

Revelation 8:1-13

The Glorious Lamb is the only One worthy to send horrible judgments, because of His death, burial, and resurrection. There are 3 major sets of judgments. The 6th seal judgment brought a worldwide earthquake. People on the earth know it is from God & the Lamb.

Before the 7th seal, chapter 7 is a parenthesis to say that God sealed 144,000 Jewish men, who witnessed so that thousands of people are saved and many die as martyrs during the Tribulation.

Now at 8:1, Jesus Christ, the Glorious Lamb, opens the last of the 7 Seals on the scroll. Now the whole scroll lays open, showing all the rest of the judgments to the very end. The "silence in heaven" for 1/2 hr after the Lord Jesus Christ breaks the last seal is "deafening."

- Even the great multitude that has been worshipping (5:11, 13).
- Even the cherubim, who "do not cease" to say "Holy, Holy, Holy" (cf. 4:8).
- Why? Heaven "stops" because of the horror about to be unleashed on the earth -- "the lull before the storm."

Out of 7th seal comes the 7 trumpet judgments (8:2 -- 9:21).

A. 7 angels were each given a trumpet, 8:2.

1. Angels - prominent; specially chosen for this task; these angels are not the same as the 4 cherubim (living creatures Rev. 4-5; Ezek. 1, 10).
2. Trumpets - These are not to be confused with the trumpet of the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16-17). These are given by the Glorious Lamb as judgments on the world.

B. "Another angel" (v.3).

I believe this is likely "the Angel of the Lord" (phrase from OT), Jesus Christ, with the golden censer, 8:3a.

In OT, only the High Priest used a golden censor to carry fire from the brazen altar of the Temple courtyard to the altar of incense in the Temple (cf. Exod. 37:25-28).

Jesus Christ is our High Priest who intercedes for us! (cf. Heb. 4:14-16).

1 JESUS CHRIST, OUR HIGH PRIEST, ADDED HIS OWN INTERCESSIONS TO THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS TO ANSWER THEM WITH THE JUDGMENTS OF THE 7 TRUMPETS, 8:3-5.

A. Christ added the incense of His own worth & work & intercession, to the prayers of ALL the saints (all time) already on the altar in heaven, 8:3b-4.

B. These prayers are now answered. "Vengeance is Mine! I will repay!"

This same censer becomes the instrument of judgment, thrown to the earth as a signal to start the Trumpet judgments, 8:5.

2 WHEN THE GLORIOUS LAMB GAVE THE SIGNAL, THEN THE TRUMPET JUDGMENTS BEGIN, 8:6--9:17.

In 8:6, the angels prepare to sound their trumpet one at a time.

- A. As a result of the 1st 4 trumpet judgments, 1/3 of the whole earth will be ruined, 8:7-12. There is no indication that saints living in these regions are exempt.

Trumpet #1, 8:7

Nature: Hail & fire, mixed with blood.

Result: 1/3 of the earth & trees is burned up. All green grass is burned.

Trumpet #2, 8:8-9

Nature: A "mountain-like" substance, burning with fire is thrown into the sea.

We might be tempted to say a "meteor" but God is not confined to known phenomena.

Result: 1/3 of the sea becomes blood (cf. Ex. 7:20-21). Worse than any oil slick. 1/3 of sea creatures die; 1/3 of ships destroyed. Some whales are dead and carcasses would wash up on shores. Trade ruined.

Trumpet #3, 8:10-11

Nature: "Star" fell from heaven. Stars can refer to angels (9:1), but probably not here. Rather - some heavenly body crashes through the atmosphere. "Wormwood"

Result: 1/3 of fresh water becomes bitter => can't find good water to drink.

Trumpet #4, 8:12

Nature: The luminaries in the heavens were darkened. The text doesn't say how. Cf. 9th plague - Ex. 10:21-23

Result: 1/3 of luminaries were blackened, day and night. => lost 1/3 daylight worldwide; colder.

- B. A flying eagle gives a warning about the last 3 Trumpets => Woes on earth, 8:13.

REVELATION 9:1-21**Trumpet #5, 9:1-12 -- the First WOE**

1. The Leader of this judgment is Satan himself, 9:1a and 11.
 - The "star" had already fallen from heaven to the earth, which fits other biblical descriptions of Lucifer (cf. Isa. 14:12; Ezek. 28:15; Rev. 12:4ff).
 - He was given authority (common symbol -- a "key") by God over the bottomless pit.
 - The bottomless pit (vv.1-2) & the abyss (v.11) are the same (same Greek word, abyssos is found in both verses). See Appendix to this lesson.

The abyssos means "bottomless, unbounded." Place of all departed spirits - dead righteous people, dead wicked people, wicked angels (spirits). Ex: Lk. 8:31. The "bottomless pit," or "pit of the abyss" is a unique phrase to refer to the abode of confined fallen angels (demons) that are reserved for this particular moment in the judgments of God on the earth, 9:1b. (Cf. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6 --> wicked angels are confined or bound.)

The Paradise portion of the place of the dead "emptied" when the Lord was resurrected and ascended to heaven.

2. When Satan was authorized to open the pit, "locusts" were released out of the smoke from "the pit of the abyss" - location of confined demons, 9:2-3.

These "locusts" had power of a scorpion given to them by God to accomplish His purposes in judging people on the earth (cf. v.10).

(Skip ahead to v. 7 where)

3. These creatures looked like horrifying monsters, 9:7-11.
"like" - 8x. (For comparison, study Joel 2).

Spirit beings have the ability to appear in various visible forms. Support? Good angels appear as people in OT & Heb.13:1.

- Obviously they are not ordinary locusts, 9:7-9.
These "locusts" appeared "like horses" with faces like faces of men.
- These demonic creatures appear with tails like scorpions, 9:10.
Hideous, frightening demonic monsters appear on the earth.

- Here in Rev. 9:11, these demonic monsters have a king => Satan.
"Locusts have no king" Prov. 30:27.

(Now go back to verse 4)

4. Their terrible power is limited by God, 9:4-5.
 - a. Locusts normally eat what is green, but these are told not to (!). Instead, they have a different purpose => hurt people who are not sealed with the "seal of God" => The 144,000 who are sealed by God are the only exception to this torment.
 - b. They could not kill anyone. They only tormented people on the earth for 5 months, 9:5.
5. Their sting was so torturous that people longed to die, but couldn't, 9:6.
Example: demon control in the Gospels, especially the demoniac from Gerasenes (Luke 8:26-39). There is utter domination by these horrible, surreal creatures for 5 months as a judgment from God.

Now go ahead to 9:12 -- "The 1st WOE is past; behold, 2 woes are still coming after these things."

Trumpet #6, 9:13-21 -- The 2nd WOE

A. Jesus ordered the release of 4 angels to lead 200 million demons who would destroy people on the earth, 9:13-15.

1. Authority for this release, 9:13-14.
 - a. This is Jesus' voice authorizing judgment in response to the prayers of God's people.
 - b. These 4 angels are bound at the River Euphrates, 9:14. (Cf. 16:12-14)

This region is a Satanic, demonic stronghold because:

- Satan made his 1st appearance in Eden in this region.
- Near this region was the 1st murder, and the tower of Babel was erected here in defiance of God (Gen.11:1-9).
- Near the Euphrates, Babylon was built by Nimrod (Gen.10:8-10), where idolatry originated (Gen.11:1-9).

2. These 4 angels were prepared for this specific time to kill people, 9:15.
 - a. "Prepared" -- suggests a state of readiness for this exact moment in time as determined by God.
 - b. Why? Their purpose is to destroy (kill) 1/3 of the population of the world.

This 6th trumpet is unlike the 5th trumpet where people were unable to die.

4th seal = 1/4 world population destroyed.

6th trumpet = 1/3 (of remaining) world population destroyed.

B. These 200 million "horsemen" were given overwhelming power to kill people, 9:16-19.

EXCURSUS ON THE HORSE-LIKE CREATURES

These horse-like creatures have heads that look like lion's heads, and mouths that spew fire, smoke, and brimstone (all 3 items are called "plagues" by John). Also, each of these horse-like creatures has a tail that looks like a snake with a head, which has power to harm (though the text does not say that the harm caused by the tail is caused the same way as the mouth of the lion-like head).

V. 16 introduces the number "of the armies of the horsemen"

Questions:

- What is the implication of assuming a relationship between the 4 evil angels and the 200 million horsemen in terms of identifying the nature of these horsemen?
- Why emphasize the number?

Though John describes what he sees as "horsemen," he de-emphasizes the riders and goes into detail concerning these strange looking "horses."

Questions:

- Are these "creatures" John calls horses literal creatures, or is John using figurative language to describe something other than literal (and strange!) creatures?
- If figurative sense is intended, is it figurative to describe something like modern weaponry or is the figurative description used as a symbol of something entirely different (in the same way Daniel received visions of animals representing various kings-97-cf. Daniel 8, etc.)?

Are these literal or symbolic?

Reasons we want to say symbolic:

- These descriptions cannot be related to anything we know today.
- John uses the words "like" or "as" much more in the 5th trumpet, but not as much here in the 6th; this could indicate a switch to metaphorical figures of speech rather than similes.
- This could be John's attempt to describe modern mechanical warfare, especially since no known created beings spew out "fire and smoke and brimstone" (except for Job 41:18-21, description of Leviathan). This is a reasonable possibility.
- Apocalyptic literature often uses animals to symbolically represent other things, especially kings and kingdoms. And the animals have strange characteristics, like multiple-sized horns, which grow and are broken off (cf. Daniel 8, ram, goat, large horn, 4 small horns, etc). However, it is very unclear what they would symbolize.

Reasons we want to say literal:

- The immediately preceding context of the fifth trumpet tells of the release of strange-looking demonic creatures straight from the pit of the abyss; perhaps this sixth trumpet releases other demonic creatures.
- John does not use "like" or "as" to grope for a way to describe what he sees.
- J.B. Smith has noted that the only indication of symbolism may be the phrase "in the vision"; but as shown by Peter's vision of the sheet with all the animals on it, "the vision does not nullify the realness of the objects seen" (p. 148).
- The tie between the 4 angels (probably evil angels bent on destruction) and the "horses" seems to suggest that these horses are somehow demonically controlled, if not themselves a whole hoard of demons held back under the leadership of these 4 fallen angels (demons) bound at the Euphrates.
- The possibility of a creature that breathes fire and smoke may be reinforced by God's description of Leviathan in Job 41:18-21 (though Leviathan in Job may simply be a symbol).

CONCLUSION OF EXCURSUS:

Tentative conclusions concerning the 200,000,000 "horsemen": Tend toward demonic creatures (This is the view of Robert Thomas; J. Dwight Pentecost vacillated). Very difficult text.

1. The number of these (demonic) armies, 9:16.
200 million of "armies" (pl. armies?)
2. The description of these (demonic) armies, 9:17-19.
 - a. "Riders" -- breastplate colors: fire, hyacinth (deep red); brimstone (sulphur). They had no weapons.
 - b. "Horses" -- had heads like lions. Out of their mouths, 3 plagues: fire, smoke, sulphur that killed people. They had snake-like tails to do harm (v.19).
3. The destruction by these (demonic) armies, 9:18

These demonic monsters killed 1/3 of the world's population.

Never were so many people killed since the days of Noah (Cf. Matt. 24:37-39).

RESPONSE

The response of the rest of the world's remaining population to these horrible judgments was a refusal to repent, 9:20-21.

- 1] People are being judged by God, but still they did not repent of their worship of demons or idols, 9:20. Idolatry during the Tribulation involves (in part) worship of Antichrist (cf. chap. 13:3, 8) and his images (13:14-15).
- 2] People still did not repent of their sinful actions, 9:21.
Listed here:
 - murder of God's people during the Tribulation period
 - addictions to various drugs
 - horrible sexual perversions -- adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, etc
 - looting - stealing, thefts.

God wants us to repent! Turn to Him. Turn away from our sins.
Repent and be saved!

IN ANSWER TO THE PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE FROM ALL TIME, THE GLORIOUS LAMB RELEASES HORRIFIC, DEMONIC JUDGMENTS ON THE EARTH.

APPENDIX

The abyssos, (Thayer, 2) means “bottomless, unbounded” or “the pit, (the immeasurable depth) the abyss.” In the NT the word occurs 9x, 7x in Rev. 9:1, 2, 11, 11:7, 17:8, 20:1, 3.

The usage in Lk. 8:31 indicates that the “abyss” is the place where the legion of demons begged Jesus not to send them. This implies that demons are in the abyss and that it is not a place demons want to be.

This concurs somewhat with the usage in Rev. 20:1-3, which says that an angel (probably Michael, powerful enough to overthrow Satan, 12:7-9) bound Satan, threw him into the abyss, and sealed it over him for 1000 years. Rev. 20:7 says that “when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison.”

The usages in 11:7 and 17:8 seem to coincide. Rev. 11:7 says of the two witnesses that “when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.” Walvoord says this is Satan Himself (p. 181), whereas Smith says it is the Antichrist (p. 170). JDP says its the beast of chapter 13 who gets power from Satan.

Smith says that therion (wild beast) has the definite article here for the only time in Rev in this its first occurrence in reference to the Antichrist. The significance of this, he says, is “the beast rises out of the sea before (emphasis mine) he comes of the bottomless pit” (p. 170). If we assume for a moment that the bottomless pit and the abyss are the same thing, 13:1ff occurs first, then this beast is fatally wounded and comes to life again (cf. 13:3, 14) which Smith understands to be a reference to his coming up out of the abyss (midway point in the 7-year tribulation, cf. 42 months of 13:5). Smith’s view requires the two witnesses to be killed by this “resurrected Antichrist” in the middle of the Tribulation, and 3 ½ days later raised from the dead and called up to heaven.

Against Walvoord here is the implied idea that whatever evil angel has been put into the abyss cannot be released until the events of the 5th trumpet in Rev. 9 (cf. Jude 6; Lk. 8:31). It could be that Satan has access in and out of the abyss until Rev. 20, but it seems unlikely that he is given any authority in relation to this abyss until the events of Rev. 9.

Rev. 17:8 seems complicated, too. It says, “the beast that you saw was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction.” Smith and JDP again seem to agree that the Antichrist who secured a false peace will be killed in the middle of the Tribulation period, will come up out of the place of the dead, wage war and eventually be destroyed by the Lamb, Jesus Christ (i.e. cast into the lake of fire forever, Rev. 19:20). This would understand the “abyss” to be a broader reference to “the place of the dead.” If so, the one remaining reference which uses “abyss” makes more sense.

The only other usage of “abyss” is found in Romans 10:7, which says, “WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).” Smith says this “implies that He

had been, if not in, at least adjacent to the abyss in the interval between His death and resurrection” (p. 142). Thayer, however, distinguishes uses and notes that this Romans passage refers to the “common receptacle of the dead” (p. 2).

The point of the Romans context is to emphasize that it is impossible to suppose that we could do what Christ has already done. Paul quotes OT passages as a kind of merism to summarize the totality of Christ’s work by reference to His incarnation and resurrection. Rather, we must accept by faith the word about what Christ has done. We must trust His work on our behalf as totally sufficient for our salvation.

The reference to the “abyss” in Rom. 10:7 is cited from Deut. 30:11-13 in the phrase, “Who will cross the sea for us to get it?” As Hodge notes, the “expressions here used seem to have become proverbial among the Jews” (p. 338, Romans). To ascend to heaven or to go down to hell was to do what was impossible (cf. Amos 9:2; Ps. 139:8-9, both ref. To Sheol). Hodge’s rendering “hell” may be tilting his bias early. Sheol, used 65x in OT, often means the grave where the body is placed at death (cf. Num. 16:30, 33; Ps. 16:10) and so refers to the place of righteous and wicked departed spirits (apparently of men). Actually the word is “sea” in the Deut. passage, and to the ancients, the sea was impassable and so to compare doing something to crossing the sea was to attempt the impossible. That is the point that Paul wishes to capture in Rom. 10:7.

So the “abyss” would seem to be a reference to Sheol, the place of departed spirits, which for the righteous dead is a place of conscious bliss, for the wicked a place of torment (cf. possibly Lk. 16:19-31), and for wicked angels (who are also spirit beings and the demons) perhaps something else. This third division within the “abyss” may be indicated in Rev. 9:1 by the Greek phrase “pit of the abyss” (which occurs in Scripture only twice, Rev. 9:1, 2). If the genitive is apposition, then it means the “pit, which is the abyss,” and Romans 10:7 would mean that Christ descended to the place of the demons. If the genitive is partial, then it could mean “pit which is part of the abyss.” The word, “pit” occurs 7x in NT, 3x as “well” and 4x as “pit,” all 4 occurrences found in Rev. 9:1-2. Though the “abyss” is mentioned again in Rev., never the “pit of the abyss.” “The pit of the abyss” is a unique phrase to refer to the abode of confined fallen angels or demons that are released at this particular moment in the judgments of God on the earth.

