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REVELATION 8:1-9:11

Last week in our study of the *Book of Revelation*, we saw Jesus Christ as the Executor of God's will on planet earth.

Last week we saw when the events of last week's lesson takes that the church has already been raptured and we who are the children of God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are in heaven.

Last week we saw that the Lamb of God opened six of the seven seals on the seven-sealed scroll...and we saw as those seals were opened, that **they were seals that represented severe judgment on planet Earth.**

If we didn't know better, we would say, "Well, praise God, there's only one more seal...if there's only one left, it couldn't be that bad...surely the worst is behind us."

But, we know that when the seventh seal is opened, the cycle begins all over again...except the judgments get progressively worse and worse and worse. When the Lamb of God opens the seventh and last seal on the little scroll the judgments of the Tribulation will intensify and expand dramatically.

Revelation 8:1-2...

"silence in heaven..."

When John took us to heaven a couple of weeks ago, we saw in our "mind's eye" beauty and splendor and grandeur...but what did we hear in our "mind's ear?" We heard worship, praise, adoration, and singing. Bro. Bob says, and I agree, that heaven will be a noisy place...there'll be a lot of racket in heaven. **I believe it will be dignified racket, but I don't believe it will be "high church", do you?**

I believe if folks don't care to come to worship down here, they're going to have to change their "want to" up there. If it's too much trouble for folks to make it to worship service down here...they're going to have to "get with the program" up there, aren't they?

But, here in the first verse of **chapter 8**, we're told about a silence in heaven.

I believe what we see here is a "stunned silence". I believe when the Lamb of God breaks that seventh seal, that somehow **everyone in heaven will know the awesome and terrible things that will take place.** I believe they will realize that at last all the wrath that God has reserved for this planet will shortly be poured out...and the only thing the folks in heaven will be able to do is to look on in complete silence.

Then, we see **seven angels with seven trumpets.** You see, the seventh seal is also the first trumpet. In that day the trumpet was used for summoning God's people to **worship**, to **war**, and to **work.** But these trumpets aren't used for any of these. **They are used to sound the alarm...**they are used to summon folks to pay close attention...They are used to tell people that Almighty God is intervening in the affairs of mankind...because these trumpets represent judgments!!

Verses 3-5...

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Somehow the prayers of “all the saints” come into play here. Most theologians believe the prayers here refer to the prayers of the martyred Tribulation believers. Remember a couple of weeks ago when we saw these souls crying out “How long will it be before You take vengeance on those who have persecuted us?”

However, they could be the prayers of all the saints from all the ages. If this is true, and these prayers refer to **our prayers** as well...I wonder...

Have you ever stopped to think when you pray, that somehow the prayers you pray have been stored up by God?

Think about this...the God we serve is absolute, totally powerful. He is absolutely and totally omnipotent...yet, in a way that we cannot understand, He has chosen to release that power many times in response to the prayers of His people. Does that not boggle your mind?

Have you ever thought about the times you bow your head or kneel down in your favorite “prayer place” that God will take heed and change events because you have prayed? In some mysterious way that we may never understand, prayer indeed changes things. You may say, “...but I don’t know how to pray long, flowery, profound, articulate prayers...”

Well, Beloved, you don’t have to. In fact, the **longest**, and the **floweriest** and the **most profound** and **articulate prayers** to us, are but **clumsy and feeble attempts to God!** But the good news is this...Our prayers never reach God in the clumsy and feeble way they leave our lips. Somehow, after we pray, the Holy Spirit **energizes** our prayers and the dear Lord Jesus Christ **endorses** our prayers and they become a powerful force that prompts Almighty God to act. And, here we see that as there is silence in heaven, God graciously takes into consideration the prayers of His children.

After the prayers of the saints and the smoke of the incense go up before God, there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake. These seem to be God’s drumroll announcing the First Trumpet Judgment.

Before we get into these judgments, let me just touch on something we’ve touched on before...

The **Book of Revelation** is a highly interpretive book and you’d be shocked at some of the ways that it has been interpreted. (No, you probably wouldn’t be shocked at all, come to think about it. If any of you watched any or all of the **In Search of Jesus** program that came on this past Monday night on ABC...nothing else you would ever hear would shock you. I’m always amazed that men with degree after degree after their name could ever be so stupid!!)

Paul told us that we are to be diligent to present ourselves approved unto God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed...rightly dividing (or handling accurately) the Word of Truth...

Well, I believe the best way to handle God’s precious Word accurately is to interpret it **literally** except in those passages where it is **overwhelmingly obvious** that it is to be taken **symbolically**...and then we’re to figure out the symbols and we’re to take them literally.

For example...

In Scripture, Jesus is referred to as “**The Door**”. Does this mean Jesus is an actual door? No, but it **does** mean that Jesus is **our entrance into the kingdom of God**.

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In Scripture, Jesus is referred to as “**the Lamb of God.**” Does this mean Jesus is a real lamb? No, but it does mean that Jesus is **God’s precious sacrifice on behalf of our sins.**

Now, do you believe that Jesus is **literally** our entrance into the Kingdom of God? And do you believe that Jesus is **literally** the sacrifice for our sins? **Of course you do...**

We could mention so many other examples, but what I wanted you to see is that **we have discovered what these symbols mean, and then, we have taken them literally.**

Having said all that...let’s look at these Trumpets.

1) Verse 7...The Burned Earth

Hail and fire mixed with blood, thrown to earth...1/3 of the earth, 1/3 of the trees, all of the green grass...burned up! I believe we are to take this literally!

Have you ever been in a bad hailstorm? I’ve mentioned this to you before, but one time my husband and I were on our way to the cabin and a huge wind came and hail poured down so hard on that we had to pull off the side of the road. **It was really scary and I kept wondering what my husband had done to make God so mad!** We later heard on TV that those winds were 80 mph winds. That surprised me because I thought they were at 120 mph! ☺

But, can you imagine hail and fire, mixed with blood? This will be a terrible judgment. This will also be an ecological nightmare! The Burned Earth...

But the church won’t be here!!

2) Verse 8-9...The Bloody Seas

This is “something like” or “as it were”... This is not a literal mountain but “something like a mountain...” Maybe it’s a huge **meteor** or **asteroid!** It is a literal mass of something huge like a mountain!!

This **literal mass** falls into the literal sea, and 1/3 becomes **literal blood**, and 1/3 of all the **literal living creatures** in the literal sea die a **literal death**. Nothing could be plainer than this...Also, 1/3 of the **literal ships** of all **literal nations** are **literally destroyed**. **If we just let John say what he wants to, he makes it very clear, doesn’t he?**

But, remember the Rapture has already occurred and the church is gone!!

3) Verses 10-11...The Bitter Waters

I believe this to be a **literal star**...it doesn’t say “**like** a star”, does it?

Psalm 147:4... “He counts the number of the stars;
He gives names to all of them.”

And this star’s name is Wormwood, and it means “bitter poison.”

Think of getting a drink of water, or tea or coffee...and it’s poison and you die!

But remember, we who are believers will be with the One who gives us Living Water to drink!!

4) Verse 12...The Blackened Sky

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Now, at first glance, this doesn't seem so bad, does it? But, think of the crop failure...when the crops don't get enough sunlight! Think of the climate and temperature...think of the seasons!

God says, "I'm going to throw the earth into confusion.
I'm going to throw the earth off schedule."

But guess what...we'll be in heaven where our light will be the light of the glory of God, and our lamp will be the Lord Jesus Christ!

Verse 13...

Here we see an eagle flying and saying with a loud voice "**Woe! Woe! Woe!**" This eagle is saying...

"There's more to come! There are three more trumpets to come and they will be woeful...they will be horrible!"

KJV says "angel"...but older manuscripts say "eagle"...Is this an eagle, or an angel? I don't know.

But, I don't have any trouble at all believing it's an eagle...**a talking eagle...a screaming eagle!** I believe Balaam's donkey talked!

And let me just say this...if you're finding all this hard to believe...please don't!!

God didn't write us a **novel**...or a **fable**...or a **fairy-tale**. This isn't science-fiction!! God's Word is Truth!! Just believe it, whether you understand it all or not!!

5) Revelation 9:1...The Demonic Locusts (The First Woe)

Up until this point, the judgments that have come seem to be directed against the physical earth itself, affecting man only indirectly...the trees and grass destroyed, the sea being turned to blood, the poisoned waters, the sun's light and star's light being greatly reduced... All these judgments affected men and undoubtedly led to the death of many folks, but undoubtedly most survived these horrible judgments.

I mean, after a few days, the sun resumed its normal shining, the grass began to grow, and the water supplies were quickly treated and made potable again, and men went back to their own personal concerns...again ignoring the voice of God.

When the next Trumpet sounds, however, the first of the three great woes predicted by the angelic messenger they had seen flying through the heavens...every single person would indeed experience directly the mighty sting of judgment.

The "star" in **verse 1**, unlike the "star" in **verse 11 of chapter 8** is not a literal star! We see that the key of the bottomless pit was given to **him!** Most commentators believe this fallen star is **Satan, and I do, too!** Who had the key? **Revelation 1:18**...Jesus had the key!

These locusts are not literal locusts...they are demons! The Demonic Locusts...okay so I ran out of "B's"...☺

These aren't just any demons. These demons are far, far worse than any demons that are running loose today, and be very sure...there **are** demons running around today.

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They are inflicting pain and persecution and hardship and heartache right now on Christians. We have fiery darts shot at us from the enemy and his agents every single day!

Satan knows he can't get our soul, but he can surely attack us!

Ex: **The Screwtape Letters** by C. S. Lewis
Lord Foulgrin's Letters by Randy Alcorn

But, the demons of **Revelation 9** are so bad that they're not allowed to roam the earth like the other demons. These demons have been imprisoned for eons. WHY? **I don't know**...there is a lot of conjecture, but we won't go into that for lack of time.

Whoever they are, these demons are so horrible and the place where they are imprisoned is so horrible that when Jesus cast the demons out of the man at Gadara, those demons begged Him not to send them to the abyss...they chose the swine instead...remember?

Also, we need to note that the only reason these demons were loosed is because Satan was allowed to open the pit and he was given that permission by the Lord Jesus Christ!

These judgments are indeed an indication of a world ruined by Satan, as our little outline tells us, but Satan is allowed to ruin the world only by the permission of the Lord Jesus Christ!!!

Verses 2-4...

Smoke is a picture of judgment.

These locusts were like scorpions. These demon locusts were told not to hurt the grass nor any green thing, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

Remember who had the seal of God? The 144,000 Jewish evangelists we saw last week...sealed for possession and protection! God is going to protect these folks, because through their testimony and preaching, many will come to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

By the way, real locusts don't hurt men. Locusts eat plants and trees, but they don't hurt men! Demons, however, do hurt men,

Let's see how these demons will hurt men...

Verses 5-6...

Five months doesn't seem like a long time when you're having a good time, but when you're in constant pain, five months can be an eternity!

Think about men who want to die but cannot! Men and women can't even take their own life...

**If they jump off a building, God will catch them in mid-air!
If they jump off a bridge, they'll float!
If they try to shoot themselves, the gun will misfire!**

Dr. Kevorkian can bring his "killing machine" and administer "death" only to have his patient get up and walk away, still in torment.

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Listen, Beloved, Satan always seeks to hurt men. When a man follows Satan, you can write it down, Satan will **never ever** help him, but he will **always, always** hurt him.

Can you imagine Memphis, if tonight, every criminal, every vicious and violent criminal were set free from the prisons? What if every pervert and murderer and rapist and sadist were turned loose with no police supervision?

Well, as frightening as that may be, something far worse than that lies in store for this world. Satan one day will be permitted to set free the most deadly, diabolical demons to torment mankind, but God has put a limit on even that... **5 months!!**

Who's in control?

Remember, God has not destined His children for wrath...just as He promised in **Revelation 3** to keep the church at Philadelphia from the hour of testing, He has made this promise to those who are part of His Son's church as well. The church will be gone when all this takes place!! Draw comfort from that!!

Verses 12-14...The Demonic Legions (The Second Woe)

Whose voice is in **verse 13**? I believe it is the voice of Jesus!

In **chapter 8** we saw the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar. Well, what have all the saints been praying for 2,000 years?

"They kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

And, His will is being done...Jesus is executing the will of our Father who is in heaven!

And Jesus says in **verse 14**... "Release the four angels..."

Well, who are these angels? Are they good angels, or bad angels? Scripture never tells us that good angels were ever bound, does it? Some commentators have suggested that they are the angels that controlled Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome...**The four world empires that ruled in the area of the Euphrates River.**

We don't know why these angels were bound, but we do know who bound them, don't we? No one but Almighty God could have kept those bad angels under lock and key. God can do anything He wants to do and He doesn't have to tell us why.

The River Euphrates is significant because it is there that civilization began. The **Garden of Eden** was in that area...The **sin of man** began there, the **first lie** was told there, the **first murder** was committed there...the **Flood** began there and spread all over the earth...the **Tower of Babel** was erected in that area. This area had been the **fountainhead for idolatry!** **Are we to take these four angels literally? YES!!**

Let's look at what these four angels do...

Verses 15-19...

I don't believe the army is a human army...I believe it is a **supernatural army made up of demons**. We know that there are demons who have roamed the earth throughout history, the **"spiritual forces of wickedness in high places"** of which Paul speaks in **Ephesians**. We know from our lesson today that even more demons will be released from the abyss at the sounding of the fifth trumpet.

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And if those demons aren't enough, here comes another army...a new demon army two hundred million strong. This vast army will kill 1/3 of mankind with three plagues...**fire, smoke and brimstone**...which proceed out of their mouths.

*****Verse 20...*****

“And the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues repented and turned to God and turned from their idols and their demon worship...”

Is that what you Bible says? Well, mine doesn't either!

Verses 20 and 21...

“They did not repent...” The four saddest words of all time!

“They did not repent...” “He did not repent...” “She did not repent...”

This is a pretty graphic picture, isn't it? I mean, we really don't have to wonder about these folks, do we?

We see continued **rebellion against God**.

We see continued **reliance upon idols**.

We see continued **rejection of righteousness**.

Wouldn't you think that these folks would have repented after all they had seen and been through?

We said last week that God's Word teaches that God will send upon these folks **strong delusion** and I believe we've seen the proof of this in today's Scripture.

Don't be tempted to say, “Well, God just isn't being fair.”

Listen, Beloved. Our God's ways are higher than ours and His thoughts are far above our thoughts and we cannot know how He thinks or acts...but we can know this...**the God we serve is infinitely just and infinitely righteous. He does all things well!! We don't have to ever wonder if what He does is right...IT IS!!**

Jeremiah tells us that the heart is deceitful above all else and desperately wicked.

See, the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart!!

Well, what do we get out of all this? What does it all mean to us? Let me mention four things and then we'll be through...

- 1) These judgments are from God.** God has not lost control...He knows exactly what's going on and He's allowing it all to happen.
- 2) These judgments are on the earth.** God is not judging hell or Satan at this point. God's judgment is falling upon folks who have lifted their fists in rebellion and said, “We don't need Jesus and we don't need the blood He spilled at Calvary.”
- 3) These judgments help us to understand a little bit of how much God hates sin.** We've forgotten that. One day His wrath will be poured out on this sinful earth...
- 4) These judgments should drive lost people to the Cross.** They

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won't in that day...we've just seen that, but they should drive lost folks of **our** day to the Cross.

Let me say this to you. This has been a very difficult lesson to teach. I don't like teaching doom and gloom. But, we can't skirt around God's Word. We're promised a blessing if we read and heed the **Book of Revelation**, and we can't pick and choose what we read and heed in the **Book of Revelation**, can we?

I believe the lesson we must take with us today is this...

I believe we ought to examine our own hearts and lives and see if there is any shred of doubt as to whether we are saved or not. Please do that!

If we know we're saved, then we should leave here with an urgency as never before to share the Gospel with those around us. We should be anxious as never before to take as many folks with us to heaven so they won't have to go through this time of Tribulation.

We're indeed closer to it than we've ever been before!!