

Sent: Wednesday, December 15, 2021, 1:59 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Revelation 8

"Blow a trumpet in Zion; and sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming; surely it is near!" (Joel 2:1)

Remember two weeks ago when we finished Revelation 7? Where we encountered an unexpected pause in the middle of all the action happening in John's vision of the unleashing of God's judgment on the earth as an angel having the "seal of the Living God" held back the release of the seventh seal, which was about to be released by the four angels "standing on the four corners of the earth"! Holding it back until there was opportunity to "seal" 144,000 representatives from the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel, who would be saved, sealed, and sent to evangelize the world, in what will be the greatest missionary outreach the world has ever known! All done in the midst of the greatest terror and turmoil the world has ever seen! Then, even more surprisingly, John saw in a separate vision, a great multitude, which no one could number, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues (including many martyrs who had come out of the tribulation with their garments "washed in the blood of the Lamb"), standing before the throne and before the Lamb (in heaven!) giving glory and praise to God for their salvation!

And so, we saw in Revelation 7 a shift in John's vision from what was happening on the earth (in verses 1-8) to what was happening, at the same time, in heaven (in verses 9-17). Taking us from the "worst of times" (on earth), to the "best of times" (in heaven)! And we concluded that John, while exiled on the Isle of Patmos, and in the last days in this life, must have experienced the greatest of joy after seeing a vision of the things to come! A joy we too can share, despite all the turmoil going on in our own world today, knowing that God's plan of redemption is coming to its completion and that, in the end, the gospel will triumph, and that we will spend eternity in a glorious heaven where the Lord Himself will "lead us by still waters and there will be no tears"! But we're not there yet!

And that sets the scene for our lesson last night, on Revelation 8, with the opening of the seventh seal, and the unleashing of even more of God's judgment on the earth!

Revelation 8:1 says that "when the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour; and John saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets...given to them." An awesome silence, as those around the throne waited expectantly to see what God would do next! (Willmington, in his "Guide to the Bible," writes that it's the "only occasion in recorded history that heaven was silent"!)

The seventh seal (we will learn) contains within it all the remaining judgments of the tribulation, including the seven "trumpet" judgments, followed by the seven "bowl" judgments, with each judgment progressively more devastating! And thus, all of God's wrath poured out leading to the Second Coming of Christ!

Zechariah 2:13 says, "Be silent, all flesh before the Lord; for He is aroused from His holy habitat!"

And so, the seven angels with the seven trumpets prepare themselves to "sound" the seven trumpets!

But before they do, Revelation 8:3 says, "Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne"! Wow!

John's vision at this point is reminiscent of the priestly service as it took place in the "tabernacle in the wilderness" (way back in Exodus), where the priest every morning and every night would fill the golden censer with fiery coals taken from the brazen altar (the "altar of burnt offering") located in the courtyard of the tabernacle and take it into the Holy Place to light the incense on the "altar of incense" (which was positioned just outside the veil leading into the Holy of Holies where God dwelled), representing the prayers of the people offered up to God, with the smoke "rising as a sweet-smelling savor" before the Lord!

And so, the angel, in Revelation 8, was offering up the prayers of the saints (including the prayers of the martyrs) before God to bring justice to the world. God responded by having the angel "throw the censer, filled with the fire of the altar, to the earth," resulting in "peals of thunder and sounds flashes of lightning and an earthquake"!

And with that,

- The first trumpet is sounded! And verse 6 says, "there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth...and a third of the earth...and a third of the sea...and all the grass was burned up"!
- Then the second trumpet sounded! And verse 7 says, "something like a great mountain burning with fire (perhaps a meteor) thrown into the sea...and a third of the sea...and a third of the creatures in the sea died...and a third of the ships were destroyed"!
- Then the third trumpet sounded, and "a great star (called "Wormwood") fell from heaven, burning like a torch, causing a third of the rivers and springs to be made bitter, causing many to die"!
- Then the fourth trumpet sounded! And (verse 12 says) "a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck...and darkened"! Woe!

MacArthur sums up these four trumpet judgments as "divine destruction of the earth's ecology" (which will be much to the chagrin and despair of the "save the earth" advocates for sure)!

But there's more to come!

These acts of God are not new to God, or to us (who get into the Scripture)! Remember how God, through Moses, in Exodus 7:20-21 struck the waters of the Nile River, turning it into blood; and, in 9:22-26, sending thunder and hail and fire down upon the land of Egypt; and, in 15:23-25, turning the "bitter waters" of Marah into "sweet water"! And on and on!

Robert Thomas, in his commentary on Revelation, notes that "the prophets understood that the miracles of Egypt were to be repeated in the future" only to a much larger degree! The prophet Joel writes (in Joel 2:20-21), for example: "I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,

blood, fire and columns of smoke, the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes!" Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah wrote of the "days to come"!

And Jesus told His disciples (in Matthew 24:22) that "unless those days were cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect (many of whom will be saved during, and suffering through, the tribulation) those days will be cut short"!

Trumpets, we know, play a major role in God's dealings with His people! Perhaps most notably at the "battle of Jericho," where (according to Joshua 6:4) "seven priests" with "seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark, on the seventh day...march around the city seven times," and when the priests blow the trumpets, "the walls came tumbling down"! (Harry Ironside once wrote: "Jericho fell at the sound of the seven trumpets and the world, as we know it, is going to fall at the sound of the seven trumpets, blown by the angels of judgment!")

But also, at the rapture (as noted in I Corinthians 12:52), and at Christ's Second Coming, as Christ Himself told His disciples (in Matthew 24:31)

Our text ends with the warning of more to come! In Revelation 8:13, John sees an eagle (maybe symbolizing the "fourth living creature," according to Revelation 4:7) flying in midheaven, saying '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 only "triple woe" in Scripture!)

Stay tuned! It's going to get even worse, before it gets better!

Blow a trumpet! Sound the alarm! "For the day of the Lord is coming! Surely it is near!"

Merry Christmas, men! Sound the alarm! But, also, spread the good news!"

Lowell