

A Parable of the End - Revelation 16

It is over 111 years since the Titanic sank in the north Atlantic on its maiden voyage from Southampton to New York with the loss of over 1,500 lives. Still it remains very much in the public imagination. Increasingly, as I contemplate God's word concerning the end of times, especially as it is portrayed in Revelation 16, the loss of the Titanic appears as a modern-day parable for this world.

The ship was 'state of the art'; it was a palace of worldly opulence and luxury on the upper decks but with space below for very many poor people hoping for a new life of opportunity in the USA. Distinct from the upper decks, the lower ones provided cramped and unpleasant conditions for the week-long journey. For the 2,500 or so passengers on board, this ship was the key to all their hopes and aspirations; they trusted it to get them safely to 'the promised land' with little or no thought of how it might end. The ship's owners, designers, construction engineers and sailors had supreme confidence in their creation. But how tragically was the dream shattered in a freezing cold, dark, watery death for the majority.

This world in which we live is the kingdom of Satan, of his Anti-Christ. The vast majority of people are fully on board; their every pleasure and aspiration is vested in this world. It is a world with no thought, other than rejection, for the God who made all things. It is a world in open, brazen revolt in thought and deed against God and his righteousness. It is a world that

makes life difficult for anyone who does not conform to its values, for anyone who believes God and rests in the redemption accomplished by Christ for them. These are the people who alone out of all of fallen humanity establish the righteousness of God by faith in Christ (Rom3:31). These are people who, to use the Titanic parable, have already abandoned ship and have fled to the only reliable lifeboat which is Christ.

When God instructs his angels to pour out the seven vials of wrath on this world it will be like the Titanic's passengers with all their dreams and godless hopes taken from them in a moment. How would they have lived and thought differently if they had seen what was coming in the dark night ahead.

When God reveals the details of the end in Revelation 16, he graciously inserts a warning, a call and a promise in verse 15. The warning is that the end will come unexpectedly, the call is to watch, to be prepared (in thinking and allegiance) and the promise is of garments to preserve his believing people from the just judgment of sin that would otherwise condemn them to the fate of all the rest. Those garments are held up in Isaiah 61:10, garments of salvation in the work of Christ, garments that present God's people holy and righteous in God's Kingdom. AJ

Revelation 16:15

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.

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Sunday 24th Sept 2023

11:00 am (GMT+1) Service

Revelation 16

"The Seven Last Plagues"

Traditional worship with hymns, prayer, Bible readings
and a sermon based on a passage of the Bible

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Isaiah 61:10

352 to 283

J Hart

1 The moon and stars shall lose their light,
The sun shall sink in endless night;
Both heaven and earth shall pass away;
The works of nature all decay.

2 But they that in the Lord confide,
And shelter in his wounded side,
Shall see the danger overpast,
Stand every storm, and live at last.

3 What Christ has said must be fulfilled;
On this firm rock, believers build;
His word shall stand, his truth prevail,
And not one jot or tittle fail.

4 His word is this (poor sinners, hear);
“Believe on me, and banish fear;
Cease from your own works, bad or good,
And wash your garments in my blood.”

Prayer

Matthew 24:29-44

Prayer

97 to 385

C Wesley

1 'Tis finished! the Messiah dies!
Cut off for sins, but not his own;
Accomplished is the sacrifice;
The great redeeming work is done.

2 Finished our vile transgression is,
And purged the guilt of all our sin;
And everlasting righteousness
Is brought, for all his people, in.

3 'Tis finished, all my guilt and pain.
I want no sacrifice beside.
For me, for me the Lamb was slain,
And I'm for ever justified.

4 Sin, death, and hell are now subdued;
All grace is now to sinners given;
And lo! I plead the atoning blood,
For pardon, holiness, and heaven.

Sermon

982 to 671

T Kelly

1 “It is finished!” Sinners, hear it;
'Tis the dying Victor's cry;
“It is finished!” Angels bear it,
Bear the joyful truth on high :
“It is finished!”
Tell it through the earth and sky!

2 Justice, from her awful station,
Bars the sinner's peace no more;
Justice views with approbation
What the Saviour did and bore;
Grace and mercy
Now display their boundless store.

3 Hear the Lord himself declaring
All performed he came to do;
Sinners, in yourselves despairing,
This is joyful news to you.
Jesus speaks it,
His are faithful words and true.

4 “It is finished!” all is over;
Yes, the cup of wrath is drained;
Such the truth these words discover;
Thus the victory was obtained;
'Tis a victory
None but Jesus could have gained.