

Study 33: Revelation 16:17-21

17 The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!"

- Yet once more we see the phrase “a loud voice” used. Some people ask, “How can I hear the Lord?” My question is, “How can you miss hearing the Lord?” While God may at times cause us to seek Him, He will always allow our search to end in hearing from Him.
- When I was a pastor, I almost always began each pastoral session with the question, “What is the Lord saying to you?” I will begin this week’s study by asking the same question: “What is the Lord saying to you right now?”
- You may be going through a time of trial and suffering, but a loud voice from heaven at some point in time will say, “It is done!” You may be experiencing persecution or misunderstanding, but at some point, heaven will say, “It is done!”
- I am thinking of three passages that relate to this theme:

For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. When I felt secure, I said, "I will never be shaken." O LORD, when you favored me, you made my mountain stand firm; but when you hid your face, I was dismayed. To you, O LORD, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy: "What gain is there in my destruction, in my going down into the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness? Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me; O LORD, be my help." You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever (Psalm 30:5-12).

- During good times we can feel confident and secure that God is with us and nothing adverse will ever happen. That is what the psalmist felt when he said, “I will never be shaken.” A few verses later he is crying out, “O Lord, be my help!”
- In good times, I have made faith professions that were then severely tested in times of lack or suffering.

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (John 19:30).

- When I see “It is done!” in Revelation, I think of what Jesus said on the cross. Jesus suffered through the worst form of death man has ever conceived against man. But it had an end to it, and your suffering and trial will have an end, too! Like Jesus, you will be able to say, “It is finished! It is done!”

- After every trial, there is a time of tremendous blessing. The deeper the trial, the greater the eventual blessing will be.

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do-- living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit. The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray (1 Peter 4:1-7).

- Since Christ our Lord suffered in the flesh, Peter urged his followers to have the same readiness and attitude that Jesus had. Do you have that attitude? Are you ready to suffer for His sake? Why should Revelation be a source of anxiety or stress for the believer? We know the world will be judged and that we live in the world. Therefore, there may be hard times, even martyrdom for some of us.
- Peter told us plainly that the end is near. How the end will come is open to interpretation. That should not make us anxious, but glad. I fear no end time beast or conspiracy. The Lord is my shepherd!

18 Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake.

- Recently I was in Hawaii and saw the lava flow from an active volcano. It was awesome and scary! Nature and its power through storms, floods, earthquakes, and eruptions makes man realize how powerless and insignificant he is. The things that happen in heaven may have natural effects.
- But Revelation uses what we call apocalyptic language. Will there be a literal earthquake? Maybe. Will things happen in heaven that will upset the status quo on earth where men and women are totally unsettled and powerless to control it? Definitely!

19 The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath.

- I am not implying that God will not judge the earth. He has entered into judgment many times in history and great cities and civilizations were reduced to nothing. He will do the same one final time and will usher in a new age with a new heaven and earth. No one knows when that will be and many generations have felt it would happen in their lifetime. Obviously, it did not.

20 Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.

- This is a great example of apocalyptic language and images. Islands will not flee and mountains will not literally hide. But this language tells us and told the early church that cataclysmic events would take place that were not the norm.
- When those events happened, the Church was to know it wasn't due to natural causes, it was due to heaven's intervention.
- This doesn't mean that some islands and mountains may not disappear or change due to certain natural disasters, but apocalyptic language is not to be taken literally. It is simply a style that is used to communicate upheaval and unusual events.

21 From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.

- Here is another plague that was similar to one that came upon Egypt in Moses' time:

Therefore, at this time tomorrow I will send the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen on Egypt, from the day it was founded till now. Give an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every man and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die." Those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD hurried to bring their slaves and their livestock inside. But those who ignored the word of the LORD left their slaves and livestock in the field. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt-- on men and animals and on everything growing in the fields of Egypt." When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. Throughout Egypt hail struck everything in the fields-- both men and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree. The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were. Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. "This time I have sinned," he said to them. "The LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. Pray to the LORD, for we have had enough thunder and hail. I will let you go; you don't have to stay any longer." (Exodus 9:18-28)

- Egypt worshipped the elements of nature and the Lord was proving His superiority to and control over those elements. Up to this point, Pharaoh refused to repent and let God's people go, but after this storm, he began to soften.
- God will prove His superiority over anything that man puts before Him, whether nature, philosophy or technology. His purpose, as I have said in the past studies, is so that men will repent and turn to God.
- God's judgment is even an expression of His love, so that sin may be eradicated and men may turn to Him.
- In Revelation, the people upon whom the hail fell refused to repent and even cursed God. This is how hard man's heart can become, that he will use God's objects of mercy as signs of God's cruelty.
- My greatest journey in my walk with the Lord is to see that all He does in my life is motivated by love and is in my best interests. Too often tough times have caused me to question God's faithfulness and love. As I study Revelation, I am seeing how God was comforting the early Church through the message given to John. And I am also seeing God's great love as He acts to help men decide who they will follow.
- For this reason, I cannot understand why some use Revelation as a history book or as a tool to scare or unsettle people. Revelation is the last great expression of God's love for His people, a love that was first shown in Genesis and now comes to a conclusion in Revelation. Thank you, Lord, for your care and involvement in the affairs of the earth. I trust you, and I commit myself and my family to you for protection. No matter what happens, Lord, I declare my trust in You. Amen.