

Week of December 30-January 5

STUBBORN

Scripture Reading: Read Revelation Chapter 9

In Revelation chapters 8-9, the apostle John describes for us the terrible destruction unleashed on a rebellious world through the trumpet judgments.

Trumpet #1: Hail and fire mixed with blood – 1/3 of the earth and 1/3 of the trees, along with all green grass, burned up

Trumpet #2: Blazing mountain thrown into the sea – 1/3 of the sea turned to blood, 1/3 of sea creatures died, 1/3 of ships destroyed

Trumpet #3: Blazing star named Wormwood falls – 1/3 of the rivers and waters turned bitter, people die from drinking the water

Trumpet #4: 1/3 of the sun, moon and stars struck – 1/3 of the day and night without light

Trumpet #5: Demonic locusts – torture of those with mark of the beast

Trumpet #6: Drying up of the river Euphrates and invasion of 200 million soldiers – death of 1/3 of humankind.

For a moment, imagine the horrific results these plagues would bring to our world if the angels were to blow their trumpets today. If 1/3 of the earth and trees (and all green grass) were burned up, it would affect the world's food supply much like the drought gripping our nation's heartland has affected supply and increased food prices. If the seas and the rivers were affected, this would harm both the fishing and shipping industries, not to mention the world's water supply. The ensuing panic would be worldwide. It would only be aggravated by the loss of light and the demonic locusts. Could a world war follow by countries in search of scarce supplies? Trumpet #6 seems to answer that in the affirmative and the death toll that follows is astronomical – 1/3 of humankind or approximately 2.1 billion people at today's figures (35 times as many as died in WWII, the deadliest military conflict in history)!

Yet, in spite of all the destruction and carnage on planet earth laid out for us in chapters 8-9, this is not John's focus. He doesn't write down what he sees simply to give us a view of the future, or to detail disastrous events. No, he writes with a threefold purpose: to exalt Christ as the one sovereignly in control of the future; to encourage the saints to faithful and holy perseverance; and to warn sinners. It's this last point that is so apparent in the concluding two verses of today's chapter reading. The judgments weren't just about punishment. They were also about repentance and redemption. Sadly, though, in spite of all the plagues, sinful humanity will refuse to repent of their idolatry, demon worship, murder, magic, immorality and thefts. As a result, they will suffer the full brunt of God's wrath in the bowl judgments that will follow and, then, the final judgment. In our day, it's the same thing. People still refuse to repent and turn to Christ in spite of all attempts by God to reach them. Rather than choosing life, they choose death and God honors their stubborn choice.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Read Romans 2:4-5 and Hebrews 10:28-31 in light of today's devotional. If you don't know Christ, today he calls you to repentance and faith.

Take-a-way: *God doesn't send people to Hell. He simply honors their choice.*