

# The Grace of Wrath

Studies in the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Text

Chapter 8:1-13

Topic

Dreadful judgments fall from the sky upon earth as a final warning for sinners to repent and be saved

Title

*"Dread Sky at Morning, Sinner Take Warning"*

Introduction

Crowdfunding has become hugely popular.

If you're not familiar with it, crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project by raising contributions from a large number of people, typically via the internet.

For example I've been following a campaign to fund a unique coffee mug that looks like a goat's horn.

As of 2012, there were more than 450 crowdfunding platforms. The ones you'd likely be most familiar with are *Kickstarter* and *GoFundMe*.

Churches more-and-more are turning to crowdfunding for their projects. My search for "church" on *Kickstarter* turned-up 574 projects, everything from missions trips churches would like to take to worship albums they'd like to record.

Over the last five years, *Kickstarter* has raised more than \$1 billion for 69,000 successful projects.

I couldn't help looking up some of the weirdest campaigns that actually got funded.

- *Combat Kitchenware*. It's a frying pan attached to a sword hilt. The inventor took home \$46,261.00 to make them.
- *Meat Soap* raised \$1,905.00 to create a line of soaps that smell like bacon, beef, and BBQ.
- The *Menurkey* is combination of a *menorah* and a *turkey*. It's a ceramic menorah that looks like a turkey. It celebrates the rare coincidence of Hannukah and Thanksgiving.

There's no crowdfunding campaign in our text in Revelation chapter eight, but we *do* see a certain crowd's long-time campaign come to fruition.

We might call it "crowd-pleading."

"The prayers of all the saints" is the ages-long campaign, and it comes to fruition when we see their pleadings ascending before God, with incense from the altar added to them.

They are instrumental in bringing the Tribulation judgments of God upon the inhabitants of earth.

As we work through the verses, I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Can Add Your Prayers To Those Offered In Heaven, and #2 God Will Answer Your Prayers Upon Those Who Inhabit Earth.

## #1 You Can Add Your Prayers To Those Offered In Heaven

(v1-5)

In the future, sometime after the resurrection and rapture of the church, Jesus will take a seven-sealed scroll from His Father's hand, and open one seal at a time. Each open seal takes us further into the seven years of the Tribulation on the earth.

Our verses describe the opening of the seventh seal, around the very middle of the seven years. It is a momentous event, because the scroll is now fully open, revealing the most awful judgments upon the earth.

**Rev 8:1** When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

It's the most ominous dramatic pause of all human history. Something extreme is about to happen, and it is announced by a terrifying silence.

Seriously, silence can be very uncomfortable. Have you ever been in your car, listening to the radio, when, suddenly, the broadcast goes silent? After even a few seconds, you think something is wrong.

If I suddenly stopped talking for even thirty seconds, you'd wonder if I was having a stroke.

**Rev 8:2** And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

John records this as if it was common knowledge that there were "seven angels who stand before God."

It was, to the Jews. You may have heard of the Book of Enoch. It is an ancient Jewish book, ascribed to Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah, who was taken to Heaven by God in a rapture prior to the global flood.

The Book of Enoch is quoted in the New Testament, by Jude. It is interesting, but it is not considered part of the inspired Bible.

Enoch mentions the seven 'presence' angels, also called archangels, by name: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Raguel, Remiel and Saraqael.

I'm not saying these are their names; but Jews reading the Revelation would flash on this tradition.

Notable for us is that they each are given a "trumpet," seven trumpets in all. The seventh seal **is** the blowing of seven trumpets, one after the other, taking us deeper into the second half of the Tribulation.

Rev 8:3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

Something must occur before the first trumpet is blown. "The prayers of all the saints" are brought before God's throne, incense added, and placed upon "the golden altar."

This is the second "altar" we have encountered in Heaven in the Revelation. The first was the opening of the fifth seal as the martyred souls beneath an altar cried out to God for vengeance (6:9-11).

The Jewish Temple on earth was a replica of things in Heaven. The first altar you came upon in the Jewish Tabernacle and Temple was the altar of sacrifice upon which a fire was constantly kept kindled, night and day. There the body of the sacrificed animal was burnt.

After the sacrifice was consumed, fire from the altar of sacrifice would be put in a censer and brought into the main room of the Temple to the second altar, called the golden altar of incense. Just beyond this room was the holy of holies where the presence of God dwelt behind a thick veil.

The Jews understood by these furnishings that the way into the presence of God was by the sacrifice of an innocent substitute. Once the sacrifice atoned for your sin, you could then approach God and offer your prayers before Him. Without that sacrifice, you could *not* approach God and could only face His judgment upon your sin.

No animals are actually sacrificed on the altar in Heaven. Jesus Christ, on the Cross at Calvary, was the sacrifice for the sins of the world. In the Book of Hebrews you read regarding Jesus,

Heb 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

Hebr 10:5 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me.

Heb 10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.

Heb 10:7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come; In the volume of the book it is written of Me; To do Your will, O God.'

Jesus is called "the Lamb of God" about thirty times in the Revelation. It is to constantly remind the Jewish readers, and us, that all the animals sacrificed through the centuries by the patriarchs and priests on altars were typical of His once-for-all sacrifice on the Cross.

We read, in Hebrews 9:12,

Heb 9:12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Jesus is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe, by virtue of having offered Himself as our Substitute. If you are a believer, you can approach God's throne anytime, anywhere, with total freedom and confidence you will receive grace and mercy from our Father.

When the seventh seal is opened, "the prayers of all the saints" play a crucial role. They activate the blowing of the seven trumpets that bring the final series of judgments upon the earth.

Rev 8:5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

The phenomena John mentions here are like the curtain going up on the trumpet judgments. These happen globally; they portend something God is about to do upon the entire planet.

Wild animals are able to sense disturbances weeks before major earthquakes strike, according to a new study by Cambridge University published in the journal *Physics and Chemistry of the Earth*.

Researchers studied several creatures in Peru's Yanachaga National Park and observed a change in their behavior, beginning 23 days before a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Contamana in 2011.

Japanese fishermen and sailors look to cats to predict the weather, even taking them on the ships so they'd be the first to know if a storm was coming their way.

A storm is coming upon the earth, preceded by "noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake." If you are on the earth mid-Tribulation, you will know what's coming.

While we believe that all of our prayers rise as incense before God's throne, something very specific is happening in these verses. Given the fact that what follows is the final series of judgments that lead to the return of Jesus Christ to earth in His Second Coming, to establish the kingdom on earth, I would suggest to you that the "prayers" being answered here are "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven."

Jesus taught us how to pray; we call it the Lord's Prayer.

Mat 6:9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.

Mat 6:10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is  
in heaven.

Mat 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

Mat 6:12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

Mat 6:13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from  
the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the  
glory forever. Amen.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He told us to approach  
God as our Father, reverently, and, right out of the gate, before  
anything else, **ask for His kingdom to come.**

We are only then to seek God for our daily spiritual and physical  
needs as we await the coming kingdom.

The prayer ends with another reference to the kingdom. It  
prompted one scholar to say, "the Lord's prayer is kingdom-  
saturated and kingdom-oriented."

Even before Jesus taught us to pray, believers were looking  
forward to the coming kingdom on earth. It was promised to  
Abraham, and to David. It was the constant expectation of Jews -  
prompting the disciples to constantly argue about positions in the  
kingdom, and to ask Jesus when it was going to be established.

The coming of the King, to establish His kingdom on earth, ought  
to permeate our praying. It ought to be our passion, because it is,  
ultimately, the answer to all of our prayers.



If we are longing for the kingdom to come, for the return of the King, it will affect not just our praying. It will affect our living - all aspects of our lives. Our daily lives are to be lived within the framework of our understanding that Jesus is coming.

For us, He is coming, imminently, to resurrect and rapture us. The expectation should be a blessed hope that gives us a joyful urgency to be serving Him.

Thus we add our prayers to this future scene in Heaven.

Maybe our prayers will have headings, like tweets on Twitter, so that we can literally 'see' them as they are brought before God.

We should want to 'see' a lot of our own prayers when we are surrounding the throne mid-Tribulation.

## #2 God Will Answer Your Prayers Upon Those Who Inhabit Earth

(v6-13)

The answer to those prayers is the Second Coming of Jesus. "Thy kingdom" *comes* when He returns, bodily, to earth.

His coming must be preceded by the blowing of the seven trumpets.

Rev 8:6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

I assume they have been ready for all of human history. Still they make last minute preparations.

I don't know exactly what an angel ought to do to prepare for his ministry. *I know what I should do.* I should get alone with the Lord so that I have a clear vision of Him. A lot of pastors have on their pulpit or podium the words of John 12:21, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

Further, we prepare by seeking fresh fillings by God the Holy Spirit. When you get saved, the Holy Spirit comes within you; He indwells you. But He also wants to come upon you, to empower you, as He did the disciples in the Book of Acts.

Jesus told us to ask, seek, and knock, speaking to believers specifically about receiving refreshings and renewals of God the Holy Spirit.

Now, the trumpets. The first four trumpets affect the natural creation.

Rev 8:7 The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

It has become somewhat popular to move away from the understanding that these things are literal to saying they are typical and symbolic. For example I keep encountering the term, "Jewish Apocalyptic Literature" when people are criticizing the literal approach. The argument is that there is a genre of literature that has its own unique rules of non-literal interpretation, and that the Revelation was written in that form.

There is really no basis at all for making that argument. John Walvoord wrote, "a sharp distinction should be observed between apocalyptic works outside the Bible and apocalyptic works which are Scripture, whose writing was guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."

The Holy Spirit, in fact, Who inspired John to write, often goes out of His way to show just how literal the prophecies are.

There is a glaring problem with adopting an allegorical approach. The problem is that you can interpret things however you like; there's no consistency. If you read commentaries from the non-literal point of view, that's exactly what you find.

Commentator J. A. Seiss wrote,

The truth is, if *earth, trees, and grass* do not mean *earth, trees, and grass*, no man can tell what they mean. Letting go the literal signification of the record, we launch out upon an endless sea of sheer conjecture.

We take the Revelation to be literal, unless it tells us it is being symbolic or allegorical. Then we look for the interpretation of the symbol within the book itself; or elsewhere in the Bible.

We are futurists, meaning we see the bulk of the book as still unfulfilled, literal future prophecy.

A mighty hailstorm, a real one, accompanied by some sort of fire rains down from Heaven.

"Mingled with blood" is just chilling. It could be the carnage from the deaths of men on the earth as they are caught in the storm.

It may be blood accompanying the storm. Since the martyrs, in 6:10, specifically asked the Lord to avenge their blood, it could be representative of their blood.

There will also be massive fires on the earth as a result of this judgment. In chapter eleven you'll learn that there has been a three and one half year drought on the earth - fuel for the fire from Heaven.

"And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up." I endured many devastating fires when we lived in Southern California. The Panorama Fire took over 400 homes.

Multiply that to include one-third of the homes, globally. It's mind-boggling.

Or think of it this way. Recall all the most devastating fires of the last decade, and think of them happening all over the earth, all at once.

Rev 8:8 Then the second angel sounded: And *something* like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.

Rev 8:9 And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

It isn't a mountain that is thrown down. It is something **like** a great mountain. It is a giant, solid mass which hits the earth, surrounded by combustible gases which ignite as it enters the earth's atmosphere.

It hits in one of the oceans and a third of the sea becomes blood. This could mean that the ocean affected turns to blood - as the Nile River did during the ten plagues in Egypt. Or it could again be the effect of the creatures in the sea dying.

There are a few similarities to the trumpet judgments and the ten plagues. One scholar wrote,

The trumpet and bowl judgments intentionally parallel the ten plagues of Egypt (Exodus 7-12). The ten plagues are prototypes of the trumpets and bowls, providing a framework to understand them.

The ten plagues occurred just before Israel's exodus from Egypt, prophetically foreshadowing the end-time judgment before the final exodus of God's people from the kingdom of darkness.

By the way - we take the ten plagues to be literal, do we not?  
**Then why would the Revelation suddenly become allegorical?** It's just silly.

The "sea" may be a specific reference to the Mediterranean and not a reference to all oceans. "For a person in the world John lived in, the Mediterranean Sea *was* the sea, and they really had little knowledge of other oceans" (Guzik).

Even if it hits in the Mediterranean, the effects are global. They might be worse at the point of impact; but everyone on the planet will be affected.

A third of the ships in the worlds oceans are destroyed by resultant rogue waves.

Notice the precision of the measurements. It's one third – no more, no less. It shows that these are carefully calculated judgments sent by God - not simply nature gone bad, or human beings ruining the environment.

The third trumpet brings poison upon the world's fresh waters:

Rev 8:10 Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.

Rev 8:11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.

Another object strikes the earth. It's called a "star." It seems mostly fluid, burning like a lamp.

As it strikes the atmosphere it scatters all over the planet. It affects the earth's fresh water rivers and the springs from which they flow.

It is named "Wormwood," perhaps the way we name storms and hurricanes.

Wormwood is a word that refers to something being poisonous to you.

The fourth trumpet brings a plague on the heavens, and darkness on the earth:

Rev 8:12 Then the fourth angel sounded: 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 were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.

This is more than an eclipse. The light from these heavenly bodies is actually *reduced* by a factor of one third. It will result in severe drops in the world's temperatures, vast meteorological upsets, and changes in climate.

Commentators sometimes attribute these judgments to extreme natural disasters. Sort of like people blame so-called global warming for all manner of problems.

Other commentators see a nuclear event in these descriptions.

*These are supernatural judgments in nature - **not** natural events.*

Verse thirteen removes all doubts:

Rev 8:13 And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

God is sending storm warnings out to the inhabitants of the earth. Everyone, everywhere, will hear this being warning them from Heaven.

The word translated "angel" is odd and is more likely *eagle*. Weird but true. Here is a suggestion by Dr. Henry Morris:

He is both angel and eagle. [There are] four mighty cherubim, the living creatures of Revelation four... The fourth of these is said to have an appearance "like a flying eagle" (4:7).

God is not a passive bystander who allows mankind to ruin himself by environmental ignorance or unrestrained weapons technology. This isn't describing nature taking its course, or even human nature taking its course.

It isn't *The Age of Ultron*.

People on the earth will know what is happening. God won't be trying to fool anyone. Everyone will have an opportunity to repent.

"Woe" is a word that indicates God is at work judging sin. *He tells mankind that the worst is yet to come.*

We understand the phrase "the inhabitants of the earth" to be a technical phrase describing nonbelievers on the earth who have deliberately rejected salvation and who prefer this world over Heaven for their home. They will be without excuse.

- If they won't accept Jesus as their Substitute at the altar of sacrifice, then the fire from that altar must fall upon them.
- If they won't apply His blood to their sins, the blood of the martyrs they have slain will stain them.

Commenting on these judgments, Pastor David Guzik writes,

[God] attacks all the ordinary means of subsistence, such as food and water; and He attacks all the ordinary means of comfort, and knowledge, such as light and the regular rhythm of days.



Man has come to see these aspects of the created order as impersonal, perpetual forces. During the Great Tribulation, God proclaims His Lordship through their agonizing disruption.

Remember, though, that God 'only' strikes one-third. It's been said that He spares more than He strikes.

Judgment is inevitable. The wages of sin is death.

But in His divine wrath God remembers mercy. Men will still have the opportunity to repent.

The Tribulation, even as it worsens leading up to the Second Coming of Jesus, is the grace of wrath.

Our God saves any and all who will call upon His Name, trusting in the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross for the forgiveness of their sins.

Are you a believer in Jesus Christ, with the blessed hope of the rapture at His coming for the church?

Or are you an inhabitant of the earth - one who will be left behind to see and experience the seals being opened?

Something for us believers to ponder. This scene shows us that our prayers for the kingdom are answered by God's judgments raining down upon nonbelievers. We ought to want there to be as few nonbelievers as possible.

In other words, we ought to be motivated to be serving the Lord, for the sake of the Gospel reaching as many as possible *before* the time of the end.

