

15. Getting worse with each trumpet call

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At the beginning of the Book of Revelation study, I mentioned to you that the focus of the study of this book should remain in knowing the awesomeness, holiness and righteousness of Jesus Christ, not just chasing after knowing future.

But I couldn't help myself wondering what in the world non-believers expecting to do during the time of the Great Tribulation? In chapter 6, we find somewhere around 1.6 billion people around the world would be killed by the wrath of God through wars, and natural disasters. Then again, if you and I were not saved by God's grace and mercy, we would be in the same shoes with them.

As we head to deep in the middle of the first half of the Great Tribulation, we find that the intensity and scope of God's wrath gets increased. The trumpet judgments are released during the first half of the Tribulation, and the bowl judgments during the last half. The trumpet judgments parallel the plagues that God sent on the land of Egypt before Moses led them out of that country to the Promised Land. And why not? After all, the whole world will be saying, as did Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that we should serve Him?"

Let's find out what happens as the seventh seal of the scroll is about to break open in the hand of the Lamb of God.

A. SILENCE IN HEAVEN

Revelation 8:1 When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

Some Bible commentators say that there is not any woman in heaven. Because if there are women in heaven, there couldn't be silence for about half an hour. I know it is a terrible thing for them to say such a thing like that. Let's move on.

More likely, this silence in heaven demonstrates a sober, awestruck silence at the judgments to come, now that the seals are off and the scroll is about to be opened.

B. THE PREPARATION FOR THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

Revelation 8:2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

During this silence, the seven angels were given trumpets, which are significant to Apostle John, because he was a Jew and understood the place of trumpets in Israel's national life.

According to the OT, trumpets had four important uses:

- 1) They called the people together in Num. 10:1-8.
- 2) They announced war that would them to a victory by the power of God in Num. 10:9.
- 3) They announced special times in Num. 10:10.
- 4) The sound of the trumpet signaled the Year of Jubilee in which all debts were canceled, all slaves set free in Leviticus 25:9.

Sounding seven trumpets certainly would announce a declaration of war, as well as the fact that God's anointed King Jesus was enthroned in glory and about to judge His enemies.

Revelation 8:3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

The entire Book of Revelation is a mixture of vision and prayer. And here in chapter 8, Apostle John deals with this issue in a most powerful, picturesque, practical way as he reminded his persecuted people to pray.

The prayer that causes silence throughout heaven is mixed with much incense. Throughout Scripture, incense speaks of intercession.

Hebrews 7:25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, ever lives to make intercession for the saints. In other words, the incense of Jesus' intercession on our behalf sweetens our prayers. My prayers stink because they're tainted by my flesh. I ask for something I think is good, but Jesus, knowing my request would have disastrous results says, "Father, this is how Joonho is praying, but what he really needs is..."

Knowing our hearts, Jesus perfumes our clumsy and faulty prayers through His intercessory ministry.

C. THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS

Revelation 8:4-5 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

The "prayers of the saints" are not the prayers of a special group of people in heaven who have arrived at "sainthood." To begin with, all God's children are saints – means set apart for God – through faith in Jesus Christ. And there is no definite teaching in the Scriptures that people in heaven pray for believers on earth, or that we can direct our prayers to God through them. We pray to the Father through the Son Jesus, because He alone is worthy.

For centuries, God's people have been praying, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done!" and now those prayers are about to be answered. Slowly, I begin to understand that my prayers remain in the Lord's "To Do" box, even though I may have given up hope or forgot long ago. Mixed with the sweet incense of Christ's intercession, they simmer on the altar until God answers them in a way I would never have dared dream.

Ephesians 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

On the great Day of Atonement, the high priest would put incense on the coals in the censer and, with the blood of the sacrifice, enter the holy of holies. But in this scene, the angel put the incense on the altar and then cast the coals from the altar to the earth! The parallel in Ezekiel 10 indicates that this symbolized God's judgment.

Another major storm is about to begin!

Like it or not, the prayers of God's people are involved in the judgments that He sends. The purpose of prayer, it has often been said, is not to get man's will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth – even if that will involves judgment. True prayer is serious business!

We see the impact and power of answered prayer as the prayers of the saints are hurled back to earth.

D. THE FIRST TRUMPET: AGAINST VEGETATION

Revelation 8:6-7 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

Before we go any further, let's make it very clear to understand the things we are going to study.

We are going to interpret what the Bible says in literal way in context. If it is a symbol due to context, we will search for the meaning of the symbol from the Bible. We can guess how it is going to work in that way when we read a certain thing. But we are not, I repeat, we are not going to make our guesses as a doctrine, because we don't know for sure. But if we take the eschatology of the Book of Revelation as much as we can literally, we cannot go wrong.

2 Peter 1:20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

"Hail and fire mingled with blood" reminds us of the seventh plague that God sent against Egypt. The Prophet Joel also promised "blood and fire" in the last days in Joel 2:30.

If this event is caused by a detonation of a nuclear warhead, two hundred fifty-mph winds of fire will follow. The aboveground nuclear tests on the island of Bikini in Pacific Ocean in 1954 and 1956 caused the surrounding water to shoot up thousands of feet into the air, where it froze and returned as hails big enough to destroy the equipment intended to monitor it.

However, I don't think the first trumpet will bring a nuclear holocaust. I believe it is God's supernatural judgement. Because the target for this judgment is green vegetation, the trees and the grass, one third of which is burned up. Nuclear holocaust will affect everything and everyone, not just vegetation.

One can well imagine how this would affect not only the balance of nature, but also the food supply. The Greek word for 'trees' usually means "fruit trees". The destruction of pasture lands would devastate the meat and milk industries. The phrase "Got Milk?" will bring a special meaning to many people during that time.

Many of you still remember Rodeo-Chediski Fire at Showlow and the White Mountains in 2002. The aftermath was devastating. Multiply that fire hundreds times all over the world. I am sure that many more people will die because of this great fire.

E. THE SECOND TRUMPET: AGAINST SEAS

Revelation 8:8-9 Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. 9 And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

The question we have now is what the "something like a great mountain burning with fire" is. Are you ready for an answer? I don't know. The best solution is to see this

as some literal mass of land, probably a meteor or asteroid, falling into the sea and bringing ecological disaster.

In my feeble opinion, it is a gigantic meteor coming down from space with fire and hit an ocean and contaminates it with some sort of toxins. When it hits the ocean, it will make such an enormous shock wave to destroy many ships in the ocean as well as the ones in the ports. With toxic contamination, many sea creatures will die. That is my guess.

Water covers three-fourths of the earth, one-third being the Atlantic Ocean. Interestingly, one-third of over 40,000 merchant ships afloat today are in the Atlantic region. 13,000 ships will be at the bottom of the seas with their cargoes! All of sudden those cheesy "Made in Taiwan" products will become very valuable.

A third part of the sea water turned to blood, a third part of the marine life died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. This will be an ecological and an economic disaster of unprecedented proportions.

"Come on," some say. "These judgments are allegories. You can't take them literally." In response, I challenge them to compare the trumpet judgments with the plagues that befell Egypt in Exodus 7-12. Were those plagues allegorical or literal? Ask Pharaoh.

F. THE THIRD TRUMPET: AGAINST WATERS

Revelation 8:10-11 Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. 11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.

God's wrath next reaches inland and touches the rivers and fountains of water, making the fresh water taste bitter like wormwood. The National Geographic Society lists about 100 principal rivers in the world, ranging in length from the Amazon (4,000 miles long) to the Rio de la Plata (150 miles long). The U.S. Geological Survey reports thirty large rivers in the United States, beginning with the mighty Mississippi (3,710 miles long). One third of these rivers, and their sources, will become so bitterly polluted that drinking their water could produce death.

God has made all the stars in heaven, so He named them, too. This particular great star is "Wormwood". The word "wormwood" means "undrinkable."

If the people who drink from these waters are in danger of dying, what must happen to the fish and other creatures that live in these waters? And what would happen to the vegetation near these rivers? If the ecologists are worried about the deadly consequences of water pollution today, what will they think when the third trumpet blows? On top of it, all the liberal tree huggers are going to have massive depressions.

F. THE FOURTH TRUMPET: AGAINST SKY

Revelation 8:12-13 Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night. And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying

with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

The first creation by God was light according to Gen 1. The mankind on this earth is dependent on light from the sun. To a lesser degree, man also is dependent on the moon and stars that effect tides and other things.

The judgments from the first three trumpets affected only a third part of the land and waters, but this fourth judgment affects the entire world. Why? Because it gets to the very source of the earth's life and energy, the sun. With one third less sunlight on the earth, there will be one third less energy available to support the life systems of man and nature. The temperature will go down rapidly and drastically and whatever the leftover vegetation will start to die.

It is possible that this particular judgment is temporary. Because the fourth bowl judgment at the second half of the Great Tribulation will reverse it. During that time the sun's power will be intensified. Then, at the close of the Tribulation, the sun and moon will be darkened again to announce Christ's return.

Not only will nature suffer loss, but human sinful nature will take advantage of the long darkness and no doubt indulge in crime and wickedness.

At this point, a remarkable messenger will appear in the sky, proclaiming 'woe' to the earth's inhabitants. Most manuscripts have "eagle" here instead of "angel," but either one would certainly get people's attention!

In other words, the angel is saying, "The worst is yet to come because the last three trumpets are worse than the first four."

Some of you who don't believe Jesus Christ as the Savior and Lord will say, "It was only nature reacting. It wasn't God, after all. Everything can be explained by natural causes. Besides, how do you know all these things in the Bible are going to happen?" If you are thinking that way, I must say this to you, "Men are not lost because they are sinners. They are lost because they have rejected Jesus who died for them."

G. APPLICATIONS

1) The purpose of prayer is not to get man's will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth.

We need to remember that we are the ones who are asking and pleading to our Father in heaven through the name of His Son Jesus. Hudson Taylor, an Inland China missionary of yesteryear, said, "God reserves His best to those who leave the choices to Him."

Our prayer should not be marked with our demands to God, but our requests for His will in our lives. We can not get anything better than that.