



20. Revelation 8 – The seventh seal and the seven trumpets

Revelation 8:1-13 and Daniel Chapters 7 to 12

During our investigations into the Book of Revelation, we have discovered the events unfolding in Heaven (**Revelation Chapters 4, 5 and 6**). We have also taken a look at what was happening on the earth including the Gog Magog War and at how God miraculously delivered His people the Jews, from invasion and possible annihilation at the hands of unbelieving people, who were out for their own advantage (**Ezekiel 38 and 39**). We saw too, that God was not just sitting back allowing things to happen out of His control. On the contrary, Jesus is in total control of everything including the judgements on the earth. He had caused His prophets to foretell these events, more than 2,500 years before they are to occur. But we have also seen (**Revelation 7**) how 12,000 Jews from each of the 12 Tribes of Israel were commissioned to go throughout the earth and to preach the Gospel, primarily to the Jews, but to anyone else who would listen. The results of this worldwide evangelistic crusade are staggering. In a period of a maximum of four years, a vast multitude received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

This multitude of people came from every tribe, people and tongue, from every nation on the earth, and they were taken up to be before the Throne of God. They will be in the Kingdom of Heaven for ever, to be with us, who became Believers before the Rapture. We will all rejoice at such amazing and exceptional deliverance together with the angels, the Elders, and all the heavenly host, **Revelation 7:9-17; Zechariah 8:23**. What a time this will be! There will be incessant praise for the wonderful things that have been planned for us, even before the foundation of the earth. Jesus, with His great wisdom and mercy, personally knows every single person!

In our studies, we have looked back at some of the events (the Rapture and the Gog Magog war), which will cause such a massive influx of individuals to abruptly change their views; people who previously had cared so little for God before the Rapture. After all, the Rapture was an extraordinary milestone in the life of the earth and its inhabitants. From being a planet filled with citizens, the majority of whom were godless and for whom Christians were just 'a bunch of do-gooders', people, who challenged those who lived lives to excess, the earth has become a place of chaos, of uncertainty, a leaderless place resorting to Martial Law and Curfews to keep control. Some of these 'lost,' now turn to the God of Israel for answers. They begin to see that He looks after His people and protects them, whereas their own gods are proven powerless to act. Writing this in 2015, at a time of unprecedented natural disasters, earthquakes, floods, so-called climate change, fires etc. we remember the many earthquakes tsunamis and resulting damage to infrastructure within a very short time of each other. Watching the very painful recognition on everyone's face that all their possessions that they built their security upon have gone in a flash gives the Church today an exceptional opportunity to show love and care and an alternative lifestyle and values.

The events described in **Revelation 8** occur in mid-Tribulation. Approximately 42 months of the Tribulation period has passed. The Crusade begun by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists is now underway and will continue undiminished for the rest of the Tribulation Period. All Israel and millions of Gentiles are being saved around the world. The Antichrist, Satan's Messiah, has been revealed at the beginning of the first period (the rider of the white horse in **Revelation 6**) and he has been working hard fabricating his plan. He has not had an easy job, because although Satan has planned this event for some time, the Antichrist has to put the structure into place. Whoever he is, he is a cunning, resourceful and clever man and he will have to use all of his negotiating skills and authority to pull together a world government that will encompass not only political power, but also financial, commercial, religious and military control. Although this is to be a world government, it will be one that is autocratically controlled by the Antichrist, who will rule it with an iron fist. It will be a government that has all the trappings of democracy but will have none of its delegated authority. Jurisdiction will be absolute and will be entirely confined to the Antichrist himself.

At this mid-point, the Antichrist has had 42 months to turn the support he received from the original 10 nations (perhaps a strong core of those countries who gave up their own sovereignty to form the European Union?), into an embryo world government (**Daniel 7 and 8**). He has used the time to expand this group and even though he rules with an iron fist, we now discover that his authority is constantly being challenged. Satan's last planned assault on God's creation has already gone badly wrong! He believes that he is invincible and would have us believe this too. Because we have begun to read the end of the Book (the

Bible), we are already beginning to understand what we should have known all along; Satan is **NOT** a roaring lion as he would try to tell us, but only goes around **AS IF** he was one! **1 Peter 5:8-9**

In comparison to the events after the mid-point of the Tribulation Period, the first part has been comparatively mild. It is very apparent to both Satan and to the Antichrist that things are not going well. Ten major events now occur at the beginning of the second half of the Tribulation Period. These occur or start within a very few days and are as follows:

1. The Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel. (**Daniel 9:27**)
2. The believers who have been born again during the first half are martyred (**Revelation 7:9-17**)
3. An earthquake occurs (**Revelation 8:5**)
4. Through the Antichrist, Satan wages war on Israel. The remnant of Israel (those who have not yet accepted Jesus as their Lord) are taken to a location and hidden from the Antichrist. (**Daniel 9** and **Revelation 12:13-17**)
5. The Antichrist destroys the religious system. There has been little latitude up to this point whereby people have been permitted to attend church or follow their own religious beliefs. Opposition has mainly been through peer pressure and implied opposition. In the second half of the Tribulation Period, all pretence is done away with, and a world religion is imposed. (**Revelation 17:16-18**)
6. The Antichrist holds a Press Conference from Jerusalem. He has transferred his headquarters from Babylon to Jerusalem. (**2 Thessalonians 2:4**)
7. The false prophet has been appointed the head of the one world religious system and he introduces the 'mark of the beast'. This religious system will be the only one to be permitted from this point on. (**Revelation 13:16-18**)
8. The Two Witnesses begin their ministry. These witnesses are considered by many to be Moses and Elijah returned for this special mission. (Moses and Elijah were the two men with whom Jesus spoke at His transfiguration – see **Matthew 17:1-13**) (**Revelation 11**)
9. The four angels (whose job it has been up until the Rapture to minister to the Believers – **Hebrews 1:14**) now begin their ministry to all nations. This includes making known to them in their own languages that they should neither worship the beast nor receive his mark. This mark is the only authority by which they may buy and sell and transact business and identifies people as belonging to Satan. (**Revelation 14**)
10. The plagues begin (**Revelation 8 and 9**)

Revelation 8 begins with the opening of the seventh seal. The opening of the first 6 has been described in Chapter 6, but as the seventh seal is opened, there is silence for half an hour in Heaven. There are several thoughts about the silence. Conceivably it was awe, in respect to what was about to happen on the earth; perhaps there was silence because God always stops to listen to the prayers of His saints? The prayers of all God's people rise up to Him, so our words reach the heart of God; prayers not based on the one in need, but upon the perfect Love of Jesus. The power of prayer does not depend on the virtue of the one who prays, but on the unchanging love of the One who hears. Action begins in heaven when we pray, so we need to keep on praying! We know that God holds up the entire process of judgement while He receives and processes the prayers of His own. As His terrified servants pray, God waits. We don't understand why prayer changes things, but it does. The Holy Spirit energises our prayers and translates them into the powerful force that causes the God of the universe to respond. Prayers are a sweet-smelling aroma to our Heavenly Father.

At this point, we are told that an angel places incense in the censer and the smoke from the incense mixes with the prayers of the saints, as they go up before the Father. God had instructed Moses on how to make the incense altar, when he was given the pattern for the Tabernacle in the wilderness, as he was leading the Children of Israel into the Promised Land. We should note that the altar which Moses created was just a facsimile of the real one that the angel is using in heaven, **Exodus 30:1-9; Revelation 8:1-5**.

The seven angels, who stand in the presence of God, have each been given trumpets with which to sound the release of the plagues on the earth. Trumpets traditionally announce important events, but these trumpet sounds to come are certainly much more than that! Trumpets can also be used to give warnings in time of war and the event they signal here is none other than the crusade against the Antichrist and his forces. In other words, they can be said to be announcing the downfall of Satan. However, bad as the plagues may be, they are nothing in comparison to the 'bowl' judgements to follow, which we shall discuss in a later study.

The prayers in the censer, which have ascended to God, are now purified with the smoke of incense and then filled with fire from the altar to empower them. Prayers that have precipitated such actions must be powerful! Their jettison to earth causes a preparatory hesitation, before the judgement of God is released through the blowing of the trumpets.

"The first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire mixed with blood were thrown down upon the earth. One-third of the earth was set on fire so that one-third of the trees were burned, and all the green grass," **Revelation 8:7**. If this is taken literally, it would be an ecological disaster without parallel, up to present times. If taken symbolically, it could mean that the 'grass' represents the 'mass of people,' with the 'trees' signifying the 'prominent leaders,' all of whom are deposed or removed from the earth.

"Then the second angel blew his trumpet, and what appeared to be a huge burning mountain was thrown into the sea, destroying a third of all the ships; and a third of the sea turned red as blood; and a third of the fish were killed," **Revelation 8:8-9**. It is not difficult to imagine how this might happen. In fact from the current fascination people have with cataclysmic films we can very clearly see that they are being prepared for difficult times. This 'sea' could also symbolise 'godless mankind', and a 'great mountain' symbolises a 'great nation'.

"The third angel trumpeted, and a great flaming star fell from heaven upon a third of the rivers and springs. ¹¹ The star was called "Bitterness" because it poisoned a third of all the water on the earth and many people died," **Revelation 8:10-11**. This again could be another ecological disaster. The trees, the grass and the sea have all been devastated; now the rivers and springs are poisoned. Some see the 'fallen star' as symbolic of the antichrist and others as Satan, **Revelation 12:12**. A possible interpretation is that because Satan is bitter from having been cast out of heaven, he poisons people with his evil attitude, causing many to die.

"The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and immediately a third of the sun was blighted and darkened, and a third of the moon and the stars so that the daylight was dimmed by a third, and the night-time darkness deepened. ¹³ As I watched, I saw a solitary eagle flying through the heavens crying loudly, "Woe, woe, woe to the people of the earth because of the terrible things that will soon happen when the three remaining angels blow their trumpets," **Revelation 8:12-13**. This is a time of great darkness on the earth and yet the worst is still to come! We know this is the time the beast will move to seize power and take over three rulers, in order to take complete control. At first he will seem a wonderful person, who knows how to act decisively and has the answers to all the world's major problems. He will be elevated to the highest position, as people will be so thankful that he can 'still the storm' and offer hope. Satan is determined to be cheered and worshipped on the earth, even if God has denied him a place in heaven.

This chapter reveals to us the first four plagues and their consequences, which were announced by the sounding of the trumpets. In their own way, each one is devastating and has a single main purpose, which is to point those who are still alive on the earth, to God. Each of these plagues has an ecological effect. The world may be focussing, to one degree or another, on how to save the planet – as if we - by our own efforts could do such a thing! There are always consequences to actions, so the reason for the problems related to our planet's pollution, is surely that people have turned away from God. How can man possibly maintain the delicate ecological balance of the Universe, through his own cleverness and accumulated knowledge? Rather than humanly trying to save the earth, we as Believers, should be focussed on the real task ahead – which is to save the people on the planet from eternal destruction - and not just the temporal annihilation that most people believe we face. We cannot just work on reducing our carbon footprints and ignore the Maker of the Universe, with His instructions and warnings!

The first trumpet of hail and fire reflects the imagery of the seventh plague inflicted by God on Egypt, when Pharaoh refused to let His people go, **Exodus 9:13-25**. We should remember how God judged those who

tried to attack Israel in the Gog Magog War, as we have recently discovered, **Ezekiel 38:22**. We saw that the hurling down of hail and fire on the earth, apart from the physical discomfort it will cause to the inhabitants of that part of the earth, will destroy a third of the vegetation and grass. In fact it will burn anything that can be burned, including residential and commercial buildings, animals and people living in its path, rendering the land uninhabitable. The Lord spoke to Moses and showed him the reason for these disasters, "For by now I could have stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. ¹⁶ But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you My power and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth," **Exodus 9:15-16**. No doubt there will be a massive refugee problem for the Antichrist's administration to handle, with his finite and already overstretched resources!

The second trumpet causes a burning mountain to crash into the sea. A third of the sea is turned into blood, and a third of the living creatures in the sea will die. Not only will this be an ecological disaster, it will have commercial impact, as a third of the ships will be destroyed (probably those caught in the area of devastation). This is similar to the first plague against Pharaoh, when the water of the Nile was changed to blood. "The fish will die and the river will stink, and no one can drink the water," **Exodus 7:17-18**.

The third trumpet's blast will cause a huge burning star to fall from the sky. It will fall on a third of the world's freshwater resources. The name of the star is called 'Wormwood.' Interestingly the translation of the Russian word 'Chernobyl' is 'Wormwood.' Chernobyl was where the nuclear reactor accident occurred in the late 1980's, causing a huge area of devastation and the poisoning of land and water resources. People young and old were badly and permanently hurt; some were deformed and many suffered the on-going side effects of exposure to radiation. This horror is the reverse of the miracle that was performed through Moses, when the Children of Israel found bitter water at Marah, **Exodus 15:25**.

The fourth and final plague described in this Chapter, reduces the light on the earth, **Revelation 8:12**. This reminds us of the ninth plague on Egypt, when thick darkness covered the land for three days, **Exodus 10:21-23**. References to the Egyptian plagues suggest that in Revelation we have the final Exodus of God's people, from a world where hostile and evil powers are attempting to exert total control. How Satan's fury and frustration must be growing, as he realises that he and his appointed representatives, are powerless.

These four trumpet blasts and associated judgements are as nothing, compared to those about to be unleashed on the earth. The eagle flying in mid-air is horrified by what it knows is about to be released!

Today, we see and hear about the atrocities and increasing number of natural disasters; the severe persecution of the Jews and Believers, and of people, even some Christians, who are turning against God and damaging His Name and His character. For this reason, let us pray for a real revival in our own hearts, of love for Him and His love through us for our neighbours, so that no person we know will have to go through this horrific Tribulation period.

20. Revelation 8 – The seventh seal and the seven trumpets – Challenge Questions

It is suggested that you answer all the questions in your homework but only do those marked with '*' in your group to save time and give more time to prayer.

1. ***Read the Notes and the Bible Verses** referred to in them. Highlight the points that 'speak' to you and be prepared to share with your group.

2. From the list of 10 events (described in the Notes) that will occur or begin to occur at this point in the Tribulation Period which **three** do you believe to be the most important? What sort of impact will they have on the people alive at that time?

3. ***Which plague would you find personally difficult to handle and why?**

4. Why did the eagle call out from mid-air? Where will you be when these events occur?

Read Revelation 9:1-21.

5. Describe in your own words the size of the devastation outlined in **Revelation 9**.

6. ***Why do people blame 'natural disasters' on God sometimes declaring them to be 'Acts of God'?**

7. ***Why do you think it is that many people do not feel certain of where they will be for eternity today? How could you reassure them?**

8. ***Who does the word 'star' describe in **Revelation 9:1**? What does the star do when he has been given the key?**

9. When the shaft is opened, what is the very first thing that happens?

10.*What will come out of the Abyss disguised in the smoke?

11.These scorpion-like locusts are described by Joel as operating in a military-like fashion, **Joel 1:2 -2:11**. Do you think that these beasts are organised and commanded? If so, who is their commander?

12.These beasts certainly have the capacity to kill. Do they actually kill anyone?

13.*Which group of people are they specifically prevented from touching? Why would this be?

14.How long will this plague last? Describe one of these locusts.

15.*The first Woe is over, and the second now begins. What is the second Woe?

16.Which agents are responsible for starting the events that lead to such unparalleled human destruction? Where have they been restrained up to this time? How have they been restrained?

17.Following the destruction outlined in this woe, what will be the state of the planet? Do you think that many people will remain alive?

18.*Itemise the 5 areas of lawlessness that will prevail after the end of the two Woes described in **Revelation 9**.