

REVELATION – SERMON 39

THE COMING ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHE

Revelation 8:7-13

INTRODUCTION

- We are constantly told by the nature worshipping heathens who govern us that “man-made pollution will bring catastrophe upon the planet”
- That statement is actually true, except is the nature of the pollution that they have wrong
- The heathen claim that it is *environmental* pollution that is our problem
- But it is *moral* pollution that is our problem
- The last global catastrophe which permanently altered the topography and climate of the world took place some 4,300 years ago.
- The cause was not carbon dioxide, but the *wickedness, evil* and *corruption* of man (Genesis 6:5,11,12) – it was *moral* pollution that precipitated God’s judgment upon the antediluvian world
- So too, the “day of the Lord” is his righteous anger against sin poured out upon the world, “to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity” (Isaiah 26:21)
- During the tribulation, God will punish the ungodly by disrupting the natural order
- It is essential that these descriptions be interpreted literally
- The preterists, historicists and non-literal futurists attempt to interpret these catastrophic events in nature as being symbolic
- There are as many interpretations as interpreters, and there is no way of determining which one is correct
- To regard these as being anything but literal is to subject the Bible to endless conjecture, a quagmire of speculation, never coming to a certain understanding of what is meant.
- These judgments bear many parallels with the plagues on Egypt
- The first six trumpet judgments occur close to the mid-point of the seven-year tribulation period, while the seventh trumpet and the attendant seven vials take place in the final half.
- The proportion of the earth affected by these judgments increases as the tribulation progresses

- One-fourth under the seals (6:8), one-third under the trumpets (8:7-12), and the whole earth under the vials (16:1-11)
- These first four trumpets affect nature (ch.8), while the fifth and sixth summon forth demonic forces against men (ch.9)

I. BURNING DESTRUCTION IN THE HERBAL REALM (7)

A. Hail, fire and blood cast upon the earth

1. The seventh plague on Egypt was hail and fire (Exodus 9:22-23)
2. Some think that it could be a result of volcanic activity, with rocks and lava hailing from eruptions
3. The blood may refer to the rain itself that has been transformed to blood, or to the bloodshed of men and beasts that are afflicted by the hail

B. Trees and grass burnt up

1. The loss of one-third of the earth's trees will drastically effect mankind
 - a. Famine from reduction of fruit supply
 - b. Reduction in oxygen levels in atmosphere
 - c. The smoke from the fires will cover the world and choke men and beasts
2. All green grass will be burned
 - a. At the second seal (6:6) there was drought and famine
 - b. The dry earth will be ripe for wildfires
 - c. Vital grain crops such as wheat and rice will be eliminated as well as fodder for cattle, causing global famine (cf. Joel 1:15-20)

C. God's right to devastate his creation

1. As its Creator, all the creation belongs to God (Psalm 24:1)
2. The original creation was perfect and untainted, without corruption and suffering (Genesis 1:31)
3. Man's sin brought death and the curse not only upon humanity, but upon the whole earth, which is now subject to corruption and suffering (Rom 8:19-22)
4. While even now the creation groans and travails in pain as a result of sin, this travail will be greatly increased during the tribulation
5. The environmentalist nature worship that is prevalent in our day will be answered by God in sending destruction from heaven upon the objects of their idolatry

II. BLOOD AND DEFILEMENT IN THE HYDROLOGICAL REALM (8-11)

- A. One-third of the sea becomes blood (8-9)
1. The object like a great mountain cast into the sea could be a meteorite
 2. Its impact on the world's oceans will bring death and devastation
 3. This echoes the first plague on Egypt (Exodus 7:19; Psalm 78:44)
 4. This should be understood as literal blood, not a blood-like substance
 5. The third part of sea creatures will die, creating further food shortages
 6. The third part of the ships will be destroyed, capsized by great tsunamis, halting supply and transportation
 7. The seas, under God's mercy, are a source of life blessing, providing food, oxygen and rain
 8. But under his justice they become the source of misery and death to a rebellious and ungrateful mankind

B. One-third of rivers polluted (10-11)

1. The star from heaven may be another meteorite (*aster* – cf. 6:13), which breaks up in the atmosphere and scatters poisonous gasses into the freshwaters of earth
2. "Wormwood" is a translation of the Greek *absinthos*, which is a stupefying and sometimes toxic plant product
3. It is bitter tasting, and is used in Scripture to denote bitterness (Lamentations 3:19)
4. It is also connected to idolatry (Deuteronomy 29:18)
5. God judged the idolaters of Israel by giving them wormwood to drink (Jeremiah 8:14; 9:14-16; 23:15), and will do likewise to the idolaters of the earth during the tribulation (Revelation 9:20; 13:15-16)

III. BANEFUL DARKENING IN THE HEAVENLY REALM (12-13)

A. Sun, moon and stars darkened

1. The day of the Lord is a day of darkness (Isaiah 13:10; Joel 2:2; Amos 5:18; Mark 13:24)
2. The ninth plague upon Egypt was *darkness* (Exodus 10:21-23)
3. This darkening is suggested by some to be from thick clouds in the atmosphere obscuring the sun's light

4. Yet it may be that God actually alters the sun itself to diminish its energy output
 5. The reduced heat from the sun will bring unprecedented effects upon earth's climate, weather and biological cycles
 6. In these days mankind will be brought back to a very primitive state
 7. God will strike at the proud accomplishments of man, as he did with Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4), yet for all this, they will not repent (Rev 9:20-21)
- B. The angel pronouncing a threefold woe (13)
1. The Critical Greek text reads *eagle*, while the Received Text reads *angel*
 2. "Woe" indicates grief and anguish, and is intensified by repetition
 3. His pronouncement assures the inhabitants of the earth that the worst is yet to come
 4. The fifth and sixth trumpets unleash demonic forces to torment man, while the seventh trumpet (the third woe) brings the seven vial judgments

CONCLUSION

1. These judgments are a foretaste of hell
 - Hell's *desolation* – there will be not one green tree or one blade of grass, only burning desolation.
 - Hell's *dehydration* – there will be no water, not even a drop to cool the tongue of the damned
 - Hell's *darkness* – there will be no light, only darkness
2. On the other hand, the believer shall not come into condemnation (John 5:24) and need not fear these judgments (John 5:24)
 - There are eternally green pastures prepared for the Lord's sheep (Psalm 23:2)
 - The child of God has free and eternal access to the water of life through Jesus Christ (John 4:10-14; Revelation 22:17)
 - The believer no longer walks in darkness, but has the light of life, and will dwell in the eternal light of the Lamb – the Light of the world (John 8:12; 12:46; Re 21:23)
3. The Christian can say, *The best is yet to come*
4. But for the unbeliever *the worst is yet to come*
5. Which is yours: eternal joy, or eternal woe?