

Pursuing Resilience in Revelation

The Fruit of Rebellion

Revelation 9:13-21

Intro

Dr. Richard Phillips has written one of the best modern commentaries on Revelation. He says that Apocalyptic literature presents reality through symbolic images, or pictures. This is a great way to define the genre of literature which Revelation belongs to, and to understand this helps us to understand what God is trying to communicate with us through this book.

The Neverending Story and the truth of a world that is eroding because we have not taken our new name.

Discover

I. The Lord answers the prayers of His people. (13-14)

- A. The altar in God's heavenly temple has four horns, likely representing the four corners of the Earth.
 - 1. There are not four literal corners, but rather are a representation of the four directions and thus the whole Earth.
 - 2. The fifth seal was the cries of the martyrs for justice, and the sixth trumpet comes in direct response to that prayer.
 - a) The cries of the saints from all over the world are being heard before the Lord, and He is moved to action by them.
- B. Remember also the scene of God's throne room, with the great cosmic worship service and the prayers of the saints rising like incense before the Lord.
- C. Our world is a mess and the people who run it are often extremely wicked and corrupt. We find ourselves praying like David often prays in the Psalms, wondering why the Lord allows the wicked to prosper.
 - 1. The good news of the 6th trumpet is that the Lord has heard our prayers, and He is bringing judgment on the very tide of the cries we lift up to Him.
- D. A holy voice speaks up from the place of worship and mercy, the altar representing the place where the perfect Son of God was slain, and unleashes judgment on the world because of their rebellion against God and their abuse of His Church.

1. I think that this is probably the voice of the Holy Spirit who proceeds forth from the Father and carries out His will.
2. The Holy Spirit is the chief worship leader as He is the one who leads us into all truth about the Father through the Son. It is fitting that He would minister at the altar while the Father sits on His throne and the Son opens the seals.

II. The Lord's judgment extends into the whole Earth. (14-15)

- A. The voice from the altar calls to the holy angel holding the sixth trumpet, commanding him to release four angels of death.
 1. Whether these angels are good or bad we don't know, but what we do know is that they bring a horrible judgment upon the sons of mankind.
 - a) Again we see the number 4, symbolizing the global nature of this judgment.
 2. Just as the Lord used the great armies of that wicked nation Babylon to judge Israel, He will use the utterly wicked hordes of Hell to judge the entire world.
 - a) The Euphrates was the primary river of Babylon much like the Jordan is for Israel. It is both the boundary of the land and also representative of Babylon.
 - b) The symbolism here hints to an enemy which is indeed powerful, but seems far away. Though far away, this enemy crouches at the door like sin awaiting the allotted time to pounce.
 - (1) When a nation is ripe for judgment, the Lord lets these angels of death loose in order to bring doom and destruction upon that people and place.

III. The deadliest weapon of Hell is deception. (16-19)

- A. Deception is how Satan and his devils keep people enslaved to their sin and away from salvation and freedom in Christ.
- B. The number of hardened demonic warriors the rebellious world faces is innumerable.
 1. They resemble human riders, meaning that they are intelligent.
 2. They wear breastplates meaning that they are well armored and thus difficult to defeat.
 - a) The colors are the colors of Hell. Red for the flame that never goes out. Purple for the temporary kingly power of Satan. Yellow for the sulfuric, smoldering brimstone.
 3. They ride horses who have the heads of lions and snakes for tails.
 - a) Lions symbolizing their ferociously and thirst for blood.
 - b) Snakes representing their serpentine nature, their connection to Satan the father of lies.
 4. Their power is in their mouths and tails.
 - a) This army fights not with swords and bows, but with deception.

- b) From their mouths come all manner of evil, deceit, false religion, sexual immorality, narcissism, temptations to murder, and etc.
 - c) Their tails represent their cunning and amazing ability to lie, since they are of their father the Devil who is the ultimate liar.
5. A third of mankind will die from these plagues.
- a) 1 Timothy 4:1-5 NASB2020, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, [2] by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, [3] who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. [4] For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; [5] for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.*
 - (1) Watch out for those who forbid marriage, who condone fornication rather than a marriage commitment. Watch out for those who are the only ones who are right in their own eyes and who reject anyone who disagrees with them. Watch out for false teachers who twist the scriptures and build religion that serves the passions and egos of sinful man rather than pointing people to a Holy Christ. These are all traits of the spirit of the antichrist and signs of the mark of the beast rather than the seal of Christ.
 - b) While I don't think the 1/3 number is meant to be taken literally, the point is clear. A great multitude of people will be killed as a direct result of the war being waged by these demons.
 - c) How many people in our world today die not from natural causes, but as a direct result of sin. Many. Certain diseases are a direct result of sin. Not to mention those who have died from murders, abortions, and as a direct result of human warfare.

IV. Men are more than happy to partner with Hell. (20-21)

- A. Humans are naturally predisposed to sin because we have fallen from God's grace, but the presence of demonic influence makes us much more capable of taking our wickedness to its worst possible ends.
 - 1. The demons don't have to directly kill people because people are all too eager to kill themselves and one another by immersing themselves into destructive and damning sin.
 - a) John 3:19-21 NASB2020, "And this is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their deeds were evil. [20] For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, so that his deeds will not be exposed. [21] But the one who practices the

truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds will be revealed as having been performed in God.”

- B. Even when they see God's judgment happening all around them, the sons of this world refuse to repent and only double down on their evil.
 - 1. 1 Corinthians 2:14 NASB2020, “But a natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”
 - 2.

Nurture

Who is God? He is the Holy One who hears the prayers of His people.

What has God done? He has unleashed divine judgment onto this wicked world.

Who are we? We are His sons and daughters, freed from the corruption of this world by our faith in Christ and thus saved from the wrath that is coming upon the sons of Satan.

Hebrews 9:27-28, “And just as it is destined for people to die once, and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.”

What are we being called to do? We are called to walk worthy of the gospel which we have received, in holiness and truth, and to snatch as many souls away from the grip of Hell as possible.

Act

The fruit of rebellion against God is demonic influence leading to destruction rather than the leadership of the Holy Spirit leading to life. Sin is a self fulfilling prophecy to the unbelieving world. They sin because they don't know any better and if it wasn't for God's grace we would be just like them. What should we do then?

We must not give up or lose heart! Jesus has lived for us, died for us, risen for us, and reigns over us. He is with us and so this judgment is not for us. Though we may experience pain along with this world because we do live here for now, there is nothing but goodness and light stored up for us on the other side. We belong to Christ and so these demons cannot take us to Hell with them, nor can they ultimately corrupt a true Christian. We are sealed by the Spirit and held by Christ for a good and certain future with Him.

1 Corinthians 2:15-16 NASB2020, “But the one who is spiritual discerns all things, yet he himself is discerned by no one. [16] For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

What of our friends and family members who are steeped in and suffering under this great demonic oppression? We can't save them, but Jesus can. It is our job to pray and to warn them of the corruption which is eroding them and the whole world. We must try to make them aware, and ask the Spirit to open their eyes. The good news is that He can and He wants to do it, but He is partnering with a church which has often grown cold, silent, and has allowed the enemy to make us ineffective.

Often we have not walked in holiness, have been afraid to speak the truth, and would rather keep to ourselves than go into the fire to drag the dying out. The world is doomed and they desperately need us to be who Jesus saved us to be.

May we walk in the confidence we have when we are full of the Spirit. May we walk in purity, perpetual repentance, and with compassion which leads us to risk life and limb to drag souls out of the pit.

Jude 1:17-23, “But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, [18] that they were saying to you, “In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.” [19] These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. [20] But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, [21] keep yourselves in the love of God, looking forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. [22] And have mercy on some, who are doubting; [23] save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.”