

## REVELATION 8

### I. BACKGROUND

As John on the island of Patmos receives this tremendous vision from the glorified Lord, it is notable that Jesus' first concern is HIS CHURCH, that they might be prepared for His appearing. To that end seven letters are sent to seven churches in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) to diagnose their true spiritual condition and exhort them to change where necessary. The purpose? That they might be prepared for Jesus' return for His church, a bride radiant, blameless, without spot or blemish, for we "know not the hour of His coming."

The promise to the church at Philadelphia was, "*Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown.*" (3:10-11). The Greek preposition used is ἐκ, lit. "out of," not "safe through" (διὰ), not "from" (ἀπὸ)]. Laodicea was reminded: "*those whom I LOVE I rebuke and discipline*" (3:19).

God's motive is always Mankind's ultimate well-being; it is always founded upon His love, His desire is to see repentance and true humility upon the earth. The calamities we see hurled upon the earth will humble many. The preaching of the 144,000 sealed Jews from the 12 historic tribes of Israel, the angel flying through the air with the Gospel, the 2 remarkable witnesses of Rev. 11 will lead many to believe in and accept as Savior the Lord Jesus Christ; we see a tremendous, almost numberless number of Tribulation saints whose souls are beneath the altar in chapter 6 as the 5<sup>th</sup> seal is loosed, and standing before the throne of God in chapter 7, verses 9-10, 13-17.

Seven seals are first opened (ch. 6), releasing the beginning of God's judgment upon the earth. Here we see mercy even in judgment. 1st seal: Antichrist; 2nd seal: War, 3rd seal: Famine, 4th seal: Death; 5th seal: slain souls offering prayers; 6th seal: a great earthquake, sun blackened, moon to blood, stars fall to earth - the result: "every mountain and island moved from its place" (6:14). And that's just the start...and ¼ of the Earth's population perishes (1.75 billion people today)!

Chapter 7 is really a parenthetical interlude between the 6th and 7th seals being opened by the Lamb, Jesus Christ. We see the:

- 1) Sealing of the 144,000 literal Jews;
- 2) A tremendous multitude of Tribulation saints before the throne;
- 3) The mercy of God in restraint, patience, love.

### II. TEXT:

In Chapter 8, the 7th seal is loosed and out of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal come the 7 trumpet judgments. The seven trumpet judgments of Rev. 8-9 (the last trumpet seen in 11:15-19) announces a series of judgments more severe than the seals, but not as devastating as the bowl (KJV: "vial") judgments which follow: this is God's mercy in action!

**v. 1:** Nothing so dramatic as silence in a crowded place. The pause speaks of peace in Heaven; initiates a merciful period in which those surviving the 6 seal judgments can repent! It speaks of God patience and reluctance to impart judgment, giving people a chance to repent, reconsider, change! THAT'S MERCY!

**v. 2: "Seven angels who stand before God"** -- Gabriel (Lk. 1:19) answered John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, and said, "*I am Gabriel ("mighty man of God"). I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.*" Also cf. Dan. 8:16; 9:21 "Michael" only other angel named in Scripture (Dan. 10; Jude 9, "**The** archangel"; Rev. 12:7).

**vv. 3-5** The ceremonies in the tabernacle were patterned on the heavenly ceremonies. In the OT the golden censer was used by the priest who daily went into the tabernacle. He'd take some coals off the altar, place them in this little golden censer, and add some incense to it. As the smoke of the incense rose, he'd enter the tabernacle and wave this golden censer before the altar. The smoke of the incense rising would be as the



sweetness of the prayers of God's people. The priest would thus intone his prayers to God for the nation Israel. It's important to realize that the actions of the priest, combined with the whole earthly tabernacle, were a model or a pattern of the heavenly things. Here in Revelation 8:2-6 we see the heavenly scene of which the earthly tabernacle was a model. We see the angel taking the coals from the altar and mingling it with the incense, the prayers of the saints.

v. 3: Incense altar – compare with the Tabernacle (Exo. 30:1-10) and the one in the Temple (1 Kings 7:48ff).

Censor - Ex. 30:7-9; “**prayers of the saints**”? In 5:18 the incense IS the prayers of the Tribulation saints; here poss. mingled with. Some see this angel as Christ as High Priest (but see Heb. 1); non-destructive earthquake means more is coming!

"**Another angel**" (ἄλλος ἄγγελος) another of the same kind; not one of the seven of v. 2 and before they began to sound the trumpets.

vv. 7-12: “**T**”rumpets - “**T**”hirds; partial judgments; limits of John’s vocabulary of 1st century. One-quarter of the earth’s population was already destroyed in the 4<sup>th</sup> seal judgment (6:8b)...

v. 7: **Trumpet #1** – “**Hail and fire mixed with blood**” – if “hail” in the OT is literal, why wouldn’t it be here? “**Hail**” in Heb. is *baw-RAWD*; Greek is *CHAL-ad-zah*. Hail means hail; fire means fire...

- cf. Exodus 9:13-25, the 7<sup>th</sup> plague on Egypt: lightning, thunder and hail; flax and barley destroyed, but the wheat and spelt were spared – mercy!
- Gen. 19:24-28 Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by God with “burning sulfur;”
- Ezek. 38:22 in a prophecy against Gog, to the NORTH of Israel (38:15); Russia and her allies WILL invade Israel but be judged by God with “rain, hailstones and burning sulfur.” In Ezek. 39:6 God promises to send “fire” against invading Magog (“the place of Gog”).
- “**Blood**” should be taken literally as well; ἡματιὰ mentioned 99 x’s in the NT, always literal: “the blood of animals or men; fig. the juice of grapes; esp. the Blood of Christ; by implic. bloodshed, also kindred.”
- “**Blood**” Exodus 7:19 all the waters of Egypt “*became blood*” (Heb. *hayah dawm*) best taken literally, not explained away as “red tide.”
- Seems VERY literal -- earth’s vegetation/crops, decline in oxygen levels and increase in smog. “**Grass**” also includes grains, rice, oats, wheat, and grass. Just IMAGINE the atmospheric pollution . . .

NOTICE THE GRACE: 2/3 is spared!

vv. 8-9: **Trumpet #2**: reminiscent of the first plague on Egypt (Exodus 7:20f) where the water of the Nile was “*turned into blood*.” Here a meteorite? Asteroid?

- Barringer Meteor Crater, 3/4 mi. across, 575’ deep, made by a nickel-iron meteorite impact, probably only 150’ in diameter, weighing 150 tons and traveling 36-40,000 mph!. The impact released energy equivalent to a 20 MEGATON thermonuclear warhead (=20 million tons of TNT!!!). Most of the object vaporized, but about 30 tons of fragments have been collected. The rim is raised 148’ above the surrounding terrain. It is the BEST preserved meteorite impact crater in the world! BUT . . . it is NOT the biggest by a wide margin!
- The largest discovered so far is the Chicxulub Crater, NW Yucatan peninsula; originally 105 mi. wide most likely produced by the impact of a giant meteorite the size of a small city (5 mi. dia.). An asteroid impact equiv. to 10 million MEGATONS of TNT! A new term had to be invented to describe its explosive force: equal to 100 tera-tons TNT!!!!
- Comet Shewmaker-Levy 9 hit Jupiter in July 1994 and was torn apart under the influence of the planet’s gravitational pull; 21 major fragments hit all along the equator as it rotated beneath the incoming comet. The largest hole left could contain OUR ENTIRE PLANET! About ten comets are discovered each year, and on the average one comet every 3 yrs is visible without a telescope. Halley’s Comet is 5 mi. x 5mi. x 9.3 miles is the most well known.



**vv. 10-11: Trumpet #3: “a star from heaven”** indicates an extraterrestrial phenomenon – Greek is *aster*, where we get our word asteroid! RWP says “meteor.” The waters polluted. John notes its massive size “something like a MOUNTAIN!” Imagine something the size of Pikes Peak hitting the Earth!

“**Wormwood**” (*apsinthe* in Greek; native to Europe and the ME; there called absinthe; used to flavor wines; is a plant with a strong, bitter taste... Some say “Chernobyl” in Russian means “Wormwood” though no corroboration of that can be found. However, Chernobyl did NOT poison 1/3 of earth’s water supplies nor was it a “star.” Chernobyl was the site of a partial core meltdown and steam explosion in 1986 at the nuclear power plant 80 mi. N. of Kiev, in the Ukraine.

[www.neo.jpl.nasa.gov](http://www.neo.jpl.nasa.gov) -- As of April 30, 2015, 12,628 Near-Earth objects have been discovered; new ones are discovered almost daily! Some 871 of these NEOs are asteroids with a diameter of 1 km. or larger.

In 1989 an asteroid that was a ¼-mile in diameter came within 400,000 miles of Earth. The asteroid weighed 50 million tons and was traveling at 46,000 miles per hour! Astronomers estimate that the asteroid and the earth passed through the same point in space only six hours apart!

The Tunguska Event of 1908 in Siberia – 1,000 x’s the explosive force of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima! Knocked down 80 mill. trees over 830 sq. miles and is estimated to have been 200-600 ft. in diameter; the bolide exploded 3-6 miles overhead. It is the largest impact event on Earth in recorded history. 10-15 Megatons TNT equivalent!

- Also, 1241 of these NEOs have been classified as Potentially Hazardous Asteroids (PHAs). But what of the comets? Meteorites? Others coming in from beyond our solar system??? Or the millions of asteroids in the belt between Jupiter and Mars?

**vv. 12-13:** reminiscent of the 9<sup>th</sup> plague on Egypt (Exo. 10:21-23) where darkness covered the land for 3 days . . . Causes could include:

- Pollution from the wars of 2<sup>nd</sup> seal (Rev. 6) and the extraterrestrial judgments in vv. 8-11 and the preceding 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet judgement of 1/3 of the earth being burned up along with 1/3 of the trees, grass and grains?
- Atmospheric pollution from the previous apparent meteorite impacts (vv. 8-11 the “Wormwood” asteroid and the “blazing mountain thrown into the sea”);
- Possible volcanic eruptions: lately Vesuvius, Pele, Yellowstone and St. Helen’s are all rumbling . . . Mt. St. Helens - In Washington, Mt. St. Helens erupted, May 18, 1980, in a violent blast estimated to be 500 times as powerful as the Hiroshima atomic bomb. The blast, followed by others on May 25 and June 12, left about 60 dead, and economic losses estimated at nearly \$3 billion.

**v. 13** The KJV has “angel” but the word here is not the usual Greek word for angel, “ἄγγελος” but ἄετου, meaning “eagle.” But you remember that the cherubim, one of the faces was that of an eagle, so this could be both an angel or an eagle or one of the faces of the cherubim; certainly it is not an eagle as we know it, they are not able to speak.

These 3 “woes” correspond to the last 3 Trumpet judgments; worse than the first 4. The “woes” fall on the “**inhabitants of the earth**,” a term that in Revelation consistently refers to unbelievers of the world, the wicked, not the righteous (cf. 6:10 coinciding with the first mention in Rev. of “wrath”).

**III. SUMMARY:** As the 7th seal is opened, it reveals a series of harsher judgments:

- 1st Trumpet: Hail, fire, blood cast upon the earth; 1/3 of the earth is burned up;
- 2nd Trumpet: Something like a great burning mountain thrown into sea (asteroid/meteorite/comet?).  
1/3 turns to blood, 1/3 marine life dies, 1/3 ships destroyed.
- 3rd Trumpet: A great burning star fell upon rivers; 1/3 become undrinkable.
- 4th Trumpet: Light of sun, moon, and stars decreased by 1/3.

Destruction only part; a minor fraction, urging REPENTANCE. Herein is God's grace, mercy and love seen and manifest. The increasing severity of the judgments moves us toward the first defeat of evil and the triumph of Christ. Message to the church is clear and affirming:

- (1) God is in control; ultimately His will shall be accomplished; therefore
- (2) We need to stand firm, trust in His power/love and wait for the final outcome: Christ's coming in glory!

While we may be tempted to despair/distress/impatience at the corruption, crime, violence, and sin all around us, realize God's plan and timing **WILL** come to pass; He knows what's best "Father Knows Best!" Thank God for the time he gave us to repent of our sin; use what time remains to help others turn to Him!