

Sermon – 09/12/2007 am

It Is Done – Bowl 7

Study Text: Revelation 16:17–21

What was the last thing Jesus said as he was dying on the cross? John tells us that “knowing he had fulfilled all Scripture and completed all that he had been sent into this world to accomplish, Jesus said ‘I thirst’”. But his was not his last utterance. After receiving some sour wine he said ‘it is finished’. Not ‘I am finished’ but ‘it is finished’.

The words in the passage before us today echo those of Jesus on the Cross, and indeed lead us into a greater understanding of his words. *It is done* is the cry that comes from the throne in heaven as the 7th angel pours out the final bowl of God’s wrath (16:17).

The cry of Jesus from the Cross is the basis for this cry from the throne in heaven, for on the Cross Jesus won the victory over death and the devil or Satan. It was a victory cry. In this vision John sees the final outworking of this victory, the end of all the enemies of God.

The world over which Satan has ruled since the Fall, the world that is the home of sinful human beings as they follow the ‘prince of the power of the air’, will come crumbling down faster than the twin towers in New York city on 9/11. And there will be even less left than there is of those towers. Even the mountains will not be found (16:20).

Done

The promised judgment of God upon this world, upon those who follow the beast/Satan has arrived. God is long suffering. God is patient. The prayer of the martyrs (6:10) is ever before him, but he must bring in the full number of their brethren. But let us never forget that God’s patience does not mean any change in his declared purpose. God forgives sin, he forgives all who repent and worship him alone. But he will *by no means clear the guilty* (Exodus 34:7). The death of Jesus means eternal life to those who believe but destruction and eternal punishment to those who reject Jesus Christ.

The last bowl is poured out into the air. The previous ones were poured out on the waters, upon the sun and upon the earthly throne of the beast. The air may refer to this element of creation or it may refer to the realm of the spirits. Air is vital to human life. The air or atmosphere is where the final deluge of hail comes from. But in a spiritual sense the devil is called the ‘prince of the power of the air’ (Ephesians 2:2).

There is a finality in these words *It is done*. The verb is in the perfect tense, meaning the consequences of this ‘doing’ are ongoing. This is not some ‘phoenix – type’ end. There will be no rising again from these ashes. Moreover, this will not be some slow running down of the universe. This is not some end that can be averted by man with all his sophisticated technology. The only way you can avoid this destruction is by coming to Jesus and entering his kingdom, the only kingdom that will remain.

‘It is done’ speaks of the completion of what Almighty God has determined. It reminds us of those words that rang out from heaven in the beginning – ‘the day that you eat of it (the tree

of the knowledge of good and evil) you shall surely die'. Disobedience is rebellion, and God being God will share his glory with no other. In these bowl judgments *the wrath of God is complete* (15:1).

Destruction

The seventh bowl was marked by *noises, and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake coming from the throne in heaven* (16:18). We have come across these previously – with the 7th seal and 7th trumpet. For the Jews such a picture would remind them of the time when God came down to spoke with Moses on Mt Sinai. A mighty storm erupted and the mountain shook. The people trembled in fear. The prophet Haggai also spoke of the Lord once again shaking *heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land and all nations* (Haggai 2:6-7). The writer to the Hebrews picks up on this truth, writing of a day when our God who is a consuming fire will shake and remove all that belongs to this world leaving only the unshakeable kingdom of God (Hebrews 12:27f).

In this vision John sees this word come true. He sees a great earthquake such as has not been seen before. And along with the earthquake came great hail (16:21). One of the plagues God sent upon Egypt was hail. Hail destroyed their trees and crops and killed men and animals that did not take shelter. Yes, there were people who ignored the warning from God and stayed out in the hailstorm.

We have had some huge hailstorms in recent years. Many homes and cars were damaged some years ago. Men have been killed when hit with hail stones. I have not seen hailstones bigger than golf balls. Some tell of tennis-ball sized hail. But look at the size of the hail in this bowl judgment. At over 30 kg the hailstones are larger than a basket ball. To be hit by such an object falling from the sky would mean instant death.

What about shelter you ask. But remember the earthquake. As buildings shake and crumble people flee outside. And outside they run into this great hail. The destruction will be terrible – it will be total. There will be no place to hide. There will be no escape on this great day of Almighty God.

The great Babylon was remembered before God (16:19). The fall of Babylon was referred to back in 14:8 – remember we do not read this book chronologically. It will be referred to again in 18:2. Babylon is symbolic of the world order or worldly system. Men first made a pact to exalt themselves against God at Babel, and they have been doing so ever since. What about the climate change meeting in Bali last week? Was there prayer at this meeting?

In Babylon, Daniel was confronted by rulers who kept exalting themselves against God. In the time of John, Roman rulers were doing the same thing. John and the churches of Asia were suffering just like Daniel from this world order. Such a world order continues today with rulers who arrogantly stand against God and his word, the Bible.

What will become of Babylon? Babylon had made all the nations drink of the wine of her fornication (14:8, 17:2). All, the nations were drawn into her economic system and its associated corruption and immorality. It is the system of humanism – God denying and God defying humanism. 'Secular humanists, Marxists and others who believe a Utopia on earth is possible are wrong. They are wrong for the simple reason that earthly rulers are corrupted by power and deify the power by which they are corrupted'.

In divine judgment Babylon is made to drink the wine of God's wrath. She will get her just due (16:6). She will be divided and fall, never to rise again. The great city will crumble under the mighty hand of God – and all the cities of the nations fell with her (16:19).

With the great and final shaking of the earth *every island fled away and the mountains were not found* (16:20). 'The recognisable frame of the creation of God disappears at his command, just as it had appeared originally at his word of command'. This will be some shaking when the mountains cannot be found! Some may think this points to flooding but God has promised there will never again be a worldwide flood – and has given the rainbow as a sign of this covenant.

Some think that environmental devastation going on today is of 'apocalyptic proportions', but this outpouring of God's wrath in the seventh bowl is beyond our imagination. Moreover, it will be sudden and total destruction. It will be the end of this earth brought about at the word of God, not man.

Delinquents

Where are the earth dwellers when all this devastation comes upon the earth? Are they turning to the mighty creator God in humility? Like Pharaoh they are being hardened. They are turning to God to curse not to plead mercy.

We often hear of juvenile delinquents who reject authority as they engage in criminal activity. The word juvenile can be left out to describe all who live in rebellion against God and his law – delinquents. They abide by the law of 'Babylon' but not the law of God. They violently oppose God and blaspheme his holy name, especially when the finger of God's wrath touches them.

This is an aspect of the gospel which we seldom hear today and many do not want to hear it. The gospel is preached with the premise of 'take it or leave it' – 'it is your choice'. This is not wrong but the consequences of leaving it must be made clear. 'This negative side of the gospel is as much part of the gospel as that which declares that Jesus has saved and that he is Lord'. One day every human being will have to face the consequences of their choice – the choice to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ or reject it.

It is done. In this vision John sees the end of humanity and the end of this world. God's wrath is poured out in full in these seven bowl judgments – *for in them the wrath of God is complete/ended/consummated* (15:1). The earth disappears. The kingdoms of men come to nothing. Only the kingdom of God remains. To which kingdom do you belong?

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