

Vial 4

Revelation: How It All Ends

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Bible Text: Revelation 16:8-9

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We're going to be in Revelation 16 and we're going to cover about four verses today and try to learn a little bit from the word of the Lord and we'll begin reading in verse 1 so that you can get the flow of thought. That's pretty important. You can't all go back and get it at the same time. I'm sure there's a lot of other good stuff back there.

“1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. 2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image. 3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. 4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. 7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.”

Now today's,

“8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. 10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.”

That was some light reading, wasn't it? So, today we're going to deal with the fourth and fifth vials. Naturally I would say that these occur in the last half of Daniel's 70th week. I

had a discussion with one among us earlier this week, I think that person is in here. If I look too hard, it will be pretty apparent. We had a discussion because a lot of these Scriptures in the Old Testament especially when you see Revelation language in the Old Testament, it looks like maybe it's already been fulfilled and it's all poetic and maybe it was fulfilled either in AD 70 with the Romans attacking Jerusalem or the Babylonians attacking Jerusalem in 605 BC. In particular context, that's true and I just wanted us to hold our place here and find a few other things. But before we do, if you could sum up the fourth vial, the fourth bowl of judgment, how would you do that? One or two words, a phrase, whatever. Really hot sun so lots of sun. If you were to sum up the fifth vial, how would you do that? Lots of darkness.

I'm going to take you to three passages of Scripture and I want you to maybe write these down in the margin of your Bible next to Revelation 16 and one of them is in Revelation but we're going to start further back and come back this way. Let's go to Isaiah 24. I'm going to give you an example so let's look at Isaiah 13. I'm going to give you an example of a local fulfillment in the day of the Old Testament and then I'm going to give you a fulfillment that has yet to be done. They look a lot alike and so you're going to say, "Well, I wish it was clearer." Yup, I do too but as we've already discussed, most prophecy is not transparent, you're not going to really know yes, this is exactly what it means. I wish it were a little easier but the Lord tells us what we need to know, doesn't he?

Isaiah 13 and I want you to see some language here. I want you to look, please, if you would, at verse 6, "Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames." Their faces shall be as flames, do you see that? It almost sounds like the what? It sounds like lots of sun. So we're going to go right here and say Isaiah 13 and we're going to make us a little table here and we're going to go check, lots of sun. It could be, I'm not saying it is, I'm saying we have a passage about the day of the Lord and there are apparently people suffering from burning.

Look at verse 9, "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it." I would like you to please notice that in Isaiah 13 there is an emphasis on, and I'm going to write it down here, the land. Do you see that? I'm going to show you why in a minute.

Look at verse 10, "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine." As you look up here, what does that look like? Lots of darkness. I appreciate you playing along with that there, Mike. Something real dramatic here, we see Isaiah 13 and we see an emphasis on the land.

I do want you to notice in verse 1: who is this supposed to happen to? Babylon. So, you're faced with wondering a couple of things: Babylon that was or the Babylon that's

forecast in the book of Revelation and we could guess but I don't want to, how about you? Do you want to? Let's look at verse 17, "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them," or Babylon, "which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it." Now, some of you actually like world history so let's give you a chance to stretch and strut your stuff a little bit. After the Egyptians, what would you say the world empire was? Not Greece. The Assyrian Empire, not to be mistaken with the Syrian Empire, the Assyrian Empire. The capital city was in Nineveh, present Mosul. Anyone here officially been to Mosul? A good handful of us because I'm sure some of us have unofficially been there. Assyrian Empire and then after the Assyrian Empire, who crushed the Assyrians? Babylonian Empire, so Babylon.

Now, remember the last Babylonian king we find in the book of Daniel is Belshazzar. I can't remember the two but in any case, you find the last Babylonian king in the book of Daniel right about chapter 6 and we remember that mene, mene, tekel upharsin that showed up on the wall there, do you remember that? Apparently it's a prophecy about someone getting tickled, I don't remember. It had something to do with the demise of the Babylonian Empire. Do you remember Darius the what? The Mede. Darius was the Median king and so the Medes and the Persians were next so when we read Isaiah and we find out in chapter 13, verse 17, that the Medes are going to come and punish the Babylonians, we see Isaiah 13 is history or prophecy? History, yes?

Now let's look at Isaiah 24:1: what's the different emphasis? The earth, that's right, so we have land and we have earth and we have a difference between the two passages. You might notice, please, if you'll look at Isaiah 24, "the Lord makes the earth empty and makes it waste and turns it upside down and scatters abroad the inhabitants thereof." Look further in the chapter around about verse 13, "When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree," so there's still a focus in the middle of this worldwide thing and it's Jerusalem. We found out in the book of Revelation, James I think taught the lesson that Babylon in the Old Testament is always defined or at least the great harlot in the Old Testament is always defined as Jerusalem. We don't have any reason to believe that the Babylon in the book of Revelation is anything but Jerusalem. Now, I don't expect you to take that last statement of nine seconds long and take my word for it but I would expect that if you care enough, you'll listen to that lesson and hear why we believe that.

Look at verse 18, "And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth." Hang on now, "And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited."

Look at verse 6. “Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are,” what? Burned, what does that sound like? Lots of sun. And then go forward in Isaiah 24 and we see verse 23, “Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.” In other words it looks like around the time of the Lord's coming there is going to be a period of what? Lots of darkness.

This is a good example of first of all, how some things in the Old Testament are history by the time we're reading it and some of them are prophecy. Now since they use similar language, this is what we need to remember: it did happen a certain way and it was described a certain way so we should probably be careful about, how should we say, reading back into Isaiah 13 what Isaiah 13 should be instructing us to read into Revelation instead. Do you get what I'm saying? In other words, it can't ever mean what it never meant. Ever. There is no kind of...

(...) That's right, what did the writer mean when he wrote it? What would the original audience believe when they heard it? The Bible is never going to mean and it doesn't mean now what it never meant before. Ever. So that means that it should instruct us as to what we see in the book of Revelation. Okay?

I want to show you one more place in Joel 2. There are a lot of things I don't understand and I don't know and I don't know how to put on a number line or a time line so I'm going to try to be real forthright when I tell you that I'm guessing at something. I've been trying to do that, Brother Dick's been trying to do that, Josh has been trying to do that, James has been trying to do that for about 11 months now. We've been trying to be real forthright when we're guessing and when things are very clear, well, then we want to be very clear.

Look at Joel 2 and the questions someone should be asking when we read Joel 2 is: is this history or prophecy? Well, there are certain indicators that we should be looking for. Joel 2, the three chapter book right after Hosea which is right after Daniel so look at verse 1, “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it.” What does that sound like? There has never been a time like this up to this time, there will never be a time like this after this time. What does that sound like? It sounds like what Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse: there has never been a time of tribulation like this ever before. It will be a time of great tribulation; it's never happened like this before and it will never happen again. So, it's not that Joel is using Jesus' language, Jesus was using Joel's language. Jesus was using Old Testament material and so what the reader of the New Testament needs to decide is: was this something that was already fulfilled or is this something that has yet to be fulfilled?

We see in verse 3, “A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth.” That looks like lots of heat; that looks like people are being burned up. Now, I don't know...think about Revelation, the fourth vial, “I saw an angel pouring the wrath of God out on the sun.” What in the world does that look like? Was that John's perspective? Can you think of other times in the book of Revelation where John is saying something and it's a matter of his viewpoint? How about chapter 6 of Revelation. Can you think of anything that happens in the seals where he says, “I saw something under something”? The only way it makes sense is if it's a matter of perspective. Martyrs under the altar. So do we expect that if we were to go like say into the auditorium and we had this communion table that was hollow, do we expect that all the martyrs were, “Get in there,” you know, just crammed underneath this table? Or was it a matter of, “From my perspective it looks like they're standing below the altar”? He's in the spirit, he was in heaven in chapter 4 and now he's back on earth in chapter 9, 10, 11. It's really hard to tell sometimes where he's standing but let's just say that he's in a localized place known as heaven or we could say that he's on the isle of Patmos in the body seeing visions which is what chapter 1 says. Let's leave a little bit of room here for writer's perspective. This is a little unusual for me in some ways. Because we know that you can fit like 10,000 earths in the sun, I think, something like that, so I don't think that it's probable that when John looked and saw an angel pouring out his vial on the sun...I don't have to understand it but it could be a matter of he saw that angel standing up. You know how people pose next to a mountain, in front of a near mountain. Do you know what I'm saying? It looks like they're pushing the mountain and they're really not. They did it in Morocco even. I saw them doing it, it was hilarious. Do you remember that? They would be standing up and the building is miles behind them but they're posed just right so that it looks like they're pushing this building that's miles behind them on another mountain peak. It's just a joke. I'm not saying this angel is trying to tell a joke, man, I've got to be careful here, but I am saying that what if it's just a matter of perspective.

Remember, he's seeing a vision so we don't know that an angel actually dumps wrath on the sun. It's poetic. It's a vision. It's something he sees. He describes it so we had a discussion, Walt and I did before Sunday School via email which is always very clear. You know how text and emails are, I mean, I just about rather shave my eyeballs than do a conversation with...anyways. It sounds a lot like Lasik surgery so in any case, I'm not sure exactly what the source of the heat is. It's a vision. Could I say that the sun got so hot that it burned people? Yes, that's the plain sense of the reading. I do believe what is not poetic is that the sun gets hot. What is probably a vision, what is probably poetic is that he saw this angel pouring a vial out on the sun. That seems easy enough, doesn't it? Let me see if I can say it this way: at some time here in the last 3 ½ years of the tribulation, I'm not sure that someone's going to be able to look up from the earth and see an angel pouring out wrath on the sun. Does that make sense? It's a vision he's having.

(It's going on in the spiritual world.) Yeah, it's going on in the spiritual realm. I don't know how big the angel is. I don't know anything. I just know that when he saw this vision in Revelation 16, he saw an angel pouring and making the sun hotter.

Let's look at Revelation 16 and see what we're going to see there today and make some comparisons. I did want you to see that the Old Testament idea of having much sun or much burning and much darkness is common, very, very, very, very common. And how these are fulfilled, I don't know. I believe my Bible: the sun's going to get very hot and John saw a vision of an angel pouring a vial of wrath on it. Let's just say pick any hurricane and let's just say that it was the judgment of God because, you know, for every Klondike out there who says it is, you have someone over here that's hypertensive and wants to say it's not so let's just say that we have a hurricane that is clearly the judgment of God and if John were prophesying of it, he might would say, "I saw an angel pouring wrath out on the Pacific Ocean and it stirred up and went into the eastern seaboard of the United States." Did I say Pacific? Okay, it's not going to swirl up and go on the eastern seaboard. It's not. They are not moving the Pacific Ocean. Yeah, that would be really tough. Thanks for that clarity.

So, we see in chapter 16 of Revelation and verse 8, "And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire." My first question is and maybe you know where I'm getting it: are we talking about 2/3 of the sun here?

What are you talking about, Walt? Walt says the other 1/3 was affected some other time. (...) Let's look back at the trumpets. The trumpets happen in chapter 8 so hold your place here and look back at chapter 8. You're like, "I can't keep all this straight." Most of us can't either. We update the slides and we send them out every week, we update the information that we have, we're all learning together. It's okay. It's quite alright. Look at verse 12 of Revelation 8, "And the fourth angel sounded." Folks, did you notice how the trumpets and the vials go together up until now? You have trumpets 2 and 3 were about bloodying the waters and becoming bitter. Vials 2 and 3, the same thing. Here's trumpet four, vial four: they both affect the sun. Look at verse 12, "And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten," so 1/3 of the sun's power is gone. Now, I don't understand the relationship there because, to me, based on what we studied last week, it seems like this trumpet comes before the vials and there's a reason for that. We're not just going off cuff there but when you go back to chapter 16, the sun is getting very hot so it seems like whatever remains of the sun, it's crazy hot, hot enough to wear probably, it looks like power is given unto him to scorch men with fire. Given to who? This fourth angel, right? Are you all with me?

So we're back in Revelation 16 and we see the sun is scorching men with fire because of this power given to the angel, "And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory." What is happening if the sun is getting so hot that it's causing people worse sunburn than this? What are we dealing with there? What else would happen ecologically? Everything in the earth dries up.

Look at chapter 9, verse 6. This might give us an idea of how this kind of pans out. Look at verse 4, we'll read it in context. We can't do that, it starts actually before that, doesn't it? Verse 1, "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the

earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.” By the way, perspective matters here again, doesn't it? Let me turn it around there and show you the big orb. Let's look at this really quick here. Perspective matters in some regard. There is the Christmas angel and so remember, this is all about what John sees. The bottomless pit is open, let's just say and the smoke...was the sun darkened? Yes and no. Behind the smoke, the sun was still plenty bright, yes? Alright, so it's a matter of writer's perspective here. This is a great example.

Look at verse 3, “And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.” By the way, if we could just mention this: the implication is that there are people on the earth with the seal of God.

Verse 5, “And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.” I am guessing when I say that I think that takes up the last five months of the tribulation period. And if that's true, look at verse 6, “And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.” Isn't that something. They're going to wish they could die. Boy, I've heard people get pretty graphic about that. I don't think I need to but they would do certain things to try to die and they just can't die. I don't know to what extent that's to be taken but I think there are some people that wish they would die from the heat of the sun but cannot.

Back to chapter 16. Here in just a few minutes I have to close maybe 4-5 minutes early. I know that's going to break your heart and I've got to go over to the first class and say hello to them so I am going to go out that door but it's not because I don't want to talk to you. So, if you want to be added to our class email, please just write it down on a scrap of paper and give it to my wife back there or my daughter back there.

So what I want you to do now is I want us to answer the question, man, there's just so much here. We see that in the fourth vial people are scorched with the sun and with heat. Stop here and let's look back at chapter 7. I want us to compare this with something that takes place in chapter 7. Let's please remember that although we've been studying this for 11 months and it's possible that you're going to forget the flow of thought here that the writer is trying to keep, that the writer remembers what he wrote nine chapters ago. It's not hard for him and if you were reading it in a matter of an hour or two, you wouldn't forget either. So when we read chapter 7, I want you to notice, please, in verse 9, “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne

on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" Where did they come from? "And I said unto him, Sir," so he said to one of the 24 elders, "Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

The first thing I want us to remember: here's the last 3 ½ years of the tribulation period and this is some scene over here where they all came out. No, the sense of the original language is these are they that are coming out of great tribulation. They are coming out so little by little, these people are leaving the earth. And how are they doing it? They washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, that's usually short term, verse 14, that's usually a way of saying that they died and paid for their faith with their lives. This is why we say that Revelation is another Exodus or the ultimate Exodus because it tells the story of how the people of God leave the earth or are rescued from the Egypt of the world. Now, let's remember something here as we get into verse 15: what were the two things that were described as putting men in torment in the fourth vial? Do you remember? Two elements really? Heat and the sun.

Let's look at verse 15, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more," look here, "neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." So little by little, many if not most of the Christians are dying and are leaving the earth and most of that apparently, John wants you to remember this heat and sun thing, later on in chapter 16 and he wants you to know that there is a significant decrease of Christian activity on the earth at that time.

Remember in the trumpets it says that the people who had the mark of God on their foreheads were not affected. Do you remember that? The question is: is that just 144,000 Jews or is that everyone? That's really the question, right?

First of all, let's remember that in the Exodus which is the pre-Revelation or you could call Revelation the ultimate Exodus, however you want to call it, were the Israelites safe from all the plagues in Goshen? Yeah, they were. They were safe from all of them and we're going to get into it, I guess next week, the fifth vial when the darkness happens, it's light in their dwellings it says. So, if we're using the Exodus perspective and now we have 34 parallels between Exodus and Revelation, if we're using the Exodus perspective, then we say yes, God's people are free from the wrath of God that happens on the earth at this time. They are being sheltered in some supernatural way. Now, this shows up in the book of Job, believe it or not. We'll get to it in about maybe six chapters probably where the people of God are saved from the wrath of God on the earth. It's crazy. It's amazing. It's all over the Bible.

So that's the short answer. Let me give you a Bible passage that kind of answers the question I asked back to you of: is it just the 144,000 male virgin Jews that have the mark of God on their foreheads because that's how it was described to us in chapter 7 and chapter 14? Is everyone with me. Look back at chapter 3 and then I guess this will be the last thing that I show you today. Look at chapter 3. While you're turning, do you remember it says that the men were scorched with great heat and blasphemed the name of God which has power over these plagues. The question that I want to know is: other than the fact they're just reprobates, why are they blaspheming the name of God? Look at chapter 3 and let's look at verse 12, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." Who is talking? John wrote this in red, right? Just kidding. It is in red, right? So it's Jesus talking, yes? Jesus says to the overcomer I'll write my Father's name on him and I'll write my name on them.

(...) Yeah, of course, he's branding us because he's the Master, right? That's easy enough so the question is: who are those, think about it now, what kind of sense would it make, please, help me, help me understand something here, what kind of sense would it make for us to say God made a promise to the church of Philadelphia and then said, "Now, before I fulfill that promise, I'm going to jerk you out of here." No, there are people in the book of Revelation who have the name of God on them and those who are being tormented by the sun during the fourth vial hate the fact they're being tormented by the sun and there's a group of people that aren't and they just so happen to have the name of God on them and so they blaspheme that name. The reason people hate us and hate God mostly is because they see that we're in the middle of turmoil and we're not losing our minds. Even today, right? What makes you so good? Nothing. I just have his mark on me, that's all. I'm just stamped by the Lord. Nothing makes me all that special, just special enablement in the middle of difficult times. It doesn't mean we don't make mistakes, it doesn't mean we don't feel pain, it doesn't mean we don't have difficult times and troubles. No, none of that. No, it doesn't mean that, it means that we have the mark of God on us. He's marked us for himself. I don't know what that looks like in a physical way during this time period. I don't know how much of that is poetic, I don't know. I know this, I'm marked.