

Sixth Trumpet, part 2

Revelation 9:13-16

By Phillip G. Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2016-10-17

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Text

13 So the sixth angel trumpeted, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God 14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." 15 So the four angels were released—they had been prepared for the hour and the day and month and year—so that they might kill a third of mankind. 16 And the number of the mounted troops was a hundred million (I heard their number). 17 And in the vision I saw the horses like this: those who rode them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue and sulfur yellow; the heads of the horses were like lions' heads; out of their mouths came fire, smoke and brimstone. 18 By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone that came out of their mouths. 19 For the capability of the horses is in their mouths—and in their tails, because their tails are like snakes, having heads, and with them they do harm.

20 Yet the rest of the people, those who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as to stop worshiping the demons, even the idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; 21 and they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their fornication or their thefts.¹

Introduction - review of what we covered in the last sermon

It's been three weeks since I have preached on Revelation, so let me give a quick review of where we have been recently. We have been seeing that there has been a perfect sequence of the six seals moving into the seven trumpets from the Spring of AD 30 to the Fall of AD 66, where we ended chapter 8. And we saw every detail perfectly fulfilled, including every mountain and island in the Mediterranean moving up or disappearing from sight. Recent meteorological studies have clearly shown how that all happened in AD 66. The fourth trumpet was the last passage of chapter 8, and it describes the spectacular things that happened in the sun, moon, and stars at the very time that the Roman legions under Cestius were defeated. The historians of that day say that the soldiers were terrified with these signs in the heavens. We also saw that when Cestius' armies fled from Israel, it gave a tiny window of opportunity for Christians to flee from Jerusalem. And Eusebius indicates that every Christian except for the two prophets in chapter 10 did indeed escape and stayed under the protection of Pella for the duration of the war.

So Cestius was defeated at the end of chapter 8. Almost immediately a

¹ Translation of the Majority Text by Wilbur M. Pickering - [The Sovereign Creator Has Spoken](#). The first word "And" was changed by me to "Then."

messenger was sent to Nero who commissioned Titus and Vespasian to punish Israel. And connecting this passage with the parallel in the second half of the book we saw that the dragon who controlled Nero issued forth orders to other demonic princes at the same time. So chapter 9 (the fifth trumpet) starts on Dius 24, of AD 66 and continued until Veadar 25 or AD 67, or exactly five months (150 days). And that fifth trumpet describes the demons that were symbolized by Titus' armies so perfectly. All of their armor, their banners, their standards, and their horses armor were decorated with symbols of their gods - what we call demons. And we saw that the demons described in the first half of the chapter brought torment for the next five months, but not death. It's the only period during that war when there is torment without death. So that was the fifth trumpet.

The sixth trumpet, which is verses 13-21, perfectly describes the symbols of the gods of Vespasian's legions who came down from the Euphrates. And we saw last time that these armies literally had images of lions on the heads of their horses, and breastplates and armor of red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow, just as verse 17 describes. And we looked at the symbols on those legion's shields that show fire, smoke, and brimstone. They also had griffins with tails of serpents. So we saw that those symbols were very literally present and could be seen throughout the Roman armies. Last time I showed you numerous photos documenting those symbols.

In fact, so perfectly do each of the symbols in verses 1-21 match the various legions that descended upon Israel, that many commentaries only see the Roman soldiers being described. But that is a big mistake. This chapter is describing the demons that the Roman armies worshiped. It's showing a behind-the-scenes glimpse of what was driving the human armies. Certainly the human armies put symbols on their men and on their horses to imitate what they thought the demons looked like. But they did that because they worshiped actual demons (as verse 20 explicitly says). And this chapter is preoccupied with what those demons were doing. And we spent a great deal of time on the demons in the last three sermons. Those millions of demons were actually far more scary than the ferocious Roman armies who worshiped them.

So let me summarize the two sections of chapter 9. The gross-looking armies in verses 1-12 are the demonic hordes that were associated with Titus's armies. His army had Apollyon as its patron god. We saw from the book of Acts that Apollyon had been bound in the pit less than sixteen years earlier, and now he and his armies were unleashed from the Abyss. And so we looked at modern spiritual warfare and why it is legitimate to bind demons

to the Abyss.

What about the creatures in the second half of the chapter? Well, we saw that the gross-looking armies in verses 13-21 are not human at all - they are clearly the demonic hordes that were associated with Vespasian's armies up there at the Euphrates. So the first half of the chapter describes the demons associated with Titus' armies, and the second half of the chapter describes the demons associated with Vespasian's armies.

And verse 16 says that there were one hundred million demons at the Euphrates. The New King James says two hundred million, but I pointed out last time that 100% of our Ecclesiastic Greek Text (f35) and 2/3 of all Greek manuscripts in existence have one hundred million. I have been preaching from the Majority Text, and the New King James does not always reflect that in the book of Revelation. But either way, it is a pretty scary number, isn't it? If you were part of those four human legions that came from the Euphrates, you had one hundred millions demons to contend with. What a scary thought.

So just imagine a massive army of one hundred million demons either marching or flying the 500 or so miles from Babylon to Israel. Anyone who had eyes to see would know that Israel was in deep trouble. But we saw last time that it wasn't just Israel that was in trouble. Over the next three years these demons would produce a blood-lust in the Roman soldiers that would result in one third of all the Roman Empire being killed - which is exactly what verse 18 says. With the death of Nero, Rome fell apart with legions fighting legions and barbarian uprisings leading to disaster. So verse 15 says, "So the four angels were released—they had been prepared for the hour and the day and month and year—so that they might kill a third of mankind." And that is repeated in verse 18.

So there are three years between the Spring of AD 67 and the Spring of AD 70, when the seventh trumpet sounds, and ushers in the last six months of the first half of the seven year war. Those three years are years of absolute terror being unleashed not just upon Israel, but upon the whole Roman empire. Last time as I added up the estimates of the numbers of deaths of Christians, Jews, Romans, and Barbarians, that the death-toll hovers right around the one third mark. The statistics are horrifying.

I. More details about these heavenly angels and creatures

Well, last time we didn't quite get finished with the chapter. So this is going to be an odd sermon. We are just going to have a potpourri of lessons that we missed. And let me pick up something from verse 14 that someone had a question on. In verse 14 God tells the sixth angel, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." We already dealt with the binding to some degree, but some have wondered how those four angels were bound. And the answer is, "I don't know." Perhaps God put something akin to an electric fence bracelet on their necks to keep them within certain boundaries. Maybe they had good angels keeping them back. Maybe God put up some kind of a spiritual barrier. We aren't told. We just know that they had freedom to roam the region of Euphrates, but they had no freedom to leave that territory. We have spoken before of territorial spirits; well, sometimes they are territorial through no choice of their own. God restricts their movements.

But however it was that they were bound, this sixth angel somehow has the power to remove that restriction. So again, this introduces us to this idea of spiritual warfare. There are good angels fighting against bad angels, and somehow those invisible battles intersect with the flesh and blood conflicts that happen in history. And we saw last time that both Jews and Romans were described during this period as turning into humans who were either insane (what the Roman historians think) or as being demon-possessed. We believe it was the latter. That perfectly explains the bizarre behavior of both populations during this period of time.

There is another little detail that I didn't comment on in verse 17 - and that is that at least some of the demons ride on horses. It says, "And in the vision I saw the horses like this: those who rode them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue and sulfur yellow; the heads of the horses were like lions' heads; out of their mouths came fire, smoke and brimstone." So you have something like horses and something like riders of horses. And this is a repeated theme throughout the Old Testament and New Testament. Just as Revelation speaks of various kinds of good "living creatures" who worship and serve God, there are various kinds of evil "living creatures" who worship and serve Satan.

But I find it fascinating that the Bible speaks of horses and horse riders in the spiritual realm. And some people say, "Yeah, but the book of Revelation is just symbols. Those horses don't really exist." But keep in mind one of the

early rules of interpreting this book that we looked at. We cannot dismiss either the symbol or what was symbolized from real history. We cannot spiritualise these things away. And the easiest example to remember is the symbol of the rock that Moses struck. It was a real rock that was really struck and from which literal water flowed, but it symbolized a real Jesus, who was really smitten by God, and because of His crucifixion, we have been given the Holy Spirit. So both the symbols and what is symbolized are real. That's why we have been looking in history for both. We have seen that there are real symbols on the armies pointing to real demons. Well, if that is the case, then the inescapable conclusion is that there are good angels and good horses in the heavenly realms, and there are evil angels with evil horses as well.

Now, in case you question whether there really are spiritual horses, let me give you some Scriptures. 2 Kings 2:11 speaks of a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire carrying Elijah up into the sky. You can't explain that away as being poetic language. That is a historical book using historical language to describe a historical event. Four chapters later, Elisha prayed that his servant's eyes would be opened to see the spiritual battles going on, and God did so. Immediately Elisha's servant saw "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17). He was not just dealing with angels. He was dealing with spiritual beings that functioned like horses and looked like horses. Psalm 68:17 speaks of hundreds of thousands of chariots in God's heavenly armies, which means that we have multiplied hundreds of thousands of horses in God's armies. Ezekiel 1 speaks of a whirlwind coming out of the north (which would be the region of the Euphrates) and in the midst of raging fire are these armies of angels similar to what we are seeing here in Revelation. Habakkuk 3:8 speaks of God's horses and chariots. Zechariah 6 speaks of heavenly chariots (v. 1) being pulled by horses (vv. 2-4) and the horses are called spirits (v. 5) and these spirit-horses seem to have intelligence (vv. 6-8). And they too seem to be involved with angelic beings in earth's drama and battles. We saw that the four horsemen of the apocalypse were demonic princes riding fallen evil horses. Some of these things are so weird and wonderful that it is hard to imagine. I think Spielberg would have a lot of fun depicting the angelic battles that the Bible describes.

But my point in bringing it up is not simply to point us once again to spiritual warfare (which obviously is an important topic), but to also point out that there is a vast and wonderful world of the unseen. The Greek word, ζῷον, the Greek word for animals, is used 17 times in the book of Revelation

to refer to various strange and wonderful creatures that are neither human nor angel. That's the word we get zoo and zoology from. The New King James translates the term as "living creatures," but it is literally animals. If you were to translate it literally you would have spirit-animals in heaven. Yet, though some of these animals look like lions, oxen, horses, and eagles, they have intelligence and can talk. The Narnia trilogy may not be so far off after all. And these creatures serve redeemed man. We have a very truncated cosmology if all we think about is humans and angels.

Apparently one third of the angels fell with Satan (chapter 12 will talk about that), but they also dragged a lot of the other creatures with them. And this passage shows spiritual horses that are no longer serving God or man, but are fighting against God and against mankind. And whether they morphed into these ugly shapes (and we have already seen that angels can morph and change their own shape) or whether that was part of God's curse upon them (just like he cursed plants with thorns), we are not told. But these creatures use their God-given powers to kill rather than to give life. Verses 17-18 describe some kind of fire that comes out of their mouths. That should not seem odd since even angels are said to have fire connected to them in some way. For example, Hebrews 1:7 says, "Who makes His angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire." But the Fall into sin turned good powers upside down and made them destructive. Verses 17-18 says,

17 And in the vision I saw the horses like this: those who rode them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue and sulfur yellow; the heads of the horses were like lions' heads; out of their mouths came fire, smoke and brimstone. 18 By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone that came out of their mouths.

And I dealt with those verses at length in my last sermon. But take a look again at verse 19. Verse 19 shows the strange powers in the tails of these horses:

19 For the capability of the horses is in their mouths — and in their tails, because their tails are like snakes, having heads, and with them they do harm.

Keep in mind that these creatures were made for good and not for evil, yet the Fall has twisted everything around for evil. Evil has affected every aspect of creation. You might question that, but even the elect good angels, and horses, and other creatures are negatively impacted by the Fall in the sense that it grieves them and they have sadness and anger against sin and they must fight rather than bringing healing. They are not sinners - they are perfect, but they are negatively impacted by our sin. I believe this is why Colossians 1:20 says that Christ's redemption is destined to eventually reconcile all things in heaven and earth. The good angels and creatures don't

need to be saved, but they do need to be reconciled to man as man becomes increasingly redeemed; they no longer have to fight against man. Let me read that Scripture. It is Colossians 1:19-20.

Col. 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

Notice that it doesn't say that all things will be saved, but all things will be reconciled. And I will point out that the phrase, "all things," doesn't mean "all without exception," or we would see demons and Satan reconciled, which the Scripture denies. But it is "all without distinction." In other words, every kind of thing is going to be reconciled. Well, the implications of that are profound. The Fall of Adam not only negatively impacted earth; it negatively impacted heaven. We saw that this is why heaven had to be cleansed, and Satan cast out. The whole universe is out of sorts, and the whole universe must enter into redemption - and the last chapters of this book will show that. So when Christ brings peace, there are unfallen spiritual creatures that will also enjoy that peace.

One question that came up is, "If there are spiritual animals, will there be physical animals in the New Heavens and New Earth? If there are spirit-horses, will there be horses of flesh?" And to anticipate a sermon near the end of this book I will say, "I don't see why not." The one reflects the other. I'm not saying that there are spiritual animals that correspond to every species of physical animal. I doubt that is the case. But here is the point - if Christ's redemption reconciles all things in heaven and on earth, then even defining the "all things" as "all without distinction" shows that the animal life on earth will itself enter into the beneficial fruits of Christ's kingdom. And I think Randy Alcorn's book on Heaven does a nice job of showing how the physical world will be restored. Christianity is not Gnosticism, which escapes from the physical. Christianity believes that Christ's redemption heals and restores even the physical. God made us for a physical world.

I know this is a rabbit trail, but why don't you turn with me to Isaiah 11 to see this. This is a passage that begins with the First Coming of Jesus and shows how His kingdom will progressively bring more and more changes to planet earth as Christ's redemption reconciles things that are currently at odds. Isaiah 11, beginning at verse 1:

1 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. 2 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

And you will recognize that the whole of verse 2 is quoted by the New

Testament as a reference to Jesus being anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism. It goes on:

3 His delight is in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; 4 But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist.

And Ephesians 6 applies those verses to our spiritual warfare as we advance the cause of Christ. Commentators point out that when we put on spiritual armor, we are really putting on Christ. But what is the end result of our spiritual warfare? The topsy turvyness introduced by the Fall begins to gradually be undone. Look at the impact upon animals in verses 6 and following:

6 “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. 7 The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. 10 “And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious.” 11 It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea. 12 He will set up a banner for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.

Why do I bring this all up in chapter 9? Why not wait till Revelation deals with this reconciliation in the last chapters? And the answer is in part because I have been asked about it. But it is worthwhile to think about these things because these early chapters of Revelation show how spiritual warfare is absolutely essential if these wonderful prophecies are to be fulfilled. Just as Isaiah 11 begins with warfare and opposition and ends with a converted world, so too does Revelation. And by the end of the book not only physical animals but also heavenly animals will enjoy the fruits of Christ's kingdom and shalom. Not only humans but angels too will enjoy the shalom that comes from the Gospel. It is in this sense and this sense alone that Christ reconciles all things to himself. It's not universal redemption (as heretics claim), but a kicking out of the world of all that offends and a restoring of planet earth to all that was lost and much more. Every category of life ruined in Adam will be reconciled to Christ.

II. The purpose of judgments is to lead to repentance. When repentance is not forthcoming, only further judgments await them.

But God is very patient, and until humans repent and once again embrace God's law, they will not enjoy the good fruits that this book points to. And the last two verses of Revelation 9 highlight this purpose for God's judgments.

20 Yet the rest of the people, those who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as to stop worshiping the demons, even the idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; 21 and they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their fornication or their thefts.

A. God's patience and mercies go to even to rebellious pagans ("the rest of the people...")

There are six things I want you to notice in those two verses. First, notice God's patience even to pagans who are not yet converted. He says, "Yet the rest of the people, those who were not killed by these plagues." He didn't kill everybody, even though everybody deserved to be killed. We have been seeing God gradually heating up judgments in the seven seals and the seven trumpets. When pagans did not repent after the first seal, He brought a worse one. When they still did not repent, He brought an even worse one. God could have brought total destruction way back there in the beginning of chapter 6. But He is patient, and He gives opportunities to repent - that is the point.

We speak of these as redemptive judgments. They are judgments designed to bring repentance to some. It doesn't bring repentance to all, but it does bring repentance to some. And as we go through this book we will see in later chapters that God drew millions to Himself as a result of the disasters brought upon Rome. There was a reason why God spared some. He did it for the sake of the elect.

Why is that important to understand? Because it is easy for Christians to miss the goal of repentance that is at the heart of God's judgments and to go to one of two extremes. The first extreme is to become hard-hearted against the evil men and women who have led our country astray and to allow our language to show that we despise them; that we have just written them off. Well, that kind of attitude will not reach them. The other extreme is to withdraw from culture and to only be concerned with self-preservation.

Now, I will hasten to say that seeking to protect yourself if possible is not a

bad goal. The fact that Christians were warned by Christ to flee from Jerusalem shows that self-preservation can be an OK goal. And we saw that they did indeed escape from Jerusalem and survived for three and a half years in Pella. We do need to prepare for disaster. But if you read the history of this period and beyond, you do not find that those Christians stayed in a ghetto. No. As disasters hit Rome, they were there to pick up the pieces and to show the love of Christ. They explained to the Romans how these were God's judgments designed to bring people to repentance. And because they engaged with society and loved on undeserving humans, millions came to Christ during the next three hundred years. So there is an expectation of repentance in the midst of judgments. Henry Chadwick's history of the first three centuries says that the kindness and mercy ministries of Christians during times of disaster was the single biggest reason for the growth of the church. They engaged.

B. Plagues were not just for Egypt - all nations can suffer ("plagues"; cf. Ps. 1)

The second thing to notice is that word "plagues." Commentaries point out that this word occurs 15 times in the Greek. But more importantly, the way several of these chapters are constructed, they show that God is bringing upon Israel and upon Rome miraculous judgments in a similar way to how He brought them upon Egypt in the book of Exodus. For example, we saw that both Jewish and Roman historians describe the water being turned to blood and described other plagues that came upon them. Because I will be dealing with the plagues later, I won't dig into it much here. But I will say that it illustrates that miraculous judgments are not a thing of the past any more than miracles are a thing of the past.

Too many Christians are skeptics when it comes to America being judged. They act like God has hands off of history. They act like Deists. They do not vote for God's approval; they vote to avert trouble - as if trouble comes independently of God. No, God is the one who brings these troubles. And if God is the one who is bringing the statism, war, inflation, and other troubles upon America as judgments, then our goal should be to call the church and the nation to repentance. Elections will not save America. Nothing but repentance will save America from further judgments.

C. Notice how God applies both tables of the law to Gentile nations (vv. 20-21)

The third thing to notice is how God applies both tables of the law to Gentile

nations. It is clear that the Romans were in focus here, not Israel, because it was the Romans who worshipped "idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk." Chilton's attempts to apply that language exclusively to Israel simply will not stand up. This is clearly not a description of Israel. It's a description of the pagans. So both tables of the law were applied to pagans in this chapter. And that is significant.

You see, there are currently three forms of antinomianism in the American church. The first form says that Old Testament law no longer applies to anyone. But we have been seeing John applying Old Testament law over and over again. The sealed scroll of chapter 5 and following was the Old Testament canon, and God judged the nations in terms of it. Certainly in these verses we have a listing of the first, second, sixth, seventh, and eighth commandments.

The second form of antinomianism says that the law continues to apply, but it only applies to Israel. And a lot of Preterists only apply the judgments of this book to Israel. But it is clear here that God is calling Gentiles to repent of these things.

The third form of antinomianism says that only the second table of the law applies to Gentiles. So, in American politics, they refuse to apply the first table, and even with the second table, they don't use Scripture to oppose immorality, theft, murder, and attacks on the family. They have a quasi-secular defense of the second table of the law. But in this passage we see that God is holding the Roman Empire accountable for their gross idolatry, worship, and sorcery. God is killing them for those things. He is bringing a covenant lawsuit against Rome for those things. That's the first table. He is clearly applying both tables of the law.

D. Notice God's definition of repentance ("repent...works of hands...stop")

The fourth thing to notice in these verses is God's definition of repentance. It is not simply saying, "I'm sorry." Repentance requires an about face; a turning around of mind, will, and emotions. Just as there is a false faith called "easy believism," there is a false repentance that could be called "I'm sorryism." It involves feeling bad for getting caught and apologizing, but there is no action or fruit. As you are evaluating politicians who claim to have repented and become prolife, consider this definition.

How does verse 20 know that they did not repent? It is by their fruits. It's the same way we know that people have not repented - they have not brought

forth the fruits of repentance (as John the Baptist worded it). Nothing had changed with regard to the works of their hands. They did not stop their sin; they did not stop worshipping the demons. Proverbs 10:12 says, "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy." That's the definition of repentance: confessing and forsaking sin. When there is no goal of forsaking our sin, there is no genuine repentance. And judgment can only be averted by repentance.

E. Notice the connection of demons to idolatry

The fifth thing that I want you to notice is the connection of the demonic to idolatry. Verse 20 says that by worshipping idols they were automatically worshipping demons. He says, "so as to stop worshipping the demons, even the idols of gold, silver," etc. Hosea 4:12 says that the Israelites of his day had been infected with a demonic spirit of harlotry that was causing them to stray, and he gives as his reason that they had worshiped idols. That worship had caused the demons to have a deep-seated stronghold in their lives that they could not shake. Idolatry is not an inconsequential thing. It always involves people in demonism. And at conversion idols must be destroyed. But Christians must destroy their idols as well, or they give a foothold to the devil.

F. Notice the irrationality of idolatry

The last thing I want you to notice is the irrationality of their idolatry. When God kept increasing the judgments over a forty year period (from chapters 6-9) it was absolutely irrational for them to continue in their rebellion. But they did. Even when it is self-destructive, humans don't like to give up their sin. It is irrational. Likewise, to make idols that can't see, hear, or walk is irrational. In fact, commentators point out that that is an allusion to Psalm 115:5-8 which says this:

Psa. 115:5 They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; 6 They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell; 7 They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat.

Then here comes the amazing punchline:

8 Those who make will become like them; Everyone who trusts in them.

Wow! You become more and more like what you idolize. In Herbert Schlossberg's book, *Idols for Destruction*, he says,

When a civilization turns idolatrous, its people are profoundly changed by that experience. In a kind of reverse sanctification, the idolator is transformed into the likeness of the object of his worship. Israel 'went after worthlessness, and became

worthless' (Jer. 2:5)."²

Hosea words it that Israel's idolators "became as detestable as that which they loved" (Hos. 9:10) Those who refuse to repent become more and more like the irrational demons that move them.

I won't repeat the descriptions I gave last time of the irrationality that overcame both the Romans and the Jews during this seven year war, but the hint is that when you see people doing irrational things, it may be (at least in part) explained by the demonic.

Conclusion

It's been kind of an odd sermon of finishing up the bits and pieces of the chapter that were left, but let me end with four concluding exhortations.

First, do not doubt that God judges nations today just as He did back then. Some people act as if modern nations are exempt from judgment because they aren't Israel. Well we have been seeing in this book that both Israel and Rome received God's covenant lawsuit and His judgments. And we need to ask if we are any better than they were. I doubt it. And if God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, we can count on further judgments coming our way. The Scripture helps us to anticipate that by looking at the symptoms in our nation. And having examined the symptoms in America, I believe that apart from repentance, America is headed to a massive increase of judgment. I think it is inescapable apart from repentance. Winning an election will not save us. We must be on our knees.

Second, don't fear God's judgments on America. I have stopped praying "God bless America." Instead I pray for repentance. I don't want rebellion and statism to be blessed. I don't want humanism to continue to be prospered. We want the tower of Babel to fall. Do not fear God's judgments. He knows what He is doing.

Third, be prepared to step into the gap when humanism does fall. That might involve getting out of debt, becoming more mobile, for churches to be prepared to go underground overnight, for families to have reserves, etc. If you are only in survival mode during an economic collapse (for example, scrambling to put food on your table) you will not be prepared or have the energies to minister or to take advantage of humanism's collapse. You are going to be a part of the mess. But if you have prepared yourself to survive an economic collapse so that you don't need to be cared for, then you will be in the perfect position to minister to hurting pagans all around you.

² Herbert Schlossberg, [Idols for Destruction: Christian Faith and Its Confrontation with American Society](#), (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), p. 295.

God preserved the 144,000 Jews, but not so that they could selfishly live for themselves. He preserved them so that they would be in a position to take the world for Christ - and they did so. There will be many hurting people as a result of God's judgments in America. If they have experienced the bitter fruit of humanism, Islam, or other isms, they will be much more likely to hate those things and to be open to your love and your positive Biblical answers to the problems they face. Romans 11 speaks of that as being jealous of the fruits of the Gospel. Those judgments will present a great opportunity for the church to grow. This is one of the reasons why the church is exploding in Iran. The Muslim citizens have grown to hate the oppression of Islam and they have been attracted to the Christianity of Christians who have fearlessly engaged with society. So be prepared to step in the gap. Pella was a kind of survivalist preparation that enabled the 144,000 to step in the gap.

Fourth, do as John did and bring the whole of God's law (both tables of the law) to bear upon our culture wars. Without the first table of the law there is no definition of what theft, fornication, or murder are. Several Reformed people in recent years have strangely encouraged the church to not apply the first table of the law to civil government. That's illogical. You cannot even define what murder is without the first table of the law. Why? Because everyone believes that murder is wrong, but they all have different definitions. Is war murder? And what kinds of war are murder? What about abortion? Everyone has different answers to those questions. Is oiling someone in self-defense murder? The Bible says "No," but many people say "Yes." Is vigilantism murder? The Bible says that it is murder whereas many libertarians and anarchists deny that it is murder. Same with raising the sword against a tyrannical king Saul. The Bible defines that as murder. But people have all kinds of opinions on that subject. I had a Hare Krishna tell me that eating animals was murder. Without the Bible of the God of the first commandment you can't settle that issue. Other religions do not think the civil government is capable of murder, whereas the Bible does. Without the first table of the law committing us to loyalty to the God of the Bible you cannot even define the most basic of civil laws, such as murder. Nor can you define any of the other laws. Can you define what Washington DC is currently engaged in as theft unless the God of the Bible says it is theft? No. The moral law is a package deal and we must embrace it all. And as we seek to live it out by the power of the Gospel, may God bring a harvest of righteousness in our nation. Amen.