

Revelation 9
The Trumpets of Heaven – con't

You should know the classic line from IAWL – “every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings.”

Well in Revelation we get a different story...If ZuZu were to read Revelation, she'd say...

“EVERY TIME A STAR FALLS AN ANGEL IS CAST INTO THE ABYSS”

Last week we got to the end of chapter 8 and the introduction of the first 4 Trumpets (from the 7th Seal)

Here is a good point to remember as we go through Revelation. When we look for modern incidents or trends as THE fulfillment of this book, we miss the importance of the letter to the church for the past 2000 years.

The allusions and content may refer to OT incidents, and John may have in mind contemporary catastrophes, but his purpose is to use them merely as examples to evoke the meaning of divine judgment which reoccurs in this broken world. John may take a basic idea like the locust of Exodus 10 and turn them into an NT image of judgement. It is what some have interpreted as Apache attack helicopters with stinger missiles. Obviously, if that is what John had in mind, the Revelation narrative here in ch 9 would have been meaningless until recently.

The plagues connected with the Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls of wrath are not new things to be revealed right before the return of Christ. They have been part of this sinful world all along. They may represent God's proactive judgment, or they may represent the consequences of sinful human action. **As Augustine put it long ago: “sin becomes the punishment of sin.”**

EITHER WAY, we see that God is in control and scripture is not shy about owning that.

While the visions of judgment do address the unbelievers, i.e. BABYLON, the main audience is the church. John is proclaiming in Dolby sound stereo, “**Babylon is doomed! Live for what is eternal.**” The message is repeated again and again for emphasis.

John is bringing comfort to an audience that is a persecuted minority. They need to know that Christ is and will remain victorious.

If you want to get people engaged, motivated and frightened, then involve INSECTS.

That's what John does

Ex: cock roaches, bees, gnats

Perhaps the trumpets of 8:13 – 9:20 will motivate us to action. It may simply start by praying for those who don't know Christ.

What is the message for Christians like us who have been the comfortable majority and whose lives have been basically free from persecution? We are to be reminded that this is not our ultimate Home. We are strangers and aliens. The second-century writing called the *Epistle to Diognetus captures the sense of the entire NT.*

This writing offers what is arguably the most appropriate attitude for Christians to have toward the country in which they happen to live:

[Christians] live in their own countries, but only as aliens. They have a share in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their fatherland, and yet for them every fatherland is a foreign land.” (5:5–6)

Philippians 3:20 teaches us that we are citizens of heaven, and Revelation shows what this New Heaven and New Jerusalem will look like.

Now on to the end of ch 8 and to chapter 9

8:13 then I heard an eagle flying in mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

The triple use of "woe" is for emphasis – This IS going to come.

Eagle or vulture?

For believers – eagle – Is 40 OT symbol of good for those who believe

31 But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength.

They will soar high on wings like eagles.

Non-believers – vulture – in OT AND NT, a negative symbol – a carrion bird (eat decaying flesh)

Rev 19:9 "blessed are those invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb. This is followed by the banquet of God – 19:21 the bodies of the army of the beast are eaten by vultures (carrion birds.)

The woes are aimed at non-believers who do not bear the seal of the Lamb.

The Fifth Trumpet of Seven (from 7th Seal)—the Bottomless Pit

1 Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit (abyss) was given to him. 2 He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. 3 Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. 6 And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them.

7 The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. 8 They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions. 9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. 10 They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. 11 They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is (destruction) Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon – the destroyer

12 The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.

v. 1-3

Fallen angel IS GIVEN the key to the abyss = God is completely in control of what is happening. He turns over the keys.

The abyss is seen again in ch 12 as Christ expels Satan from heaven and in the final vision cycle beginning in ch 20 abyss = hell; the abode of the devil and demons... 2 Pet 2:4

They are given to ONLY afflict those who do NOT have the seal of God. All that is eternally true of you in Christ – forgiven, loved, adopted, justified, sanctified, and glorified- is PROTECTED.

In Revelation everyone has some sort of seal. No one is spiritually neutral.

Why then do we as Christians have this info?

For encouragement and so that we will turn outward to mission to tell others about Christ.

Believers are protected and those who rise from the abyss are constrained by the hand of God himself. This understanding of the abyss will shape how we grasp this locust horde. The 'locust' are not insects, but they are agents from hell, i.e the abyss.

What comes out of the abyss / hell is a spiritual attack, not so much a physical attack. Satan uses lies and deceit to create confusion, emotional and spiritual oppression in this world. The forces of darkness are sent out like an organized army, and they are constantly scheming. **The only way to oppose them effectively is to take up the armor of God – Eph 6 and to stand united with other believers. Don't make the mistake of thinking that you can handle the schemes of the evil one alone.**

"I thought I could handle this myself" are the famous words of EVERY MAN I've spoken with who has been humbled by his besetting sin or addiction. There is nothing noble, manly, or BIBLICAL, about standing alone against our common foe.

v. 7 This is an unnatural description of locusts

The image is symbolic, i.e. "like horses", etc

The symbol is "like" but not the same as the locusts of OT -Exod, Joel 2

The description is quite bizarre and ominous. This is a shock and awe portrait of demonic attack.

While belief in evil and the devil in a biblical sense is "so yesterday" according to our cultural influencers in academia, entertainment, and politics, it is hard to explain the level of bad stuff in the world without appealing to demonic influence.

Scripture and especially Revelation tells us that our problems and trials are different from what we normally think. Our tendency in the 'sophisticated' west is to look for some sort of psychological, sociological, governmental, or educational solution.

EX: I grew up in a university town where there is an underlying belief in the "messianic nature of education." Education is important, but it won't change your heart. Here in Revelation, we get a good look at the reality of evil and demonic forces, and it only gets worse as we move through the chapters. We have a hard time believing that many of the issues are related to a plague of demon locusts.

"Sophisticated Educated people don't fall for evil". REALLY. Look at Germany in the 1930's Helmut Thielicke (German pastor) **the rise of the 3rd Reich cannot be explained outside of the category of the demonic.** The same could be said for much of what we're seeing culturally and globally today.

I'm not advocating a Salem Witch Trial mentality or even a Frank Peretti (This present Darkness) vision of things, but we DO NEED a more biblical understanding of the reality of spiritual warfare.

v. 6 the torment was so intense that they wanted to die- a torment of the soul and mind.

The locust plague is a flashback to Exodus – the spiritual meltdown of Pharaoh Ex 10:1. Pharaoh hardens his own heart then God turns him over Ex 10:1.

Courts officials and people confess the God of Israel and beg the people to leave, but Pharaoh doesn't turn in repentance. He knows the truth but can't embrace the truth. His heart is frozen in unbelief.

At the time of John, Domitian was the emperor and he imagined himself to be Apollo. One of his symbols was the locust.

The locust will come and bring torment i.e. a taste of "hell"- separation from God. Satan, who disguises himself as an angel of light, is the father of lies. He functions through fear and lies to fill the hearts of men, women, and children with dread and hopelessness. That is the torment that gives rise to the desire to seek death, but they can't find it.

Does the reality of this torment move us as believers to be on mission to the lost? It should. (1Pet 3:15)

FIVE months is the lifespan of a locust and the typical dry season in which locusts appear. Usually locusts swarm in, eat, and go. But 5 months indicates the severity of this torment. The life of a locust is only 5 months, but demons have a much longer lifespan, so for those targeted, it is relentless.

v. 11 – Abaddon means ‘destruction’ and is used 6x in OT as synonym for “sheol” or “hades”, the place of the dead. Here the term is given a personal quality, Apollyon.= destroyer. The only use in NT. This would seem to be a reference to a demonic representative, if not the Devil himself. In Pilgrim’s Progress, Christian encounters this fiend in the Valley of Humiliation.

This book is a book of comfort and A

Call to action –

outward face – invite to fellowship events, church or VBS and pray for them. Look for ways to expose unbelievers to God’s Word and His people.

EX: Palm Sunday picnic lunch at Linda Summer’s home

Spurgeon – “If sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. And if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.”

Examine our hearts and ask God to expose our idols

Cultivate an eternal perspective. This is not our home.

Come to Christ – turn from idols that enslave to find new life in Christ. Idols can’t love you, forgive you or die for your sins.

COME TO THE TABLE

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