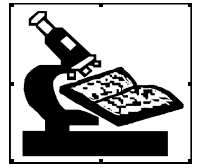


**REV. 7-9 THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL; THE SEVEN TRUMPETS**

In the last study, we saw in chapter seven that the innumerable multitude of converted people are pictured as being before the throne of God and the Lamb, praising both of them. Some have taken this depiction as if these saints went up to heaven after they have died. Yet, this contradicts the clear teaching that the saints do not rise until the return of Christ (1 Thes. 4:16). Also it does not take into account the purpose of chapter 7, which is to describe what will happen to the two groups of God's people during this time of great tribulation. One group will be protected from the wrath of God with the opening of the seventh seal, while the other comes out of the tribulation, probably after having been martyred, and then are pictured in their glorified state before the throne of God, likely when the New Jerusalem has come down to the earth.

In Revelation there are such interludes in its story flow to pause and focus on God's servants, for chapters 2-3 can be viewed as an inset; so is chapter 7, and so are most of chapters 10-15. As Ladd brings out about chap. 7, "[God] inserts *an interlude*, painting a picture which is essential background to the flow of the narrative. In the present instance, as the church stands on the threshold of her time of great tribulation, she is reassured that God will safely see her through her terrible ordeal" (p. 110).

Ladd then notes about the innumerable multitude before the throne of God: "The *setting* of this vision is not explicitly stated, but the language of Rev. 7:15-17 suggests that it is in the consummated Kingdom of God *after the throne of God has descended from heaven to dwell with men* (Rev. 22:3).

"Here we find the second *proleptic* vision (the first was in Rev. 1:6) and means a vision describing a future event as if was happening now] when John looks forward to picture some situation that will not come actually into being until some later time." He then adds, "...the blessings they enjoy—no more hunger or thirst, no scorching heat, the shepherding of the Lamb, the springs of living water, the wiping away of every tear from their eyes, and especially the statement, 'he will shelter them with his presence' (vs. 15)—sound more like the blessings of the consummated Kingdom (Rev. 22:1-5) when the throne of God comes down from heaven to dwell with men" (pp. 118-119).

After this interlude in chap. 7, which interrupted the continuity of the opening of the seven seals, the story flow resumes in chap. 8 with the breaking of the seventh and last seal. John says, "When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake" (Rev. 8:1-5).

This opening of the seventh seal technically begins what is called "the Day of the Lord." As our booklet on Revelation points out, "*The Day of the Lord*, the event angels and saints have anticipated for thousands of years, *has finally arrived*...Once the seventh seal is broken, the entire scroll is finally opened. Much of *the remainder* of the book of Revelation is *subdivided into seven major parts, each signified by the blast of a trumpet*. In the ancient world trumpets often were used to announce the approach or arrival of danger. They serve a similar purpose in Revelation. Here they announce *the main phases of God's judgment* on this evil world and on the devil, who has deceived it. Combined, *the seven trumpets* (chapters 8-11) provide a *summary* of what will happen during the time known as *the Day of the Lord*...Most of the following chapters (12-20) fill in details concerning the Day of the Lord, particularly about the persecuting worldly powers led and controlled by Satan and about Jesus' victory over those powers. Chapters 21-22 give us a glimpse of the saints' eternal reward" (p. 39).

So the trumpet blasts consist of God's intervention to stop Satan from destroying the earth and to punish the wicked before the return of Christ. The silence in heaven is due to the awe caused by the momentous time it portends. As God is about to intervene, we are reminded of the importance of the saints' prayers. As Leon Morris points out, "The saints appear insignificant to men at large. But in the

sight of God, they matter. Even great cosmic cataclysms are held back on their account...Indeed in a sense it is these prayers that set the judgments in motion" (pp. 119-120).

As Robert Mounce notes, "The sixth seal found people fleeing to the mountains and calling for sanctuary against the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:15-17). The tribulation of this period is now portrayed in a more advanced fashion. While the first four seals depicted judgments that are the inevitable consequences of human sinfulness, *the trumpets* reveal the active involvement of God in bringing punishment upon a wicked world...As plagues preceded the release of the children of Israel from their Egyptian masters, *so plagues will precede the Exodus of the church from hostile political powers*. Constant allusion throughout this section to the Egyptian plagues is a way of emphasizing that in the last days God will again bring punishment upon those hostile powers that oppress His people...The purpose of this visitation is to warn people of the full wrath of God yet to fall, and in so doing to bring them to repentance" (pp. 176-177). So there are many parallels between Exodus and Revelation!

John continues, "So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up" (Rev. 8:6-7).

The first four trumpet plagues descend from the sky, and this first punishment is with the hope that it produces the needed repentance of the unredeemed, with the burning up of a third of the plant life on earth and causing many deaths and famines.

As our booklet points out, "The first four trumpets in Rev. 8 herald cataclysmic devastation. The first is a rain of hail and fire, perhaps similar to one of the 10 plagues God sent on Egypt at the time of Moses (Ex. 9:13-35). This could be describing phenomena such as icy hail mixed with lightning, a rain of superheated volcanic material from a gigantic eruption, or a meteor storm from space" (p. 39). Another possibility, although remote, is that God will allow WWII to begin and causes nuclear weapons to produce these great disasters since sometimes He does use nations to carry out His punishments, such as Assyria (Is. 10:5) and Babylon (Jer. 25:9).

Our booklet then mentions, "Although these events are terrifying, God remains merciful. He always prefers to impose lesser punishments first to give people an opportunity to repent. As He told Ezekiel: "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live'" (Ez. 33:11).

"Rarely have whole nations repented and changed because of God's warning punishments. Most people tend to become bitter toward God rather than admitting their own callous behavior and evil thoughts. Though the first four trumpets may cause a few to abandon their evil ways, most of humanity will not repent, even when later afflicted by far greater punishments" (pp. 60-61).

John writes, "Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed" (Rev. 8:8-9). A third part of the oceans is now targeted and something resembling a great mountain falls and destroys one third of marine life and also devastates a third of the ships. Our booklet mentions the cause could be a devastating super volcano or an asteroid impact. Today there is an average of 100,000 vessels at sea at any given time, so if it happens in our day, some 33,000 ships would be lost with enormous loss of human life.

John continues, "Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter" (Rev. 8:10-11).

Now the third disaster from the sky, like a blazing star, strikes one third of the earth's fresh water sources, a plague similar to the first Egyptian one affecting the drinking water. The term "wormwood" refers to a bitter-tasting plant. As God says in Jer. 23:15, "Behold, I will feed them *with wormwood*, and make them drink the water of gall."

John describes the fourth trumpet blast, "Then the fourth angel sounded: 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 were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night."

Our booklet notes the effect could occur “possibly as a result of the atmospheric debris from the first three catastrophes. A plague of darkness, similar to another of the plagues of Egypt (Ex. 10:21-29), engulfs at least a third or possibly all of the earth. (An even greater darkness will later ensue during the seven last plagues)” (p. 40). After these four disasters affect the world’s ecosystem, the next three deal directly with humans, demons and war.

John says, “And I looked and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, ‘Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!’” (Rev. 8:13). These next three calamities are even more devastating and so are called “woes.”

John writes, “Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them. The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. They had hair like women’s hair, and their teeth were like lions’ teeth. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months. And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon” (Rev. 9:1-11).

This next event takes place on the earth, where an angel is given a key to unlock the lid closing the

bottomless pit. Our booklet brings out, “Like the first and fourth trumpets, the fifth blast is reminiscent of one of the plagues that fell on ancient Egypt—that of locusts (Ex. 10:1-20). However, these ‘locusts’ in Revelation are apparently not insects but *machines*, with ‘breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings...like the sound of chariots’—possibly, from John’s first-century perspective, referring to deadly military aircraft such as modern helicopters. These torture people as with the sting of a scorpion.

“Though the sources of the afflictions are not specified, their effects are strikingly similar to the effects of modern chemical or biological warfare. The director or ‘king’ of this wave of affliction is described as ‘the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.’ These titles, in Hebrew and Greek, mean ‘destruction’ and ‘destroyer,’ respectively. And we later see that the Satan-led ‘beast’ power emerges from this abyss or bottomless pit (Rev. 17:8), showing that the locusts here are probably the forces of this Europe-centered power bloc directed by Satan. As noted earlier, as the end of his reign approaches, Satan is filled with ‘great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time’ (Rev. 12:12). He is the master manipulator behind the massive armies gathering for their brutal mission. But God remains in control despite Satan’s rebellion against Him. Notice the limitations God puts on the locust-like conduits of human suffering...They are not sent to kill people, only to torment them. God’s previous punishments were aimed at the environment. But now they directly target those who still refuse to repent. The agony caused by this plague will be so intense that many will prefer to die. God is still giving the world’s inhabitants an opportunity to recognize just how angry He is with their rebellious behavior so they can understand that He will no longer tolerate their sins...After five months of terrible afflictions, an angel announces: ‘One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things’” (vs. 12).

Here are described what appear to be combat flying machines, such as helicopters and jets, with vapor trails appearing as long hair, and very loud. Robert Mounce notes, “Long-haired, horse-shaped, flying locusts with scorpion tails and golden crowns above human faces...are of considerable size...and were protected with breastplates of iron” (p. 189).