

"HAR MAGEDON: THE MOUNTAIN OF ASSEMBLY"

I. Introduction

- A. We began our study of the visionary cycle of the seven bowl judgments last week, looking at the first five bowls of wrath.
1. In that sermon we noted that the angels who pour out these judgments in John's vision are dressed in priestly attire.
 2. The bowls themselves are also connected with priestly service in the sanctuary, as Israel's priests used bowls to collect and carry out the ashes that were produced from the sacrifices.
 3. This association with the sacrificial system is what makes these bowls a fitting image of judgment.
 4. It symbolizes the outpouring of divine wrath upon all of those who are not found in Christ and covered by his blood.
- B. In this sermon we will be focusing on the sixth and seventh bowls of wrath.
1. Like the sixth and seventh seals and trumpets, the sixth and seventh bowls depict the climactic events that will take place just before and at the end of history.
 2. Joel Beeke provides a helpful illustration to explain the connection between the climactic judgment of the last day and the temporal judgments that are depicted in the first five bowl judgments.
 3. He writes, "God's anger is like a dam. Behind the dam is a tremendous reservoir of water. Every now and then, when it has been raining heavily and the reservoir is getting dangerously full, the sluice gates are opened and some water is let out so that too much pressure is not put on the dam. The wrath of God is like that; it isn't entirely pent up, but is drawn down and poured out from

time to time. However, on the day of judgment, the dam will break and the wrath of God will be poured on this world without restraint. The wrath that is going to break upon this world on judgment day is even now being revealed, says Paul." [445-446]

II. The Great Day of God the Almighty

- A. The pouring out of the sixth bowl causes the Euphrates river to dry up, which makes a way for kings from the east.
1. Both dispensationalists and preterists tend to see this as referring to the literal Euphrates, which is located in modern day Iraq, Syria, and Turkey.
 2. A better interpretation sees it as a symbolic representation that is based on something that took place when the Lord restored the Israelites to their land after Babylon's fall to the Persians.
 3. Through Isaiah, the Lord foretold that Babylon would fall to Cyrus the Great about 150 years before Cyrus lived.
 4. In Isaiah 41, Cyrus is described as one whom the Lord stirred up from the east.
 5. Several chapters later, the Lord says that he is the one "who says to the deep, 'Be dry; I will dry up your rivers'; who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'" (Isa. 44:27-28)
 6. That prophecy was fulfilled in the sixth century BC when Cyrus diverted the Euphrates river so that he could lead his troops in conquest over Babylon.
 7. Soon after that, Cyrus issued a decree that the Jews should return to their land and rebuild their temple in Jerusalem.
 8. Here in Revelation 16, the Lord is using the deliverance that he brought about for his people through Cyrus, which was itself

patterned after the exodus deliverance through the Red Sea, as a symbol to declare that he will deliver his people once and for all from all the earthly kingdoms that oppress them and oppose God.

- B. John continues his description of the sixth bowl judgment by saying that he saw three unclean spirits like frogs being spewed out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet.
1. As we have previously noted, this evil triumvirate is Satan's attempt to mimic the Trinity.
 2. The dragon represents Satan himself, the beast represents the Satanic political system, and the false prophet represents the religious propagandists who support the beast.
 3. The fact that the unclean spirits look like frogs once again points back to the plagues that God sent upon Egypt when he delivered his people from their slavery there.
 4. Frogs are an apt symbol for deceptive spirits because they are characterized by their incessant croaking.
 5. This signifies the empty and meaningless words spouted by deceivers, along with the confusion it produces.
- C. The parting of the Euphrates is symbolic of an occasion in which the kingdoms of this world are deceived into assembling for war against God's people.
1. Though this deception is brought about by the unclean spirits, the Lord is in ultimate control of it.
 2. We see an Old Testament parallel to this is 1 Kings 22, where the Lord uses a lying spirit to bring about Ahab's downfall.
 3. Here, the kings of the world are assembled for battle on what John calls "the great day of God the Almighty."

4. This name is drawn from several Old Testament prophetic books, where it is used to refer to the decisive day of judgment. (see Joel 2:11, 31; Zeph. 1:14)
 5. It refers to the confrontation between the forces of the beast and Christ at end of age.
 6. It is the same climactic battle that is described in Revelation 11:7, 19:19, and 20:8.
 7. Greg Beale summarizes what is being conveyed in this part of the vision in these words: "The nations are deceived into thinking that they are gathering to exterminate the saints, but they are gathered together ultimately by God only in order to meet their own judgment at the hands of Jesus (19:11-21)." [835]
- D. While it is the kings of the world who are deceived by these unclean spirits, worldly deception also seeps inside the covenant community.
1. This is why a call for wakefulness is issued in verse 15.
 2. We need to be prepared, always remembering that the great day could come at any moment.
 3. We must not be led astray into compromise with the world.
 4. We need to keep our garments on, which is a symbolic way of saying that we are to hold fast to the righteousness with which we have been clothed in Christ.
 5. The way to do this is to persevere in our faith in Christ and to remain loyal to Christ amid pressure to conform to the world's ideals.
- E. The sixth bowl judgment ends by telling us that the name of the place where the nations will be assembled is "the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon."

1. Most people are familiar with this word, but what does it mean?
 2. The one thing that is clear from our text is that it is a Hebrew name that John has transliterated into Greek.
 3. A better English translation of John's transliteration would be the two words *Har Magedon* (with just one 'd'), which could mean either "mountain of Megiddo" or "mountain of assembly."
 4. Megiddo is a plain where God delivered his people from their enemies on multiple occasions in the Old Testament (Jdg. 5:19; 2 Kgs. 23:29; 2 Chron. 35:20-22), which leads many interpreters to think that Megiddo is being used as a symbol of deliverance here.
 5. While this is a possible interpretation, there are several problems with it.
 6. First, in the most reliable Greek manuscripts, the term *Magedon* only has one delta in it (delta is the Greek equivalent of our letter 'd'), whereas Megiddo would have two deltas if it were transliterated into Greek.
 7. Second, the word *Har* means 'mountain,' and Megiddo is not a mountain but a plain.
 8. And third, Megiddo is two days' journey from Jerusalem, but all of the Old Testament prophecies of the last battle place it in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem and Mount Zion.
- F. The other option is to see *Har Magedon* as a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew term *Har Moed*, which means "mount of assembly."
1. While the similarities between these names is not as clear when they are pronounced in English, the first three consonants of *Magedon* and *Moed* do correspond to each other.
 2. The differences in vocalization are due to the adjustments that occur in the transliteration process. [see Kline, *God, Heaven, and Har*

Magedon, 51]

3. The Hebrew term *Har Moed* appears in Isaiah 14:13, a passage where the king of Babylon is being taunted for his boastful attempt to elevate himself above the host of heaven.
4. Listen to the verse in its context: “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.” (Isa. 14:12–15 ESV)
5. The mount of assembly is the mountain of the Lord, or Zion.
6. If this is what *Har Magedon* is referring to in our text in Revelation, then it is simply underscoring the ironic nature of the defeat of the forces of evil.
7. Though they take pride in their assembled forces and think that they are about to put an end to the people of God, it is actually the Lord who has assembled them for destruction.

III. The End

- A. We turn now to the seventh and final bowl judgment.
 1. Notice that there is no interlude in between the sixth and the seventh bowls, though there was with the seals and the trumpets.
 2. Both of those interludes had to do with God’s preservation of his church amid the judgments that he sends upon the world in this present age.
 3. Here we move directly from the sixth bowl to the seventh bowl.

4. This is another example of the intensification that takes place as the visionary cycles progress in Revelation.
 5. Even though the book is not to be understood as a chronological sequence, there is a greater and greater emphasis on the final judgment as the book unfolds.
 6. To speak metaphorically, it is as if the volume is being turned up louder and louder.
- B. The seventh bowl recalls the plague of hail on Egypt.
1. It is poured out into the air because the air is associated with the forces of evil in Revelation and elsewhere in the New Testament.
 2. When the fifth seal was opened in chapter 9, the shaft of the bottomless pit was opened and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke that issued from it.
 3. And in Ephesians 2 Paul says that those who are still dead in their trespasses and sins follow “the prince of the power of the air.”
 4. This is a way of calling attention to the pervasive and invisible nature of Satan’s influence in the world.
 5. The fact that the seventh bowl is poured out into the air declares that the forces of evil have met their doom.
 6. This is underscored by the voice that cries out from the temple, saying, “It is done.”
 7. Those words, paired with the storm imagery and the descriptions of cosmic dissolution, indicate that this bowl is depicting the final destruction of the ungodly world system and the spiritual powers that lay behind it.
 8. This is the meaning of parallel descriptions elsewhere in Revelation and in the prophecy of the final battle in Ezekiel 38 and 39.

9. In Ezekiel 38, the Lord says this in response to the assembled armies of the enemies of his people, led by a fierce leader referred to by the name Gog: “In my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare, On that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field and all creeping things that creep on the ground, and all the people who are on the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence. And the mountains shall be thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground. I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Lord GOD. Every man’s sword will be against his brother. With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur.” (Ezek 38:19–22 ESV)
 10. In Revelation 6, as the beginning of the final judgment is being described, it says, “The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.” (Rev 6:14)
 11. And in Revelation 20, in a clear description of the final judgment, John writes, “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.” (Rev 20:11 ESV)
- C. In verse 19, the assembled armies of the church’s enemies are identified as Babylon the great.
1. This is not a literal restored Babylon, since Old Testament prophecy declared that it would be desolate forever. (see Jer. 50:39-40; 51:26)
 2. Instead, as we have noted throughout our study of Revelation, Babylon is symbolic of the city of Rome in John’s first century context, and by extension it is a symbol of the ungodly world system all throughout the church age.

3. This is why John says that the fracturing of Babylon results in the downfall of all the cities of the nations.
4. Notice how Babylon's end is described.
5. God makes her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.
6. This was the cup of which Jesus spoke as he saw the cross looming nearer and nearer, praying in Gethsemane, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." (Mt. 26:39)
7. Jesus drained the cup of wrath when he offered himself up on the cross in our place.
8. By draining it, he satisfied the demands of God's justice and secured our justification.
9. At the outpouring of the seventh bowl, those who have neglected or despised Christ will find themselves in the position of having to drain the cup that Jesus drained, and it will be their eternal undoing.
10. The cup of the fury of God's wrath is inescapable.
11. What a blessing is bestowed on those who lay hold of Jesus by faith, trusting that he drained the cup on their behalf.
12. What a curse awaits those who are still in their sins when they stand before God on the last day.