

The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets

Call to Worship: Isaiah 55:1-7

Hymn #718- *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*

1st Scripture: Luke 10:1-20

Hymn #707- *Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior*

2nd Scripture: Revelation 9

Hymn #724- *Only Trust Him*

Introduction:

Last time, we saw that our Lord broke the final seal, which sealed the scroll that He had taken from the right hand of God. And there was silence in heaven for about half an hour, in part, due to the universal anticipation of preparing to behold the contents of the scroll. And we saw that, by means of the prayers of the saints and the intercessions of our Lord Jesus Christ, the opening content of the scroll contained seven trumpet judgments, which would be enacted. All of these judgments would be severe, and yet partial in their scope of affect and devastation, being directed toward the ungodly and those who contend with the Kingdom of God. And we considered the first four trumpet judgments last time, and how they brought about catastrophes upon the land, the sea, maritime commerce and the kingdoms of the world.

This morning then, we move on to consider the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments, which are called “woes,” because they inflict pain and torment directly upon their personal objects. These “woe” judgments, though still partial in their scope of affect (1/3 according to the symbol), are intensified, bringing us closer and closer to the final and universal judgment. They are hellish in nature, bringing about great torment and despair for a time, ultimately leading to the death of those who fail to repent, which sadly, is by far the great majority. So significant is the intensity of these judgments that much more space is given to describe them. You will notice that the first four trumpet judgments were collectively summarized and described in a total of 6 verses (Rev. 8:7-12). Well, here, two trumpet judgments cover the whole of chapter nine, consisting of 21 verses. These “woes” are meant to strike great fear in the heart of the unsaved. In other words, you really don’t want to enter these stages of judgment. For they take away all peace and comfort, and every sense of security that we as human beings (who want to live life) need and desire.

I. The Fifth Trumpet Judgment [Read verses 1-12]

When the fifth angel sounds his trumpet, John sees a “star fallen from heaven to the earth.” And this star was given a key to the bottomless pit. Clearly, this star is a person of some sort, and when you consider the information given to describe him, it would seem to indicate that this person is satan himself. Notice, John sees the star, which has *already fallen*. In other words, he did not see a star *falling*, but one which has already fallen. And it is not only the case that satan is known as a fallen angel, but furthermore, in our first scripture reading in Luke 10:18, we recall our Lord’s response, when His disciples were excited about the success they were having in casting out demons in His name. Our Lord responded, “I saw satan fall like lightning from heaven.” And so, this “star,” which *is given* (notice, he does not have the power or authority to do this in his own right, he is *given*) the key to the bottomless pit (or the shaft of the abyss), then opens it, releasing a host of terrifying, demonic creatures.

But first, billows of smoke emerge from the pit, darkening the sun and the air, like the smoke of a furnace. And here, the indication is that whatever is coming out of this pit, emerges from a pit of hellish evil, intent upon bringing about great darkness and deception on the earth. The creatures that are to follow were bound and restrained in some way, until they are now given the ability to be released and freed, so that they might bring about great harm, torment and spiritual devastation upon their victims. Here, satan is granted permission to release his chained/restrained demonic cohorts for a time, so that they might serve God’s purposes in bringing judgment upon the ungodly. And ironically enough, while they themselves are intent on doing evil (it is their fallen forte), they are not permitted to touch those who are sealed in Christ. Notice, in verse 4, we are told, “They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.” And so, this trumpet judgment, along with the following two woes, is not permitted to harm those who are sealed in Christ. These “woe” judgments affect *only* the unsaved and the unrepentant (like the Egyptian plagues). And though they are described like “locusts,” they are not even permitted to harm the land or the vegetation. These “locust like creatures” bring famine not to the land, but to the soul.

But again, in keeping with the general pattern we have been seeing, we are reminded of another Egyptian plague here, are we not? We are reminded of the plague of the locusts, which

ate away all of the vegetation in Egypt, leaving the land barren and empty of produce. But in this case, these grotesque “locust like” creatures do not harm the vegetation. They gnaw away at the soul’s sense of peace and comfort. They bring great inner torment and unrest.

These demonic figures are described in such horrifically graphic ways, not as a means of exposing their physical appearance (they are spirit beings), but rather as a means of describing the type of pain and anguish they bring upon those whom they providentially afflict. They are dark, evil, grotesque monsters, as it were, intent on torturing and tormenting their subjects. They are parasitic in nature, and they thrive off of the evil harm they do to their hosts. They are intent on removing every ounce of comfort and rest and peace from those whom they harm, while replacing these with turmoil, anguish, anxiety and pain. Their power is described as the power of “scorpions.” They lock their claws around you, as it were; they hold you in place, while they bring down their venomous tail, piercing your soul with poisonous, paralyzing pain and torment. In verse 5b, we are told, “Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.”

So terrible is the inner anguish and turmoil that these demonic figures bring, that we are told that those who endure their hellish torments, wish death upon themselves but don’t find it. And the demons themselves are incapable of bringing about death, because they are not granted the authority to do so. And then, continuing on with the lengthy description of these dark figures in verses 7 and following, we are told that the shape of the locusts was “like horses prepared for battle.” Even as a horse runs fearlessly into battle, these locusts are set and determined to swiftly and fearlessly come upon their prey. On their heads are crowns of something like gold; they come across as royal figures, as having power and authority in themselves, but really, they are leashed and sent out unto a divine purpose. Their faces are like the faces of men; they are intelligent creatures, who devise their wicked schemes of attack in accordance with their own naturally dark hearts. They are reasonable; they plan with a sense of intelligence and thought, rather than haphazardly roaming upon their victims. They have hair like a women’s hair and teeth like lion’s teeth. They are grotesque, savage-like, powerful, merciless and strong. They are frightening and terrifying. And they have “breast plates of iron, and the sound of their wings are like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle.” They are a large army of wicked demons, ferociously working together to overcome and torture their prey. They are

incapable of being warded off. But the real sting is in their “scorpion like” tails. They attack from the rear, as if to deceptively come upon their prey with a sense of suddenness and deception. And they are allowed to torment the ungodly for “five months,” not a literal five months, but for a divinely fixed and ordained period of time, with five months, possibly representing the life cycle of a locust. They are part of the trumpet warnings, and as such, they serve to warn of the approaching final judgment, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth forever!

And then, we are told that their ruler; their king, who ruled over them, was the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon (or “Destruction”) and in Greek, “Apollyon” (or “Destroyer”). And more than likely, this “destroyer,” is the same one who was given the key to the bottomless pit from the outset, namely, satan himself, the ruler of the demons. Of course, as we have seen all along, and continue to see right here in our text, this ruler is himself on a leash. He can go no further than what God allows. To be sure, his intentions are evil, along with his demonic cohorts, but God is the one who releases him and allows him to unlock the abyss, as a means of punishing the unrepentant and all who contend with His church. Notice again, they cannot touch the people of God, and they cannot kill their victims, at least at this point, because they have not been granted the authority to do so. God is sovereign even over this. And the irony of all of this is that these demonic beings actually attack the very ones who serve and worship them. They attack their own allies. They are so bent on evil and on bringing about pain and sorrow; they so enjoy the job of tormenting; it is like their drug, that it makes no difference that their targets are the very ones who serve with them in this world. The viper has no sincere friends; he just bites and poisons, because that is what is most natural to him. He is bent on evil, even if he destroys his own kingdom in the process.

And following this, two more woes are to come, with an increase in the severity of the judgment.

Well brethren, what is the real meaning of this collage of grotesque, graphic imagery that we are given to describe this fifth trumpet judgment? Well, we have already seen that these locusts are demons, who afflict souls in some respect; they are permitted to torment those who are not sealed, but how are we to understand this?

Well, let me seek to describe this in the only way that I can comprehend it. Incorporating all of the imagery we are given here, we find that these demons are used as a means of taking away every form of peace, rest and security from their hosts, to the point that their victims wish death upon themselves, but cannot find it, and are incapable/unwilling to bring it about themselves. There is a desire to remain living in some sense, but there is a strong desire to die as well. There is enough of a desire to live that they cannot bring about their own death, but there is a strong enough desire to die, that they could wish that someone or something else would. This torment involves utter depression and anxiety that stems from a realized hopelessness of ever overcoming their tormented condition. It is the worst form of despair with no Christ to flee to for rest, hope and peace. It is agony of soul; the kind of agony of soul that exists when a person is completely undone because every single ledge of hope they have stood upon in life has collapsed beneath them. They realize that nothing they have set their hopes upon, really matters. They are broken but not unto repentance and faith in Christ. Perhaps one way I can illustrate this is by the example of King Saul, who because of his rebellion against God, was tormented by an evil spirit. And his torment hit its greatest peak when he had consulted a medium to bring up Samuel from the dead, that he might find out about the outcome of the war he was about to engage in, against the philistines. Saul was sharply rebuked for consulting the medium, and he was told that he would most assuredly perish in the battle that he was preparing to fight. The next day, he and his sons would die. And we are told verbatim in 1 Samuel 28:20 of Saul's response, "Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, and was dreadfully afraid because of the words of Samuel. And there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all day or all night."

Saul's spirit completely fainted within him, as it were. He knew he was under the judgment of God, and he knew there was no turning around at this point. And there is no indication that he had repented that day. He was full of dread, despair and utter hopelessness. His soul was in bitter agony. You see, this type of torment and torture accompanies a realized condemnation. The whole world comes crashing down; yesterday's joys are all forgotten, the soul is undone, the moment of truth is upon you and it is a foretaste of hell, as it were. It is total unrest and agony of soul. The utter vanity of everything you have lived for, and everything that defined your life is brought to bear; the emptiness of every idol you have built your life upon overwhelms you, the floor beneath you crumbles, and you realize that you are facing impending

judgment. This is the kind of agony of soul that these demons bring about upon those who are unsealed. And you would think, “Surely, they will at least repent now...surely, they will repent now.” But the indication of the text is the very opposite. They are not even granted repentance. The desire does not even exist, because repentance is a “God-wrought” blessing. Young people, you think that you can just “choose Christ at some later point in life, when you are ready?” Do you think for a moment that it is even in you to do so? Use the light you have now to bring you to your knees. Cry out for salvation now; repent now, and be saved. You don’t know whether or not this type of judgment will fall upon you, as it has many others. Perhaps, you will be further hardened and overcome by the influence of these grotesque, invisible and yet, very real demonic figures? Oh, flee to Christ before it is too late. Unbeliever, don’t die in your sin. For the next trumpet judgment is even greater, because it indeed brings about death. These demonic torments are probably the closest manifestations of the torments of hell, but even they, pale greatly in comparison. For hell, is permanent in its duration and far more intense in its suffering and agony (like the constant feeling of being burned by fire and brimstone, accompanied by the mental anguish of eternal regret). [see also Deut. 28:15-68 and Joel 2]

[Exodus example—judgment upon their gods, Rome example, and what if America is overcome by foreign powers? Defenses stripped...etc; from absolute freedom to being bound within barbwire fences, limited rations in concentration camps...]

II. The Sixth Trumpet Judgment [Read verses 13-21]

The sixth trumpet judgment is the last trumpet *warning*, leading up to the final and universal judgment that will come upon all unbelievers at Christ’s visible return. For when the seventh and final trumpet sounds, we will see that the times for warning are over, and the judgment for all who remain unconverted will be forever sealed.

This sixth trumpet judgment comes on the heels of the fifth trumpet judgment. They are, in fact, similar in some ways. Only, this judgment brings about death to a third of mankind (according to the symbol given in verse 15). The trumpet blows and a voice comes from the four horns of the golden altar. You might recall that during the Old Covenant sacrifices, some of the sacrifices, such as the “sin offering” necessitated the priest dipping his fingers in the blood of the

sacrifice, in order to put some on the horns of the incense altar (Lev. 4:7). Perhaps, here again, we are reminded of how the saint's prayers, represented by the shed blood of the martyrs, are used by God to carry out His fierce judgments upon the wicked. And so, the voice coming from these horns, calls forth the release of these four angels who are bound at the Euphrates, so that they might kill a third of mankind (according to the symbol). The idea of these four angels being bound is not meant to imply that they were somehow chained or tied up. Rather, as we see in the next verse, it indicates that they were waiting there for this specific purpose. They were awaiting the call of God for them to act and bring about this judgment. And they were waiting at the river "Euphrates," which would have symbolized the reality of their enmity, especially toward the Roman Empire, whose eastern border reached the Euphrates, beyond which the threat of attack and opposition always existed. Notice then, what we are told in verse 15, "So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind."

You see, the idea conveyed here is that the judgments of God are all set to a precise divine timeline. In other words, everything that happens; everything that brings about death and suffering in this world, be it for good or bad, is set to a divine clock. And every appointment God makes, must and will be kept. Do you see that friends? These angels were held back; they knew their divinely ordained task, but they had to wait for the very hour and day and month and year that God had ordained for their release. They could move not a moment too soon or too late. Every judgment is set right according to God's divine timetable. Again, we behold the glorious sovereignty of God in the timing of these judgments. Several months ago, Japan was hit with a massive Tsunami (and an earthquake) that set them back greatly, and no one expected it. We went through the hardships of Katrina and 9/11. Major wars have come and gone. But all of these things sprung right out of God's divine time table, and He dipped into the prayers of God's people, as a motivation to enact these judgments. Does that bring fear to you, unbeliever? Will you continue to delay fleeing to Christ for His grace and salvation, as if your life is in your own hands? Oh, God has an appointment book in heaven, and your death is written in it with permanent ink. Be ready for that day, friends! Be ready for it! Flee to Christ now before it is too late!

Well, these angels are released and they are set to bring about a significant amount of deaths, whenever this trumpet is blown. And we find the description of their attack, once again, to be quite graphic and intense. Like the dreadful sound of an innumerable army; an army that is clearly far too big in number and power to imagine for a moment that it can be defeated, and an army far too set on bringing about destruction to imagine that they will be merciful (200 million horsemen was the number John *heard*). And the horses along with their riders are described by fearsome, hellish like symbols. The horses have heads like lions. They are powerful, roaring, ferocious beasts, intent on destroying their prey. And both, horse and rider, are described by bearing the symbols of fire, smoke and brimstone, the three plagues that are used to destroy their victims. And the power of these fierce warriors is found in the horses rather than the riders. The horses are directed by the riders to use their mouths and tails to bring about this devastating judgment. Out of their mouths come the fire and the smoke and the brimstone (all hellish symbols, reminding us of the judgment that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah). And their tails “are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.” These monstrous, demonic beings, following suit with the locusts of the previous plague, bring about great deception (judgment coming from the “mouths” and the serpentine tails of the horses), and darkness, leading ultimately to death. The insanity and utter torment brought about by the locusts, leads men to curse God rather than repent, and their judgment is increased greatly, pushing them forward to death and the final judgment, of which all of these trumpets have warned.

And then, consider again verses 20-21. [Read Rev. 9:20-21]

Here, we are given further confirmation that these trumpet judgments are meant to warn those who are not killed by them. But sadly, as a general whole, the world does not repent of its idolatries, murders, immoralities...etc, entailing that the warnings have ended and now universal judgment is imminent, and on its way in the blowing of the last trumpet; the last of the three “woes.”

Conclusion

1) Again, be encouraged brethren to know that none of the three “woe” judgments will directly affect you. If you are sealed; if you are in Christ by faith, then these demonic judgments

cannot and will not harm you. You might recall before, when we read Luke 10:1-20, and we saw there, the Lord rejoicing with His disciples, who were given authority over the demons, that our Lord said, “I saw satan fall like lightning from heaven.” Well, following these words, interestingly enough, our Lord moved on in the very next verse to say, “Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you...” Clearly, these fifth and sixth trumpets have that promise in mind. Is it not interesting that the power of these demonic beings is described in part as the power of “scorpions” and “serpents”? Unlike some today, who would think they could tamper with snakes and scorpions, as if to tempt God in their tampering, is it not the case that our Lord had demons in mind, when He spoke those words to His disciples, who had just come back from casting out demons? And when He says, “nothing shall by any means hurt you...”, He is certainly not referring to physical harm, for most of the disciples suffered horribly, painful deaths. Rather, He was speaking in keeping with these two trumpets, showing that they (and all of His people) could not be harmed by the power of demons, who would seek to deceive and destroy them by infiltrating their souls with great darkness and deception. Our faith is safe, brethren; our lives are ultimately safe in Christ! For, He has prayed for us. But, not so for those of you who are outside of Christ! Might some of you be being hardened by demonic darkness unto judgment, such that you would deny even the obvious (embracing evolution, works Gospel...etc)? Where will you stand when devastation strikes you? Where will you stand when all of the freedoms you have taken for granted are suddenly taken away?

2) The desperate call to evangelize the lost!

3) God is sovereign over it all! The winds and the waves obey Him! Even the demons are subject to Him. The ruler of the demons, rules within the limited jurisdiction, allowed and permitted by Christ! And our glorious Christ uses even their “ill-motivated” destructions to lift up His throne, to exalt His glory and to prosper His church!

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25