

The Earth Shaken by Judgment

Revelation 16:17-21

INTRODUCTION

- A. Earthquakes can be terribly devastating.
 - 1. The earthquake with the greatest loss of life occurred in 1556 in Shensi, Central China when 830,000 people were killed.
 - 2. The second greatest loss of life occurred on July 28, 1976, near Peking, China, when 655,000 people died and at least 780,000 were injured.
 - 3. The greatest physical devastation was in the earthquake on the Kanto plain, Japan, on September 1, 1923.
 - a. In Tokyo and Yokohama, 575,000 dwellings were destroyed.
 - b. The number of people killed and missing in this quake and the resultant fires was 142,807.
- B. Earthquakes can be terribly frightening.
 - 1. When I was around 6 or 7, my family and I were in our den watching the Cincinnati Reds.
 - a. During the course of the game, my parents fell asleep.
 - b. I was lying on the couch when the fan sitting in the floor began to shake, and soon the whole house was shaking violently.
 - c. Mom and Dad quickly jumped up to discover what had just transpired.
 - 2. When I was in high school, I had just dozed off when I was nearly shaken out of bed by another earthquake.
 - a. Mom, the only one awake at the time, began running through the house, yelling “Randy, Randy, up.” I’m still not sure what she expected Dad to do.
 - b. We got up and watched the 11:00 news while we experienced a few aftershocks.
- C. Tonight’s text speaks of the fright and destruction of earthquakes.
 - 1. In our text, the earthquake is not simply a seismic event, rather, it is a divine judgment event.
 - 2. Let us explore this text to be informed about the earth shaken by judgment.

COMPLETION OF JUDGMENT, v. 17

- A. The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air.
 - 1. We do not know exactly what is meant by this symbolism.
 - 2. However, most of the bowls were poured out upon nature.
 - a. The first bowl was poured out upon the earth, the second upon the sea, the third upon fresh water, fourth upon the sun, the sixth upon the great river Euphrates.
 - b. The fifth bowl - where the bowl was poured out upon the throne of the beast - is an obvious departure from this scheme.
- B. A loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “It is done!”
 - 1. The voice is loud so that it can be heard by all - those on the earth know quite well why disaster befell them.
 - 2. The voice came from the temple of heaven, from the throne.
 - a. Exactly who spoke these words is not known.
 - 1) At first thought, we would naturally expect God to be the speaker; he is the One who sits on the throne (Rev. 4:2).
 - 2) However, the four living creatures are depicted as being “in the midst of the throne” (Rev. 4:6).
 - 3) The Lamb is also depicted as being “in the midst of the throne” (Rev. 5:6).
 - 4) Was the voice God’s, was it one of the four living creatures, or was it the Lamb’s?
 - b. Whoever spoke these words, the speaker was in the presence of God - either God himself or one in close proximity to him; therefore, this is divine judgment about to come.
 - 3. The voice said, “It is done!”
 - a. The wrath of God is about to be completed, fully carried out.
 - b. In chapter 18, we will have more judgment, but really chapter 18 is these verses in further detail; here we are simply given a synopsis.

- c. There will be no more judgment upon Rome after this judgment.
- C. What are we to learn from this?
 - 1. There will be a day when God's judgment is completion.
 - a. The judgment spoken of in this context was over long ago.
 - b. But, an important principle can be found - that God's judgment is complete, and there will be a day in which there will be no more judgment, for his judgment will be over.
 - 2. Are you ready for that day?

COMING IN JUDGMENT, v. 18

- A. "There were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquakes such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth."
- B. The language here is reminiscent of a theophany, a divine appearance.
 - 1. "It came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain" (Ex. 19:16).
 - 2. "From the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices" (Rev. 4:5).
- C. The meaning is unmistakable in light of this imagery - God was about to come; it would be he who would judge the Roman Empire.

CITY OF JUDGMENT, vv. 19-20

- A. The great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations falls v. 19.
 - 1. The city's being divided into three parts could show the city's complete destruction.
 - 2. The cities of the nations fell because Babylon fell.
 - a. This shows the interdependence of world cities, or it could just show the dependence of these other cities upon Babylon.
 - b. Imagine what would occur today if New York were to fall.
 - 1) The economy, the culture and everything about the city fall into utter disrepute - far worse the anything we saw after 9/11.
 - 2) Other cities in this nation, and around the world, would begin to fall - their economies, their cultures, and everything else about those cities would fall into utter disrepute.
 - 3. The fall of Babylon could be one of two things:
 - a. This could refer to the near collapse of the empire, or
 - b. This could refer to the actual burring of Rome which took place while Vitellius and Vespasian we fighting for control.
- B. Great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath, v 19.
 - 1. God did not forget to give Babylon the judgment due her.
 - a. Babylon was not going to escape the judgment of God.
 - b. When I was a child, Mom and Dad might would say, "Son, when we get home, you're going to get it." All the way home, I was hoping that Mom and Dad would forget what they had promised.
 - c. The point here is that God will not forget to give Babylon her judgment, likewise, God will not forget to judge those who do not live obediently to his will.
 - 1) "Though they join forces, the wicked will not go unpunished" (Prov. 11 :21).
 - 2) "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven" (Heb. 12:25).
 - 2. God gave Babylon the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.
 - a. God's wrath is nothing to take lightly; rather is wrath is fierce.
 - b. Scripture speaks of the fierceness of God's wrath.
 - 1) "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD. And take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My fury come forth like fire. And burn so thud no one can quench it, Because of the evil of your doings" (Jer. 4:4).
 - 2) Those who do evil will see "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" (Rom. 2:8-9).
 - c. Will you see that fierce wrath, or will you be obedient?
- C. Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found, v. 20.

1. The islands and mountains fled because they did not want to be near God's wrath.
2. If the islands and mountains do not want to be near God's wrath, why would we want to be near his wrath?

CURSING IN JUDGMENT, v 21

- A. Great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent.
 1. This hail is far greater than that that fell upon Egypt (Ex. 9:24).
 2. Hail was often punitive in the Old Testament.
 - a. The plague upon Egypt (Ex. 9:18-26).
 - b. When the kings of the Amorites made war on the Gibeonites and Joshua and the Israelites defended Gibeon, God struck down the armies of the Amorites with hailstones (Josh. 10:11).
 3. The weight of a talent changed from time to time, but the range seems to have been from about 60 pounds to over 100.
- B. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.
 1. Instead of turning to God in repentance, the people cursed God because of the severity of this plague.
 2. Will you curse God or will you repent and live obediently to him?