

## Revelation Chapter 8

### 1) The Opening of the Seventh Seal (8:1-5)

- a) **1** When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. **2** Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. **3** And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, **4** and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. **5** Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.
- i) The opening of the first six seals went rather quickly.
- ii) The opening of the seventh (and last) seal is delayed, and silence prevails, perhaps in expectation of what the seventh seal may reveal.
- (1) The silence heightens the expectation.
- (a) Somewhat like a courtroom when a verdict is about to be read.
- (b) A rest in music brings expectation of what follows.
- (c) Perhaps to indicate that what follows is a group of scenes that needs to be separated from the scenes of chapters 6 and 7.
- (d) Note that what follows immediately is the prayers of the saints (incense) going up to God. Silence enables these prayers to be heard.
- (2) Whereas the first six seals stood alone, the seventh seal will reveal the blowing of seven trumpets, and the blowing of the seventh trumpet will reveal seven bowls of the wrath of God.
- (3) 7<sup>th</sup> Seal
- (a) 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet
- (b) 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet
- (c) 3<sup>rd</sup> Trumpet
- (d) 4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet
- (e) 5<sup>th</sup> Trumpet
- (f) 6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet
- (g) 7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet
- (i) 1<sup>st</sup> Bowl
- (ii) 2<sup>nd</sup> Bowl
- (iii) 3<sup>rd</sup> Bowl

- (iv) 4<sup>th</sup> Bowl
- (v) 5<sup>th</sup> Bowl
- (vi) 6<sup>th</sup> Bowl
- (vii) 7<sup>th</sup> Bowl

(4) The reason for the judgments about to be revealed is indicated in Rev. 9:20-21

- (a) **20** The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, **21** nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.
- (b) The judgments are intended to bring repentance.

(5) The silence for about half an hour.

- (a) 2 Peter 3:9 - patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish
  - (i) God does not relish the things that are about to be revealed.

(b) References to hour in Revelation

- (i) Rev. 3:10 – keep you from the hour of trial that is coming (general time)
- (ii) Rev. 8:1 – about half an hour (the delay will not be long)
- (iii) Rev. 9:15 – prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year (appointed time)
- (iv) Rev. 17:12 - to receive authority as kings for one hour (short time)

(c) Also suggested that the half an hour is like an introductory “drum-roll” to announce that something special is about to begin.

(d) Hour is used in John’s writing to signify the arrival of something.

- (i) John 2:4 – “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour is not yet come.”

(ii) John 13:1 – Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

- (iii) 1 John 2:18 – Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.

1. The critical moment when the antichrist appears.
- iii) the seven angels who stand before God
- (1) Seven angels appear 10 times in Revelation.
    - (a) Rev. 1:20 - the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches
    - (b) Rev. 8:2, 6
    - (c) Rev. 15:1, 6-8
      - (i) Coming out of the sanctuary implies they were in the presence of God.
    - (d) Rev. 16:1 – a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels
    - (e) Rev. 17:1 – same seven
    - (f) Rev. 21:9 – same seven
  - (2) Seven angels are named in extra-biblical writings (Enoch 20:1-7, Tobit 12:15)
    - (a) Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Raguel, Zerachiel and Remiel.
    - (b) Michael and Gabriel we have read of in Daniel, Luke, and Jude.
  - (3) The significance is that they “stand before God”, his messengers, ready to do His will, worthy of attention.
- iv) Seven angels are each given a trumpet.
- (1) A loud trumpet blast was used as a warning of approaching danger or calamity.
  - (2) A soft trumpet call was used to call the people to assembly.
  - (3) In either case, it was to call attention to something significant.
  - (4) Numbers 10:1-11 – two trumpets used to summons, and to sound a signal (alarm).
- v) Before any of the seven angels were allowed to sound their trumpets, another angel appears.
- (1) Stood at the altar
    - (a) Luke 1:8-11 - angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense
    - (b) Heb. 9:1-5 - golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant
    - (c) Ex. 40:1-8 - put the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony
    - (d) Familiar, especially to Jewish Christians.
  - (2) he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne,

- (a) Rev. 5:8 - and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.
- (b) Psalm 141:2 - Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!
- (c) Luke 1:10 - And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense.
- (d) Incense was *added* to the prayers of the saints.
- (3) the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth
  - (a) Ezekiel 10:2 – a similar scene in Ezekiel indicated judgment coming upon Jerusalem
  - (b) Rev. 6:10 - “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”
- (4) there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.
  - (a) Rev. 4:5 - From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings<sup>a</sup> and peals of thunder
  - (b) Sets the stage for the sounding of trumpets.
  - (c) the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them
  - (d) The consequences of hurting the people of God are coming from God.
- b) The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets
  - i) Groups of 4, 2, and 1, or 4 and 3
    - (1) The first four trumpets and the first four bowls are often similar, almost identical.
  - ii) A progression is seen in the following:
    - (1) Seals are broken – revelation
    - (2) Trumpets are sounded – warning
    - (3) Bowls are poured out - judgment
  - iii) Historians such as Gibbon attribute the fall of Rome to three things.
    - (1) Natural calamities
    - (2) Internal corruption
    - (3) External invasion
  - iv) One-third

- (1) By one-third is indicated a large part, but not all, of what is being affected by the plagues of the seven trumpets.
- (2) Some have suggested that the Roman Empire spread over one-third of the known world in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.
- v) Similarity to the 10 plagues of Egypt in Exodus chapters 7-11.
  - (1) Some, but not all 10, of the plagues will be noted here.
  - (2) The purpose of the 10 plagues of Exodus was to change Pharaoh's mind (repentance), to convince him to release God's people, or else suffer the consequences.
  - (3) The purpose of the 7 trumpets of Revelation chapters 8-11 is to bring about repentance (Rev. 9:20-21) and punish Rome for the persecution of God's people.
- vi) Calamities of nature – things affecting man indirectly
  - (1) 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet – land
  - (2) 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet – sea
  - (3) 3<sup>rd</sup> Trumpet – fresh water
  - (4) 4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet – heavenly bodies

**c) The First Trumpet (8:7)**



THE FIRST TRUMPET (8:7)

- i)
- ii) The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

iii) hail and fire, mixed with blood

(1) Exodus 9:13-35 - There was hail and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very heavy hail, such as had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

(a) The 7<sup>th</sup> plague on Egypt

(b) Only in the land of Goshen, where the people of Israel were, was there no hail.

(2) Exodus 7:14-25 - all the water in the Nile turned into blood

(3) The sands of the Sahara desert were red. People had seen red rain falling when dust storms and rain came together.

(a) The Sahara desert spans almost the entire width of northern Africa – larger than the USA.

(b) What John saw is not described as being “like blood”. Very frightening to have actual blood being cast on the earth.

(4) Rev. 16:6 - **6** For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!”

(a) This is from the third bowl, and offers insight into blood from the sky (1<sup>st</sup> trumpet) and seas turning to blood (2<sup>nd</sup> trumpet).

(b) A reminder that the shedding of blood of Christians would be rained back upon them.

iv) a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

(1) Crops – food supplies – are affected

(2) Trees – material for building – are affected

(3) Grass – grazing for livestock – is affected

#### d) The Second Trumpet (8:8-9)



i)

ii) **8** The 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. **9** A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

(1) Burning mountain used to symbolize a falling kingdom.

- (a) Zechariah 4:7 – Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’
- (b) Jeremiah 51:25 – “Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, declares the Lord, which destroys the whole earth. I will stretch out my hand against you, and roll you down from the crags, and make you a burnt mountain.”
- (c) Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD, but John did not say he saw a literal mountain, but “something like a great mountain”.
  - (i) The destruction wrought by Vesuvius was substantial, but it did not cover a third of the sea.
  - (ii) 1 Cor. 13:2 – if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.
  - (iii) Matt. 21:21 - “Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen.
  - (iv) The power of God is unlimited, and this is just a warning – only a third of the sea is affected.

(2) A third of the sea became blood

- (a) Exodus 7:20-21 - all the water in the Nile turned into blood. **21** And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.
- (b) Rev. 16:3 - The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.
  - (i) No mountain here, but the blood still serves as a reminder.

(3) A third of the living creatures of the sea died.

- (a) Commercial fishing is affected.

- (4) A third of the ships were destroyed.
  - (a) Delivery of goods is affected.
- iii) In this warning brought by the sounding of the 2<sup>nd</sup> trumpet, Rome is shown to be falling, people are dying, and commerce is declining.
  - (1) Mountain burning
  - (2) Water becoming blood, as in the plagues of Egypt
  - (3) Commercial fishing affected
  - (4) Transporting merchandise by ship affected.

e) **The Third Trumpet (8:10-11)**



- i)
- ii) **10** The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell 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 became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.
  - (1) Isaiah 14:4,12, 22 - **4** you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon: ... **12** “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! ... **22** “I will rise up against them,” declares the Lord of hosts, “and will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, descendants and posterity,” declares the Lord.
    - (a) Isaiah is using the image of a star in foretelling a judgment upon Babylon.
    - (b) Princes and rulers are sometime symbolized by stars in the prophets.



- (c) It cannot be a literal star, which would be like our sun and would vastly dwarf the earth, and all fresh water would be destroyed – not just one-third.
  - (d) The effect of this falling star should receive greater attention than what the star might have been in the vision.
- (2) It fell on a third of the rivers and springs of water.
- (a) Drinking water is affected, and lack of fresh water affects life.
- (3) Wormwood
- (a) Literally means bitterness.
  - (b) Apsinthos - Various plants of the genus *Artemisia*, particularly: *Artemisia absinthium* (grande wormwood or absinthe wormwood)
  - (c) The prophets also used wormwood in speaking against the perversion of justice.
    - (i) Amos 5:7 - [7](#) O you who turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth!
    - (ii) Amos 6:12 - [12](#) Do horses run on rocks? Does one plow there with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood —
  - (d) Exodus 15:22-26 - [23](#) When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. ... [25](#) And he cried to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.
    - (i) Some translations have “tree” instead of “log”.
    - (ii) Either the tree or log which the Lord showed to Moses counteracted the effects of bitterness, or God worked a miracle, of which the tree or log was a symbol.
  - (e) Jeremiah 9: - [15](#) Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will feed this people with bitter food, and give them poisonous water to drink. [16](#) I will scatter them among the nations whom neither they nor their fathers have known, and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them.”
- (4) Many people died from the water
- (a) One-third is not used to state the magnitude of the effect of the bitter, poisonous water - only that many people died.

f) **The Fourth Trumpet (8:12)**



- i)
- ii) **12** The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.

(1) Isaiah 34:4-5 - **4** All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree. **5** For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction.

(2) Joel 2:10 - **10** The earth quakes before them; the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

(3) Exodus 10:21-29 - “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt.” ... , but all the people of Israel had light where they lived.

**(4)** There have been eruptions of volcanos that spewed so much ash into the air that the light from the sun, moon, and stars was dimmed, less daylight lowered temperatures, growing seasons were shortened, and shortage of crops ensued.

**(5)** *Look up USA volcano eruption circa 1820 which had such an effect.*

g) **Woes to Come (8:13)**

- i) **13** Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!”

(1) The first four trumpets signaled natural calamities which indirectly affected mankind.

- (2) The eagle loudly proclaims three woes that are to come with the remaining three trumpets.
- (3) The remaining three will affect those who dwell on the earth directly.
- (4) Those who dwell on the earth
- (a) Rev. 3:10 - Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.
  - (b) Rev. 6:10 - They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”
  - (c) Rev. 7:1-3 - **1** After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. **2** Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, **3** saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”
  - (d) Rev. 12:12 - Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”
  - (e) Rev. 13:8 - and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.
  - (f) Rev. 7:1-3 - **1** After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. **2** Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, **3** saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”
  - (g) In the preceding 6 verses from Revelation, “those that dwell on the earth” refers to the ungodly. Godly people were sealed for protection.

- (5) Some things to observe in the preceding verses:
- (a) The servants of God were sealed for protection before any of the seven trumpets sounded. (7:1-3)
  - (b) God's people have a promise that they will be kept from the trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. (3:10)
  - (c) Those who dwell on the earth worship the beast. (13:8)
  - (d) God's people are presented as dwelling in heaven, not among those who dwell on the earth. (12:12)
- (6) Futurist view – in the extreme the first 4 trumpets are taken as a prediction of thermo-nuclear war to come, or that was predicted to come in the 1980's (Hal Lindsay).
- (a) Current events continue to be analyzed with a view toward fulfillment of the calamities of Chapter 8.
- (7) Historical view – natural calamities are given as one of three primary causes of the fall of Rome.
- (a) See some excerpts of the writings of historians at the end of this lesson.
- (8) My view – the first 4 trumpets were warnings designed to bring about repentance, as the plagues of Egypt were designed to convince Pharaoh to change his mind.
- (a) Some natural calamities which occurred in the history of Rome bear much resemblance to the first 4 trumpets.
  - (b) However, the worst is yet to come, as the eagle loudly announced.

#### Natural Disasters Contributing to the Fall of Rome

One more reason why the Roman empire might have fell, was because of the natural disasters that hit Rome. Around 366 CE, the Roman world was hit with a violent and destructive earthquake. The land around the mediterranean was left dry and droughty because of the vacancy of the sea. When the tide finally returned, it came back with the weight of a huge flood which poured on the coasts of Sicily, parts of Greece and even on cities in Egypt. 50,000 human beings lost their lives in the flood in the city of Alexandria alone. The catastrophe boggled and terrified the citizens of Rome which caused a battle of vanity between themselves (*Doc.F part 1*). Another

initiation of the decline was the succession of plagues that brushed over the nation, which brought diseases from Asia to areas like the Mediterranean, where there was no cure even to a greater contagion called the Measles. The results of the disease were drastic, the population of Rome went from 1 million to 250,000 people. Economic life worsened as a result and the recruitment of troops got harder than ever because they were running low on soldiers, so they had to recruit Germanic soldiers to guard the border.

Few would argue that the eruption of Mount Vesuvius on August 23-24, AD 79, has created a deeper impression on the modern mind than any other natural disaster of antiquity. The disinterment of the towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and the spectacular nature of the finds revealed by archaeologists, have inspired writers and movie-makers to focus on the tragedy of the violent demise of these peaceful and prosperous communities. We may be sure that the event had a similar, or even deeper, effect on contemporary Romans, whose religious beliefs were steeped in superstition and the interpretation of omens. The disaster occurred only two months after Titus had succeeded to the imperial throne. He must have been extremely anxious that the gods were sending this sign of their displeasure at the very outset of his reign, and he may even have pondered on his destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem almost a decade before. Worse was to come, for in the following year (AD 80) Rome suffered an outbreak of plague followed by yet another devastating fire. All of this may have overwhelmed poor Titus who died prematurely in September of AD 81 at the age of only 42.

We now move on to the mid-3rd century. Rome's fortunes were in serious decline and her borders were threatened by ever-increasing numbers of barbarian nomads. The emperor Trajan Decius had been defeated and killed in battle against the Goths (AD 251) and his successor, Trebonianus Gallus, was obliged to conclude a shameful peace with the victors. An indirect result of this episode was a devastating outbreak of plague in Rome and the western provinces. The pestilence had been brought back by the returning Roman army, some members of which had been infected by the Goths with whom they had been in contact. The scourge was so serious and widespread that it even claimed the life of the co-emperor Hostilian. One of the coin types of Trebonianus Gallus appears to make specific reference to these events as it invokes the assistance of Apollo in his role as healer (Salutaris). This remarkable representation appears on the Roman coinage only at this time and the connection with the plague can hardly be seriously contested.

