

Revelation 8

We continuing to watch as the events of the Book of the Revelation unfold. We have already witnessed the end of the church age, which will culminate in the Rapture of the church, (Rev. 4:1). We have watched as Heaven worships God and the Lamb for what They have done and for what They will do, (Rev. 4-5). We have seen the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus, take the seven-sealed scroll from the hand of His Father and, we have watched as He began the process of breaking the seven seals, (Rev. 6). As He did, the judgments of God began to fall on sinful people. We also studied the events of Rev. 7, where 144,000 Jewish evangelists are saved, sealed and sent out to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the nations of the world, (Rev. 7:1-8). As they preached a vast multitude was saved out of great tribulation and washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb. This redeemed multitude is pictured, in Heaven in the presence of the Lamb and of the Father, (Rev. 7:9-17).

That brings us to our text for this study. Here, in verse 1, the seventh seal is broken by the Lord Jesus. When He breaks this seal, seven trumpet judgments are unleashed upon the earth. If you think things have been horrible so far, you are right, but the worst is yet to come. Today we are going to read about the first four of the seven trumpet judgments that are sounded against the earth. We are going to see things go from bad to worse for those who will be living on the earth during the Great Tribulation..

Read pages 99-101 in book

The Seventh Seal and the Golden Censer

1 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

John describes a scene that must be a first in Heaven. Absolute silence reigns there for one-half an hour. Chapters four, five and seven all describe Heaven as a place of worship, praise, joy and song. Heaven is described as a place alive with noise. It is pictured as a place full of excitement. Yet we are told there is silence for half an hour. Heaven sits in total silence.

Silence is a funny thing. You can be asleep in a service, but just let the preacher be silent for a moment and you will snap out of it. Silence can also be nerve shattering too (The 1- Minute Reprimand). Imagine you have asked your girlfriend to marry you and she just sits in silence for thirty minutes. Imagine you have been accused of a crime and the jury has come back with your verdict. You are standing before the judge waiting for him to read it to you, and for thirty minutes he just sits there in silence. What we are seeing here in this verse is the lull before the storm. The judgment of God is about to fall on the earth. It is a solemn time in Heaven as there is thirty minutes of silence before the judgments commence. The people on Earth rush about in their sins while Heaven sits in silence because those in Heaven understand what God is about to do and they fall silent in awe at His presence and His power. Here on earth, we often see people call for a moment of silence in the aftermath of tragic events. We saw that kind of thing after 9/11. In the same way, Heaven, calls for a moment of silence before the event. Heaven knows about tragedy that is about to stake place in the face of God's impending judgment.

2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

Seven angels are pictured, standing before God, ready to do His bidding. By the way, these angels present a good lesson for us. We should also stand ready to do our Lord's bidding. In a day when people are concerned about education, wealth, health and a host of other things they think they need to serve God, the greatest need is ability and availability. The Lord is looking for people with a heart like that which Isaiah possessed. He is looking for people who will say, "Here I am" when He asks, "Whom shall we send?" (Isa. 6:1-8).

These seven angels are given seven trumpets. These seven trumpets are going to be used to send judgments upon the earth. Trumpets, as you know, figured heavily in the lives of the ancient Jews. Numbers 10:1-12 tells us that two silver trumpets were to be used to notify the people of Israel that certain events were about to occur. A certain blast was used to assemble all the people; another was used to assemble just the heads of the tribes. A certain sound was used to tell the people when it was time to break camp and march; another alerted them when there was a war. There was a certain sound that was to be made for each event. That is why Paul said, "Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" (1 Cor. 14:8) So, trumpets were very important to the people of Israel. Trumpets are a big part of our future too. God's people are listening for trumpets, (1 Thess. 4:16-17) (1 Cor. 15:51-52). I'm no longer looking for the signs of the times. I am listening for the sound of the trumpet.

There is coming a day during the Tribulation when Heaven will sound its trumpets against a rebellious earth, and the walls of rebellion that have been erected against holy God by sinful man will fall before His unstoppable wrath (as the walls of Jericho fell with a trumpet blast). These trumpets are war trumpets and they are used to sound the attack. When God attacks the earth in His wrath, no one will be able to stand or repel His advance.

3 Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. 4 The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand.

Another angel takes a censer filled with incense. He takes the incense and offers it along with the prayers of the saints on the altar before God. The smoke of the incense and the prayers of the saints ascend together into the very presence of God.

When it comes to the prayers of the saints, they are:

1. Kept by God – As our prayers leave our hearts/, they are not just sent out into the air to disappear forever. These verses show us that God holds onto our prayers and keeps them in His presence. You see, some prayers cannot be answered when we pray them because the time is not right! In His time, however, they will be answered, as we see in these verses. (1 John 5:14-15).
2. Answered by God – I am convinced that we are seeing the prayers of the saints under the altar, Rev. 6:9-11, being answered in these verses. I am also convinced that the prayers of God's people down through the ages are being answered as well.

For two-thousand years, God's people have prayed, *"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."* Those prayers are about to be answered. For thousands of years the people of God have asked Him to demonstrate His power; avenge evil, sin and sinners. Those prayers are about to be answered. They have been kept and they ascend up before God and they will be answered!

3. Have power with God. If we are saved, then we have power with God in prayer. Eph. 5:2 says that Christ's finished redemptive work is a *"sweet-smelling savor"* in the nostrils of God. When we pray in Jesus' name, our prayers mingle with His finished work and rise up before God as a sweet-smelling offering. It is an offering that He accepts and blesses for His glory! Our prayers ascend up to God on the basis of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and God hears us when we pray! Think about it, we have an Advocate in Heaven, (1 John 2:1). We have one pleading our cause in Heaven. We have an Advocate in our hearts, John 14:6 uses the word "Comforter" to refer to the Holy spirit. It is the same word translated "Advocate" in 1 John 2:1. We have one member of the Godhead pleading our cause in Heaven. We have one member of the Godhead pleading God's cause in our hearts. That is why you and I have power in our prayers!

Our praying may seem weak and ineffective at times, but by the time our prayers arrive in glory, they are not in the same form as they were when they left our feeble lips. The Spirit of God takes them and offers them up to the Lord Jesus, Who takes them and offers them up to God. When He hears our prayers, they are a powerful force that He uses for His glory!

The most powerful people are not the kings, queens, dictators, presidents and generals. The most powerful people are not the celebrities and the wealthy. The most powerful people in this world are those who believe in God, and pray to Him in faith. So, pray Christian pray! There is more power in your prayers than you could have ever imagined!

5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

The angel takes the censer and fills it with fire from the altar and he casts this into the earth. When he does, there are sounds from the earth. These sounds are the premonitions of the upheavals that are coming upon the earth. The same fire that causes the incense and prayers to rise up also causes the judgments to come down. As Dr. Jerry Vines says, *"Judgment is merely the opposite side of rejected love."* People have rejected God's love, His grace, the gift of salvation through His Son, and there is nothing left for them but the wrath and judgment of an offended God. (Another reason the church is not present during this time (1 Thess 5:9)) That is what we are about to see as these trumpets are sounded and judgment falls upon the earth.

The Trumpets

6 Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.

Verse 6 tells us that the angels take their places and prepare to sound their trumpets. As they do, we are about to see one horror after another visited upon the earth and her inhabitants.

7 The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

Read page 101 in book

The first trumpet is that of devastation. The first trumpet brings hail and fire mingled with blood. This may be a description of hail falling from the skies, mingling with lava from volcanic eruptions. The blood might be that of men and animals killed in this event. Whatever the nature of this judgment, this storm of wrath falls upon the earth and burns up one-third of all the trees on the earth, along with all the grass. As a result of this judgment, oxygen levels plummet and the quality of breathable air suffers greatly. This judgment will have a tremendous impact worldwide food supply. Here we have a time of great geological, ecological, and economic disaster.

8 The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, 9 a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Read page 102 in book

When the second trumpet sounds, a fiery mountain is seen falling into the sea. One-third of the sea is contaminated; one-third of the all marine life dies and one-third of all human ships are destroyed.

This could be a description of a meteor falling out of space and hitting the oceans. If that were to happen, it could easily destroy one-third of all life in the sea. This would contaminate the oceans with the dead, rotting bodies of marine life. It would also trigger massive tidal waves that would sink great numbers of ships. The destroyed ships will choke shipping lanes and hinder the movements of people and materials. We are very dependent upon the resources from the sea. When the oceans are taken away as a source of life and livelihood, we will suffer from hunger and economic disaster.

When God created the universe He built within the tiniest part of this universe, the atom, the very power to destroy this universe. When mankind learned to “split the atom” we unleashed the most powerful and destructive force in existence. Mankind possesses the power to literally destroy the world.

Could it be that God will use a nuclear explosion to accomplish some of these things? I do not know, but I do know that He has built the potential into every atom in this universe. Everything around you, from the air you breathe, to the pews upon which you sit, can become an instrument of destruction.

Read pages 97-99 in book

10 The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water— 11 the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.

Read page 102 in book

Another object falls from Heaven. It is probably a comet, since it is described as having a tail. It falls upon the fountains of fresh waters and causes them to become poisoned.

The word "**wormwood**" translates the Greek word "**apsinthos**". It means "**bitterness**". It refers to a plant whose leaves are used to manufacture a certain toxic drink called "absinthe". One-third of the sweet, fresh waters of the earth are poisoned and many die from drinking these tainted waters.

12 The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.

Read page 102 in book

When the fourth trumpet sounds, God turns down the power of the sun, moon and stars. Their power is reduced by one-third. They are dimmed do not shine as they used to. This could be the result of all the ash and debris from the earlier judgments, or this could be the supernatural hand of God. However, the results are the same, the earth is plunged into darkness as the sun, moon and stars refuse to give their light. This will affect growing seasons, weather patterns, plant life, temperatures on the earth, and mankind's physical and emotional health. This trumpet will take a great toll on humanity.

These events were prophesied about in Ez. 38:22-23, and Matt. 24:29, respectively

Ezekiel 38:22-23, *"I will execute judgment on him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troop and on the many nations with him. 23 And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD."*

Matthew 24:29, Jesus said: *"Immediately after the distress of those days " 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."*

Since the beginning of time, people have taken God for granted. People have ignored Him, blasphemed Him and lived as though He did not exist. People have also taken God's creation for granted. There have always been plenty of trees and green grass. There has always been plenty of oxygen to breath. The sea has always been there, and it has always yielded its food to us as we fished its waters. There has always been plenty of fresh water to drink. Just go to the faucet or the water fountain and turn it on. The sun,

moon and stars have always been in their places, and they have always given their light. During the tribulation God will take away what we have always taken for granted. Mankind will be judged for our refusal to bow before God and to acknowledge His Lordship.

13 As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!"

This chapter closes with an angel flying through Heaven pronouncing further woes upon the earth. Read page 103 in book. Things are bad, but not as bad as they will become. The worst part of the Tribulation still lies ahead!

If you have never been saved, this would be a good time to do something about that. If you have been saved, this would be a good time to rejoice that you will miss these events. The bottom line is this: Judgment is coming upon this earth and upon all those who refuse to accept Jesus as their Savior. The best thing you can do today is to tell others how to be saved by His grace and ready yourself to meet Him when He comes so you can avoid the tragedies that are coming. Are you saved?