

Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas -- Sunday, August 6, 2017

"And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth." (Revelation 16:1)

We spent some bit of time last week getting familiar with the introductory scene for this final work of God in bringing Christ to His earthly throne -- all as part of that covenant term: ***"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him"***. (Revelation 1:1) As we turn our attention to the main event, it begins with a commandment from God for the actors to go forth and execute on His providential plan. Why do I say this is God's voice? Because we know from the previous chapter that until ***"the seven plagues ... [are] fulfilled"*** nobody enters into this temple where ***"the glory of God"*** has filled up (Revelation 15:8). Therefore, His is the only voice that could be heard out of the temple at this point in the event timeline.

Both from the term ***"pour out"*** ("*ekcheo*") and from the description of where these plagues are to go ***"upon the earth"*** we are to understand that there is to be a broad or large distribution of the plagues. From other indicators throughout this ruinous series of events, we know that it will impact all of the inhabitants of the earth; not just humans. As far as the kingdom of Christ will be extended, these plagues will go to establish His power and secure His dominion, as is prophesied:

"And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one." (Zechariah 14:9)

I shared with you last week the reasons I believe these catastrophes are a required component of the purging that these redeemed of Israel must undergo if they are to be spiritually prepared to dwell with God and Christ for a thousand years in the proper and righteous ministrations in the temple of God. It is good for that understanding to be in us all, because we read from John's other book how we must be prepared to view those with whom we may dwell, but who lack the grace of God – as evidenced in their lives:

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out [i.e., publicly disassociated themselves] from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." (1 John 2:18-19)

This is another passage that does indeed have fulfillment in our generation, with full and relevant application as we ***"see the day approaching"*** (Hebrews 10:25) in the evidence all around us, and yet it will receive its greatest fulfillment in this excited period when the Hebrews are winnowed precipitously down to the 144,000 who are given saving faith in Christ as their Messiah.

But, there is another framing reality to these events that -- once put before you -- will bring a good many things into sharper focus while we examine the terrors of the seven vials. If you recall, the death of the two witnesses are reported to take place in a place that receives three descriptors:

"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called [1] Sodom and [2] Egypt, [and 3] where also our Lord was crucified." (Revelation 11:8)

This place is called, in the prophecy of Isaiah, Sodom (Isaiah 1:10). Ezekiel's prophecy confirms the reasons for that God-abandoned place to be called Sodom in chapter 16 of his work where he decries their ***"pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness ... [and that she did not] strengthen the hand of the poor and needy"*** (Ezekiel 16:49). Curiously, however, I do not believe you'll find a place in scripture where prophets declared Jerusalem to be spiritually Egypt. Expositors will opine generally that she received such a moniker in Revelation 11 because of the cruel tyranny of her people when in an apostate condition. They cite no specific passage of scripture for that proposition, though I do not expressly reject the legitimacy of that comparison.

Perhaps, though, there is a more edifying way to view this passage of Revelation 11. Perhaps if we consider our *current* context it will be evident why this place -- where the history of all humankind will be brought to focus -- would have a spiritual relationship to Egypt of old. Remember, the description of Jerusalem in Revelation 11:8 is on the very cusp of Christ's second advent -- which then comes in close time proximity, and even closer event proximity (Revelation 11:15). We know further that it is in this place -- ***"where also our Lord was crucified"*** -- that the two witnesses are slain by the seventh iteration of Antichrist (Revelation 11:7; 17:11). It is, no doubt, Jerusalem. The seventh iteration of the Antichrist (Revelation 11:7) -- and subsequently the eighth iteration of the Antichrist (Revelation 13:1; 17:11) -- sets up his center of operations in this location. The prophecies are many that describe a major piece of Antichrist's work is to take and destroy Jerusalem, e.g.,

"For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." (Zechariah 14:2)

It was Pharaoh, the ***"king over Egypt which knew not Joseph"*** (Exodus 1:8), that took into captivity the Children of Israel, which then lasted for 400 years. It was the first iteration of Antichrist -- the Pharaoh of Egypt who rose to power and refused to let the Children of Israel go out from her to worship God -- that felt the plagues of God upon his kingdom to set those children free, physically.

"[T]he Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name, ... Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day". (Jeremiah 32:18, 20)

So, now comes this final iteration of Antichrist in the last day and sets up his kingdom in Jerusalem -- "**spiritually called ... Egypt**" -- and determines not to allow the redeemed of Israel to be free to return to God in the new temple and worship Him in perfection of righteousness. Perhaps, this is why Paul chooses -- from all the historical instances of God's deliverance of His people for the purpose of serving Him -- this event in Egypt to encourage those of His Jewish brethren (and we, their spiritual type) about His election and redemption:

"For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." (Romans 9:15-18)

Remember, it is the "**Song of Moses, the servant of God**" which the 144,000 redeemed of Israel sing while they look upon a worldwide expression of many of the same plagues previously administered in old Pharaoh's Egypt. The historical event drew the final confrontation into the Red Sea -- the eschatological will similarly bring a final confrontation into the Valley of Meggido. So we should bathe ourselves in the beauty of this metaphorical and spiritual symmetry while we consider the individual plagues coming forth from these seven expressions of God's wrath against Antichrist and his kingdom.

"And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image." (Revelation 16:2)

This Greek word for "**sore**" ("**hel'-kos**") is used only three times, two of which are in discussing this specific plague. I find particular comfort that the third is what that gentle Lazarus was reduced to licking while the rich man received his good things (Luke 16:25). That was indeed an evil thing that was joined to that good man's afflictions, and it is here indeed an evil thing that will suddenly come upon these "**which destroy the earth**" with their rebellion (Revelation 11:18).

These sores are malignant and distracting, consuming the attention of the earth's inhabitants. They have mischief in their hearts, energized by the Antichrist Beast and the False Prophet, to destroy those beloved of God. Please keep in mind, my friends, that there are many other things that take place during this calamitous three and a half year period during which the vials are poured out upon the earth's inhabitants. It is this same period during which "**all the world [wonders] after the beast**" of Revelation 13. It is this same period during which the kingdoms of the earth "**give their kingdom unto the beast**" and at his command destroy all forms of religion in the earth, to wit: "**make [Babylon] desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.**" (Revelation 17:16) Revelation 14, ties the three of these worldwide events together with this passage:

"And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen [destruction of false religions], that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast [Antichrist's reign] and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God (seven vials), which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation". (Revelation 14:8-10)

Much worldwide mischief calls for a worldwide pandemic of pain and suffering that annoys and distracts. We can look upon the application of this same instrument of God's armament in Egypt of old, to be further instructed on the nature and value of this unique plague.

"And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt. And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians." (Exodus 9:8-11)

Like a sea of leprosy, the persons of the earth are witness to the death of their own skin, breaking forth in pustules like a continuous physical expression of the rot that is within their very souls, as Isaiah prophetically declares:

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." (Isaiah 1:6)

They think to replace the glory of the God of heaven with this mischievous pretender -- like the old Egyptians did with their magicians -- so God will remind them that He is the only God of life and death, health and sickness.

"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." (Deuteronomy 32:39)

As we will see many times over in this amazing work of our God, the faithful fear of Him that is given to elect souls will never be in the reprobate; though they be smitten with the most grievous experiences. This is a generation of mankind wholly given over to the deceitful influences of Satan, who is in his death throes (Revelation 12:12), and their relenting to his authority will come to some great cost indeed.

"And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea." (Revelation 16:3)

Some expositors utilize historic battles among armies of emerging empires -- in metaphor -- to expound this amazing expression of God's wrath. It cheapens this work and denies glory to God to take so little care in understanding a thing so grievous. If all of the men who inhabited all of the nations in every generation of mankind were to give their blood in violence, it would not fill a tributary of the earth's unfathomable seas.

Each of these seven plagues is expressed in a different part of the world's political and eco-system (earth, sea, fountains, sun, kingdom, Euphrates, air). It expresses the fullest of God's wrath upon each of these places, and it is to be understood as demonstrating His power to dispose of His creation as He sees fit -- even while the Dragon, Antichrist, and the False Prophet deceive the nations to think otherwise.

The "**sea**", collectively the oceans of the earth, cover 71% of the earth's visible surface and, if measuring the multitude of "livable space" upon the earth, it covers 99% of that space. By far, the greatest source of food and life-giving resources are contained in the delicately-balanced eco-system called the "sea". More than 50% of the oxygen that humans take in comes from the plentiful supply of phytoplankton living on the surface of the waters of the sea. The biosphere - - land and "air" above the land for hundreds or thousands of feet upward -- is dominated by the life cycle of the "**sea**". This event -- to use a snarky cliché -- "is no day at the beach"!

All that vibrant, life-giving, food-supplying, fresh-air-providing volume of water turns to the clotting, putrescent, stinking, and suffocating quality of a dead man's blood! It brings death to all sea-inhabiting life forms -- plant and animal. Current estimates indicate that between 20% and 30% of all protein consumed by humans is seafood. The percentage grows to dominant proportions in poorer nations where populations rely on their access to the sea creatures for their lives. Dead. All dead, from the mighty whale to the plankton and corral ... dead, dead, dead. And oh, the stink!

"Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall lothe to drink of the water of the river." (Exodus 7:17-18)

If the Egyptians were overwhelmed with the putrefied stench from the Nile ... what of the world's population who, together with the winds of death coming off the oceans must endure the smell of their own rotting skin? A generation of people who have made these parts of God's creation into their idols -- fish ... water -- who have denied God's capacious power and prerogative in the

disposition of these resources, now find them to be loathsome and wretched impositions upon their very existences.

"And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy." (Revelation 16:4-6)

The plague of the waters continues inland, so to speak, but I want to focus on the response that flows from God's tender souls. Sweet friends, as I discussed previously, there was a full period of the most intense hostilities being meted out between those of God's elect souls in the earth - Jews and Gentiles -- and their enemies who, though fragmented in every other aspect of their lives, find league in the fretful cause of finding and slaying God's righteous. It was, as I will one day (Lord willing) explore at length for you, the very purpose for the plagues and woes of the **seven trumpets**. As Christ Himself intimates, and this Apocalypse expressly documents, there will be some limited successes. Consider these troubling, yet in fact quite hopeful, recordings:

"For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death." (Luke 21:15-16)

and

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:" (Revelation 6:9)

and

"And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." (Revelation 11:7-8)

But it would be an incomplete vision of this event to hang it upon the malevolence of the hordes of demon-possessed humans during this apocalyptic dispensation. The text we're considering declares of our Saviour: ***"Thou are righteous, O Lord"***! Just as He - in the midst of this flesh-bound existence - grants us explosive visions of our glorification ... earnest pennies of our expectations, He has likewise given the damned clear signs of their damnation, both within their spirits (Hebrews 10:27) and in dispensational judgments. From the beginning it was the movement of Satan-deceived men to spill the blood of Saints to bring an end to that pre-Creation

promise of election to glory; ... as if! That blood spilled cries out! (Genesis 4:10) That blood speaks for certain ... though not as efficaciously as the blood of Christ. (Hebrews 12:24).

"And David was then in the hold, and the Philistines' garrison was then at Bethlehem. And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate! And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: but David would not drink of it, but poured it out to the LORD, And said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mightiest." (1 Chronicles 11:16-19)

This passage helps us to see a way in which we should understand this unique expression of the wrath of God and Christ in the plague of the third vial. The blood of the Saints of God is a precious thing -- a thing that is subject to God's intimate care and concern -- not just when it is spilled in death; but when it is spent in the work of God's faithful servants preaching His gospel and ministering to His people! Here we see these mighty men -- the Bible metaphor for the great character and bravery of His Saints in the *church militant* stage of existence -- going out against the enemy to bring a cup of cold water to the besieged David! In the heat of his spirit David -- as every one of us in this house -- refused to have that blessed blood put in jeopardy so that we might fulfill vanity of the flesh. That is the work of the damned! That is what every generation of reprobates has done to every generation of the righteous. They trouble us, perplex us, persecute us, and cast us down! And though our Redeemer and Friend prevents us from distress, despair, forsaking, and destruction (2 Corinthians 4:8), He does not forgive them for their work or their want. This consuming of the Saints' precious resource -- that life blood energized for the work of the Cross -- is part of the thefts referred to in Revelation 9:21, for which they will not repent, though they be mortally tormented! God sees it all, and will make them answer for every excitement within that precious life blood of the Saints!

"Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble." (Psalm 9:11-12)

The enemies of God and Christ now know that the inquisition has begun in earnest, because all they now have to drink is blood.

"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory." (Revelation 16:8-9)

The disruptive and retributive power of God now turns, in the hand of the glorified and jubilant saints, to that great natural source of light and life. This is the first of these plagues that does not have a precursor from the conflict with Egypt; a turning up, if you will, of the heat. No refreshing oceans, no springs of relief can be drawn from to restore the dehydrating, decaying inhabitants. The earth takes on the atmosphere of an oven, like the prophet Malachi warns:

“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” (Malachi 4:1)

This cluster of words **“burn them up”** is one Hebrew word (“*law-hat*”) that means “to scorch, burn, blaze”. Malachi is speaking to the rebel Jews ... in part of which the earth’s population is made up – and very much part of the population where the Antichrist Beast has set up his seat of power in Jerusalem. He is declaring how those who have fully and finally rejected the Messiah will be fully and finally cut off, leaving **“neither root nor branch”**. This is that day that cometh, and this is that oven-like oppressive heat and fire that will blister the very blisters of the first pandemic plague, leaving the population to writhe in their blasphemous screams against God.

These plagues render many crippled with scorching and boils; and the language of this plague of heat has intimations that death follows for some at least, if not many, of the tortured lackeys in Antichrist’s kingdom. When Isaiah pens his prophecy of this time, he is a bit more explicit:

“Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.” (Isaiah 24:1-6)

It must be ... with only blood to drink and stifling levels of heat and pain ... that the inhabitants of the earth would submit. But under the perpetual strong delusion under which God has judicially bound them (2 Thessalonians 2:11), these deranged know only to blaspheme His name and cling to every deceitful word that comes from the mouth of the master soothsayer, the False Prophet. What other possible explanation could come from a rational mind that would look upon such a sorry and self-destructive lot?

"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds." (Revelation 16:10-11)

Then, as fast as the great sun's rays and brightness radiate torture and flame, there is suddenly the appearance that it has exhausted its powers to shine. Together with the moon and stars, the heavenly givers of light in any form cease anymore to do that work. Joel helps us to see it:

"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more." (Joel 3:14-17)

Very "**near**" now ... he tells us in this prophecy ... there will be a gathering in the "**valley of decision**". Very soon indeed, but first we will see this plague of darkness when the "**sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.**" No light whatsoever. Complete blackness of darkness -- as Isaiah declares exists within, it shall be without:

"For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." (Isaiah 60:2)

Even while the redeemed of Israel are given the brightness of God's presence atop Mount Zion, there is a blackness below -- an absence of any light whatsoever -- that no machination of mankind can overcome. This beautiful prophecy puts one in mind of the dichotomy of that great battle scene when Pharaoh charged forth with his armies to slay the escaping Jews. The very same pillar of fire (granting life-saving light and joy to the fleeing Israelites) was a dark cloud to the Egyptian army racing to destroy:

"And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians." (Exodus 14:23-25)

Like there, in this final contest, God is fighting for those of His redeemed. This is, as dropped upon the Egyptians for three terrifying days, a darkness that can be felt (Exodus 10:21-23). And as those of old had no capacity to see "**one another, neither [could rise] from his place**" (Exodus

10:23), the inhabitants of that last pre-millennial population of rebels will have no capacity to do anything but sit about gnawing their tongues between their blasphemous screeds against God!

Whether this plague lasts for three days, like Egypt's, or for another set time, it is clear from what follows that men are able to see to move as this march of wrath continues unrelenting to its conclusion.

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. [Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.] And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." (Revelation 16:12-16)

This scene shifts the complete focus of these shakings in the earth, from the unmitigated pouring forth of nightmarish trauma (the cause) to the enabling power of Satan's deceitful influences in harnessing the unhinged, rage-induced, pride of the earth's population in seeking retribution of their own (the effect). What I am hoping to display for you here is the absolute perfection in application of these beautifully fit words of David:

***"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."
(Psalm 76:10)***

The language of the passage expressly limits the pouring of the vial onto the river Euphrates. While I am not overly concerned if it is strictly limited to that river, other language in the text -- coupled with what was issued previously among these plagues -- could support the conclusion that the Euphrates is symbolic of what occurs with all liquid barriers to the insurgence of the armies of all the nations, because we know they all come forth.

"Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood." (Isaiah 34:1-3)

So whether they are all directed -- from one path or another -- to ultimately travel across this great river dry-shod, or they move across many such dried up barriers, they most certainly are drawn into the valley of Meggido. The language ***"dried up"*** imports (through the base of the

word "xay-ros") being withered from scorching. We know the scorching of the sun was upon all of the inhabitants, so it is not unreasonable to assume John saw an *example* of the drying up of rivers in the earth to allow free passage of all kingdoms' armies.

The more amazing thing to consider, however, is this scene of frog-like demons pouring forth from the three leaders of this rebellion: Satan, Antichrist, and the False Prophet. There is much to learn from this amazing scene. We are viewing compelling evidence that the jurisdiction of Satan is strictly limited to the earth. As will hopefully be more exhaustively drawn up for you in a future sermon (perhaps from my friend Steve), once Christ has come and taken possession of the heaven the only jurisdiction for Satan to operate is the physical earth and sea (Revelation 12:9). No more can he send forth his army of cursed demon spirits through flight ... they must travel forth leaping like the frogs of Egypt's plague!

"And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneadingtroughs: And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants." (Exodus 8:3-4)

But these creatures -- though as voluminous -- are far superior to the frogs their gait may emulate. These emissaries of the great usurper make the leaders of the people -- from presidents to precinct committeemen, sultans to sheriffs, if you will -- to be convinced of the wisdom in sending their nations' armies forth to the place where the beast has set up his kingdom to fight. "Fight", they say of one voice. "Fight to be free from this great King who would rule us with His rod of iron!" What audacity these filthy and fried hordes display.

So many of them. So furious their marching. So utterly and blindly committed to the cause of their champion Antichrist! They come forth. For the freedom of man's self-governance they come. For the cause of man's free will they come. To cast off the shackles of religion, they march. Like so many great causes they have witnessed in film and in stories reported in the grotesque blasphemy of the media mob -- these are utterly convinced of their unified power to take the earth for their own use.

Those on top of Mt. Zion are in peril. These 144,000 -- though they have the ***"spirit of grace and of supplications"*** (Zechariah 12:10) -- are still flesh. They are witness to this amazing vision of the millions upon millions marching -- shaking the earth in their foment of war. It is here that they may slip into some longing to let their flesh influence this outcome. It is here they may look to the arm of man for resolution. Hence the warning which I bracketed in the citing of the passage:

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." (Revelation 16:14)

On June 22, 2014 I did a full sermon on this danger. This particular expression of Christ "***I come as a thief***" is not referencing his second advent, but rather that moment expressed a few chapters hence:

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war." (Revelation 19:11)

The precise time when Christ rides into the "***valley of decision***" is no more expressly known than the moment of His second advent. These 144,000 are as much in spiritual crisis as those who -- in the immediate wake of the two witnesses going up into heaven and the resulting earthquake in Jerusalem -- are said to be "***affrighted, and gave glory to the God of Heaven***" (Revelation 11:13). Knowing that the return of Christ is imminent is comforting -- but the flesh is still affrighted and at risk of reliance upon man. Hence the perpetual warning to them -- and us!

"Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"
(Isaiah 2:22)

"And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great." (Revelation 16:17-21)

The same voice that commanded these plagues go forth (Revelation 16:1) now declares "***it is done.***" But the plagues clearly are not done, for after these words come a disruption of the physical earth "***such as was not since men were upon the earth.***"

[it is not a part of this sermon, but this language certainly supports a consideration of the possibility both that the earth far pre-existed mankind, and that prior to the creation of man the earth underwent tremendous upheaval ... but I digress.]

So, what was "***done***"? The Greek word ("*ghin'-om-ah-ee*") intimates something has come to pass or been fulfilled. The language comes upon the heels of the declaration that the armies of the kingdoms of the earth have been brought together into "***a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon***", which fairly justifies the conclusion that the work of the plagues was -- in relevant part -- for the purpose of bringing those armies forth to face a coming King. That work was done. That work, which finishes the staging for all of the glories declared in Revelation 19, is done: the

marriage of the Lamb, the wedding supper of the Great God, and the coronation of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords -- all associated with the slaughter at Armageddon.

But the plagues in this seventh vial go beyond that dreadful valley. We should not imagine, having observed the traumas declared in this oracle, that those citizens of the kingdoms throughout the earth will not share in the retribution because they did not come into the valley! No! They very much do, and they very much learn who is in fact the King of the earth!

The earthquake itself does a tremendous work both in Jerusalem ... **"the great city"** ... as well as all **"the cities of the nations"** which fall. How does a city fall? Is it not a complete disruption of life-sustaining infrastructure -- shelters, food sources, roads on which to flee from city to city? When the earthquake renders every citizen exposed -- fully and unreservedly exposed -- then they are ready to receive a recompense that is perfectly fitted to their rebellion. You remember, I trust, that when Christ first began to display His awful power over the heavens and earth, these inhabitants mocked Him even in their terror:

"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Revelation 6:15)

What audacity! Yes, it is an expression of the intensity of their fear. But, to whom do they call for relief? Not upon that God who they very well know has been angered by their worship of false gods -- **"great Babylon"** in her purest form of expression. No, they call upon the mountains and the rocks -- not for their slaughter, but for their defense! You should not read Revelation 6:15 as to say these rebels are seeking to be slain by those rocks, but that those objects of their worship -- Mother - freakin - Nature !! -- will come to their defense. Now that God will take their mountains and islands -- great formations of rock -- and turn them into showers of hail! **"[E]ach stone about the weight of a talent"** drops on the heads of this unsheltered and undefended population of the earth's cities, bringing the power and majesty of the God of Eternity into the very faces of them all.

The matter of Armageddon itself -- though no language here indicates those armies are immune from these final traumas of the plagues -- was more fully examined in three previous sermons (February 14, 21, and 28 of 2015) so will not be repeated here. This final venting out of God's wrath upon the earth, howsoever horrifying it will be, still fails to disrupt the blasphemy from the Satan-deceived population. It will not be until that great usurper is cast into his assigned prison for a thousand years (Revelation 20:3) that his deceit will be interrupted and the punished population will relent and be properly subject to the rule of Christ.

These things -- far too large for me to ever be capable of sufficiently describing for you -- are absolutely certain to come. If we do not frame our lives every day as though they could commence right here where we sit today, we are not taking the message that God **"sent and signified ... by his angel unto his servant John". (Revelation 1:1)** When we see so many signs that these matters are imminent, it should possess us daily and should press out of us our preoccupation with our daily lives -- which are filled with every vanity, innocent and sinful. Long before the unredeemed are cast into an eternity of hell fire, there are majestic terrors awaiting them. We here should be perpetually thankful that we have a hope -- that we have been warned to flee the wrath to come.

I love you all. Amen.