

Have No Fear, The End is Near

A Practical Discussion on the
Book of Revelation

11.11.09

Revelation 8:7 The first angel blew his trumpet, and 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.⁸ The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.⁹ A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.¹⁰ The third angel blew 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.¹¹ 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.¹² The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and 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.¹³ 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!"

The Trumpet Blasts

- Trumpets 1 – 4
 - Affect the four major regions of creation:
 - Land, sea, fresh water, and sky
 - Trumpets 1, 2, and 4 correspond to Egyptian plagues
 - Hail and fire – 7th plague
 - Blood – 1st plague
 - Darkness – 9th plague
 - These judgments come against evildoers.
 - They are a call to repentance, but like the Egyptians many will harden their hearts.

The Trumpet Blasts

- “a third of the earth”
 - The cycles build in intensity. The seals affected a fourth of the earth.
 - This is not complete judgment yet. The bowls will depict more complete judgment.
- “Wormwood”
 - Associated with idolatry (Deut. 29:18), adultery (Prov. 5:4), and suffering (Lam. 3:19)
- “Woe, woe, woe” – the worst is yet to come

Revelation 9:1 And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.² 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.³ Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth.⁴ 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.⁵ 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.⁶ And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.⁷ 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,⁸ their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth;⁹ 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.¹⁰ They have tails and sting like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails.¹¹ 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.¹² The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.

The Fifth Trumpet

- Locusts – corresponds to the 8th plague
- Exodus 10, Joel 2 – locust swarms foreshadow devastating judgment from a divinely commissioned army
- Demonic forces. They attack the wicked, not saints.
- General principle here – wickedness results in suffering.
- “five months” – the whole period locusts are active in the year
 - Swarms usually linger in one place only a few days
- Apollyon – probably Satan. Maybe a pun on Nero or Domitian, who fashioned themselves after the god Apollo.

Revelation 9:13 Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God,¹⁴ saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."¹⁵ So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind.¹⁶ The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number.¹⁷ And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths.¹⁸ By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths.¹⁹ For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound.²⁰ The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk,²¹ nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

The Sixth Trumpet

- A very scary looking army
- Collectively, the images from these trumpets were meant to be horrific to the original audience.
- Euphrates – dividing line between good and evil.
 - God had sent judgment from there before. (Isa. 8:7-8)
 - The boundary of the Promised Land.
 - God's kingdom said to extend from it to the ends of the earth. (Psalm 72:8-9)
- Shocking way of saying: Don't be on the wrong side!
- What's the wrong side?
 - Idolatry – wickedness - unrepentance

What does it all mean?

- Historicist – specific events leading to the downfall of the Roman empire.
 - Some things line up, but overall this approach is too narrow. What does it mean for us today?
- Preterist – specific events corresponding to the Roman war against the Jews
 - Doesn't seem to match the scope of the plagues and there are dating issues.
- Futurist – events that will occur during seven years of tribulation (not yet occurred). Nuclear warheads, Apache helicopters, etc.
 - If so, what did it mean to the original readers?
- Symbolist – no specific literal event is in view. These plagues represent mankind bringing judgment upon themselves through wickedness and a failure to repent, even as they witness the effects of sin.
 - Some fulfillment of this view in all periods of history, including our own. Nations and individuals see fulfillment of these judgments whenever they live out idolatry.