

Revelation Lesson 08

Revelation Chapter 8

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Introduction: We continue our study of the book of Revelation this week as the eighth chapter commences with the seventh seal being opened which introduces the sequence of seven trumpet judgments. John also is allowed another view of the altar area of heaven and the prayers of the saints coming up before God.

The first of the four trumpet judgments are presented. In each, there is a catastrophic judgment affecting the earth itself in which one-third of the earth is devastated in each of the respective judgments. The fourth judgment affects the entire earth and how time is defined.

I. Seventh Seal is Opened

(Rev 8:1) And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

John sees Jesus break loose the seventh seal of the book. A strange thing happens. Prior to this seal being broken, all heaven rang with the singing and praising of the Lord. Suddenly there is a silence in heaven for half an hour.

Volumes are written trying to explain the meaning of this silence, all kinds of speculation are made, some of them plausible, some of them foolish. Some argue the reference to “half an hour” in that time is an earthly phenomenon. John saw and heard what he saw and heard. He said a half hour, whether an estimate or exact, a half hour it was.

The greater point is the silence or the calm before a gathering storm. God is preparing to execute His wrath and indignation upon the earth, as the world has never seen before.

(Rev 8:2) And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

Precisely who “the seven angels” standing before God are not further noted. It is implied that they were angels of the highest rank, for they stood before God. These are not the seven Spirits of God noted in 1:4 and 5:5 though some have assumed that. In any event, they each were given a trumpet. As will soon be seen, the sounding of each respective trumpet signaled great judgment.

The ancients routinely used trumpets for military communication, signaling various maneuvers. They also were used as 'civil-defense' alarms, warning of impending trouble. In short, the sounding of the respective trumpets would signal further wrath from heaven against the earth.

It is noteworthy that the primary thrust of the seven-seal judgments originated on the earth, the exception being the sixth seal. The seal judgments are worldwide warfare and the concomitant pestilence and economic collapse following it. The trumpet judgments, however, are directed from heaven itself, particularly the first five.

(Rev 8:3) 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.

There apparently is an altar of incense before the throne of God in heaven in addition to the altar of the Temple of heaven as noted here and in 6:9. A censer was an implement used to ignite incense from an open fire such as evidently was upon the altar. Typically, such devices were a metallic basket (in this case made of gold) with a handle long enough to reach into the fire. Incense was placed therein and was burned.

Of interest is that this angel was given "much incense" which was to be offered with "the prayers of the all the saints upon the golden altar." In the tabernacle in the wilderness, incense was offered daily on the altar. This was a symbol of the prayers of God's people being offered up and so it is through the Bible. Once again, the prayers of God's people are likened unto the fragrant aroma of holy incense. See Revelation 5:6.

(Rev 5:6) And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

God is pleased as His people pray. It is a fragrant aroma to Him. The clear lesson is that we need to pray more.

(Rev 8:4) And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

As the smoke of the incense in the golden censer arose "up before God out of the angel's hand," the prayer of God's people does the same. Precisely who these saints are is not noted. They well may be those on the earth who are saved during the Tribulation. Conceivably, they may be the prayers of God's people

already in heaven as implied in 6:10. What is the content of these prayers? It is clearly to be seen they are prayers for vengeance. This we saw in Revelation 6:9,10.

These are God-honoring, Holy Spirit indicted prayers such as Psalm 69:22-28, Psalm 71:13, Psalm 79:5-6. Vengeance belongs to the Lord, all the suffering His children endure will meet with His wrath.

(Psa 79:5) How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

(Psa 79:6) Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.

Christians should not fret because of evildoers, just talk to the Lord about it. He will recompense when the time comes. Our prayers in this day are like unto a fragrant aroma before God.

(Rev 8:5) 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.

The censer of incense which is a sweet savor in the nostrils of God becomes the means of destruction to those who dwell on the earth. The word of God is a savor of life unto those who believe, but a savor of death unto death to those who reject. The judgment of God is ready to be poured upon the earth in vengeance against His enemies. All the earth is in a turmoil as it waits. The holy fire of God's wrath is placed as live coals into the censer and thrown into the earth.

Implied is much wrath with indication of more to come. Picture a powerful angel from heaven throwing with all his might the burning censer into the earth. The impact of the golden censer crashing through the earth's atmosphere evidently causes the alarm of men and their voices of fear, great destruction with the accompanying thunder. As the censer strikes the earth itself, there is an earthquake.

(Rev 8:6) And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

The golden censer being cast into the earth apparently was a warning of what was about to follow as the seven angels unleashed their judgments announced by the sounding of their respective trumpets. With that prelude, the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. At the sound of each trumpet a terrible calamity befalls the earth.

(Rev 8:7) 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.

The first angel sounded the trumpet. Hail and fire mingled with blood were cast upon the earth. All the green grass burned and a third of all the trees burned up. Recall that in 7:1, the four angels holding the four winds were initially forbidden to not hurt the trees and seas. How and why one-third of the trees are burnt is not clear. It may be the forests of one-third of the planet are destroyed by the forest fires ignited by the fire from heaven.

Moreover, all the prairies of the earth are evidently burned. One can only imagine the horrendous inferno caused by this judgment. The blood may be in retribution for the shed blood of the martyred saints.

(Rev 8:8) 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;

(Rev 8:9) 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.

The second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea. No further description of this mountain is made. However, several thoughts may be advanced. This great mountain may be an asteroid (see notes on 6:14-15) burning with fire as it falls through the atmosphere. It apparently lands in one of the oceans. The result is, And the third part of the sea became blood. Precisely how and why part of the oceans become blood is not clear. It may be due to or representative of death.

This parallels the judgment of God upon the Nile River as recorded in Exodus 7:20. See also Revelation 16:3.

Rev 16:3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.

Most of us have experienced the effect of throwing a red hot object into water. We have seen the water literally explode as it turned instantaneously into boiling steam.. In the Yellowstone National Park one can see the effect of water running on to burning rock, huge geysers rise to hundreds of feet, an awesome sight. Now imagine all this multiplied millions of times as this great mountain of fire is cast into the sea, millions of gallons of water and tons of earth hurled miles into the air as tremendous explosions take place. Then a third part of the sea turns to

blood.

The modernist today doesn't like to think about blood in the salvation of souls. They frown upon the blood atonement, they think it is barbaric. They don't want to sing songs about the blood so they leave all of them alone. His blood can make the sinner clean. In the day John sees, there will be plenty of blood but it won't be to wash away their sin. All life, both animal and human, as well as vessels in the ocean affected are destroyed. This amounts to one-third of the oceans of the world. Reference may be to one of the major oceans of the planet such as the Pacific or Atlantic. A great percentage of the worlds food supply comes either directly or indirectly from the sea. The longer the Lord tarries His coming the larger this percent will be.

The oceans are vast, but great as they are, they abound with life everywhere. To have a third of all the living things of the sea die at once would indeed be an unimaginable catastrophe. We think water pollution is bad now; imagine the dead bodies of all kinds of sea life floating on the surface and being washed ashore.

(Rev 8:10) 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;

Thereafter and apparently without significant delay, the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp. Again, precisely what this star constitutes is not further defined. However, the fact it falls from the heavens may again imply some sort of heavenly body, perhaps a comet with its brilliant tail following.

Such celestial bodies are more ice and dust than solid rock. It may be as it enters the earth's atmosphere it certainly burns as it were a lamp. And it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters. Whereas the great burning mountain described above fell on an ocean, this heavenly body apparently falls on a continent affecting the fresh water supplies thereof. The "fountains of waters" quite apparently refers to the ground waters for wells and springs.

(Rev 8:11) 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.

The name given to this falling star is Wormwood. Wormwood is also a plant in the Mediterranean world that is very bitter and toxic. One-third of the fresh waters of the earth, apparently are fouled and made bitter. The effect of the meteor-like body is to turn the waters into a bitter poison.

Many, no doubt die of the waters, because they were made bitter. Man for thousands of years has enjoyed the things that God has created. He has learned to make useful to himself those things that surround him. In the days to come, he won't know what to expect for even a clear spring of water may suddenly be turned into poison.

Thus to date, as the trumpets sound, a third of the forests of the earth have been consumed and all prairies. One of the major oceans of the world has been turned to blood destroying all life therein and spreading throughout the earth's oceans. Now, apparently much of the earth has its fresh water supply poisoned. Many die therefrom. Of interest is that a substantial proportion of the fresh water in the world resides in the Great Lakes of North America.

God put all the stars in place; He knows every heavenly body, the planets, asteroids, meteors, comets, stars all are known to Him by name - Psalm 147:4 *"He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names"*. Again, the name of the star is Wormwood or bitterness. God made this star for a particular purpose. He didn't ask anyone about it, as with all His creation. He does as He pleases.

(Rev 8:12) 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.

Whereas the first three trumpet judgments began in the heavens and caused great damage to the earth, the fourth judgment remains in heaven but nevertheless has a profound impact on the earth. A third of the sun, moon, and stars are smitten (destroyed or darkened). Much of the key to understanding how the earth is affected is found at the end of the verse. The days are shortened by a third. In other words, whereas normal days throughout history have been twenty-four-hour days, they now will become sixteen-hour days.

Think of the confusion for those surviving. The very foundation of time is altered. Clocks no longer make sense. In as much as the length of a day is the time it takes the earth to rotate once, the speed of the earth's rotation is apparently sped up. Astronomers have skillfully calculated the movement and actions of the heavenly bodies until they can make predictions with astounding accuracy.

They can tell the day when a comet will reappear after an absence of decades. They can tell to the minute when an eclipse of the sun or moon will occur; they know exactly when a particular planet will be closest to the earth; they can tell how long sun spots will affect radio communications etc., but with all their knowledge and wisdom they will be completely baffled by what takes place here.

This disturbance may come by the impact of the several astronomical bodies which have been altered. These celestial bodies control the earth's rotation, and the tides. God made the heavens and the earth and put every thing in place. He makes them perform with precision accuracy century after century but when He is ready He can change the order to suit Himself.

Imagine after thousands of years the sun comes up and goes down exactly on schedule and likewise the moon then suddenly in the middle of the day the sun blacks out, or here are some enjoying the moonlight and then it's gone! All of these things add to the misery and woe of those who dwell upon the earth.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:22, "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

From various eschatological sources, it is clear that the Tribulation is precisely seven years—two forty-two month periods of 1,260 days. It is apparent the quantity of days cannot be shortened. However, the character of the days are. God, in mercy to surviving Israel, will shorten the very days that they might be delivered.

(Rev 8:13) And I beheld, and heard an angel 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!

An angel flew through the atmospheric heavens of the earth with dire warning. His threefold woe is to those still alive on the earth. One might wonder, what more or what worse thing can happen? As the voice of the angel indicates they have not seen the half of it yet.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.