

The Beginning of Great Tribulation

Revelation 8:1-13

Please open your Bible to the eighth chapter of the book of Revelation. We will begin by reading the entire chapter together.

Before we read this chapter, I need to establish the context of these words. We need to remember the flow of events related to this coming period of world history.

First, currently we live in what is referred to as the church age. Our Lord continues to build his church which is comprised of believers from around the world. With that said, there is a moment in time when his church will be completed, and our Lord will receive the directive from his Father to bring his bride to the father's house.

At that moment Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout calling for the resurrection of the dead in Christ. He thus will cloth that part of the church already in heaven with their resurrected, glorified bodies. Simultaneously, he will catch away living believers who also experience his resurrection power. As living believers are caught up to meet the Lord in the air they shall be changed in a moment and in the twinkling of an eye. On that great day the entire church will be clothed upon with immortal, glorified bodies likened to the body of our Lord.

The rapture of the church signals a definite change in the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the earth. 2 Thessalonians chapter two verse seven indicates the current restraining work of God the Holy Spirit, which holds back the appearance of the man of sin, will be removed. Post rapture the appearance of that Wicked one will occur in short order.

In fact, we have noted already the rise of antichrist when from heaven our Lord opens the first seal on the scroll no man was able to open. Traumatized by the global

effects of the rapture and now unhindered by the Sovereign hand of Almighty God, the antichrist takes the reign of power as the world quickly embraces the new world order so longed for.

At the beginning of his reign, the antichrist will bring a measure of peace and security to the world stage. The centerpiece of his plan is a seven-year covenant with the nation of Israel. The signing of that covenant signals the beginning of Daniel's famous 70th week of Bible prophecy. It also signals the countdown to the appearance of our Lord as he describes it in Matthew 24. Exactly 2520 days will occur and *"then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."* Amen!

As indicated by the opening of the seals in chapter six, the first part of the tribulation is troubled by what mankind could categorize as natural events, or events caused by warring factions in the world. However, as we come now to chapter eight, the things revealed to us as these trumpets sound cannot be attributed to nature or bad human behavior. Rather, what we are about to study comes directly from the hand of God.

Do you remember when Moses interacted with Pharoah and demanded he let God's people go from Egyptian bondage? Do you remember how the magicians of Egypt were able to seemingly duplicate the first few signs Moses offered to Pharoah, such that it caused Pharoah to harden his heart against the Lord's directive to free the people?

But there came a time when their deceptive power reached its end. Upon their attempt to continue mimicking Moses they failed. Then they told Pharoah, *"This is the finger of God."*

My friends what we are about to read as these trumpets sound and later as the final vials, or bowls, of God's judgment are poured out upon a rebellious world is nothing short of the finger of God!

Please look now at Revelation chapter eight as I read the chapter:

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

2And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

3And 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.

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

5And 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.

6And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

7The 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.

8And 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;

9And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

10And 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;

11And 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.

12And 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.

13And 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!

Now look again at verse two. John sees seven angels receive seven trumpets. However, before they sound their trumpets something interesting occurs in heaven. Another angel came and stood before the altar having a golden censer. And there was given to him much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God.

My friends, we need to recognize what is happening here. God has never forgotten the prayers of his saints who have cried out to him to avenge their blood on the unrepentant perpetrators of persecution—persecution instigated by their hatred of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has not forgotten and as revealed to John he is about to answer those prayers.

And so, the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth. With that action, the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared to sound. Now it is time for the saints to be avenged. Now it is time for

God to judge the kingdom of darkness and Satan himself, who is the god of this world system. Now it is time for what Jesus called *great tribulation*.

We know in the middle of this seven-year period the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet occurs. We know that abomination amounts to the antichrist entering the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and demanding worship from the world. Satan's man will have the audacity to demand what belongs to the living God exclusively. This is the height of rebellion, and the Lord will be silent no more!

And so, the first angel sounds his trumpet and Divine judgment, the finger of God, touches the earth as described in verse seven: *"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."*

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Next, the second angel sounds his trumpet and we read: *"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; 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."*

Next, the third angel sounds his trumpet and verses ten and eleven say: *"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; 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."*

And finally, the fourth angel sounds his trumpet. Look again at verse twelve: *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.”

Conclusion

These judgments of God are destined to fall upon a rebellious world, but this is not the end of the great tribulation. Rather, it is just the beginning! The angel in verse 13 warns the world of three more “woes” coming upon the earth. And as we shall see, the last trumpet contains the seven vial judgments of God upon the earth.

My friend, where will you be when these things come upon the earth? Are you saved? Are you ready for the return of Christ for his church? Are you prepared to die if death ushers you into eternity today?

It is time to bow before the Lord and call upon his name. I have good news for you. All those who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:13).
Amen!