

# **First the Silence, Then the Storm**

Revelation 8

Pastor Ray Pritchard

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These are the headlines this week:

**“Drying River in Biblical ‘Cradle of Civilization’ raises scary spectre of end times.”**

**“AI turns evil after reading too much sci-fi.”**

**“Ceasefire on Massive Life Support”**

**“Humanity’s Future: War, Famine, Pestilence and Great Earthquakes”**

**“Something weird and worrying is happening with rain, study finds”**

**“Pentagon Releases first batch of UFO files Amid speculation”**

Then there was this headline that seems to fit the times:

**“Buckle Up for a Wild Week”**

Many people say that “**something big**” is about to happen.

**Stock Market.**

**Banking system.**

**Supply chain.**

**Russia and Ukraine.**

**Israel and Iran.**

**China and Taiwan.**

**The Rise of AI.**

**UFOs in the News.**

No one knows.

But this much is certain.

We live in dangerous, unstable times.

*With that cheery thought, I say hello to all our friends here at Edgewood. It's good to be with you again. This is the 6<sup>th</sup> time I have spoken here. The first was at Brian's installation as your pastor. It's wonderful to see the growth and progress of the church since then.*

On behalf of Keep Believing Ministries, I want to say thank you for your love, your prayers, and your support. Brian has been on our board from the very first day 20 years ago. *He is now the chairman of the board.* Marlene and I are glad to be here because no church in America has done more to support KBM than Edgewood.

When Brian told me he was preaching through Revelation, he offered to let me preach on any topic, or he said I could take the next message in the series. I was happy to do that because I believe we need to understand the future from God's point of view. Those headlines give you man's viewpoint—and it's not very encouraging.

I think about what Daniel said when he was asked to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's strange dream. When the king asked if Daniel had the answer, he told the king that no mortal man could give the meaning, but (and this is the big point) **“there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries” (Daniel 2:28).**

If you want to know about tomorrow's news, read the Bible!  
If you want to know how the world ends, read the Bible!  
If you want to know about the last days, read the Bible!

So I'm glad Brian has been taking you through Revelation.  
And I'm glad to talk about Revelation 8 with you.

As we come to this chapter, keep two things in mind.

- 1. Revelation 8 describes events that are yet future to us.**
- 2. These events happen amid a vast turning away from God.**

The Four Horsemen have ridden.  
Christians are being murdered for their faith.  
Men are hiding in the rocks for fear of the wrath of God.

But the end is not yet.

So what do we have in Revelation 8?

## **#1 Preparation in Heaven (vv 1-5).**

**When the Lamb opened the seventh seal,  
there was silence in heaven for about half an hour (v 1).**

Silence!

What's going on here? John has talked about many different sounds in Revelation 4-7. The courts of heaven are filled with divine beings offering nonstop praise to God. But that's not all. We've also read about thunder, lightning, and crashing sounds from the Throne of God.

The creatures fall down and sing, "Holy, holy, holy!" The four creatures sing. And then the elders sing.

And then the redeemed sing. The angels sing. Heaven is filled with joyful sounds.

But when the seventh and final seal is opened, there is silence.

*Few things are more frightening than complete silence. If someone is silent too long, we say, "Why aren't you talking? Why are you just sitting there? Why don't you say something?"*

Silence in heaven is a divine signal that something momentous is about to happen.

Imagine the runners in a great Olympic race. The athletes line up and wait for the call: "On your mark. Get set." Before the gun goes off, a hush falls on the crowd.

The conductor lifts his baton, and for a moment, there is total silence.

Now the universe is silent, awaiting the next round of judgment. Intense silence, expectant silence, foreboding silence.

The angels who love to sing are silent because awesome judgment is about to be pronounced.

Then, we read about seven angels with seven trumpets.

**I saw the seven angels who stand before God,  
and they were given seven trumpets (v 2).**

In the Bible, trumpets are very significant. Trumpets were used in the Old Testament to announce important events. Trumpets played when the law was given at Mount Sinai. They were used in

warfare to rally the troops. When Joshua and the people marched around Jericho, the walls didn't fall until the trumpets sounded.

In the New Testament trumpets are often associated with the Second Coming. They are mentioned in Matthew 24, 1 Corinthians 15, and 1 Thessalonians 4.

The blowing of trumpets means **the great day of judgment** has come for planet earth.

What happens next breaks the silence.

**Then another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, along with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, rose up before God from the hand of the angel (vv 3-4).**

In the tabernacle, the burnt altar stood near the entrance. This is where the priests would offer the animal sacrifices. It might be a bull, a lamb, or a goat. Inside the tabernacle there was a place for offering incense before the Lord. The priests took coals from the altar, added incense, and the smoke rose as a sweet-smelling savor to the Lord.

That much is clear.

But John saw something remarkable. Somehow, he saw the prayers of the saints added to the incense that rose up to the Lord.

- The prayers are **collected**.
- The prayers are **offered**.
- The prayers are **remembered**.

But that's not all!

Listen to verse 5:

**Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it to the earth; and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.**

What are these saints praying about? They are praying for the wickedness that's broken out on the earth to end. They cry out to God for justice!

When Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer, He taught us to say, "**Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven**" (**Matthew 6:10**). For centuries, Christians across the world have prayed that way.

Whatever else we might say, this much is true: On earth, God's will is too often not done. We live in a world filled with murder, lying, greed, hatred, and jealousy. We see it everyday.

No, God's will is not done on earth as it is in heaven.

The saints of God are praying, "Lord, let Your kingdom come! Bring this wickedness to an end. Send your Son back. Let Him reign from David's throne in Jerusalem."

What can we learn from this? **First, our prayers move God to action.** Sometimes we wonder if prayer makes any difference. Why should we pray if God knows what He's going to do? If God is sovereign, why pray?

Good question. Here's the answer. *Your prayers are part of His plan to bring about His will on the earth.*

Christian friend, do you understand? Our Father in heaven has given us a weapon we can use any time we like.

Prayer is our secret weapon forged in the realms of glory! Have you used your secret weapon today?

**Second, the line between earth and heaven must be nearer than we think.** Where is heaven? Heaven is always up in the Bible. But we tend to think it's outside the solar system and outside the Milky Way, like a million, billion, trillion miles away.

That's not right. Heaven is a lot closer than we've ever imagined.

A gossamer film separates us from the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and the saints who have gone on before.

**Third, when we pray “Your kingdom come,” we’re asking God to judge evil and to speedily establish His kingdom on the earth.**

There's no better prayer for us than, “Your kingdom come, O Lord. Do whatever You need to do to judge evil, and send Jesus back, and send Him soon.”

Your prayers matter to God!  
It doesn't always seem that way.  
It often feels like the heavens are brass.

But in heaven, your prayers rise like incense before God.

No prayer is wasted.  
No cry is ignored.  
No tear is forgotten.

Now, we come to the second part of Revelation 8. First, there is silence; then, comes the storm.

Don't miss the connection. What happens next happens because God's people prayed!

## **#2 Devastation on the Earth (vv 6-12).**

These trumpet judgments come one right after the other.

The first judgment is against the land.

**The first angel blew his trumpet and hail and fire mixed with blood were hurled to the earth, so that a third of the earth was burned up. A third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up (v 7).**

Before I go on, let me ask a simple question. Is that literal or is that symbolic? Bible students, literal or symbolic? Okay, raise your hands if you think it's literal. Raise your other hand if you think it's symbolic. I'm raising both hands because that's the right answer. It's both literal and symbolic. It's literally true. It's actually going to happen.

But there is symbolism when we think about hail and fire mixed with blood. These trumpet judgments remind us of the ten plagues in the book of Exodus. It's like Sodom and Gomorrah when the Lord rained down fire and brimstone.

As a result, a third of the earth is burned. A third of the trees are burned. All grass is burnt. This will be the greatest ecological disaster in history.

Fires burn out of control, with forests reduced to ash heaps and homes going up in flames in Africa, America, Europe and Asia.

A thick layer of black soot covers the earth. Smoke everywhere, no more grain, farmers out of business, commerce destroyed.

Here comes the second trumpet. The first one was judgment against the land, and now the judgment is against the sea.

**The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned to blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed (vv 8-9).**

John doesn't really know what he's looking at here. He knows it's like a great mountain. He doesn't know where it came from. It's a burning mountain hurled into the sea so that a third of the sea became blood.

A third of the living creatures in the sea died. That's the fish, the whales, the dolphins, all the creatures of the sea.

John calls it, "something like a great mountain." Some people think it's a meteor. I'm fine with that. Or perhaps this is some hypersonic explosion that pollutes the sea.

Could this be some kind of enormous volcanic explosion? Could this be a nuclear explosion? John certainly wouldn't have had words to adequately describe that in the first century.

A third of the ships were destroyed. Right now there are 112,000 merchant ships on the seven seas. If one third of them were destroyed, that's 33,600 gone.

That's a third of the fuel tankers. That's a third of the cruise ships. A third of the fishing boats. All gone. Think what that would do to the supply chain. Look what's happened to gas prices because of the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

Think of what this would do to the food chain. An unbelievable catastrophe.

The first trumpet is about the land.

The second trumpet is about the sea.

Now comes the third trumpet.

**Then the third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star burning like a torch fell from heaven and landed on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter like wormwood oil, and many people died from the bitter waters (vv 10-11).**

That's a judgment against the rivers.

The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star blazing like a torch fell from heaven. The word translated star is just a general word in the Greek. It could be a planet, an asteroid, a meteor, or it could be some manmade object.

When the third trumpet sounds, a bright object falls to the earth, landing on the rivers and the springs. The second trumpet impacted the salt water, but this trumpet poisons the freshwater.

Notice the star's name: Wormwood. *It's the only time this word is used in the New Testament.* The Greek word is fascinating because it refers to a drink that once was popular but was banned because of its dangerous nature. It's a strong alcoholic drink called absinthe.

Here's a fascinating sidenote. In Russian and Ukrainian, the word Chernobyl literally means "wormwood." But Chernobyl was just a shadow of what is to come in the last days.

What's the significance of this? Wormwood was the name of a whole family of plants in the ancient Near East. *All of them had a strong, bitter taste.* If you ate some of the plant, you would get very sick.

Many people died from the waters because they had been poisoned by this star "Wormwood." It pollutes the water of the earth.

As a result, one third of the fresh water on the earth is now polluted. It's no longer safe to drink. It reminds me of something we used to talk about called acid rain.

Marlene and I have traveled around the world, and in many places they tell you, "Don't drink the water." Don't drink it because it's infected. It's polluted. It's dirty and dangerous.

You'll get sick if you drink the water.

So just imagine. Suddenly fresh water is gone from one third of the earth. "In that future day the fresh water will become as putrid as a Calcutta gutter" (David Jeremiah).

Now here comes the fourth trumpet. The fourth trumpet is a judgment against the sky.

**The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon and the third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened (v 12).**

A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.

Let me come back to the question I asked earlier. Are we supposed to take this literally or symbolically? I'm arguing that the only safe way to read this book is to take things as plainly, and as normally, i.e. as literally as possible. *We'll come closer to the truth if we try to take the Word of God literally.* There's always the

temptation to read this and say, “Now that can't possibly happen.”

These are the words of the Lord Jesus from Luke 21:25-27:

**There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among the nations, bewildered by the roaring of the sea and the surging of the waves. Men will faint from fear and anxiety over what is coming upon the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.**

Think about this list:

Celestial signs.

Dismay among the nations.

Turbulence in the sky and on the sea.

Widespread fear.

Heavenly bodies shaken.

Terror grips the world.

Is that not exactly what is being described for us in Revelation 8?

When the fourth trumpet sounds, darkness descends on a third of the sun, the moon, and the stars. Evidently, this means partial darkness spreads across the earth.

Here are the first four trumpets:

Land Burned.

Sea Bloodied.

Freshwater Poisoned.

Sky Darkened.

Here's the situation. Fires rage out of control around the world. The sea is covered with dead animals, rotting carcasses, smoldering hulks of huge ships, and commerce destroyed. No more grain, no more seafood, water supply suddenly polluted, skies continually darkened, clouds of smoke, acid rain, thick smog everywhere.

What would be the result?

Life as usual comes to a halt, food becomes scarce, billions die, hyperinflation. There is a worldwide emergency as darkness settles on the earth. No one is safe, anywhere, at any time.

If you'll permit me to jump ahead in the story, in the midst of that chaos, one man rises to power. *He and he alone can bring an end to suffering and an end to the looting.*

He offers a united rescue plan if only the people of the world will follow him. If you just take this mark on your hand or on your forehead, he'll take care of everything.

These judgments are setting the stage for the Antichrist to take total control over the entire world. Does it sound farfetched?

You can make your own judgment. To me, it doesn't sound farfetched at all. *God's shock treatment is going to be co-opted by the Antichrist for his own evil purposes.* But the worst is not yet.

### **#3: Proclamation from Heaven to Earth v. 13**

**I heard an eagle flying overhead, calling in a loud voice,  
“Woe! Woe! Woe to those who dwell on the earth, because  
of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the remaining  
three angels!**

As they say on the street: “You ain't seen nothing yet.”

Think of this. These trumpet judgments impact the water, the earth, and the sky. Men and women suffer as a result. What's about to happen in these last trumpet blasts?

The worst is yet to come. What can we say here at the end?

God's judgments are progressive.

God's judgments are complete.

God's judgments are devastating.

*They are inescapable, and they are meant to be redemptive.*

God is saying to the world, "Wake up!"

C. S. Lewis said, "God whispers in our pleasures, but he shouts in our pain. Pain is God's megaphone to rouse a sleeping world."

Does all of this bother you? It should. When we read Revelation 8, it ought to sober us. It ought to awaken us, and it ought to humble us.

Where's the gospel in all this?

It's in that last verse, "**Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell upon the earth,**" because we're about to hear the blowing of the last three trumpets.

The worst is yet to come. Where's the good news in that?

The answer is found in 2 Peter 3:9,

**The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise as some understand slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.**

*Our God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.*

Will a loving God send people to hell? The world says "no", but the Bible says "yes." Not with joy but with sorrow, yet to hell they must go.

Men and women send themselves to hell because of their sin, because of their rebellion, because of their refusal to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Someone said it this way, “Heaven is God's prepared place for prepared people. Hell is God's prepared place for unprepared people.”

In the last days, no one can deny God's judgment. Blasphemers are going to have to admit it. No one can ignore it.

Revelation 8 is shocking. *But this is the word of the Lord.* It's a message for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century.

God calls out to us and says, “Turn back before it is too late!” Don't take God's grace for granted.

Today is the day of salvation.

God is giving you time to change your mind.

If you've never trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, run to the cross.

Run to the cross! Trust in Him. Believe in Him.

You will be saved, and you will be protected from the wrath that is to come in the last days.

# One Final Word

Revelation 8 teaches us a hard lesson that we must learn over and over. We like to think we're in control. This chapter reminds us we aren't in control. *We were never in control.*

You can rip that great big "G" off your sweatshirt.

Fear grips us when we read the headlines because it appears the world is falling apart. But when we understand Revelation, we know that everything is falling into place, just like the Bible says.

*Christians ought to be the calmest people on earth because we know the Lord, and He holds the future in His hands.*

The awful judgments of Revelation 8 happen because the saints pray to God.

We pray.

Judgment comes.

We pray.

Jesus comes.

Here's a simple application for this week. Take a moment each day and pray these familiar words:

***Your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.***

My advice is, Buckle up! It's going to be a bumpy ride. But that's okay. Let me give you my own prediction for the future:

Easy days are over.  
Great days are ahead.

*What amazing days to be alive.* We can see the lines of Bible prophecy converging as we rush headlong toward the end of the age.

Jesus is coming soon!  
That's what the Bible says.  
It won't be long now.

Very soon the trumpet of God will sound, the dead in Christ will rise, and we will be caught together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

How then should we live?

Clear eyes.  
Full hearts.  
No fear.

Jesus is coming soon!  
Are you ready?

**Heavenly Father,**

**You are a God who reveals mysteries.**

**Your Word teaches us that you are in control of nature.**

**We're amazed. We're stunned. We're a little frightened by what is going to happen to planet earth.**

**Help us, Lord, to rest in Your grace in these troubled times.**

**We thank You that anyone anywhere who believes in You will be saved now and from the wrath to come.**

**Give us eager hearts to share the good news with others around us this week.**

**In Jesus' name. Amen.**