

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #42
6/20/2007

The Judgment of God, The Great Tribulation, The Great Day of God's Wrath
Chapter Sixteen - The Bowl Judgments
The Last Series of Judgments, The End of The Tribulation Period

The statement, **“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates”** (16:12), takes us toward the climax of this third and last series of the judgments of God upon this wicked world. We are glad that they are the last events before our Lord's victorious return. We are now approaching the end of this seven-year period of time of which God has spoken many times throughout His Holy Word. Verse twelve tells us of the sixth angel pouring out his bowl of wrath upon the earth. Verse sixteen tells us the purpose for which this is done and briefly tells us what results from this. The verses in between, verses thirteen through fifteen, are a type of **explanatory interlude** as God tells us why **“the kings of the east are gathered to Armageddon,”** the place of their final destruction at the hands of God. God intends for us to go to other places in His Word for further explanation of these events. We will do that having learned that each of the Bowl Judgments has a **fulfilling** characteristic to them.

It perhaps is easier for us to understand this statement of God about this **sixth Bowl Judgment** if we set aside the descriptive verses, thirteen through fifteen, and read it in this way,

“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. ... And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”

By doing this we are not saying that the God's Words in verses thirteen through fifteen are of any lesser importance than His Words in verses twelve and sixteen, only that sometimes it helps us to focus on the event and the results and then consider the descriptions of what happens. When we come to considering verses thirteen through fifteen we will need to focus on what God is telling us there. When we consider those verses we will be able to better comprehend how God draws them to willingly come to their self-destruction and we will see that they come like moths drawn to a flame of fire to be destroyed at the hands of God.

As we begin to read God's description of this event we already know, from the previous verses, that each of these **“Bowl Judgments”** is **ascendative** in its intensity and severity. The increasing pain and trauma known by the earth's inhabitants during this seven-year **Tribulation Period** is so far beyond any and all horrors in human experience and history that a proper description of these judgments defies this writer's ability.

Perhaps, if we could allow our imagination to be energized we might visualize a picture in which the wicked are taking downward steps toward hell and with each step down a staircase to hell exposing the wicked to more of the characteristics of the **“lake of fire and brimstone.”** This writer visualizes a scene like unto this:

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At the top of a staircase is a clear and ominous sign that reads:

“This is the way to hell, the place of indescribable, unending, eternal pain and suffering beyond anything ever known to man. God prepared it for the devil and his angels (followers). It is the extreme opposite to the bliss of heaven where all eternally live in joyful submission to and dependence upon the merciful authority and provisions of God.

The only way any person can go down these steps is by his own deliberate choice to reject Jesus Christ and choosing to give his life to Satan to worship and serve as his god. Each downward step he takes will further separate him from the loving presence of God and expose him to more and more of the lake of fire and brimstone where he will have chosen to spend eternity.

Therefore, take these steps at your own risk, assuming full responsibility for the results of your choice and the judgment you have chosen for yourself in spite of all that Jesus Christ has done for you.”

Returning to the verses before us, we continue with our study of God's Words. The target of the sixth angel's bowl of wrath is specific — **“the great river Euphrates.”** As a person reads this, his mind may be stimulated to ask **“Why this place?”** This **“great river Euphrates”** has a long history in the Bible and is associated with some very significant events.

“The great river Euphrates” is first mentioned in Genesis 2:14 as the **“fourth river”** God put in **“the garden of Eden.”** While this may or may not be the same river, God calls it by the same name and it is obviously something God wants us to focus our attention on, so we will spend some time trying learn more about this river.

It is no ordinary river. Its flood plain was the location of the first city and **“the tower of Babel in the land of Shinar”** (Genesis 11:1-9) where the first organized rebellion against God took place. We know from other references that this is where the city of Babylon first was built and will very likely be the place where the **“MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH”** (Rev. 17:5) is to be located. God indicates that the throne of the beast is to be located at **“Babylon,”** which will, as it has always been throughout man's history, be the center of Satanic activity and the birthplace of false religions.

The Euphrates, along with its twin river the Tigris, begins its journey from the melting snows of a mountain range in modern Armenia. There it is said, on the highest peak, Mt. Ararat, about 17,000 feet high, in snows that

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never seem to melt, lie the remains of the Ark. It marked the eastern boundary of the land promised to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 15:18). Flowing down through modern day Iraq, it is still an extremely important river in many ways with its water providing hydroelectric power for generating plants, irrigation for agriculture, and, among other things, fresh water for thirst in an otherwise dry land. Besides this, it still forms an official dividing line between east and west. True to the demonic origins of religions born in that part of the world, as a seemingly endless effect flowing out of Satan's activity at Babel, it is also rife with all kinds of superstitions and traditions about demons and evil spirits.

In Revelation 9:14, during the Trumpet Judgments, we read about a command from God to **“the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.”** Following that statement we read of creatures, so vile, horrific and weird, that we can only conclude that they are some of the demonic beings, originally angels in heaven, who followed Lucifer in his rebellion against God. They are apparently so evil and vile that God has, up to this time, confined them in a special **“hell,”** otherwise known as **tartaroo** (5020) which we read about in 2 Peter 2:4. The description and horrible activities perpetrated by these creatures certainly makes us think of the **“lake of fire and brimstone”** and may be God's way of giving unrepentant sinners a sampling of what their eternal destiny will be like.

As we come to this **“sixth angel”** with his **“bowl of God's wrath”** we remind ourselves that one of the characteristics of these Bowl Judgments is the **accumulative** effects of the judgments. The first **“bowl judgment”** left all of those who had chosen the mark of the beast dealing with indescribably debilitating pain from **“sores”** that covered their entire bodies. It is a pain from which they are never free and for which no anesthesia is effective. The second **“bowl judgment”** transformed all of the seas into mass containers of poisonous coagulated blood that killed every creature in them. The third **“bowl judgment”** affected all of **“the rivers and fountains of waters and they became blood.”** Of course, this would have applied to **“the great river Euphrates.”** Then the **“fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun and power was given to him to scorch men with fire.”** We learned in Isaiah 30:26 that this meant that the heat from the sun increased **“seven-fold.”** Such intense heat would quickly melt the snows of Mt. Ararat and dry up the source of the water supply for **“the great river Euphrates.”**

If the normal melting of those snow caps had supplied any fresh water to replenish and rejuvenate the mighty river whose waters had been transformed into blood, that source would now be gone. Non-biblical sources indicate

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that the mysterious “**demons**” associated with this great river, and the consequential superstitions, had long terrified the worshippers of demons and false gods. Such people, having chosen to serve such demonic beings, have long been terrified of creatures, sometimes imaginary, which have, according to religious folklore and superstition, lived under the waters of the great river, no longer have anything to fear. According to the actions of the sixth angel, there is nothing left of the great Euphrates except a dry river bed. It is neither a real or imagined barrier to those who have long been consumed by a hatred for Jesus Christ and His people, Israel, and desired to offer themselves as suicide sacrifices in their devotion to their gods in efforts to annihilate God's chosen people.

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.

This writer will make no pretensions to knowing the identity of these “**kings of the east**” though plenty of others seem to have that knowledge. The Bible Knowledge Commentary has found at least fifty such claims and identifications. We all know that the nations of the east have extremely large populations of people who worship and serve other gods which are simply alternatives Satan provides to people who desire to serve any god except Jehovah and Jesus Christ. In the east can be found Islam, Hinduism, Shintoism and a host of evolutionary, pantheistic, polytheistic, astrological, animalistic humanism and other Satanic substitutes for the God of the Bible. Hundreds of millions of faithful, fanatical followers of these gods are enslaved by a myriad of strange superstitions which seem to motivate them to self-destruction.

Energized by their hatred for God, and angered by the judgments of God, they will fanatically follow their leaders across a now dry river bed to confront Jesus Christ at the climax of the war of Armageddon.

And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

The “**he**” of verse sixteen is none other than Jesus Christ, Jehovah God. “**He**” gives these people what they demand and have desired for so long and uses their own perverted drives to bring them into a final conflict with Him. He does not force them against their will. “**He**” simply removes all barriers to them doing what they have wanted to do for so many ages. As slaves of Satan, they have long fed themselves upon Satan's lies, mirages and deceitful “miracles.” Now, their ability to think rationally is gone. They are slaves to their passions and will be led to their final end by the very things they have long hungered for.

In the next lesson we will study what God tells us in verses thirteen through fifteen.