

Text: Revelation 8:7-13

Title: "Woe for the ones dwelling on the earth - Part 1"

Time: 9/24/2017 am

Place: NBBC

Intro: The fact that I am preaching to you this morning means that the rapture of the Church did not occur yesterday. I mention that because some influential people said it might. A Youtube video with millions of viewers predicted that yesterday would be very significant on the prophetic calendar because of their interpretation of Revelation 12.

That chapter describes a woman who is pregnant with a child, whom a dragon desires to devour upon its birth. She is described there as "clothed with the sun" and having "the moon under her feet" and a crown of 12 stars on her head (v. 1).

The creators of this theory about yesterday noted that the constellation Virgo, which mythology has seen as a woman, would line up with the sun, with the moon under it, with the 9-star constellation Leo, and with 3 other planets for 12 stars total. Jupiter would be in Virgo, and then move out of it, thus depicting a woman giving birth to a child.

There are some astronomical problems with the idea, and clearly now that we are still here on 9/24 we know that the rapture did not happen. It would have been nice, actually, if it did, but here we are. What we are left with is a sure hope that it will happen right on time in spite of the faulty theories of faulty men.

One takeaway for me was that it is best to keep astrology out of theology. Jesus tells us to look at the skies to predict the weather, and to look at current events to understand

the times and the possibility of the literal fulfilment of prophecy (Matt. 16:1-4). We should not seek signs from heaven in the stars.

Those precautions notwithstanding, it is nevertheless a truly remarkable thing to be a 21st century Christian reading this first century Scripture of God's ultimate judgment of the earth. We understand some realities about the world we live in today, which John could never have dreamt of, which become helpful to understanding the possible fulfillment of what John wrote.

This is true of the first four trumpet judgements we will be looking at this morning. I take my title for this study from the last verse of our passage (v. 13), "Woe to the ones inhabiting the earth." Those woes are going to not be completed until Christ returns in chapter 19. As we understand the reality of the woes of this future time, we come to understand better the importance of the blessing of our present time of grace during which these future judgments are being withheld.

We will note those two points about the first 4 trumpet judgments this morning: (1) the future literal reality of the first four trumpet judgments; (2) the present spiritual opportunity of judgment withheld.

I. The future literal reality of the first four trumpet judgments.

A. The first trumpet – nuclear war? (v. 7). The question mark in this point is an important one. The image that combines hail, fire, and blood is not an easy one to decipher. What we do know is that the results of this object or these objects is that 1/3 of the earth's trees and plant life is

burned down. The hail of the first trumpet contrasts the mountain of the second and the star of the third. Hailstones are smaller and more numerous than those other objects. This hail affects land areas especially, and they are areas that suffer the damage of fire mixed with blood. All this sounds very much like nuclear war to me, with its missiles flying through the air and its devastating radiation and bloodshed.

B. The second trumpet - a meteorite hits the ocean? (vv. 8-9).

Illustration: In 2014, Steven Nelson, a professor at Tulane University, published a paper entitled, "Meteorites, Impacts, and Mass Extinctions." He began by telling the story of a meteor that exploded in the sky over Chelyabinsk, Russia:

"On February 15, 2013 a meteor exploded in the sky over Chelyabinsk, southern Russia. Although no people or buildings were hit by the resulting meteorite, the shock-wave from the exploding object injured about 1500 people and caused damage to 7200 buildings in the region. The fireball was caught on video, mainly by dash cameras throughout the region, which were posted on the internet by news organizations individuals. Although the Chelyabinsk meteorite probably weighed about 12,000-13,000 metric tonnes, and measured 17 to 20 m in diameter before it exploded, scientists [*sic*] were quick to point out that it was very small compared to other objects that could potentially hit the earth. The explosion released energy estimated at about 500 kilotons of TNT (about 20 to 30 times more energy than the Hiroshima atomic bomb). The event brought to the world's attention the very real hazards asso-

ciated with the impact of objects from outer space” [http://www.tulane.edu/~sanelson/Natural_Disasters/impacts.htm; accessed 9/21/2017].

Application: The apostle John may have had a meteorite much larger than the Russian one brought to his attention in this passage. He describes a fiery mountain hitting the sea and causing the sea to look like blood. Meteors are often made of basalt rock, many of which can be red with a high iron content. Professor Nelson describes in his paper how that if one would hit the ocean, acid rain would result and ph levels in the water could become too low for many sea creatures to survive. The destruction of ships, perhaps from the resultant tsunamis, is mentioned as well.

C. The third trumpet – a meteorite airburst over fresh water sources? (vv. 10-11). John endeavors to distinguish this object from the first two, but there are some similarities. Like the hail and the burning mountain before it, this third object comes from heaven. The word *star* can refer to any celestial body, asteroids included. This one looks more like a lamp than a burning mountain to John, however, perhaps because it explodes over a land mass with its fresh water sources before hitting the surface. Scientists call this type of meteoroid an *airburst*. John notes that the debris from this explosion causes fresh water sources to become poisoned over time, and many die of the toxicity of the water.

D. The fourth trumpet – darkness caused by atmospheric obstructions? (v. 12). The devastation of the first three trumpet judgments would cause much of the light from heaven to become no longer visible. Colder temperatures would result from these conditions. The suffering caused by fire, bloodshed, polluted waters, and tsunamis will be intensified with this darkness.

Application: These verses must have seemed more strange to John's first readers in the first century than they are to us. Today, it is easier to see these things happening to a third of the earth than it was back then. We kind of know what hail that produces fire mixed with blood might look like. We understand that it can destroy 1/3rd of the earth and then some. Asteroids have become familiar to us. Perhaps better than any other time before us, we can understand the future literal reality of the first four trumpet judgements.

Transition: So what should we do about this coming literal reality now? That brings us to our second point this morning:

II. The present spiritual opportunity of judgment withheld.

A. We have the opportunity now to understand that none of these things will happen on their own.

Application: Angels sound trumpets at the command of the Lamb. Hail is cast on the earth, a mountain is cast into the sea, a star fell from heaven having been named. The light from celestial bodies was smitten. Who does all these things? It is the angel/high priest of v. 5; it is the Lamb of v. 17. Who makes sure there is no nuclear war or asteroids for us to deal with today? That same Lamb. He is in control of all things.

Illustration: Dr. Panosian's phrase: "Whatever happens, whenever it happens, however it happens, nothing just happens."

Christ is on the throne, He died for our sins so that we need not face God's judgment, and He withholds that judgment from us this morning so that we could have another day of grace and mercy to repent of our sins and trust Him as our

Savior. What will you do with this day of grace and mercy? 2 Cor. 6:2, "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Will you be saved today?

B. We have the opportunity to understand that we are God's creatures (v. 9, "creatures").

Application: Many men and women claim to be exempt from God's judgment by denying that they are God's creatures. They claim to have evolved from lower life forms. The Bible says that all that exists is "all that He made." Its existence came from Him, depends on Him, and can be rightfully extinguished by Him. We are not the Creator, but the creature. We should worship and serve and glorify not ourselves, but the One who made us.

C. We have the opportunity to know that the results of sin are bitter (v. 11).

Application: The star that poisons the fresh water sources is named after a very bitter tasting plant, wormwood. Our text says that it causes the water to become bitter or poisoned over time. That word *bitter* occurs one other place in our New Testaments, in Col. 3:19, where we read, "Husbands, love your wives, and do not *be bitter* against them." Bitterness is sin, and sin results in bitterness. They go together and they are the opposite of love. Certainly in our marriages, we need to recognize that a toxic relationship with our wives is sin. We might be tempted to nurse our hurts with that bitterness in that and many other relationships, but reading about Wormwood ought to make us see that the results of sin are bitter. Though often pleasurable for a season, the end of sin is never sweet.

D. We have the opportunity to understand the futility of living for the things of this earth (v. 13). It is the earth-dwellers that will lose everything under the woes of the future judgments of God. There are two groups of people in Revelation – the earth-dwellers (earthlings) who experience God’s judgment, and those who belong to the kingdom, who know His salvation, comfort, and protection. We belong to the latter group, not the former. Do not live like a mere earth-dweller.

Conclusion: Jesus explained to His disciples how not to live like an earth-dweller in Luke 12:13-34. Where is your treasure? That is where your heart is. If your treasure and your heart dwell on the earth, your future is one of woe.

This is what the book that could describe nuclear holocaust and two different kinds of meteorite impacts back in the first century says about the future of people whose treasure and heart are on this earth. Do not doubt this book when it says that now is the time to seek first the kingdom of God. You can stake your life on trusting it.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching