

Date: January 30, 2011

Revelation 8:8-9 (ESV)

⁸The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. ⁹A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

I. The Great Burning Mountain v. 8

As the 2nd Trumpet blasts, devastation now target the seas, sea life and ocean going ships. This “something like a great mountain” describes a large mass for which there are 3 main interpretive camps;

1.) It is symbolic of spiritual Babylon or some other kingdom. However, this allows for way too much subjectivity – so that some see this as Babylon, others see it as Rome, yet others see Zion or some heathen nation. Another argument against this view is that this not a mountain, but “like a mountain”. It would make no sense having a metaphorⁱ describing a simileⁱⁱ.
2.) A 2nd view is that this is volcanic activity spewing a huge mass of lava or magma into the sea, but the verse describes a mountain-like mass, not something being ejected out of a mountain. ①
3.) It is a meteorite or asteroid ablaze with fire due to the friction of entering the atmosphere. This keeps it literal and plausible and is in keeping with Rev. 6:13 (“the stars of the sky fell to earth”), and to me this seems to be the most satisfying explanation.

The sea being described is also a literal sea (not symbolic of Gentile nations), and is not just the Mediterranean – but the scope of the entire oceans of the world are in view here. Since earth is about 70% water, this is a huge judgment. As something with the magnitude and mass of a mountain hits the ocean after entering earth’s atmosphere, with the bulk to survive the friction of atmospheric defense, it will impact with incredible force. It will certainly create tsunamis, and almost nuclear explosion, vaporizing the water at the impact site and surrounding it.

This object is on fire as a result of the friction from entering the atmosphere, and at the size described, it has been estimated that such a meteorite would impact the surface at 11 K/sec. or 39,600 KM/Hr! It enters the atmosphere at between 10-70 K/Sec. Smaller meteorites, due to frictional erosion, hit earth at closer to 300 KM / hr. Many that are even smaller simply disintegrate in the atmosphere and never reach earth. These are the ‘shooting stars’ we all want to see on a clear summer night.

II. The Sea Thirds

vv. 8c-9

The first thing John records is that 1/3rd of the sea becomes blood, so we have to determine – is this real blood, and if so, what is its' source? – or is it something resembling blood, much like a “red tide” which consists of billions of tiny organisms gathered in the water which are red in colour?

For a natural thing like a meteorite, burning or not, there seems to be no way for this to create blood, but it is plausible that it could destroy 1/3rd of all ships and kill 1/3rd of all sea creatures, depending on where it hits in the ocean. It is possible that the blood mentioned is from the 1/3rd of marine life killed off, but not very likely. There is more likely a supernatural result attached to this judgment. It is a possibility that the blood is a symbolic notation regarding the life lost during this catastrophe. One thing such a devastating impact would do is severely hamper the production of oxygen on the planet, because much of the oxygen generated on earth comes from plankton, microscopic plants in the oceans. This oxygen is a by-product of their system of eating and expulsion of waste. Surely, 1/3rd of them gone will have a major effect on the supply of oxygen in the water and the air.

In the first Exodus plague (**Ex. 7:21**) the blood was real and supernatural and fish in that blood soaked water died, so the blood which saturates 1/3rd of the waters makes the underwater & surface environment untenable for sea life in the areas affected.

②

The destruction of 1/3rd of the ships could be the result of tsunamis or other wave action created by the splash-down of this mountain sized chunk of burning rock & metal. The destroyed ships would be both those in the path of the meteorite & those caught in the giant ripple effect caused by the impact. Obviously, the loss of the ships also implies the loss of any crews manning those vessels, which would be substantial and from all sea-faring nations.

God's judgment is now starting to exude a comprehensive attack on His planet that will not leave any aspect of His creation untouched, because it is all under the curse as a result of His wrath against sin.

Next lesson – Lesson # 30 The Third Trumpet Rev. 8:10-11

ⁱ A metaphor is defined as, “a figure of speech in which a word for 1 idea or thing is used in place of another to suggest a likeness between them.” – source Webster's New Explorer Dictionary

ⁱⁱ Robert Thomas; Revelation 8-22; Moody, p. 18. A simile is defined as, “a figure of speech in which 2 dissimilar things are compared by the use of like or as.” – source Webster's.