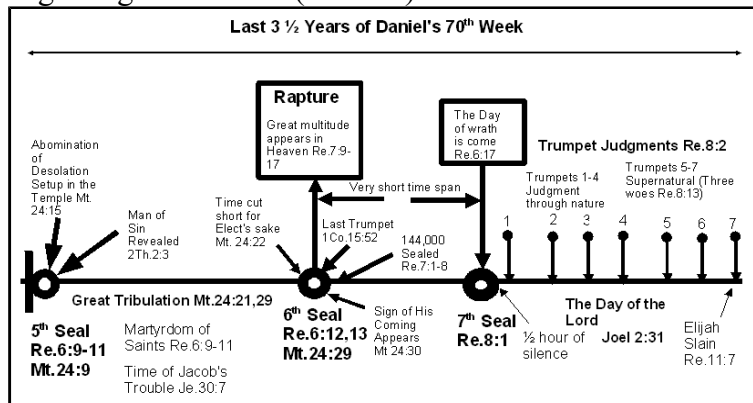


Newsletter January 2018

In our November 2017 Newsletter, we had moved on in our continuing study of the book of Revelation into Chapter 6. We observed Jesus in Heaven as He began to break open the seven seals of the scroll He had taken from the offering-hand of his Father in order to claim his glorious inheritance of the earth and to receive absolute authority over all that dwells upon it. As each seal was broken open, a momentous event simultaneously occurred upon the earth in adverse reaction. The first four seals, brought forth four “horsemen.” The first sent forth a man, called the Antichrist, whom Satan sponsored to head up a global government. The second brought a great world war, and the next two brought forth starvation and disease in its aftermath. Altogether, one quarter of the earth’s human population was killed. As severe as this three and one-half year period was, Jesus referred to it as only “the beginning of sorrows” (Mt:24:8).



Referring to the timeline in the illustration to the left, we discovered when the fifth seal was broken open, it brought forth a period of great tribulation on earth during which men indiscriminately slaughtered each other without cause or reason; it was a world gone totally insane. Many Christian saints were killed, and Jews were heavily persecuted.

The breaking of the sixth seal by Jesus brought the great tribulation to a sudden end, as a mighty earthquake shook the entire earth from

pole to pole. Simultaneously, a great cataclysm took place in the heavens as the sun was blackened, and the moon turned blood red. The sky then rolled away into total emptiness, and against the backdrop of that darkness, the Lord Jesus was seen descending out of Heaven in bright clouds with mighty power and great glory (cf. Mt.24:30). In overwhelming fear, the reprobate population of the earth mourned over their pending judgment, and they sought to entomb themselves in caves and mountains to avoid looking upon the face of the One whom they long hated and had cursed. He was now arriving from Heaven as their sovereign Judge and the avenger of those of his own whom they had persecuted. “For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand” (Re.6:17)?

In our December 2017 Newsletter we discussed the brief interval of time between the breaking of the sixth and seventh seals during which 144,000 Jews were sealed to survive on earth through the terrible judgments ahead (cf. Re. 7: 4-8), and the Church, consisting of both the living and the dead in Christ, was transported off the earth into the heavens to safely assemble as one before the throne of God (cf. Re.7:9-15); 1Th. 4:16-17). Those unsealed men and women that remained on the earth are the reprobate who have despised the Gospel, rebelled against both God and his Christ, and have received the identifying mark of the Antichrist (cf. Re. 14:9-11).

In this newsletter we continue on into our study of the book of the Revelation by considering the text of Revelation Chapter 8. In doing so, we will be utilizing edited excerpts taken from *CRC Book III*, Chapter 20.6. With the breaking open of the seventh seal of the scroll in Heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will send forth seven extremely severe judgments upon the earth and its reprobate inhabitants. These judgments are symbolized in Scripture by the blowing of seven trumpets by seven angels. This period of “trumpet judgments,” which follows the brief interval following the sixth seal that we discussed last month, is labeled on the right end of the timeline in the figure above as the “Day of the Lord,” which follows the breaking of the seventh seal. This is both an Old and New Testament term for this specific period of God’s fierce judgment (cf. Is.2:12; 13:6; Je.46:10; Eze.30:3; Jl.2:11; Am.5:18; Obad.1:15; Zep.1:7; Zec:14:1; Mal. 4:5; Ac.2:20; 1Co.5:5; 1Th.5:2; 2Th.2:2; 2Pe.3:10).

The interpretation presented here concerning the first four trumpet judgments of chapter 8 is based upon a hypothetical probability of the earth being approached in those days by a relatively large celestial mass, a “rogue” star, or perhaps a very large interstellar comet, specifically designed by God for that purpose. While it cannot be dogmatically stated that the approach of a large celestial mass will be the natural causation underlying the catastrophes coming forth from the sounding of the first four trumpets, we believe that it may very well be the

case based upon what we read in the text of Revelation Chapter 8 verse 10 regarding an approaching “star” and our rather limited present-day knowledge of the physical universe.

Most of today’s astrophysicists concede a high probability of a collision or near collision with the earth by a celestial body sometime in the future, inasmuch as there is strong evidence that such cataclysmic events have occurred in the past upon other planets, the earth, and upon its moon; it is only a matter of time until such an event occurs again, and it would prove to be calamitous for the earth’s massive population. As we discussed at length in our Newsletter of August 2015, we believe that a similar event of a close-passing comet most likely brought forth the great Ice Epoch on earth in which the great mammoths were destroyed. As well, we contemplated that it was very possibly the natural causation of the great Noachian flood initiated by God in which the earth’s human population was annihilated, excluding only Noah and his immediate family to repopulate the earth.

Regardless of any underlying natural causes that may be in evidence, we must clearly understand that all of these four judgments can begin only in accordance with God’s preordained time and through his express command, as was God’s earlier judgment of the earth’s reprobate population in the global flood. These future catastrophic events cannot come about as the consequence of a mere “chance” encounter with a celestial body, inasmuch as God is in full control of his universe. He will shelter his earth from such massive calamities until He determines that the hour and day requiring his judgment of the sin-filled world has become necessary.

We shall observe that these seven trumpet judgments are divided up into two groups consisting of four initial judgments brought about through celestial actions from the physical universe, followed by three supernatural judgments having no underlying basis in physical nature. During the first four judgments, our Lord will bring about catastrophic events upon the earth sent out of the vast regions of the cosmos. They will cause massive physical destruction and will inflict great physical pain upon the earth’s inhabitants. We are not given a specific interval between the first four trumpet judgments once they begin. They could immediately follow each other, or there could be a short interval of hours or days between them, assuming as we do that a bright celestial mass approaches and completes one or more orbits around the earth before escaping again into the vast reaches of space.

With this preliminary evaluation as an introduction, let us now begin a direct exposition of the text of Revelation Chapter 8, as Jesus breaks open the final seal of the scroll in Heaven:

“And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour” (Re.8:1).

Here Jesus Christ opens the last seal of the scroll, and in doing so He attains all power and authority written within it to take possession of the earth and to thoroughly judge it in preparation for his return to rule over it. The brief thirty-minute silence that follows this event is very ominous in view of the noise and violence that has previously taken place upon the earth. It is almost as if our Lord takes a deep breath concerning the severity of the judgments that He must now execute against a rebellious nonredeemable mankind. This kind of fierce judgment is a strange work for God to undertake, inasmuch as He is a God of love and is longsuffering, taking no pleasure in the death of men (cf. Ez.18:32). But, at this point his striving with rebellious mankind has reached its limit, and his fierce judgment is absolutely necessary to maintain his holiness and sovereign reputation. The reprobate have refused all that the Father has offered including the sacrifice of the Son of his very being. Therefore, we find this period of silence marks a solemn transition from the exercise of God’s grace and mercy to that of his vengeful judgment. For thirty minutes nothing happens on earth as the significance of this silence slowly begins to set in; it is literally the lull before the mighty storm of God’s vengeful wrath.

“And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets” (Re.8:2).

During this period of deadly silence, seven angels have assembled themselves before God, and they have been given seven trumpets to announce each judgment in turn at the very moment that Jesus orders them to take place. It is not God the Father who will order forth these judgments, for all judgment has been committed unto the Son for Him to carry out (cf. Jn. 5:22). Here we see Jesus as He stands before the throne in Heaven holding open the seven-sealed scroll, which grants Him sole authority to govern and judge the earth in righteousness. The contrast between the meek and mild mannered Jesus who once humbly walked among men and in great love died for them, and the glorified Christ (cf. Re. 1:13-16) whom we see here ready to carry out the severe sentence of God’s

righteous judgment is unfathomable indeed. But, such it is that He who had redeemed many through his own blood must now severely deal with reprobate sinners who have angrily rejected his compassionate offer of redemption, have hated Him and persecuted his elect, and have so hardened their hearts that repentance is no longer possible. The only thing they can justifiably receive in exchange is the “wrath of the Lamb.”

“And 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 and the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand” (Re. 8:3,4).

This eighth angel is not Jesus Christ, who is about to execute God's severe judgment, but an angel whose apparent task it has been to record and store up the enumerable prayers of those many saints who had suffered persecution and had been martyred at the hands of evil men for the firm stand they had taken for God and his Christ over all of mortal time. The golden censer the angel holds is a container specifically designed to hold burning incense; nevertheless, the angel burns the incense it contains upon a golden altar standing before the throne of God. Such in type was the golden altar of incense that stood in the holy place of the Old-Covenant Temple before the heavy veil leading into the innermost holy place – which had symbolized the throne-room of God. Here this angel is given an abundance of incense to burn on the golden altar in the true throne-room of Heaven, such that the devout prayer of every saint who had ever lived ascended up in the smoke of burning incense from the altar before God the Father who sits upon his eternal throne in Heaven.

“And 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” (Re.8:5).

This transaction that had presented the prayers of all the saints of all time before God thus completed, the angel then takes fire from the altar of burning incense and placing in the censor he casts it down into the earth. The heavenly silence is suddenly broken on earth by the sounds of many voices as the devout prayers of martyred saints immemorial are broadcast down to earth. The accusations implied within their prayers are punctuated by angry thunder as the storm of God's righteous judgment approaches, and lightning from it begins to fill the sky and strikes the earth causing it to tremble and quake.

“And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound” (Re.8:6).

The seven angels now take their places, lift their trumpets, and stand ready to sound – awaiting only the command of Christ to be given. All of this sounds very symbolic, but as we shall see the effect of each trumpet when it is sounded will be very real and quite devastating. There will be nothing symbolic about the coming judgments as they impact the earth and its environment.

“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” (Re.8:7).

Not since the great flood of Noah's day has such catastrophic judgment been rained down upon the earth. This time the judgment will not be a heavy deluge of water, but a heavy deluge of burning fire coming down from the heavens. Here we see God's wrath mingled with the blood of the many saints who were martyred for their faith. When the first trumpet is sounded, one-third of all the vegetation of the earth will be destroyed. It will come in the form of fiery hail from out of the cosmos as debris from the great celestial cataclysm, triggered by the breaking of the sixth seal, begins to reach the earth (cf. Re.6:12-13). We read in the Old Testament that Elijah was permitted to call down fire from heaven which consumed the adversaries of God (cf. 2Ki.1:10-14). However, this fire from Heaven is not intended to directly kill men. Instead, it will burn up every form of vegetation from grass to great trees much as when God sent a great hail mingled with fire upon the land of Egypt (cf. Ex. 9:22-25). This mass destruction of vegetation will greatly reduce the oxygen level in the air making breathing more difficult, and it will reduce the availability of all types of food crops. We believe that this destruction will not occur all in one place, but will be distributed in various regions across the entire earth. Even so, we are told that mercifully only one-third of the vegetation will be burned up by the burning hail so that mankind would not suffocate or immediately starve – but the second trumpet is now about to sound!

“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” (Re.8.:8,9).

From the phrase, “as it were” we realize that this “great mountain” need not be a literal mountain. Even so, it must be a large physical mass like a mountain in size. It could be that this signifies the explosion of a huge volcano somewhere on earth that is then thrown into the sea through a massive explosion. This could possibly be triggered by the increased gravitational pull upon the crust of the earth resulting from the approach of a large mass from out in the cosmos even before it actually reaches the earth. It could also be a large burning asteroid coming down out of space to fall into an ocean. Whatever this huge burning mass is, it will destroy one-third of the smallest of fish up to and not excluding one-third of the ships of men, which are now the only means of transport for scarce food grains to various parts of the earth. We are not told where on the earth this great event will take place, but again, in mercy, two-thirds of the earth’s seas will remain unaffected.

“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” (Re.8:10,11).

Here we are told that a great star falls from heaven, which will pollute the waters of the earth. The word for star in this verse is *astare* in the Greek, which means it could be any one of any number of lights that are “strewn across the sky.” *Astare* can be interpreted literally or figuratively. If it is a literal star, it must be a huge burning mass of gas that is somewhat similar to our sun. If instead it is a very large comet, it has a small solid core consisting mostly of ice, but it is largely made up of burning gas. With the blowing of the third trumpet, one-third of all the fresh water on earth will become poisonous. The burning gases of this visitor from space entering into the upper atmosphere would pollute the rainfall and thereby poison one-third of the rivers and streams from which men get their drinking water. This star has a name, which is “Wormwood.” Wormwood taken from the Greek means “bitter.” The poisoned waters will have a very bitter taste declarative of its poisonous substance and mercifully rendering the water altogether undrinkable. Again, we see that this is not a total judgment since two-thirds of the fresh water supply of the earth will not be affected – but now the fourth angel blows his trumpet!

“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” (Re.8:12)

When the fourth trumpet sounds, one-third of the day and one-third of the night will be without light. That is, the day will be short of sunlight, and the night will be short of both moon and stars. We should not think from this that the sun and moon will have a “bite” taken out of them such as we commonly observe during an eclipse. Rather, the last part of this verse clarifies the first part. That is, the sun will not shine on earth until it is well elevated into the heavens, and it will be dark well before it again reaches the earth’s horizon. It is quite possible that this darkness will be brought about by large amounts of atmospheric debris coming from the close approach of the “star,” which has caused the lower atmosphere to become opaque so that the sun’s rays cannot penetrate it near the horizon. In a similar manner, the moon will not be seen for one-third of the night. Stars would not be visible at all near the horizon. The net result will be an increase in darkness upon the earth, which will cause its overall temperature to dramatically fall into a global winter.

The earth’s environment will have been totally wrecked by the catastrophic events of the first four judgments, but a far worse calamity will soon be experienced by mankind when the last three angels sound their trumpets:

“And 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” (Re.8:13)!

The last three judgments, which we shall discuss next month as we move on into Chapter 9, will be brought about by God through supernatural means, which is beyond the scope of all natural human experience. While the first four judgments were explainable in the physical sense, those that are to follow are in the spiritual realm. They are the very substance of the worst nightmares that mankind has previously experienced only in his most chaotic dreams. During these next three judgments, the power of the underworld will be unleashed against mankind as demons, which have been forbidden to indwell men, will be given freedom to do as they wish with the sinful rebellious men and women that remain on earth. They will inflict unbearable mental anguish upon the earth-dwellers of that day, and there will be no escape possible for them – not even through death.