



Route 66, Revelation

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March 23, 2022

Revelation 8:1-5 THE SILENCE AND THE THUNDER OF PRAYER

"When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand in the presence of God, and seven trumpets were given to them. Another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense that he might add it to the prayers of the saints on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God. And the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it on the ground. And there were crashes of thunder and loud voices and flashes of lightning and an earthquake."

The angel is standing at the altar. (Revelation 6:9; Revelation 9:13; Revelation 14:18).

The altar of incense stood before the Holy Place in the Temple (Leviticus 16:12; Numbers 16:46). Made of gold, it was eighteen inches square and three feet high. At each corner it had horns; it was hollow and was covered over with a gold plate, and round it was a little railing, like a miniature balustrade, to keep the burning coals from falling off it. In the Temple incense was burned and offered before the first and after the last sacrifices of the day. It was as if the offerings of the people went up to God wrapped in an envelope of perfumed incense.

Here we have the idea that prayer is a sacrifice to God; the prayers of the saints are offered on the altar and, like all other sacrifices, they are surrounded with the perfume of the incense as they rise to God. A man may have no other sacrifice to offer to God; but at all times he can offer his prayers and there are always angelic hands waiting to bring them to God.

The same angel takes the censer, fills it with coals from the altar and dashes it on the ground; and this is the prelude to the thunder and the earthquake that are the introduction to more terrors.

Revelation 8:2,6 THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH THE TRUMPETS

"And I saw the seven angels who stand in the presence of God, and seven trumpets were given to them; and the seven angels with the seven trumpets prepared to sound the trumpets."

It meant immediate readiness to be dispatched on service. Both Elijah and Elisha repeatedly spoke of "the Lord God of Israel before whom I stand" (1 Kings 17:1; 1 Kings 18:15; 2 Kings 3:14; 2 Kings 5:16); and the phrase really means, "The Lord God of Israel whose servant I am."

The seven angels had seven trumpets.

In the Old Testament

Mount Sinai, when the law was given to the people. There were on the mountain thunders and lightening's and thick cloud, and a very loud trumpet blast (Exodus 19:16,19).

The Day of the Lord. In that day the great trumpet will be blown and it will summon back the exiles from every land (Isaiah 27:13).

On the Day of the Lord the trumpet will be blown in Zion and the alarm sounded in the holy mountain (Joel 2:1). That day will be a day of trumpet and alarm (Zephaniah 1:16). The Lord will blow the trumpet and go out with the whirlwind (Zech.9:14).

In the New Testament the trumpet shall sound and the corruptible will put on incorruption (1Cor.15:52-53).

He speaks of the trumpet of God, which is to sound when Christ comes again (1Th.4:16).

Matthew speaks of the great sound of a trumpet when the elect are gathered in (Matt.24:31).

A trumpet blast can be three things:

- (i) sound the alarm. It can waken from sleep or warn of danger; and God is always sounding his warnings in the ears of men.
- (ii) fanfare which announces the arrival of royalty. It is a fitting symbol to express the invasion of time by the King of eternity.
- (iii) summons to battle.

Revelation 8:7-12 THE UNLEASHING OF THE ELEMENTS

"The first angel sounded a blast on his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood and launched themselves on the dry land; and a third part of the dry land was burned up, and a third part of the trees was burned up, and all green grass was burned up."

"The second angel sounded a blast on his trumpet, and what I can only call a great mountain burning with fire was hurled into the sea; and a third part of the sea became blood, and a third part of the creatures in the sea who had life died, and a third part of the ships were destroyed in wreckage."

"The third angel sounded a blast on his trumpet, and a great meteor blazing like a torch fell from heaven; and it fell on a third part of the rivers, and on the springs of water. And the name by which the meteor is called is Wormwood; and a third part of the waters became wormwood; and many of mankind died because of the embitterment of the waters."

"The fourth angel sounded a blast on his trumpet, and a third part of the sun was smitten, and a third part of the moon, and a third part of the stars, so that a third part of their light was darkened, and so that a third part of the day did not shine, and so with the night."

FIRST, the destruction of 1/3 of the EARTH (Revelation 8:7) trees, grass.

Exodus 9:24 - there came upon Egypt fire mixed with a hail of unparalleled destructiveness. John to increase the terror adds blood, remembering Joel's picture of the day when the sun would be turned into darkness and the moon into blood (Joel 2:10).

SECOND it falls upon the SEA (Revelation 8:8-9) even ships

In Exodus, when Moses lifted up his rod over the waters, the waters of the Nile turned to blood and the fishes in the river died (Exodus 7:20-21).

Exodus, when Moses lifted up his rod and smote the waters, the waters of the Nile turned to blood and the fishes in the river died (Exodus 7:20-21).

THIRD it falls upon the FRESH WATER rivers and springs (Revelation 8:10-11)

It was the threat of God through Jeremiah that God would give his people wormwood to eat and the waters of gall to drink (Jeremiah 9:14-15; Jeremiah 23:15). Wormwood always stood for the bitterness of the judgment of God on the disobedient.

FOURTH it falls on the HEAVENLY BODIES (Revelation 8:12).

No compatibles.

Revelation 8:13 THE FLYING EAGLE

"And I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in mid-heaven crying with a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe! for those who dwell on the earth, because of what is going to happen when the rest of the trumpets speak, which the three angels are about to sound."

Revelation 9:1-2 THE UNLOCKING OF THE ABYSS

"The fifth angel sounded a blast on his trumpet, and I saw a star falling from heaven on the earth, and to him there was given the key of the shaft of the bottomless abyss; and he opened the shaft of the abyss; and smoke went up from the shaft like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke from the abyss."

Terrors - beyond nature. Now DEMONIC;

The abyss is the intermediate place of punishment of the fallen angels, the demons, the beast, the false prophet and of Satan (Revelation 9:1-2,11; Revelation 11:7; Revelation 20:1,3).

Their final place of punishment is the lake of burning fire and brimstone (Revelation 20:10,14,15).

Gehenna--which is not mentioned in the Revelation--is the place of punishment for evil men.

This idea of the abyss underwent a development. In the beginning it was the place of the imprisoned waters. In the creation story the primeval waters surround the earth and God separates them by creating the firmament (Genesis 1:6-7). In its first idea the abyss was the place where the flood of the waters was confined by God beneath the earth, a kind of great subterranean sea, where the waters were imprisoned to make way for the dry land. The second step was that the abyss became the abode of the enemies of God, although even there they were not beyond his power and control (Am.9:3; Isaiah 51:9; Ps.74:13).

Next the abyss came to be thought of as a great chasm in the earth. We see this idea in Isaiah 24:21-22, where the disobedient hosts of heaven and the kings of the earth are gathered together as prisoners in the pit.

Revelation 9:3-12 THE LOCUSTS FROM THE ABYSS

"From the smoke locusts came forth upon the earth, and they were given power like the power of the scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only such men as had not the seal of God upon their forehead. They were not permitted to kill them, but to torture them for five months. Their torture was like the torture of a scorpion when it strikes a man; and in those days men will seek for death and not be able to find it; and they will long to die but death flees from them."

In likeness the locusts were like horses prepared for battle; on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold. Their faces were like human faces and they had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions. They had scales like iron breastplates, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of many chariots with horses running to battle. They have tails like scorpions with stings, and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. As king over them they have the angel of the bottomless abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek Appolyon. The first woe has passed. Behold, there are still two woes to follow it."

They are forbidden to attack vegetation do that (Revelation 9:4); their attack is to be launched against the men who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads.

The scorpion is like a small lobster, with lobster-like claws to clutch its prey. It has a long tail, which curves up over its back and over its head; at the end of the tail there is a curved claw; with this claw the scorpion strikes and it secretes poison as the blow is delivered. The scorpion can be up to six inches in length; it swarms in crannies in walls and literally under almost every stone. Campers tell us that every stone must be lifted when a tent is pitched lest a scorpion be beneath it. Its sting is worse than the sting of a hornet; it is not necessarily fatal, but it can kill. The demonic locusts have the power of scorpions added to them.

Their attack is to last for five months. The explanation of the five months is almost probably that the life-span of a locust from birth, through the larva stage, to death is five months. It is as if we might say that one generation of locusts is being launched upon the earth.

Such will be the suffering caused by the locusts that men will long for death but will not be able to die. Job speaks of the supreme misery of those who long for death and it comes not (Job.3:21); and Jeremiah speaks of the day when men will choose death rather than life (Jeremiah 8:3). A Latin

writer, Cornelius Gallus, says: "Worse than any wound is to wish to die and yet not be able to do so."

It is fitting that the king of the demonic locusts should be called Destruction and The Destroyer.

Revelation 9:13-21 THE HORSEMEN OF VENGEANCE

"The sixth angel sounded a blast on his trumpet and I heard a voice from the four horns of the altar saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet:

"Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." So there came the four angels who were prepared for that hour and day and month and year, to kill a third part of the human race.

The number of the armed forces of cavalry was twenty thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number, and this was how I saw in appearance the horses and those who were seated on them. They had breastplates of fiery red, and smoky blue, and sulphurous yellow. The heads of the horses were like the heads of lions, and from their mouths there issued fire and smoke and brimstone. With these three plagues they killed a third part of the human race, with the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which were issuing from their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like snakes with heads, and with them they inflict their hurt."

1/3 of humans killed by plagues.

*** The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, even in spite of this did not repent of the deeds of their hands, so as to cease to worship demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which can neither hear nor see nor move; nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their immorality or their thefts.

The horror of the picture mounts. The demonic locusts were allowed to injure but not kill; but now come the squadrons of demonic cavalry to annihilate a third part of the human race.

This is a passage whose imagery is mysterious and whose details no one has ever been able fully to explain.

No one really knows who were the four angels bound at the river Euphrates. We can only set down what we know and what we can guess. The Euphrates was the ideal boundary of the territory of Israel. It was God's promise to Abraham: "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18). The angels, therefore, came from the distant lands, from the alien and hostile places from which the Assyrians and the Babylonians had in time past descended with destruction upon Israel.

It would have been only natural to think that the remainder of mankind would take warning from this dreadful fate; but they did not and continued to worship their idols and demons and in the evil of their ways. It is the conviction of the biblical writers that the worship of idols was nothing less than devil worship and that it was bound to issue in evil and immorality.