

SECTION 24

Text 8:1-6

And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels that stand before God; and there were given unto them seven trumpets.

3 And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 And the angel taketh the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth; and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings and an earthquake.

6 And the seven angels that had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

Initial Questions 8:1-6

1. What does the trumpet signify - vs. 2?
2. What were trumpets used for in the New Testament world?
3. Does vs. 3 and 4 contain biblical justification for the Roman Catholic doctrine of the power of the prayers of the dead saints?
4. What does the casting of fire upon the earth signify - vs. 5?
5. Who prepared to sound the trumpets - vs 6?

Opening of the Seventh Seal: The Half Hour's Silence
in Heaven; The First Four Trumpet Blasts
Chapter 8:1-13

Verse 1

As with the seven seals (5:8-10), before the trumpets sound there is an initial vision of the function of the prayers of the saints. Here we see the power of the prayers of the righteous to avail God's intervention in the events of history (8:2-5), described in almost the same way as before.

The first four trumpet blasts are (vs. 6-12) closely related as were the first four seals. (The figure of the trumpet is used by Paul - see I Thess. 4:16). John's imagery comes primarily from Exodus 10:; the records of the Egyptian plagues.

John declares that "when (*hotan* - indefinite particle - giving us a picture of indefiniteness) he opened the seventh seal there came silence - (*egento sigē* - 2nd aor. middle voice) in heaven about (*hōs* - indefinite - about) a half hour." Heaven was silent; there was no speaking or singing.

Verse 2

John next saw the seven angels "who stand (*hestēkasin* - perf. indicative) in front of (before) God." They receive the seven trumpets. A new period of woes begins.

Verse 3

"On (*epi* or above) the altar (*thusiastēriou*). The problem here is whether this altar is the "brazen altar" (as 16:9) or the altar of incense (as 9:13). The angel takes the place of the priest at the altar in John's imagery. The priest took fire from the brazen altar to light the censer. (See Swete, *op cit.*, p. 108) for good discussion of this point; also the extensive discussion of Charles). The angel was given the incenses "in order that (*hina* clause - for the purpose) he will give (it) with the prayers of all the saints". . . . The imagery relates that the holy incense was to be added so the prayers to that they could both (incense and prayers) ascend before (or in front of) the throne of God. Note how the martyrs were *praying* in spite of their trials and martyrdom for the Faith. What can we learn from their prayer life?

Verse 4

"The smoke of the incenses - went up (*anebē*) with the prayers of the saints."

Verse 5

The angel cast (*ebalen* - 2 aor. active - ind. - in a single momentary act the fire was cast!) The judgment of fire covers "the entire earth (*eis tēn gēn*, Ezekiel 10:2); and there occurred (*egenonto* - 2 aor. ind. middle voice) thunders, and sounds, and lightnings, and an earthquake." This same phenomenon occurred when the first four seals were opened (6:12ff).

Verse 6

The angels have put the trumpets to the mouths (prepared themselves) "in order that (*hina* clause - for the purpose that) they might trumpet (*salpisōsin* - 1st aor. subj.)

SECTION 25

Text 8:7

7 And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

Initial Questions 8:7

1. What followed after the sounding of the first trumpet?
2. Why the symbolism of limitation, i.e., one-third of the earth, trees, and green grass - vs. 7?

Verse 7

This imagery is unquestionably taken from the Egyptian plagues recorded in Exodus 9:24 (see also Joel 2:28f).

The first four trumpets are discussed in seven verses; the last three are called three woes, and are described in TWENTY-seven verses. The first four are very similar and are not extensively discussed; the last three are described in greater detail. The first four affect the properties belonging to nature; the last three affect mankind.

"One-third of the earth, and one-third of trees, and all green grass was burnt." This destruction which has been cast on the earth destroys extensively as a warning to sinful man. Among the trees were those which provided food for the land, i.e., olive, fig, etc.

The imagery of this section symbolizes the custom of the day regarding the court of king. The king is God, and mankind is called to learn of His judgment, which is limited but severe.

SECTION 26

Text 8:8-9

8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; 9 and there died the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, even they that had life; and the third part of the ships was destroyed.

Initial Questions 8:8-9

1. What followed the sounding of the second trumpet - vs. 8?
2. What particular part of creation was effected?
3. How extensive was the destruction - vs. 9?
4. What place does the sea play in the life of man?

Verse 8

The first trumpet sounded for the affect on the earth; now the second trumpets sounds and the marine area is affected.

John does not assert that a burning mountain fell into the sea, but rather he says that "as (*hōs* - a simile - as or like a mountain) a great mountain burning with fire". . . . This could have been the imagery of a great meteorite. This fire brand affected the habitant of the fish. Fish were counted as a vital source of food in the first century. The imagery of the sea was no doubt the Mediterranean Sea. One third of the sea became blood. This symbolism could have come from the first Egyptian plague (Exodus 7:20-21)

Verse 9

The extent of the destruction is here revealed. "One third of all living (*psukas* - see appendix immediately following this chapter) were destroyed (*diephtharēsan* - 2nd aor. passive - were destroyed in a single act).

SECTION 27

Text 8:10-11

10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; 11 and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the

waters became wormwood: and many men died of the waters, because they made bitter.

Initial Questions 8:10-11

1. Life is impossible without water. How much of this life-sustaining fluid was defiled - vs. 10?
2. What does wormwood mean - vs. 11?
3. What did the wormwood do to the waters?
4. How long could life be prolonged without the water which we take so much for granted?

Verse 10

The drinking water of man was affected by the events that followed the third trumpet. Man cannot long survive without water. John declares that the burning object (as a lamp) fell on "one third of the rivers and onto the fountains of the waters." The fresh water supply was attacked like in the Egyptian plague.

Verse 11

This imagery comes from Jeremiah 9:15. "The name of the star (in vs. 10 the word used was lamp) is called wormwood" (see Deuteronomy 29:18; Amos 5:7). Note that John does not say that the water is mixed with, but turned into wormwood. This event is lethal for the continuance of human life. The symbol of wormwood signifies the "bitter sorrow" (Lamentations 3:19).

SECTION 28

Text 8:12

12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner.

Initial questions 8:12

1. Destruction was now reaching into what parts of creation - vs. 12?
2. How vital is the light and heat of the sun for the sustaining of human life?

3. How had the destructive forces effected the order of the solar system? Who sustains the order that we take for granted?

Verse 12

The imagery comes from the ninth Egyptian plague (Exodus 10:21). After the fourth angel sounded the universe's source of light, heat, and energy, which sustains plant and human life, was affected.

John declared that one-third of the sun, moon, and stars "was struck"—"in order that (*hina* clause - for the purpose that) the third of them might be darkened." This was to effect the length of night and day.

The first four angels have now trumpeted. Each devastation which followed their blast, affected nature. We must not lose sight of the fact that nature was attacked at the most vital points which related to the on going of human life.

SECTION 29

Text 8:13

13 And I saw, and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound.

Initial Questions 8:13

1. What does woe mean - vs. 13?
2. In view of our present involvement in a hymanistic, naturalistic, and rationalistic effort to provide a perfect society upon the earth quite distinct from God's power and purpose, what can we make of the declaration that there is more and worse to come?

Verse 13

There is an innovation between the fourth and fifth trumpet. John has a vision of "one flying eagle." What message does the eagle bring? Why the symbol of an eagle? It is an O.T. image for vengeance or wrath in general (see Deuteronomy 28:49; Hosea 8:1; Habakkuk 1:8). The eagle was also a bird of prey. What is the message of this bird of prey? The one eagle was flying "in mid-heaven (*mesouranēmati* - this means the meridian or the place the sun occupies at noon.) SAYING WITH A

LOUD voice, Woe, Woe, Woe to the ones dwelling (*katoikountas* - present participle the one now dwelling or dwelling at present) on the earth." This vision demands both seeing and hearing (contrast some of John's visions - were seen - some heard). The next phrase tells us why the eagle was crying Woe, Woe, Woe. "By reason of (literally *ek tōn loipōn* - from or out of the remaining) the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels being about (*mellontōn* - about to) to trumpet. The triple woes stand for the three remaining trumpets. Things have been bad, but they will get worse. John's message of the progressing forces of destruction is in harmony with Paul's teaching (II Tim. 3:12). There will be more destruction and it affects will be worse than the last.

Review Questions for Entire Chapter 8

Much of the material in this chapter is self-explanatory within its context.

1. What effect did the great persecution have on the spiritual and general prayer life of the saints - vs. 3?
2. What is the major source of the imagery in vs. 7?
3. What was destroyed and how extensive were the destructions - vs. 8, etc.?
4. How vital was shipping for the Palestine of John's day - vs. 9?
5. What does the symbol of Wormwood signify - vs. 11? Discuss the appropriateness of the symbol.
6. How important, chemically speaking, is the light of the sun for the existence and continuity of life (animal, plant, and man - vs. 12)?
7. Why was the image of the eagle used in vs. 13?
8. What was the message of the eagle - vs. 13?
9. Compare and discuss the teaching of Christ (Matt. 24), Paul (especially I and II Thess.) and John in this passage regarding their doctrine of "the last things."

Special Study on the word Psukē

(From Verse Nine the Form is *Psukas*)

This term translated soul has a long history. It is a very important term in the vocabulary of the Christian view of the nature of man. It is completely distorted and misunderstood by