

Judgement Day Comes to the Earth

Revelation 16:1-21

Introduction

1. Recently a world famous scientist and cosmologist expressed his concern concerning the uncertain future of the human race and planet earth. In an interview headlined, “Colonies in space may be only hope,” British scientist Stephen Hawking said,

The human race is likely to be wiped out by a doomsday virus before the Millennium is out, unless we set up colonies in space. Hawking said that biology, rather than physics, presents the biggest challenge to human survival. “Although September 11 was horrible, it didn’t threaten the survival of the human race like nuclear weapons do. In the long term, I am more worried about biology. Nuclear weapons need large facilities, but genetic engineering can be done in a small lab. You can’t regulate every lab in the world. The danger is that either by accident or design, we create a virus that destroys us. I don’t think the human race will survive the next thousand years, unless we spread into space. There are too many accidents that can befall life on a single planet. But I’m an optimist. We will reach out to the stars.” (Telegraph.co.uk., Oct. 16, 2001)

2. Hawking’s apocalyptic scenario is not so difficult to imagine anymore. Hawking’s eschatological anxiety is not too difficult to believe when you look at Revelation 16, when “Judgement Day Comes to the Earth.”
3. Chapter 16 contains the last of the 3 series of judgements in Revelation, the 7 bowls. The intensity and rapidity of this final judgement leaves nothing but disaster, destruction and death in its wake. Indeed the bowls may be poured out in just a few months, weeks, or even days. What the seals (Ch. 6) and the trumpets (Chs. 8 & 9) did not get, the bowls will wipe out in a furious and climactic display – wrath and judgment.
4. Tragically and unbelievably, men will know all of this is God’s doing and yet, rather than fall on their face in repentance, our text informs us that they will repeatedly blaspheme the true and living God (verses 9, 11, 21). The complete and total depravity of man could not be put on display more clearly.

These 7 plagues are somewhat similar both to plagues God brought upon the Egyptians during the time of Moses (Exodus 7-12) as well as the 7 trumpet judgements (Revelation 8-9). However, the Egyptian plagues were localized and the 7 trumpets affected 1/3 of the world. These judgements in contrast, are worldwide and the last the world will ever see.

I. God will send sickness. 16:1-2

*Loud voice (*megulas phones*) – 20 times in Revelation, 6 times in chapter 16 alone. The voice of God, for only He is now in the temple (15:8)!

1. The disease is severe. 16:1

*Go and pour (both imperatives of command)

*Wrath of God – the fierce anger and just judgement of God. This will be the most severe and devastating judgement the earth will ever experience.

*On the earth – what starts in heaven ends up on earth. What starts with God ends up with man.

2. The disease is specific. 16:2

*Foul and loathsome (lit. bad and evil).

*Sore – boil, abscess, ulcer; like the 6th Egyptian plague (Exodus 9:9-11); like Job (Job 2:7); like Lazarus (Luke 16:21).

*Note it is “men who had the mark of the beast and ... worshipped his image.” Only unbelievers and all unbelievers are affected by this incurable, open, oozing, painful sore. God will specifically target and afflict those who have rejected His grace and said no to His mercy.

Zechariah 14:12 – *Now this will be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth.*

II. God will destroy the seas. 16:3

*The bowls will be catastrophic because they follow each other so rapidly and their effects are cumulative, building upon one after the other.

*This judgement recalls the 1st Egyptian plague (Exodus 7:20-25) and the 2nd trumpet (Revelation 8:8-9).

1. The seas are defiled.

*Blood as of a dead (man) – the sea because coagulated and rotting; thick and dark. The oceans which occupy approximately 70% of the earth’s surface becomes a worldwide pool of blood, stabbed and running out by the just judgement of God.

Illustration

On a sultry Fall morning in 1947, the community of Venice, Florida, awoke to thousands of dead fish along the beaches and a stinging, choking “gas” in the air. Some blamed nerve gas, others a chemical spill, but scientists soon discovered the cause: RED TIDE. Although this was the first scientific documentation of this catastrophic event along the Florida Gulf coast, reports of similar events have been recorded as far back as the mid 1800’s. Red tides are caused by several species of marine phytoplankton, microscopic plant like cells that produce potent chemical toxins, potent neurotoxins. These toxins cause extensive fish kills, contaminate shellfish and create severe respiratory irritation to humans along the shore. As red tide blooms, the density of red tide organisms increase to several million cells in each liter of sea water, and

the effected area expands to many square miles. The result is a mass of deadly toxin leaving a wake of dead and dying fish. As the bloom approaches the shoreline, we begin to see and feel the obvious effects: dead fish, the characteristic burning sensation of the eyes and nose, and dry, choking cough.

When God judges the seas, like a worldwide “red tide” the oceans will be defiled. But note also:

2. The seas produce death.

Literally “every soul of life died.” In this toxic “wastewater” nothing can survive. That which once brimmed with life from pole to pole is now nothing more than a watery grave, a worldwide pool of death. Marine life as we have known it will be wiped out! From the tiny minnow to the largest whale; marine mammals, reptiles, fishes and innumerable invertebrates, all will perish. The term “watery grave” will take on a whole new meaning.

III. God will ruin the springs. 16:4-7

Blood follows blood in this judgement. The affliction that visited the oceans now comes upon the fresh water. The intensifying of God’s wrath can scarcely be missed.

1. His judgement is righteous. 16:4-5

*Fresh water is already in short supply due to 1) 3rd trumpet (8:10-11) and 2) the drought brought on by the 2 witnesses (11:6).

*Recalls the 1st Egyptian plague (Exodus 7:14-25).

*Water to drink, water to bathe and cleanse is, at best, in short supply.

*The angel of the water (3rd bowl) testifies to the rightness of God’s judgement, the God who is and who was (not “who is to be,” for HE IS HERE!). A day of reckoning is coming. The day of reckoning has arrived. Our God is a righteous God. Sin will be dealt with. You can count on it.

2. His judgement is retributive. 16:6-7

*They shed the blood of God’s servants. They drink the blood of God’s wrath.

*Why? Because they deserve it! Altar almost always connected with judgement in Revelation.

*Why? Because God is Lord Almighty!

*Why? Because God is true and righteous.

Genesis 18:25 – *Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?*

Psalms 19:9 – *The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgements of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.*

Psalms 119:75 – *I know, O Lord, that Thy judgements are righteous, and that in faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me.*

- There is a logic to God’s judgement.

- There is a rightness to God's judgement.

IV. **God will have men scorched. 16:8-9**

*In contrast to the first 3 bowls poured out on the earth, the 4th is poured out on the sun.

*In contrast to the 4th trumpet, which darkened the sun, moon and stars, the 4th bowl scorches the earth with fire, with burning heat.

1. **Men will be burned by God. 16:8**

* "Searing heat exceeding anything in human experience will scorch men so severely that it will seem that the atmosphere is on fire" (MacArthur, 155).

*This unbearable heat will only amplify the pain of the sores and the pain of thirst.

*The heat will melt the polar ice caps flooding the coastal regions with the toxic, noxious waters of the dead seas. Death, misery and sorrow will lay in its path. And in response, what will men do?

2. **Men will blaspheme God. 16:9**

*This verse is a tragic commentary on the depravity of man.

*Knowing from whom these plagues come, they do not repent they revile, they do not bless they blaspheme (again 3 times – verses 9, 11, 21).

*In 13:1, 5-6 Antichrist blasphemed the Lord. Here his followers follow in the footsteps of their master.

V. **God will take away their sight. 16:10-11**

*Reminiscent of the 9th Egyptian plague (Exodus 10:21-29).

*Previous judgements worldwide, this one localized.

*God turns out the lights on the beast!

1. **There will be darkness on earth. 16:10**

*Throne of the beast – his kingdom. Throne 42 times in Revelation; 40 of God's. (1 of Satan 2:13, 1 of Antichrist).

*His kingdom full of darkness – physically (?), politically, economically.

Mark 13:24-27 – *But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. And they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven.*

*Painful sores, foul oceans, undrinkable water, intense heat, worldwide chaos and confusion, the world is plunged into unimaginable misery. The Antichrist and his "New Deal" wasn't such a good idea after all.

2. **There will be defiance by men. 16:11**

*2nd time they blaspheme (curse, slander) God.

*2nd time they refuse to repent.

*God of heaven – Daniel 2:44, referring to the God who sovereignly destroys the false kingdom of this world and establishes His own universal reign.

*This is the final reference to mankind’s unwillingness to repent. These first 5 plagues were God’s final invitation to repent. Having ignored the Lord’s call; unbelieving, sinful humanity is confirmed in its sin. Mercy did not melt their hearts. Neither did judgement jolt them out of their wicked ways.

VI. **God will utilize evil spirits. 16:12-16**

*Great river Euphrates – called this 5 times in the Bible (Genesis 15:18; Deuteronomy 1:7; Joshua 1:4; Revelation 9:14, 16:12). Flows 1800 miles from the slopes of Mt. Ararat to the Persian Gulf. It formed the Eastern boundary of the land God promised to Israel. It remains the lifeblood of the Fertile Crescent.

1. **They will gather a great army. 16:12-14**

*Kings of the east (probably some connection with the 200 million demons of 9:14ff). They come apparently in political rebellion against Antichrist or rabid anti-Semitism against the Jews. In reality, God is leading them to their destruction and slaughter.

*3 unclean spirits like frogs – the unholy trinity. Frogs were unclean animals (Leviticus 11:10, 41).

*They were deceiving spirits performing the miraculous! They deceive the rulers of the whole earth drawing them to their death.

*They believe they are gathering for earthly combat. They will actually be gathering for a heavenly conflict. Their enemy? God Almighty!

Matthew 24:24-25 – *For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance.*

*Support for bin Laden Mixed Among Palestinians
By Elaine Ruth Fletcher
c. 2001 Religion News Service (October 15, 2001)*

JERUSALEM - - Ahmed, a Palestinian Muslim resident of East Jerusalem has never been a religiously observant man. And his prosperous contracting business is built on a wide network of Jewish customers with whom he maintains excellent relations. But ever since the Sept. 11 terrorist attack on the United States, Ahmed has begun to have dark, apocalyptic thoughts about the future. With the winds of war blowing through the region, he’s not sure anymore if he and his family will live another year. The only hope for salvation for Arabs and Palestinians, he now believes, may be if a righteous Muslim leader, or “emir,” can unite the Middle East in the fashion of the Muslim rulers of the early Islamic era.

2. **They will gather at Armageddon. 16:15-16**

*Verse 15, 3rd of 7 beatitudes

Matthew 24:42-44 – *Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.*

1 Thessalonians 5:2 – *For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.*

*Watches and keeps (pre. tense)

*F.F. Bruce says that “according to the [Jewish] Mishnah, the captain of the temple in Jerusalem went his rounds of the precincts by night, and if a member of the temple police was caught asleep at his post, his clothes were taken off and burned, and he was sent away in disgrace” (Bruce, 657).

*We must at all times be alert and prepared. “Ever ready believers!”

*Armageddon – Har-Magedon, probably means the hill country surrounding Megiddo, 60 miles north of Jerusalem. Actually there is no Mt. Megiddo. Mounce and Johnson and others attempt to symbolize it to mean the final overthrow of all the forces of evil by God. There is no reason to symbolize or spiritualize the text.

- One of history’s most famous battlefields with more than 200 battles having been fought there.
- Napoleon called this valley the greatest battlefield he had ever seen!
- Battle (v. 14) is actually a campaign.
- Further, Armageddon is its focal point. The war to end all wars will engulf the whole earth without question (cf. 14:17-20; 19:17-21).

VII. God will end with incredible signs. 16:17-21

*This is it. Turn out the lights, the show is over.

*Loud voice (chapter ends and begins with this).

*From the temple – from God it is done – it’s over. That’s it.

1. The earth will be shaken. 16:17-21

*7th seal (8:5), 7th trumpet, 7th bowl all contain noises, thunderings and lightnings.

*The “big one” really does come in this day.

Wave goodbye to Florida

A big splash near the Canary Islands could have a devastating ripple effect on the Eastern seaboard. A study in last week's Geophysical Research Letters warns that as much as 100 cubic miles of rock perched on a steep volcano in the Canaries, off West Africa, could someday slide into the Atlantic Ocean, sending tsunamis around most of the Atlantic. North America would be barraged with building-high waves. Two years ago geologist Simon Day of University College, London, warned about ominous cracks and movements along the flank of Cumbre Vieja volcano. The faults are sure to give way in some future eruption, Day says. If they let go all at once, a 10-mile-wide chunk of mountain would crash into the sea. Now tsunami specialist Steven Ward of the University of California – Santa Cruz has used a computer to simulate the consequences. His analysis, which other tsunami experts say is sound, shows the mammoth rock slide would raise a wedge of water up to half a mile high. Within nine hours a dozen or more immense waves, some as much as 80 feet high, could bore in on the U.S. East Coast, where they might sweep a few miles inland on low-lying shores like Florida's. "It'd be a real mess," says Ward. [And it would be nothing new. The seafloor around the islands – like that around part of Hawaii and other archipelagoes – is littered with debris from a dozen such landslides in the past few million years.] – Charles W. Petit / U.S. News & World Report, September 10, 2001, p. 73.

*Great city (probably Babylon) divided.

Jerusalem is the great city of 11:8, Babylon of 14:8, 16:19, and Rome in 17:18.

*Cities of the nations fell – can you imagine? In a matter of moments Hong Kong gone, Beijing gone, New Delphi gone, Sydney gone, Moscow gone, Paris gone, Rome gone, Athens gone, London gone, Berlin gone, New York gone, Washington gone, Los Angeles gone, Chicago. Gone gone gone! All of them gone!!!

*And great Babylon – center and hub of Antichrist's kingdom (dealt with in detail in chapters 17 & 18) ... God remembers.

*Islands vanish, mountains disappear. Australia vanishes, Everest disappears, Hawaii vanishes, the Rockies disappear. All gone. All gone.

Transition

And those few who remain ... what of them?

2. Humans will remain sinful. 16:21

*Similar but so different from the 7th Egyptian plague (Exodus 9:23-24) and the 1st trumpet (8:7).

*A talent – 60 to 100 pounds. The heaviest hailstone on record weighed 2 pounds! The earth, what little remains, will be blasted and plummeted.

*The result: same as before. Men blaspheme God. Beaten, bruised and battered into submission, men still shake their fist in the face of God and curse His name.

Conclusion

1. At the beginning of our message I quoted British scientist Stephen Hawking. The final words I cited from the eminent scientist as he expressed his fears about earth's future was, "But I'm an optimist. We will reach out to the stars."
2. I have another suggestion. Let's not encourage mankind to reach out for the stars, but to reach out for the Son, the Son of God. When God's judgement comes, only those holding on to Him will stand, only those held by Him will survive. The day will be awesome. The day will be terrible. Only those who hold on the Son will escape the wrath that is to come.