

## Study 32: Revelation 16:8-16

**8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire.**

- It occurs to me that I don't have enough faith for natural phenomenon. God is in charge of nature. The power of nature may be awesome to me, but it isn't overwhelming for God. I am scared in a storm or other natural upheaval. God is comfortable in them. I should have faith to ask God to intervene in weather and other natural conditions.
- I think of the few miracles that Jesus performed in the realm of nature.

**After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear (Matthew 14:23-26).**

**He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" (Mark 4:39-41).**

- Jesus also turned water into wine and took a few pieces of food and fed a multitude. Jesus' miracles were not only performed on human beings and bodies, He did miracles over nature to show the total power of God in all natural situations. We can put our trust in Him no matter what and can have faith to move mountains if need be.

**9 They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.**

- This verse contains one of the reasons that God pours out His "plagues." It is so that people will repent and glorify Him. God may bring hard times to people so that they come to their senses and turn to Him. I know many people who have come to know the Lord through a bankruptcy, death of a loved one, or some other tragic event.
- When they have come through that tough time and found Jesus, they then go on to see that their loss is far outweighed by their gain! They have found the true treasure and it is God.
- There are others, however, who will endure difficult times and stubbornly resist coming to God for help or repenting.

- Do you see God in all the things that happen to you? Do you glorify Him in any and all circumstances? I am not saying I do. But we who know God is in control should praise Him no matter what circumstance we find ourselves in.
- This “plague” differs from any of those found in Exodus that accompanied Moses’ ministry. There was a plague of darkness in Egypt, but not of searing heat. It is interesting that there must be a balance of light and darkness in our lives. Too much of either one can be detrimental to our health.
- I think the same is true spiritually. There are times of great light and insight into God and His works; then there are times of darkness when God seems far away. It would seem that both are necessary for spiritual growth.
- I know some people who have too much “light.” They always have an answer and know what God is up to. Then there are those with too much “darkness,” never figuring out what God is doing.

**10 the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony**  
**11 and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.**

- Here we have the plague of darkness, similar to the one found in Exodus:

**Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt-- darkness that can be felt." So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived (Exodus 10:21-23).**

- The symbolism for the early Church would not have been lost in this plague. While God will plague the kingdom of Egypt or the beast with darkness, He will maintain His people with light at the same time.
- We have another clue to the plagues that the angels released. They were somehow connected to what the followers of the beast had done. Therefore, these plagues are not just God pouring out His wrath, but pouring it out in response to something that the people did that merited such pain and suffering.
- Men must take into account that we will reap what we sow. If they sow wickedness, then they will reap death. There is no way around the principle of reaping and sowing.
- This is the same scenario as we saw in Exodus. God showed His power again and again to Pharaoh in Egypt, but repeatedly he refused to acknowledge the Lord. In the verses above, God afflicts the kingdom of the beast and its inhabitants with

plagues to prove His power and sovereign rule, yet they, like Egypt, continue to resist Him.

- This has been the case throughout history. Kingdoms of the beast resist God and perish. God continues to reign and live.
- Repentance should also be a way of life for you and me. We should evaluate regularly our mindset and thinking about things. Is there any adjustment that God would like to make in our thinking? After all, repentance is literally a “changing of the mind.” Do you know the Lord but still find that you need to repent of attitudes and ways of thinking that aren’t in alignment with Him or His ways? I know I do, and need to do it even more.

**12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.**

- This is the first mention of any “kings from the East.” Who are they? No one knows for sure. If I were living in one of the Revelation churches, the power of Rome would be from the west. So these kings for these churches would have been unknown, powers that did not yet exist or were unknown to the world of the Revelation churches.
- Could this mean that God would in some ways make it easy on future governments to establish themselves and their rule against the Lord God? This sixth plague doesn’t seem like much of a plague compared to the previous ones described earlier. Yet it is a plague nonetheless, for the Lord doesn’t oppose their folly, which leads to their eventual doom.
- I want God to oppose me if my path is wayward and against Him. While it may seem harsh at first, it is really His grace to save me. When I lost a job years ago, it was a devastating experience. Yet months later I thanked God that He had worked things out for me to be with my dying father. If I had kept that job, I would not have been able to be with my father. I want God to oppose me, not to “dry up rivers” to make it easier for me to fail.
- Can you trust God enough to allow Him to rule in all the affairs of your life, whether you see the benefit of those affairs at the present time? Can you praise Him for the promotion or raise you didn’t receive? That is true faith.

**13 Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet.**

- Why would these evil spirits resemble frogs? Because anyone who looked closely to examine them would see that they are simple creatures not worth following. Yet the followers of the beast follow these deluding spirits with eagerness. To anyone with spiritual discernment, however, the words of the dragon, beast and false prophet would be akin to listening to the words of a frog!

- These spirits are not just harmless like frogs, but they are evil. There were frogs in the plagues of Egypt as well (see Exodus 8:1-15). They became a nuisance and ended up everywhere. When anyone accepts the teaching of these “frogs” coming from the beast, dragon and false prophet, that teaching has a way of permeating (and fouling) all of life. False doctrines are not harmless little things; they have the power to make all of life unclean (frogs were unclean according to Old Testament law).

**14 They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.**

- Demons and the kingdom of evil can do miraculous signs. The Egyptian magicians could replicate some of the early plagues and signs that Moses performed.
- Once again the Lord seems to use these things to help determine who is with Him and who is against Him. He allows some of these things to happen so that those whose hearts are against Him will be duped into believing a lie. Why would He do this? Because they have rejected the truth!
- Will there be a battle on “the great day of the Almighty?” Will there be a literal battle? I think there have been many such battles throughout history. Every kingdom and government, every philosophy that sets itself up against the Lord and His rule has been or will be defeated. They will not be able to stand in the age to come.
- Do I believe in an end of this age, with a literal return of Jesus? Absolutely! Am I convinced that verse 14 represents this last, great battle? No.

**15 "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."**

- This verse is in an interesting place in this chapter. Of course, it refers to another verse that seems to refer more to the natural phenomenon of death. This tells me that this reference to a final battle isn't what most people have interpreted it to be.
- We must be clothed in a righteousness that only God can provide through the blood of Jesus. We cannot be clothed in any other doctrine or system of religious works and deeds. No matter how attractive other systems may be, we must stay awake and be clothed in garments that only God can supply.
- The Lord comes like a thief to everyone who doesn't know Him. But to those who know Him, His intervention, whether through deliverance or death, is a welcome event that leads to joyous joining with the Father.
- Paul wrote about the day of the Lord being like a thief:

**Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing (1Thessalonians 5:1-11).**

- What do you think? Was Paul writing about the second coming of Jesus in these verses, or was he referring to the sudden end of each human that comes through death? Whatever he was referring to, he urged the saints to use these verses as an encouragement to one another.
- Peter also wrote about this day being a thief:

**But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him (2 Peter 3:10-14).**

- Here it seems that Peter was definitely referring to the return of the Lord. But note that his conclusion is the same as Paul's. They were not trying to spell out a doctrine of the end times, but rather exhort the Church to holy living *now*. So where should our emphasis be, do you think? On some doctrine of the end, or on holy living?

**16 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.**

- I have been to the valley called Armageddon in Israel five times. It is an impressive valley, but hardly big enough for the kings to gather. This must be symbolic of something else, especially in the context of the preceding verses.

- I have recently read, for the first time, one of the end time novels written by a well-known Christian author. They are entertaining but pure fiction. Even knowing that, they produce a certain fear in me because of the elements of conspiracy, intrigue and mystery that surround the story line. Does Revelation point to a literal Armageddon? I doubt it.
- I do believe there will be a final historical event that will end history as we know it and usher us into the next age of a new heaven and earth. I do believe that there will be a final establishment of the kingdom of God where His enemies will be defeated once and for all. How will this happen? I don't know. But Revelation tells us to have faith, that it will happen, and that even if we lose our lives in the process, God will be victorious over every foe, no matter how powerful they seem to be.
- We are also warned to be ready for this to happen at any time. It is too late to prepare when it happens. We must get ready now for when it happens.