

The chronology, or time sequence, of events in Revelation can be difficult to work out. We read of the seven trumpets after the seven seals but that does not necessarily mean the trumpets follow the seals chronologically. There may be some overlap, at least to the extent that the seventh seal apparently consists of the seven trumpets.

The trumpet judgments appear to afflict more of mankind with greater severity than the seal judgments. In addition, the eagle in 8:9 heralds new and greater woes to come. This increased distress may mark the halfway point of the seven year tribulation. Daniel 9:27 tells us the Antichrist will make a seven year treaty with a group of nations but repudiate it after three and a half years and set up an abomination in the restored temple in Jerusalem.

This will initiate a period of unparalleled distress for Israel, sometimes called the great tribulation. *“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short”* (Matt. 24:21-22).

It is important to remember that the prophecies concerning the tribulation are given to the Jews, God's earthly people. They will experience relative peace during the treaty period of the first half. But the second half, specifically termed the time of Jacob's distress in Jeremiah 30:7, will result in the death of as many as two thirds of the Jews on earth (Zech. 13:8). The Lord is talking to His Jewish brethren in Matthew 24 and 25, not the church that will be called out later at Pentecost. In Daniel 9:24, the decrees delivered by the angel Gabriel are for Daniel's people and the city of Jerusalem.

This great tribulation is a time of testing and trial for Israel before it enters into the promised millennial blessings. But what about the Gentiles? Are they spared?

By no means. The bulk of the fatal

judgments falls on the Gentiles, and primarily on them alone during the first half of the tribulation. And they will have no comfort from prophecies. Instead, having rejected Christ, they will remain forever in the condition of the Gentiles before Christ came: *“... remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world”* (Eph. 2:12).

How great the contrast for all those, Jew and Gentile, who have believed! *“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father”* (Eph. 2:13-18). The “new man” who was formed by the reconciling blood of Christ is the church, held safe in heaven through the tribulation.

Notes on Chapters 8

8:1 When the last remaining seal is opened, there is an expectant pause like the still before a storm. The seventh seal is not a judgment itself but includes the seven trumpets.

8:3 The priest/angel at the altar is probably Christ, although not appearing here as the sacrificed Lamb.

8:5 The fire on the altar would consume the sacrifice. The fire taken from the altar and thrown upon the earth reminds us that our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29) bringing fearful judgment to the unbelievers on the earth.

8:6 The trumpets announce the imminence of

God's judgment and signal a call to repentance, if repentance were possible for those who have rejected God's grace (Heb. 6:4-6).

8:7-12 The first four trumpet judgments fall on different parts of God's original creation: plant life, the sea, fresh waters, and the heavenly bodies. A third of each is harmed. This is an acceleration of the "bondage to corruption" suffered by creation through Adam's sin (Rom. 8:21).

8:7 Grass pictures the impermanence of man and trees his pride and self-exaltation (as in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of Daniel 4).

8:8 One commentator likens the fall of the mountain into the sea to the dispersal of the Jews into the Gentile nations. An alternate view is the destruction of a great religious system.

8:10-11 The falling star has similarities to Satan's plunge from heaven in Luke 10:18. Wormwood means bitterness. Satan truly sows bitterness where he alights.

8:12 Those who have rejected God's light will now be denied a portion of it.

8:13 The eagle's cry of woe warns of greater disaster to come upon the earth. Indeed, the scope and scale of the judgments greatly increase after this point.