

THE THIRD PLAGUE

„And the third poured out his bowl into the RIVERS and into the FOUNTAINS of waters and they became BLOOD. And I heard the angel [messenger:: of the waters saying—Righteous art thou, the one who is and who was, the bountiful one, because thou hast judged these. Because they poured out the blood of Saints and Prophets thou gavest them also blood to drink; they deserve it.”—vs. 4-6

This third element of trouble results from the turning of the rivers and fountains of water into *blood*. Running waters symbolize truth. The *river channels* through which water (truth) has flowed, symbolize the various sects or denominations. The fountains symbolize the founders and schools of these various systems—the places or men in whom these channels had their start or beginning.

For a long time, water—truly very muddy in some, but nevertheless a mixture of water has flowed in these various systems, of which many have partaken and have been refreshed. But a change comes, and that which once refreshed, will (gradually) become loathsome as blood. [Blood has been advised as a medical remedy, but in such cases it is taken immediately on being drawn from the animal, else it would be poisonous for its change is rapid—hence a river of blood could symbolize only loathsomeness and death.]

This we understand to be a picture of a change rapidly taking place in religious *channels*—their creeds, though containing as much truth and error as ever, they are coming to regard differently. General enlightenment is greater, and what was once received without question, is now becoming loathsome and death-like. As in a similar plague (literally) upon Egypt, the people digged wells for water because they could no longer drink of the bloody rivers, so here—independent thinkers are *digging* for themselves, for purer waters than the regular channels afford. Truly this turning of the waters of *their* channels into blood, is among the causes of anxiety and great annoyance to the *sectarian*, but only the few yet realize this trouble.

The angel of the waters—or the *messenger of the REAL truth*—is able to see in this a righteous judgment of God against those systems, as expressed in vs. 5 and 6. The direct cause of this trouble is mentioned—they had poured out the blood of the saints and prophets.

Is it inquired in what sense this was done? We answer that blood *in* a person is life and to pour it out is to waste it. The life of the saints is truth—God’s word—as it is written: „The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life,” and „The testimony of Jesus is the spirit [vitality, life] of prophecy.” Hence to have wasted the life-principle of saints and prophets, would be to have wasted the words and testimony of Jesus. This they did by neglecting his word, and receiving instead the traditions of men, which errors have corrupted and defiled the truths they possess to such an extent that the thinking ones are fast coming to that condition where they cannot drink from those channels.

In these very *channels*, or systems, where the teaching of Satan has been preserved, viz.: that man has an existence which can never cease, and hence must *continue* forever (Gen. 3:4), nine-tenths of them in misery, in these same channels, the teachings of the Prophets, that the wages of sin is death, but that God has provided for „times of restitution of all things, spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21) is neglected, cast aside, WASTED. And hence it is that they will get blood to drink shortly. The creeds of these systems being so mixed with error by the retaining of Satan’s lie and the rejection of the Lord’s testimony, both through the words and example of prophets and saints, they will soon come to recognize them as too obnoxious and nauseating to be palatable to either themselves or the world. „*And I heard the ALTAR saying, Yes, O Lord God, the omnipotent, true and righteous are thy JUDGMENTS,*” verse 7.

The altar represents the class of prophets and saints whose testimonies for truth were sealed with their lives, the testimony of whose lives had been *wasted*. These speak not audibly, but in that figurative way in which Abel’s blood is said to have cried out. The testimony of these condemn the present systems as worthy of having this trouble or plague; because of their previous disregard of truth. While *nominal* Church systems have become great and popular in worldly favor, both in the days of the prophets and ever since, in the days of the saints, yet now as ever, this success and popularity has been the result of an alliance with the world and a participation of its spirit. Since, as well as in the days of the prophets, to live separate from the world and to boldly advocate *the truth* in opposition to the worldly mixture of error, has cost persecution and either literal or symbolic *beheading*—or cutting off. The testimony of every *sacrifice* for truth acceptable to God is here represented as condemning the course of these systems and justifying the retribution represented in this third plague—“FOR THEY ARE WORTHY.”

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