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Lesson 28 Rev 16:1-21

Revelation 16:1-21 (NASB)

¹ Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

² So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

³ The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.

⁴ Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood.

⁵ And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things;

⁶ for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it."

⁷ And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

⁸ The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire.

⁹ Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

¹⁰ Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain,

¹¹ and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

¹² The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.

¹³ And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs;

¹⁴ for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

¹⁵ ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.")

¹⁶ And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

¹⁷ Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done."

¹⁸ And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty.

¹⁹ The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

²⁰ And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

²¹ And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, *came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague *was extremely severe.

J. The bowls of divine wrath ([chap. 16](#))

Chronologically this chapter is close to the time of the second coming of Christ, and the judgments described fall in rapid succession. Alford says, "There can then be no doubt here, not only that the series reaches on to the time of the end, but that the whole of it is to be placed close to the same time" (*The Greek Testament*, 4:696). Daniel indicated that these closing days of the Tribulation will be a time of world war ([Dan. 11:36-45](#)). World events are now pictured by John as rapidly coming to their climax.

1. THE FIRST BOWL ([16:1-2](#))

16:1-2. John recorded that he heard a loud voice from the temple instructing the seven angels to pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth. This is undoubtedly the voice of God speaking from His heavenly temple. The adjective translated "loud" (*megalēs*) is frequently used in this chapter ([v. 17](#) also refers to the loud voice). But the same Greek word is used in connection with intense heat ([v. 9](#)), the great river Euphrates ([v. 12](#)), the great day of God Almighty ([v. 14](#)), a severe earthquake ([v. 18](#)), the great city ([v. 19](#)), Babylon the Great ([v. 19](#)), huge hailstones ([v. 21](#)), and a terrible plague ([v. 21](#)). The judgments being poured out are greater, more severe, more intense than anything that has happened in the preceding events. When the first angel... poured out his bowl of wrath, it produced ugly and painful sores on those who had the beast's mark and worshiped his image.

The question has been raised as to whether the bowls of the wrath of God are chronologically subsequent to or identical with the seven trumpets of the angels. There is clearly much similarity between the trumpet judgments and the bowl judgments. They both deal with (a) the earth ([8:7](#)) or the land ([16:2](#)), (b) the sea ([8:8](#); [16:3](#)), (c) the rivers and springs of water ([8:10](#); [16:4](#)), and (d) the sun, moon, and stars ([8:12](#)) with only the sun mentioned in the bowl judgments ([16:8-9](#)). The fifth trumpet dealt with demon possession with the sun and sky darkened ([9:1-3](#)), which is similar to the fifth bowl in which darkness will cover the earth and sores will cause agony among men ([16:10-11](#)). The sixth trumpet deals with the river Euphrates ([9:13-14](#)), and the sixth bowl will dry up the Euphrates ([16:12](#)). The seventh trumpet implies that the Great Tribulation is coming to its end ([11:15-19](#)), and the seventh bowl of the wrath of God records a loud voice from heaven, saying, "It is done!" ([16:17](#)) with resulting destruction of the earth by earthquake and hail, which is also included in the seventh trumpet ([11:18-19](#)).

Similarities, however, do not prove identity, and a comparison of the trumpets with the bowls of God's wrath reveals striking differences even though the order of the judgments is the same. In the trumpet judgments, generally speaking, a third of the earth or heaven is afflicted, whereas in the bowl judgments the effects of the judgments are on the entire earth and are much more severe and final in character. Accordingly it seems best to follow the interpretation which has long been held in the church that the seven bowls are an expansion of the seventh trumpet, just as the seven trumpets are an expansion of the breaking of the seventh seal. The order is climactic and the judgments become more intensive and extensive as the time of the second coming of Christ approaches. All indications are that the bowl judgments fall with trip-hammer rapidity on a world that is reeling under previous judgments and a gigantic world war. Some bowl judgments

are selective and extend only to the wicked ([16:2](#), [8-11](#)), and several affect parts of nature (sea, rivers, sun, etc.).

In the first bowl judgment people who followed the Antichrist received painful sores. Sores also come with the fifth bowl ([vv. 10-11](#)).

2. THE SECOND BOWL ([16:3](#))

[16:3](#). After the second trumpet blew ([8:8-9](#)), "a third of the sea turned into blood," killing "a third of the living creatures" and destroying "a third of the ships" ([8:8-9](#)). In **the second... bowl**, however, **every living thing in the sea died** ([16:3](#)). It is probable that the ocean here did not chemically correspond to human blood, but that it looked like blood and had the same effect in killing everything. Just as in the second trumpet, the blood here is analogous to the first plague in Egypt ([Ex. 7:20-25](#)). **As most of the earth's surface is covered by the seas, this is a worldwide, tremendous judgment.**

3. THE THIRD BOWL ([16:4-7](#))

[16:4-7](#). Just as the third trumpet made "a third of the waters" bitter ([8:11](#)), so **the third... bowl** extends the judgment of the second bowl on the sea to **rivers and springs and they became blood** ([16:4](#)). John heard the angel in charge of the waters proclaim that **God the Holy One is just in His judgments** ([v. 5](#)). For God's work in turning the waters to blood is **in response to the shedding of the blood of... saints and prophets** ([v. 6](#)). This is echoed by a word from the altar declaring the judgment just ([v. 7](#); cf. [15:3](#)).

4. THE FOURTH BOWL ([16:8-9](#))

[16:8-9](#). This judgment focused the **intense heat of the sun**. In response people **cursed... God and refused to repent** (cf. [v. 11](#)). By contrast, the fourth trumpet ([8:12](#)) darkened a third of the heavens but did not include additional intense heat. **It is clear from this and other prophecies that dramatic changes in climate will occur in the Great Tribulation.**

5. THE FIFTH BOWL ([16:10-11](#))

[16:10-11](#). This judgment was directed toward the beast's **throne**, imposed **darkness** on the earth, and inflicted painful **sores** (cf. [v. 2](#)) on people. Again they **cursed... God and refused to repent**. This is the last reference in Revelation to a failure to repent (cf. [2:21](#); [9:21](#); [16:9](#); cf., however, [16:21](#)). The fifth bowl is similar to the fifth trumpet ([9:1-11](#)) in that both will bring darkness, but the fifth trumpet has to do with demon possession rather than physical pain.

6. THE SIXTH BOWL ([16:12-16](#))

[16:12](#). According to John's revelation, **the sixth angel poured out his bowl** and dried up the river Euphrates **to prepare the way for the kings from the East**. There has been endless speculation about "the kings from the East," with many expositors trying to relate them to some

contemporary leaders of their generation. A survey of 100 commentaries of the Book of Revelation reveals at least 50 interpretations of the identity of the kings of the East. The simplest and best explanation, however, is that this refers to kings or rulers from the Orient or East who will participate in the final world war. In the light of the context of this passage indicating the near approach of the second coming of Christ and the contemporary world situation in which the Orient today contains a large portion of the world's population with tremendous military potential, any interpretation other than a literal one does not make sense. Alford states it concisely: "This is the only understanding of these words which will suit the context, or the requirement of this series of prophecies" (Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 4:700).

This is related to the **great river Euphrates** because this is the water boundary between the Holy Land and Asia to the east (cf. [comments](#) on [9:12-16](#)). While the implication is that the water is dried up by an act of God, the fact is that dams have been built across the Euphrates River in this century to divert water for irrigation so that there are times even today when there is little or no water in the Euphrates. The Euphrates River is frequently mentioned in Scripture (e.g., [Gen. 15:18](#); [Deut. 1:7](#); [11:24](#); [Josh. 1:4](#)). The drying up of this river is also predicted in [Isaiah 11:15](#).

16:13-16. John was then given a symbolic and comprehensive view of the preparation for the final bowl of God's wrath. He **saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs** coming out of the mouths of Satan (**the dragon**) and the two beasts (Antichrist [[13:1-10](#)] and the false prophet [[13:11-18](#)]). One need not speculate on the identity of the three frogs, for [verse 14](#) explains that **they are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs**. These demons go throughout the world influencing kings to assemble **for the battle on the great day of God Almighty** ("Almighty" [*pantokratōr*] is also used in [1:8](#); [4:8](#); [11:17](#); [15:3](#); [16:7](#); [19:6](#), [15](#); [21:22](#)).

While the meaning of this symbolic presentation is clear, there is a major problem involved in what the demons do. The coming world government in the Great Tribulation will be established by the power of Satan ([13:2](#)). Here, however, Satan, the world ruler, and the false prophet unite in inciting the nations of the world **to gather** for the final world war. Actually the war is a form of rebellion against the world ruler. Why then should satanic forces be let loose to destroy the world empire which has just been created?

The answer seems to be in the events which follow. **Satan, knowing that the second coming of Christ is near, will gather all the military might of the world into the Holy Land to resist the coming of the Son of Man who will return to the Mount of Olives** ([Zech. 14:4](#)). Though the nations may be deceived in entering into the war in hope of gaining world political power, the satanic purpose is to combat the armies from heaven (introduced in [chap. 19](#)) at the second coming of Christ.

The war is said to continue right up to the day of the Second Coming and involves house-to-house fighting in Jerusalem itself on the day of the Lord's return ([Zech. 14:1-3](#)). The reference to "the battle" (*ton polemon*, [Rev. 16:14](#)) is probably better translated "the war" (NASB). Thus it is better to speak of "the war of Armageddon" (see [v. 16](#)) rather than the "the battle of Armageddon." **The war will be going on for some time, but the climax will come at Christ's second coming.** "Armageddon" comes from the Greek *Harmagedōn*, which transliterates the

Hebrew words for Mount (*har*) of Megiddo. That mountain is near the city of Megiddo and the plain of Esdraelon, the scene of many Old Testament battles.

Accordingly John heard the warning coming from Christ Himself: **Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.**


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.

Taken as a whole, the sixth bowl of the wrath of God is preparation for the final act of judgment before the Second Coming, and is the later stage of development related to the river Euphrates, anticipated earlier (Rev. 9:14). The time factor between the sixth trumpet and the sixth bowl is comparatively short.

7. THE SEVENTH BOWL ([16:17-21](#))

[16:17-20](#). The seventh angel then poured out his bowl into the air. John heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, **It is done!** A similar pronouncement followed the seventh trumpet ([11:15-19](#)). Here also John saw lightning flashes and heard thunder, which was followed by a severe earthquake ([16:18](#)). John was then informed that this will be the greatest earthquake of all time (other earthquakes are mentioned in [8:5](#) and [11:19](#)), and the resulting description indicates that it will affect the whole earth with the possible exception of the land of Israel. The great city which split into three parts refers to the destruction of Babylon. The most important event, however, is that the cities of the nations collapsed. The huge earthquake will reduce to rubble all the cities of the nations (Gentiles). The stage is thus being set for the second coming of Christ. Obviously in the collapse of the world's cities there will be tremendous loss of life and destruction of what is left of the world empire.

Though Jerusalem is mentioned in [11:8](#) as "the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified," "the great city" here is specifically Babylon, as indicated in [16:19](#). God will give Babylon the cup filled with the wine of the fury of His wrath, that is, she will experience a terrible outpouring of His judgment. Some have suggested that this city is Rome, but is called Babylon because of its spiritual declension. While this has been debated at length by scholars (cf. J.A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse*, pp. 381-82, 397-420), it is preferable to view "Babylon" as the rebuilt city of Babylon located on the Euphrates River, which will be the capital of the final world government (cf. Walvoord, *Revelation*, pp. 240-41).

 In addition to the terrible earthquake and probably because of it, John recorded, **Every island fled away and mountains could not be found.** These verses ([vv. 18-20](#)), if taken literally, indicate topographical changes in the earth which eventually will also include great changes in the Holy Land in preparation for Christ's millennial kingdom.

16:21. In addition to the earthquake, **huge hailstones of about 100 pounds each** fell on people. Such huge masses of ice supernaturally formed would destroy anything left standing from the earthquake and would no doubt kill or seriously injure those they hit. In spite of the severity of the judgment and its cataclysmic character the hardness of human hearts is revealed in the final sentence: **And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.**

The question is sometimes raised **why eternal punishment is eternal.** The answer is that people in **the hardness of their hearts will not change; they deserve eternal punishment** because they are **eternally unrepentant.** With the final destruction coming from the seventh bowl of the wrath of God, the stage will then be set for the dramatic and climactic second coming of Christ, revealed in [chapter 19](#). Before this event, however, a future detailed description is given of Babylon in [chapters 17-18](#).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

Open it

1. What is the most pain you have ever experienced?

Leg pain when I ruptured a disc in my back, brought me to tears

2. Which do you think is worse—physical or emotional pain?

Emotional, it can linger for years while physical will fade in time

Explore it

3. What instructions did the loud voice give to the seven angels? ([16:1](#))

Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.

4. What happened when the first angel poured out his bowl? ([16:2](#))

It became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.

5. What happened when the second angel emptied his bowl? ([16:3](#))

poured his bowl into the sea and it became blood like that of a dead man and every living thing in the sea died.

6. What happened in the wake of the third angel pouring out his bowl? ([16:4](#))

poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters and they became blood

7. What did the angel in charge of the waters say about the judgments being poured out? ([16:5-7](#))

⁵ And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; ⁶ for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it." And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

8. What kinds of judgment did the fourth bowl contain? ([16:8-9](#))

⁸ The fourth *angel* poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. ⁹ Men were scorched with fierce heat

9. What effect did the "raising of the thermostat" have on the earth's inhabitants? ([16:9](#))

they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

10. What happened when the fifth angel poured out his bowl? ([16:10-11](#))

He poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

11. Where was the judgment of the sixth angel directed? Why? ([16:12](#))

The sixth *angel* poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.

12. What was the appearance of the three evil spirits after the judgment of bowl number six? ([16:13-14](#))

3 unclean spirits like frogs

13. What blessing was pronounced in the middle of this outpouring of judgment? ([16:15](#))

Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.

14. What happened to the kings of the East? ([16:16](#))

And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

15. What were the results when the seventh angel poured out his bowl of judgment? ([16:17-21](#))

Then the seventh *angel* poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done."¹⁸ And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake *was it, and* so mighty.

¹⁹ The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

²⁰ And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. ²¹ And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, *came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague *was extremely severe.

Get it

16. What makes the judgments described here—horrible as they are—perfectly just?

God repays them as they did to others

17. What makes a person blessed for "keeping his clothes white"?

He/she has not sinned

Apply it

18. What is one step you can take this week to fight spiritual laziness?

Pay more attention to the scriptures as I study

19. How could you use the message of this passage to engage a non-Christian friend in a discussion about Christ?

Ask if they want to avoid a terrible fate, read this passage to them and tell them how to become a believer.

Daniel 11:36 (NASB)

³⁶ "Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.

Daniel 11:37 (NASB)

³⁷ "He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any *other* god; for he will magnify himself above *them* all.

Daniel 11:38 (NASB)

³⁸ "But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor *him* with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures.

Daniel 11:39 (NASB)

³⁹ "He will take action against the strongest of fortresses with *the help of* a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge *him* and will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.

Daniel 11:40 (NASB)

⁴⁰ "At the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow *them* and pass through.

Daniel 11:41 (NASB)

⁴¹ "He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many *countries* will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon.

Daniel 11:42 (NASB)

⁴² "Then he will stretch out his hand against *other* countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape.

Daniel 11:43 (NASB)

⁴³ "But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians *will follow* at his heels.

Daniel 11:44 (NASB)

⁴⁴ "But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many.

Daniel 11:45 (NASB)

⁴⁵ "He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

Revelation 8:8 (NASB)

⁸ The second angel sounded, and *something* like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood,

Revelation 8:9 (NASB)

⁹ and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Revelation 16:3 (NASB)

³ The second *angel* poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like *that* of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.

Exodus 7:20 (NASB)

²⁰ So Moses and Aaron did even as the LORD had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that *was* in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the water that *was* in the Nile was turned to blood.

Exodus 7:21 (NASB)

²¹ The fish that *were* in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the land of Egypt.

Exodus 7:22 (NASB)

²² But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

Exodus 7:23 (NASB)

²³ Then Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this.

Exodus 7:24 (NASB)

²⁴ So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink of the water of the Nile.

Exodus 7:25 (NASB)

²⁵ Seven days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

Revelation 8:11 (NASB)

¹¹ The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.

Revelation 15:3 (NASB)

³ And they *sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!

Revelation 8:12 (NASB)

¹² The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.

Revelation 2:21 (NASB)

²¹ 'I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality.

Revelation 9:21 (NASB)

²¹ and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

Genesis 15:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:

Deuteronomy 1:7 (NASB)

⁷ "Turn and set your journey, and go to the hill country of the Amorites, and to all their neighbors in the Arabah, in the hill country and in the lowland and in the Negev and by the seacoast, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.

Deuteronomy 11:24 (NASB)

²⁴ "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours; your border will be from the wilderness to Lebanon, *and* from the river, the river Euphrates, as far as the western sea.

Joshua 1:4 (NASB)

⁴ "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory.

Isaiah 11:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ And the LORD will utterly destroy The tongue of the Sea of Egypt; And He will wave His hand over the River With His scorching wind; And He will strike it into seven streams And make *men* walk over dry-shod.

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¹⁵ And the LORD will utterly destroy The tongue of the Sea of Egypt; And He will wave His hand over the River With His scorching wind; And He will strike it into seven streams And make *men* walk over dry-shod.

Zechariah 14:1 (NASB)

¹ Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you.

Zechariah 14:2 (NASB)

² For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city.

Zechariah 14:3 (NASB)

³ Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.

1 Thessalonians 5:4 (NASB)

⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;