

## **A Study on Revelation chapter 8**

### **CHAPTER 8**

- 1. And when He opened the seventh seal, silence was birthed (came into existence; occurred; came to be) within the heaven for about (something like; as) half an hour.**
- 2. And I saw the seven agents (messengers) -- the ones having stood and now standing before (in the presence and sight of) God. And seven trumpets were given to them.**
- 3. And another agent (messenger) came and was stationed (was set; is made to stand) upon the altar, continuously holding a golden censer. And it was given to him many incenses (or: much incense), to the end that he may give [them, or, it] by the prayers (or: in the prayers; that he may impart to the prayers) of the set-apart ones (the holy ones; the saints), upon the golden altar which is before the throne.**
- 4. And the smoke of the incenses ascended, by (in) the prayers of the set-apart ones, from out of the agent's hand, before God (in God's sight and presence).**
- 5. And the agent had taken the censer and filled it full out of the fire of the altar, and he threw [fire; or, the censer] into the Land (earth; soil). And thunders and sounds (or: voices) and lightnings and shakings birthed themselves (of themselves came into being).**
- 6. And the seven agents (messengers) -- the ones holding the seven trumpets -- prepared themselves (made themselves ready), so that they may sound the trumpets.**
- 7. And the first one sounded a trumpet; and hail and fire mixed in blood was birthed (came to be) [or: hail and fire came to be mixed with blood], and it was thrown into the Land (earth; soil). And the third of the trees was burned down, and all pale-green pasture (grass) was burned down.**
- 8. And the second agent trumpeted; and something like a great mountain, continuously being burned in fire, was thrown into the sea. And the third of the sea came to be blood.**
- 9. And the third of the creatures within the sea -- the ones (or: things) having souls -- died. And the third of the ships was thoroughly ruined (decayed; destroyed).**
- 10. And the third agent sounded a trumpet. And a great star, continuously burning as a lamp (a shining one), fell out of the heaven, and it fell upon the third of the rivers and upon the springs of the waters.**
- 11. And the name of the star is called Wormwood (or: Absinth). And the third of the waters are being birthed (are coming to be) wormwood. And many of the men (or mankind) died from out of the waters, because they were embittered (made bitter).**
- 12. And the fourth agent trumpeted; and the third of the sun and the third of the moon, and the third of the stars were struck (received a blow), to the end that the third of them may be darkened, and the day may not shine [for] the third of it -- and the night in like manner.**

12. And I saw and heard one vulture (or: eagle), constantly flying within mid-heaven, repeatedly saying by a great voice, "Woe (Alas)! Woe (Alas)! Woe (Alas)! for those (to or in the ones) constantly dwelling upon the Land (earth), from out of the midst of the remaining sounds (voices) of the trumpets of the three agents who are about to be continuously sounding a trumpet!"

Looking again at the phenomenon of silence in heaven for about half an hour (vs. 1), Nelson's Bible Dict. says, "silence: the absence of noise or sound." The CLNT translates the word as "a hush." Nelson goes on to say, "The word silence is used in the Bible to symbolize death (Ps. 94:17) and sheol (Ps. 115:17) ..."

Ps. 94:17, "Were not the LORD my Help, I should soon dwell in silence." (Tanakh)

Ps. 115:17, "The dead thank not the LORD, nor all who go to silence." (Fenton)

In Hab. 2:20 it says, "But the LORD [is] in His holy Abode -- be silent before Him all the earth!" (Tanakh) Yet here it is heaven, and all therein, that is silent.

Ps. 62:2, "Truly my soul waits quietly for God; my deliverance comes from Him." (Tanakh)

Zech. 2:13 gives a word appropriate to our study, "Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD! For He is roused from His holy habitation." (Tanakh)

Matthew Henry comments on ch. 8:1, that it may be "a silence of expectation."

Barclay says that it might be either "a kind of breathing-space in the narrative, a moment of preparation before another shattering revelation comes," or "that everything in heaven halts so that the prayers of the saints may be heard."

I tend towards the insights given by Ray Prinzing:

"One of the difficult tests in the life of the believer is that of 'silence,' and yet it is used of God in preparation for greater things to come. 'Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord.' (Zech. 2:13) The more we are stripped of all flesh-works, the more inner Christ-life can find expression through us. Silence is a vital part of the inworking of redemption -- it is a proving time whether we will seek for 'other voices,' or wait until He speaks to us again. A time of silence will test our ability to keep focused on Him. Thus it is also a mark that we are His. 'The sheep follow Him: for they know His voice... for they know not the voice of strangers.' (John 10:4-5) .... So purified, so becoming one with the Spirit, the soul is now silent before Him. A ceasing from all self-motion and noise. Trusting in HIS GRACE alone, to 'rest (be silent) in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.' (Ps. 37:7) No longer the agitation of the mind, with thoughts in a turmoil, for the mind is renewed into oneness with the mind of Christ.... 'Praise waiteth (IS SILENT) for Thee, O God, in Zion.' (Ps. 65:1) The highest order of anything is to BECOME that thing -- and when PRAISE is silent before the Lord, it signifies that we have BECOME HIS PRAISE, and in this state of being we stand before Him -- what we are IS a praise to Him." (Revelation, A Positive Book, by Ray Prinzing)

Why for about "half an hour"? If this be, as some suggest, an interlude, then it is a short one. If it be a time of rest, then that too is a short one. But let us most of all keep in mind that this is a unit of "time." Even though it is "within the heaven," it pertains to the earth, for earth is where time exists -- within His creation.

This next scene -- whether a part of the opening of the 7th seal, or the beginning of the next vision -- is one that involves God's agents, His messengers. John was shown seven agents who are given seven trumpets. The scene immediately changes, momentarily, and we see another agent in another scene -- or, in a separate part of the same vision. Let us keep in mind that this is a vision: using symbols, figures. What does each agent, or messenger, in this vision represent? Remember that one was seemingly in charge, or at

least the contact person, of each of the "seven churches". An agent signifies one who represents and works for and handles the power and authority of God.

Here we see an agent who was stationed upon the altar. He continuously holds a golden censer. He is given many incenses -- many prayers (Rev. 5:8 -- in this vision it is the elders who had the bowls brimming with incenses "which are the prayers of the set-apart ones") -- that he may offer these, by means of the prayers of the set-apart ones, upon the golden altar which is before the throne. The setting is the "holy place," the location of the incense altar within the tabernacle (or, temple). It was stationed just before the ark, a figure of God's throne of mercy, the beautiful veil separating the two.

I suggest that this agent represents the praying aspect of the set-apart ones, the function of the body which as priests offer prayer, praise and worship. "May my prayer be established as incense before You, the lifting of my palms as the evening approach present." (Pa. 141:2) This agent represents the body of Christ in prayer and worship. We are made to stand (set, stationed) upon the altar of incense. We are given, by the Spirit, many prayers to offer upon this altar before God. The smoke that ascends from this altar is a figure of the cloud of God's presence and leadership -- as was the cloud of the Holy Spirit that guided Israel in the wilderness.

In vs. 5 we see that the agent (His sons) had taken the censer and filled it full out of the fire of the altar. As our God is a consuming fire, these energize their prayers from filling their vessels with the burning presence and being of God Himself. These prayers (for His kingdom to come, for His will to be done on earth) are cast, thrown, into the land (the earth: the realm which is to be ruled by heaven). The thunders, voices (or, sounds) and lightnings are a figure of the power, presence, Word, illumination, and activity of God. Once again we see an echo of the scene of God's presence manifested at Mt. Sinai. In David's Psalm of Thanksgiving (2 Sam. 22:15) lightning is used as a figure for God troubling and routing the enemy. In Ezk. 1:13, lightning came from out of the fire which moved among the living creatures (figures of the body of Christ, in Ezk's. vision). Here it is His agent (the body) which He uses to express Himself. The signs of His presence, etc., accompany these fire-empowered prayers which they throw into the land. Another interesting point is that "in the Temple incense was burned and offered before the 1st and after the last sacrifices of the day." (Barclay) Is this characteristic of the "Day of the Lord"? Barclay further points out that this picture is similar to the vision in Ezk., "in which the man in the linen-cloth takes coals from between the cherubim and scatters them over the city (Ezk. 10:2)."

In vs. 6, John noted that the seven agents (messengers) prepared themselves to sound forth their messages. In God's program there is always preparation needed. The types in the sacrifices and worship portrayed in the Law attest to this. Were this not important, it would not have been necessary to include this fact in order to give the message of this scene.

Characteristic of this book, there are seven agents. Remember, 7 is an idea. This is a complete message. Each agent, or messenger, gives a specific aspect of the message of this vision. Each one has his own message, but each is but a part of the whole.

The vision begins by entering His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise (Ps. 100:4): prayer and worship. Next the burning prayers are thrown into the land. Now, when the first agent sounds forth his message [recall that a trumpet was used as a means of communicating a message to the people of the land: they were use to 1) sound an alarm, 2) as fanfare for the arrival of royalty or the coronation of a king, 3) a call to battle, or

commands within battle, 4) a call to feast days] the result is that hail and fire mixed in blood is thrown into the land. This is reminiscent of the "miraculous signs" of God in Ex. 10:1. I wonder if this is a description of the ministry of the two witness as described in Rev. 11, where in vs.6 one characteristic of their ministry echoes the plagues brought upon the land through God's agent Moses. These seven messages may be an amplification of that ministry.

Notice also in vs. 7 that part of pastures and trees are destroyed: also an echo of the plagues in Egypt. I wonder if this speaks to the beginning of God's work: passover -- judgement upon the world (figure of the flesh nature) and deliverance of God's people (our personal experience of Passover).

In vs. 8 we have the second message. A figure of a great mountain continuously burning with fire. This figure has had opposing interpretations. Malcolm Smith sees this as a symbol of the kingdom of God being plunged into the sea of humanity: a picture of the main message of this Unveiling -- The Little Lamb rules! Perhaps there is merit to this view. The third of the sea becoming blood speaks to another of the signs in Egypt. Was the water turned to blood there a symbol of the lambs that were to be slaughtered? Does this symbolize the fact that we must drink His blood (John 6:55,56)?

The opposing view is that this mountain is a figure of Babylon (another captor of God's people) and that this scene is a reference to Jer. 51, the judgment of Babylon, and specifically vs. 25, "See, I will deal with you, O mountain of the destroyer -- declares the LORD -- Destroyer of the whole earth! I will stretch out My hand against you and roll you down from the crags, and make you a burnt-out mountain." (Tanakh) Another reference is Zech. 4:7, "What are you, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you are to be a level plain." (CVOT)

Mountains in the Scriptures speak of kingdoms. Perhaps it was this mountain that Jesus spoke of in Mt. 21:21 where He said, "... but if you may say to this mountain 'Be thou lifted up and be cast into the sea,' it will come to be (be birthed)."

The sea speaks of humanity (cf Rev. 4:6; 5:13 comments). So whichever kingdom this represents, it is cast into humanity. That the 3rd of the sea came to be blood seems a reference to the plagues in Egypt, so I would conclude that this speaks of a judgment on mankind which will work into the good (deliverance) for God's people. His kingdom coming into humanity would do this. The fall of Babylon would also fit this scene. This could obviously prefigure the fall of Jerusalem and the blood which flowed there.

What do the creatures within the sea represent? In Gen. 1:21 we see, "And creating is the Elohim great monsters and every living moving SOUL, with which the water roams .... and blessing them is the Elohim, saying, 'Be fruitful and increase and fill the water of the seas.' " (CVOT) Here in vs. 9 it is specified that the third of the ones having souls are the ones in the sea that died. Is He speaking of fish, dolphins, etc.? If He were, do these have souls? Yes, see Gen 1:20, (in the Heb.). Or is the specification of "having souls" a key to tell us that He is speaking of people, because this is symbolic, not literal? Like when He gave an explanation of what the stars and lampstands meant in ch. 1:20?

That some of the ships were ruined would speak of the means of transportation used on the sea. It would affect their means of commerce. It would limit their ability to escape or to be about the things one does on the sea -- meaning that their lives and way of life would be impacted. That some would die could symbolize their no longer being a part of, or involved in, the world figured by "the sea." In using the figure of the sea, it would seem that this is speaking of those not considered to be in "the church," or God's people. The thrusting of the burning kingdom into humanity is having direct results. The thought occurs to me, that if

these messages are associated with the pattern of Israel in relation to Egypt, then later to the nations encountered on their journeys and the entering of Canaan, could this burning mountain be a figure of the kingdom of Israel as it was taken from Egypt and cast into the nations? They sure had an effect upon those nations and their ways of life. The imagery which I see here reminds me of the stone which smote the image upon his feet, and then "became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." (Dan. 2:31-35). Daniel explains in vs. 44 that the stone which became a mountain is a kingdom.

In vs. 10 the third message is given. Here we see a star. It is continuously burning as a lamp (or, a shining one). It fell out of the heaven. It fell upon part of the rivers and springs. In vs. 11 the waters become what the star is: absinth or wormwood (bitterness). Many of mankind die from bitterness.

If we can reconstruct the scene which John saw, I suspect that he saw what we would call a meteorite, fall from the sky and land upon the springs and rivers.

Recall the journey of Israel after they had passed through the sea and went three days into the wilderness and came to Marah (bitterness). They had found no other water, but the waters at Marah were too bitter to drink. The solution was, "...Yahweh directed him (Moses) to a tree. So he flung it into the waters, and the waters were sweet. There He made for them a statute and a judgment, and there He probed them ..." (Ex.15:22-26, CVOT) The Tree (the Cross of Christ) turns our bitterness into sweetness!

The churches to which this letter was written would have remembered this story and would have made the association. Israel's next step is recorded in Ex. 15:27, "Then they came to Elim; there were 12 springs of water and 70 palms there. So they encamped there by the waters." The message is clear: although the heavens decree and send down bitterness into that from which we draw our life and refreshing, turn to the cross. He will then move you to the life and refreshing of the whole household of God (the 12 tribes) and sustain you with fullness of prosperity (7X10 palms) and sustenance.

Bitterness of heart or soul can bring death to spirit, soul, and eventually to the body. This is true of a church, or, corporate body, as well.

Remember that a star is an agent, or messenger (Rev.1:20). This one comes from heaven -- the realm of the Spirit -- to bring a negative situation into the lives of mankind. But remember the lesson of Ex. 15. The bitterness need not be the end. Absinth (wormwood) is an herb (related to sagebrush) that is very bitter. That the star is named Wormwood signifies the quality or character of its message and dealing. "Bitter as the wormwood might be that is used to purge out the error of tradition, carnal concepts, the false self-image, etc., yet when He has finished this tremendous judgment, 'The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' (Hab. 2:14). God has appointed HIS CLEANSING AGENTS and they shall be most effective in their working, and though bringing death to the old, it also bespeaks of the preparation for the birthing of the new." (Prinzing)

Vs. 12 brings the 4th message. The third of the sun, moon and stars were darkened. Part of the day and part of the night are not allowed to shine, to have light. This would seem to parallel the opening of the 6th seal (ch. 6:12,13). Once again we see the things that govern their lives, the things that give light and instruction and guidance, come under restraints. For the people of God, there come times and dealings from God where faith and hope must carry us through dark nights of the soul and situations where we can see nothing.

Isa. 13 is a pronouncement against Babylon. In vs. 10-11 we have, "The stars and constellations of heaven shall not give off their light; the sun shall be dark when it rises, and

**the moon shall diffuse no glow. And I will requite to the wicked their iniquity; I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant and humble the haughtiness of tyrants."**

**"... and with the extinguishing of earth's lights, comes the forth-shining of God's luminaries of the new creation order. HE IS 'the True Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' (John 1:19) And He is also 'The Father of lights...' (Jas. 1:17) He births after His own kind. 'Now are ye light in the Lord.' (Eph. 5:8) To the new order He speaks, 'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: [as the earth's lights are diminished] but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.' (Isa.60:1-3)" (Prinzing)**

**In Ex. 10:21-23, the ninth plague, "Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days .... yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived."**

**Vs. 13 seems to mark an interlude: one vulture (or, eagle) continuously flying in the sky with a message of three woes, which are the messages to be sounded out by the remaining three agents. The message comes from the heavens. The woes are to those who continuously dwell upon the land, the earth realm. As Ray Prinzing points out, the woes are in every realm: spirit, soul and body. God brings His judgments (woes) to the earth to prepare men to live in the heavens (when His judgments are in the earth, the people learn righteousness).**

**Both vultures and eagles are often seen flying alone. The vulture is searching out the dead flesh -- perhaps that of those who died from the bitterness of the wormwood. On this latter, we have Jer. 9:14-15, "Assuredly, thus said the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to feed that people wormwood and make them drink a bitter draft. I will scatter them among nations ... I will dispatch the sword after them until I have consumed them." Vs. 12 of this passage tells why: "Because they forsook the Teaching I had set before them." So, once they are consumed, the vulture will do its work until only dry bones are left. All flesh gone and bones separated one from another, then will they be ready for the Spirit of God to blow upon them.**

**"Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine ..." (Prov.23:29,30) The old wine of Mat. 9:17? Woe in the O.T. was an indication that judgment was to come. And so here.**