

**Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas -- Sunday, January 7, 2018**

***“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.” (Matthew 24:32-33)***

Good morning, my friends. To have the capacity to know when ***“his branch is yet tender”***, we must have attained to a familiarity with this ***“fig tree”***. This is why I am committed to the work for this body to have as clear an understanding of Christ’s Revelation as God will permit. As I have attempted to open for you in the past two sermons, this work with the trumpets is a disruption of the mischief employed by the earth’s inhabitants, who seek to silence the preaching of the gospel of peace while the conflict of Canaan comes to the crescendo of Christ’s second advent. To set the stage for consideration of the trumpets three through seven, I want to remind you of what we’ve considered thus far.

The plague of raining fire, hail, and blood brought the suffocating and terrifying effects of the third part of trees and all grass being burned up, likely leaving the entire land mass in a blackish-reddish tinge with the skies fully overtaken in a sootish miasma. The plague that follows brought a fiery mountain-like mass down from the heavens to disrupt commerce and troops moving through the oceans on ships, turning the third part of the life-giving waters to blood. Remembering the disrupted state of the earth’s inhabitants even before the trumpets began to sound, these terrifying sounds, sights, and conditions discomfit and distract the hosts who increasingly surmise the cause is of God, and His servants must be removed from the face of the earth to bring this torment to an end.

***“And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.” (Revelation 8:10-11)***

This ***“star”*** is the angel assigned to execute this blessed and condign work of God from His throne. We know that these majestic ministers are called stars, as in God’s discourse with the patriarch Job:

***“When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:7)***

We have seen angels be declared lamps in the beginning of John’s vision, burning with energy before the throne of God (Revelation 4:5), so there is no confusion in the description here of this star ***“burning as it were a lamp”***. While the word in our text for ***“there fell”***, the Greek ***“pipto”*** (***“pip’-to”***), can mean a fall to disgrace and darkness, like when that great dragon’s ***“tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven”*** (Revelation 12:4), the term is more generally understood to describe the action of alighting downward or falling upon a lower place or thing from a higher place or state. Recall, please, the portion of last week’s sermon discussing the preparations of the archangels to sound the trumpets – or put into motion these events. That preparation was

appointing the lower ranked angels to their duties assigned to carry out the commandments of God in this work.

Further, when we look at these amazing works we should not pretend that we are ignorant of what science instructs. We must also recognize that many expositors of bygone years did not have the same ability to know about the heavenly bodies in God's creation. The non-metaphoric "star" is many times larger than the earth. The earth's sun, for example, is more than 100 times the size of the earth. That sun is a star, and is average sized for stars. Therefore, it is necessary to conclude that if an actual "star" were to come down onto the earth, it would likely disintegrate the earth entirely, not just discretely impact **"the third part of the waters"**. Further, if a planetary object were to come down through the earth's atmosphere and strike the surface of the earth, it is irrational to conclude it would have the ability to discretely impact exactly the **"third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of waters"**. It would devastate both land and water in a blunt, inefficient manner. This movement of God is a beautiful symphony of sound and precise traumas that are wholly consistent with His sovereignty and His Word. The Word says what is impacted, and it is not only prophesied in Scripture – both here and elsewhere – but it is a well-established weapon in His armory. This, I believe, we must conclude, is a mighty angel coming down and executing the judgment of our God upon the precise measure of key and relevant rivers and fountains of waters. John is given to see the angel, but that doesn't mean the earth-dwellers will see him. They will only hear the trumpet and learn of the plague that follows as the result becomes apparent.

There are 26 distinct verses that might help us understand both the nature and significance of these afflicted waters, both literally and metaphorically.<sup>1</sup> It is expressly written that **"many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter"**, so we are not to imagine that "bitter" means "distasteful". Rather, it is horrific hemlock that introduces those who drink to grievous pain of body and, at least for some, death. A most instructive passage to this point is found in the law of Moses:

***"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him, And a man lie with her carnally, ... And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled: ... Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, ... And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the LORD: And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water: And the priest shall set the woman before the LORD, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which is the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse: And the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse: But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee beside thine husband: Then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing, and the priest shall say unto the woman, The LORD make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the LORD doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell;***

***And this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot: And the woman shall say, Amen, amen.” (Numbers 5:12-22)***

There is more to the passage, including that the wife who was guilty of adultery would be rendered sterile from the poison, but the one not guilty would be unaffected. The type presented in this ceremonial process brings into view the proper understanding of how God has made use of bitter waters. The wife – in the context of the passages above, referring to the Jewish people who were God the Father’s betrothed – has gone and lain carnally with man or men other than her husband. This spiritual adultery, like the physical type, brings the curse of God upon them, as warned:

***“Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;” (Deuteronomy 29:18)***

Of course, that nation being unfaithful and unthankful, they quickly and frequently turned from the Lord their God to go and serve the gods of those nations, so they were sent a prophet to prophesy about the necessary recompense for their infidelity:

***“And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them: Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.” (Jeremiah 9:13-15)***

Then, after they ***“mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets” (2 Chronicles 36:16)***, the threatened punishments came – symbolized by the use of that bitter water of affliction, and the prophet thereafter lamented the horrible punishments, heaping upon his own spirit the essence of the bitter cup from which the Jews were forced to drink (Lamentations 3:15-19). My point in this analysis is to underscore that every methodology for God’s terminal works against those who ***“offend, and them which do iniquity” (Matthew 13:41)*** during these amazing plagues are, in some fashion, adumbrated in His management of providence. The methodology here employed – the suffering and death to those who drink from the fountains and rivers of waters that this ***“star”*** was sent forth to poison – is simultaneously a new distraction for the protection of His servants, and a just punishment. Those unwashed, unrenewed, reprobates will be vexed for their rebellion against His statutes and their worship of idols, in similar manner to those nations that have gone before us.

***“He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence”.* (Psalms 78:49-50)**

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As the plagues of the first three trumpets work their wonders upon the earth, another plague – that was expressly referenced by Christ during His first advent – follows the tremulous sounding of the fourth angel’s trumpet. Christ proclaimed:

***“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” (Luke 21:25-28)***

Without the event-by-event articulation of the sequencing with the trumpets, Christ is clearly speaking of these same disturbing events leading up to His second advent, and providing comforting guidance to His elect souls who will be in the thick of it, as Revelation 11 clearly articulates. So, we understand from this that among those promised afflictions are the following ***“signs in the sun ... moon, and ... stars”***.

***“And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.” (Revelation 8:12)***

The precision of these words is astounding, considering the scope and volume of heavenly bodies that must be impacted for this matter to come to pass. We can likely – though with some frightful reticence – perceive of raining hail, fire, and blood. We can envision a massive mountain-like, flaming object falling onto the ocean. We can make our minds comprehend the poisoning of the drinking water supply. But here we must consider both the massive size and powers of the sun, moon, and stars ***and simultaneously*** consider how their inter-relations and relative distances would need to be manipulated to accomplish the effect of eliminating precisely four hours of the daylight and four hours of the ability to see moon or stars at night.

Further, it will not do to simply say that some cover of cloud or debris or objects are “blocking the view” for these assigned periods, and then they suddenly are not. The language of the verse compels the recognition that the heavenly bodies are described as directly ***“smitten”*** in this plague. The sun is smitten ... so too the moon and the stars. If you have any doubt of this truth, consider the words Isaiah wrote on this same affliction:

***“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.” (Isaiah 13:9-11)***

Incidentally, if I provided not one single additional authority for the proposition that the seven trumpets are to address the violent wicked from destroying the elect, the closing clause of this verse proves it. The word **“terrible”** here is the Hebrew **“ariyts”** (**“aw-reets”**), which is used to describe **“terrible one...oppressor...mighty...violent”**. Because they have convinced themselves of their own power and have numbered the people (2 Samuel 24:4) of the earth, they do not believe the little flock of slaughter (Zechariah 11:7) will be fed and protected from their violence. We cannot lose sight of this objective for these plagues.

Considering that little knowledge we actually have about these parts of God’s creation, that would mean that the precise stars would need to have their power of light distribution suspended at the precisely-timed moment, so that the light of those stars would “turn off” from the view of the earth dwellers and “turn on” again, at the precise moments required under the plague of this trumpet! We, of course also know that God alone directs the light and the darkness, as He reminded the patriarch Job:

***“Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof, That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof?” (Job 38:19-20)***

Since God is the gentle Father of creation, He knows the precise means by which to move that creation to confound the wisdom of the human – and there is simply no limit, no elusive nuance, no strain upon His might or His wisdom to carry out this amazing and mystifying work. Therefore, while our minds may not have sufficient knowledge to even quite visualize how stunning and precipitous and perplexing this plague will be, our spirits know well that it will be the perfect answer to the angry and violent rebels who seek to destroy God’s servants. They simply and suddenly will lose eight hours of their day to palpable, disrupting and terrifying darkness. Take comfort, my beloved friends, for our God is He **“which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night,” (Jeremiah 31:35)** and He can take that light from man, at His pleasure.

One final thought on this particular plague. It is one of the four plagues for which we have specific prophecy to indicate its duration. What I mean by this is that the plagues of the first three trumpets do not have any clear passage that helps to understand the duration. It may be that something exists that would resolve that question, and I would be most pleased to find it. However, for trumpets four through seven, passages can be found in prophecy giving us a hint. For this plague, it is found in the book of Joel. Among the language where this prophet describes the monsters we will consider under the sixth trumpet, he writes:

***“The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:” (Joel 2:10)***

Where Joel is not parsing out the tremendous works of the trumpets, as John’s work does, it is clear that Joel’s vision included the state of sun, moon, and stars being darkened simultaneous to the running of the monstrous horses. We know from Revelation chapter nine that the plague

of the fifth trumpet continues for five months (v.9), and the plague of the sixth trumpet (which brings the horses) continues for 13 months, a day and an hour (v.15). So, we are justified in the conclusion that what begins with the fourth trumpet – this inexplicable loss of all light for eight hours out of each day – continues through at least the period of time the fifth and sixth trumpets effect the earth and her inhabitants; eighteen months, a day, and an hour.

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Because it is so integral a portion of this traumatic series of God’s pre-advent judgments and disruptions in the earth, this passage slipped between the fourth and fifth trumpets has to be examined independent of the trumpets themselves. Here is the text:

***“And I beheld, and heard an angel (or eagle) flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!” (Revelation 8:13)***

The expositors point out that in many early copies of the text in this place, the Greek word “aetos” (“ah-et-os”) translated to the English “eagle” is used, rather than the Greek word “aggelos” (“ang-el-os”) translated to the English “angel”. Seiss forces this difference into his phased rapture lens of Revelation<sup>ii</sup>. Others, including Gill, make less to do about it because in proper view whether “eagle” or “angel”, the text properly can make this actor the saints of God preaching to the heaving world of antagonized rebels. The elect saints are described in this Apocalypse as being ***“like a flying eagle” (Revelation 4:7)***, and when Ezekiel describes his ***“living creatures”*** one of their faces was ***“of an eagle” (Ezekiel 1:10)***. I discussed the intimate engagement between the elect angels and the elect saints in my first sermon on these trumpets two weeks ago.

The engagements in the earth are between the elect saints and the reprobate hordes, and as we observe in Revelation 11, those saints torment ***“them that [dwell] on the earth” (Revelation 11:10)***. So, without endorsing Seiss’ extrapolations from the view of this announcer here identified, it is altogether acceptable to conclude that we here deal with the saints of God – the two witnesses, if you will – declaring what the earth has theretofore experienced as but a warm-up. *“If raining blood, hail, and fire will not stop you in your delirious course ... if a meteoric mountain disrupting your seafaring mischief does not bring proper pause ... if the widespread death from poisoned drinking water will not dissuade you ... if, indeed, God’s removal of your capacity to see for a full third of your day will not bring your assault to heel ... then you should know that your widespread miseries will now multiply.”* Remember, my friends, what remains of these plagues bring forth the whole of the remaining miseries upon the earth and her inhabitants – including their penultimate misery before Christ takes His throne in majesty; Armageddon.

Woe thrice repeated; one for each of the remaining trumpets, which shall now bring exponentially greater traumas ... and triumphs. There is a lens that all expositors put to this proclamation, and if we conclude that it is the proper one it will do very well. They are of one consent that what this voice cries is an articulation of passionate grief ... declaring to the earth dwellers that most horrible things are coming under the next three trumpets to sound. The

difficulty I have with stopping here in the analysis is that, from what we have examined the past two Sundays and today, there have been terrible traumas both in the seals and within the four trumpets. Why is there a division between number four and number five? Seiss indicates the distinction is that the first four trumpets work with the things known by mankind in nature, but the next trumpets bring *“mysterious and malignant tenants of the underworld [] to overrun the globe, and to inflict torture and woe upon its unsanctified inhabitants”*. That distinction would be at least helpful for understanding *“woe, woe”*, but could not fairly characterize the seventh trumpet, or third *“woe”*. Again, I think the confusion lies in failing to keep in focus the purpose of these wonderful plagues. If we bring this passage back into that focus, it will be brighter and clearer to us.

***“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11)***

This articulation of the grant of Christ’s Revelation reveals what is the “end game” of this mighty and glorious conflict. Satan, his demons, and those humans in whom they move to malicious words and mischievous madness (3 John 1:10; Ecclesiastes 10:13) have the notion that they will take this earth from Christ and break the bands of His Word from them (Psalms 2:1-3). The ownership ... the kingship ... the sovereign power of disposition that God holds and that will be granted Christ when this conflict is over includes the things in heaven, earth and *under the earth*. Seiss is on point that humans have a grievous misunderstanding of the powers that exist under the earth. That being the case, it will indeed be a tremendous disquieting to the collective spirit of man when those bowels break open and God’s dominion is put onto full and terrifying display!

The third *“woe”*, of course, is when Christ takes the first heaven and removes His redeemed – Jew and Gentile – from the reach of the enemy. It is the beginning of the most grievous combination of plagues, as it brings the final pouring out of the seven vials, about which I provided previous examination.<sup>iii</sup> This is a better lens on the three woes pronounced from the expectant saints, who at once feel anguish about how severe these will be and jubilation at the display of sovereign power. Both energies fit comfortably in the definition of the word *“woe”*, thrice repeated.

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***“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.” (Revelation 9:1)***

The first thing that should be underscored in opening this next amazing work is that, unlike the efficient and clinical descriptions provided for the first four trumpet-plagues, these final three have detailed descriptions. This means they need more parsing to bring them properly into view. I hope you will be patient with me as I dig into Scripture to learn what God has there prepared for us in His Word.

Like in the third trumpet, we have here a mighty angel appointed to initiate the work. Expositions regarding this angel have brought an entire array of speculations. Some say it is Satan here falling. Some say it is Antichrist here revealed. Yet others speculate extensively about it being wholly metaphoric for cataclysmic wars throughout Europe and rise of Roman Catholic dominance. Because this is so, I believe it is critically important to give some treatment to these confusions, lest this blessed group leave this meeting house with a sense that we do not have sufficient light to answer the question; “who is this angel?”

Though I understand how some of Scripture can bring even a sincere observer to the conclusion that this angel is Satan, there are many equally sound reasons to reject this notion. It is true that Satan fell, and that when his fall is discussed it includes that ***“his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth”*** (Revelation 12:4). Though this vision John has is recorded in the Revelation, we have a time-congruity problem if we want this ***“star”*** of Revelation 9:1 to likewise be Satan. The vision of Revelation 9:1 is expressly after the *fifth* trumpet, whereas the reference in Revelation 12:4 is after the *seventh* trumpet. Of course, as brother Steve’s sermon on this Revelation 12 vision<sup>iv</sup> demonstrates, the recording of Satan’s fall in Revelation 12 is part of that ***“great red dragon[s]”*** description and not part of the present-tense activity he was engaged in vis-à-vis the ***“woman [who there is] travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered”***. Scripture further belies the notion that John would be seeing Satan actually falling in this vision, when we consider the words of Christ Himself:

***“And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he [Christ] said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”*** (Luke 10:17-19)

In this passage, Christ had sent seventy disciples – in groups of two – to go ***“into every city and place, whither he himself would come”*** (Luke 10:1). When they returned, they expressed amazement that ***“even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.”*** (Luke 10:17). Would one of Christ’s apostles here – in Revelation 9:1 – be only now seeing what Christ had declared a past event? A further descriptor of this mighty angel is that ***“to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.”*** We see this same angel again, with the same key for the same pit:

***“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years”.*** (Revelation 20:1-2)

It seems incongruous that we would have the key to the bottomless pit being passed about – between elect and wicked angels – during these amazing events. It seems stranger still that Satan, who with his angels have been ***“delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment”*** (2 Peter 2:4), would be granted the key of that prison. It is, I humbly submit, not credible to conclude that the angel who John sees is that great ***“accuser of our brethren”*** would be playing so prominent a role in executing the wrath of God in the grant of power to Christ over

all parts of the creation as part of His Revelation. Satan plays a role, but as an antagonist not an ally.

The notion – that John Gill, Arthur Pink, and others espouse – that this “*angel*” is the Antichrist of Revelation 13, is likewise untenable. We know that Antichrist “*shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and [at the great judgment day] go into perdition:*” (Revelation 17:8). This passage alone, I submit, disproves this angel to be Antichrist. If Antichrist “*shall ascend out of*” the bottomless pit, it is necessary to conclude that he was theretofore *in* the bottomless pit. This place of darkness and torment is the home of the damned souls – the prison of the rebels against God! It is the prison for all those who receive condemnation, men and angels. I know that popular culture suggests that Satan rules Hell; but that is fiction. Satan has power, indeed ... but only that power granted him by God, and can take none of it for himself:

***“And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand.” (Job 1:12)***

So, it is proper to understand that when the dragon gives power to the Antichrist – including to come back from the dead (Revelation 13:3-4) – it is a limited power, despite the deceived earth-dwellers proclamation: “*Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?*” Antichrist is plainly said to have received his power from the dragon (Revelation 13:4), so he has nothing beyond what Satan has. So, as Satan has no key to the bottomless pit, neither does his super-man hero of the damned! Furthermore, Antichrist is plainly a man!

***“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” (2 Thessalonians 2:3)***

While it is true that in Scripture the elect humans are sometimes referred to as “angels” – because they are the messengers of God – no place are hell-bound rebel humans granted that moniker. When a man is moved by the demonic power of Satan, he is called expressly “*the messenger of Satan*” (2 Corinthians 12:7). Only when it is an actual fallen member of the race of angels do you find the notion of “*Satan ... and his angels*” (Revelation 12:9).

Finally, Antichrist is a man ... indeed, *the man* who is the antagonist against whose hordes the affliction under this fifth trumpet is unleashed! I provided a two-part sermon on Antichrist in 2015.<sup>v</sup> In that sermon I articulated how the seventh iteration of Antichrist is he who “*shall make war against [the two witnesses], and shall overcome them, and kill them.*” (Revelation 11:7). Having done this, and thereby won the accolades of “*they that dwell upon the earth*” (Revelation 11:10), that bold bastard is shortly thereafter faced with that power of Christ who “*shall destroy [him] with the brightness of his coming*” (2 Thessalonians 2:8), from which “*deadly wound [the beast] was healed*” (Revelation 13:3) resulting in the wonder and worship of the earth’s population. It is unfathomable, taking these sober truths into account, that the same Antichrist would be he who inflicts five months of grievous torment upon those he rules – and will again rule upon his own resurrection.

The notion that this angel, this bottomless pit, these scorpion-tailed locusts and the torments that they bring are all metaphors for some historic ebb and flow of a particular religious or civil belief system is, frankly, too ridiculous to waste my precious time with this house of blessed souls. I will leave that for any one of you to pursue to your own satisfaction and await any who believe there is something there on which to engage. I want to talk about what I believe is necessary to conclude about this opening passage.

An angel – one of that mighty race of our elect friends and compatriots who is **“come for [our] words” (Daniel 10:12)** – was appointed to this work here – and the later work of Revelation 20, when Satan will be cast into this same bottomless pit. He was seen to **“fall”** in the same sense that the angel under the third trumpet **“fell upon the third part of the rivers....” (Revelation 8:10)** The same Greek word is used, and does not necessarily intimate a falling from a state of higher stature, but is used merely to intimate *“to descend from a higher place to a lower”*, like those angels who ascended and *descended* in the vision of Jacob at Bethel (Genesis 28:12).

This noble friend has the key – the capacity to open and close – the grand breach in the earth’s crust that grants immediate access by horrendous creatures to the earth’s surface and the atmosphere above it. What this means, in physical application, is not specifically said. However, from the scope of the release it is altogether valid to conclude it is beyond any chasm known to mankind in breadth and depth, for:

***“[A]nd there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.” (Revelation 9:2)***

There are two ways to see the magnitude of this terror ... even before we get to the creatures belching forth to torment the men of the earth. One version is that each of the previous plagues have subsided, so that this darkening of the sun and air is all from the **“smoke of the pit”**. The other is that the former plagues are still in motion – the former trumpets (perhaps in different key, perhaps in accumulative volume and vibration) still sound. The darkness – brought from the raining fire, the explosive plume of polluted water that would shoot into the atmosphere from the **“mountain burning with fire” (Revelation 8:8)** that collided into the ocean, and the smitten heavenly lights – is still in effect, so this new trauma just completes the darkness and suffocation.

Either way, we know from this passage that a distracting and halting darkness fills the earth. Men are unable to see beyond a short distance from themselves in any direction. They are choked – but not killed – by the smoke. Like those vicious Sodomites who wanted Lot’s skin, but **“wearied themselves to find the door” (Genesis 19:11)**, these men of the earth are brought to a new distraction from their venomous bloodlust against the saints. Then the real trouble starts.

**“Locusts”**. Clearly, from the description John the Beloved provides, what comes forth out of the smoke are not garden-variety locusts. This is a creature of mesmerizing beauty and horrifying alacrity in the performance of their assignment. The Hebrew/Chaldee word for “locusts” comes from the primitive root word *“rabah” (“raw-baw”)*, which means *“be or become great, be or*

*become many, be or become much, be or become numerous*"; a clear reference to the tendency of this unique creature to work in self-organizing hordes, like the proverb:

***"There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: ... The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands" (Proverbs 30:24, 27)***

The Greek word for "locusts" – which is more directly applicable to our text that was recorded in Greek – finds its root word in "akmen" ("ak-mane") which is word expressing an accusatory case of a noun, and means "extremity, climax, acme, highest degree". The idea is expressed, to use the concept connected with these creatures, like this: "Can these locusts get any greater in scope?" As though every expression of these creatures in Scripture have been weakly pointing to this magnificent event, John describes them with the most spectacular attributes:

***"And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months." (Revelation 9:7-10)***

I should think that such a monstrous army would cause the heartiest of humans to shriek in terror, and it appears that the torment of mind as well as body in fact has so great an *in terrorem* effect as to make men "seek death", and "desire to die" (v. 6). However, these bands of flying monstrosity are not self-managing, and are not at all behaving according to their nature. When locusts were set by God upon the Egyptians of old, their work was quite different than these.

***"And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt." (Exodus 10:14-15)***

But the locusts of John's vision were directly instructed not to "***hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree***" (Revelation 9:4). Locusts' greatest historical strength, as a weapon in God's arsenal, is their capacity to destroy crops and trees. The plague has already been meted out upon "***the third part***" of trees and grass, under the first trumpet. These locusts are not for that cause, but for one much, much more horrifying.

***"And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. ... And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months." (Revelation 9:5-6, 10)***

There are two levels of physiological reaction to the sting of a scorpion. The first are those symptoms at the site of the sting: *Intense pain, tingling and numbness, swelling*. When the venom settles into your blood stream, the symptoms are more consuming: *breathing difficulties; muscle twitching; unusual movements in neck, head, and eyes; dribbling or drooling; sweating; nausea; vomiting; high blood pressure; accelerated heart rate or irregular heartbeat; restlessness, excitability, or inconsolable crying*. Nobody dies. Everybody is tormented, while these creatures follow their king's directives with perfect precision. Like the citizens in the Land of Goshen of Egypt, the elect of God – both Jew and Gentile – are wholly unaffected by this grievous plague, since this intelligent army of creatures direct their venom on **“only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.” (Revelation 9:4)**

One last thing I believe needs to be confirmed about this plague; the king over this horde of tormenting creatures. He is named **“in the Hebrew tongue Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue [] Apollyon” (Revelation 9:11)**. This is the only place in Scripture where this angel is named, and both reference his office of “destroyer”. He is expressly called **“the angel of the bottomless pit”**, which official title makes it easier to confirm that it is the same angel who has keys to that prison. He is not called “the angel of the locusts” or “the angel of destruction”, though he is clearly **“king over them”**, and his names certainly point to that as his vocation. The bottomless pit is, by its very definition, a place of destruction. Those who go there are being **“punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:9)**. The locusts clearly do not destroy – men or crops – but torment. Their king, though a “destroyer”, has not sent them to destroy. He has that name because he keeps the place of destruction, **“the bottomless pit”**. I believe this vision of plague and torment ends as it begins, identifying the angel of God who is directing the work.

Thick, smoky blackness followed by heart-stopping sounds of horses running to battle. In a flash of vision, before being mercilessly stung by flying creatures, the rebels who seek the saints' destruction get to look into the human face of the most beautifully terrifying monster; flowing women's' hair under golden-colored crowns, teeth like great lions and impenetrable thoraxes of iron. So many strange characteristics. So much torment. Yet, their feverish insanity cannot be mitigated in death. It eludes them. They cannot die; they cannot kill. For five long months they walk through the mist of darkness in grievous pain, unable to discern what next to do. Certainly, they will have no capacity to move in mischief toward the blessed saints who, unharmed, continue to pronounce that God is on the move, and He will bring His Christ to His throne.

This work of God is building to its crescendo. When we return, Lord willing, next week we will take up the consideration of God's most majestic earthly creatures, as we search out John's vision under these trumpets. In the meanwhile, please inquire if you wish further discussion on the examination of this second act of Christ's Revelation so far. I love you all. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Verses in Scripture that speak to the character of the afflicted, poisonous waters or food (wormwood, gall, venom, poison, bitter, hemlock).

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1. Exodus 15:23 And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.
  2. Numbers 5:18 And the priest shall set the woman before the LORD, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which is the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse:
  3. Numbers 5:19 And the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse:
  4. Numbers 5:23 And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out with the bitter water:
  5. Numbers 5:24 And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse: and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter.
  6. Numbers 5:27 And when he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, that, if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband, that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot: and the woman shall be a curse among her people.
  7. Deuteronomy 29:18 Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;
  8. Deuteronomy 32:32 For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter:
  9. Deuteronomy 32:33 Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps.
  10. Job 6:4 For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.
  11. Job 20:14 Yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him.
  12. Job 20:16 He shall suck the poison of asps: the viper's tongue shall slay him.
  13. Psalms 69:21 They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.
  14. Proverbs 5:4 But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword.
  15. Ecclesiastes 7:26 And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.
  16. Jeremiah 8:14 Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.
  17. Jeremiah 9:15 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.
  18. Jeremiah 23:15 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.
  19. Lamentations 3:15 He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood.
  20. Lamentations 3:19 Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall
  21. Isaiah 5:20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!
  22. Isaiah 24:9 They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.
  23. Hosea 10:4 They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.
  24. Amos 5:7 Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,
  25. Amos 6:12 Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:
  26. Revelation 8:11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

<sup>ii</sup> Joseph Seiss, in his work *The Apocalypse* says the following in his 19<sup>th</sup> lecture on this passage:

*"1. Our English version describes this proclamation as made by an angel. This is admitted to be an erroneous reading. It is not sustained by the best and oldest manuscripts. The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Alexandrinus, and the Codex Vaticanus, the very best and most reliable authorities on the true reading of the New Testament, have ajetov, eagle, instead of aggelov angel. The Syriac has eagle. Griesbach, Scholz, Lachman, Van Ess, Hengstenberg, Stuart, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Wordsworth, Ewald, Alford, and the best critics in general, accept eagle as the proper and original reading. Bengel, a century and a half ago, wrote "the Italian version, and other most ancient authorities, widely separated from each other in age and clime, and in very great numbers, clearly vindicate the reading of ajetou, eagle, from all suspicion of gloss." As this agent is in heaven and speaks intelligent words, it is easily to be seen how interpreters and transcribers, on the ground of congruity, might be tempted to read*

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angel instead of eagle," but, on the supposition that the original was angel, it is impossible to explain how the best, and the vast majority of ancient copies, came to have it eagle. I, therefore, take the true reading, and the only one critically defensible, to be eagle.

Are there, then, rapacious birds in heaven? No; nothing of the kind. There are other eagles besides birds. The Saviour himself has spoken of them in more than one place. Speaking of the day of His future coming, He said to His disciples: "I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where [whither], Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will THE EAGLES be gathered together." (<421734>Luke 17:34-37.)

Here, then, those ready and watching saints, who are to be mysteriously conveyed away from the earth upon the first manifestation of the day of the Lord, are called eagles. We find them spoken of also in the Saviour's great prophetic discourse in <402426>Matthew 24:26-28, where He admonishes His people not to trouble or disturb themselves to find Him in the day of His coming, and not to heed those who shall say, Behold, He is here, or there; "for," says He, "as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be; for wheresoever the carcass [slain body] is, there will THE EAGLES be gathered together." Here, as Hilary observes, "He calls His saints eagles, soaring, as it were, to Him, the body, by a spiritual flight."

There are some who take these eagles to mean the Roman armies, which bore the eagle on their standards, and consider the carcass to be the corrupt Jewish population and state which the Romans destroyed. But the whole face and intent of the passage, and the common voice of antiquity, and of the great reformers, unite in referring the description to Christ and His people, at the time of the second Advent. We are naturally repelled from the idea that Christ should be represented as a dead body, or that His meek followers should be likened to birds of prey. But when more carefully considered, there appears eminent propriety in the figure.

Jesus is the Saviour, most of all by His death. It is by His fall that we rise, and by His death that we live. "He that was dead" is one of His particular titles, though He is alive for evermore. He gave His flesh for the life of the world. His own word is: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day: for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." (<430653>John 6:53-55.)

He has also instituted a holy sacrament, concerning which He says: "Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you. Drink, this is my blood which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins." He is the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world." He is, therefore, the true slain body on which all saints feed, to whom they are gathered in spirit, faith, and loving sympathy now, and to whom they shall be gathered in person hereafter, to see Him as He is, and to be with Him forever. And as saints have their life from the slain Christ, they are rightfully likened to the eagles which live on fallen bodies. They are eagles of faith. They feed on the body and blood of their Saviour, broken and shed for them.f65

But not all Christians are to the same extent, and so pre-eminently, the eagles. The eagle is a royal bird. It stands at the head of the feathered tribes, as the lion among beasts. There are also different orders and classes of saint-ship, as there are degrees of sanctity and spiritual attainment. When the Saviour first comes, according to His own word, He will take some and leave others — honour some servants, and cut off some other servants. And those who are "taken" while others are "left," are particularly and emphatically "the eagles." They are the heirs of royalty and dominion. They are to have crowns. They are to share in the official honours of eternity, as none but themselves ever will. And the qualities of these are eminently the qualities of eagles.

Eagles are great watchers. They have a quick, clear, penetrating, and farreaching vision. In this respect they excel all birds. It is almost impossible to surprise or deceive them. Audubon once placed himself in ambush to watch an eagle's nest. The parent birds were absent when he took his position. When the female returned, "ere she alighted she glanced her quick and piercing eye around, and instantly perceived her haunt had been discovered, and, dropping her prey, with a loud shriek communicated the alarm to her mate." And the eagle saints are those who are not taken unawares when the day of the Lord comes. That day is to come as a thief, with stealth, unobserved by the common world; but it cannot surprise them. They are on the lookout for it. They have a clear and keen vision for all signs of its nearness, and they exercise that vision. They are ever on the watch, as commanded by the Lord. Whatever the duties in which they are engaged, both in their going out and in their coming in, they are never unmindful of what may at any time occur. They know their danger and they know their safety, and exercise a corresponding circumspection.

Eagles have elevated aspirations and instincts. They prefer the heights, both when they soar and when they rest. They make their homes among the most inaccessible crags, and excel all birds in their sublime ascensions. So eagle saints have their citizenship in heaven. They live in the world, but all their feelings, aims, affections, and desires are above it. Their greatest impulses are upward, ever upward. They love the higher atmosphere and the sublimer sunlight above the clouds and malarious mists and dangers of earthiness. They build their nests in the mountains of God, and prefer and long to be where they are never more annoyed with the vexations and dangers of this sordid world.

Eagles are stronger of wing than other birds. Their swiftness and power are astonishing. So the eagle saints are distinguished by their vigour of faith and hope. They are particularly strong in those truths and promises which lift heavenward, anticipate the

dawn of a sublimer economy, and sit "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Isaiah referred, in his day, to saints of these eminent qualities, and likens them to eagles, where he says: "They who wait for Jehovah, gain fresh strength, lift up their wings as eagles, run and are not weary, go forward and do not faint." (<234030>Isaiah 40:30, 31; Delitzsch's Translation.) And in <053211>Deuteronomy 32:11, 12, Jehovah is likened to a parent eagle, and His elect to young eagles, whom He feeds, and upbears, and teaches to fly and rise to himself.<sup>f66</sup> We thus identify a class of eagles, other than the rapacious birds denoted by this name; — eagles that have voices, intelligence, and place in heaven. These eagles are also in heaven before the judgments occur to which these trumpets refer. The Saviour himself, in Matthew 24, puts their gathering together where the body is, in advance of the sending forth of His angels with the great trumpet-sounding. When the sun is darkened, and the moon is obscured, and the stars fall, and the powers of the heavens are shaken, and the sign of the Son of Man appears, and all the tribes of the earth mourn; these eagles are already where the Lord, on whom they live, is. John saw them there, among other images, under that of "a flying eagle," before the Lamb took the book or ever a seal was broken; where also he heard them sing unto the Lamb: "Thou art worthy; for Thou wert slain, and redeemedst us to God by Thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and Thou madest us unto our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth." (<660405>Revelation 4:5-10; 5:8-10.) And from among these was He whom John here beheld and heard flying in midheaven, saying with a great voice, "Woe, woe, woe, to the dwellers on the earth, by reason of the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels who are yet to sound." The manner in which this eagle is spoken of, implies that there are others of the same class. The seer says: "I beheld and heard one eagle "thus flying and saying. This "one eagle" presupposes more eagles; as "one scribe," in <400819>Matthew 8:19, presupposes more scribes; as "one voice from the horns of the golden altar" (<400913>Matthew 9:13) presupposes more voices; as "one mighty angel" (19-21) presupposes more angels. The Church of the first born is to have a part in the administrations of the judgment upon the guilty world. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (<460402>1 Corinthians 4:2.) Hence, when the first seals were broken, the voice of power was heard from the living ones. "Go!" And so here, "one eagle" has a mission which he executes between the sounding of the fourth and fifth trumpets, as the prelude to what the last three trumpets are to produce. Verily, we know not, and cannot haft conceive what ministries and agencies of heavenly sublimity await us, if only we are faithful. We shall fly, like eagles, in mid-heaven, and mingle our voices with the trumpets of judgment, and fill offices of honour and celestial dignity among the transactions of archangels, as they go forth to close up the history of a rebellious world! The precise manner in which this proclamation of the eagle is to reach men, is not stated. That it is to be heard on earth, I am quite sure. We can discern no reason why heaven should be thus specifically notified that the succeeding trumpets are woe-trumpets; nor yet for the introduction of such a special agency to inform John that they were to be woe-trumpets. The results of the blowing of them would necessarily make this sufficiently manifest to him. The intention of the proclamation itself is evidently merciful. I take it as a heavenly signal, given in the midst of the ongoing of the scenes of the day of judgment, to apprise men of the terrible plagues next to be enacted, that those then living, who have not become utterly blind and deaf to sacred things, may take warning and seek refuge against the oncoming calamities. It is one of the principles of the Divine administrations, that mercy is remembered in the midst of wrath; and, as long as there is any possibility of bringing men to a right mind, the opportunity for it is given. These three woe trumpets are to conclude the history of this world and to end forever this present economy. Hence, on the very eve of the end, and when the last awful visitations are about to fall upon the ungodly, still a mighty voice of warning goes forth from midheaven, that such as will heed it may prepare themselves, and cry for mercy before mercy is clean gone forever. God gives up the world to perdition with great reluctance. He has always said that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; and we thus behold Him true to His word up to the last"

<sup>iii</sup> The two sermons by Timothy regarding the seven last plagues of God, discussed discretely in Revelation 15-16, on July 30, 2017 [tinyurl.com/Rev15-16Pt1PDF](http://tinyurl.com/Rev15-16Pt1PDF), and on August 6, 2017 [tinyurl.com/Rev15-16Pt2PDF](http://tinyurl.com/Rev15-16Pt2PDF).

<sup>iv</sup> The first of two sermons by Steve regarding the two wonders, the birth and the war, preached on September 24, 2017 [tinyurl.com/Rev12Pt1PDF](http://tinyurl.com/Rev12Pt1PDF).

<sup>v</sup> The two sermons by Timothy regarding Antichrist: Satan's Superman, the Beast of Revelation 13, Part 1 on June 28, 2015 <http://bit.ly/Antichrist1>, and part 2 on July 5, 2015 <http://bit.ly/Antichrist2>.