

## Transcription of 21ID3498

Revelation 8:1-12

"The Trumpet Judgments Begin"

May 12, 2021

Let's open our Bibles tonight to Revelation 8 as we continue our verse-by-verse study through this last book of the Bible.

I think it is important that you realize that the book of Revelation, though it is given to the church, is really much about what we're not here for, and yet it is a warning not only to the church but to the world that the Lord will have the last word. And I think it is good if, at least in your mind, you can make the outline; I don't know if you can do it tonight, but you should easily walk yourself through because it is mostly in order. And I think what happens so often is you get bogged down and say, "Man, all this goin' on," but it really goes on, for the most part, in 42 months. And to be honest with you, the last seven judgments in this book are concentrated into weeks and probably very short months, if at all, before the Lord's return.

So, chapter 1 is John's vision of Jesus in His glory. He is told to write down what he has seen and what he knows to be going on at the time and what will be. And so it is the outline for the book.

Chapters 2 and 3 is the Church Age. It is the letters - seven of them - from Jesus to us, to God's people and every generation. Though they're all existing within 50 miles of each other in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, they are certainly indicative of every Church Age, and there're probably many of them found in churches. Certainly they all represent what the Lord sees the church having to face.

In chapters 4 and 5 we find the Lord taking the church to glory, and we get a chance to go to heaven, into the heavenly scene; see Jesus take the scroll from the Father's hand, the title deed, if you will, to the earth.

But then the judgments of God begin. In chapter 6, six seals (out of the seven, the seventh one actually opens the next seven judgments).

Chapter 7 is a break as the Lord stops us, even after those first six seals, and says, "Look at the fruit that is coming out of the Great Tribulation time," the last 3½ years. Chapter 7 is a break.

Chapter 8 and chapter 9, which we will look at this week and next week, are the six trumpet judgments of the seven.

And then, in chapters 10-14 (it's quite a bit of time), there's another break in the chronological action as you stop and, rather than move forward, you look around. And like chapter 7, the Lord gives us more insights into what was going on at that time from chapters 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14.

Then we are able to move a little bit forward. In chapters 15 and 16, we find the seven bowl judgments. They're very quick. They almost compound upon one another.

In chapters 17 and 18 is the judgment of both commercial and religious Babylon and what that represents, if you will.

Chapter 19 is the return of Jesus. Chapter 20 is His 1,000-year reign. Chapter 21 is the new heaven and the new earth.

So it's fairly straightforward. Don't get too bogged down.

In the last five studies, we went through chapters 6 and 7 as Jesus opened the six seals on the scroll. The first seal introduced the Antichrist, and he came to deceive, to win support. It is the only part of the book of Revelation, almost, that we believe is in the first  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years of the Great Tribulation after the church is removed. And then the final tribulation really begins with the second seal, as the Antichrist - halfway through that seven-year period - comes to a rebuilt and finished Temple where sacrifices have begun again, and he demands to be worshipped as God; in fact will make the threat - whether he does that day one or in the days to come - that you take his mark or you die. You can't buy or sell unless you have his mark, and he's the only one that is to be worshipped.

Well, as a result of his introduction to the world for who he is - the second seal - then the seals that follow show us the outcome. The second seal was the red horse of war. The third seal was the black horse of famine. The fourth seal was the pale horse of death in tremendous numbers. The fifth seal begins to show us already that out of that troublesome time, the saints begin to come to heaven; the martyrs begin to arrive; the remnant begins to appear under the throne of God's grace, under His altar, if you will, and crying for vengeance.

The sixth seal brought cosmic disturbances, earthquakes. The skies and the stars falling, darkness. Men began to cower and cry out, "Hide us from God! The day of His great wrath has come."

Then we get to chapter 7, and there's a break, if you will. And before the seventh seal is opened, the Lord shows us the big picture: the salvation, the 144,000 Jewish witnesses (God's mouthpieces), the angel flying through the heavens that we will read about in chapter 14, the two witnesses we will meet in chapter 11 - all contributing factors to this huge gathering of saints that will come out of this time. Chapter 7:1 tells us the numbers are innumerable. So, we want to be sure that we get the big picture because it looks pretty bleak, especially what we're going to read tonight, pretty bleak. But, at the same time, the chronology would tell us that a lot of these things are compacted in fairly small portions of time, and it'll be brutal, but it'll also be over. And John will be told in chapter 10, "You've got a little bit more to write, but it's almost over." You read that in chapter 10. "It's almost over. We're gonna get through this." And so then you still have eleven chapters to go, but, at the same time, in terms of time it moves along very quickly.

Well, tonight, we are going to take chapter 8 together. It'll be the first four trumpets. We return to the chronology that we stopped in chapter 6, and Jesus will now open the seventh seal which will reveal seven trumpet judgments upon an unbelieving world that stands in defiance against Almighty God and is now being led and dominated and threatened by the Antichrist; a world that is no longer free to be sinful. They are now forced into slavery, if you will, to him.

Also, as the opening of the seven seals will reveal the seven judgments, later on the seventh trumpet will reveal the final judgments - the vial or bowl judgments, as they are sometimes called. We are told that they will proceed very quickly. The Lord tells us that in this book; that these last seven that are following will go very quickly. Both of the judgments - in the trumpets, which we begin tonight, and the vial or bowl judgments later - have the same judgments in order, the same kinds of judgments. The only difference is they are distinguished by their intensity. So we see God dealing with them in the same order: first the earth, then the seas, then the rivers, then the heavens, then the demonic torment that is poured out, the gathered armies that seek to fight against God, and finally the nations that He judges. And it'll follow that same pattern in these last two groups of seven.

As we start tonight, in chapter 8, the seven trumpet judgments - and later on in the vial judgments as well - you will begin, if you're reading any commentaries or studying under other teachers, you might find speculators becoming Bible expositors. What I mean by that is they are now going to explain to you what's going on in modern terms. They will take the explanation that John writes, and they will try to tell you what it means, to the best of their ability. Remember John is told back in chapter 1:19, "Write the things that are coming hereafter. You've got to take a good note of what you see." From the standpoint of John writing in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, with his 1<sup>st</sup>-century mindset, he uses a lot of metaphors or similes. He describes what he sees. He may not understand what he sees or how it is produced or that he doesn't fully understand it, but that's really not his responsibility. He's not told to explain to you what he sees. He's told to write what he sees; just to be a reporter. If you were a 1<sup>st</sup>-century inhabitant, and you had to explain to somebody what an engine is or a vapor trail behind a plane, you might be very hard-pressed. You could say, "It looks like," and then you could relate it to something that people could relate to. Because of his use of various descriptive terms, some Bible teachers and commentators seek to theorize or even interpret, if you will, John's description with very fanciful speculations or even reduce what John is saying to some kind of symbolic meaning that they, alone, now will tell you how you should interpret it. And I don't mind guessing at what John might have seen. It is fun to talk in a group about what he might be describing. But at least admit to yourself and to others that you can't be sure and that maybe the bigger lesson, or the bigger picture, or the bigger application, is that God says this will take place. And so it will. Right? His judgments are terrible. God doesn't rejoice in any of them. He would rather you be saved. He doesn't rejoice in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). He sent His Son to deliver man. But this is the end now. This is the time of judgment. This is as far as it goes.

When it comes to Bible study, I think you can be best served by staying as close as possible to the text and to the context. Some of the people that write for a living - not necessarily pastors but writers - will tell you that the first four trumpet judgments here are very emblematic, if you will, of a nuclear fallout on ecology. And I'll say this, "All right. Fine. Whatever you think." But God doesn't need a method for us to describe in order for Him to do what He chooses. And I will show you, at least tonight, or at least make a couple of references to them so you can look them up for yourself, that some of the plagues that God visited upon man in Egypt, when Pharaoh held His people and wouldn't let them go, are almost exactly similar to what we find here. And there was certainly no nuclear fallout in the 1<sup>st</sup>

century or in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century or whenever those things took place - 2200 years before Christ. So we've got to be careful that we don't take it upon ourselves to explain what God is doing. I tend to want to be quiet when the Lord doesn't say anything. If there's a similarity, make the comparison and then leave it at that. Or you can guess all you want, but I'm probably not going to go down that road with you if that's what you're looking for.

Tonight, in these four judgments, they are oftentimes called the 1/3 judgments, and that's because (as they sound) 1/3 of something dies. The focus for the Lord's judgment upon those still living in rebellion is upon the life-supporting systems of the earth. The last two - next week - will focus solely upon man. But now that the 144,000 are sealed by the Lord to protect them, it is time to move forward in these final 3½ years as we approach the coming of the Lord again.

So here's what John writes (chapter 8:1), "When He opened the seventh seal," (speaking of Jesus) "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." John guesses, I guess, that the time in heaven was a half an hour. Some people say, "Hey, you know, there's no time in eternity." Yeah, we get it. But John is having a vision, and he thought it was about half an hour. So from earth's perspective, that's what he understood. I heard a joke one time that someone said, "There can't be any women in heaven if there's been silence for half an hour." (Laughing) But I told them that wasn't nice to say. So you can always count on me. (Told you, Tom, they wouldn't like that.) I'll tell you what. A half an hour of silence can be frightening if you know something bad is about to happen. It must seem like just a long time. And John's been in heaven for a while now, and he's found it to be a place of tremendous, loud, ongoing worship and praise and singing. You've heard "silence is golden," but this silence is not that way. It's ominous. It is foreboding. It is the somber kind of calm before the storm. It is what Zephaniah, when he was prophesying of this day, wrote, "Be silent in the presence of the LORD God; for the day of the LORD is at hand, for the LORD has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests" (Zephaniah 1:7). It is what Zechariah wrote in chapter 2:13 about this time, "Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for He is aroused from His holy habitation!" It is what Habakkuk, the prophet, wrote in chapter 2:20 when he declared, "But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him." Somber time. A time of tremendous judgment. It seems like all of heaven is holding its collective breath.

Our attention, by John, in verse 2, has been drawn to seven more angels. They're new to us as far as the heavenly scene. They haven't been referred to before. Each of them is given a trumpet. They will sound it with a sound. They will announce a judgment from the Lord. And, as with the bowls later and as with the seals before, these actions in heaven have a corresponding action upon the earth; sometime immediate, sometime delayed. But they're sounding the alarm of God's wrath. We know about the four living creatures. We talked about them when we went, in chapter 4, to heaven. They are the seraphim or the cherubim - special angels in God's sight that are defined for us in Ezekiel and in Isaiah. These seven angels - we don't know who they are. They're possibly.....I guess they could be archangels. They seem to have a special place. The word "arch" means chief. If that is so, we know a couple of them. We know of Gabriel, who stands in the presence of the Lord. Zechariah told us that. In fact, Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, met with him when he was serving (Luke 1:19) and told that he was going to have a son. We know about Michael, the fighter angel (in Jude 9 - you can read about him as well). So if that's who they are, then we know two of the seven. I don't know. They are a different group of angels. They could be lots of angels. So, who knows? But we know that one of them, if they are archangels, has a specific job at the rapture when the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout and with the voice of the archangel (1 Thessalonians 4:16), and this time with a trumpet of God. But this trumpet is to declare victory. This one not so much.

Trumpets in the Old Testament served only three purposes. In fact, if you read Numbers 10, all three of them are used in one chapter. They were used to call the people together for prayer or to make announcements or to give directions. They were used to call an army together for war. And then they were used on very special occasions to give the Law, the Feast Days, the anointing of the king, the calling for a fast - things that weren't on the schedule but were scheduled for one reason or another. In the New Testament, there are only two reasons to have the trumpet. The one is to call you home in the rapture, and then there's this one - to announce God's judgment that is to fall.

Well, we read, in verse 3, "Then another angel," (now an eighth 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. So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound." There are some times when you run into people who tell you that the Old Testament studying is boring and without relevance and, "What does it matter to me, living in these days?" And maybe one of the arguments, when you get to these kinds of verses, is, "What does all of this mean, then?" Because the Old Testament tabernacle that was built by Moses in the wilderness was, we are told in Hebrews 9:24, a type of or a picture of or a blueprint of what the heavenly scene would look like. "Christ has not entered into the holy place made without hands, which" (we read) "was a copy of the true, of heaven itself, now to appear before the presence of God for us." So when you go back and study the tabernacle - and there are literally chapters upon chapters to explain that place of worship and meeting between God and man - and you say to yourself, "Gosh, this is endless!" I would say go take it all in because as you do, you're going to get a picture of what is taking place in heaven and what heaven is going to look like. And you may not understand every significant part, but understand this: that, in the tabernacle, every part has a significant aspect of it that represents the work of Jesus and our relationship to Him or His work on our behalf. The altar of sacrifice stood outside. It was the place that the priests would take and offer the offerings, the blood sacrifice that would allow us to go forward and to get closer, if you will, to the Lord. The laver of washing stood outside, too. Ceremonially you washed, but unless the Lord washes you, you're not going to get anywhere near him. The candlesticks and the showbread and the altar of incense, if you will, stood in the holy place. They stood right before the Holy of Holies, behind that curtain. They represented the light that God would bring and the food that He would provide and the prayers that He would answer. But man was still separated, but these were His accesses to the Lord who was behind that curtain into the Holy of Holies. Every morning, every afternoon, the priest would burn incense before the Lord in the holy place. Like I said, this is what John the Baptist's dad, Zacharias, was doing in Luke 1 when he was told about a future son.

Wherever you turn - almost everywhere in the Scriptures - the incense that is related to is related to your prayers. Sweet-smelling, pleasing in the Lord's sight, a privilege of the saints. They could bring and come in before God's presence, bring their needs to Him, set their cares before Him. Psalm 141:2 says, "Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." So understand that when you go to pray, it's like incense before the Lord. You should remember that next time you go pray. Sometimes you might feel like you're just talking to yourself - the Lord seems so far away. But not from

heaven's point of view. And one day, all of these prayers - the cries of the Lord to come, of deliverance, of His goodness, of worship - is all going to be offered to Him, and it is going to be at a time when God pours out His judgment and His wrath upon those who have rejected Him while being blessed and honored, praised and glorified, worshipped by His own. So, from God's perspective, your prayers are sweet-smelling and pleasant, and He loves them.

Well here's this other angel, verse 3, who comes to stand by the altar of incense in heaven, brings a censer containing coals. The coals would have come from the altar of sacrifice (outside), which is significant because your prayers and worship are only acceptable when you first pass through that altar of sacrifice. Unless you go to Jesus, you're not gettin' in. Unless you go to Jesus, your prayers are not heard. Unless you go to Jesus, you'll never be able to enter into a holy place or in fellowship with God. And so the picture is spot on, as you would expect it to be, that your worship is acceptable when it is fueled by the fires outside of sacrifice; the altar where the Lamb was slain, and the blood was shed. So in heaven it will be a tribute to Jesus. It'll always be in central view.

This angel is given, verse 3, much incense to burn. In the Old Testament, incense burned upon the golden altar, the one inside before the Lord's presence. It was made of a special formula. We aren't told what it was made of, but we are told that it was not allowed to be used for personal enjoyment. And someone who tried to do that was put to death. You can read about it in Exodus 30. It has been one of those little stumbling blocks to the Jews today who are preparing for this; that they'll tell you they figured out the formula. I don't know where they got it because it's not in the Bible. But anyway, they're workin' on it somehow.

We are told, in verse 4, that the incense and the prayers it represented are offered before the Lord, and it is awesome to think that every prayer that has been prayed has been stored somewhere as valuable. Because these seem to be brought out at this time. Right? You might have thought you prayed, and it's gone. No. I don't think so. Even when God does not answer immediately, He hears; He doesn't forget, and He is honored by them. You will read often in the Scriptures - as you read through, especially in the New Testament - of the prayers of the saints coming before the presence of the Lord. When Cornelius was praying (Acts 10), and he said to the angel, "What is it, Lord?" and the angel said, "Your prayers and your alms have come up as a memorial before the Lord. You've been praying, and God's been listening." An angel showed up, "What're you doin' here?" Well, God



is answering your prayer. God is responding to you. There's a verse in 2 Chronicles 30 that says, "Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, to heaven" (verse 27). They get through. You know, the thing is if you don't know the Lord, your prayers go up about 6' and then they fall right back down. They never make it. But you know the Lord. You get this direct line. Right? And if you go to Israel, it's closer. No. (Laughing) I don't think that's true. But you'll be told that, I'm pretty sure - you get up on that Temple Mount somewhere. Well maybe not this week, but you'll be all right.

How many years have you prayed for somebody in your family to get saved, or a friend, and one day they come to Jesus? And I suspect that the prayers are those that God has stored up. He remembers. He hears. It does seem, in this case, that the prayers here might very well be particular to those who are crying out for justice as, remember, we read a couple of chapters ago. "How long, Lord, are we going to have to wait?" (chapter 6:10) "How long before You judge?" There's a prayer in Psalm 59 of the people during this time. And here's their prayer, verse 13, "Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be; and let them know that God rules in Jacob to the ends of the earth." So there's this crying out for the Lord to judge. And you will find Asaph writing in Psalm 83. These are his words, verses 14-18, "As the fire burns the woods, and as the flame sets the mountains on fire, so pursue them with Your tempest, and frighten them with Your storm. Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O LORD. Let them be confounded and dismayed forever; yes, let them be put to shame and perish, that they may know that You, whose name alone is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth." Those are prayers of the saints. "God, make Yourself known." And I'm sure that you've prayed that kind of prayer for a long time as well. It reminds me of "How long, Lord?" in chapter 6:10 or even the cry of the blood of Enoch. So I think these prayers are probably more on point with that, I suspect.

Verse 5 tells us that the angel then takes this censer, fills it with fire from the altar. And, like we said, that fire comes from the offer of sacrifice. And then he throws that down to the earth. And as a result - again, an action in heaven - the consequences upon the earth: there is noise and thunder and lightning and an earthquake. The same fire that consumed the Lamb, where His blood was poured out to cover our sins, that same fire that brought sweet prayers from many, now brings judgment to the rebel. Why? Because the judgment of God during the Great Tribulation is only about His Son. Right? The world ultimately answers to

God for denying that they need His Son or, if you will, valuing His blood as useless. You could make it yourself. Why? If you could make it yourself, God shouldn't have sent His Son. If there's another way to be saved, it was the most cruel example of hatefulness that a Father could show to His Son. "Well, I'll just let you die, and you'll be door #2. There'll be a door #1, you can do your thing. Door #3, you compare yourself to others and grade at least 51%. And then there's you." No, there's only one life, only one name, only one way. And so even here, the judgment of God - that fire that saved us, the sacrifice that we look to, the blood that is shed that brings us into His presence so we can have our prayers heard - is now the judgment stick for the world. And so, again, acted out very clearly in the Old Testament picture, if you will. And then, as this fire is thrown from the place of judgment, from the altar of sacrifice, the presence of God is known in the terms of lightning and thunder and earthquakes and noises heard in the sky, if you will.

The wrath of God against man - in its purest sense - is just the rejection of the sacrifice of Jesus. They despised the Lamb, if you will, and that's going to be the issue. In Isaiah 6, you might remember, "In the year that King Uzziah died," Isaiah said, "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up." And then Isaiah realized that he was standing in God's presence, but he wasn't fit to be there. And so he cries out, in chapter 6:5, "'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.' Then one of the seraphim," it says, "flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar." Same altar. And in his repentance for his sin, it says, "And he touched my mouth with it, and said: 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged.'" So, when we go there, our prayers get through; we get into the holy place. We enter into God's presence. But here, the world that's facing the judgment of God, are all facing His wrath because - and simply because - they have rejected His Son.

So, the reaction upon the earth is - the visible signs are the things that we've seen before. In fact, the Bible talks about God being a consuming fire (Exodus 24:17, Deuteronomy 4:24, Hebrews 12:29), that either He is going to refine you by trusting in Him, or He's going to destroy you because you've decided not to follow Him. What did Jesus say in Matthew 21 there? He said, about the stone, "And whoever falls on this stone" (speaking of Jesus) "will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder" (verse 44). So here's the declaration from that very picture of God's judgment upon a world that has decided that they can go

without the Lord. And they're either going to face Jesus as Savior or as Judge. And this is Judge.

As the prayers of the saints, like incense, rise up in worship, and the coals from the fire of sacrifice are thrown down upon a Christ-rejecting world, they hear noises. The word in Greek is voices. It's actually "phone" (pho-nay), like phone. They hear voices equal to what John, you might remember, heard in chapter 4 when he got around the throne of God. And it is identical to God's presence in Exodus 19, where the children of Israel had six weeks been out of Egypt, had been traveling into the desert, and they met with God at Mount Sinai. And you remember that the LORD had told them to stay back and that the mountain was holy. "If you get across this line, you're going to die." God was holy. But as the LORD began to make Himself known - the reality of His presence with His people - these very same things you will read (like I said, in Exodus 19:16-19) scared the people. It was lightning and thunder and earthquake and even the trumpet sounds. But the point is these judgments preceded from His throne because God is speaking. God is moving. God is judging. And those that are left have decided that the sacrifice of His Son wasn't worth it, and so they meet the God of judgment, the fire of His judgment. Pretty symbolic but pretty powerful as well. And so the angels step forward. They take their places. The trumpets are placed in their hands, and they are about to blow.

Verse 7: First Trumpet, "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." Fire mixed with blood, and hail falling to the earth, destroying 1/3 of the trees and all of the grasses or the vegetation upon the earth. We do know - because we've gone through the book - that, by the time you get to chapter 9:4, the grasses will have grown back because the locusts will actually begin to eat them and march through them for a while. They're actually directed by the Lord to do that. So when we try to find timeframes, we can say to ourselves, "Well, after this, at least there was enough time for the grass to grow back." It doesn't take that long, but, in any case, this is the first of the trumpet judgments.

If you go to Exodus 9 (on your own), you will find the seventh plague of ten plagues that God brought upon Egypt because the Pharaoh decided he wasn't going to let the people go. And you will find the plague there to be exactly what you read here. It is literally reproduced here. Joel, the prophet, writing many, many years

before, wrote this (Joel 1:15-2:1), "Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty. Is not the food cut off before our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seed shrivels under the clods, storehouses are in shambles; barns are broken down, for the grain has withered. How the animals groan! The herds of cattle are restless, because they have no pasture; even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment. O LORD, to You I cry out; for fire has devoured the open pastures, and a flame has burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field also cry out to You, for the water brooks are dried up, and fire has devoured the open pastures. Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand." He said, two chapters later, "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke" (Joel 2:30). "He gave them," Psalm 105, "hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He struck their vines also, and their fig trees, and splintered the trees of their territory" (verses 32-33). And on and on it goes. But you see, all of those prophecies - looking way ahead - were maybe fulfilled in part for the historical time for which they were written, but they are ultimately fulfilled in the future time when the Lord will come.

So I think I've told you before, the best way to study prophecy, rather than just to sit down and read the whole book of Isaiah, which is going to be very difficult, is to find the time where Isaiah was speaking, and then allow yourself to read them in that context that is set before you.

Sodom and Gomorrah, by the way, was destroyed in Genesis 19 in the exact same manner. Go read it for yourself. The only difference between those and this is those were both localized judgments; this is worldwide. So the scope of it is obviously very great.

The word for "tree" here is the word for fruit tree. The word for "grass" here is the general word in the Greek for oats or wheat, suggesting maybe a famine that might follow, as we read in Joel - pasture, affects livestock, affects milk, affects grain. In both the plagues - in Egypt as well - men and beasts suffered and lost their lives with fire mixed with blood. So, not unique.

Now, like I said, people will say, "Well, that's nuclear fallout." Well, it might be, but I wonder what it was back in Egypt. And so I would say this to you: the Lord did it. How did He do it? I don't know. Nor do I care to know. It really doesn't

matter to me. That He is going to do that is all that I need to know. Whether we can speculate about how God causes this, it's almost without significance because He doesn't really tell us, and the world only needs to know - as Pharaoh did - that they're fighting with God, and they're going to lose. So if you can come to that conclusion, you'll be in good shape. In fact, it seems to me it might be better to view all of these things as simply supernatural in origin rather than trying to discover natural explanations. It's God's wrath. It's His last word. He'll have His last word. But, needless to say, if you start reading a lot of commentaries, you're going to get a lot of help trying to decide what these things are.

Verse 8: Second Trumpet, "Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain" (here's John, "something like," metaphor, simile) "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." Now, again, you can come up with all kinds of, "Here's what happens, here's what it is," and I'll just go, "All right, good for you." But it says "like."

If you go to Exodus 7, the first plague in Egypt, the LORD turns the waters of the Nile and the tributaries to blood throughout Egypt. So God knows what He's doing. He knows how to do these things. Since  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the world is covered with water, imagine the impact of this worldwide. What does John see? To John's eye, a fiery mountain of sorts. Was it a meteor? I don't know. I don't know what it was. I just know God did it. God did it. It came from heaven to the earth. And, like I said, the speculators will fill books with maybes. My word to you is the only thing I'm sure of is that God caused it, and the results are horrific, and He hates it. But the judgment has to fall at some point. In Isaiah 2:12-21, Isaiah wrote this, "For the day of the LORD of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up - and it shall be brought low - upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan; upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up; upon every high tower, and upon every fortified wall; upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all the beautiful sloops. The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, but the idols He shall utterly abolish. They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily. In that day a man will cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they made, each for himself to worship, to the moles and bats, to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crags of the rugged rocks,

from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily." Hosea writes, chapter 4:3, "Therefore the land will mourn; and everyone who dwells there will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; even the fish of the sea will be taken away." Zephaniah writes, chapter 1:2-3, " 'I will utterly consume everything from the face of the land,' says the LORD; 'I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, and the stumbling blocks along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the face of the land,' says the LORD." It goes on and on. So don't think He hasn't warned us that this is coming. Will you be here? You will not. But the blood will indicate a lot of death. I'm sure, living in southern California, you probably, if you're a beachgoer, are aware of red tides. And if you've ever gotten anywhere near the beach, what the plankton do to the pollution and the water temperature's rising begin to die, you can't even get near the water, it stinks so bad. So I can just imagine how this might go - when 1/3 of all marine life is affected, even sinking 1/3 of the ships on the oceans of the world. God is angry. He's angry that His Son has been trampled underfoot. His judgment has come.

Verse 10: Third Trumpet, "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." The third trumpet affects drinking water, fresh water. Again, John - 1<sup>st</sup>-century mindset - looks like a big star falling from heaven. But the star is pretty targeted; it goes after the springs and the water supply. It just hits a river and the source of a river. It's very.....even, "Well, what's falling out of the sky?" It seems to be a guided missile, and the Lord is guiding the missile. A third of the world's fresh water, drinking water, is contaminated. "Wormwood" is a word from the Old Testament associated with poison or with bitterness. You might read about it, there in Deuteronomy 29:18, that says the LORD says, "Don't let a root of bitterness or wormwood come from your hearts." There is no direct plague in Egypt to correlate with this, as far as I can tell.

We do know, in Exodus chapter 15, however, once the children of Israel get out of Egypt, that the people, being led out of Egypt by Moses, end up in a place called Marah. And it is called Marah because the waters there were extremely bitter. They couldn't drink it; they couldn't survive. These 3 million+ people were in a dire strait. They even began to, "Thanks a lot, Moses. You got us out of Egypt to get us to die here without water." The LORD directs Moses to throw a tree into the

bitter waters; it's really kind of an allusion or symbolic to the cross. John 7:38 - He'll give us fountains of living water. So the tree is thrown in, and the water is healed. Jesus, to this day, by His grace, is making bitter lives sweet with forgiveness. But one day, the dreams and the ambitions that drive man will be as bitter as the water they have to drink.

*National Geographic*, a couple of years ago, came out with a publication that named the 100 principal rivers that the world's drinking water depends upon: from the Amazon, which is about 4,000 miles, I believe, long to Rio de la Plata, which is about 150 miles long (pretty small). The US Geological Survey says that the US has primarily 30 rivers that they depend upon for their water, starting or being led by the Mississippi, which is, I believe, 3,700 miles long (almost as long as the Amazon). But imagine if 1/3 of all of those waters become polluted and undrinkable. It is already a problem in many arid places in third world countries. Imagine what this will do. We can wreck our environment and illegally dump junk in the oceans, but when the Lord moves, it's going to radically affect life. By the way, there's no reasonable explanation for this as many of these Bible scholars would like to tell you. There's no reasonable explanation where something hits just a river or just a source of the river. But it is a time of judgment upon the earth.

The fourth and final one that we're going to look at tonight is in verse 12, "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. 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!' " The heavens are affected in the fourth trumpet: the light, the heat, the energy that we would receive not arriving at the earth.

Again, going back to Egypt, in the ninth plague (Exodus 10), you remember that the LORD brought, before the death of the firstborn, tremendous darkness upon the earth. You remember that? For three days. In fact, it was so dark that it is described in Exodus as being able to put your hand in front of your face and not being able to see it. And it was a kind of a heaviness that came with it. That one was localized, and it was short. This one is worldwide, and it appears to be significantly longer. Again, if you turn to the prophets, the prophets warned of these things, very clearly so. Isaiah writes, in chapter 13:9-11, "Behold, the day of

the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine. I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." Amos writes, in chapter 5:20, "Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light? Is it not very dark, with no brightness in it?" Later on, when we get to the fourth vial - and remember I told you they're similar, just in terms of intensity - you will see the reverse taking place. The Lord will take these same elements of the heavens, and the sun will shine brighter and brighter (Revelation 16:8-9) and actually burn; it'll become an enemy. Then, right before Jesus returns again, Matthew tells us, in chapter 24:29-30, again the sun will be darkened, and it won't give its light. So this is going to take place in the heavens more than once. The world is certainly going to be able to know who they're dealing with. But, look, God, alone, can turn on and off the heavens that He has made. Make no mistake about it. He wants everyone to know they're dealing with Almighty God. He controls the light, the switches. So, many of the Old Testament prophets speak about this darkness, and they refer to this time or this period of time at the end of the Great Tribulation before the Lord's return. Again, if you read lots of scholars, they will tell you this is nuclear fallout or nuclear winter, and that's just the consequence. And they're taking, I guess, God's hand out of the thing is what it sounds like, more than anything, to me; which is why I guess I'm driving home the point. I just want you to leave it with the Lord. Know that He's the One behind it. It's His Word, His actions. The prophets 700 years earlier - before He was born - talked about it happening. It has still to take place. We're still waiting for this to happen. But everything else has been fine. Everything else has been right on, 100%. So, it may very well be that, just as in Exodus, God is just putting Himself on display so that no one doubts His power or has reason to refuse Him or doubt Him any longer. Unfortunately, like the Pharaoh, despite the evidence, most in the Scriptures that we read about - at least those who don't end up as martyrs - they don't repent, they'll die in their sins, and their very last days will be much like the last days in Egypt for the Egyptians with the Pharaoh.

Well we end, in verse 13, with a warning as these four trumpets have passed. An angel - another angel now - is flying through the midst of heaven. Not coming to the earth but flying to the midst of heaven. And his warning is frightful. You read these things, and you say, "Man, that's pretty bad what's goin' on!" And we would agree. Horrible! The 1/3 judgments. But he said, "Woe, woe, woe, there are three



judgments still to come, and they are horrible." Now we'll take two of them next week, but then we won't even pick up the third one, or the last one that will open the bowl judgments, until chapter 16. We'll have a prelude to them in chapter 15. So when we get through chapter 9 next week, we're going to spend four or five weeks just looking around, kind of filling in all of the gaps that you might have questions about. What's going on here? What's going on there? And the Lord's going to give us many things to think about. But the woes would say that what was coming is even worse than what has come. They will bring even more sorrow and suffering than the previous four. It's almost like, "You ain't seen nothin' yet!" And that's what this verse says. I believe, personally, this angel is here to encourage John and those watching. God has begun to lay His hand upon the rebellious. They have freely been able to choose their path, and they have chosen to fight God. God now is beginning to remove life-sustaining things from them that they've always enjoyed without being thankful for: the food, the grains, the light, the water. God takes care of everyone. He blesses all, any who don't call upon Him as well. He's been a merciful God. But now notice they're being systematically removed from their lives so that no one is left on the earth to wonder who they're dealing with. And I really believe God, in His mercy, wants them to be sure they understand who they're messin' around with so that He might then draw them to Himself.

I think next week we might just take the first twelve verses because there's a lot in there, and I don't want you to miss it. And we'd like to look at these locusts. It's pretty frightening. I'm glad we're gonna be in heaven. That's all I gotta say. I get creeped out when I see spiders in my bathroom. This is worse. (Laughing) All right? Praise the Lord, we're goin' to heaven. Let's allow the Lord to warn us sufficiently and take concern enough to tell our neighbors, to tell our friends, to tell those folks at church or at work or at school - hopefully not at church - that they need to be ready.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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