

Place: Lurgan 3:2:2004

Reading: Rev 8:1-13

## EXPLORING THE FUTURE

### 14. ANGELS OF DOOM

The "*Hallelujah Chorus*," of Handel's *Messiah* is probably one of the most powerful and moving musical composition's ever written. During the London premiere of the *Messiah* in 1743, King George the Second was seated in his box as the first rolling strains of "*Hallelujah*," cascaded forth from the orchestra. The King was so deeply moved that he spontaneously rose to his feet and stood for the remainder of the performance, his eyes glistening with emotion. The rest of the audience, seeing the King reverently standing as the music swelled, also rose to its feet .... a tradition that remains to this day whenever the "*Hallelujah Chorus*," is performed. Some of you know this magnificent chorus well. At its climax, wave after wave of Hallelujahs sweep over you. I am sure that its difficult to experience this music without your heart pounding, and your eyes filling with tears. And then .... the orchestra and the chorus suddenly stop.

And there is silence. It is a thundering, silence, full of awe and intense anticipation. The echoes of the last hallelujah still reverberate in your ear and in your heart, fading gradually until the silence at last becomes complete. There is a sense of drama, of suspense, of mystery. You know it is not over. The last hallelujah is yet to sound. Suddenly the silence shatters under the triumphant blow of the final majestic hallelujah. The victory of the Messiah is accomplished.

Now in the eighth chapter of Revelation, we witness the very moment which is symbolised in the climactic pause of Handel's "*Hallelujah Chorus*," John says, "*And when He had opened .... half an hour.*" ( 8:1 ) Certainly this silence was "*the lull before the storm*," for God's intensified judgments were about to be hurled to the earth. Now ( Ch 8 ) records the opening of the seventh and final seal. Here we pick up the next event in order following the opening of the sixth seal in ( Ch 6 ) Do you recall what I said last week ? I said that ( Ch 7 ) is a parenthetical portion ! Between the sixth and seventh seal judgments God calls a divine time-out. But now we are back in ( Ch 8 ) at the opening of the seventh seal.

The period prophesied here is still The Tribulation, Daniel's seventieth week. Indeed Revelation Ch 6 until Ch 19 is focusing on this seven year "*week*." Now we have noticed that this seven year "*week*," is characterised by three series of events. (1) The Seven Seals ( 6:1-8:5 ) ( 2 ) The Seven Trumpets ( 8:6-19:21 ) (3) The Seven Vials ( 16:1-19:21 ) I think that we could say that the entire Book of Revelation is divided

into four sevens. There are the letters to the Seven churches, then the Seven seals, then the Seven trumpets, and then the Seven Seals. Now in connection with these last three sevens, there is something very striking. We have first, six seals opened, then a parenthesis which takes up

( Ch 7 ) In ( Ch 8 ) the seventh seal ( which includes the seven trumpets ) is opened. So that the scroll or book as a whole is now open to view.

Now this seventh seal we find includes the seven trumpets. Six trumpets are sounded. ( 8:1-9:21 ) and then again there is another parenthetical portion which includes from ( Ch 10-11:14 ) At the conclusion of this parenthesis the seventh trumpet brings us to the end of all things. ( 11:15 ) Now Chronologically we are as far on when we reach ( 11:15 ) as when we reach the Great White Throne Judgment in ( Ch 20 ) for the seventh trumpet introduces us to the "*kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ.*" ( 11:15 ) so you see we really have a duplication, in measure, of prophetic truth from this point on. That is, from ( Ch 4 ) to the end of ( Ch 11 ) you have truth presented in orderly sequence, a prophetic outline of the things that shall take place after the Rapture of the Church right on to the end of time. Then, commencing with ( Ch 12 ) God seems to give us a second view of the events, but especially in relation to Israel. In ( Ch 12&13 ) there is brought before us the great actors for good and evil in the last days .... the woman clothed with the sun, the Man-child, Christ, who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron, Michael who is the archangel, the dragon, who is that old-serpent, the devil, the beast who is the Antichrist. Then there follows another parenthetical chapter ( Ch 14 ) Then in ( Ch 15 &16 ) we have the last main group of seven. The seven vials or bowls of the WRATH OF GOD. We have six vials and then another parenthesis. In this case the parenthesis occupies only one verse ( 16:15 ) Immediately following this, the seventh vial of the wrath of God is outpoured, bringing us to the doom of Babylon in ( Ch 17 &18 )

Then in ( Ch 19 ) we have the Lords Descent to the earth, accompanied by the armies of heaven to establish His millennial kingdom. After this we see the great white throne judgement in ( ch 20 ) and on into the New Heaven and the New Earth where God will be all in all throughout and eternity of bliss. So as the Lord Jesus opens this seventh seal we have this panoramic view of the events in the Book of Revelation. Everything that happens in the Book of Revelation happens because He precipitates the action. Now there are three words that seem to gather up all the threads in this chapter.

### **(1) PREPARATION**

Look at ( 8:1-2 8:6 ) You see with the opening of this seventh seal comes the series of trumpet judgments. The last seal is called the trumpet judgment, because within the seventh seal are seven trumpets that will sound. Now from the seals to the trumpets

to the bowls, the judgements increase in their intensity. Here then are seven angels standing in the Presence of God

*"preparing themselves to sound."* (1) Now this preparation centres around two factors. Notice there is:

**(a) *THE SILENT PAUSE:***

( 8:1 ) An Ulsterman once said, *" There are going to be no women in Heaven for they couldn't keep quiet for half an hour."* But think of this. An eerie silence in heaven just after the seventh seal is opened. This is probably the longest silence heaven has ever known. Usually Heaven is filled with music and worship and praise to God continually ascending to His Throne. In

( Ch 4 & 5 ) we noticed that the scene in heaven is usually one of great joy and worship. There celestial beings are crying out continually, *" Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."* ( 4:8 ) There worship is ascribed to the Lamb as the hosts of heaven cry out, *" Worthy is the Lamb."* ( 5:12) But suddenly amid all this crescendo of sound, there comes universal silence. The Scroll had now been opened completely, and perhaps even turned over, and all heaven could see Gods glorious plan unfolding. Perhaps the heavenly hosts were simply awestruck at what they saw. So all heaven holds its breath. Half an hour to go and the Longsuffering of God to this world has run its course. This is the silence of intense expectancy this is the silence of ominous foreboding. This silence was the *" lull before the storm,"* for God's judgments were about to be hurled to the earth. (a) Tell me, has God " paused," in your life ? In the midst of all your health difficulties, do you find you are feeling better ? In the midst of all your financial struggles do you feel you can now make ends meet ? After the cycles of problems, difficulties, and disasters has repeated itself in your life, are you able to cope today ? My .... what is your response to the pause ?

During this silence, the seven angels ( and probably Gabriel was one of them Elk 1:19 ) were given trumpets. Now remember John was a Jew and he understood the place of trumpets in Israel's national life. Trumpets had three important uses. They called the people together, ( Num 10:1-8 ) they announced war, ( Num 10:9 ) and they announced special times. ( Num 10:10) Do you recall the trumpet sounded at Mount Sinai when the Law was given. ( Exude 19:16 ) Do you remember trumpets were blow when the King was anointed and enthroned. ( 1 Kings 1:34:39 ) What about Jericho ? Trumpets were used to conquer Jericho ! ( Josh 6:13-16 ) My .... sounding seven trumpets certainly would announce a declaration of war, as well as the fact that God's anointed King was enthroned in glory and about to judge His enemies. ( Ps 2:1-5 ) Listen, As trumpets declared defeat to Jericho, they will ultimately bring defeat to Babylon ! Notice, (a) was followed by:

### **(b) THE SAINTS PRAYERS:**

" *And another angel came ....* " ( 8:3-5 ) Now who is this angel ? Many Bible scholars believe this angel is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, because He ministers both Goddard and Mansard serving as both Priest and Judge. This is a possibility, but it does not really matter who He is, the important thing to note is *What He is doing*. Now the imagery here is that of worship in the Tabernacle. Do you recall that in the Tabernacle and Temple the Golden Altar stood before the Veil and was used for burning incense ? Burning incense on this altar was a picture of prayer ascending to God. The Psalmist said, " *Let my prayer be set before Thee as incense.* " ( Ps 141:2 ) Now who are the saints whose prayers are being heard here ? Well, whoever they are their prayers are certainly connected with Judgement, for as the prayers of the saints ascend, the judgment of God descends. Are these not the prayers of tribulation saints who pray to God for an outpouring of His wrath on the godless on the earth ? ( Rev 6:9-11 Ps 7:26:35 )

Indeed these may be " *the prayers of all saints,* " who have longed for the Coming of Christ kingdom. My .... for centuries, Gods people have been praying, " *Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.* " ( Matt 6:10 ) And now those prayers are about to answered. For when the last trumpet sounds, the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of Jesus Christ. My .... do we realise what a potent force prayer is ? We go into our rooms, close the doors, kneel down and pray. We spread out before the Lord our petitions and God hears. Many times we think that perhaps God has forgotten the prayers of His people, but He has not. He has been saving them for thousands of years, and they are about to be answered. Like it or not, the prayers of God's people are involved in the Judgements that He sends ! The Throne and the Altar are related.

My .... the purpose of prayer is " *not to get man's will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth,* " even if that will involves judgment. Now notice that the angel casts the fire from the altar into the earth. The altar is where the sacrifice was made, so it is a place of salvation and judgement. When Christ died on Calvary, He offered us salvation. But He also took the fires of God's judgment onto Himself. My .... here is an impenitent world, refusing to bow before God, and having the fire from that altar flung onto it. For as the prayers of the saints ascend, the judgment of God descends. (1) But now:

### **(2) DESOLATION**

My .... as we see the first four trumpet judgments being poured on the earth we see the death of world ecology. Scholars even fifty years ago could not fathom these judgments described in the Book of Revelation, they were so far beyond their comprehension that no one dreamed they could happen apart from supernatural

assistance. Now such things as John described here are not only possible, but could happen within thirty minutes. There are already enough nuclear-tipped missiles on earth and ready for launching to do everything predicted in this chapter. Dr. W.H. Pickering warned, "*In half an hour the East and the West could destroy civilization.*" it's a number of years eighteen years since a nuclear reactor experienced a catastrophic meltdown at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the former Soviet Union.

Do you know something ? The farmer's in Wales are still having to cope with problems from that fall-out ? I was amazed to learn that radiation released from Chernobyl was 200 times more than that which was released from Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined when the U.S.A. dropped the bombs. I just wonder and I am only wondering could all the ecological catastrophes described in this chapter be the direct result of nuclear weapons ?

I wonder will God simply step back and remove His restraining influence from man, allowing him to do what comes naturally out of his sinful nature.

One thing is certain, people today are very concerned about saving the environment. Fears about the depletion of the ozone layer, pollution, the destruction of the rain forests, and global warming are constantly in the news. There is a passionate concern to save endangered species, everything from whales to spotted owls to California condors, and a host of lesser known species. My .... for many protecting the environment has become far more than a concern for health and safety, it has become an issue of idolatry, as they worship

"*Mother Nature*," by trying to protect and perpetuate the earth. There is no question that fallen man has failed in his responsibility to properly care for God's creation. ( Gen 2:15 ) But the damage man has done to the earth pales in comparison to what God will one day do to it. For the earth will experience an ecological upheaval that will make our toxic dumps seem like playgrounds.

Well, this seven fold judgment is about to commence and as I have already hinted scholars are divided as to whether these seven trumpet judgements are to be taken literally and symbolically or both ? I think its helpful if we compare these Judgements with the Plagues that fell on Egypt ! Do you remember Aaron performing the symbolic act of waving his rod over the waters of Egypt, which physically turned to blood ? ( Exod 7:20) Here we see an angel performing the symbolic act of blowing a trumpet. Why should the result on earth be less physical than the event in Moses day ? Do you recall Aaron put out his rod and smote "*the dust of the land*," as a result of that symbolic act, physical lice appeared. My .... why it should it be any different when these angels perform their symbolic act of blowing the trumpet ! No one suggests that what happened in Egypt was not literal in its form of judgment on the rebellious Egyptian nation, so we can say that the same thing happens during The great Tribulation and that the Trumpet judgements introduce

Literal, physical judgment on the earth.

You see these trumpet judgments parallel the plagues that God sent on the Land of Egypt. And why not ? After all, the whole world will be saying as did Pharaoh, "*Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice ?*"

( Exod 5:2) What desolation will take place on earth when these trumpet judgments sound. Look at the first judgment and notice there will be desolation.

***(a) THE THIRD PART OF EVERYTHING ON THE EARTH:***

( 8:7 ) What does that remind you of ? The seventh plague that God sent against Egypt. ( Exod 9:18-26 ) If you've ever been in a forest fire you can imagine the terror of watching one-third of all the trees on earth go up in smoke ! Think of the famine that will occur when all of the green grass is wiped out by fire. The Greek word for "*trees*," usually means "*fruit trees*," and the destruction of pasture lands would devastate the meat and milk industries. But notice that even in this judgment God continues to be gracious. He leaves two thirds of the greenery untouched. But even this mercy-tempered judgment fails to turn the people's mind to God ! ( 9:20-21 ) (a)

***(b) THE THIRD PART OF EVERYTHING ABOUT THE EARTH:***

( 8:8-9) What does that remind you of ? The first Egyptian plague. ( Exod 7:19-21 ) Now John is very specific here. He says, "*And as it were a great mountain.*" ( 8:8 ) This fiery object, could it be a meteor, was like a great mountain. A triple judgment resulted, a third part of the saltwater turned to blood, a third part of the marine life died, and a third part of the ships were destroyed. My .... this will be an ecological and an economic disaster of unprecedented proportions. When you consider that the oceans occupy three fourths of the earth's surface, you can imagine the extent of this judgment. The pollution of the water and the death of so many creatures will greatly affect the balance of life in the oceans, and this will undoubtedly lead to further problems. Can you imagine the shock waves that will hit the shipping industry when one third of the ships are destroyed ? And what about their cargoes ? There will be desolation for (a) (b) and,

***(c) THE THIRD PART OF EVERYTHING UNDER THE EARTH:***

( 3:10-11 ) God's wrath is now touching the rivers and fountains of waters, that is the wells and sources of the rivers making the fresh water taste bitter like wormwood. The National Geographic Society lists about 100 principal rivers in the world, ranging in length from the Amazon ( 4,000 miles long ) to the Rio de la Plata ( 150 miles long ) One third of these rivers, and their sources will become so bitterly polluted that drinking their water could produce death. If the people who drink from these waters are in danger of dying, what must happen to the fish and other creatures

that LIVE IN these waters ? And what would happen to the vegetation near these rivers ? My .... if the ecologists are worried about the deadly consequences of water pollution today, what will they think when the third trumpet blows ?

Now notice that John describes the source of this judgement as "*a great star*," ( 8:10 ) Will this be a comet-like object which breaks up when it enters the atmosphere, scattering itself throughout the earth, falling into the rivers and springs poisoning them ? Will this form of poisoning actually be a form of radiation ? Do you know before this .... that Chernobyl is actually Russian for "*Wormwood* ?" Was God giving us a little insight into what might happen in the future ? Desolation (a) (b) (c) and,

***(d) THE THIRD PART OF EVERYTHING ABOVE THE EARTH:***

( 8:12 ) What does that remind you of ? The ninth plague in the Land of Egypt was darkness which lasted three days. ( Exod 10: 21-23 ) Here with one third less sunlight on the earth, there will be one third less energy available to support the life systems of man and nature. Do you recall that it was on the fourth day of creation that God brought forth the sun, moon, and stars into view to provide light for man, here under the fourth judgment He shall withdraw the light He Himself created. ( Lk 21:25 ) Think of the vast changes that will occur and how these will affect human health and food growth. What a day this will be, when "*the powers of the heavens shall be shaken*." ( Matt 24:29 )

At 2.27.am on August 6th, 1945 an U.S.A. bomber named Enola Gay, took off on a mysterious flight from the Island of Tinian in the Pacific. In command were co-pilots Colonel Tibbit's and Captain Lewis. Aboard was a sinister cargo, weighing 5,000 pounds and known as Little Boy. As the plane took off the crew had no idea of the historic nature of the mission on which they were embarking. It was not until they were airborne that Colonel Tibbits told them that they were about to drop on a Japanese town called Hiroshima the biggest bomb ever exploded. When the target was reached, the command was given, "*Bomb Away*," and the mighty missile plummeted towards the town. Suddenly there was a flash, and the equivalent of 20,000 tons of T.N.T. hit the heart of the city. Heat estimated at two trillion degrees centigrade was generated. Instantly, 100,000 people died: 13,937 were afterwards reported missing, and a further 37,425 died later as a result of the bomb. To the men in the bomber it seemed as if the plane was about to be blown out of the skies, such was the disturbance created by the blast. The powers of the heavens were shaken, and as Captain Lewis looked back and saw a gigantic mushroom-shaped cloud ballooning to a greater altitude than that of the plane itself, he was utterly overwhelmed by the appalling spectacle and cried out, "*My God, what have we done ?*"

What a day that was, but what a day this will be when God will bring, Desolation on (a)(b)(c)(d) Do you think this is bad ? Well, there is worse to come. Look at ( 8:13 ) Most manuscripts have " *Eagle*," here instead of " *Angel*," but look at what this messenger is saying, " *If you think this has been terrible, just wait ! The worst is yet to come !*" ( 8:13 ) introduces us to the kind of people who will be on earth at this time. One word sums them up,

### **(3) *OCCUPATION***

For they are occupied with the things of the earth. Look for example at:

#### **(a) *THEIR FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD:***

The phrase " *inhabiters of the earth*," is found 12 times in the Book of Revelation. It means much more than " *people who live on the earth*," rather it refers to a kind of people, those who live for the earth and the things of the earth. " *Woe to those who make their home on earth*." You see during the days of the Great Tribulation there will be many new converts, ( 7:9 ) who are inhabitants of the earth but who do not make their home on earth. They will live and act as though their citizenship is in heaven. But those " *who make their home on earth*," care nothing for the things of God and the life to come. Do you know folk like that ? They care only about the present, their needs, their pleasures, their own will. They give no thought to the meaning of their own existence or to God. Do you know like that this .... ? But look not only at (a) but at:

#### **(b) *THEIR FUTURE IN THE WORLD:***

Listen to the cry of the messenger, " *Woe, Woe, Woe*," ( 8:13 ) These three " *woes*," refer to the judgments yet to come when the remaining three angels blow their trumpets. The first four trumpet judgments are Bad, the last three trumpet judgments are Worse for they shall bring unimaginable woe upon those who live for the things of the earth. My .... what a period this is going to be when things will become Bad, Worse and the Worst ! You see, for the Christian the best is yet to be. For the unbeliever the worst is yet to come.

Are you not glad this .... that you are saved ? Are you not rejoicing this .... that you will not be there when these Trumpet Judgements fall on the earth ? My .... we are not going through, but going up. But tell me, which world are you living for ? Are you living for earth instead of living for heaven ? Are you living for self instead of living for the Lord ? Are you living for the temporal instead of living for the eternal ? As a Christian, which world are you living for ? This world or the next ? ( Phil 3:20 )