

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #44
7/04/2007

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 Work of The Evil Spirits of the Sixth Bowl of God's Wrath

In verse fifteen Jesus continues the explanatory interlude which He began in verse fourteen. In verse fourteen Jesus describes how the **“three unclean spirits”** are used by Satan to gather the armies of the world to foolishly challenge His authority and power at **“Armageddon”** which is before us in verse sixteen.

While in verse fourteen Jesus describes the deceitful power and **“miracles”** which the **“unclean spirits”** utilize to deceive the gullible enemies of God, in verse fifteen He speaks to those who have been saved during the Tribulation Period.

Before we continue, it needs to be recognized that there are “two comings” of the Lord Jesus which are associated with His “second coming.” First, He returns, in the air, but not to the earth itself, to **“catch up,”** or rapture, His own, His bride, the church. No one knows when that will be. It is known as **“the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ”** (Titus 2:13).

Second, He comes in His victorious return to defeat Satan and his followers at “Armageddon.” This **“coming”** is described in Revelation nineteen and is at the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period. The exact moment of that return is apparently also not known, and that is the reason for the admonition contained in verse fifteen. When He returns as described in Chapter nineteen it will be to the earth and **“every eye shall see Him,”** (Rev. 1:7).

Though the verse we are to consider in this passage is associated with the Lord's victorious coming as presented in Chapter nineteen and the church has already been **“caught up to meet the Lord in the air”** (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), it is important to recognize that the **“suddenness”** of both **“comings of the Lord”** is emphasized in the New Testament. The Lord frequently warns us, who belong to Him and will be raptured before the Tribulation Period begins, with similar language as is used here, so we will consider some of those references before we proceed with this verse.

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee makes one of his rare mistakes in interpreting this verse when he says “Christ will never come as a thief to the church,” perhaps forgetting Jesus' words in Revelation 3:3 to the church in Sardis: **“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”**

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McGee is certainly correct in saying that a thief is never welcome and that his coming is never anticipated. When He was here on the earth Jesus emphasized that no one knows exactly what hour He will return to come for His own to meet Him in the air. He knew that it would be easy for even His own to be distracted by the affairs of this life to the degree that even believers might not be prepared for that day. The **“rapture,”** the catching away of the church, will take place suddenly and without any warning: ***“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed”*** (1 Corinthians 15:52). In regard to this, He advised His followers: ***“...take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man,”*** (Luke 21:34-36).

We are all aware that what He said is true. We often find ourselves so consumed by the daily things of life and distracted by the ***“cares of this life”*** that we know that there are times when we were not ready.

In a number of passages such as those listed below, while He was here on the earth, Jesus spoke about the suddenness of His return for His own. Notice the references in Matthew 24, Luke 12 and 1 Thessalonians 5 where the Lord is obviously speaking to His followers and there are other similar passages such as 2 Peter 3:8-14 which could also be included:

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 24:42-44).

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not” (Luke 12:35,36,39,40).

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“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do” (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11).

In the passages above, believers, who will be raptured before the start of the “day of wrath,” are being addressed. God clearly said that He *“has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation,”* and He used the analogy of the thief suddenly coming at a time when he is not expected. The New Testament has many passages which present a similar message. Believers, who are not being addressed here in Revelation 16:15, should nevertheless pay serious attention to what our Lord has said. If believers are not living with that expectation, then lives should be changed lest believers today be caught unprepared.

Now, we direct our thoughts back to what verse fifteen tells us. This is addressed to those who have been saved during the Tribulation Period and have survived Satan's efforts to kill them. We know that they number at least 144,000, but how many more are included is never revealed though we can assume that there are others. Therefore, not knowing the precise moment that the events presented in Chapter nineteen are to suddenly happen, those who belong to Jesus are told to be ready.

In conjunction with the warning Jesus presents the third of seven beatitudes found in this Revelation of Jesus Christ. Because they are so wonderful and important, they are listed below:

1. **“BLESSED is he that readeth, and they that hear the words**

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- of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand” (Rev. 1:3).**
2. **“BLESSED are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13).**
 3. **“BLESSED is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev. 16:15:).**
 4. **“BLESSED are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9).**
 5. **“BLESSED and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6).**
 6. **“Behold, I come quickly: BLESSED is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (Rev. 22:7).**
 7. **“BLESSED are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14).**

No doubt, those who have rejected **“the mark of the beast”** and remained faithful to the Lord during the awful times of the **Tribulation Period** have been persecuted and have suffered beyond our comprehension. Likely surviving with great difficulty the attacks of the enemy, being outcasts and hunted like animals, they will certainly benefit from some encouragement, and they get it from the Lord's words in this brief interlude. Our Lord is always aware of the needs of His children and provides whatever strength is required as indicated in His tender words found in 1 John 2:28: **“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”**

The events associated with the sixth angel's bowl of wrath reach their climactic conclusion with the next verse.

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

There is yet one more bowl of wrath to be poured out upon this earth. It will have an even worse and more devastating effect upon this God-hating world. We will consider it next week. When that bowl of wrth has been poured out, the next event will be the victorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Come, Lord, come!