

END TIMES: BACK TO THE FUTURE

Lesson 11 w/Answers

Revelation Chapter 8

In this lesson, we will examine scripture passages related to the breaking of the seventh seal and the first half of seven-trumpet judgments, as we look at Chapter 8 in Revelation. As we did for earlier lessons, we should read through the entire chapter at least once and note the symbols that are used. In this lesson, we will observe liberal use of the numerical symbol "three". See if you can calculate how many "1/3" references there are in the seven-trumpet judgments. Hint: you will need to read Chapters 8 through 11 for a complete and accurate count.

As you read Chapter 8, note that it appears to be divided into two sections: the opening scene in heaven, followed by the sounding of the first four trumpets. The many symbols encountered in the scriptural text for this lesson include hail and fire mixed with blood, green grass, living creatures in the sea, and ships that are destroyed. We also find references to rivers and springs of water, a star named "Wormwood", bitter waters, the sun, the moon, and "a third of the stars".

With all of that as a backdrop, and our understanding that, at this point in the sequence of events: (1) all the seals have been opened, (2) the first six judgments are already in progress (including the four horsemen), and (3) the worst of the judgments are about to begin with the sounding of the first trumpet, let's have a look at Chapter 8.

Read Revelation Chapter 8, and consider the following questions:

1. There is great significance to the events described in the opening verses of Chapter 8. Specifically, why do you suppose that there is silence in heaven following the opening of the seventh seal?
 - a. ANSWER: With the opening of the seventh seal, God's harshest judgments are released, as the seven trumpets prepare to blow. I believe that the silence reflects all of heaven in anxious awe regarding how severe and horrible the coming judgments will be. Even the saints are quiet as they await the unfolding of this awesome and awful event.
2. If trumpets are typically used to announce something, what is the significance of the fact that seven trumpets have now been given to the seven angels? (see Revelation 8:2)
 - a. ANSWER: God is preparing to send a complete and full announcement of His judgment on the earth, and the unrighteous living there. These seven angels will carry out that announcement and the associated judgment. They are now waiting for God's command to go forth.
3. Before the seven angels prepare to sound their trumpets, we are introduced to "another angel" who has a golden censer. Who is this angel, and what is he doing? (see Revelation 8:3-5 and Leviticus 16:12-13, 30)
 - a. ANSWER: Clearly this angel is Christ, the High Priest. This is the only position allowed to stand before God and offer up incense as intercession. This represents the Day of Atonement for the entire world, as Christ cleanses the earth from its wicked ways, its uncleanness, and its rebellion. Having done so, the angels then prepare to blow their respective trumpets.
4. In Revelation 8:7, the first trumpet blows and "hail and fire mixed with blood" is hurled down to earth. What are the meanings of the symbols in this verse?
 - a. Hail (see Joshua 10:11, Isaiah 30:30, and Ezekiel 13:13)
 - i. ANSWER: God is executing severe judgment and causing overwhelming calamity.
 - b. Fire (see Jeremiah 23:29 and Malachi 3:2)
 - i. ANSWER: Represents the purifying influence of God's Holy Word.
 - c. Blood (see Revelation 14:20 and Revelation 16:3)
 - i. ANSWER: This represents a great slaughter.

5. Beginning in Revelation 8:9, we see that a series of one-thirds is referred to. There are a total of twelve contained in all of the trumpet judgments. What could this fact represent? (i.e., what does "twelve" symbolize? how about "one third"? see Zechariah Chapter 13 for example, and verse 8 in particular.)
 - a. ANSWER 1: Given that the Bible uses twelve to represent governance or a form of government, many believe this is a reference to the revived Roman Empire.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Others believe that it simply represents massive personal, political, economic, and environmental destruction on a global scale.
 - c. ANSWER 3: Regarding the judgments associated with the specific trumpets, it can be interpreted that the first four trumpets pertain to judgments against the reign of the Anti-Christ and his government. Trumpet five is a judgment against those who do "not have the seal of God on their foreheads", i.e., the godless gentile world. Trumpet six is a specific judgment on the godless inhabitants of the Roman world. Trumpet seven a universal judgment by God.
 - d. ANSWER 4: It is also worthwhile to note that "one-third" can be used to represent a specific people or nation, as God himself did in the Zechariah Chapter 13.
6. In Revelation 8:7, judgment is hurled down on earth, i.e., "hail and fire mixed with blood". What do the others symbols – earth, grass and trees – indicate to us regarding this judgment?
 - a. Earth
 - i. ANSWER: This is a "worldwide" reference, indicating that a third of the entire earth is consumed as part of this judgment.
 - b. Green Grass (see Psalm 90:5-6, Psalm 102:4-11, Psalm 103:15, Isaiah 40:6-8, and James 1:10)
 - i. ANSWER: Grass symbolizes life – and how temporary it is. "Green" grass could thus be interpreted to refer to a prosperous life.
 - c. Trees (see Daniel 4:4-25 and Ezekiel Chapter 31)
 - i. ANSWER: Trees symbolize the high and the mighty, and their pride.
7. So, if Revelation 8:7 tells us "all the green grass was burned up", then why is the instruction given in Revelation 9:4, "not to harm the grass of the earth"? Is there a conflict between these two verses? How can all of the green grass be burned up before the command "not to harm the grass" is given for a subsequent judgment?
 - a. ANSWER: As we noted above, the verse in Chapter 8 refers to "green grass", i.e., prosperity. The "grass" referred to in Chapter 9 is the standard Biblical reference for life. They are two different symbols: (1) green grass and (2) grass.
8. Continuing with references in Revelation 8 to a third, a third, and a third, we encounter a mountain which is on fire, the sea turning blood, killing one-third of the living creatures in the sea, and the destruction of ships. Taking our knowledge of mountain, fire, sea, and blood symbology, what can we tell is being described in this verse? (see also Jeremiah 51:25, Psalm 46:2, and Zechariah 4:7)
 - a. ANSWER: In this verse, what appears to be a government or kingdom is being thrown into a sea of turbulent and unsettled people, a nation or nations. We saw in an earlier lesson people crying out for the mountains to fall on them (Revelation 6:16), and now God has answered their prayer! A new government has been hurled down on them, blazing hot with a refiner's fire, and again we see a reference to blood. This government will be bloody and terrible in its persecution, as it puts itself up as the shield between the sea of raging people and God.
9. We read further that "a third of the living creatures in the sea" die, and "a third of the ships" are destroyed. What could these symbols refer to? (see Genesis 49:13 and Revelation 18:19)
 - a. ANSWER: It could certainly be literally interpreted that one third of the fish in the sea die, along with a great loss of ships (a third of them). However, it is probably more accurate to say that this passage symbolizes the loss or dramatic negative impact to commerce as a result of this trumpet judgment. This would also tie in with the above references to the green grass and trees. In other words, the prosperous and prideful are being brought low during this time of extreme economic hardship.
10. In Revelation 8:10, the focus shifts from a burning mountain to a great burning star falling from heaven. According to the symbolism in this verse, what is being announced as the fourth angel sounds his trumpet? (see Isaiah 14:12)
 - a. ANSWER: Again, we know from earlier studies that a star can represent a heavenly being; and in this case, a "great star" would represent a significant heavenly being, who is falling from heaven. In this passage, we see the likely fulfillment of prophecy from Isaiah: Satan is cast out of heaven and is falling down to earth.

11. We also observe that the "great star" referenced in the previous question falls on "a third of the rivers and on the springs of water". What could these rivers and springs of water represent? (see Jeremiah 2:13, Joel 3:18, and Revelation 17:15) Once we identify what they represent, what is the judgment prescribed for them? What is happening to them? (see Revelation 8:10 and Revelation 16:4-5)
- ANSWER: Herbert Lockyer, in his book, *Revelation, Drama of the Ages*, writes: "The rivers and fountains of waters suggest sources of profitable pleasure, or of nations acting under turbulent influences." Correspondingly, it is clear that many will die from the poisoning of these sources of profitable pleasure due to contamination from the great fallen star. Sin, in all its forms, will bring with it deadly consequences for so many who are attracted to, and drink from, these poisoned waters.
12. Furthermore, the great fallen star is referred to as "Wormwood". It is not-so-much the star's name as much as it is a name given it because of the effect and the evil influence that it has on the rivers and springs of water. What does the name itself mean, and what is its effect? (see Deuteronomy 29:18, Jeremiah 23:15, and Amos 5:7)
- ANSWER 1: Wormwood refers to an oil that comes from sage brush. It is bitter, and too much of it will be poisonous.
 - ANSWER 2: Accordingly, we can see that Satan's influence when he is cast down to earth will be to turn people's hearts away from God. He will induce them to worship other gods or idols, and this worship will be poison for them and will lead to eternal death. Just as God brought judgment on the Jews during Jeremiah's time, so will he bring that same judgment on this generation as they follow after Satan and consume his poisoned water. Surely, we will observe injustice and immorality as prevalent characteristics of the times: the taking of bribes, dishonesty at every level, and a hedonistic lifestyle where every imaginable pleasure for the benefit of self will be pursued.
 - ANSWER 3: Quoting again from Herbert Lockyer's above-referenced book, "Every earthborn pleasure has 'wormwood' bitter in it, and in the Tribulation judgment a third part of the earth, instead of finding life in fountains of life giving water, finds death."
13. Following the judgments of the third trumpet, a fourth trumpet sounds; and the results are catastrophic. What could be the inferred meaning of the loss of one-third of the sun, the moon and the stars – and the light they produce?
- ANSWER 1: Environmentalists will point to the literal translation associated with a great celestial collision – and the very negative effects that this would have on the ecology and life on the planet.
 - ANSWER 2: More likely however, this event is indicative of God withdrawing light from the world as a result of their desire to follow after Satan. A darkness, going deep into the soul, will cover the earth; a darkness that is not void of physical light, but rather spiritual light. Jesus said that He was the light of the world, now we will have a world devoid of Christ. Darkness will exist like never before; only night until Christ returns as Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

As we can see, God's judgments grow in intensity and severity as they progress: more pronounced, more specific in nature, and more difficult to understand at first reading. As the narrative progresses from the opening of the seven seals to the sounding of the seven trumpets, and then finally on to the seven bowls or vials, God's judgments become more terrible with each phase, and more specific to the people being judged.

Revelation Chapter 9 will reveal to us the next three trumpet judgments, and we will encounter the use of even more symbols. What we can already see is that God's plans are specific, and are in accordance with His timetable, not ours.

While it might appear to the secular population that the world is a chaotic mess and spinning out of control, God is still God; and nothing, not even a single hair on your head, will do anything that is outside of His plan.

So let's thank God today that His grace is still available to all who will believe in his only son Jesus, the Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Because a day is coming when that same Jesus, the very Lamb of God, will come back to earth as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. What a mighty and terrible that day will be!

Thanks for continuing to study with us.

In Christ, Wes