

“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” — Revelation 16:15

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TRIBULATION SAINTS BEFORE ARMAGEDDON



— by Bill Salus —

The verse above was strategically inserted into the details of the Sixth Bowl Judgment for a specific reason. It seemingly serves as the Lord’s instructions to believers who are still alive on earth when the Antichrist, kings of the earth and their world armies are advancing to Armageddon. The underlying message within the verse will be explicated upon at the end of this chapter.

The book of Revelation is clear that during the Tribulation Period there will be no shortage in heaven of praise, worship and casting crowns before the throne of God. But, how do believers on earth, who are striving to survive the severe persecution in the Trib-period, hear about these glorious events happening in heaven? Possessing awareness of these heavenly festivities might help them hold their hopes high during the lowest of troubling times on earth.

Although they can’t yet take part, they can take heart in the knowledge about heaven’s rejoicing, but how? The answer is the same way that believers today can discover about these encouraging events in advance, and that’s through God’s Holy Word, the Bible. Hopefully, many believers in the Trib-period will become encouraged through reading in their Bibles about what’s taking place in heaven.

More importantly, as they study God’s Word, they will discover that throughout the Trib-period, the Lord will be communicating benedictions, instructions and warnings directly to them. These words of God’s wisdom are intended to equip His believers for the many trials that they will be forced to face. A few examples are listed below.

Note that these following passages are strategically placed in the book of Revelation to align with the events that are taking place on the earth during the Trib-period. They are intended to navigate believers through the Seal, Trumpet and Bowl Judgments.

Rev. 7:9 – Encourages persecuted believers that they are not suffering alone in their struggles, but they are part of “*a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.*”

Rev. 11:14 – Speaks directly to believers that somehow survived through the first two woes of the Fifth and Sixth Trumpet Judgments that there is only one more woe to go and that “*the third woe is coming quickly.*”

Rev. 12:12 – Prepares believers alive at the Midpoint of the Trib-period for the arrival on earth of Satan and

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The FINAL Prophecies: The Prophecies in the Last 3 ½ Years of the Tribulation

his defeated angelic troops. These believers are made aware *“for the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”*

Rev 13:9-10 – Commends believers to be patient and warns not to seek revenge for what’s happening to them. They are advised that, *“if anyone has an ear, let him hear. He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”*

Rev. 14:12-13 – Reinforces what was said previously above in Rev. 13:9-10. This particular passage has a specific application to those refusing to receive the Mark of the Beast. As a result of their refusal they run the risk of being beheaded by the Antichrist as per Rev. 20:4. These believers are told, *“Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”*”

Rev. 16:15 – Fast forwarding to the Sixth Bowl Judgment, the believers are instructed to, *“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”*

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, this verse seemingly serves as the Lord’s instructions to believers that are still alive on earth when the Antichrist, kings of the earth and their world armies are advancing to Armageddon. Due to the reference in Rev. 16:15 of, *“I am coming as a thief,”* rather than as a conqueror riding on a *“white horse”* with *“eyes of flaming fire”* and His *“head wearing many crowns”* as described in Rev. 19: 11-12, this verse needs some further clarification.

The question that arises is, *“does this verse allude to the coming of Christ in the Rapture or in His Second Coming?”* Keep in focus that Rev. 16:15 is the second to last detail of the Sixth Bowl Judgment of Rev. 16:12-16. By the time this verse gets inserted the:

- 1 Euphrates river has dried up,
- 2 The kings of the east are preparing to march over the dry ground of the Euphrates,
- 3 Three unclean spirits resembling frogs are performing signs and gathering the kings of the earth for *“the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”*

These three momentous events above all happen deep into the Great Tribulation Period, and likely five or more years after a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. The fact that Rev. 16:15 shows up amidst these three events strongly suggests that this verse is provided for believers witnessing the Sixth Bowl Judgment unfold before their very eyes.

To help answer this pertinent question, *Rapture vs. Second Coming*, a few quotes from noted Bible prophecy teachers are presented below. The first quote is from Dr. Tim LaHaye (1926-2016). Referring to Rev. 16:15, Dr. LaHaye writes:

“Verse 15 is our Lord’s challenge to any saints still living during the closing days of the Tribulation. He will come as a thief to the ungodly world not prepared for Him, and He challenges believers of all generations to be faithful, so in those closing days He will challenge His servants whom He has supernaturally preserved from the effects of the previous judgments to continue faithful to the very end.”

Dr. LaHaye is not suggesting that Jesus Christ is coming as a thief in order to steal away His Bride the Church in the Rapture. Rather, he is identifying a different grouping of believers that are not from the Church age, but who exist in *“the closing days”* of the Trib-period. LaHaye identifies them as *“His servants whom He has supernaturally preserved from the effects of the previous judgments.”*

These followers of Christ in *“the closing days,”* for whom the message of Rev. 16:15 is directed, have been *“supernaturally preserved”* through twenty of the twenty-one judgments of the book of Revelation. Unless they were born sometime in the midst of these judgments, they have already witnessed the fulfillment of the Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets and the first Six Bowl Judgments.

At that time, these believers are witnessing the advance of world armies, including the kings of the east marching over the dried-up Euphrates, to their destination in Israel. In Rev. 16:16 they are told, *“And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.”*

The second quote relating to Rev. 16:15 comes from *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* by John Walvoord and Rob B. Zuck.

“Christ’s return is often compared to the coming of a thief. It implies suddenness and unpreparedness as far as unbelievers are concerned. Just as Christians

are not to be surprised by the Rapture of the church (1 Thes. 5:4), so believers at the time of the Second Coming will be anticipating His return. Blessing is promised to the one who is prepared for the coming of the Lord by being attired in the righteousness or clothing which God Himself supplies.”

The quote above emphasizes that the coming of Jesus Christ as a thief “implies suddenness and unpreparedness as far as UNBELIEVERS are concerned.” This commentary does not say that the thief analogy “implies suddenness and unpreparedness as far as BELIEVERS are concerned.” In other words, Walvoord and Zuck seem to agree with Tim LaHaye that the reference to the “coming as a thief” in Rev. 16:15 alludes to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

If these persecuted saints who are alive at the time of the Sixth Bowl Judgment have been paying attention to the various words of God’s wisdom in the bullet points above, they will realize that Jesus Christ is about to return in His Second Coming! This is the moment that they have all been patiently waiting for. Rev. 16:15 commands these believers to do three important things:

- 1 BEHOLD THAT HIS RETURN DRAWS NEAR:
Behold, I am coming as a thief,
- 2 BE WATCHFUL FOR HIS RETURN:
Blessed is he who watches,
- 3 KEEP FAITHFUL: *Keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.*

These believing survivors are to be watchful and faithful because Jesus is coming quickly, like a thief does when he enters into a place to steal from it. The world is marching to Armageddon to finish off the Jews, but

Jesus Christ will come and stop them. He will rescue the Faithful Jewish Remnant and in the process, like a thief, He will rob the Antichrist, the kings of the earth and all of their evil armies of their victory. Additionally, these believers need to press onward and fight the good fight, finish the rapidly ending race, and continue steadfast in the faith. The pressure to cave in will be enormous and that’s why they are encouraged to keep their garments. Isaiah 61:10 associates garments as a typology for a person’s salvation. The prophet says, “For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.”

Remember that the Sixth Bowl Judgment is, as are all of the Bowl Judgments, filled with the wrath of God as per Rev. 15:1. Consider the promises below that are for Church age believers, they:

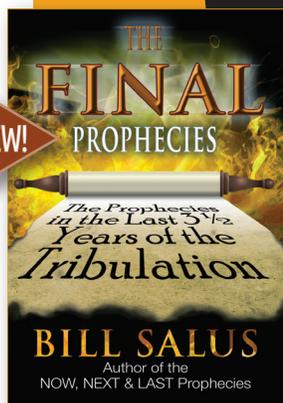
- Will be saved from God’s wrath through Jesus Christ – (Romans 5:9),
- Will be delivered from God’s wrath through Jesus Christ – (1 Thess. 1:10),
- Are not even appointed to God’s wrath – (1 Thess. 5:9),
- Are going to be kept from the hour of trial that will come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth – (Rev. 3:10),
- Are instructed to comfort one another with these above promises – (1 Thess. 4:18).

Thus, in keeping with the timing and content of the Sixth Bowl Judgment, it appears that the instructions of Rev. 16:15 for believers to behold, be watchful, and remain faithful, are applicable to followers of Christ that are witnessing the stage being set for the battle of Armageddon. 

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