

# Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

## Subject: Delayed Disobedience=Desolation (Rev. 8:7-13)

### The Blessing of Humility

When you are in the process of humbling yourself, the Lord will load you with blessings. God wants you to be like the stalk of wheat that is full of beautiful grains. The more it is loaded the lower it stoops down. Thus, my dear friend, your real riches will be manifested by your humility.

Mankind is in trouble with God because he has refused to humble himself and obey the word of God.

Isn't it amazing that the wind and the waters obey Him, but mankind can't.

Matthew 8:27 But the men marveled, saying, what manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him! KJV

### Burdened for the Lost

The St. Bernard dogs in the Alps who seek out travelers lost in a storm take their mission very seriously. One of these dogs returned late one afternoon, wearied from fighting his way through the drifts. He went to his kennel, lay down in a corner, and acted thoroughly despondent, despite the efforts of his master to encourage him. Was he sick? Well, no—not in body, but in heart. He had failed to find anyone to help and had come back ashamed. It is such sorrow of heart, resulting in outbursts of tears on behalf of others that should characterize the Christian.

John is clearly struggling to find words. It's helpful as we read these chapters to remember that what we have here is a description of events beyond imagination, events impossible to portray in words. It is as though someone from colonial days were suddenly dropped into our century and asked to explain to one of his contemporaries such sights as spaceships and jet planes, television and skyscrapers. He would have had no words to adequately convey such a vision out of the future.

So we should not find it hard to see why John has to struggle for words. "Something like a huge mountain, all ablaze" is the closest he can come to describing the sight he sees. Many reading these words see visions of atomic warfare. That may be. Whatever it is John describes, it is destruction beyond our wildest dreams, beyond our greatest fears.

The first four trumpet judgments are "natural" in that they affect the land, the saltwater, the fresh water, and the heavenly bodies. The fifth and sixth judgments involve the release of demonic forces that first torment, and then kill. The last of the trumpet judgments (Revelation 11:15-19) creates a crisis among all the nations of the world.

**Desolation on earth** (v. 7). "Hail and fire mingled with blood" reminds us of the seventh plague that God sent against Egypt (Exodus 9:18-26). The Prophet Joel also promised "blood and fire" in the last days (Joel 2:30). Since this is a supernatural judgment, it is not necessary to try to explain how hail, fire, and blood become mingled. "Fire" could refer to the lightning of a severe electrical storm.

The target for this judgment is green vegetation, the trees and the grass, one third of which is burned up. One can well imagine how this would affect not only the balance of nature, but also the food supply. The Greek word for trees usually means "fruit trees"; and the destruction of pasture lands would devastate the meat and milk industries.

**Desolation in the seas** (vv. 8-9). Turning water into blood reminds us of the first Egyptian plague (Exodus 7:19-21). Note that John did not say that an actual burning mountain was cast out of heaven, but that the fiery object was like a great mountain. A triple judgment resulted: a third part of the saltwater turned to blood, a third part of the marine life died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. This will be an ecological and an economic disaster of unprecedented proportions.

**Considering that the oceans occupy about three fourths of the earth's surface, you can imagine the extent of this judgment.** The pollution of the water and the death of so many creatures would greatly affect the balance of life in the oceans, and this would undoubtedly lead to further insoluble problems. As of January 1, 1981 there were 24,867 ocean-going merchant ships registered. Imagine the shock waves that would hit the shipping industry if 8,289 valuable ships were suddenly destroyed! And what about their cargoes!

Some interpreters take "the sea" to mean the Mediterranean Sea. However, this would make a relatively small impact on the world, since the Mediterranean covers only 969,100 square miles and averages just 5,000 feet deep. It is likely that all the major bodies of saltwater are included in this judgment.

**Desolation in the fresh water** (vv. 10-11). God's wrath next reaches inland and touches the rivers and fountains of water (wells and sources of the rivers), making the fresh water taste bitter Like wormwood. The National Geographic Society lists about 100 principal rivers in the world, ranging in length from the Amazon (4,000 miles long) to the Rio de la Plata (150 miles long). The U.S. Geological Survey reports thirty large rivers in the United States, beginning with the mighty Mississippi (3,710 miles long). One third of these rivers, and their sources, will become so bitterly polluted that drinking their water could produce death.

**God has His stars numbered and named (Job 9:9-10).** It is likely that this fallen star is molten and that, as it nears the earth, it begins to disintegrate and fall into the various bodies of water. If a star actually struck the earth, our globe would be destroyed; so this star must "come apart" as it enters the atmosphere. Of course, this event is a divinely controlled judgment; therefore, we must not try to limit it by the known laws of science.

The word translated "wormwood" gives us our English word absinthe, which is a popular liqueur in some countries of the world. The word means "undrinkable," and in the Old Testament was synonymous with sorrow and great calamity. Jeremiah, "the Weeping Prophet," often used it (Jeremiah 9:15; 23:15; Lamentations 3:15,19), and so did Amos (Amos 5:7, "those who turn justice into wormwood," NASB). Moses warned that idolatry would bring sorrow to Israel, like a root producing wormwood (Deuteronomy 29:18). Solomon warned that immorality might seem pleasant, but in the end, it produces bitterness like wormwood (Proverbs 5:4).

If the people who drink from these waters are in danger of dying, what must happen to the fish and other creatures that live in these waters? And what would happen to the vegetation near these rivers? If

the ecologists are worried about the deadly consequences of water pollution today, what will they think when the third trumpet blows?

There is no direct parallel here to any of the plagues of Egypt. However, after the Exodus, Israel encountered bitter waters at Marah (which means "bitter") and Moses had to purify the water supply (Exodus 15:23-27). But no supernatural purification will be available during the Tribulation.

**Desolation in the heavens** (vv. 12-13). The judgments from the first three trumpets affected only a third part of the land and waters, but this fourth judgment affects the entire world. Why? Because it gets to the very source of the earth's life and energy, the sun. With one third less sunlight on the earth, there will be one third less energy available to support the life systems of man and nature.

This judgment parallels the ninth plague in Egypt (Exodus 10:21-23), which lasted three days. "The Day of the Lord is darkness, and not light" (Amos 5:18). Think of the vast changes in temperatures that will occur and how these will affect human health and food growth.

It is possible that this particular judgment is temporary, for the fourth bowl judgment will reverse it, and the sun's power will be intensified (Revelation 16:8-9). Then, at the close of the Tribulation, the sun and moon will be darkened again to announce the Saviour's return (Matthew 24:29-30; see also Luke 21:25-28).

**"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion,"** said the Prophet Joel, "for the Day of the Lord cometh ... a day of darkness and of gloominess" (Joel 2:1-2). Darkness, indeed! Not only will nature suffer loss, but human nature will take advantage of the long darkness and no doubt indulge in crime and wickedness. "Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light" (John 3:20).

At this point, a remarkable messenger will appear in the sky, proclaiming woe to the earth's inhabitants. Most manuscripts have "eagle" here instead of "angel," but either one would certainly get people's attention! Could this be the eaglelike living creature that John saw worshiping before the throne? (Revelation 4:7-8) Will God send it on this special mission? We cannot say for sure, but it is a possibility.

**The three "woes" in Revelation 8:13** refer to the judgments yet to come when the remaining three angels blow their trumpets. It is as though the messenger cried, "If you think this has been terrible, just wait! The worst is yet to come! "

**The phrase "inhabiters of the earth"** (or "them that dwell on the earth") is found twelve times in Revelation (3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10 [twice]; 12:12; 13:8,12,14; 14:6; 17:2,8). It means much more than "people who live on the earth," for that is where all living people reside. Instead, it refers to a kind of people: those who live for the earth and the things of the earth. These are just the opposite of people who have their citizenship in heaven (Philippians 3:18-21). John described this worldly sort well in his first epistle (1 John 2:15-17), and later in this prophecy he again makes it clear that "earth-dwellers" are not born again (Revelation 13:8).

At the beginning of human history, heaven and earth were united because our first parents honored God and obeyed His will. Satan tempted them to focus on the earth; they disobeyed God; and ever since, a great gulf has been fixed between heaven and earth. This chasm was bridged when the Son of God came to earth and died for the sins of the world.

## **Growth**

## No Short-Cuts

When James A. Garfield was president of Hiram College, a man brought his son for entrance as a student, for whom he wished a shorter course than the regular. "The boy can never take all that in," said the father. "He wants to get through quicker. Can you arrange it for him?"

Mr. Garfield, a minister-educator said, "Oh, yes. He can take a short course; it all depends on what you want to make of him. When God wants to make an oak, He takes a hundred years, but he takes only two months to make a squash."

Many want instant spirituality— like instant coffee or potatoes! It doesn't come that way! There are no short courses! No shortcuts! No gimmicks! It takes time to grow! Growth is a sequence—an orderly arrangement! "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again" was God's indictment of the Hebrew Christians (Hebrews 5:12-14).

### **Learn how to work the Storm!**

#### Soar on Wings Like Eagles

"Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isaiah 40:30,31 NIV).

An eagle knows when the storm is approaching long before it breaks. It will fly to some high spot and wait for the winds to come. When the storm hits, it sets its wings so that the wind will pick it up and lift it above the storm. While the storm rages below, it is soaring above it.

The eagle doesn't escape the storm, it simply uses the storm to lift it higher. It rides on the winds that bring the storm.

Isaiah compares people to eagles. He says, in the words of God, that we are blessed with that gift from God that enables us to ride the winds of the storm that bring sickness, tragedy, failure and disappointment in our lives. We can soar above the storm. Remember, it is not the burdens of life that weight us down, it is the way we handle them.