

The Soon Coming End – Part 12

2 Peter 3:9-13

Revelation 8

At the close of the message last week, we said that we would begin examining the words of chapter 8 of the Book of revelations. And we will do that in a moment, but may we again rehearse to ourselves some of the beginning words of this study, words that will help us to grasp why these angels that are spoken about here in chapter 8, will begin pouring out the terrible wrath of God upon the people and the nations of the world.

Recall again, the words of Matthew 24, when the Lord Jesus spoke about the events that lay just ahead of us in those “Soon Coming End of Days”. There, in Matthew 24, the Lord Jesus declared to us that, yes, those days will surely come, and they will be terrible days, terrible beyond any measure we could imagine or comprehend. And they will begin without warning, first with the rapture of all His “saved ones”, as we are “caught away” to be with Him in the heavens. Those words again in Matthew 24, beginning in verse 36,

36 “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. 37 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, 39 and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. 42 Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. (Matthew 24:36-42 (ESV))

And then, with His people having been “caught away” to be with Him, God will begin to pour out His wrath upon the earth, slowly at first, and then building to such a violent measure that no flesh anywhere upon the earth will be able to withstand its force and misery.

Those warnings in Matthew 24, beginning in verse 4, Jesus said

4 . . . “See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. 9 “Then they will deliver you up to

tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. 15 "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, 18 and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. 19 And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! 20 Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. 21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. (Matthew 24:4-21 (ESV))

For you and me, as in no other time in history before us, these words ring eerily familiar, exactly mirroring many of the events that we see taking place all across our world this very day, and especially in the Middle-East nations, and especially in those nations that closely surround Israel. These events today are surely those "birth-pains" that Jesus spoke about.

With these thoughts as a reminder, may we now pick back up with the events that we have been studying about over the past few messages. Beginning today with the words of Revelations chapter 8. Turn there with me and I will read for us?

Remember, that leading up to these words of chapter 8, Jesus had broken open the first six seals of the great "scroll". And now here in chapter 8, He breaks open the seventh seal.

1 When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. 3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. 6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. (Revelation 8:1-6 (NKJV))

Here, as Jesus opened the seventh seal, for a short while of half an hour, prayers and supplications of the saints, both those gathered around the throne of God there in heaven and also those who were yet upon the earth were offered up to God. Verse 4

4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. (Revelation 8: 4 (NKJV))

Consider these words for a moment! The worst disaster that would ever come upon mankind was about to be unleashed with a fury. Death and destruction would have no bounds. So then, yes, fervent and passionate prayer was the next most appropriate thing to do. And the saints were the ones to do it, those already in heaven gathered around the throne of God, and those are yet still on the earth.

And then, in verse 5, the misery begins in earnest and will never again let up.

5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. 6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. 7 The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up. 8 The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. 9 A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. 10 The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. 11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter. 12 The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night. 13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!" (Revelation 8:7-13 (ESV))

Recall again, the setting of what is taking place with the people on the earth as all of these woes begin to be poured out upon the people and the nations.

The rapture has taken place, and the antichrist has risen to power and domination over everything that is taking place on the earth. With the help of the two beasts, that together with him form the "unholy trinity", the antichrist has first befriended most of the

people of the earth, forming alliances in every venue of life, and especially with the other religions of the earth, and especially with Israel. But then the antichrist has suddenly reduced the religions of the world done to just one, his own “one world religion” in which he is the supreme leader and is declared to be “god”, a religion in which all must worship him, and those who refuse to worship him as “god” will be killed.

And most commentators agree that this “one world religion” will be set up right there in the temple in Jerusalem, bringing about the prophecy of Daniel that speaks of the “abomination that brings desolation”.

And at the same time that the antichrist is establishing his one world religion, he is also bringing all of the financial systems of the world under his dominion and power and control, fully instituting the “666” system. And the merchants of the world are especially forth-coming in their alliances with the antichrist and his world-wide financial empire called “Babylon the Great”, becoming wealthy beyond anything they had ever imagined possible. As we read in Revelation 18,

3 . . . all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication (speaking about Babylon), the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury." (Revelation 18:1-3 (NKJV))

A quick warning as we study these words . . . unfortunately, words of prophecy are often too mysterious for our natural minds to clearly grasp their full meaning. And as we struggle to understand, too often, our imaginations get involved. And our imaginations can easily take us down wrong pathways. So please, always be careful to use “spiritual discernment” as you try to follow all that these words are saying.

With that warning in mind, it seems safe to imagine that during the first years of the tribulation, as the antichrist seeks to win the favor of the people of the earth, yes, there will be suffering, but for the most part, for the people who “join in” with the antichrist and his way of doing things, life probably will be pleasing for them, adopting the attitude of “simply do what you are told and take advantage of the benefits available to you, and everything will be alright.”

Such behavior really seems quite similar to the systems that we have in place already in our country and in many other of the nations of the world. Here in America, between the provisions of EBT cards, Medicaid, Medicare and other government sponsored provisions, people can survive, and some quite well. And the “666” system seems only a short step further from that.

And then, when you consider the financial system that seems to be put into place in the new “Babylon”, spoken about here in Revelation 18, it does not look much different from a runaway capitalistic system that is not properly controlled. And that would seem the logical progression for a financial system that is controlled by greedy demons, taking great profits when you can, and “crushing” your competitors. Those words again in verse 3 of Revelation 18.

3 . . . all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."

(Revelation 18:3 (NKJV))

Within just a very short period of time in the tribulation, “Babylon the Great” will rise to financial greatness, and it will initially thrive, greedy men getting very wealthy. But God will not permit its wickedness to continue for very long. These “trumpets” and these “bowls of wrath” will quickly take their toll on the conduct of business in the world and collapse will quickly follow. Listen again to chapter 8, beginning in verse 7,

7 The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up. (Revelation 8:7 (ESV))

Whether this hail and fire and blood spoken about here can be explained by asteroids colliding with the earth, we can't know, but we do know that these are coming directly from the hand of God and for the purpose of destruction. And they will do exactly that! Imagine what will take place when a third of the earth is burned up, and a third of the trees are burned up, and all the green grass is burned up. People all over the earth will die in massive numbers, starvation and disease and plagues will quickly follow. And surely most all business and commerce will come to a halt. Those business leaders who have gotten rich off the financial systems of the antichrist will not be able to enjoy their ill-gotten wealth.

Verse 8

8 The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. 9 A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. 10 The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. 11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter. 12 The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the

moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night. 13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!" (Revelation 8:8-13 (ESV))

Again, these "mountains" and these parts of the stars of heaven falling upon the earth will bring death and destruction beyond anything we can imagine. Much of the water on the earth will either be turned to blood or become poisoned. People will die, and the fish and other sea life will die bringing more and more disease and more death. And the stench from all of the decay will be unimaginable.

And as the ships and their cargo are destroyed, and starvation and misery continue to increase, darkness will descend over much of the earth, with only a few hours of light each day. It is a bleak prophecy with no relief to come, only more and more misery and destruction.

And then in verse 13, we hear the cry of an eagle saying,

13 . . . "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!" (Revelation 8:13 (ESV))

And, the Lord willing, we'll begin there next week.

May we pray.