

Lesson 35

So where are we at the end of Chapter 14? Before the **seals** were opened we had a vision of heaven assuring us that the true throne was in heaven and not in Rome. Before the **trumpets** were sounded we were shown a period of silence in heaven, and we were told that the coming judgment was occurring due to a call for justice by the saints. Chapter 15 will show us a third vision of heaven, and this vision occurs before the **bowls** of God's wrath are poured out in Chapter 16.

Chapter 15

Revelation 15:1

1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

So far, the judgments against Rome have been partial and have allowed for repentance. The judgments of the seven bowls are total and final, and repentance is no longer an option.

Yes, God is longsuffering, but at some point the door swings shut. At some point, the time for repentance comes to an end, and judgment awaits.

With a person, that door shuts with finality at the person's death. But even before death, the door can be almost entirely closed.

***Romans 1:24** — Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.*

***Romans 1:26** — For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections.*

Romans 1:28 — *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.*

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 — *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

I think that when God gives a person up that is God's final attempt to convince that person to repent. Perhaps that person, like the prodigal, will come to his senses in that pig pen. God does not do these things because he wants the person to perish — God does these things because he wants the person to be saved. But some day the door will close forever on that opportunity.

And what about a society? Does God give a **nation** up so that perhaps the entire society will come to its senses? At what point does a nation's opportunity for repentance comes to an end?

Nineveh repented at the peaching of Jonah, but Rome did not repent at the preaching of Peter and Paul. And what amount of preaching would it take for our own society to turn from the path it is on? At some point, a society becomes so far gone that all that remains is judgment.

Hailey: "If proclaiming the good news of redemption does not cause men to fear before God, and if partial judgments do not turn them from humanism and materialism to repentance, then such an unregenerated society forfeits its right to continue. A destruction by judgment is inevitable and just."

Rome had reached that point. Rome had fulfilled its role in the plan of God to establish his eternal kingdom, and now Rome was actively persecuting God's kingdom. The gospel had been proclaimed to Rome, and Rome had been given opportunity after opportunity to repent, and yet Rome had not repented. Instead, the terrible persecution under Nero was about to begin again under Domitian. God had had his fill of Rome, God's wrath had risen to the brim of the bowl, and now the bowls of God's wrath were about to be poured out on Rome.

But remember that what we are seeing here is a **spiritual** judgment, just as the deliverance of the church was a spiritual deliverance. We know that the deliverance of the Christian occurred at that Christian's death.

Revelation 2:10 — *Be thou faithful unto **death**, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

Revelation 14:13 — *Blessed are the **dead** which die in the Lord from henceforth.*

That is also when the spiritual judgment of the Romans occurred. Yes, some of the judgments may have involved some physical aspects (such as the gruesome deaths of Nero and Domitian), but the focus of this book is on the *spiritual* deliverance of the church and the *spiritual* judgment of Rome.

How do we know that for sure? We know that for sure because the time for repentance is over. That occurs at the time of death, not before. That repentance is no longer an option confirms that we are looking here at a spiritual judgment.

Verse 1 tells us that, with these seven last plagues, the wrath of God is **filled up**. The ESV says that “with them the wrath of God is **finished**.” The RSV says that “with them the wrath of God is **ended**.”

Filled up? Finished? Ended? Doesn't that mean that we have at last reached the end of the world? No. It does not.

Once again, we should turn elsewhere in the Bible to see how similar language is used. Let's look at Matthew 24, for example.

Matthew 24:13-14 — *But he that shall endure unto **the end**, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall **the end** come.*

That sure sounds like the end of the world, doesn't it? Is that the end of the world? No. We know it is not. How do we know for sure? Because of verse 34.

Matthew 24:34 — *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*

The “end” in Matthew 24:13-14 is the end of the Christian's life (verse 13) and the end of Jerusalem (verse 14). It can't be the end of the world because that end did not occur during that first century generation.

Let's look at another example.

Ezekiel 7:2-3 — *Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel; **An end, the end** is come upon the four corners of the land. Now is **the***

end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations.

Was that the end of the world? No. That was the judgment and exile of God's own people.

So what can we conclude from those examples? Just this — when we see the word “**end**” we shouldn't automatically assume that the end of the world is being discussed, but instead we need to look at the context to see what is being discussed. That is hardly an earth-shattering conclusion — but if more people followed it, there would be much less confusion about what this book is teaching!

The Greek word *teleo* translated “filled up” here simply means to carry out, accomplish, perform, or fulfill, and that is exactly what is happening in this chapter with regard to Rome.

So what then does verse 1 mean? Verse 1 means just what we would expect it to mean, having studied the previous 14 chapters. Verse 1 means that this is God's final word with respect to Rome, the great enemy of God's people on which this entire book has been focused. God has had enough. The bowls of his wrath are about to be poured out on Rome. Rome ignored the seals. Rome ignored the trumpets. Let's see if Rome can ignore the bowls.

Revelation 15:2-4

2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. 3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. 4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy

name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

James describes someone who is a hearer and not a doer of the word as someone who looks into a mirror and then forgets what he looked like. How can we keep that from happening? James tells us in the very next verse.

James 1:25 — But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

What James is telling us is that if we want to see what we really look like, we shouldn't look at ourselves in a physical mirror, but instead we should look at ourselves in the mirror of God's word, the perfect law of liberty. Our reflection in Scripture is what we really look like. Only there can we see the flaws that matter — not our physical flaws, but our spiritual flaws.

But the good news of the gospel is that when we see ourselves in God's mirror, we can, through the blood of Christ, see a spotless image staring back at us. Remember what we read in the previous chapter.

Revelation 14:5 — For they are without fault before the throne of God.

That's my kind of mirror! And that's the mirror we have in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Why do I raise this point now? Because not only can an individual Christian use the perfect law of liberty as a mirror, so can the church as a whole. The church can look into God's word and see itself. And when we do, we will not see ourselves as the world sees us (as if we were looking in a physical mirror), but we will see ourselves as God sees us.

So how do we look? Well, first, we have to acknowledge our faults in failing to live up to the ideal that God has given us. We see that, for example, when we look into the mirror of Revelation 2-3.

But, second, we see that, despite those faults, God's church is a glorious eternal kingdom washed clean by the blood of Jesus. And in the mirror of God's word, we can see how God views the blood bought people of his Son. And what a

beautiful image we can see! If we are ever tempted to doubt the beauty and power of the church, we need to look at ourselves in the mirror of this beautiful book of Revelation. And we should thank God every day for this wonderful gift.

The next time you say your prayers, please remember to thank God for giving us this beautiful book of Revelation that contains so many wonderful descriptions of the Lord's church! Jude is also a wonderful book — but I'm glad the New Testament didn't end with Jude! Revelation is the perfect ending for the word of God. It began in the Garden, and it ends with the people of God rejoicing in the eternal kingdom of Christ.

The first thing we see in verse 2 is a sea. As we have mentioned, the restless sea is a common figure for the nations of the world, but here we do not see a restless sea; we see a sea of glass. Once again, God has calmed the restless sea! But this sea of glass is mingled with fire. What does that mean?

The most common suggestions are that it refers either to the fiery judgments that were about to fall on Rome or that it refers to the fiery trials through which the Christians had emerged victorious. I much prefer the second option based on the context. The focus here is on the faithful people of God. They have endured fiery trials. They "had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name."

In the KJV, verse 2 says that they are standing "on the sea of glass." The ESV says that they are standing "beside the sea of glass." I think that "beside" is likely the better translation, but if they are standing "on" the sea of glass, then perhaps verse 2 is telling us that the saints have moved closer to the throne through their suffering. If the proper translation is "beside the sea," then, as Swete says, these martyrs have come safely through the sea of martyrdom to arrive at the shore of heaven.

What incredible examples that have left for us to follow! Whenever we think we have it bad or when we are facing some persecution or trial, we should look back to their example and consider what they endured. As Hebrews 12:4 reminds most if not all of us today, we "have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

Verse 2 also says that they have the harps of God. What are the harps of God? Doesn't verse 3 answer that question? "And they **sing!**" The harps of God are the harps made by God — the human vocal chords. They are not playing the harps of man. In fact, Acts 17:25 tells us what God thinks of the harps of man.

Acts 17:25 — Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.

The kingdom of God is made without human hands, and those who worship God in the kingdom made without human hands must not use instruments made with human hands, but instead must use the harps of God — the human voice made without human hands.

Remember that what we are seeing here is symbolic. This language is figurative. In the same verse where we see harps, we also see a sea of glass mingled with fire and a beast along with its image and the number of its name. These harps are symbols for praise, just as elsewhere incense is used as a symbol for prayer. And the pattern in the New Testament is that we praise God with the harps that he made — the human voice. And that is exactly what we see happening in the next verse.

In verse 3, the church **sings** the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb.

We can read the song of Moses in Exodus 15. That song celebrated a tremendous victory of God over Egypt, the great enemy of God's people. Here the song of Moses celebrates another tremendous victory over another great enemy of God's people, Rome.

The song of the Lamb celebrates the same victory because it is only through the Lamb that such a victory was possible. This deliverance is a spiritual deliverance, and there can be no spiritual deliverance over Rome or over anyone else absent the cross of Christ. It is only through the blood of Christ that faith is the victory. We are victorious in death only because of Jesus' death.

Why are both songs sung? I think the fact that we see both songs here confirms what we said earlier — the church consists of the faithful people of God under both the old covenant and the new covenant. Together all of God's faithful people are united in Christ as one redeemed people.

We have seen many comparisons in this book between the deliverance from Rome and the deliverance from Egypt during the exodus, and here we see yet another comparison with the song of Moses. But there is a key difference between the two events: The deliverance from Egypt was a **physical** deliverance while the deliverance from Rome was a **spiritual** deliverance. The deliverance over Rome was a **better** deliverance than the deliverance over Egypt.

When we see the word “better,” we should think of another New Testament book — Hebrews. The purpose of that book is to explain how the new covenant is better than the old covenant. One way in which the new is better than the old is related to the two songs that we see here: the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

Hebrews 3:1-3 — *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.*

Moses could *physically* deliver his people, but Moses had no spiritual deliverance to offer. Moses could do nothing for a dead Israelite. Moses’ power to help his people ended at their deaths. Not so with the Lamb. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth” (Revelation 14:13). “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). Listen as the book of Hebrews explains the difference.

Hebrews 2:14-15 — *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

Moses could deliver his people from Egyptian bondage, but Moses was powerless against the bondage of death. No so with the Lamb!

The singers in verse 3 give no glory to themselves. Instead they sing, “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”

If we are looking for a pattern to follow for the songs that we sing in worship, this would be a good place to start. Almost every phrase of this hymn is taken from the Old Testament.

Psalms 111:3 — *His work is honourable and glorious.*

Amos 4:13 — *The Lord, The God of hosts, is his name.*

Deuteronomy 32:4 — *He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*

Jeremiah 10:7 — *Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?*

Swete says that the singers here seem to be so lost in the joy of being before God that they completely forget what they have been through to attain this position.

In the presence of God the martyrs forget themselves; their thoughts are absorbed by new wonders that surround them; the glory of God and the mighty scheme of things in which their own sufferings form an infinitesimal part are opening before them; they begin to see the great issue of the world-drama, and we hear the doxology with which they greet their first unclouded vision of God and his works.

And we are reminded of a song we often sing — “Sing On, Ye Joyful Pilgrims.” How does that song end? “My heart is filled with rapture, My soul is lost in praise!”

Is Revelation all about heaven and the end of the world? No. But does this book tell us a great deal about what heaven will be like? Absolutely. Some day we too will be lost in the joy of being before the throne of God. Some day we too will sing these great songs of deliverance in heaven.

In verse 3, the KJV has “King of saints.” Other translations have “King of the ages,” while still others have “King of the nations.” Which is correct? The commentaries are nearly unanimous that the KJV is not correct here. As for the other two possibilities, the ancient manuscripts are divided, but “king of the nations” seems to fit the context better. In any event, Jesus is King of kings, which means he is the King of the ages and the King of the nations.

What does it mean in verse 4 that “all nations shall come and worship before thee”? I think it means two things.

First, it means that the church would come and worship before God, which in fact is exactly what we are seeing in these verses. The church consisted of people from all nations, so in that sense all nations would come and worship God. That is what had been prophesied long before when God promised to

bles, not just Israel, but the entire world through Jesus Christ. Remember the great prophecy of the church in Isaiah 2.

Isaiah 2:2 — And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

And remember the great Messianic Psalm 2.

Psalm 2:27-28 — All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations.

But, second, I think verse 4 is also telling us that God's power and God's righteousness would be made manifest before all nations — something that was particularly true when it came to the triumph of the Lord's church over the mighty Roman empire. I think verse 4 is telling us that all nations would one day come to understand who the real King is and which kingdom is the eternal kingdom. We saw an example of this with King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4.

Daniel 4:37 — Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

What prompted that change in attitude from the great Babylonian king? Not his piety, but instead it was prompted by a display of God's great power in causing the king to live like an ox for seven years! After all, what is the explanation given here in verse 4 for the worship by the nations? "For thy judgments are made manifest." That is the same reason why Nebuchadnezzar found himself praising God in Daniel 4.

Revelation 15:5-8

5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: 6 And the seven angels came out of

the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. 7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

The “temple of the tabernacle of the testimony” in verse 5 is not the temple that Solomon built but is instead the tent that was erected by Moses in the wilderness. Moses was mentioned just a few verses ago, and much of what we are seeing here is modeled after the exodus.

*Numbers 9:15 — And on the day that **the tabernacle was reared up** the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, **the tent of the testimony**: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning.*

*Acts 7:44 — Our fathers had **the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness**, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.*

This tent was called the tent of the testimony or the tent of witness (Numbers 17:7, 18:2) because it held the two tablets brought down from Mt. Sinai by Moses and placed in the ark of the covenant (Deuteronomy 10:5).

Why is this tabernacle shown here? Several reasons.

First, this tabernacle keeps the focus on the exodus, which in turn keeps the focus on the deliverance of God’s people, which is what this book is all about. Every time we see a reference back to the exodus we should think about deliverance.

Second, this tabernacle was the inner sanctuary where God dwelt. What that tells us is that these final judgments against Rome are coming from the very presence of God. Yes, angels are coming out of the tabernacle, but God is not *delegating* this judgment; God is *doing* this judgment. These angels are coming from his very presence. The judgment they are bringing is coming directly from God.

Back in Revelation 6:10 we saw that the coming judgment against Rome was a divine judgment brought about by the prayers of the saints. That point is emphasized here by what these seven angels are wearing. They are wearing priestly clothing—white linen and golden girdles. Such a girdle was worn by a priest only when he was officiating on behalf of the people. These angels dressed as priests come directly from the presence of God to wage a holy war of judgment against Rome. It is a very powerful image.

We discussed the four beasts or the four living creatures back in Revelation 4:6-8. They protect God's reputation and demand punishment of the ungodly. It is one of these four living creatures who passes out the bowls of wrath to the seven angels in verse 7. Remember what these four living creatures do.

Revelation 4:8 — And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

Notice the three sets of three in that verse: Holy Holy Holy; Lord God Almighty; Which was, And is, And is to come. These four living creatures show the creation (symbolized by the number four) worshipping the Godhead (symbolized by the number three). They are about to send seven angels (symbolizing a perfect judgment by the perfect number seven) to judge Rome (symbolized by the number two, a number that falls short of the divine number three). **This book is truly beautiful when we understand the symbols!**

The Greek word used here for “bowl” occurs only in Revelation (where it appears twelve times). It denotes a broad shallow vessel or a deep saucer. It is similar to some of the bowls used in the Old Testament for sacrifices and rituals.

What is the purpose of these seven bowls that are full of the wrath of God? The purpose of the seven **seals** was to **reveal**. The purpose of the seven **trumpets** was to **warn**. The purpose of the seven **bowls** is to **execute**.

The smoke in verse 8 is yet another reminder of the judgment that is about to be unleashed. The smoke comes from the glory of God and from the power of God. Mt. Sinai was covered with smoke with God descended upon it in Exodus 19:18. A cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of God filled the tabernacle in Exodus 40:34. The temple of heaven was filled with smoke in Isaiah's great vision in Isaiah 6:4.

The smoke may also be a reminder of the prayers of the saints, which ascended as smoke to God in Revelation 8:4.

Why does verse 8 say that no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues were fulfilled? Likely because these plagues were a manifestation of the glory of God upon which no one can look. We see something similar in 1 Kings 8 where, at the dedication of the temple, the priests could not enter the house of God because of a cloud of smoke.

1 Kings 8:10-11 — And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.

There is another possible reason why we are told that no man could come into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels had been completed. That prohibition may be a symbolic statement that no one could appeal to God to stop the coming judgment. The time for talking and for intercession was over. God's hand could not be stayed from the judgement about to be unleashed on Rome.

What's next? Chapter 16 describes these seven bowls, which together depict a total and complete judgment against Rome.

That Christians are not to take vengeance on their persecutors does not mean there will be no vengeance. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). The time for payment had arrived for Rome. The day of vengeance was here.

Introduction to Chapter 16

Before we start our verse-by-verse study of Chapter 16, let's pause to ask ourselves what we expect to see in this chapter. So far, this entire book has been building up to a great judgment, which, if we are correct, is a great judgment by God against the first century Roman empire.

The Roman emperors thought that they were gods, and the Romans worshipped the emperors as gods and persecuted the church for refusing to worship the emperors. Rome was itself a royal priesthood, but Rome had come up against another royal priesthood that was infinitely more powerful — the church. Rome was fighting against the prophecy of Daniel 2 — and Rome stood no chance at all in overcoming God’s word.

God had decreed the victory of the church over Rome six centuries earlier, and that victory is about to happen in Chapter 16. That is what this book has been building toward, and that is what we expect to see here.

Is that what we will see in Chapter 16? Absolutely. We are about to see the seven bowls of God’s wrath poured out onto Rome.

Will we be seeing the **physical** destruction of Rome? No. We will not be seeing that anymore than we will be seeing the physical victory of the church. The church’s victory in this book is spiritual — it happens at the **death** of the faithful. Likewise, the judgment of Rome will be a spiritual judgment.

So what does that say about the events in this chapter? What it says is that we should not try to match each event up with some physical calamity that struck ancient Rome. That exercise is doomed to failure because that is not what is happening in this chapter.

So what is happening here? To what will these terrible events apply? They will apply to the judgment of those ungodly emperors and ungodly Romans who were persecuting God’s people and who refused to repent and obey the gospel. If the blessings of the faithful began at their death (as we have been told repeatedly in this book), then I think we should expect the judgment of their persecutors to occur at the same point — at their deaths, when their door of opportunity closed with finality.

Can there be any judgment more horrible than that? Can anything be more horrible than dying outside of Christ and knowing that the door of the kingdom is forever closed to you? Is anything more horrible than that? That horror is what Chapter 16 shows us with vivid apocalyptic images.

Milligan: “No attempt to determine the special meaning of the objects thus visited by the wrath of God — the land, the sea, the rivers, the fountains of the waters, and the sun — has yet been, or is ever likely to be, successful; and the general effect alone appears to be important.”

I agree — and, as will see, the general effect is staggering. Wave after wave of plagues come against Rome in this chapter. Earlier we saw the blessings that await the faithful dead from henceforth. Here we see the plagues that await the unfaithful dead from henceforth.

People die every day. Some die in Christ; many more die out of Christ. Do we see those deaths as we should? Do we see them as God sees them? If not, then this is the book for us because this book shows us how God views the death of the faithful and how God views the death of the unfaithful — particularly those unfaithful who in this life were actively opposed to God's eternal kingdom.

But shouldn't we expect to see all of these plagues literally fulfilled like the plagues of Egypt were literal? No. That wasn't the case with the original Babylon, and we shouldn't expect it to be the case with the first century Babylon, Rome.

Listen to Isaiah as he describes the fall of ancient Babylon.

Isaiah 13:19-22 — And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

That prophecy paints a picture of horror and utter desolation. Did it **literally** occur? No. History tells us that Babylon fell without a shot. The priests opened the gates and let Cyrus in after Belshazzar was assassinated. The Bible describes what happened with just two short verses.

Daniel 5:30-31 — In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

But Isaiah said that Babylon would fall as Sodom fell, that no one would ever live there again, and that no one would ever pass through there again. None of that was **literally** fulfilled. Alexander the Great headquartered there. People still live there today.

What then was meant by such language? The language paints a picture of God's wrath against the ungodly. The language shows us the terrors that await those who are opposed to God. The language shows us what God thinks about those nations that set themselves up against God's people and God's kingdom.

But some will say that these things never happened to Rome. Some will say that Rome never suffered in this way. Is that right?

Rome may never have suffered physically in this way, but spiritually? That is the question. And I suspect that if we could speak today with those first century Roman persecutors, they might tell us that this language does not even come close to all that they have suffered.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 — In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

Could any language ever be an overstatement when it comes to describing that punishment?