

BOOK OF REVELATION

Lesson 19 - Chapters 8 and 9

In Revelation chapter 6 God's wrath upon the Earth and its inhabitants begins with the opening of the 6th seal. Chapter 7 represents a pause in the action of the judgments, and then chapter 8 resumes the judgments with the final Seal judgment and then next the series of so-called Trumpet judgments. We looked at the first 3 Trumpet judgments last week. They were: first, an attack of the dry land. This involved hail and fire mingled with blood. The result is that one-third of the earth is affected by it. One-third of Earth's forests are consumed and all green grass everywhere goes up in smoke. The second Trumpet judgment falls upon the oceans of the world. One-third of the earth's sea water turns to blood; one-third of all sea life dies as a result; and one-third of the ships on those waters is destroyed. The third trumpet blows and the fresh water sources are hit. Something falls from the sky and contaminates the fresh water making it bitter and unusable.

What I just described to you is assuming that the judgments described in the Scriptures are literal. There are those Bible scholars who believe that what we read is not literal but symbolic of things like governments falling and a powerful angel bringing pollution to our water supplies. I can find no good reason to believe these descriptions to be symbolic anymore than we should find the descriptions of the 10 plagues of Egypt as symbolic and not literal.

Let's move on with the remaining Trumpet judgments by reading the last few verses of chapter 8.

RE-READ REVELATION CHAPTER 8:12 - end

So now that God has sent judgment against the land, oceans, and fresh water sources the sky is affected. Upon the 4th angel sounding his trumpet we're told that one-third of the sun was smitten, and also one-third of the moon and stars. The result was that days were darker and so were the nights. Very likely this is not so much meaning that of the entire body of the sun, one-third of it was darkened but the other two-thirds was not; nor that the moon was affected similarly. And it probably doesn't mean that one out of every three stars went dark, but the remaining two out of three remained bright. Likely the idea is that as observed from the surface of planet Earth, the sun, moon, and stars lost about one-third of their brightness. I'm not going to speculate what the cause of that could be but we are given a hint that we'll discuss later. However the effects of such a thing by whatever mechanism would be catastrophic. Significantly less sunlight means Earth's climate would change drastically; it would immediately cool. Cooler weather means shorter growing seasons. Some areas would have a permanent winter and so no crops would grow at all. Less heating from the sun also means that the wind patterns would change. And, because solar generation of electrical power is growing rapidly around the world in both industrialized nations and third-world countries, the output of electricity from that source would seriously diminish.

This judgment looks similar to the plague of darkness upon Egypt that we find in Exodus 10. However we should not draw the parallel too closely. The darkness that enveloped Egypt is called in Hebrew **choshek** and it means an evil, spiritual kind of darkness; it is the lack of illumination of truth. Here in Revelation 8 if we take the meaning literally, this darkening of the day and nighttime means an actual dimming of light that comes from the skies. Much of the Christian world sees this darkness as symbolic of the depth and fullness of God's judgment. Some see it as figurative because they cannot square such an event with science; others because they formulate their End Times doctrines based on allegory and so take all of the judgments of Revelation as necessarily symbolic.

There is little doubt to me that the allusion of the Trumpet judgments, and especially of the 4th one, is to the Book of Joel chapter 2.

^{CJB} Joel 2:1-13 2:1 ***"Blow the shofar in Tziyon! Sound an alarm on my holy mountain!" Let all living in the land tremble, for the Day of ADONAI is coming! It's upon us!- ² a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick fog; a great and mighty horde is spreading like blackness over the mountains. There has never been anything like it, nor will there ever be again, not even after the years of many generations.***

³ ***Ahead of them a fire devours, behind them a flame consumes; ahead the land is like Gan-'Eden, behind them a desert waste. From them there is no escape. ⁴ They look like horses, and like cavalry they charge. ⁵ With a rumble like that of chariots they leap over the mountaintops, like crackling flames devouring stubble, like a mighty horde in battle array. ⁶ At their presence the peoples writhe in anguish, every face is drained of color.***

⁷ ***Like warriors they charge, they scale the wall like soldiers. Each one keeps to his own course, without getting in the other's way. ⁸ They don't jostle each other, but stay on their own paths; they burst through defenses unharmed, without even breaking rank. ⁹ They rush into the city, they run along the wall, they climb up into the houses, entering like a thief through the windows.***

¹⁰ ***At their advance the earth quakes, and the sky shakes, the sun and moon turn black, and the stars stop shining. ¹¹ ADONAI shouts orders to his forces- his army is immense, mighty, and it does what he says. For great is the Day of ADONAI, fearsome, terrifying! Who can endure it?***

¹² ***"Yet even now," says ADONAI, "turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping and lamenting." ¹³ Tear your heart, not your garments; and turn to ADONAI your God. For he is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in grace, and willing to change his mind about disaster.***

The reason that I quoted so much of this 2nd chapter of Joel is because of the last 2 verses I just spoke and because Joel 2 plays a role in others of the Trumpet judgments. God's hope behind these terrible judgments upon the Earth and the Universe is that non-Believers would finally see their folly, trust in God and His Son, and seek mercy. No doubt some number of earth's inhabitants will do just that. Unfortunately, these new Believers will suffer greatly right

along with those who continue to clench their fists in hardened rebellion because the Rapture of the faithful has already occurred. These disasters, once started for the final time, are not reversible. The Earth will be decimated and the bulk of the population killed. But the decimation will eventually end as Christ takes His seat as King of His Father's Kingdom, with its capital in Jerusalem, as the Millennial reign of Christ begins. The planet-wide damage will heal in time as this will be the home for Believers for 1000 years.

Revelation 8:13 speaks of woes. But first it gives us the image of a lone eagle flying in mid-heaven (mid-heaven means the atmosphere where birds fly as opposed to the "sky", which is where the sun, moon and stars reside). It is this eagle who cries out woe!, woe!, woe! to the earth's inhabitants. Let's talk about eagles for a minute as biblically eagles symbolize something different from what you might expect. Especially for Americans an eagle is seen as a noble bird that represents power and honor. However biblically that is not necessarily the case. No doubt an eagle is seen as among the most powerful and formidable of all birds, as it is quite large and dangerous for a flying creature; sometimes in the Bible the term eagle is used as a metaphor for those attributes. And yet, from a Torah standpoint, it is also an unclean bird, not to be eaten.

CJB Leviticus 11:13-19 ¹³ ***"The following creatures of the air are to be detestable for you—they are not to be eaten, they are a detestable thing: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey,***

¹⁴ ***the kite, the various kinds of buzzards,***

¹⁵ ***the various kinds of ravens,***

¹⁶ ***the ostrich, the screech-owl, the seagull, the various kinds of hawks,***

¹⁷ ***the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl,***

¹⁸ ***the horned owl, the pelican, the barn owl,***

¹⁹ ***the stork, the various kinds of herons, the hoopoe and the bat.***

In fact so closely related are they in purpose and size, the Hebrew word for eagle and vulture is the same: ***neshar***.

So because of the context, here in Revelation 8:13 we need to see this eagle and its cries of woe, woe, woe as an expectation that scavenger birds are about to be able to eat their fill because of the horrors remaining from the final 3 Trumpet judgments. The Old Testament often uses ***neshar*** (eagles or vultures) as harbingers of coming destruction such as in Deuteronomy 28:49: **CJB Deuteronomy 28:49** ***Yes, ADONAI will bring against you a nation from far away that will swoop down on you from the end of the earth like a vulture (or an eagle), a nation whose language you don't understand,***

As terrible as the first 4 of the Trumpet judgments have been, the remaining 3 represent such an escalation in human carnage that they are given their own special category and described

as "woes".

Let's move on to chapter 9.

READ REVELATION CHAPTER 9 all

The character of chapter 9 is quite different from the previous ones; and this character also changes in the nature and source of the judgments of God's wrath. In the first 4 of the Trumpet judgments (like in Egypt) nature was used in super-natural ways to punish non-Believers and rebels. Thus in Trumpet 1 we had hail and fire, and in Trumpet 2 we are told of something like a blazing mountain affecting the sea and ships that sailed upon it. In Trumpet 3 something like a great star fell from the sky and polluted the fresh water, and in Trumpet 4 the sun, moon, and stars were dimmed. But now with Trumpet 5 the natural gives way to the macabre and the spiritual. And biblically whenever the spiritual sphere begins to dominate the narrative, the words describing the scene and what is occurring will necessarily become more symbolic and figurative. That is, familiar words that best describe physical tangible things, people, and creatures commonly known to us will be borrowed to describe that which is not physical or not commonly known to us.

In verse 1 we're told that John sees a star that had fallen out of Heaven; it had fallen onto the earth and this star was given the key to the shaft leading to the Abyss. There's quite a bit here to dissect and understand. In the Bible the term star is at times used to refer to an angel; at other times it simply means star in its most literal sense (that tiny pinpoint of light up in the night sky). Here we see that this star that had fallen was given a key to the Abyss so clearly this is not a literal star and must be a spiritual being... an angel. In Greek the star is mentioned in the past perfect tense, which means that the action happened at an earlier time and it is completed. That is, when John sees it the star had already fallen; how much earlier we don't know. Yet this falling angel is still future to us in the year 2018 as it seems that this action of the star falling comes before the blowing of the 5th trumpet and the judgment that follows. An angel that "falls" means that it was expelled from Heaven against its will and now its dwelling place is Earth.

The shaft (or pit) that is the entry or the top part of the Abyss commonly can refer to a well or a pit dug for most any purpose. It is the association of the pit with the Abyss that makes the entire structure an evil place. In Greek abyss is **abussou** and it means "unfathomably deep". It was used among Greeks in John's day to refer to a place deep underground where disobedient spirits were held prisoner and Judaism adopted more or less the same meaning for it. In fact in the Book of Romans we read: ^{NAS} **Romans 10:7 or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).'**"

The thing we must not do is associate the Abyss with Sheol; that it, the Abyss is not the grave; rather it is where demons reside until they are called forth. The fallen angel is not Satan, nor did he naturally possess the key to the Abyss but rather it had been given to the angel presumably on the authority of God because whether it is Heaven, the earth, or the underworld of the dead, God is sovereign over it all. And what did the fallen angel do with the key? He opened the entrance into the place where these evil spirits lived. Whatever the Abyss is, it is

like an inferno as immediately upon opening it smoke begins billowing from it. Saying that the smoke darkened the sun and the sky continues to establish that this is God's judgment and again alludes to the Prophet Joel. But for any Jew hearing this it would have immediately also evoked this famous scene from Genesis:

CJB Genesis 19:27-28 ²⁷ Avraham got up early in the morning, went to the place where he had stood before ADONAI, ²⁸ and looked out toward S'dom and 'Amora, scanning the entire plain. There before him the smoke was rising from the land like smoke from a furnace!

As the smoke of the Abyss rises and begins to encircle the globe locusts emerge and they are given the ability to sting people like scorpions do. Unlike regular locusts who can simply denude several square miles of vegetation when they swarm in their voracious quest for food, these locusts are barred from harming any plant life; they were only allowed to harm people. So the 5th Trumpet judgment is aimed directly at non-Believing people. We can know this because the rapture of Believers has already occurred.

One of the interesting features of this long string of judgments, all but the first 4 happening after the Rapture, is that while no Believer will be left behind at the moment of the Rapture, it is inevitable that many new Believers will be made as each new judgment happens and some people will finally open their hearts to God as the truth of His Word becomes painfully obvious. This is not unlike how some who have resisted the call of God all their lives will suddenly drop the barriers as they lay on their death beds, and sincerely accept Christ's mercy hours or minutes before their death. These last-moment Believers are just as saved as those who believed at a much earlier stage in their lives. So even though it is correct to say that all these Revelation judgments are directed against non-Believers, the sad reality is that because some number of new Believers will be made along the way as each new judgment falls they too will face the terrors and horrors of God's wrath as collateral damage. The difference for them is that they will at least have the comfort to know that upon their death they will have eternal security and joy living in the presence of God. I suspect that because of the circumstances and the clear certainty of the imminence of the end that thousands of the most passionate and fearless evangelists for Yeshua ever to live will emerge from the rubble and the scorched earth. So the number of new Believers that are killed during these judgments might be staggeringly large.

The only people who will be held safe from these locusts that sting like scorpions are those that have been sealed by God. This can only be referring to the 144,000 Israelites from chapter 7, which tells us that these who are sealed are NOT dead Believers in Heaven but rather are living Believers who go through the final judgments of God's wrath. So, then, who are those who are not protected from being stung? In an irony that to me is somewhere between comical and maddening (depending on my mood), those adherents to the Pre-Tribulation and some other manmade, and rather recent, End Times doctrines say things like this (I shall quote directly from Charles Lee Feinberg and his rather short Revelation commentary):

"The first of the woe judgments is directed by Satan against the ungodly in Israel".

Against the ungodly of Israel?! Why Israel? Because the 144,000 that are sealed are said to be from the 12 tribes; so the logic is that the sealed will only be living among their own people. Other Pre-Tribulation doctrine adherents agree that this particular judgment is against Israel but only because God is through with Israel and although (according their doctrine) the 144,000 are actually representative gentiles of the worldwide Church (and not Israelites), at the same time the mention in chapter 7 that they are taken from the 12 tribes of Israel is symbolism that then means that here in chapter 9 the people who are subject to getting stung can only be non-Believing Jews at whom God is directing His rage! To all this I say that is unequivocal nonsense. There is no such implication in this passage that Israel is the target; it is only that in order to uphold their manmade church doctrines they feel that they must interpret these passages in such a way. Verse 4 makes it clear that the only living human beings that are excluded from being stung by these bizarre locusts are the 144,000 sealed Israelites. Otherwise it is open season on Jews and gentiles, non-Believers and Believers.

In verse 5 we get the information that as painful are these stings, they do not lead to death. Further, these stinging locusts will only be able to operate for 5 months. So their purpose is not to kill but to torment. Why for 5 months? I can only offer speculation. First, 5 months is a relatively short period of time. But second, 5 months is the natural locust season in the Middle East. The last 5 months of the Jewish Calendar are when locusts are active (on our modern calendars that would be May through September). So while these strange creatures aren't actual locusts but rather are demonic hybrids, God has limited their lifespan to (apparently) mimic that which happens naturally on earth. My opinion is that this is so those who have thus far hardened their hearts towards God will be able to point to a natural reason for this locust invasion so as to maintain their hardness. They'll say that even though these locust-like insect creatures are some kind of mutation caused by man, the proof that they are essentially actual locusts (and God has nothing to do with it) is that they operate in precisely the same season as locusts regularly do.

And, by the way: I don't know if anyone here has ever been stung by a scorpion or has even encountered a scorpion. I have not been stung; but having been born and raised for some of my earliest years in the desert regions of Southern California I have had several scorpion encounters and know people who were stung. The sting is excruciating and unlike a bee sting, the pain doesn't go away very soon. The most common place on the body that people were stung was the foot. The reason for this is that scorpions like dark places to hide; and one their favorites is a shoe. So as a desert dweller you learn early in life to shake out your shoes and to look inside of them before casually slipping them on; otherwise you might get a rather nasty and agonizing surprise. Apparently, like swarming locusts, these strange creatures of Revelation 9 could also fly. I can't even imagine what those living during those 5 months are going to go through.

We're told in verse 6 that the torment of the pain (and no doubt the anxiety of knowing every day that you might be stung) was so terrible that people wished they could die, but they couldn't. That death would flee from those sufferers of the stings could mean a couple of different things. First, it is thought by many Bible commentators that the term "death" is being personified; that is, death is being spoken of as the name of a being. It is like the image of Death that we're all familiar with: a skeleton wearing a dark hooded cloak and carrying a sickle,

ominously roaming the earth looking for its next victim. Second, the question is whether death fleeing the person in long term agony might merely be an expression that they wish they could die, but the sting isn't lethal enough to cause death; or, if it is that God has put death itself on a short term hiatus and people simply stopped dieing for any reason for 5 months in order that their torment was assured. There is also one other scenario that can't be dismissed. It is that while people will still die from natural causes, the stings from these locusts do not bring on death. However no kind of drug seems to stop the pain, so these people want to die but don't have the courage to take their own lives. They are so afraid of death that they make the choice to go on living indefinitely with horrific pain.

Let's pause for a moment and back away to get a longer view of what is happening. We see a side of God that most Christians don't want to know about, or seem to believe is not there. A side in which, for the most part, His mercy (in the way we might think of it) has ceased. Once His wrath begins the goal is not only to kill but to also inflict the greatest terror and agony on the human race. What happened to the God of love? Has the Old Testament God reemerged just as the New Testament God seemed have taken center stage? The one who is there mainly to help us attain our personal dreams and to make us happy? The reality is that such a God has never existed and is more reflected in the mythology of the genie in the bottle. Let me remind you of something we learned back in chapter 6.

^{CJB} Revelation 6:15-17 ¹⁵ Then the earth's kings, the rulers, the generals, the rich and the mighty- indeed, everyone, slave and free- hid himself in caves and among the rocks in the mountains, ¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of the One sitting on the throne and from the fury of the Lamb!

¹⁷ For the Great Day of their fury has come, and who can stand?"

God and the Lamb (Messiah Yeshua) share a mutual fury and together they are raining their judgment down upon mankind and on our habitat. God has spent centuries, millennia, doing everything to bring truth to mankind for the purpose of bringing mankind to repentance and salvation. However only a minority of humans has ever taken that narrow road to Lamb. Now, after all that time has passed since Adam and Eve sinned and began passing along their sin natures to every human that would come after them, the true gruesome penalty for sinning against God is being realized. The death and torment promised by the Prophets has turned out to be real, and not an empty warning or scare tactic. What we are witnessing is that the side of the divine coin that is primarily love and mercy will flip, sometime in the near future, to the opposite side that is primarily judgment and wrath. And that wrath far exceeds anything that human evil, natural disasters, or even occasional cosmic disturbances can cause.

Starting with verse 7 we get a description of these bizarre demonic creatures. We should not get too terribly caught up in the various metaphors that are used in the vision to describe these so-called locusts because they reflect common everyday language and realities for that era. For instance: even the term locusts is figurative. Clearly a creature that doesn't eat plant life, that has a stinger like a scorpion, hair on its head, etc., isn't a true "locust". The term is used because these creatures from the underworld swarm in their millions, fly, and destroy just as locusts do on a regular seasonal basis. The second metaphor John uses is that they looked

like horses outfitted for battle. Likely the image of war horses was the closest thing John had to describe what he saw; but clearly these creatures weren't miniature flying horses.

They wore something on their heads that looked like crowns. These were not regal crowns, but rather the typical laurel wreath sort of "crown" worn by battle victors and winning athletes. We know this because the Greek work **stephanos** is used, whereas if this were a kingly crown the word would be **diadema**. These creatures also had faces that looked human; but we must not take this to mean that they had actual human faces.....there was just some kind of similarity. They had hair like women's hair, meaning their hair was long. This is not to evoke an image of femininity. Rather it is either to paint a picture of a pagan warrior of some feared nation or it is perhaps a reference to Samson, or perhaps to David's son Absalom (a fierce warrior) or some other know strongman who wore his hair long. So hair is being used as symbolic of strength.

Teeth like a lion's meant they were sharp and used to tear their prey apart. This speaks of a fearsome and insatiable appetite for blood and flesh. Their chests looked like iron breastplates. This may have intended to call to mind that giant Philistine Goliath who it is said wore a coat of mail that weighed 5000 shekels of bronze. In John's day a coat of armor didn't look like metal netting as it would hundreds of years later. Rather it looked like overlapping metal plates; like scales on a dragon. And the sound of their wings (verifying that these creatures traveled through the air) is said to have resembled the roar of horses and chariots rushing into battle. Once again the image is the same as the Prophet Joel tells us:

^{CJB} Joel 2:4-6 ⁴ ***They look like horses, and like cavalry they charge.*** ⁵ ***With a rumble like that of chariots they leap over the mountaintops, like crackling flames devouring stubble, like a mighty horde in battle array.***

⁶ ***At their presence the peoples writhe in anguish, every face is drained of color.***

Also notice in Joel that he says that when these creatures appear "the peoples" (plural) writhe in anguish. A people means a race, ethnicity or those who share a common language. Here it is "peoples" meaning it is many races, ethnicities and languages represented, which furthers my argument that by no means is this woe of locust-like demonic creatures a judgment aimed only at Israel and the Jewish people. Rather the target is indiscriminate; it is a pox upon all people everywhere.

In verse 10 we learn that like horses they had tails; but also like scorpions, the part of them that stings is in their tails. So while they had ferocious devouring teeth, the really dangerous part of these creatures was their tail. This swarm of demons was not operating on instinct; they had a definite leader. This is very un-locust-like because locusts do NOT have a leader. Therefore these creatures had a measure of intelligence. Moreover their leader is identified as a king, meaning he had power and authority and the swarm obeyed him. Their leader sounds as though he might be the fallen angel that held the keys to the Abyss; however most translators believe it is someone else. I agree with them; I think the king, the leader, over this demonic hoard was locked away just as were the demon minions but now has been set free by the fallen angel in order to unwittingly serve God's will.

This king's name was **Abaddon**; it means destroyer or perdition. This angel of the Abyss is closely compared to Belial in the Holy Scriptures and he is also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. There **Abaddon** is the military chief of the forces of darkness who battles against the sons of light. The writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Essenes, were well known in John's day, highly admired, and what they believed in was adopted by the most zealous Jews. What we read here in Revelation fits hand-in-glove with the general End Times doctrines of the Essenes.

So these demonic little beasts likened to strange locusts form Satan's army, if you would. And while they are not taking their marching orders from God, but rather are doing what Satan and his demons naturally do.....destroy and corrupt.....God is allowing them to carry out their evil nature in order to inflict punishment upon the people of Earth for their sin in the same way He used King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to punish His people Israel for their sin.

We'll stop here and move on the 2nd of the woe judgments, which is also the 6th of the Trumpet judgments, next week.