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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes

## INTRODUCTION

In chapter 7 we noticed the loud, exciting, dynamic praise that fills heaven. Heaven is going to be a noisy place. If you think you are going to find a nice little corner under a tree and be quiet and still, you haven't read the book of Revelation. It's going to be filled with vibrant worship and praise. Then, we come to chapter 8, verse 1. I heard a preacher say one time, "The Bible says there will be no women in heaven." Revelation 8:1 tells us why. "When he opened the seventh seal there was silence in heaven for about a half an hour." The thing about verse 1 that does stand out is that as far as we know that's the only time there is silence in heaven. There's great activity but at this point there is a pregnant pause as if great expectations are to follow. It is the announcement of the seven trumpets. If you will remember, I said during the time of Tribulation there are seven seals then there are seven trumpets then there are seven bowls of wrath. The seventh seal in chapter 8:1 leads into the seven trumpets. The seventh trumpet is going to lead into the seven bowls of wrath. Let's look at these seven seals as we think about, "The Sky Is Falling...Really!"

In verse 2 John says, "And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Another angel, who had a golden censer [an ornate, burning lamp hanging from a chain in which incense is burned] came and stood at the altar." Yes, there is an altar in heaven. In fact the temple on earth built in Jerusalem was patterned after the altar in heaven. "He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake."

We're going to look at chapter 8 and divide it into two sections. First, we'll look at verses 1-6 and the angels, in heaven because the first six verses talk about special angels in heaven.

We are in the part of Revelation that discusses the seven year Tribulation. Why are there seven years? Remember when we looked at Daniel chapter 9, the seventieth week of Daniel, and Jesus talked about a great time of Tribulation coming upon the earth. I believe with all my heart as I understand the book of Revelation we will not be here during this time of Tribulation I'm talking about tonight. Then at the end of that seven year Tribulation us Armageddon, when Jesus Christ and all the saints, which includes us, are going to come back for the great Battle of Armageddon. We're going to read about it in Revelation 19. Revelation 4:1 through chapter 18 describes the seven-year period of Tribulation. Then, after the Battle of Armageddon comes the Millennium, one thousand years. The Bible says in Revelation 20, there is going to be a thousand year reign of Christ on the earth. At the end of the thousand year reign is the Great White Throne Judgment. Revelation 20 says after the thousand year reign of Christ on earth there will be the Great White Throne Judgment. After that is eternity. Chapter 21 of Revelation describes this time.

That gives you an idea where we are. We are right in the middle of the seven year Tribulation. As I told you last week that's what I believe is going to happen in the future. If you read Billy Graham's wonderful book, *Approaching Hoofbeats*, he talks about the time of Tribulation pretty much along the lines we are studying here.

## **I. THE ANGELS IN HEAVEN**

### **A. Trumpet angels**

There are two groups of angels as they receive these trumpets pictured here. I'll call the first group "The Trumpet Angels," because there are seven angels in heaven who are given these seven trumpets. What are trumpets in the Bible? In Numbers chapter 10, you will discover trumpets played a very important role in Bible history. Basically, people blew trumpets for three reasons. Number one, they blew trumpets to announce a public gathering. Of course they didn't have sirens back then they didn't have telephones or television so whenever they wanted to gather a crowd, they would play the trumpets and the crowd would gather whatever time it was. Number two they blew trumpets to announce battle. Whenever war was declared and a nation was called to war, the trumpets were blown. Number three trumpets were blown to announce any special event like the anointing of the king, the dedication of the temple, or any special event.

We don't use those a lot anymore, but I think most of you have seen enough old-timey movies where heralds played long trumpets to announce something like that. That's pretty much what's pictured here. These angels are announcing something that is about to happen. These seven angels are special; these are the seven angels who stand in the presence of the Lord. This is speculation but one of them probably is Gabriel, because in Luke 1:19, Gabriel appears and says, "I am Gabriel who stands in the presence of the Lord!" It's as if he plays the role of one of these. Only three angels in the Bible are ever named: Gabriel, Michael and Lucifer, the fallen angel. Angels are never numbered. There is an innumerable host of angels but these special seven angels are pointed out.

In the Bible there is a highly organized strata and structure to angelic organizations. We don't get all the details about it, but anytime you read the words "principalities and powers" that's a word that means ranks of order, both the good angels and the fallen angels. In Ephesians chapter 6 when it says, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers." Have you ever wondered what those words meant? It means against the organized, structured ranks of demons. God's angels are organized with archangels and the other angels we are talking about. So these seven trumpet angels appear and they are going to be the ones who blow these trumpets to announce judgment on the earth.

### **B. Priestly angel**

There is another angel I'm going to call a "priestly angel." Verse 3 says, "Another angel" this angel appears to operate as a priest in heaven. Some commentators believe this is the Lord Jesus Christ. I personally don't believe that, because in the book of Revelation Jesus is never veiled; he is unveiled and seen as the Lamb. An angel could fulfill this role. Some people say this is Jesus, because Jesus is our High Priest in heaven but in this scenario Jesus is still the Lamb on the throne so I believe this is a special angel. He is carrying a censer filled with incense.

I'll never forget the first time I went to Jerusalem. We went within the city walls to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. That is traditionally where Jesus was crucified and buried. It is not Gordon's

Calvary, which is outside the walls and many people think is the real site. What would you expect to see when you go to Calvary or to the tomb where you see Jesus? That's why so many people love Gordon's Calvary so much more, because it looks like what you expect it to look like. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher looks like it is the most ornate, elaborate kind of church building you have ever seen. You walk in and there are hundreds of these gold censers hanging from the ceiling, all of them with filled with burning incense. I walked in there and started coughing; you just can hardly breathe in there because the incense fills the air. For the Eastern Orthodox Church, that's a very important part of their worship. Incense is burned as it was burned in the Temple in Jerusalem. As this fragrant odor flows up into the sky into the air it's a picture of prayers and adoration and worship going up. That's what the Bible says is going to happen in heaven.

There is something else besides the incense rising up before God. Look in verse 3 "with the prayers of all the saints." Do you know why our Catholic friends pray to the saints? Because they believe this refers to the prayers of all of those people who died and have achieved the status of sainthood. What we believe differently, that every believer is a saint, every born-again Christian is a saint. The word "saint" means "someone who is set apart for service." So you don't have to talk about St. Mark, and St. Matthew, and St. John, and St. Christopher. Really, the truth of the matter is its St. Mike, and St. Kevin, its St. Ken—all of us are saints. Either you *are* a saint or you're an *ain't*. You're lost or you're saved. You are a Christian or you're a non-Christian. So this is not referring to a special status of believers who died. I believe this refers to all the prayers of all true believers. Isn't this interesting? Have you ever stopped to think the prayers you pray are stored up in heaven and the time is going to come in the future that your prayers are going to ascend before God? Somebody said they think this may be prayers of worship and adoration rather than prayers of petition because when you pray a prayer of petition, you are taking something out of heaven but when you pray a prayer of praise, you are putting something in heaven. So the prayers of the saints are stored up and those prayers ascend before God. Isn't that a beautiful picture? Every time you pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" this is one of those prayers that is stored up. There are also many other prayers people have prayed that haven't been answered yet and those prayers are stored up.

Turn to Psalms 83. Have you ever wondered about these Psalms we call the "implicatory Psalms?" They are basically Psalms where David and others pray, "Lord, get my enemies! Get 'em good! Wipe them out! Destroy them utterly off the face of the earth!" We love to read the beautiful Psalms "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." We love those "This is the day the Lord has made we'll rejoice and be glad in it." Look at Psalms 83. This is one of those implicatory Psalms. In verse 2 it says, "See how your enemies are astir, how your foes rear their heads with cunning. They conspire against your people" and goes on and on about the enemies of God. Look down at verse 14 where the psalmist prays "As fire consumes the forest or a flame sets the mountains ablaze, so, God, pursue them with your tempests and terrify them with your storms. Cover their faces with shame so that men will seek your name, O Lord. May they ever be ashamed and dismayed. May they perish in disgrace." You say, "Man! I don't know if I could pray a prayer like that! That's so harsh!" You see this is not a prayer for personal retribution this is a prayer for God to execute his righteous judgment against wickedness. It is a prayer to guard God's reputation. Have you ever noticed there are many times during this life that the wicked are not punished? The wicked do not get what they deserve? Have you ever wondered why good

people suffer and are sometimes miserable, but evil, unrighteous people seem to be living it up and having fun? Those prayers just haven't been answered yet, but one day God is going to show forth his righteous vengeance. Could it be some of these implicatory prayers that have been prayed throughout the ages are those prayers stored up in heaven?

## II. THE ANGUISH ON EARTH

Back to Revelation 8. We see these angels in heaven the trumpet angels and the priestly angel. Then, we come to the second section of the book, the anguish on earth, because as these first four trumpets are blared they announce further judgment on the earth during the Tribulation. Let's look at each one. Verse 6 "Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them. The first angel sounded his trumpet and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up."

### A. Ecological disaster: Nuclear holocaust?

I'm calling this first one an ecological disaster. We're so interested in the ecology these days and people talk about how fragile our ecology is with the greenhouse effect the warming of the planet. People are afraid something is going to happen and there's going to be some kind of disastrous chain reaction that will destroy the plants on the earth. The Bible says something like that is going to happen. The title of this message is, "The Sky is Falling...Really!" because you have all heard the little story of Chicken Little running around saying, "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" until everybody is so upset and afraid and they panic. I tell you during this time people are really going to say literally, "The sky is falling!" There is going to be hail and fire mixed with blood. Even though the result is going to be an ecological disaster, I wonder and I'll put a question mark by all of these could this be a nuclear holocaust? Because what does it sound like? Hail and fire mixed with blood falling from the sky. I know there are some of you right now are screwing up your eyebrows and saying, "Boy! That sounds weird! Is this literal or is this symbolic?"

Let me give you a great tool to use always in interpreting the scriptures, whether you are interpreting Genesis or whether you are interpreting Revelation or whether you are interpreting Ephesians or Nahum. I believe you should always take the Bible literally to begin with, unless there is obvious symbolism employed and you can always tell if there is. If there is obvious symbolism employed, then you look for the literal truth of the symbolism. That might be a little confusing to you, but my manner of interpreting the Bible is first of all, always take it literally and within the context you can see if it is symbolism or literal. I happen to personally believe this is literal, that this is exactly and literally what is going to happen. When it says, "trees" it means trees. When it says "grass" it means grass. When it says, "Hail" it means hail and when it says, "fire" it means fire.

How many of you really believe that in the Old Testament in Exodus chapter 5, when it talks about "hail and fire falling down on Egypt during the plagues on Egypt"? How many of you believe that really happened? Some people who take that literally in the book of Exodus have a hard time believing something like this is going to happen, but the Bible says it could happen and

it says it will happen. Some kind of judgment will be poured out. Then it says, "a third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up and all the green grass was burned up." Doesn't this sound like some kind of massive fire that almost covers the earth? I thank God for the nuclear disarmament that has been taking place in the last seven years but you and I know there is still the capability and there are still nuclear weapons out there and all they have to do is get into the hands of some of these terrorists and you and I know they would use it in a split second! The threat of nuclear holocaust is still real. So the first one is some kind of ecological disaster and it could be some kind of nuclear holocaust.

## **B. Natural disaster: Meteorite?**

Look at the second one in verse 8. "The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain." That word "like" or "as it were," that's your catch word that lets you know it's *not* a mountain it is *like* a mountain. It's not literal it's something that is "like a huge mountain all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood," Here again this is familiar to you if you have studied the plagues in the book of Exodus, because the Bible says "the Nile river was turned to blood." Verse 9. "A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed." This is what you might call a "natural disaster," because this happens upon the sea and the sea turns into blood, whether it is some kind of red tide that floats through our oceans we don't know—all it says is the result is "a third of the sea creatures died." Can you imagine? The stench and the stink of one third of the fish and the sea creatures dying and floating would be incredible. It even goes on to say, "A third of the ships were destroyed." This is some kind of perhaps and this is why I put a question mark here could this be some kind of gigantic meteor that crashes into the earth? It's happened before. There is evidence all over our planet where meteorites have struck.

I grew up in Florala, Alabama, which is on the bank of the largest natural lake in the state of Alabama. It is a natural lake, because it is perfectly round and they believe it was formed by a meteorite thousands of years ago. It wasn't formed by a dam; it's not formed by rivers. It's just a huge, round, beautiful lake about two miles across. That must have been a huge meteorite that hit at that time! Could it be this flaming mountain coming out of the sky and landing in the sea could be some massive meteorite; some asteroid that hits the planet and the result is that a third of the sea creatures die? Then it goes on to say a third of the ships were destroyed. That's amazing! Could that be from a tidal wave or could it be perhaps all the ships were gathered in one vicinity? I don't know, but according to Jane's *Fighting Ships of the World*, there are approximately 25,000 registered ships currently on the planet. That would mean over 8,000 of them would be destroyed in this natural disaster.

## **C. Environmental disaster: Chemical warfare?**

Third, look at verse 10. "The third angel sounded his trumpet and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turn bitter and many people died from the waters that had become bitter." I'm calling this on an environmental disaster, because something happens to our drinking water. It becomes so polluted, it becomes poisonous—at least a third of it does. Look again at what it says in the scripture, "some kind of star." Anything falling from the sky we call a

"falling star" although sometimes it is not a star. It's just some kind of heavenly body. Do you remember this summer in August they were predicting all of those falling stars? We happened to be on vacation down in Florida and after we had supper we went out and tried to find as dark a place as we could. We went out to a golf course and laid down on our backs for over an hour trying to see shooting stars. If you remember, it was very disappointing that night. We saw a few, but not very many. It turned out to be a flop but we knew those were not really stars like our sun flashing through the sky. They were like meteorites. So this is some kind of heavenly body again that falls to the earth. That's why I said, "The Sky Is Falling!" because all of these things seem to be falling from the sky. This affects the fresh water supply. Could it be this is chemical warfare? Who knows?

You have to remember two hundred years ago is basically a hiccup when you look at the scope of world history. If you told someone two hundred years ago that man could create a bomb by splitting an atom that would have such a killing and fatal effect that thousands and thousands of people would be killed immediately, they would have said, "No way!" If you told someone even one hundred years ago that scientifically it would be possible to create a bacteria that could be released through a cloud and if it just touches your bare skin, it will enter your bloodstream and kill you. They would have said, "No way!" You and I know both of those things are more than possible today. Do you remember how our Desert Storm troops had to wear chemical warfare gear, because they were afraid that the Iraqis had chemical weapons and were going to load this biological warfare into the explosive part of the missiles they were firing? The technology is there. Isn't it amazing mankind is smarter than he has ever been before, but he is worse off morally than he has ever been? Technologically, man is in graduate school but morally man is in kindergarten. Man is smart enough to split the atom but he is not good enough to be trusted with it. So it could be all of these things are a result of man's own technological advances. All we know is a third of the rivers are poisoned.

That's why the word *Wormwood*, is used; Wormwood simply means bitter, gall. When Jesus was hanging on the cross, the Bible says they put a sponge on a stick and soaked it in vinegar and gall and they held it up to his lips. That word *gall* is the same word used here for Wormwood, which means "bitter," which is almost like "poisonous." Can you imagine that—a third of the rivers on the planet being polluted so that they are poisonous? According to National Geographic there are over one hundred principal rivers on the planet, not as many as you would think really. The longest one is the Amazon, of course, which is 4,000 miles long. The shortest major river is the Rio del Plata, which is 150 miles long. Of course, the largest river in America is the Mississippi, which goes for over 2,700 miles. Can you imagine one third of the fresh water of the rivers being poisoned so people can't even drink? What an environmental disaster!

#### **D. Cosmic disaster: Atmospheric ruin?**

Look at the fourth trumpet in verse 12. "The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, 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 turned dark." What do you think that means? I don't know exactly. I could be the atmosphere is so full of smoke from all of this burning that a third of the brilliance of the sun is knocked out. "A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night." I'm calling this a cosmic disaster, because this is something that happens in the sky, in the heavens. Could it be this is atmospheric

ruin, which the chemical warfare and the things taking place in our atmosphere, the nuclear holocaust, that it absolutely destroys our atmosphere so people can't even see and the sky becomes dark? Have you seen some of these movies that portray life in the future after nuclear disaster in the world? Have you noticed how dark it looks? Everything is so dark and desolate isn't it weird that even Hollywood even the moviemakers suspect the time is going to come in the future when there will be ruin on our planet?

This is interesting when it says, "a third of the day was without light and a third of the night." There have been some interesting interpretations. Dr. Charles Ryrie, whom I well respect, says he believes there is such a cosmic shakeup in the heavens that instead of a 24 hour day, even the rotation of the earth is altered, until it's a third shorter than usual—a 16 hour day rather than a 24 hour day.

In Matthew 24:21, when Jesus is talking about the Tribulation, He says, "For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. What does that mean? It could mean the number of the days themselves would be shortened but probably not, because the Bible says there is a set time for this to take place. Dr. Ryrie and others believe that this is what it is talking about, that there is going to be such a cosmic change the rotation of the earth will be effected so there will be a 16 hour day so time will go faster. You think you have trouble getting everything done in 24 hours? How would you like to have a 16 hour day? No, thank you! Thank the Lord! I'm not going to be here and you don't have to be here either.

Verse 13. "As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair, [the King James version says "angel" but it's the word for eagle] call out in a loud voice: 'Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!'" These first four trumpets all depict terrible disaster upon the earth, but this eagle flies through the sky and says, "These four are nothing compared to the three about to come!" You might call these first four "Trumpets of War." You call these last three, "Trumpets of Woe."

## CONCLUSION

This describes a terrible time on earth. There's no way to get around it. There is no way to put a "Pollyanna" cover on this, and just smile and say, "Praise God! Everything's going to be okay." It's going to be awful! You don't have to be here during this time! You make sure Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior that you have repented of your sins put your faith in Jesus and surrender to him as Lord. Make sure you know that you know that you know that you *know* that you are a Christian! Because Jesus could come back at any moment and then the Tribulation begins.

## OUTLINE

### I. THE ANGELS IN HEAVEN (vs. 8:1-6)

- A. Trumpet angels (see Luke 1:19)
- B. Priestly angel

### II. THE ANGUISH ON EARTH (vs. 8:7-13)

- A. Ecological disaster: Nuclear holocaust? (vs. 7)
- B. Natural disaster: Meteorite? (vs. 8-9)
- C. Environmental disaster: Chemical warfare? (vs. 10-11)
- D. Cosmic disaster: Atmospheric ruin? (vs. 12-13)