THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

For many weeks we have been studying the time between the Rapture of the Church and Christ's Second Coming - two distinct events. That seven year period is commonly referred to as The Tribulation. Tonight I want to wrap up the final set of three judgments, the Bowl Judgments, and launch into the return of Christ.

You will remember that during the Tribulation God sends three sets of divine judgment to the earth:
1. The Seal Judgments / Revelation 6 - 7
2. The Trumpet Judgments / Revelation 8 - 15
3. The Bowl (or Vial) Judgements Revelation 16

Note that these judgments are sequential, not concurrent - one follows another.

This last set of divine judgments (not man's inhumanity to man, but God's wrath upon humanity) are fulfilled during the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation - or the Great Tribulation. This time culminates with Armageddon and the Return of Christ to this Earth.

Rev. 16:1-21
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. [2] 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. [3] 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. [4] And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. [5] 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. [6] For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. [7] And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments. [8] And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. [9] 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. [10]
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, [11] And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. [12] 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. [13] 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. [14] 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. [15] Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. [16] And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. [17] 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. [18] 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. [19] 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. [20] And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. [21] 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.

The First Bowl Judgment - Sores Upon Worshipers Of Antichrist  Rev. 16:2

These “sores” or “boils” remind us of the plague got sent into ancient Egypt when the Pharaoh refused to release the Jews.  By the last half of the Tribulation, Antichrist will be the object of worship for most of the world’s population.  Those who indeed worship him will be the recipients of this physical disaster of the sores or boils.

The Second Bowl Judgment - The Seas Turn To Blood  Rev. 16:3

Can you possibly imagine it?  All the living creatures in the sea will die, float to the surface of the water, where their decaying carcasses will cause unbearable stench and will bring about potential disease.  Commercial shipping will have to cease, causing entire nations to go into frenzy for lack of goods, including food.  It will be global chaos!

The Third Bowl Judgment - Rivers and Fountains Turn To Blood  Rev. 16:4-7

For those who might question God’s ability to do this, remember that Jesus turned water
into wine in His first known miracle (in Cana of Galilee). Humanity cannot survive without clean water.

The Fourth Bowl Judgment - Scorching Heat From the Sun  Rev. 16:8-9

For thousands of years, the sun has been a consistent friend, rising in the morning, setting in the evening, providing energy, heat and light to mankind. But during the last half of the Tribulation, the sun will go berserk for a time. The heat will be life-taking.

I remember as a teenager in Springfield, Missouri, the daytime temps that summer hit 113 degrees. One of the lakes which served as a reservoir for the city totally dried out. I could walk - literally walk - across the bottom of that lake on sun scorched and cracked earth. Several people died from the extreme heat. But that was nothing compared to this fourth bowl judgment. But does this divine judgment bring people to God? No! Instead “they curse the name of God and refuse to repent and glorify Him.”

The Fifth Bowl Judgment - Darkness  (Rev. 16:10-11)

This judgment was predicted thousands of years ago by the Old Testament prophets:

Amos 5:18

Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.

Nahum 1:6 and 8

Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. [8] But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

Zeph. 1:15

That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

Around the north pole in the wintertime, there isn’t much sunlight. It can grow dark by 2 or 3 in the afternoon after only four or five hours of partial sunlight. Suicide is a huge problem in some parts of that area. Think what it would be like with NO light at all - only terrible darkness.

The Sixth Bowl Judgment – The River Euphrates Dried Up Rev. 12-16
This sixth bowl judgment brings the armies of the world to Armageddon. The Euphrates River has stood for centuries as a natural barrier between East and West. It is the eastern border of the land God promised to Abraham (Genesis 15:18) ***In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates;*** Also it was the eastern border of the Roman Empire. No mere creek, it stretches for 1800 miles. When it vanishes, at the Word of God, it will remove any barriers between western armies (led by Antichrist) and the armies of the East, led by various kings - the Oriental nations of the world.

While China, Japan and other Oriental nations have not shown recent proclivities against the Western nations, North Korea certainly has, a prelude, I believe, into what will become an obsession of that whole part of the world in the last days of the Great Tribulation.

In this regard, John reported the evil spirits ("like frogs" he called them) coming from Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet. It is this evil aura that invades the heads of state and results in bringing them to a "winner-take-all" battle at Armageddon (that would be the center of the war that encompasses many nations).

**Armageddon**

I have driven across the Valley of Armageddon scores of times over the past 50 years. I always remember that Napoleon Bonaparte regarded this valley (also known as Jezreel) as "the ideal battleground for all the armies of the world." In history, the valley is very well known. Dr. M. R. Vincent in his *Word Studies in the New Testament* wrote: *Megiddo was in the plain of Armageddon (also known as Esdraelon) which has been a chosen place for encampment in every contest carried on in Palestine from the days of Nabuchodonozor, king of Assyria, unto the disastrous march of Napoleon from Egypt into Syria. Jews, Gentiles, Saracens, Christian crusaders and anti-Christian Frenchmen, Egyptians, Persians, Druses, Turks and Arabs, warriors of every nation that is under heaven have pitched their tents on the plain of Armageddon and have beheld the banners of their nation wet with the dews of Tabor and Hermon.*

All these armies will be drawn to Armageddon like a moth to a flame. God's Spirit will pull them in: *Rev. 16:16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.* The end of the Gentile age now is drawing so near! Christ Himself is about to return to the Earth. But there will be one more onslaught of divine wrath before He splits the sky with all of His redeemed saints with Him.
The Valley of Armageddon - picture taken from the summit of Mt. Carmel (looking north east) where Elijah called down fire from Heaven against the prophets of Baal. The runways are active even today for the Israeli airforce. The round-shaped mountain in the distance, left center, is Mount Tabor. To the right is the mountain region where God through Gideon defeated the Midianites with only 300 men. Nazareth would be tucked away just off the left side of the picture on the distant horizon.

The Seventh Bowl Judgment - The Wrath of God  Rev. 16:17-21

As the final judgment is poured out on Earth, from the Temple of God before the divine throne comes a thundering voice, IT IS DONE! What is that final judgment? The worst earthquake in the history of humanity. It will split Babylon, which at that time will be the seat of Antichrist’s rule. Entire cities will disappear. Islands will vanish. Peter was told of this by the Holy Spirit and he wrote: 2 Peter 3:10  But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Massive hailstones, some weighing 135 pounds each, will pound down from the skies. We will read more of this when we come to Revelation 18 and 19. Still men’s hearts will be frozen in rejection of God. Only the coming of Messiah, the King of Kings, can bring any hope to the earth.
Rev. 18:1-24

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. [2] And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. [3] For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. [4] And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. [5] For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. [6] Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. [7] How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. [8] Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. [9] And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, [10] Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. [11] And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: [12] The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, [13] And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. [14] And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. [15] The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, [16] And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! [17] For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, [18] And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! [19] And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were
made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is
she made desolate. [20] Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and
prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. [21] And a mighty angel took up a stone
like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that
great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. [22] And the
voice of harpers, and musicians, and ofpipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no
more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any
more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; [23]
And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the
bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants
were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. [24]
And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain
upon the earth.

Revelation 17 deals with the destruction of the false world religious system (Babylon)
that has been led by the False Prophet. While many prophecy books declare this church
or that church to be the false religion I have personally always believed the false religious
system is Islam. And, further, as I presented some months ago on a Wednesday night, I
believe the Antichrist could very well be the Mahdi - the 12th Imam for whom Muslims
around the world await. In this study tonight I will deal only with the destruction of the
commercial and governmental systems at the end of the Tribulation period. But note
this: while the religious system (also known as Babylon in Revelation) will be destroyed
by the world's rulers in the last half of the Tribulation, the Babylon of chapter 18 -
government and commercial - will be destroyed by terrible judgments from God.

It is possible that the ancient city of Babylon will be rebuilt and will be the seat of Satan’s
government during the Tribulation. Quite a few worthy Bible scholars subscribe to that
possibility. There was much more acceptance of that theory while Saddam Hussein was
still living and who publicly proclaimed that he would rebuild Babylon. However, his
execution a few years ago and the subsequent chaos in Iraq have cast suspicion on the
theory.

Wherever, the seat of political Babylon will be, the entire system will be destroyed by
God very quickly. Verse 17 declares it happens in an hour of time. God warns the
Tribulation saints not to be occupied with investments or making wealth for themselves.
Look at these two verses: Rev. 18:4-5 And I heard another voice from heaven,
saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye
receive not of her plagues. [5] For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath
remembered her iniquities.
But now let’s leave all this global chaos and destruction and look heavenward, for...THE KING IS COMING!

THE HALLELUJAH CHORUS

“Hallelujah” means “Praise the Lord!” Perhaps no piece of music ever comes closer on this old earth to the reality of the word than Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” from the Messiah. With the destruction of the false religious and commercial systems of Antichrist, all of Heaven breaks forth in a colossal song of worship:

Rev. 19:1-3

And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: [2] For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. [3] And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

This chapter, by the way, is the only chapter in the New Testament where you can find the word “hallelujah.” What rejoicing will ring through Heaven when Satan and his minions are subdued, bound and cast into Hell. We will be there as redeemed believers for (as I taught in Revelation 4) the 24 elders represent all those who are saved: Rev. 19:4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

“Five times in the book of Revelation the twenty-four elders express themselves, each time in praise and rejoicing. In Revelation 4:10-11 we see them honoring God for His creative power; in 5:8-9, they worship the Lamb who is found worthy to take the scroll from the Father and open its seals; in 7:11-12 they celebrate the arrival of the multitude of redeemed Gentiles in Heaven; in 11:16-18 they worship God when He announced that the world has become the Kingdom of Christ and He will reign forever; now in our present text we find them adding “Amen, Hallelujah” to God’s judgment and destruction of Babylon”

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THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

It is very helpful in gaining a true concept of this event to understand something about marriage in the days of Jesus. When Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant, “before they ever came together,” he was facing a true dilemma. In those days, an engagement was just as binding as the marriage. An engagement could only be broken by a divorce.
So Joseph’s options were these concerning his beloved fiancée: divorce her; accuse her before the town elders after which she would be stoned for adultery; or quietly marry her.

When you and I are saved, born again, redeemed by Christ’s blood, we are in fact agreeing to eternal union between us and Jesus. We are engaged to Him!

With a couple in Jesus’ time, when it came time for the actual marriage, the groom would take his bride to his father’s house for an official presentation. That correlates to the Rapture, in our case, in which Jesus present us, the Church, as His Bride to God the Father.

Then would come the great marriage feast - which was not really for the bride at all, but rather in honor of the groom. At the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Jesus is the Lamb of God), the event will not be in our honor, but Christ’s honor.

Therefore, we saints of God (before entering the Marriage Supper chamber) will go through what Paul called the Judgment Seat of Christ (I Corinthians 3) where it will be determined what we wear and what we take into the Marriage Feast. WE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO WEAR ANY GARMENT OR TAKE ANY THING INTO THAT HOLY CHAMBER THAT DETRACTS ANYONE’S ATTENTION FROM JESUS! Only those things we have done for Christ in this life (not our own enjoyment or benefit) will be allowed inside. 1 Cor. 3:11-15 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; [13] Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. [14] If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. [15] If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Down on Earth, the inhabitants are suffering through the terrible throes of the Tribulation. That seven year horror will culminate at Armageddon, as we have already seen. But before the battle can commence, the King returns!

Rev. 19:11-16
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. [12] His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. [13] And he was clothed with a
vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. [14] And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. [15] And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. [16] And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

This will begin the glorious Millennial reign of Christ (1,000 years on this earth). Jesus Himself described this day in Matthew 24:29-31 [29] Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: [30] And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. [31] And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

A word about verse 29: “...the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from Heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken....” I believe Jesus was telling us that when He returns it will be with dazzling glory and light that it will blot out the lights from the heavens for a time. Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

Now....let’s go back to the book of Acts. Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus met with the eleven remaining disciples for the last time on the Mount of Olives: Acts 1:9-12 And when he (Jesus) had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. [10] And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; [11] Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. [12] Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day’s journey.

Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives - that ridge of hills just east of Jerusalem. The angels prophesied He would return one day (in like manner). The great Jewish prophet Zechariah declared it 400 years earlier: Zech. 14:3-5 Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. [4] And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on
the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east
and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain
shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. [5] And ye shall flee
to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal:
yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah
king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

The question might be asked, “So....on the earth, the armies are gearing for a global war
between Antichrist’s forces (the West) vs the Kings of the East. Do we have to fight
when Jesus returns?” No! With a word from His mouth, all hostilities cease. He will
put down all before Him and every person will be in subjection to Him for a thousand
years. Jesus is the Righteous Judge, Who knows the end from the beginning. Verse 12
declares that ON HIS HEAD ARE MANY CROWNS. That means He will have
authority over all nations, all tribes, all people.

This is the day for which we saints of God long! Jesus will reign and we with Him.
Earth will be revolutionized in that time. We will study the Millennium and Jesus’ reign
next week.