Revelation — Chapters 8:2 to 11:18

The Seven Trumpets

An Outline of "The Revelation" — Walter Scott From The Faith and The Flock, 1910–1911

In the Trumpet series of judgments, the angels are prominent, and even the Lord Himself is introduced more than once in Angelic Character (8:3). In the former series of Divine chastisements, the Lamb prominently figures. Not only are the judgments under the trumpets successively inflicted, but they follow the seals, and are not contemporaneous as some suppose. It is the seventh seal which introduces the trumpets, and these latter bring us down to a subsequent date.

The first four trumpets are briefly described in vv. 7-12. The remaining three are termed “Woe” trumpets (verse 13). These latter are more severe and searching in character than the “four.” Before the first trumpet is sounded, circumstances of unusual interest are introduced (vv. 3-5). During the period here contemplated there will be a body of suffering saints on earth— from amongst Jews and Gentiles. These sufferers are evidently characterized by prayer and intercession. The troubles through which they pass will exceed all the sorrows of past ages (Mark 8:19).

The glorified saints in the heavens are intensely interested in the struggles and witness-bearing of those on earth (v. 8), but deeper still is our adorable Lord in heaven. Christ is the Angel-Priest of our chapter who goes from the brazen altar to the golden altar adding efficacy to the prayers of these holy sufferers on earth. He alone could do this. The prayers of earth are answered in heaven, for in immediate response to these tears and prayers, “there were voices, and thunderings and lightnings, and an earthquake” (verse 5).

First Trumpet, V. 7

Detailed exposition is impossible owing to the necessarily brief space at our disposal, and the largeness of the subject. “Hail and fire mingled with blood” refer to the destructive agencies and powers of nature. “The earth” in contrast to the sea, signifies Christendom under settled government. “Third part”—eleven times in our chapter—points to Western Europe or the revived Roman Empire (see 12:3, 4). “Trees” eminent persons in the political and social life of the empire. “Green grass” a general state of prosperity amongst the populations within the Empire. Under this trumpet, therefore, is intimated judgment from

heaven upon all the distinguished persons in authority and influence, and the destruction of the general prosperity in the revived Latin kingdom.

Second Trumpet, V. 8, 9

"A great mountain burning with fire" signifies a great earthly power under Divine judgment (Jer. 51). Nations in a state of anarchy and confusion. "Became blood," spiritual and physical death. "Had life died," moral death. as in 2:23; 3:1. "Ships," commerce.

What is intimated is the infliction of Divine judgment upon the peoples, then in wild commotion, and by a great world-power, itself under Divine judgment. The revolutionary peoples here contemplated are visited with death—physical and moral—as also the destruction of trade and commerce. A state of misery on every hand is the sure result of these heaven-sent chastisements.

Third Trumpet, V. 10, 11

"There fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp," points to a distinguished dignitary in moral relation with God, but apostate and under judgment. "Rivers," the principles which guide and order the life of nations. "Fountains of water," the sources of the principles and influences which mark the life of a nation or people. "Wormwood," bitter.

The character and dire results here produced are worse than those under the previous trumpets. In fact, the increasing severity of those judicial dealings is a solemn indication of the increasing hardness of heart on the part of men determined to break all Divine bands and cords (Psa. 2:3). But God has His grip upon men. and judgment must follow judgment, till the iron will is broken and men lie humbled in the dust before God. Here an apostate power infuses his own character amongst the peoples, poisoning the political, civil, and social life of the nations—corrupting their principles at the fountain head, hence all the springs of action are similarly affected.

Nations without a religion! Without a code of morals! Without one principle of practical righteousness for guidance in life! Without morality and without God! Such is only the negative side of this awful picture of national misery. What must it be when the character of Satan is imprinted upon that nation and people who have deliberately cast off God?

Fourth Trumpet, V. 10, 11

"Sun," supreme governing authority. "Moon," subordinate and derived authority. "Stars," lesser authorities. The sun, moon, and stars combined as here, present a complete

system of earthly government in all its parts. The Roman world revived in territorial extent—ten kingdoms—is here in its government, political and social, the subject of this judgment. There is a complete description of the bonds which unite the empire in all its parts. The effect of this visitation is that moral darkness (night) settles down upon the empire and envelopes it as a funereal pall.

Fifth Trumpet, 9:1-12

We come now to the three "Woe" trumpets (8:13). The first of these occupies the first twelve verses; the second the remainder of the chapter; the third is mentioned in chapter 11, vv. 14-18.

This awful judgment has its source in "the pit of the abyss" (R.V.)— the lowest depths of Satanic misery and wickedness. The abyss, or bottomless pit, occurs seven times in the Apocalypse. But "the pit of the abyss" is only here employed. Here it is opened by a distinguished fallen star. There are two such. We read of one in Chap. 8:10; the other in Chap. 9:1. The apostate dignitary of our chapter is the personal Antichrist of prophecy. He acts religiously on behalf of Satan, first in Palestine, second in the wider sphere of Christendom. He opens the pit and the long imprisoned darkness in which the demon host of Satan dwelt bursts forth. The smoke gave birth to the locusts—not literal. The description of the locusts points to a horde of Satanic agencies let loose upon Palestine—not now a "third part." It is not the revived power of Rome, but apostate Israel in her land which is the subject of this dire judgment—upon the "men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads"—in contrast to sealed Israel (ch. 7). The locust army is resistless, cruel, and directly Satanic. Satan is the unseen yet real leader, while the Antichrist is the human commander. Men in their awful misery will seek death as a welcome release but even that is denied them (v. 6). The last state of Israel is distinctly Satanic— worse than ever it has been (Matt. 12:45). Israel's Saturday night of agony has to be endured ere the millennial day of Sabbatic rest dawns upon the land and people of Jehovah's choice. But for the apostate part of the nation, here the subject of Divine judgment, there can be no peace either in time or eternity.

Sixth Trumpet, 9:13-21

Here the "third part" reappears (v. 18). We are transported once again into the territory of the guilty Latin kingdom. The first woe falls on apostate Israel. This second woe descends on the equally guilty Western Empire. The first on Jews, the second on Gentiles.

There is no destruction of human life under the first woe, but “torment” more awful than death inflicted under the leadership of Satan; but, under the second woe, we witness the “yellow peril” in actual accomplishment. The East will overrun the West, devastating these lands with the abominable doctrines and teachings for which the East is famed. The Crescent will supplant the Cross. We had locusts under the first woe. Here we have horses. These latter we saw under the Seals signified aggressive agencies. The Euphrates— the eastern boundary of the Roman Conquests—is named as the quarter from whence this judgment proceeds (v. 14). Vast hordes from the east will invade the west, bringing with them soul- destroying doctrines, and marked also by a vast and unparalleled destruction of human life. The east will conquer the west. But the multifarious idolatry, gross wickedness, and various forms of Spiritualism within the Empire are as rampant as ever (vv. 20, 21). “Repented not” is the Holy Spirit’s comment. This truly awful judgment leaves the peoples of the revived Empire hardened as ever. The two concluding verses of the chapter reveal an awful picture of human depravity. What then remains? The Personal Return of the Lord in Power.

Seventh Trumpet, 11:14-18

It is not now Israel as under the first woe, nor the Gentiles in Christendom under the second woe, but the third “woe” and concluding trumpet involves judgment upon men universally. The whole scene under heaven is more or less visited in judgment. God’s hand is felt—north, south, east and west. Christ comes in public manifested power. The angry nations are crushed and broken under God’s wrath. The setting up of the kingdom, universal in its territorial extent, righteous and gracious in its character, and enduring as the ordinances of heaven, is anticipated (v. 15). In truth, the results of the sounding of the seventh trumpet embrace both the Millennium and the eternal state. What a range of weighty subjects is contained in verse 18! Thus we are brought down to the very end of man’s misrule and government, and even beyond that, to the blessed era of Christ’s kingdom and God’s eternal rest.

The Second Great Parenthesis, 10:1 to 11:1-13

This weighty parenthesis comes in between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets, as before we had the interesting parenthesis (ch. 7) between the sixth and seventh seals.

In Chapter 10, we have the descent of the Lord in angelic power and character to assume the government of the earth. It is His by right of purchase (Matt. 13:4:4, 38); His by

Divine decree (Psa. 2.); and His because of the rights of His Person (Col. 1:16). His sovereign rights are indisputable. The action is very grand. The rainbow round His head tells of governmental goodness, and that in wrath He remembers mercy. His feet on earth and sea implies His possession of the whole world.

Then, with uplifted hand, the mighty angel swears by God—the Creator—that there will be no further delay. The mystery of God in bearing with human iniquity is to be brought to a close. Christ assumes the Sovereignty of the earth. The Jubilee of earth has come.

The first thirteen verses of Chapter 11 transport us to the City of Jerusalem. The Lord has special witnesses there who are immortal and invulnerable so long as their testimony lasts-1,260 days. They work miracles similar in character to those wrought by Moses when Israel was in Captivity, and by Elijah when Israel was apostate. These two states exactly characterize the coming days of Judah previous to the advent of the Lord. When the defined period of witness-bearing is up, then the Beast breaks in upon Jerusalem and slays the witnesses, whose dead bodies lie in the street for shameful and public exposure. What a scene of hellish rejoicing over the temporary triumph of the Beast! (v. 10). But it is short-lived. In full view of the affrighted enemies of the Lord and of His people, these witnesses are called up to heaven, “and they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.” Both their resurrection and ascension were public events (vv. 11, 12). The triumph of the witnesses and the hour of retributive judgment upon the city and guilty inhabitants of Jerusalem are closely connected (v. 13).