

Revelation

Notes #8C

Seal #7 - Interlude Announcing Woes

Chapter 8:13

Trumpet	Description
Interlude Between #4-5	And I looked, and I heard an eagle [angel] flying in midheaven , saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe , to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound! (Revelation 8:13 NASB [KJV])
Symbology	Meaning(s)
Eagle	Messenger; angel
Woe	Judgment; grief
Period	Interpretation
476-606 AD	Interlude between two eras of judgment

This announcement from the angel or eagle flying through the midheaven closes out Revelation 8. The judgments of the first four trumpets accomplished their mission when, **in 476 AD, the Western Roman Empire fell, closing out the era of the Old Roman Empire.**

Starting in 476 AD, an interlude of about 130 years followed in which several things occurred.

First, from 529-533 AD, **Justinian**, the ERE Emperor, rejected the entire Roman judicial system dating back over a century with the publication of **Theodosius' Code**. Changing conditions, along with new laws and regulations, created confusion and contradiction. Justinian resented the chaos that this created and had a great passion for unifying the law. Thus, "in 528 AD, he appointed ten jurists to systematize, clarify, and reform the laws" (Will Durant). In 529 AD, the **Codex Constitutionum** was issued. However, further changes were made through 534 AD, when a revised edition of the **Codex** was issued. Other publications came into being as well; all of which were loosely referred to as the **Code of Justinian**.

Will Durant states in his book, *The Story of Civilization IV - The Age of Faith* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1950):

"This code, like the Theodosian, enacted orthodox Christianity into law. It began by declaring for the Trinity, and anathematized Nestorius, Eutyches, and Apollinaris. **It acknowledged the ecclesiastical leadership of the Roman Church, and ordered all Christian groups to submit to her authority. But ensuing chapters proclaimed the dominion of the emperor over the Church: all ecclesiastical, like all civil, law, was to emanate from the throne.** The Code proceeded to make laws for metropolitans, bishops, abbots, and monks, and specified penalties for clerics who gambled, or attended the theater or the games. Manicheans or relapsed heretics were to be put to death; Donatists, Montanists, Monophysites, and other dissenters were to suffer confiscation of their goods, and were declared incompetent to buy or sell, to inherit or bequeath; they were excluded from public office, forbidden to meet, and disqualified from suing orthodox Christians for debt. A gentler enactment empowered bishops to visit prisons, and to protect prisoners from abuses of the law."

"We can admire the Code of Justinian more readily as a whole than in its parts. It differs most from earlier codes by its **rigid orthodoxy**, its deeper obscurantism, its **vengeful severity**. An educated Roman would have found life more civilized under the Antonines than under Justinian. The emperor could not escape his environment

and his time; and in his ambition to unify everything he **codified the superstition and barbarity, as well as the justice and charity, of his age.** The Code was conservative, like everything Byzantine, and served as a **strait jacket** for a civilization that seemed destined never to die. It soon ceased to be obeyed except in a narrowing realm. **The Easter nationalist heretics whom it flayed opened their arms to the Moslems, and prospered better under the Koran than the Code.** Italy under the Lombards, Gaul under the Franks, England under the Anglo-Saxons, Spain under the Visigoths, ignored the edicts of Justinian. Nevertheless the Code for some generations gave orders and security to a motley assemblage of peoples, and allowed, across the frontiers and along the streets of a dozen of nations, freer and safer movement than the same regions enjoy today. It continued to the end of the code of the Byzantine Empire; and five centuries after it disappeared in the West it was revived by the jurists of Bologna, accepted by emperors and popes, and entered like scaffolding of order into the structure of many modern states."

In his attempt to bring a unifying order using orthodox Christian law, Justinian managed to merge ecclesiastical (church) power with civil power when it came to enforcing laws. The fact is that the emperor became the enforcer of the law of the institutional Roman church.

Consequently, Justinian managed to lay the foundation for a power struggle between future monarchs and popes. At first, the popes were subject to the emperor, who had to approve their appointment. But many years later, the tide turned and the emperors were subject to the popes.

Second, Justinian succeeded in elevating the pope at Rome to the head of the entire visible church. Commentary by Barton Warren Johnson (1833-1894), in his *People's New Testament*, best sums it up.

"In A. D. 527 Justinian ascended the throne of the Eastern Empire. Before his reign the schism had begun between the Greek and the Roman churches. He healed that schism by force in favor of Rome. If the reader will open Gibbon, Vol. IV., p. 528, he will find an account of a terrible persecution, inaugurated by this monarch, in order to make all conform to the Papal rule. "His reign," says Gibbon, "was a uniform, yet various scene of persecution. . . Churches with their congregations were surrounded by *Catholic* soldiers, and the houses were burned with the congregations in them." At this period, then, the Church is drenched in blood in order to make the Romish power universal. The witnesses certainly prophesy in mourning. What more? In **A. D. 531**, Justinian, the ruler of the Eastern half of the old Roman world, the ruler of the countries where the churches still protested against the arrogant claims of Rome, decreed and enforced by arms the subjugation of the whole Church to the **Roman Pope**, and in A. D. 533, he bestowed upon him the title of *Rector Ecclesiae* or **Lord of the Church**. (D'Aubigne's *Reformation* Vol. I, p. 42.) In A. D. 533 the "Man of Sin" was certainly fully revealed. The Papacy was completely established. The universal claims of the Pope were sanctioned by imperial power. Here, then, is the beginning point."

Third, attempting to force all Christians to come under the Roman church simply elevated the institutional church into a gross religious system that would rise in power until popes declared themselves the "universal bishop" and the "vicar of Christ." The cross became a physical sword as it replaced the sword of the Spirit. So, they began to brand as heretics or break fellowship with or even kill anyone who had even a slightly different view. They began to force them to comply with their doctrine (law), which had become traditions of men.

As Will Durant notes, people were driven to the Moslems, which would occur in the beginning of the next century.

The visible church was run by the carnal mind and not the mind of Christ. They worshiped their own image (carnal understanding) of God, rather than God Himself. They seemed to think nothing of shedding the blood of heretics and dissenters, while appointing and tolerating many ambitious and greedy bishops who acted nothing like the Lord Jesus.

The church had long ago fallen from first love. Instead of growing into an organic temple of living stones, the visible church became a full-blown religious empire that ruled over the minds and bodies of men and treated its people as subjects. It was fiefdom.

Fourth, the last nail in the coffin, so to speak, was pounded into place in 606 AD when Pope Boniface III assumed the title of "**universal bishop.**"

The fall of the WRE had provided a vacuum that was filled by the bishop of Rome, which soon turned into a hunger on the part of the bishops to claim power, and to act as if their power were ordained by God. It was licentiousness. They began to build a temporal kingdom on earth of men ruling over others, not a spiritual kingdom with Christ as Head.

The historian H. G. Wells summed it up.

"In later years these ideas developed into a definite political theory and policy. As the barbarian races settled and became Christian, the Pope began to claim an overlordship of their kings. In a few centuries the Pope had become in theory, and to a certain extent in practice, the high priest, censor, judge, and divine monarch of Christendom. For more than a thousand years this idea of the unity of Christendom dominated Europe. The history of Europe from the fifth century onward to the fifteenth is very largely the history of the failure of this great idea of a divine world government to realize itself in practice."

In his study on the book of Revelation, Stephen Jones summed it up this way.

"And so the year 606 AD marked an important turning point in the history of the Church. It marks the time when the Roman Bishop assumed full authority over the entire Church. Others had done this before him, setting some precedents, but then their successors had denied this power. In 606 this assumed authority became a permanent fixture in the Church religious system. Perhaps they did not understand that in God's eyes, authority brings with it an equal level of accountability toward Him for the manner in which they use this authority."

"This is quite remarkable, since his predecessor, Gregory I (590-604) had insisted that the Church was headed equally by the bishops of Alexandria, Constantinople, and Rome. In fact, in 596 Gregory wrote a letter that declared, '*whosoever calls himself universal priest or desires to be called so, was the forerunner of Antichrist.*'"

Fifth, in 570 AD, Mohammed was born and in forty years (610 AD) he would have visions while in a cave in the desert that would lead to formation of a new religion called **Mohammedanism** or **Islam**. His birth was necessary to bring judgment on the visible church that vied with monarchs for political power, rather than rising above the politics of the day to be a shining light of truth and justice and morality.

During this period, God began to prepare another people, the **Islamic Saracens and Turks**, to come against the Christian Empire of the ERE in the centuries to follow that would culminate with the overthrow of Constantinople in 1453 AD. This was the judgment of the fifth and sixth trumpets.

Stephen Jones adds to this:

"The reason that the Church failed to realize its dream of a "divine world government" was because God raised up the religion of Islam to oppose and weaken it. To understand God's purpose for Islam is one of the keys to understanding the purpose of God even in our own time." ... "Insofar as the book of Revelation is concerned—and therefore, God's perspective—the Islamic judgment on the Church came immediately after the Roman bishop laid exclusive claim to the title of "Universal Bishop." This was done by Pope Boniface III in 606."

Six, with the change of law also came a change in language. Previously, all documents were written in Latin, the official language of the empire, but one of the last pieces of legislation called **Novellae** (i.e., new enactment) was published in **Greek**. This marked the end of Latin as the language of the law in the Byzantine Empire. As we will see later in the study of Revelation 10, this played a role centuries later when the little book was opened and the Reformation began.

Now, let us return to scripture. The eagle flying in the midheaven announced that an era had passed with the preceding four trumpets of judgment, and that another era was about to begin. The voice proclaimed: "**Woe, woe, woe.**" There were three woes to come upon the earth as known to John, which means that something else was about to happen in the Roman world.

Interestingly, in Revelation 14, John saw the Lord standing on Mount Zion with 144,000, and after this scene, he saw another angel flying in mid-heaven.

(6) And I saw another **angel flying in midheaven**, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people (7) and he said with a loud voice, "**Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.**" (Revelation 14:6-7 NASB)

Fear God! This was the command of the angel to those on earth who were about to receive the judgment of God. But in Revelation 8:13, there is no such command, just a proclamation of three woes. Why the difference? The answer is that, based on history, the visible, institutionalized church, as opposed to the true Body of Christ, was not going to repent or turn from its corrupt ways. The throne of God had already passed judgment and, when the angels began to sound the remaining trumpets, judgment began once again.

We need to realize that the visible, political church (as opposed to the spiritual Church) was progressively coming into sharper focus regarding the judgment of God. The question during this interlude was whether the church leadership would repent for their sin. The church had become more institutionalized with its freedom. As it grew, it began to value creeds and precise interpretations of scripture instead of character and love for one another and for the pagans.

Further, the apparent (visible) church had melded with the political-civil power of the day. It was not pure at all. In fact, it was no church of the "called out ones." It carried the name of Christ but it acted not like Christ. God could not allow such a monstrosity to continue. It had to be judged.

Thus, woes were about to be brought upon the Eastern Roman Empire; a judgment that would come through the rise of the new religion called Mohammedanism or Islam that would continue to grow and become a major factor in the world that is still present with us today.

Could the Islamist rise in power and in number (over a billion) be God's judgment on the visible church today? Think about it!