

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 11TH, 2018 // BOOK OF REVELATION

Revelation 8 records the events of the Great Tribulation as the "seventh seal" is opened and four plagues are poured out. God often dismantles for restoration and change.

THE SEVENTH SEAL & THE GOLDEN CENSER (8:1-5)

When Jesus broke the seventh seal a unique response occurred- silence.

- Up to this point, John had heard a lot of noise in heaven- thunder, the songs of the four living creatures, the songs of the elders, the cries of angels, and the cries of the martyrs.
- But after all of the noise, when the reality and finality of judgment becomes apparent, all of heaven is reduced to silence.

The silence that lasts for a "half hour" is one of great somberness and awe at what God is about to do.

- While eternal heaven knows no time, John, who is seeing the vision, did know time.
- Each minute of that half hour of silence must have increased the suspense, expectancy, and anticipation as all of heaven waited to see the greatest event since the fall take place.

Following the half hour of heaven's silence, John saw a special group of "seven angels who stand before God" being given trumpets.

- The use of the word "the" appears to set them apart as a unique group, which some have called "the presence angels".
- The Greek verb translated "stand" indicates that they were in the presence of God and had been for a time.

Scripture describes various ranks and orders of angels, and these seven appear to be an order of high-ranking angels (Gabriel may have been one of them, Luke 1:19).

- As John watched, seven trumpets were given to these angels in preparation for the trumpet judgments that were to follow.
- These trumpets weren't shophars, but metal instruments of the 1st century.

John then sees an eighth angel with a "golden censer" standing at the altar.

- A "censer" is a bowl or fire pan designed for holding live coals and incense.
- In the Old Testament, the priests in the temple would twice daily take hot, fiery coals from the brazen altar and transport them into the Holy Place to the incense altar (Ex. 30:7,8)- incense was a representation of prayer.

John saw an altar when the 5th seal was broken, and under it he saw the souls of the martyrs, and from under it their prayers were rising.

- This angel that John sees was given incense to offer "with the prayers of all the saints".
- The smoke of the incense rose before God from the hand of the angel before he filled the censer with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth- resulting in disasters (vs. 5).

The cries and prayers of believers in the great tribulation are pictured as rising up with the smoke of the incense to the throne of God.

- The angel's act of throwing the censer to the earth reveals that God's judgment will come in direct response to those prayers.
- The deeper theological principle at work- what the saints pray on earth has a direct effect in the very presence of God.

- What have you been praying about this week? Have the distractions of daily life led you to a "prayer-less" week?
- Have you been praying with faith and believing that there is a valid reason, a holy purpose, and a specific point behind God's command to pray? (Hebrews 11:6)

SEVEN TRUMPETS (8:6-13)

TRUMPET ONE: HAIL, FIRE, AND BLOOD

The 1st trumpet will begin a series of disasters that directly affect the earth.

- An ecological catastrophe will take place worldwide
- 1/3 of earth will be "burned up" including 1/3 of trees and all grass
- This could be fallout from the 6th seal
- Also mentioned in Joel 2:30-32

A couple of points that apply to the first 3 trumpets-

- We don't know the mechanism for this destruction, but it is easy in our nuclear age to see how this is possible
- John's concern is not mechanisms, just that God is doing it.
- God has struck vegetation before due to sin (Genesis 3:17-18)

The 1st Trumpet is not fatal...yet.

- It does not directly kill, but because we cannot live long without healthy vegetation, it sets up fatality later
- If scientists believe earth cannot exist with just a mild shift from global warming, what will society make of these events?
- This will impact agriculture, industry, and commerce on a global level.

TRUMPET TWO: A GREAT MOUNTAIN

The elder also answers the question, "who" these people are.

- The 1st trumpet fell on the land, but the 2nd trumpet judgment is towards the sea.
- The text describes what seems to be a giant meteor or asteroid surrounded by flaming gases hitting the sea.
- "The Sea" mentioned refers specifically to the Mediterranean Sea, but this will also extend to all of the world's oceans.

Three catastrophic effects...

1. One-third of the sea became "blood" (maybe not literal, simply speaking of contamination),
2. One-third of the creatures which were in the sea died,
3. One-third of the ships on the world's oceans were destroyed- most likely due to giant waves capsizing huge vessels and completely swamping ports and harbors.

TRUMPET THREE: A GREAT STAR FALLS

- The Greek word for "star" can refer to any celestial body other than the sun or moon.
- This is most likely a meteor or asteroid that will hit in the earth in a body of fresh water.
- Because of its deadly effects, the star will be called "Wormwood"- an extremely bitter plant that can make a person sick if taken too much.

Does this plague look familiar?

- In Exodus 7:14-24, God struck the Nile River in Egypt and its water became undrinkable.
- Though its not specifically mentioned, this will most definitely have a devastating impact on the animal kingdom and aquatic life.
- NASA's Near-Earth Object Research Center has started planning for such event (if possible)- concluding the impact would be catastrophic.

TRUMPET FOUR: THE SKY DARKENS

- As the 4th trumpet sounded, the focus shifted from the earth to "the heavens".
- The heavenly bodies are hit so that 1/3 of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night the same way.
- At this point, temperatures will plunge drastically all over the world.

This will impact everything.

- This will severely disrupt the earth's weather patterns and seas' tides.
- This will lead to violent, unpredictable storms and tides, the destruction of crops, and further loss of animal and human lives.
- The O.T. prophets associated such signs in the heavens with "the day of the Lord" (Ezk. 32:7-8, Isaiah 13:9-10, Amos 8:9, Joel 2:10).

As severe as the first four trumpet judgments have been, the worst is yet to come.

- The first four attacked nature (with humanity affected indirectly), but the new judgments will attack humanity directly.
- As John looked, he heard an eagle (probably an angelic being) flying directly overhead crying out, "woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth..."

"Woe" is used throughout scripture as an expression of judgment

- "Directly overhead" or "midair" means at the top of the sky- where the sun shines at noon.
- The eagle's (angel's) cry is for the "people who dwell on the earth" to take warning- this phrase describes the pagan world that is rebellious, and expresses hatred towards God.

Although "those who dwell on the earth" will acknowledge that the disasters have come from God (6:15-17), they will not repent.

- The plagues poured out in 8 & 9 give humanity one last chance to repent.
- What we are seeing is a dismantling of creation in order to bring it back to perfection.
- God has started to tear apart nature, land, sea, and the cosmos in order to restore it.

DISMANTLING FOR RESTORATION AND CHANGE (JOHN 15:2)

- Sometimes God goes to great lengths to get our attention, other times He prompts us to remove things from our lives in order to produce more through us.
- What is God doing in your life? Do you fight this process?
- What may God be "pruning" from your life in order to activate repentance, change, and progress?