

Study 8 Revelation 15-16

Exodus Again

As we've seen, Revelation is full of imagery. A lot of it comes straight out of the Old Testament especially from the story of the Exodus. Looking back at the original passages often gives good insight into what John wants to say to his first century readers. In other words, in this section of Revelation, the symbols often pointing backwards rather than forwards. When John's first readers understand in principle how their own hard times can be compared with the tribulations of Israel in the Exodus, they will understand how their future hope also matches the future hope of God's people in the past.

The passage is designed as a set of "seven bowls" of God's anger, waiting to be poured out on his enemies. They follow a similar pattern to the seven seals and the seven trumpets in earlier chapters. Like them, the pattern takes us right to the "end point" of history. (In other words, it's a third look at the same scenario.)

Thoughtstarters

There are a number of superstitions and legends about the way Satan can be overpowered. Can you think of any?

What attitude do you think most "superstitious" people have towards Satan?

From the passage...

1. In verse 2, we meet "those who had been victorious over the beast and over the number of his name." The Beast is Satan's representative on earth. How do God's people defeat him?

Compare your answer with 12:11, then 2:10 and 3:10.

2. "They sang the song of Moses..." (v3) Look back at the song of Moses in Exodus 15. When did Moses and the people of Israel sing it? How does the situation the Israelites had come from compare with the experience of first century Christians? How does it compare with our experience today? (Take a look at 1 Peter 2:11)

3. Why do you think the "temple" in verse 5 is now described as "the tabernacle of testimony." (Think about John's emphasis on "testimony" right through Revelation.)

4. There are many other links with the Exodus story. (If you're not clear about the details of Israel's great escape from slavery in Egypt, find someone in your group who can summarise it briefly.)

Compare:-

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| a) Rev 16:2 | Ex 9 |
| b) Rev 16:2-3 | Ex 7 |
| c) Rev 16:10 | Ex 10:21 |
| d) Rev 16:12 | Ex 14 |
| e) Rev 16:13 | Ex 8 |
| f) Rev 16:21 | Ex 9 |

Interesting point: Compare Ex 13:9,16 with Rev 13:16 and 14:1

What do all these links suggest to you? What “promise” is there in the passage for Christians “in exile” in a hostile world, like the seven churches John is writing to?

Are you ever fearful about future persecution for your faith? How should you change your mindset in the light of this passage?

5. How do people respond to God's punishments? How does this attitude compare with that of Pharaoh? (See Ex 9:27-35 for a good example.)

Think about it...

What is true repentance? See if you can write a definition.

6. The prospect of Armageddon worries many Christians, and is the subject of many books. The name comes from the Hebrew words “Har” (Mountain) “of Megiddo.” Historically, it was a famous battle ground - Judges 5:19 records details. What happens this time when the kings and powers of this earth come to do battle with God? Compare the results in Judges 5:19 with the results here in Revelation 16:17-18.



Armageddon - Scary? Or a reassuringly easy victory for God?

7. What do WE have to fear from Armageddon? Why?

8. What image is being presented in the final verses of chapter 16? What message does this have for us as we live in a godless world today? What should we be doing?

Another Victory for the Beast?

Cassian was a schoolteacher in a town not far from Rome. When he was arrested for refusing to sacrifice to the idols, his judge decided that his punishment should be entrusted to his students, who hated his discipline. He was bound and handed over to them. In a group, they attacked him with their styles, (the sharpened iron writing tools they used for writing on wax covered tablets) and stabbed him to death.

