***The Seventh Bowl:  
A Worldwide Storm and Earthquake  
  
RV207-02***

We are studying Revelation 16:1-21. Our subject is "The Seven Bowls." This is segment number 17.

In the very near future, the human race and its governments are going to run out of God's grace. When that happens, there'll be no more time to repent and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, and to escape an eternity in the lake of fire. Liberalism today is at a high point, with complete confidence in government as the agent of human blessing based on its religion of humanism. So, man today is viewed as a god. Man is seen as being independent of any external authority. Man is free, therefore, to make his own moral laws which govern his conduct.

What God is going to do is to gather all these confident gentile nations to the field of Armageddon for their destruction, and at that point, for the termination of what the Bible calls "the times of the gentiles," when the gentiles are in charge of the world situation. The United States, the greatest nation on the face of the earth, is rapidly deteriorating internally and externally. All of the forces and all of the elements that have made this a great nation are under attack, and the enemies of God are winning.

We have seen the seventh angel step forward to pour the seventh and final bowl of God's wrath on the air surrounding the earth. This is declared from the temple in heaven to be the last of God's series of plagues on tribulation humanity. This is the end of the line for unbelievers to repent and to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. This seventh bowl is absolutely horrendous. When it is completed, there'll be no doubt in anybody's mind that this is not just some accidental event that's happening, but they will know exactly who is causing these things to happen. The God of patient grace in heaven does not want anyone to perish, but He is suddenly going to become the God of justice, bringing death and destruction to the earth as an expression of his wrath for the sinfulness of all mankind.

So, the whole issue is always God's way against man's way. People do not understand that they can resist God's way, but His way is the way it's going to be. He is the one who controls every muscle of your body, including the heart muscle. He is the one who gives you the capacity to take the next breath, and to think the next thought. And God's way will not be frustrated. It is a foolhardy thing on one hand to deny yourself information in an instructional situation, such as our Berean Church services, to learn God's way, and it is foolhardy to pretend, after you have learned them, that those ways do not exist. They do exist, and God is in charge.

**What to do with Jesus Christ**

The fundamental issue facing all mankind is ultimately what to do with Jesus Christ. That's what the tribulation is going to be all about. What are we going to do with Jesus Christ? This is the fundamental issue that faces every human being. It faces a human being at the point of coming to salvation. It faces every believer at the point of abandoning Jesus Christ.

My message to the parents and students at our academy graduation and awards ceremony was Jesus's point in question to His disciples: "Will you also leave Me? You won't do that, will you?" After the crowd decided that Jesus was not going to give them the material things they sought, they deserted Him. I pointed out to our students that leaving Jesus is something that all of them will face, and that all their parents face. There are a variety of ways by which we leave the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot physically walk away from Him, but we can doctrinally walk away from Him. We can walk away from Him in our negative volition. We can walk away from Him in our calling and in our destiny in His service. There are many ways in which we do that sad thing of leaving Jesus.

So, for all of us, there is this question of: what am I going to do with Jesus Christ? Yesterday, I heard of a believer who is moving into an action in life that horrifies me. This is a person who knows better, and a person who, by this very act, does not realize that he's walking away from Jesus Christ. And it is so sad for people who knew better to not act upon it. How are they going to explain that? How is this man going to explain that when he stands before God?

This is the ultimate issue in the tribulation when the antichrist himself is claiming to be God: What is the place of Jesus Christ, first of all, in personal salvation? What role does He play in qualifying one for heaven? Most of mankind today, as in the tribulation, are going to have very little room for Jesus Christ in their thinking, besides using His name as a swear word. They will have very little place in their religion for deciding the means of getting into heaven. He won't be related to that at all. It reduces itself to human reasoning contaminated by the sin nature to decide how to go to heaven, or to believing what the Bible reveals about faith in Christ as God's way into eternal life.

**Some Sins don't seem that Bad**

Last week, a professional man took me into his office; closed the door; and, said, "I want to ask you a question as a theologian. The question was about the merit before God of a man that is to be executed here in Texas, presumably for the crime of murder. It's one of those situations where it's not all that bad of a person who yet did this terrible crime, and who has been found guilty, and these extenuating circumstances were in the mind of this professional man. And he said, "In terms of this man facing God, it would seem that there would be just a little bit of merit in his favor over against somebody like, say, Hitler."

So, I pointed out some basic factors immediately to this man about salvation. I had been told from other sources that this man, as smart as he is, has been reaching out. He has been in some personal concern about the issue of salvation. But he's smart. He's an intellectual. That's one of the big problems – to be able to be smart enough to know that when God has spoken, He can speak with accuracy, and record it in the Bible, and we've got the information we need.

**Sin is not the Issue**

So, I pointed out to him, first of all, that I understood what he was saying. The sin of this man who is about to be executed are not as bad as Hitler's sins were. How is God going to treat the two of them? And I pointed it out to him that sin is simply not the issue before God at all. The first widening of his eyes came at that point. I pointed out that sin is not an issue, because Jesus Christ has paid the penalty of sin, which is death. He did that on the cross for the sins of all mankind so that God's justice, which indeed must be satisfied against sin, has been satisfied. The issue, I told him, is not sin, but accepting from God the offer of a free grace salvation apart from human works or religious rituals based upon the fact that Christ has paid for sins.

**Accepting God's Provision**

There's nothing to keep you from going to heaven. All you have to do is accept God's provision. It's just as simple as that. That comes up against a lot of resistance because, by nature, we don't think that way. All the religious world does not think that way – that God has taken care of the whole issue, and you just take His gift, no matter how bad you are. Therefore, I pointed out to him, there's no difference between what we might consider a small sinner and a gross sinner when it comes to salvation. I told him that all fall short of what the Bible calls the glory of God – the absolute standard of God's righteousness.

I pointed out to him that if a group of people decided that they were going to stand on the shores of California and swim to Hawaii, that depending on their capability, they would get varying distances out into the Pacific Ocean, toward Hawaii, but nobody would make it. All are going to fall short of the goal of Hawaii, as all fall short of the goal of the glory of God, which is His absolute righteousness. I quoted him Romans 3:23. That says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." I said, "What this means is that, for a person to go to heaven, he has to be as good as Jesus Christ. That's God's standard." Then there was the second widening of his eyes. That's absolute perfection. I said, "God has taken care of that problem because he has provided a way for us to have credited to us the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ, and that's how we make it. He gives us the righteousness of Christ."

**Belief**

I quoted him 2 Corinthians 5:21 that said, "He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus Christ), who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. I pointed out to him that this verse is telling us that Jesus Christ has swapped His absolute righteousness for our total depravity and our moral guilt; and that, if we accept the exchange, we become children of God permanently. I pointed out to him that the simple answer as to how one does this was the one given to Paul to the Philippian jailer, and that was, "Simply believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

**Trust**

I said, "Now the word 'believe' is a very simple word in the Bible, and what it means is to do what I observed that you did when you walked in this room." He looked a little startled for a moment and I said, "You sat down on that chair; you never looked at it; you never tested it; you never touched it; but, you just trusted it." I said, "That's what believing means. It means to trust that God is not a liar. When He says that His son has paid for your sins, and that you may have eternal life by accepting that gift, He's telling the truth."

**Salvation**

I say that salvation is simply believing that God does not lie. He makes the statement in John 3:16, where he points out that: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Trust in Jesus Christ brings one instantly and permanently into the family of God. I said, "Salvation is not even affected by your sin *after* you're saved, because the whole process is entirely God's work. Man has nothing to do with it. So, you can't contaminate the process of salvation at any point."

**The Bible**

I reminded him that the Bible is very clear that God's method of saving is only on the gift basis grace. I pointed out to him that Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "Therefore, by grace, you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves (that salvation is not of yourselves). It is the gift of God, not as the result of works, that no one should boast."

**We can add no Human Works for Salvation**

So, I said, "Trying to add just a little bit of being good, and just a little bit of human works to your salvation is to deny God the only basis upon which He can save you, which is grace. If you add one little thing, like a water baptism, or promising to behave yourself and live a good life, you have now added something to the death of Christ on the cross." I told him that Romans 11:6 says, "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works. Otherwise grace is no longer grace." Did you get that? If it's grace, there can be no works. If it's works, there can be no grace. They're mutually exclusive.

**The Catholic Plan of Salvation**

So, I said to him, "That's a startling statement, because vast denominations, such as the Roman Catholic Church, say, 'Yes, Christ died for our sins, but we must provide human good works to deserve His salvation.' And they have immediately contaminated the grace basis. Consequently, on that plan, no Catholic can go to heaven."

He said, "Oh, now I understand what was meant by one man who said to me of the Roman Catholic Pope in Rome – that he is the great antichrist in the world today. Now I understand." I said, "Exactly, because he is the fountainhead of truth for Roman Catholicism, and he is telling people that unless they provide their own merits, they cannot deserve the merit of Christ."

**Eternal Security**

Since human works and efforts are not involved in salvation, man cannot do anything to contaminate the process of salvation to ruin it after you have it. It's all the work of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. So, it's permanent in its effect.

**The Gospel**

That's as simple as I could make the gospel, and yet give enough theological basis to an intellectual man so that he understood that God had done something to solve this problem. There is a moral problem, and there is a human problem, but God has solved it. So, I said to him, "Each person has to decide now what he is going to do about Jesus Christ and salvation from hell. That's the issue. That's always the issue: What am I going to do with Jesus Christ?" It is not: What am I going to do about my sin, or how bad I've been?

**Hitler**

So, I said, "Let's put it in the worst scenario. Had Hitler, in the last few minutes before he killed himself, by some means of the grace of God, come to a realization of what he had done; the horror of his sin; and, the moral guilt that he now faced, and the God that he would face, suddenly grasped the significance of the gospel. He grasped the meaning of Christ's death for him on the cross, and he trusted in Jesus Christ as His Savior just before he blew out his brains. The grace of God is so magnificent that Hitler would now be in heaven." His eyes opened wide again, but he grasped the fact that the grace of God is greater than the sin of man. As the song title says, "Grace Greater than All my Sins."

Hitler was Roman Catholic. Hitler always thought, unfortunately, in terms of papal authority and church authority to get him into heaven, and of good works to deserve what Christ has done. I have no doubt that that is what compelled him, just before he killed himself, to marry his mistress, Eva Brown, in order to try to make things right with God before he faced that God of justice. But unfortunately, that never made it right. It was not the issue. Even that sin had already been covered by Christ.

So, Roman Catholicism believes that Jesus Christ, as the Savior, died for the sins of the world. But then it neutralizes this by adding the requirements of good works to make one fitting to deserve that salvation. So, Roman Catholicism teaches a false, non-biblical salvation, which brings one into hell, and not into heaven. You can imagine what the Roman Catholics in Irving think about Berean Church when they hear about what we have to say about their system of salvation. You can imagine what the Church of Christ in Irving thinks when we alert people to the contamination of the salvation process with their insistence on water baptism as a step into salvation. You can imagine what even those who are truer to the Bible feel toward a Berean Church who makes the great distinction of the grace of God and of the legalisms of the religious world system, and of the shallowness of what people are given.

When you don't want to be shallow, believers, you must be ready for the flak. When you refuse to be shallow, and you rise to God's standard, people will leave you. They will desert you like cockroaches running from a light turned on in a room. They will abandon the truth. They will abandon the quality of God, and they will resent you to the ends of their brain cells for the fact that you have exposed them to that light.

Tribulation humanity is going to be so spiritually insane at the end of this seventh bowl, the last plague of God. The last thing we read at the end of chapter 16 is these people blaspheming the God of spiritual light – the God who has brought them the final demonstration of enlightenment. They have once more turned their backs upon Him from that simple salvation that I described for you.

You need to know that in the times of crises. You need to know that salvation just that clearly so that you can explain it at your job. You need to know it when people in life pass off the scene that are near and dear to us, to realize that the hope is there, and that this is not some black hole that people have gone into, but that there is a great reality out there made possible on the basis of this true gospel.

**The Wide and Narrow Gates**

The tribulation humanity is going to reject Jesus Christ. And I pointed out to my intellectual professional friend, as we closed our conversation, that most of the human race does not like God's salvation plan, and has totally rejected it. For that reason, Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it."

**The Evangelism Brochure**

That's the side of the picture we have on our evangelism brochure with people on that broad road into the burning flames of hell. But verse 14 says, "The gate is small, and the way is narrow, that leads to life, and few are those who find it. That's the other side of the picture on our evangelism brochure, as people enter this small gate, and here's this narrow road going up into the glory land (the shining lights before them). And here and there, if you look closely at that picture, you'll see a man or a woman who is on the road to destruction, and he looks back over toward the glory road. And the picture just leaps out at you, and you see this person asking himself the question, "What do I want to do with Jesus Christ?" And you even see one man who has turned and says, "I'm going this way," and he heads for the glory land gate.

So, I pointed out to my friend that the Word of God tells us that most of the human race will not be in heaven. It is shocking just to hear these words of Jesus that: "Few there be that find it." The reason for that is John 14:6, which says, "Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the light. No one comes to the Father but through Me.’" If you reject Jesus Christ, you don't come to the Father for salvation. If come into the family of God, and then reject Jesus Christ by your negative volition to doctrinal truth, or to the will of God for you, in all the multiplied ways that that will applies, you have walked away from Christ. And when you walk away from Him, you walk away from the Father.

The other part of the sad fact that millions upon millions of human beings never find their way into heaven, is that multiplied millions of Christians never find it to the Father, all the days of their cutesy-pooh church activities in zealous participation. That is because people perish without the knowledge of the Word of God in death.

In Revelation 16:18, the bowl is poured out, and a dramatic effect takes place in the atmosphere. God has declared in verse 17 that He has finished now with all the grace period. And verse 18 tells us of great meteorological disturbances that take place in space. I want you to remember that I'm not describing the script of a television program, or of a movie. I'm telling you something that in the very near future, in a matter of years, is going to take place upon the face of the earth. So, shift your mentality into that context.

**A Storm**

"There were flashes of lightning, and sounds and peals of thunder." The word "there were" appears several times this context. Let me give it to you once. It's the word "ginomai." Actually, this word in the Greek means "to become." It means something that's developing. So, what you have here is a brewing of a storm. It's a developing thing. It wasn't just there. It's something that gradually people are looking around, and they're noticing something, and they're seeing that something is developing out there in the sky, and it's getting worse and worse and worse. And suddenly, it passes a point beyond which any of them have ever remembered seeing such a thing before. This storm condition is an ominous sign of God's wrath, which is about to explode upon a humanity that now has gone beyond the point of the grace of God.

"Flashes of lightning" is one word in the Greek language, and it is referring to a dazzling display of electrical discharges in the atmosphere. In Matthew 24:27, these are described as long horizontal flashes from east to west. In Luke 10:18, it is described as jagged vertical flashes from sky to earth. This is what is in view here in this Greek word "astrate." "Astrate" means balls of fire rolling across the sky – blinding flashes of lightning. I don't know if you've ever seen a ball of fire in the sky.

Some years ago, the paint factory down the street here had an enormous leak of flammable material. It was strange. I just happened to open the back door of the house and looked out, and there was suddenly an explosion of a ball of fire up in the sky. I thought it was across the street. It was that close. Only later did I find that it was way down the street here across the track where this factory was. But this had been accumulating over the factory, and suddenly, it ignited and exploded as a flaming ball of fire in the air, and stood there and shook, and then went out.

The whole sky is going to be doing this, and people are going to be wondering what's taking place. It also said that are going to be sounds. This is the word "phone." We usually translate this as "voice." But strange noises are going to be heard – maybe even voices. Who knows what warnings may be reverberating through the sky, perhaps even angelic voices. But there are some kind of sounds that are going to accompany this. And then, along with it, there are peals of thunder. Explosions of lightning create deafening peals of thunder as the atmosphere is disrupted. But this is going to be thunder at a decibel level not usually experienced on earth, so that it in itself will cause a degree of terror to all mankind.

**God Disrupts Nature**

What this is all about is, as the Bible puts it, the anger of the wrath of God is now being displayed in a physical way. Scripture observes that God exercises His wrath against evil men by disrupting nature. This is not unusual. God has done this in the past. This is a procedure that He uses. In Isaiah 29:6, we're told, "From the Lord of Hosts (the Lord of the heavenly armies), you will be punished with thunder and earthquake and loud noise with whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a consuming fire." That is a simple statement. God uses disruptions in nature to signal His judgment, and to execute His punishments.

Psalm 50:3-4 also indicates that God punishes through disruptions of nature: "May our God come and not keep silent. Fire devours before Him, and is very tempestuous around Him. He summons the heavens above and the earth to judge his people. Gather My godly ones to Me." So, here again you have the statement that God uses the forces of nature to punish and to signal His wrath.

So, this disruption, after the seventh bowl is poured out in the atmosphere, signals the imminence of the justice of God as He expresses His anger at the evildoers of the tribulation. Similar convulsions of nature took place at the close of the sealed judgment in Revelation 8:5, and at the close of the trumpet judgment in Revelation 11:19. But each time, the convulsions in nature have been worse. Now, it's at a peak.

**A Great Earthquake**

So, not only is there the atmospheric disruption, but the second thing is topographical disruptions. Verse 18 says, "And there was a great earthquake." ... At this time, the seventh bowl causes a great earthquake, meaning high intensity on the Richter scale by which earthquakes are measured. What is experienced is an earthquake. The Greek word is "seismos." What this is referring to is an enormous displacement of the earth's surface, and it causes great destruction and death. But this is a great earthquake, in the fact that it's around the whole mantel (the whole crust) of the earth. The whole crust of the earth shakes with one mighty convulsion signaling the final judgment of God and the end of the times of the gentiles. It brings with it, of course, enormous destruction and death.

This was alluded to by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 24:17-21. Isaiah, in speaking of this tribulation judgment of God, in the destruction of the atmosphere and of the surface of the earth, says, "Terror and pit ensnare and confront you, O inhabitants of the earth. Then it will be that he who flees the report of disaster will fall into the pit, and he who climbs out of the pit will be caught in the snare. For the windows above are open, and the foundations of the earth shake. The earth is broken asunder. The earth is split through. The earth is shaken violently. The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard, and it totters like a shack. And its transgression is heavy upon it, and it will fall, never to rise again. So, it will happen in that day (the tribulation day) that the Lord will punish the host of heaven on high (the demonic hosts) and the kings of the earth on the earth (the gentile nations) whose time is now brought to an end." Isn't that amazing? Hundreds and hundreds of years ago, the prophet Isaiah saw what was coming, and made a presentation of this terrible event that was going to take place.

The prophet Haggai also had an insight in that Haggai 2:6-7:4: "For thus says the Lord of hosts (the Lord of the armies), 'Once more, in a little while, I'm going to shake the heavens and the earth; the sea also, and the dry land. And I'll shake all nations, and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I'll fill this house with glory,' says the Lord of hosts." That has never happened. It's going to happen in the tribulation. And all these gentile nations that are so arrogant and confident are going to be brought to their knees, and their glory and their wealth are going to be brought to the temple in Jerusalem, and to God's holy city.

So, there's a great deal behind that simple statement: "And there was a great earthquake, such as." This is giving a comparison, indicating a manner here: "Such as had not developed since man came to be upon the earth." That's interesting. The word "man" is "anthropos," meaning humanity, so it goes back to Eden. Since the time of Eden, people have had explosions in the sky: lightning; and, thunder. People have had disruptions of earthquakes, but never to the degree that will then take place – not since mankind came upon this earth. And it is going to be so mighty.

It is going to be a slippage which will be so great in the earth's crust as has never happened in the past as part of Matthew 24:21: "Then there will be great tribulation, such has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall be." Part of that tribulation is going to be this disruption in nature.

I don't know if you've ever been in a terrific storm. One time many years ago, we had a storm here in Irving. The sky literally turned green. The phone rang off the hook as parents in consternation were calling the office. There were these hanging down clouds that are characteristic of tornadoes. The wind was whipping up, and things really looked bad, and the rain burst. I was at home alone with Stephen, who was about four years old. I took him and stuck him under his bed and said, "Don't move until I tell you," and I dashed off to go next door. Finally, the storm passed, and about 45 minutes later, things had quieted down, and we got the students all back into their classrooms, and all the wastepaper buckets back in place that had been put out to gather rain, because it brought rain right through down into the library. To this day, you can see certain rings on the floor where those buckets sat.

After we had it all cleaned up, I suddenly remembered that kid I had put under the bed 45 minutes ago or more. So I dashed home and I looked under there, and there he lay with his little hand over his face, just as quiet as could be, which was not characteristic of him. But the fear of God had been put into him by these disruptions in nature. So, he didn't move a muscle.

Well, it is fearful indeed to be in something like that. In recent years we've had a big increase in earthquakes. You know that. These have been all around the world, not only in number, but in intensity. These are all preceding the big one that's coming. They talk about the big one coming out in California that is going to break California off. Well, this is the big one. This is the one that's going to shake the crust of the earth entirely around the globe.

**Deaths**

When there is a quake, it is, of course, destructive of life. In July, 1976, in Tangshan, China, you may remember there was an earthquake that registered 8.2 on the Richter scale. That's very, very high. That earthquake killed 655,235 people – just that one earthquake in one contained area. Now put that all over the world. Think about the major cities of the world, and the ruins that they would be put in. Think about the great monuments in these major cities that men are so proud of, and they're all going to be dashed and crumbled to the ground. Mankind of the tribulation is going to be overcome with a mitigating terror. The celestial and topographical outbursts are portents of the approaching demise of the revived Roman Empire and its last Caesar, the antichrist. God is going to have the last word.

**The Great City**

It says that this is going to be an earthquake so mighty that people will know that God is doing it. Verse 19 tells us about the destruction of the cities, which we might indeed have anticipated. It says that: "And the great city was split into two parts." We have a problem trying to identify this great city, because there are two possibilities that could fill this. One is Jerusalem, and the other is Babylon on the Euphrates. Jerusalem in Revelation 11:8 is called "the great city." Jerusalem is going to be surrounded at this point in time by great topographical disruptions in the tribulation, and great destruction. Destruction is scheduled for this area. Zechariah 14:4 indicates that.

**Jerusalem**

The fact is, however, that Jerusalem is God's eternal city. 1 Chronicles 23:25 and Psalm 125:1 both stress that Jerusalem is God's special city forever. Several geographic changes are going to take place in Jerusalem near the Second Coming of Christ, but there will be no destruction of the city of Jerusalem. Zechariah 14:4 points out that the Mount of Olives will split in two, north and south, when the feet of Jesus touch down on the very spot from which He left it. We're told that a river will spring up in the temple area, and it will flow to the Dead Sea, and it will give life to that sea. Zechariah 14:8 tells us that. So, from Jerusalem is not going to come death. It's not going to be involved in destruction, but it's going to be a source of life.

**Babylon**

On the other hand, I think that the more likely candidate for this great city is Babylon on the Euphrates. Babylon is going to come under special treatment of God's wrath. All of Revelation 17, that we will soon be entering, will talk about the destruction of religious Babylon and all that it has spawned in the religious world. And Revelation 18 will talk about the political and economic destruction that Babylon has spawned in the world – socialism and liberalism, the whole bit. So, those are two fascinating chapters coming up. And Babylon is under that much judgment of God, because God hates Babylon more than He hates any other gentile city on the face of the earth. So, it's going to come under special divine judgment, because Babylon has been the source of all the evils, religiously and politically, in the world. Today, Babylon historically represents everything that is anti-God, and that is evil in human experience. Babylon is the mother of civil and religious evils, which will reach their zenith under the antichrist. So, Babylon is going to be utterly destroyed.

Isaiah said that Babylon will be destroyed to the point where it cannot be reconstructed. That has not happened yet. Babylon has never been destroyed to the point where it cannot be reconstructed. Isaiah 13:19-22 say, "And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." What's the reason for that comparison? Because when God finished with His destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, there was nothing. You couldn't find it. There was probably such a hole there that you couldn't even rebuild the thing. I mean, it was totally obliterated.

Verse 20 says, "It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation," after this destruction, which is being referred to here: "Nor will the Arab pitch his tent there, nor will the shepherds make their flocks lie down there. But desert creatures will lie down there, and their houses will be full of owls. Ostriches will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there, and hyenas will howl in their fortified towers, and jackals in their luxurious palaces. Her fateful time also will soon come, and her days will not be prolonged." Here, almost sarcastically, God is telling about the animals who are going to make their palaces and their magnificent dwellings in what was once the beauty of the Chaldean Empire, the city of Babylon.

The details of God's wrath that is going to bring this about will come in Revelation 17 and 18. The reference in Revelation 16:17, therefore, I think is probably to Babylon on the Euphrates, which will be the capital city of the antichrist. We're told that this city is going to be broken into three parts in its destruction. Babylon on the Euphrates is broken up by this earthquake into three parts, indicating its destruction. Cyrus, who conquered Babylon, the Medo-Persian king, did not destroy Babylon. In fact, when he came under the walls of the city in 540 B.C., during the night of Belshazzar's drunken party and the handwriting on the wall, for two or three days, most of the people in the city didn't know what had happened. They didn't know that the Medo-Persians had conquered the city, and that Belshazzar was dead. But Babylon instead became a provincial capital of the Medo-Persian Empire. So it wasn't destroyed.

In the third century B.C., Alexander the Great found Babylon a delightful city, and he wanted to proceed to restore it. In fact, he died there.

The apostle Peter wrote his first official from Babylon. 1 Peter 5:13 tells us that. So, the city was still there.

In the fifth century A.D., the Jews had several universities in Babylon, and they produced an Old Testament Hebrew manuscript called the Babylon Talmud, which explained the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Napoleon, because he was such a military genius, realized that Babylon was the control center for anybody who wanted to control the world. Napoleon had world government on his mind. So, Napoleon had set in motion plans to rebuild Babylon. He came to his end before he could do it, but that was on his schedule.

Today, you know who is building Babylon up again. Saddam Hussein in Iraq is rebuilding Babylon. There is much discussion now about why, in just 135 miles more, the American Army and the Marines could have gone thundering into Baghdad, and taken the whole thing, and brought Saddam Hussein down, and removed him, and sent him to that big Arab festival in the sky once-and-for-all. Our military people said, "No, don't do it. Leave him," as though they got their orders from God.

I cannot stress enough this business of the sovereignty of God. Don't be a dumb Christian. Understand that whatever comes in life is a sovereign action of God. He permits it. He triggers it. He allows it. Whatever you do; however you move; and, whichever way you go, when He blesses you, it's an act of God, and when He wants to put you under judgment, that is also an act of God. So, don't compliment yourself on something you do that you think you're so pleased about, but attribute it to the sovereignty of God. Something you may do that you're so pleased about – you may find in time that it was a horrible thing to do.

However, God is going to bring down the city of Babylon. And Saddam Hussein is there rebuilding it, getting it ready to be the capital city of the antichrist.

Well, the city was split, but, furthermore, we are told that the cities of the nations (the gentiles – the "ethnos," the Greek word for "gentiles") also fell. The word "fell" here means that they were destroyed. This earthquake causes destruction of major cities which are centers of gentile commerce and political influence. These are the cities which are the centers of the kingdom of man in religion; in government; in arts; in education; in literature; in entertainment; and, in economic socialism. These are the great cities that make all this work.

Remember that previously, one of the bowl plagues intensified the heat of the sun to the degree that the polar caps would melt and raise the sea level to the degree that cities at lower elevations would now be inundated and flooded. Now the cities at higher elevations are coming in for destruction. That would mean places like Chicago, Mexico City, Caracas, San Paulo, Johannesburg, Cairo, Beijing, New Delhi, Moscow, Berlin, and Paris. Those are the cities above the floodplain that are now going to be shaken and destroyed. Can you imagine a picture of the Eiffel Tower bent over and crushed? All the great monuments that men are so proud of, which represents the kingdom of man on this earth, are going to take a devastating blow when the earth's crust starts rolling like the waves of a sea.

Several years ago, when I was at the Alaska Bible College for two weeks of Bible lectures, it was shortly after the time of the great Anchorage earthquake. The epicenter was at Valdez, where the oil spill was in recent years, which is the end of the pipeline in St. Edwardstown. Some people had home movies that they had taken who were near the earthquake, and they showed those movies to me. And I thought that one particular scene was being shot out across the water, because it was waves. Then the people showing the movie says, "Would you believe that this is land? I said, "This is the land?? I thought this was water." They said, "No, this is not water. This is land." And you couldn't tell the difference in the way that land was moving up and down. It was like waves on water. Can you imagine standing there with something like that?

Well, the men who stood on the dock at Valdez, waiting to see whether they were going to be called for longshoreman duties that day and work, stood there on the dock. Those that had been picked stayed. Those who hadn't been chosen walked off the dock. And in that moment, the earthquake hit, and the ship that they were going to unload lifted itself out of the water; swung on the dock; and, came down upon all those men who had been hired to work on it that day.

An earthquake in one place is a powerful thing, but all over the crust of the earth at once? Perhaps you can get a little sense, as you think that through, of how enraged God is toward sin. And we're told that Babylon then comes in for her final hour of judgment before God, and we shall pick it up there next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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