

The Seven Vials

by W.J. Erdman

The sermon explores the significance of the Seven Vials as God's final judgments and the hope of redemption for believers amidst impending wrath.

Scripture: Revelation 15:1-16

Topics: "End Times", "Gods Judgment"

Description

W.J. Erdman preaches on the visions of the Overcomers and the Seven Angels in Revelation 15, highlighting the victorious standing of those who overcome the beast and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. The scene of the Holy of Holies being opened and the Seven Angels coming forth with the bowls of wrath signifies a momentous event of God's judgment. The pouring out of the Six Vials in Revelation 16 reveals the escalating wrath of God upon the earth, leading up to the Seventh Vial which brings forth final and comprehensive judgments upon God's enemies, culminating in the battle of Armageddon and the destruction of Babylon.

Transcript

Introductory Vision

THE OVERCOMERS AND THE SEVEN ANGELS. Chapter 15:1-8

1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God. 2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that come off victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God. 3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages. 4 Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy righteous acts have been made manifest. 5 And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: 6 and there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven plagues, arrayed with precious stone, pure and bright, and girt about their breasts with golden girdles. 7 And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with feinoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and none was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.

The third of the three great "signs" or wonders seen in heaven introduces the Visions of the Seven Vials. The other two great Signs were the Sun-clad Woman and the Dragon. This Sign is seen in a Vision by itself and so is one of momentous meaning. 15:1.

The second Vision discloses the Overcomers who were in the Tribulation standing by the glory-reddened sea and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. The scene is antitypical to the exodus and the deliverance of Israel. The combination of Moses and the Lamb suggests the overcomers are both Jews and Gentiles and as of one body. 15:2-4.

In this introductory Vision, the Holy of Holies in heaven was opened, the Seven Angels came forth with the bowls of wrath, and as of old, in the day of Moses and of Solomon, again "the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power; and none was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished." 15:5-8.

The scene preparatory to the outpouring of the Seven Vials and the Vials themselves are all comprehended by one "And I saw," so implying both a unity of purpose and an uninterrupted continuity of occurrence, 16:1-21.

Progression

THE SIX VIALS. Ch. 16:1-12.

1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go ye, and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth. 2 And the first went, and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a noisome and grievous sore upon the men that had the mark of the beast, and that worshipped his image. 3 And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living soul died, even the things that were in the sea. 4 And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters; and it became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Righteous art thou, who art and who hast, thou Holy One, because thou didst thus judge; 6 for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and blood hast thou given them to drink; they are worthy. 7 And I heard the altar saying, Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments. 8 And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given unto it to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat: and they blasphemed the name of God who hath the power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. 10 And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works. 12 And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the sunrising.

The Seven Vials, or the "Third Woe," taken together may constitute the Seventh Seal or the Consummation, in an extended form; but the Seventh Trumpet sounds beyond them to the establishment of the Kingdom itself. When this Seventh Seal is opened (Ch. 8:1) all that is said of it is "there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." That this Seal has no immediate connection with the six Trumpets which follow in the context has already been shown in that there follows an additional prophetic formula, "And I saw," so introducing the Trumpets as new matter; accordingly, the Seventh Seal is not the hinge for, or the container of the Trumpets. Its contents belong to a future vision of the Consummation. The wrath of the Seventh Trumpet is sevenfold as seen in the Seven Vials. The very silence, as previously stated, reminds of other prophetic Scriptures where Jehovah is seen coming forth in

a final avengement of his people.

"Be silent O all flesh before Jehovah,

For he is raised up out of his holy habitation."

8:1; Hab. 2:20; Zeph. 1:7; Zech. 2:13.

Likewise, when the Seven Vials are being emptied no one can enter the Sanctuary until their plagues are finished. It is suggestive, too, that just as Jericho was compassed with the blowing of trumpets once each day for six days, but seven times on the seventh day, so, when in the Apocalypse six Trumpets have finished their sounding, the Seventh ushers in the Seven Vials and together these constitute the Consummation -- the Seventh Seal.

Also, in favour of such a period of time for the Wrath, let it be noted, that the equivalent of the phrase "the coming of the Son of man" in one Scripture is "days of the Son of Man" in another; "a day of the Son of Man" signifying a day of deliverance. The first act of Messianic deliverance will be the removal of the Church; and the "days" are equivalent to successive strokes of wrath.

In passing, it may be suggested that the Seer was told to seal up and not write the things which the seven Thunders uttered, because for aught we know they be longed to the Seventh Seal whose contents were not to be disclosed till the Vial time, and if so, they are the equivalents of the Seven Plagues of the wrath and power of God.

They seem to imply that now the great redemption has been accomplished, the iniquity removed, and the Jubilee proclaimed, for in the types of old, the atonement and the jubilee came on the same day, making it at once a "day of restraint," a solemn close and review of an eventful past, but opening also on a new age of perpetual peace and universal divine blessing. In brief, the great Inauguration of the Kingdom, may be intimated in such promise of blessed days; or in those of the great "Marriage Supper of the Lamb," or in the following kindred Scriptures: "And when he again bringeth in the first born into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him;" "For not unto angels did he subject the world to come"-- "There remaineth therefore a rest (Sabbatismos), for the people of God." Lev. 25:29; Heb. 1:6; 2:5; 4:9; Ps. 93 to 100.

Episode

THE GATHERING OF THE KINGS. Chapter. 16:13-16.

13 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs: 14 for they are spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the 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 they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon.

This vision of three froglike demonic spirits, which go forth to gather the kings to battle, is a parenthetical episode.

Since believers are told their redemption is nigh when the signs begin, and that the day of the Lord "shall not overtake them," it is evident that the Rapture of the Church takes place before any of the Vials of wrath are poured out, and not at the point between the sixth and seventh Vials where the warning is sounded, "Behold I come as a thief." This warning of the approach of the Advent is in a parenthetic vision of the gathering of the kings between the sixth and seventh Vials, and as has been shown, in each case of an Episode between a sixth and seventh (seals and trumpets) the events of the Episode antedate at least the Sixth. This is true of the Seals, for the 144,000 of Israel and those seen coming out of the great Tribulation belong to the Fifth Seal. In the historic fulfilment the Tribulation of the Fifth Seal will come before the Signs of the Sixth and this before the "day of the Lord" or "wrath" of the Seventh. I Th. 5:1-10; Luke 21:28; 7:1-17.

This is also true of the Episode between the Sixth and Seventh Trumpets, for in the words of the angel to John, there is an intimation of a return to scenes with which his previous visions had to do. In view of this law of the Episode, the Advent forewarned in the Episode between the Sixth and Seventh Vials should antedate all the Vials. An analogy would be seen in Israel's exemption from the last seven plagues which came only upon the Egyptians. After the seven plagues came the overthrow in the Red Sea, so after seven "vials" comes Harmagedon and the overthrow of "Beasts" and armies and kings. Likewise the summons of the demons, found in this same Episode, for the gathering of the kings to battle, can antedate the Sixth Vial and even all the Vials. It should also be recalled that in the holy ascription concerning him "who is and was and who is to come," the words "to come" are omitted at the Third Vial. All this proves that the saints are removed before the wrath begins to be poured, and accords with the scene and song of the overcomers by the glory-reddened sea, who are now safely housed in the glory of heaven, while the judgments of God are made manifest on earth. See similar events in Israel's history where no one could enter the sanctuary. 10:1-11, 14; Exod. 9; 40:34-35; II Chr. 5:13-14.

Consummation

THE SEVENTH VIAL. Chapter. 16:17-21.

17 And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of* the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done; 18 and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty. 19. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of 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 great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent, cometh down out of heaven upon men: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof is exceeding great.

Here are pictured the final and comprehensive judgments upon the enemies of God. Yet what is here mentioned in mere outline, is narrated in detail in visions which follow. The battle of Armageddon is yet to be described. "Great Babylon" has come into remembrance before God; but her destruction is to be the most impressive of all the pictures of punishment and doom which fill the ensuing visions (Chs. 17-19) and prepare for the closing scenes of splendour, the glories of the "new heaven" and the "new earth."

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