

CONCERNING THE WAY

July 21, 2009

LESSON 66: THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST



Chapter 9 – The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets

Unlike the first four trumpet judgments, which targeted nature, in this chapter we see that the judgments of the final three trumpets target people. This is why they are separated and are called “the three woes”.

Revelation 9:1 Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the abyss. (NET)

I’m using the NET Bible here instead of the NASB because instead of using the term “bottomless pit”, like many versions, it uses the more accurate translation “shaft of the abyss”. The abyss is also mentioned in Luke 8:30-31, where the demons Jesus were about to cast out of a man preferred to be sent into a herd of pigs than sent to the abyss. And it is said in Revelation 11:7 and 17:8 that this is where the beast (the antichrist) comes from.

This is one of those cases in the Bible where “star” is actually an angel. Most believe this is a fallen angel, since it says he fell from the sky to the earth, possibly even Satan himself, since he is described this way in Isaiah 14:12 and Luke 10:18. Others believe he is one of God’s elect angels. In any case, he is following orders from God to open the abyss.

Later, an angel will be given the same key to lock Satan away in the abyss for the duration of the Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:1-2). Remember that Jesus has the keys to Hades and death (Revelation 1:18). Since different regions of Hades are separated by a “great gulf” (Luke 16:26), maybe this abyss is in Hades or may even be Hades itself. Paul did associate the abyss with the location of the dead (Romans 10:7).

“The “pit” that has been the home of the demons is the Greek word for “abyss”. We have a picture of a vast depth approached by a shaft, whose top is covered. It is a sobering thought to realize that many of the demons of hell are not free to hurt us in this present age. Satan is managing to do a good job of destruction today without his entire war corps to back him up.” David Jeremiah

Revelation 9:2-3 He opened the shaft of the abyss and smoke rose out of it like smoke from a giant furnace. The sun and the air were darkened with smoke from the shaft. (3) Then out of the smoke came locusts onto the earth, and they were given power like that of the scorpions of the earth.

Always pay attention to the word “like” in the text, there is comparative language here. “Like” smoke from a giant furnace, and the locusts were given power LIKE scorpions. People rarely die from the sting of a scorpion, but they often turn black and blue and go into convulsions. The pain is unbearable.

These are obviously demonic beings, not real locusts, who have been bound up in the abyss. This appears to be a shaft that connects our material world with a temporary place of punishment for some fallen angels and possibly other types of demonic beings. These beings were imprisoned for some reason. They have been locked up in this place at some point in the past by God. But God holds the key and is now going to release them for a time.

They may be the fallen angels spoken of in Jude 1:6-7. Unlike other demons which were free to roam the

earth, these particular fallen angels were guilty of an especially wicked act. Similar to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, they had given themselves over to sexual immorality and went after “strange flesh”. That seems to be speaking of the event in Genesis 6:4. The idea is that certain angels went outside the bounds that God had created them for, and they mingled with the “daughters of men” (2 Peter 2:4-6).

So since these angels are not free to roam the earth like most are, we can assume that they committed some particularly gross sin, and it may have had to do with impregnating human women.

“The ‘spirits now in prison’ in the abyss are those ‘who once were disobedient—in the days of Noah.’ They are the demons who cohabited with human women in Satan’s failed attempt to corrupt the human race and make it irredeemable (Gen. 6:1-4). . . . The demons released by Satan at the fifth trumpet may not include those who sinned in Noah’s day (cf. Jude 1:6), since they are said to be in ‘eternal bonds’ (Jude 1:6) until the final day when they are sent to the eternal Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10; Jude 1:7). Other demons imprisoned in the abyss may be the ones released. So the pit is the preliminary place of incarceration for demons from which some are to be released under this judgment.” John McArthur

Jehovah once said to Job: “Have the gates of Sheol been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?” (Job 37:17). There are worlds of being and of darkness upon which man has never looked. There is a tenanted abyss of which the demons know, and concerning which they besought the Saviour that He would not send them into it [Luke 8:27-31]. It is a dark and horrible prison, in which many, many strange and evil things are shut up. Satan knows of that world, and would fain bring forth its malignant inhabitants into the earth if he only dared. At last, however, he receives permission to bring them, and the fifth trumpet gives the result.” Joseph Seiss

So when these things are let out, they’re going to be ready to cause some major damage. However, they will be limited in what they can do:

Revelation 9:4 They were told not to damage the grass of the earth, or any green plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their forehead.

The locusts are only allowed to sting unbelievers, those who have not been sealed by God. So we can assume that the people who have the seal of God and are protected from these demonic attacks include the 144,000 Jewish witnesses and all others who have trusted Christ through their ministry. We don’t know why God prevents them from harming vegetation on earth, as normal locusts do. And the locusts can apparently tell which people are sealed, so they are definitely not normal insects! Demons have great spiritual awareness, they know who truly belongs to Christ.

Revelation 9:5 The locusts were not given permission to kill them, but only to torture them for five months, and their torture was like that of a scorpion when it stings a person.

So these demons will bring terrible pain to people who have rejected God. God is bringing this about in hopes that some will repent, He sometimes uses suffering to bring people to the end of themselves, so they might finally look to Him.

“The duration of the plague is fixed. It is to last ‘five months.’ A similar fixed date is given in Numbers 11:19-20: ‘a whole month.’ In 2 Samuel 24:13, also we have ‘seven years,’ ‘three months,’ and ‘three days,’ as the fixed limit of certain judgments. These periods are always taken literally. Why not this? The time limit of these infernal locusts corresponds with that of ordinary locusts, which is five months (from May to September).” Bullinger

“At least two general types of scorpion poison exist. One is a hemotoxin that causes mild to severe local effects such as edema, discoloration, and pain; the other is a dangerous neurotoxin (nerve poison) that may cause severe local and systemic effects such as convulsions, paralysis, cardiac irregularities, and death. Encyclopedia Britannica

Revelation 9:6 In those days people will seek death, but will not be able to find it; they will long to die, but death will flee from them.

The pain will be so terrible that people will want to die, but apparently God will not allow them to even commit suicide! Even though He is causing them great pain, He wants them kept alive so that they have the opportunity to repent and turn to Him. I believe that the pain will be more than just pain from a sting. I think people will already be feeling terrible spiritual and emotional pain because of all the things that are happening, and now actual demons are flying around stinging like scorpions!

“We are not told what will make man unable to commit suicide (Rev. 9:6), but can speculate that these demonic creatures, anticipating a man’s actions, by simply stinging him at the crucial moment, will prevent him from suicide. What excruciating torture; driven to the point of suicide, but prevented from taking the final step by the very same torment that drives a man to the resolve to take his own life. Man will seek death by any means, even the tormenting locusts, yet they will not be permitted to kill (Rev. 9:5)”. Mills

Revelation 9:7-11 Now the locusts looked like horses equipped for battle. On their heads were something like crowns similar to gold, and their faces looked like men's faces. (8) They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. (9) They had breastplates like iron breastplates, and the sound of their wings was like the noise of many horse-drawn chariots charging into battle. (10) They have tails and stingers like scorpions, and their ability to injure people for five months is in their tails. (11) They have as king over them the angel of the abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.

This is an attempt by John to describe these demons. The description helps, but we still don't really know what they look like. I don't think I really want to know, they sound pretty weird. No wonder people will be so frightened. Many find this description so unbelievable that they feel that they have to spiritualize these verses.

Some believe this Apollyon guy is Satan, but that doesn't make sense. Satan is not currently bound in the abyss. He is evidently a demon prince, high in Satan's hierarchy, a powerful fallen angel who is in charge of these demons. Abaddon means destruction, and Apollyon means destroyer. The word Abaddon is used in Job 26:6, 28:22, 31:12, and Proverbs 15:11 as a synonym of death. Some allegorists try to interpret this demon king as a figure of speech for death, but that fails to account for the fact that this passage is speaking of a real being. It is just an appropriate name for this being, not a personification.

Other scholars believe this demon king is the entity behind some of the pagan gods of history – Apollo, Osiris, all the way back to Nimrod. I believe it is very reasonable to assume that the pagan gods of ancient mythology had their roots in fact, in that they were originally powerful demons that interacted with mankind.

The “crowns” may speak of some authority these beings had in the spiritual world. Their human faces indicate that they are intelligent. Their teeth like lions speak of their fierceness and power. The iron breastplates show that they were protected from harm. They had wings, so they could fly and were capable of great speed. What does the hair like a woman indicate? It may actually be some kind of antennae, which John would not have understood at all.

“Demons and angels can take on appearances other than human, and the description of the locusts who stung like scorpions does not fit any category of man or beast.” John Walvoord

We must keep in mind several things when we read passages like this:

1. **Demonic Capabilities** - We know next to *nothing* about the demonic realm and especially the transformative powers of angels—elect or fallen. Scripture says that angels are “ministering spirits” (Psalms 104:4; Hebrews 1:7, 14), but they appear in many passages as anatomically accurate *human men*. When Isaiah, Ezekiel, and John are shown the seraphim and cherubim, they have a hard time describing their appearance in a way that we could possibly grasp (Isaiah 6:2; Ezekiel 1:10; 10:14; Revelation 4:7). The description of Satan is just as fantastic (Ezekiel 28:12-14). So, we should not be surprised to find malevolent beings of immense spiritual and transformative powers with such fantastic descriptions.
2. **Size of the Locusts** - We know nothing about the *size* of the demonic locusts. Depending upon their similarity to earthly locusts, they are probably between 0.5 to 7 inches. In other words, these demon locusts *may be the size of actual insects*. The fact that they have a painful, and possibly poisonous sting, which does not kill their victims also points in this direction. If the locusts were much larger than the largest earthly locusts, then the sting alone could easily kill a man.
3. **Fantastic Appearance of Natural Insects** - If you had to describe a simple spider or dragonfly when viewed under a magnifying glass or a microscope, how many of us would use descriptions like John did? Most, if not all of us! The simple fact is that many known insects of the natural world are just as bizarre looking, but don't have demonic power. Read the following description. *The creature had four wings, each of which was covered with something like 250 thousand scales, and a tripartite body with a head as it were with six thousand eyes. Two long hair-like whips extended from its head with which it guided itself over immense distances. Its tongue was like a fire hose and one fourth the length of its body and it pranced upon six legs, the forelegs of which terminated in six needle-like spears.* A bizarre fantasy? No, it's a female monarch butterfly.

The text compares these creatures to locusts. Since most of us have probably never studied the appearance and capabilities of even the household spider in detail, let's not be so quick in dismissing John's description as fantasy or symbolism. *“What God says is plain enough. He does not ask us to understand it. He asks us to believe it; and this, by God's help, we mean to do.” Bullinger*

Revelation 9:12 The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.

This fifth trumpet judgment is the first of three “woes”. This verse is more proof that Revelation is in sequence. These judgments do not overlap each other, they come in sequence.

Revelation 9:13-15 Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, (14) one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." (15) And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind.

The Euphrates River is a dominant subject in history. It was in the Garden of Eden, it was where the Tower of Babel stood, where Babylon was built, and where world government and world religion started. Since the time of the tower of Babel, it has been associated with astrology, idolatry, demon worship, and witchcraft. I believe this is still a very dark place, with much demonic activity going on. In the war in Iraq, Islamic

militants committed gruesome murders in this area, torturing and beheading people. Some were found chained to a wall and starving to death.

Later, in the sixth bowl judgment, the Euphrates is dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the east to gather to battle against God (Revelation 16:12-14). The mention of the Euphrates both here and in Revelation 16:12 is evidence that Babylon (Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21) is the literal, historical city on the banks of the Euphrates.

It was near the Euphrates that sin began, the first lie was told, the first murder was committed, and the tower of Babel (the origin of an entire complex of false religions that spread across the world) was built. The Euphrates was the eastern boundary of the Promised Land (Gen. 15:18; Ex. 23:31; Deu. 11:24), and Israel's influence extended to the Euphrates during the reigns of David (1Chr. 18:3) and Solomon (2Chr. 9:26). The region near the Euphrates was the central location of three world powers that oppressed Israel: Assyria, Babylon, and Medo-Persia. It was on the banks of the Euphrates that Israel endured seventy long, bitter, wearisome years of captivity (cf. Ps. 137:1-4). It is the river over which the enemies of God will cross to engage in the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16). McArthur

We think that these are fallen angels, because Holy angels are not bound. These angels have been bound at a specific place waiting for this moment, and they will kill a third of mankind. The next verse indicates that they don't do this by themselves, but they have help. So far the tally is that at least half of mankind (left over after the Rapture) has been killed by this point, since one fourth were killed in the 6th seal and who knows how many others have died between that judgment and this one. This is why Jesus said in Matthew 24:22 that no flesh would survive if those days were not shortened. No one can say that Revelation has happened yet because nothing like these things has ever happened.

Revelation 9:16-17 **The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. (17) And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone.**

Whoa, where did these horsemen come from? It looks like God will allow the four angels to lead this army to kill a third of mankind. Who and what is this army? We're not sure, because this is very illustrative language. It could be a literal human army; it is possible today for a country like China or India to field an army of this size.

However, the phrase two hundred million is actually "two myriads of myriads" in the original Greek, and it's similar to the phrase used in 5:11 to describe the countless angelic host. So, this number is not necessarily a specific 200 million, but a vast, numberless host. So, I believe this could be a demonic army. If so, the four fallen angels that were prepared for this time seem to be in charge of this huge supernatural army. And John couldn't count the numbers of this army, he heard someone say how many there were.

"To summarize why these two hundred million are demons and not Chinese, four things should be noted: first, they are led by four fallen angels; second, the location of the army is stated to be the Euphrates, where Babylon is located (which in the future will be the headquarters of the counterfeit trinity); third, the description given in the text rules out this army's being human; and fourth, the kings of the east [Rev. 16:12] are not connected with this at all." Arnold Fructenbaum

"According to General William K. Harrison (an expert in military logistics), an army of 200 million could not be conscripted, supported, and moved to the Middle East without totally disrupting all societal needs and capabilities ("The War of Armageddon," xerographic copy of unpublished, undated article). As General

Harrison brings out on this aspect of Revelation, God has made men with certain limitations; and the actual raising and transporting of an army of the size spoken of in v. 16 completely transcends human capability. All the Allied and Axis forces at their peak in World War II were only about 70 million (The World Almanac, 1971, ed. L. H. Long [New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, 1970], p. 355). Thus it seems better to understand the vast numbers and description of the horses as indicating demonic hordes.”
.Johnson, Revelation: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary

Revelation 9:18-19 **A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths. (19) For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm.**

This is how the third of mankind is killed, by the fire and brimstone that comes out of the horse’s mouths. So this is either some kind of demonic creatures or a real literal army with modern day weaponry. I have to lean towards a supernatural army, especially with the way these verses describe these creatures and their method of attack. They have fire coming out of their mouths, and their tails are like snakes that also cause harm. What the demon locusts were not allowed to do, this army is allowed to do - kill huge numbers of people. Of course, the world’s population by this time has been greatly reduced already, from the Rapture of the Church at the beginning of the Tribulation, and from the previous judgments.

This could be the same event Joel speaks of happening during the Day of the Lord in Joel 2:1-10.

“No doubt this all sounds fantastic and impossible, so commentators have invented all sorts of figurative meanings to apply to these deadly horses. But these are not the first fire-breathing animals the earth has seen. Ancient nations everywhere describe fire-breathing dragons which formerly existed on earth, and the Bible describes at least one such creature, called leviathan (Job 41:19-21). There are many indications that these dragons were actually dinosaurs, and the fossil evidence does show structures on at least some dinosaurs that could well have served as mixing chambers for flammable chemicals [not to mention methane from digestive processes] that could be expelled in the form of fire and smoke.” Barnhouse

“The terrible slaughter will completely disrupt human society. The problem of disposing of the dead bodies alone will be inconceivable. The sickly stench of decaying corpses will permeate the world, and it will take an enormous effort on the part of the survivors to bury them in mass graves or burn them.” McArthur

Revelation 9:20-21 **The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; (21) and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.**

This army could have destroyed the entire population of the planet, but God limits them to one-third, so that the other two thirds would see what happened and repent. But even after all of these horrible things, people still do not repent. This makes the horrible judgments to come even more justified and righteous. These people are like the Pharaoh in Egypt during Moses’ time, the worse the plagues got, the more he just hardened his heart. These judgments are proving that God is right in destroying these people (Jeremiah 5:3-4, Amos 4:6-13).

“The works of their hands” – “The problem is not men’s hands, but rather the will of men which motivates their hands. Their will is opposed to God and therefore what they produce by their hands does not glorify God, but rather reflects their own selfishness and sin. In the end, without God’s Holy Spirit, men become

creative perverts, dangerous geniuses (Gen. 11:6), bent on creating their own hell in pursuit of what they incorrectly perceive to be wisdom and intelligence. "Professing to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:22).

Tony Garland

The main thrust of verse 20 is that men continue in idolatry, giving honor and attention to everything except their creator. Worshipping the creature (Romans 1:25) and what man has produced rather than the one true God.

"Sorceries" is the Greek word "pharmakeia", means "the use of magic, often involving drugs and the casting of spells upon people — 'to practice magic, to cast spells upon, to engage in sorcery, etc.'"

Sorcery was forbidden by the Law of Moses (Exodus 22:18; Deuteronomy 18:10-11) as were all practices which involved communication with the dead such as conjuring spells (Deuteronomy 18:11), consulting mediums (1 Samuel 28:3-9), spiritism, or calling up the dead (actually demons). This included all forms of magic (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Malachi 3:5). God condemned all of these practices and was insulted that men would "seek the dead on behalf of the living" (Isaiah 8:19). Instead, they were to seek the living God.

You only need to watch cartoons on television or movies like the Harry Potter series to see how the foundation continues to be laid for the next generations who will see no reason not to participate in these forbidden practices.

"That people are today [1983] being prepared for an eruption of demons, however, seems very probable. The plethora of movies, television programs, and books with demonic themes, along with the latter-day mushroom growth of occult religions and practices, are all surely conditioning men to a widespread belief in Satan and his demons. Furthermore, none of this is driving men to refuge in Christ, as one might at first suppose it would." Henry Morris

Drugs are used in association with sorcery because they put the person into an altered state of consciousness where he or she becomes more open to contact with the demonic realm. The following account of a shaman from the Yanomamo tribe illustrates the connection between drug use and the demonic realm—a connection well-known even among "primitive" peoples:

"I recently interviewed a man who had spent most of his life communing with spirit entities. There is no doubt as to his "authenticity." He was a shaman, a medicine man and chief of his Yanomamo tribe, which resides deep in the Amazonian rain forest of Venezuela. At odds with the lie promoted in anthropological circles that the lives of primitive tribes-people are pure, natural and Eden-like and therefore best kept from outside influence —Chief Shoefoot and his peoples violent, fear-filled existence is documented in a book titled The Spirit of the Rain Forest, written by Mark Ritchie . . .

As a young boy, Shoefoot was singled out as one sensitive to the spirit realm and subsequently initiated into the sorcerers world. Again, a shaman is one who, through knowledge and power obtained from the spirits, heals and guides his people. Although the initial process of enabling him to contact the spirits was brutal, involving days of food and water deprivation and having someone force hallucinogenic drugs into his system by blowing them up his nose, the spirits he met were at first benign and curiously captivating. . . . Shoefoot increased his drug intake in order to go deeper into the spirit world to find more trustworthy and benevolent spirits. That led to even more wicked spirits (Luke 11:26), greater frustration, and intense despair."

Some, who deny the reality of the spiritual realm, believe experiences such as those of this shaman are brought on by natural causes, such as drug use:

“I asked Shoefoot through interpreter Mike Dawson, Joe’s son, who grew up among the Yanomamo, how he would answer a skeptic who thought his experiences with the spirits were nothing more than hallucinations brought on by the drugs he took. Shoefoot’s 70-something-year-old eyes sparkled at the question; he enjoys responding to challenges by skeptics, especially when he speaks to university anthropology students. Its ironic that this “primitive” man considers the highly educated anthropologists who study his people naive at best, deceived at worst. He told me of knowing shamans who had many of the same spirits he had had, yet, unlike him, they did not come to know them as a result of taking drugs. Whether the contacts were made with a clear mind or in a drug-induced state, descriptions and details were nearly always identical they all communed with the same spirits.”

“Mike added that we of the sophisticated West have trouble relating to a culture in which spirits, i.e., demons, are a real, everyday part of life. However, that doesn’t mean they’re necessarily exclusive to the dense jungles of the Yanomamo. He said that on one autumn trip to the U.S. with Shoefoot, he was shocked as his friend, the former shaman, continually pointed out representations of spirits he had known being featured across America as it celebrated its most financially successful holiday: Halloween. Some time later, Shoefoot was given a sampling of TV’s Saturday-morning cartoon characters and power figures. It was more of the same. He was not aware of the worldwide popularity of the Harry Potter books, which introduce children to sorcery and encourage them in the practice of witchcraft. As Mike explained this series of books to him, he was grieved that so many young people were being set up for the suffering and bondage that had tormented his own people.” T.A. McMahon

During the awful days of the tribulation, the breakdown of law and order will mean that there will be no more restraints on drug use. Furthermore, the fearful judgments on the earth will drive many to drugs as a form of escapism. The merchants of the earth will gladly cooperate because of the great profits involved [Rev. 18:13]. Henry Morris

So in these verses we see the main list of sins during the Tribulation – demon worship, idol worship, drug abuse, murder, witchcraft, sexual immorality, and theft. This will grow worse and worse (2 Timothy 3:13). You may not think that theft can be a big problem, but the kind of looting and rioting that went on in the U.S. and Mexico when major hurricanes struck is a preview of how it will be during the Tribulation.

“The last crime in this category is that of theft. This is “the statement or general and abounding dishonesty, the obliteration of moral distinctions, the disregard of others’ rights, and the practice of fraud, theft, and deceit wherever it is possible.” In our day corruption in high places gives the example to all classes. The only wrong consists in getting caught.” Barnhouse

Idolatry seems so ancient, and most people scoff at the idea that this could be a problem today. But consider these points:

1. Scripture makes plain that when men turn from God, there is no limit to their descent into depravity and ignorance (Romans 1:21-23).
2. The vantage point of western “civilized” society comes from a strong Judeo-Christian foundation. Although that foundation is quickly eroding, we still enjoy the benefits of it. It is difficult for us to imagine this kind of false worship because most of us have never encountered it.
3. The idolatry described here—where inanimate things are worshiped—is taking place today in many pagan cultures around the world.
4. Pagan belief is rapidly on the rise within our own culture, in the media, and on the internet. With

pagan belief will come pagan worship, a return to the darkness of the past.

5. It can take many generations for godliness to permeate a culture and to reap its benefits. This can all be lost in only one or two generations.
6. Worship of the *work of men's hands* goes beyond basic idols of wood, stone, and precious metals. It includes everything that man produces which is not in the service of God, things like weapons of war, computer technology, bioengineering and genetic tampering with the basic elements of life. It is not the items themselves that are so much the issue, but the way they are used. Technology is a large mirror amplifying the fallen character of men. It can be used for good or for evil, but inevitably the evil use winds up dominating. And all the time man persists in his refusal to recognize his depraved nature.
7. With the *rapture of the church*, the slide into spiritual darkness will pick up great speed. *"During the last century there has been a tremendous advance in what is called 'spiritual' but which is really spiritism or demonism. All this is to increase (until) after the believers have been removed at the rapture of the Church. It will be the predominating state of affairs after all the believers have been taken from the earth."* Barnhouse

"Ten years ago I couldn't imagine how people with today's education and enlightenment could do such a thing. But in the last few years we've seen the greatest turning to witchcraft, Satan worship, and occultism since the days of ancient Rome." Hal Lindsey

"Variations of such psychology (visions, dialogues with higher beings, meditation, guided imagery, dream work, yoga, body movement, sensory awareness, energy transfer, reincarnation therapy, and esoteric studies) have infiltrated the church, Christian schools and seminaries, because pastors and other leaders have accepted the claim that it is scientific and neutral. Most Christians have failed to recognize the fact that Christianity and psychotherapy are actually rival and irreconcilable religious systems." Dave Hunt and T.A. McMahon

Those sophisticates of western culture who had long deluded themselves in the unscientific sophistries of modern evolutionary humanism will quickly revert to more satisfying practices of ancient evolutionary polytheistic pantheism, acknowledging the demonic powers which operate in the earth and its atmosphere under "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). This acknowledgment will be even easier for those multitudes who had been devotees of Asian and African cultures, for these already were either pantheistic or animistic or both. For many years prior to Christ's return for His saints, there will have been a revival of occultism, astrology, spiritism, and kindred "doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:13), even in western cultures, preparing the minds of men everywhere for a worldwide return to pagan idolatry in the final days of the cosmic rebellion. Great worship centers will then be erected, with grotesque images of modern art depicting the various cosmic and terrestrial forces and processes presumably controlled by the principalities and powers of the wicked one (Ephesians 6:12; 1 John 5:19), and these will become objects of worship, with men and women in effect worshipping those evil spirits which they portray and represent. Henry Morris

Two practices that are growing by leaps and bounds today are worship of angels and worship of alien entities. Many people now regularly have some sort of communing with a spiritual entity, thinking they are a good angel or some sort of alien higher power. Many respected scientists are coming around to the idea that instead of life just spontaneously springing from the earth billions of years ago, an advanced alien civilization "seeded" this planet for life. All of this is nothing more than demon worship, plain and simple.

Chapter 10 – The Angel With A Little Scroll

Revelation 10:1 I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire;

Just as we had an interruption in the 7th chapter after the six seals and before the opening of the 7th, now we have another pause in this chapter after the sounding of the six trumpets and before the 7th.

Keep in mind that the effects of the 6th trumpet may not be completed yet, because the 2nd woe is only said to be past after the ministry of the two witnesses in chapter 11:3-13, which we'll get to next week.

We don't know who this strong angel is, but he is probably one of the archangels. Some think he is Jesus because of the similarity in description, but that really doesn't make sense for many reasons. This is a powerful angel acting in the authority of God. He will speak for God, and he may be dressed kind of strange. He will be wearing a cloud, for one thing, and he will be wearing a rainbow for a hat. His face will shine like the sun, and legs will be like pillars of fire.

The cloud speaks of the majesty of God, and the rainbow could be symbolic of God's mercy in the midst of His wrath. This may be where artists got the idea of halos on top of the heads of divine beings. The angel's face may be shining because he had just been in God's presence, just as Moses' face shone after he had spoken with God. The pillars of fire usually indicate judgment.

Revelation 10:2 and he had in his hand a little book which was open. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land;

He's carrying a little book in his hand, and he does something which you've probably seen in the movies before, where someone arrives on a ship to a new land, comes ashore, steps on the land and claims that land in the name of his king. That could be what the angel is doing here. With one foot on the land and one foot on the sea he is claiming both for his King because the earth is the Lord's (Psalm 24:1).

This could also be a direct message to the antichrist, who will come up out of the sea (Revelation 13:1), and the False Prophet, who will come up out of the earth (Revelation 13:11). And it could suggest that the judgments to come will be upon the whole world, land and sea.

Revelation 10:3 and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices.

He will speak like a lion roars. And when he speaks, a voice in heaven will roar like seven thunders, which is a symbol for the voice of God. The roaring of a lion is an allusion to the ferociousness of God's judgment. When Jeremiah prophesied the 70 years of captivity of Israel in Babylon, he continued to prophesy about a time when all the nations would be judged by God in Jeremiah 25:29-38, where he speaks of God roaring like a lion.

Revelation 10:4 When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them."

So we don't get to hear what John heard, because God didn't want him to write it down. We don't know why, but the Lord must think we don't need to hear it! We've already read about many amazing things, this

must have been something completely beyond our understanding or imagination. Maybe what John heard would be unbearable for us. There are some things God does not reveal because they would be too terrible to know.

Revelation 10:5-7 Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, (6) and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that there will be delay no longer, (7) but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.

Jesus has opened all seven seals, and six of the angels have sounded their trumpets. The seventh and last trumpet will bring the seven bowl judgments. It says that there will be no more delay, that the “mystery” of God will be finished with the seventh trumpet. God will reveal during this time something that has been kept secret. I believe that the sounding of the trumpet starts the 2nd half of the Tribulation, which we will study next time.

“At Nineveh God changed His mind when Nineveh repented. However, we read in the last two verses of chapter nine that men on earth were determined not to repent. Therefore, God is justified in completing the judgments for the last half of the Tribulation. There would be no further delay in ending man’s inhumanity to man and lifting nature from the curse of sin.” N. W. Hutchings

It says the mystery of God will be finished with the sounding of the 7th trumpet. This probably refers to the culmination of the conflict of the ages that will happen during this time. The rebellion of man and angels will be put down. As I’ve mentioned before, a mystery in the Bible is something that man cannot know unless God reveals it. Here are some other mysteries in the Bible.

Bible Mysteries

The mystery of the Rapture	1 Corinthians 15:51
The mystery of Israel’s blindness	Romans 11:25
The mystery of God’s wisdom	1 Corinthians 2:7
The mystery of Christ and the Church	Ephesians 5:31-32
The mystery of Christ in us	Colossians 1:26-27
The mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven	Matthew 13
The mystery of lawlessness	2 Thessalonians 2:7
The mystery of godliness	1 Timothy 3:16

Some of these things have not been revealed to us yet. For example, the mystery of lawlessness includes why God allowed Satan to cause the fall of mankind, why He allows so much sin and suffering in the world, etc. All of these mysteries will be revealed completely when we reach heaven.

Revelation 10:8 Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land."

Now John actually gets to do something; he is to take the book from the angel's hand.

Revelation 10:9-10 So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he *said to me, "Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." (10) I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and

in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.

This may sound kind of odd, but it not the first time in the Bible this has happened. Jeremiah ate the words of God (Jeremiah 15:16). Ezekiel also ate a scroll from God (Ezekiel 3:1-15). The idea is that the Word of God must be received into our hearts. It won't do us any good unless it becomes part of us, and unless we obey it. (Matthew 4:4, Romans 2:13).

One way to describe what happens to John here is that when we take in the Word of God, it is sweet and satisfying (Psalms 119:103). Learning the plans and mysteries of God are exciting and enjoyable, but when you understand the judgments that are to come, it can make us a little sick. That's understandable. These judgments are not easy to digest! It is exciting to see that God will bind Satan and there will be ultimate victory for us, but to see what believers will have to go through, and the destiny of the lost is very painful to know, especially when we have loved ones that have not accepted Christ's offer of eternal life.

"All of God's Holy Word is sweet (Ps. 19:10; 119:103), but especially the initial exposure to prophetic passages. Often, those who "eat" prophetic Scripture "sit on the edge of their seat" and focus on its quick fulfillment. Like a perpetual "sugar high," it provides an initial surge of energy and motivation, but will never sustain like a balanced meal of God's Word. The continual chasing after the latest prophetic conference, while superficially treating prophetic passages and never grasping important aspects of God's character—His heart for the lost and His ultimate interest in restoration over judgment—is sure to lead to disillusionment and will shipwreck the faith of some. Critics of the Rapture rightfully point to those who continually overemphasize prophetic passages within a shallow framework of Scriptural understanding and are forever watching for Antichrist rather than Christ. Tony Garland

"To almost all people, prophecy is sweet. Prophetic conferences draw larger audiences than virtually any other kind of conference. The voluminous sale of the more sensational prophecy books is another evidence of how "sweet" Bible prophecy has become to so many people. But if "sweetness" is all there is then it is worth little. Every student of prophecy should have the second experience that John had: bitterness in the stomach. A knowledge of things to come should give every believer a burden for people. For the way of escape from these things is the Rapture, and the requirement to qualify for the Rapture is the acceptance of Messiah now. A true student of prophecy will not simply stop with the knowledge of things to come. Rather this knowledge will create the strong burden to preach the gospel to others and thereby give them a way of escape. Arnold Fructenbaum

The knowledge of what is to come should give us a burden for the lost.

"Perhaps the full impact of what John experienced is a reminder to all who proclaim God's wonderful Word and speak of His coming judgment and wrath. We must speak it with a measure of sorrow and bitterness. A broken heart is a prerequisite to the proclamation of God's judgment and wrath. David Hocking

Revelation 10:11 And they *said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

This is what John will do in the remaining chapters of Revelation. This is why he was brought there, so he could record what he saw, all these things that will be happening to many peoples, nations, and kings. Some of them will even read the book of Revelation during the Tribulation to see what is about to happen.