

“REVELATION: DOES IT DESCRIBE OUR DAYS?” SERIES

#11: “Chapters Eight through Eleven” (Part One)

INTRO:

Hendriksen notes:

*“Twice, before our wondering gaze, the panorama of the history of the church has been unrolled. We saw the **Lampstands** and the Son of Man moving about among them. We heard his voice of tender admonition, earnest reproof, and generous promise. In seven beautiful epistles he seemed to be drawing nearer and near to us until we saw him standing at the very door and knocking. Then, just as we yearned for the **full** realization of his promise to come in and sup with us, the vision ceased. Yet, its imprint upon our soul is indelible. Through the bitterest tears we see our Savior, very near unto us, full of tender love and sustaining power. We see him as the light of the world. That light is shining through us: the churches are the lampstands, chapters 1-3.*

*Again, the ages turned **backward** in their flight . . . to the very moment of our Lord’s ascension. With wide-eyed wonder we beheld a door standing open in heaven. Peering through this portal we saw a Throne out of which proceeded flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. The surrounding heavenly beings were acknowledging in grateful anthems the sovereignty of the One whose countenance remained concealed behind the flashing luster of the diamond and the fiery red of the sardius. Suddenly we witnessed that central event, namely the coronation of Jesus, who took the scroll out of the right hand of the Throne-Occupant. We heard an elder saying: ‘Weep not; behold the lion . . . of Judah has conquered.’*

“Consequently, we were not at all surprised when, with the opening of the first seal, we saw that same Jesus going forth conquering and to conquer. But this rider upon the white horse is ever followed by the rider upon the red horse: wherever our Lord Jesus begins to wield his spiritual scepter, Satan begins to brandish his sword. The seals describe the persecution of the church by the world. Not only persecution, but every form of trial and tribulation. In the vision of the souls underneath the altar we received the assurance that the slaughter of the saints will not remain unavenged. Although the final and complete retribution is reserved for the great day of Jehovah, even now the seals of persecution are again and again followed by the trumpets of judgment. But before these trumpets are introduced, the Church Militant is sealed against all harm. Finally, we saw the Church Triumphant that has come out of the great tribulation and forever rejoices in the immediate and glorious presence of the Lamb, chapters 4-7. Now all is ready for the trumpets of judgment” (pp. 139-140).

The opening of seals reveal events or conditions of the church age; trumpets announce judgments of warning. In chapters 8-11 we have a series of what might be called “calamities” that will occur again and again before Christ returns. That is, these “woes,” as the Scripture calls them, may be seen at any time during the church age in

various parts of the world. They are not final judgments, but God's call to repentance. 2nd Peter 3:9 says, ***"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."***

The judgments revealed as the seven trumpets sound remind us of the ten plagues of judgment that came to Egypt when Pharaoh refused to let God's people go, but they are much more severe. They punish the wicked, persecutors of the church, but do not harm believers.

Note that when Christ opened the seventh and last seal,

THERE WAS SILENCE IN HEAVEN FOR ABOUT HALF AN HOUR.

Now, what's this all about? Old Testament symbolism tells us that before God's judgment is meted out, there is a time of silence that makes the manifestations of God's wrath most impressive (Habakkuk 2:20; Zephaniah 1:7; Zechariah 2:13).

As the seven angels stand by to blow their trumpets, John sees another angel offering incense to mingle with the prayers of the martyred Christians on the golden altar before the throne. The prayers of these saints are about to be answered.

Then the silence is followed by fire, thunder, lightning, and an earthquake, signaling that God is about to bring punishment upon those who harm His people.

THE FIRST ANGEL BLOWS HIS TRUMPET...

...and when he does, ***"there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up."***

We know that we have apocalyptic symbolism here, but what does it mean? What is it referring to? John doesn't tell us. Hendriksen's comment is this:

"In all probability, this first trumpet indicates that throughout the period extending from the first to the second coming, our Lord who now reigns in heaven will afflict the persecutors of the church with various disasters that will take place on the earth, that is, on the land. These calamities, of whatever nature they be, are controlled in heaven, and in a certain organic sense are sent by our governing Lord is clearly indicated by the clause: 'they were cast upon the earth'" (p. 143).

Seems to make insurance companies correct when they categorize events like hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes "acts of God," doesn't it?

Then,

THE SECOND ANGEL BLOWS HIS TRUMPET...

...and ***“something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”***

Again, John doesn't tell us what this means; he just describes what he sees. Again, Hendriksen comments:

“Observe that he does not see a real mountain but what looked like a mountain. What he saw symbolized the terror of God's judgment upon the sea. Not only does our ascended Lord use calamities on land as an instrument to punish and warn the wicked; he also employs the sea as a tool against them. . . This judgment is more severe than the first...” (p. 143).

Then...

THE THIRD ANGEL BLOWS HIS TRUMPET...

...and ***“a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.”***

So, first, the vegetation is affected, then the sea, now the waters of the land. All three are used in judgment of the wicked.

Now, Wormwood. What is it? Again, using Old Testament symbolism to interpret what John describes, we find that Wormwood is a symbol of bitter sorrow (Lamentations 3:19). So, what is described here is the “bitter sorrow” that will fill the hearts of non-believers who lose loved ones and possessions in these calamities.

Now,

THE FOURTH ANGELS BLOWS HIS TRUMPET...

...and ***“a third a third of the sun was struck and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.”***

This completes the armory at God's command. He controls the land, the sea, the waters of the land, and the sun, moon, and stars. He uses them all to seek the repentance of the wicked who persecute his people.

Now,

WE HAVE AN “INTERMISSION,” SO TO SPEAK.

Verse 13 of chapter 8: ***“Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead. ‘Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!’”***

Wow! What do we have here? We have a bird of prey – an eagle – indicating that the three remaining trumpet blasts will bring judgments worse than the first four.

So,

THE FIFTH ANGEL BLOWS HIS TRUMPET...

...and John writes: ***“I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.*”**

***“In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, their hair like women’s hair, and their teeth like lions’ teeth; they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails. They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.*”**

“The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.”

Ooee! What do we have here? Let’s see...

The star that had fallen from heaven – Abaddon or Apollyon – that’s Satan himself. The Hebrew and Greek words mean “Destroyer.” Having rebelled against God, he lost his position in heaven and has been given the key to the abyss or the bottomless pit, which he uses to release the demons there. This pit is what we know as “hell” before the final judgment. After the final judgment, it’s called ***“the lake of fire.”***

Hendriksen comments:

“When we read that Satan opens the shaft of the abyss, the meaning is that he incites unto evil: he fills the world with demons and with their wicked influences and operations. Hence, John sees that the shaft, as soon as it is unlocked, begins to belch forth columns of dirty blue-black smoke just like the smoke of a great furnace. It is the smoke of deception and delusion, of sin and sorrow, of moral darkness and degradation that is constantly pouring up out of hell” (p. 145).

Note that the power to do all this **“was given”** to Satan by God. We see that even Satan himself is used by God to bring about His judgment.

Now, what do these **“locusts”** symbolize? Locusts mean disaster to farmers and vineyard growers, but these locusts are not your run-of-the-mill grasshoppers. They’ve got stingers like scorpions, were like horses prepared for battle, had human-like faces, women-like hair, and lion-like teeth. Their wings sounded like a battalion of chariots racing into battle. Can you even imagine such beasts?



How do we take this? What do we take it to mean? Taken as a whole, and that’s the way to take it, this is exactly what the apostle Paul is describing in the 6th chapter of Ephesians when he says, **“...we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places”** (v. 12).

IN CLOSING...

Are these things happening today? Absolutely. Does this mean we’re in what the Bible calls **“the last days”** (2 Timothy 3:1)? Absolutely. We’ve been in **“the last days”** for almost two thousand years.

What we want to know is: Are we in the *last* of **“the last days”**? It would seem so. But let me say this: There have been many times that people have thought it was the “last” of the last days. More on this next week when we continue with the trumpets of judgment.