



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 8:1-13

"The Saints Pray, the Judgments Fall and the World Trembles"      TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Turning to Revelation chapter 8 in the exposition of this great book which the apostle John has given to us, received from our Lord, who in turn received it from the father. And we are going to read through this chapter, the entire chapter verse 1 through 13. I'll make just one or two comments as we go along. I'm reading, as many of you know, from the Authorized Version or the King James Version. If you have other versions you will find some differences, largely in terminology.

"And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake."

Now you may remember the tabernacle had as its furniture a brazen altar, the altar in which the priests washed themselves as they went back and forth. And in the tabernacle itself, in the holy place, not in the holy of holies where the arc of the covenant was, there was a golden altar of incense. And so John, as he sees this vision in heaven, is seeing something very similar to that. And you also may remember that the fire of the altar where the sacrifices were burned after they had been slain was taken into the holy place of the tabernacle and became the fire which burned the incense.

So in other words, where the sacrifice was slain and the pieces of the animals burned by fire, that same fire is the fire of the incense representative of the prayers of the saints, signifying of course for us that our salvation is related to the sacrifice that was made at the brazen altar, but our prayers, if they are to be effectual, must be also grounded in what Christ did in the sacrifice of himself. The same fire suggestive of divine judgment on our lord when he bore our sins is the ground of our right to pray. So in heaven in John's vision, he sees something that is in a sense the heavenly anti-type of the brazen altar and the altar of incense of the tabernacle of Israel. And then in the sixth verse we read,

"And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. 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:"

That is a term that refers to what we might call absinthe, and I am told by some of my friends in the congregation that Chernobyl, the Russian nuclear reactor that leaked some dangerous materials, that that name means wormwood. I have not checked it out, but I respect the person who has told me that, and he said that it is named wormwood. Not that John the apostle had any connection with it, but it is rather interesting to know that absinthe was a plant from which certain things were derived. The Apaches knew all about it, because the French sought to keep the Apaches from drinking liquor that had absinthe in it because it made them mad. So wormwood is representative of a very bitter plant.

"And the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. 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. And I beheld, (and the Authorized Version reads,) and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven,"

Now the *Textus Receptus*, the Greek text upon which our New Testament authorized version is based, did have the term *agg l•s*, which means angel here, and angel. But it seems evident from what we know of the New Testament text criticism of our day, that that is not the word that John probably wrote the word a t•s, which means an eagle. So if you have a version made more recently, you probably have "one eagle," for actually he wrote one eagle, not an eagle, but one eagle. In other words, he laid a bit of stress upon the fact that it was one eagle flying through the midst of the heavens that he heard.

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And one further point that I failed to make at the 8:30 service, so everybody who attended that service will have left the service with insufficient information, which you are of course to get. This term a t•s used here, the term that means eagle, also means vulture, and in fact our Lord uses it in one of the chapters of the gospels, the synoptic gospels, and so it likely has that force here. So we're not to think of an eagle so much as we are to think of a vulture, this word having that sense. So I am going to read it in the light of that, and John writes, "And I beheld, and I heard a vulture 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!"

Not a very pleasant outlook, so the apostle saw and heard. Incidentally, the reason, of course, that someone early in the transmission of our Greek New Testament inserted the word for angel instead of eagle or vulture was because no doubt, they thought it was rather strange for a vulture to be talking, and so it was much more, he thought, reasonable to think of an angel flying through the middle of the heavens and saying something. And it surely is more reasonable, but we do remember that there is a great deal of symbolism in the book of the apocalypse, and it actually is very striking, and we today who read the funny papers, and our funny papers are filled, it seems, with animals talking, we don't have quite the difficulty maybe, of adjusting to a vulture saying, "Woe, woe, woe" anticipating the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets that are to be blown later on in the development of John's theme.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we turn to Thee through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has loved us, and loosed us from our sins through his own precious blood. And we worship Thee today on this beautiful day that thou hast given to us as our great Father in heaven. And we worship the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and give

Thee thanks for the atoning sacrifice by which we have confidence and assurance, and only by which we have confidence and assurance that we may one day stand in Thy presence.

We acknowledge Lord it is not by reason of any goodness that may be in us. If thou hadst dealt with us according to our sins, we should be eternally lost, but in thy grace thou hast dealt with us through Jesus Christ our Lord. And we thank Thee for all that he has done, and we praise Thee, as well, for the gift of the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us to give us illumination on the word of God and guidance through the life thou hast given us to live.

We pray Thy blessing upon this local assembly, its leadership, our elders, and the deacons, and the members, and the friends, and the visitors who are here today. May they each experience the blessing of the triune God through the ministry of the word and through the experiences of life.

We thank thee for the whole church of Christ; we thank Thee Lord for each faithful minister of the word of God today, who proclaims our Lord as he truly is the Son of God. We pray for our country, for our president, for others associated with him in government. Bless them richly.

And for the sick who have requested our prayers, especially those named in our calendar of concern, we pray earnestly for them that thou wilt in thy marvelous grace, deal with them in love and mercy, and if it please Thee, give healing in accordance with Thy will. Bless those who minister to them, the physicians, and their family and friends, and may as a result of the experiences of life Thy name be exalted in their lives and in ours as well. Be with us as we sing together now, and as we hear the word of God, may our Savior be exalted in all that is done and said here.

We pray in Jesus name, Amen.

[Message] The subject for today as we continue our exposition of the Revelation is, "The Saints Pray, the Judgments Fall and the World Trembles." I know that as I look out over this audience, I know that there a number of you who have not been here in the preceding expositions, and so consequently to come in the midst of chapter 8, you could not help but be a bit confused if you have not recently pondered the apocalypse. And so, let me just say this as a few sentences by way of review. The Revelation, the apocalypse, is a revelation of Jesus Christ as earth's king and judge.

Now we have seen after the letters that our Lord wrote to the seven churches at Asia Minor that the apostle was given a vision of a throne in heaven. Upon that throne someone was sitting with a little book, in his right hand a seven-sealed book, which would have been known by the ancients as a will or a testament. In the midst of this heavenly group of individuals, for there were living creatures, and elders, angelic beings, and then other of the order of the angels there. The apostle, seeing the little book and looking about and finding no one who was worth to take the book and open the seals, for it seemed obvious to him that this was a will and testament and was to be opened and read, began to weep. And the angels then instructed him, "John, stop weeping. The lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed, and is worthy to open the book. And John looked and saw not a lion, but he saw a lamb. And he saw the lamb also come and take the little book, signifying his worthiness by virtue of what he had done to open that book, to unloose its seals, and to supervise the accomplishment of all that is contained within it.

We know that all heaven broke forth in praise of the one who sat upon the throne and of the lamb, as a result of that. The elders praised God. The living creatures praised God. All of the angelic beings formed part of the chorus. Then following that in the sixth chapter we saw that the time had come for the opening of the seals, and so in the sixth chapter, six of the seals were opened. And what we were seeing and what we were introduced to is a time of judgment that is to come upon the face of the earth. Six of the seals, and all of them suggested judgment.

The final seal at the end of the sixth chapter suggested a rather universal catastrophe was going to come to pass on the earth, and the apostle concluded the sixth chapter with the statement, "For the great day of the wrath of God has come; and who shall be able to stand?" The point, of course, is that no one should be able to stand, and the book will go on to say, "Only by virtue of Jesus Christ the lion, the lamb, shall anyone be worth to stand."

Now, in other words, what the book then unfolds is how our Lord Jesus Christ assumes his authority over the creation, and ultimately brings his believing people into the enjoyment of the empire that is described for us in chapter 20, and finally the new heavens and the new earth. That in simple form is the main theme of the book of the Revelation.

So our lord is presented then as the judge of this universe. Now we should not be surprised by this, because the Lord Jesus, when he was upon the earth speaking to the apostles, spoke about the fact that the father had given him that authority. He said, for example, in John chapter 5 in verse 22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. (That incidentally is why we do honor Christ as we honor the Father.) He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." He goes on to describe aspects of divine judgment and concludes in verse 27, "And hath given him (the son) authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

Now the Revelation picks up on that and gives us the details by which the Lord Jesus becomes the sovereign of this universe. He judges, he has the authority to that. Last week I read the story of a judge, who pounded his gavel for the court to come to order, then he turned to a woman who was in the witness box, and he said, "The witness will please state her age, after which she will be sworn in."

The kind of judgment that our lord does is judgment with equity. There is also a story of a celebrated judge and an almost equally celebrated bishop, who were engaged

in friendly debate and argument as to which of them had more power over their fellow me. The bishop said, "After all, you, old man, can only say to men, 'You be hanged.' I can go very much further, and I can say to a man, 'You be condemned or be damned.'" And the judge nodded smilingly. "Ah yes," he said, "but the difference is that when I say to a man 'You be hanged.' he is hanged." Well no bishop of course can pronounce with ultimate authority the eternal destiny of an individual, but our Lord can. The Scriptures from beginning to end say, "He will judge with equity and with righteousness." And that is part of the theme of this great book.

Now the unfolding of the seals and the sixth of them led us to believe that there might be then the seventh, for the book had seven seals. But John interrupted it with the intermission of chapter 7 in which we were given the picture of the one hundred forty-four thousand Israelites and then of the innumerable multitude which were to come out of the Great Tribulation. So with chapter 8 we anticipate that he will open the seventh seal and we will see something that has to do with the wrath of God.

Well, we read in the first verse then, "And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." I say it was reasonable that we should expect the great day of his wrath, but instead when the seventh seal is opened, not a voice is heard, not a motion is seen. There is a great hush over the whole of the universe, according to John's vision.

I have some friends of mine who of course do not have the kind of attitude that they should be having, they are chauvinistic. And one of them came to me not long ago, and he said to me, "Do you think that the fact that when the seventh seal is opened and there is silence in heaven about the space of half an hour, that that is evidence that there are no women in heaven?" And I smiled and I said, "No, that's of course probably not the case, because most of us know some male blatherers too (to use a Scottish expression)."

Of course we are excluding preachers from the discussion of any of this.



No, the question of the silence in heaven has nothing to do with that as you might expect, it is something entirely different. What's rather interesting about this is that while there is silence in heaven there is no silence among the commentators. The commentators seek very earnestly to explain what the silence is. Some very weird views have been offered by interpreters of the Book of Revelation. Some of them say, "It's just a blank." Whatever that means, others have suggested that it was the interval between World War I and World War II.

How someone could think of that as the interpretation, I just do not know, but nevertheless, it has been suggested. Others have thought that it is a reference to the millennial kingdom, surprisingly. And still other things have been suggested such as dramatic pauses and other things. But what seems to be evident from the passage is that the silence in heaven is designed to introduce what follows in the immediately following verses where we have reference to the seven angels of God's presence and the offering of prayers. So let me look at it then in that light. We are looking at this then as a silence in which there will be the offering of prayers, a silence in the unfolding of the divine program of judgment.

Now, the fact that it is a half an hour may puzzle us, but we do remember that time is often measured by circumstances, some things that are very short in minutes actually seem long to us when we have to undergo them, and vice versa. So there is silence heaven about the space of half an hour, and John then sees the seven angels which stood before God. That is a rather interesting expression, the seven angels that stand before God.

We know from Jewish literature that it was rather common to speak of these seven angels, and as angels that stand before God. They are the seven archangels. Their names are spelled out in Jewish literature. Their names are even given. The archangels, the seven of them were: Uriel, Raphael (we know of Raphael), Raguel, Michael (We know of Michael from the New Testament or from the Old Testament), Sariel, Remiel, and then of

course we know of Gabriel who has a rather important part to play in the birth of our Lord. So the seven angels that stand before God are the arch angels. They are what one of the Lutheran commentators has called, "the glorious septumvirate of celestial arch regents." So we are looking at a scene that is designed to be very impressive, the arch angels standing about, and to them were given seven trumpets. Each one of them is to blow a trumpet that has to do with the continuing series of judgments that are to be poured out upon the earth in the future.

Now at this point another angel comes and stands at the altar, and he has a golden sensor, and there was given to him much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne. He goes on to speak about the smoke of the incense with the prayers ascended up before God out of the angels hands, and then the angel took the sensor which had the fire in it that came off the altar, suggestive of the divine judgment by which sins are purged, and that is thrown out into the earth, and as a result of that, there were voices, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

Now, this offering of prayers is a rather interesting thing, because it suggests to us that the trumpets that are now blown are the answers to the prayers of the saints. They are praying, and they have been praying, and now the blowing of the trumpets follows. So we are to look then at the trumpets as not simply the outpouring of the wrath of divine from God in heaven, but we are to look at it also as response to the prayers of godly individuals. For example, in chapter 6 in verse 10, we read about those that were under the altar. "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" There were individuals who lost their lives and in John's vision he sees them in heaven, and they are constantly praying, "How long, O Lord, until righteousness and justice is done?" And vengeance follows from the Lord God. When you notice, too, that those beings, that those martyrs are martyrs who are interested in the kingdom that is to come.

In fact, in all heaven there is tremendous interest in the kingdom that is to come. We know of course, our Lord's Prayer. We call it our Lord's Prayer. Of course, it was never prayed so far as we know by our lord. In fact, it was never prayed by the apostles. And to make a further point, it was given by our Lord, according to the gospel of Matthew, as a model prayer. Jesus said when he gave it, "After this same manner therefore pray ye."

And the fact that he never prayed it, and the apostles never prayed it so far as we know, would suggest that we were not to regard it as a prayer that was to be repeated Sunday after Sunday in our congregations, and most of us in this congregation have had experience in gatherings of the church in which it was repeated as a regular, repetitive prayer. In fact, our Lord, when he gave that great prayer in Mathew chapter 6, prefaced it with words that we should not pray as the heathen do with constant repetitions, but we should pray after this manner. So what have we done? We have done like the heathen. We have made it a prayer that we constantly pray and we have even called it the Lord's Prayer as if he prayed the prayer. Well at least some may, those of you that are more wise in reading the Bible, you know that that term, the Lord's Prayer, would mean accurately a model prayer that Jesus gave.

But in that prayer, which is a very valuable guide to prayer incidentally, should not denigrate the Lord's Prayer, but in that prayer there is one central feature of it, in which these words occur, "Thy kingdom come." In other words, our Lord has exhorted us to pray after this manner, pray with reference to the future. Pray with reference to the kingdom of God that is to come to pass upon the earth. And in fact, John tells us here in verse 3, "That he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne."

Can we be saints? We might ask. Can we really be saints if we are not interested in Thy kingdom come? In other words, a true saint will manifest his sainthood, and of course we are using that in the sense of a believer in Jesus Christ, he will manifest that by

the fact that he looks forward to, prays toward the coming of our Lord's kingdom. So in your prayers you should remember that, and your prayers should have a future thrust to them, "Thy kingdom come." We look forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I ask, "Can we really be saints if we are not interested in what is to come to pass upon the earth?"

Well, the fire of the incense and the fire of the judgment are the fire that comes from the cross that required our Lord when he died upon the cross to cry out, "My God, my God. Why hast thou forsaken me?" For there he was the sin offering by which we have forgiveness of sins, and he was enduring the fires of divine judgment for us.

It is rather interesting, I think, that we have within the professing Christian church people who will, I call it brazenly, who will brazenly say, "I am not interest in prophecy." One cannot read the word of God and honestly and truly in accordance with the spirit say, "I am not interested in prophecy." Now let me hasten to say there are many of us who over do it, of course, and speak only of prophecy. That's wrong, too.

"But to call attention to the prophetic word," as Andrew Bonar, the Scottish author and pastor of the Scottish Presbyterian church said many years ago, "is to call attention to the eternal purpose of God." It is the tracing of some part of the stream of his predestination, and its course onward to the ocean of his eternal glory. That's why we study the prophetic word. It's very important, and as you know, the Scriptures have that forward thrust to them from the beginning of the book of Genesis on to the last book of the Bible. So we study the Book of Revelation because it is the unfolding of how the kingdom of God does come, and in fact, as you know this book begins with the little beatitude, "blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written therein for the time is at hand." If you want a blessing, my Christian friend, you can have it by reading through this great revelation.

Dr. Charles Howard, one of our elders, who generally supervises our 8:20 service, many years ago when I came to know him and his wife Lucille, was in a particular church

that had a minister who had a minister who was not very strong in the word of God. In fact, he was anything but that. And I came to know Dr. Howard and his wife in a Bible study which I was teaching, and in which he was very much interested. And in the course of the Bible study, I was teaching God's plan of the ages, and of course, to deal with that you have to deal with aspects of the apocalypse.

And he met his minister on the street, and they had a little conversation, and the minister mentioned to him what was being taught, and he mentioned something about the Book of Revelation. And his minister said to him, and I remember the quote very much because I wrote it down, it's so true to the experiences we have today, "That's a very dangerous book. John wrote that book when he was senile." So this is the attitude of many people toward this great book, but God calls it an apocalypse of Jesus Christ, never let us forget that. He calls it a revelation, an unveiling, and that's why it's so important that we study it, and ponder it. Surely, there are many things within it that we find difficult, but the more we read it, the more clarity comes to us.

Now the angels are ready to sound their trumpets, and these are true aspects of judgment. I didn't say anything about trumpets in the beginning, as I had in the 8:30 service, but trumpets are a very prominent part of the revelation of the word of God. For example, they are used in reference to the personal intervention of God. When the law was given in the Old Testament, the blowing of trumpets accompanied the giving of the law. Trumpets were used to announce days of emergency and war. Joel in his second chapter speaks more than once, "Blow the trumpet." And the announcement of war follows. It was used of the joy of repentance and deliverance and rest, associated with the great Day of Atonement, the year of jubilee, which came around every 50 years when property was restored to those to whom it was originally given. The Day of Jubilee was announced by the blowing of trumpets on the great Day of Atonement, so that every fifty years everyone got back their properties that they may have through force of circumstances been forced to mortgage away or sell away.

And it was used of course in Scripture, is used in Scripture, with reference to the resurrection of the body. Both in Matthew chapter 24 and 1 Thessalonians 4, and 1 Corinthians 15, it's the blowing of the trumpet that signals the coming of the Lord and the giving of the resurrection body for believers. The seals have to do with general judgment, the trumpets are more spectacular and specific judgments, more drastic, more final, but not universal. Did you notice in reading through them how often the expression, "a third part of," "a third part of," and we'll see when we come to the bold judgments that follow that they are the most drastic judgments and the most universal of the judgments. So we are dealing now with judgments that are drastic, and they are final, but they are not universal.

In the first four that we look at now very briefly, are judgments that are directed against the elements, primarily. Whereas, the following three, the "woe, woe, woe" which we will see in the following chapters, they are directed primarily against wicked men. And let me also say one other thing before we read through this, these seem to be to us very improbable judgments. They seem so astonishing that it is difficult for us to actually feel comfortable with them, but let us remember they may feel very improbably to us simply because we have so few antecedents in history of them. And so we should read them and ponder them, and ponder them prayerfully as well.

The first of the trumpets signals a judgment against the land. John writes, "And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound." And then in the seventh verse, "The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up as well." You probably also, if you are a Bible student, have read through the Bible; will notice the parallel between these judgments, between the trumpet judgments and the plagues which characterized Moses' contest with pharaoh. This is reminiscent of Moses' seventh plague, so hail and fire mingled with blood falls upon the earth.

Now is that something that is to be understood literally? Let us remember now we are talking about an apocalypse. We are talking about an unveiling. It's something God encourages us to read. The more we depart from the direct sense of the word of God, the more uncertain becomes the interpretation, the more likely we are to come to irreconcilable contradictions in the word of God. Now we aren't going to suggest that we take everything literally; this is an apocalypse. It's a revelation. Apocalyptic literature was filled with symbolism here and there, but not everything is symbolic. Otherwise, we have no real foundation upon which we can be sure of meaning.

But we look and we seek to follow the text as plainly as we are able to follow it, as normally as we are able to read words. Sometimes I think children can understand the apocalypse better than adults because their minds tend to go right to the point of the words that they read, and therefore they don't have all of the problems that we have built up through the years. So we are looking at this as something that is largely a literal unfolding of the judgments that are to come, and when we find difficulty with some of them, we just simply hold our views and wait for God to make plain the things that are found in the word of God.

Now as a matter of fact, many of these things are things in which we have had similar types of things in our own historical background. For example on the 17th day of August in 1819 Captain Ross saw the mountains at Baffin's Bay covered for eight miles with blood red snow many feet in depth. So Saussure found it on Mount St. Bernard in 1778. Ramond found it in the Pyrenees, and Sommerfeld in Norway, and others have told of it in other places. So blood rain has more than once fallen.

It is recorded by Cicero that word was brought to the Roman senate on one occasion that it had rained blood, also that the river Achates had flowed with a bloody stream, and even modern commentators in our present day have commented similarly. One of them has said, "A rain which looked like a rain of blood has more than once been reported from the Mediterranean countries. There is for instance a record of such a rain

in Italy all over southeast Europe in nineteen hundred and one." That comment was made by William Barclay who was professor of New Testament at the University of Glasgow, a man that when I was studying in Scotland I went over to hear, and whose books are very commonly read and studied even today. So we are looking then at things which seem strange to us, but we know that they represent the judgment of God.

The second trumpet, we read in verses 8 and 9, is offered against the sea and the ships. John writes, "And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed." Now this particular trumpet judgment suggests Moses first judgment or plague that God gave in the contest with pharaoh. "As it were" tells us that this mountain is probably figurative of a giant meteoric mass clothed in flashing, thundering flames that dashes into the sea. And again, it suggests that the normal way to look at this is to look at it as if it were really something that very similarly will happen in the future.

The expositors who take the figurative and symbolic approach give us some interesting interpretations. For example, some understand the mountain to mean heresy; the sea, the church with its baptismal waters; its change to blood, the effect of deadly error; the death of the fishes of the sea, the perdition of souls; the destruction of the ships, the overthrow of churches. Other say the fiery mountain is Satan; the sea, the nations; its change into blood and the dying of the fishes, the persecution and slaughter of Christians; the wreck of the ships, the extinction of congregations. That means that we could describe the extinction of Believers Chapel as being a wreck of a ship.

Others tell us that this fiery mountain was Geiseric with his vandals who, forced from their native seat by the Huns, plunged through France and Spain into Africa, conquering the Carthaginians. We have something in our bulletin about Augustine and his problems with the vandals in his day, in the 5th Century, the earlier part of the 5th



century, and so on. There's no need to read all of the rest of these interpretations that are offered. It's quite obvious that we have that freedom to offer interpretation. We cannot be sure of what the text means at all, so we are sticking as closely as possible to the sense, the normal sense of John's words.

The fourth trumpet is a judgment against the sky. We have had then the judgments against the land. We have the judgments against the rivers. We have the judgment against the sea and the ships, and now the judgment against the sky.

In verses 10 and 11, I perhaps should have mentioned this before we go to the last one, "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." This is not an imminent or an apostate teacher, but a flaming comet. Wormwood is absinthe, a bitter plant, metaphorical perhaps of the perversion of justice, because Jeremiah uses it in the sense of the fruit of idolatry. That is, if a man follows idolatry the result is the bitterness that is represented by the absinthe or Wormwood.

And finally in this fourth trumpet against the sky, in verses 12 and 13 we read, "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." What do we understand by the terms sun, moon, and stars? Well, ask a child. A child can tell us very clearly what we are to understand by the sun, the moon, and stars. Ask a child. Don't ask our apocalyptic interpreters, that is many of them, because they will give you as many different answers as their names exist. But the plainest sense is the sense to be preferred. And one final word about verse 13, "And I beheld, and I heard one vulture flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe." One solitary eagle or one solitary vulture presents an eerie dramatic scene of doom. That's

what God would have John sense as he looks, and sees, and hears the blowing of the trumpets. These are trumpets of judgment, which the Lord God in heaven, in the future, shall pour out upon the earth.

Let me close by saying this, they're terrible judgments. There's no question about that. But they are only preliminaries and preludes to what we shall read later on in the book of the Revelation. As one of the interpreters has put it so well, "Ah yes, sin has a voice that is heard in heaven. Though sentence against an evil work be not executed speedily, it will be executed at the last. Jezebel may flourish in her iniquities for many years, but finally the horses trample her body in the streets, and the dogs of Jezreel gnaw and crunch her royal bones. Long was the whole world left to drive its crimes, jeer at Noah's odd notions, and fling defiance into the face of God, but presently the earth broke down beneath their feet, and their lifeless bodies dashed upon each other amid the waves of an ocean world. The triumphal law will assert its rightful honor and Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ, is not going to endure the smiting, the taunts, and the wrongs of Pilate's judgment hall forever. When these judgments once give out their clanging, the vibrations will run through the universe and everything created for human blessedness shall turn into a source of disaster and trouble for them that know not God and obey not the gospel of Christ. Day of anger, day of wonder, when the world is driven asunder, smote with fire and blood and thunder, and will anyone who hears these solemn things go away from the contemplation of them not caring whether he is involved in these plagues or not. If we are hid and housed in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we have the assurance that we shall escape the judgments of the future."

If you are here today, and you've never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, let me remind you of what it means to have a Savior who died upon a cross at Calvary, rose from the dead on the third day, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of the majesty on high now. You see, we are sinners. It is necessary that sin's price be paid. If someone does not do it for us we must suffer the judgment for ourselves.

But God in the infinite mercy and love and in the wisdom of his omniscient mind has provided a way of escape through the Lord Jesus Christ. That which is against, our sins, our guilt, our condemnation, Jesus Christ has born for us. God call to meet upon him the judgment that was due us, and by virtue of that fact, we may go free. His righteousness, his holiness is satisfied in what Christ has accomplished. The propitiation has been offered, and as a result of that God is satisfied, and in his mercy he offers the gift of eternal life to sinners.

And if you are here today and you recognize that you are a sinner, then you are a candidate for the salvation that is found in the word of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. We call upon you as a minister of the gospel of Christ by God's grace to recognize your lost condition, and then between you and the Lord God, give him thanks for what Christ has done. Receive as a free gift, for it's a free gift, it's not because you are a member of a certain church. It is not because you are educated, cultured. It is not because of any good works that you may have done. It's not because of the fact that you have observed the ordinances of the church, that you've been baptized or that you sit at the Lord's table. Salvation is a free gift. "For by grace are ye saved through faith (by grace) that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast." There will be no boasters in heaven, no boasters.

This is God's great gospel message. It is the message that meets the needs of all of us. May God in his grace touch your heart, for the Holy Spirit is the one who touches our hearts, brings us to the knowledge of the Son of God, points us to him always and what he has done, and gives us the confidence by virtue of the satisfaction Christ has offered. We don't look within ourselves for feelings, as if to look for feelings by which we can know that we are believing people.

We look off, outside of ourselves, to the objective work of the Son of God who died upon Calvary's cross. If I looked within myself, I would have no confidence, but I look off to him and what he has accomplished for me. He is my continental head. He is

my representative, and his work pleases the father. It pleases the father, because the father raised him from the dead in token of the fact that he is pleased with what Christ has done.

If you want salvation, if you want the assurance of salvation, you can find it only in Christ and you'll not find it in yourselves. You'll not find it in Believers Chapel, I know that, and you'll not find it in any religious exercise, any culture, as I say, any education, anything that you may have done. You can only find it in Christ. And there will come, the humility and the gratitude of a true believing person who rests, not in himself, but in the Lord Jesus Christ. May God in his grace give you that faith.

Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] We are especially thankful to thee for the revelation of the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are thankful he's the lion of the tribe of Judah, and one day shall have the control of the affairs of this universe and reality and in openness and visibility. And we are especially thankful that he is the lamb of God who has purchased, out of every people, kindred tribe, and nation, spirits and souls of redeemed individuals.

We are indeed grateful for the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. If there, Lord, should be someone here who does not have that confidence, may they not leave this auditorium until they have it. Give them no rest and peace until they rest in Christ. For Jesus' sake. Amen.