

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. Today we will introduce Revelation chapters 8-11. Part 3 of the book of Revelation consists of chapters 8-11.

**REVELATION CHAPTER 8 AND 9** teaches that **God continually warns the godless and wicked people through the seven trumpets of judgement.**

Although the final judgement is reserved for the last day in human history, even now at the present time the seals of persecution are followed by the trumpets of judgement. Trumpets warn people. "The seven trumpets" are symbols representing *the judgements that God releases over the wicked people on earth throughout the period from the first to the second coming of Christ as a warning*. Their purpose is to punish the wicked people for their rejection of the gospel and their persecution of Christians as well as to call them to repentance. They do not point to specific events in history, but to calamities that occur again and again throughout this period. Therefore, part 3 of the book of Revelation, the period of the seven trumpets, is parallel to part 2, the period of the seven seals. The revelation of God's judgements is so terrible, that everyone in heaven became silent (8:1-2).

God's judgements come in response to the prayers of Christians, who suffer persecutions and trials on earth. Their imperfect prayers are mixed with "incense" that is a symbol representing *Christ's perfect intercession for Christians* (8:3-5)!

The trumpets of judgements affect the various parts of the universe, so that there is nowhere safety for the wicked. The first four trumpets strike the wicked people by disasters occurring in nature and affect their physical being, while the last three trumpets affect their spiritual being.

**The 1<sup>st</sup> trumpet** (8:7) strikes the wicked people on the land.

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> trumpet** (8:8-9) strikes them on the sea.

**The 3<sup>d</sup> trumpet** (8:10-11) strike their land-waters.

**The 4<sup>th</sup> trumpet** (8:12) strike the heavens under which they live. The wicked people are struck from above, symbolising that Christ uses these disasters as his instruments to punish and to warn. Each disaster destroys  $\frac{1}{3}$  area. The number  $\frac{1}{3}$  is a symbol of *the fact that God sovereignly limits and controls every disaster on earth*. The descriptions of these disasters resemble the ten plagues in Egypt and serve to emphasise their destructive nature and their terror (8:6-12). "The eagle" is a bird of prey, which bodes evil (Mt 24:28). He warns the wicked inhabitants of the earth with a three-fold "woe" that the remaining three trumpets of judgement will be worse (8:13).

**The 5<sup>th</sup> trumpet** (9:1-12, 1<sup>st</sup> woe) describes the evil and destructive work of Satan and his demons in the hearts of the wicked people. "The star" that had fallen from the sky (Lk 10:18) is a symbol representing *Satan's present condition*. After he rebelled against God, he lost his holiness, his position in heaven and his splendour. By God's permissive decree, he is given "the key to the shaft of the Abyss", that is, he receives *power to open the Abyss to let the demons out*. In the book of Revelation, "the Abyss" is a symbol representing *hell before the final judgement day* (20:1-3; Lk 8:31). After the final judgement day hell is called "the lake of fire" (20:14,15; 21:8). Satan continues to fill the world with demons and their wicked influences. "The smoke" (cf. smokescreen) is a symbol of *their deception and darkness*, while "the locusts" are a symbol of *their terror and painful destruction*. Their king is "the angel of the Abyss", called "Destroyer" in Hebrew and Greek. The number "5 months" is a symbol of *the fact that God has sovereignly limited the duration of their torture* (5 is less than 6, the number of man, cf. 1 Cor 10:13). Satan and his demons rob the wicked people of all "light" (2 Cor 4:4), which is a symbol of *all God's revealed attributes*, like righteousness and holiness, joy and peace, wisdom and understanding. This ends the 1<sup>st</sup> woe (9:12).

**The 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet** (9:13 to 11:14, 2<sup>nd</sup> woe) describes the evil and destructive work of wars. Although it does not describe any particular war, but represents all wars between the first and second coming of Christ, it especially refers to the most frightful wars that will be waged towards the end of world-history (11:7-14). While the vision of the 4<sup>th</sup> seal mentions "war" as one of the trials that Christians suffer together with the rest of the world, the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet describes "war" as a punishment and warning for unbelievers. "The four angels" represent evil angels, who relish the idea of plunging mankind into destructive wars. "The Euphrates" is a symbol representing *the great world empire of Assyria or Babylon* (cf. Isa 8:7), which in turn represents *the wicked world* (cf. Isa 17:12). God sovereignly determines the very hour, day and month of every war on earth. Towards the end of world-history, the numbers involved in these wars are enormous, 200 000 000! "The horses" are not ordinary horses, but are symbols representing *terrible war-machines* of every description. However, although very many people are destroyed, the rest of mankind refuse to repent. They continue to

transgress both the first and second table of God's law (9:20-21). The wicked people on earth are even punished with yet undisclosed plagues (10:3-7). Nevertheless, throughout the execution of God's judgements, the gospel is proclaimed as well as opposed. Thus, the persecuting world becomes the impenitent world. Man's impenitence finally causes God to pour out "the seven bowls of wrath", which finally culminates in the final judgement day.

**The 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet** (10:7; 11:15-19, 3<sup>rd</sup> woe) introduces the final judgement day, the accomplishment of God's eternal decisions and the kingdom of God in its final and eternal phase.

**REVELATION CHAPTER 10 AND 11** teaches that **God consoles the persecuted Christian churches on earth.**

**First. The symbolic picture in Revelation 10:1-11 is concerning the mighty angel and the little scroll.**

In a vision John sees a giant angel, who in likeness resembles the vision of Christ in chapter 1 and thus is closely associated with Christ. He gives a shout like the roar of a lion, because his message concerns the entire universe and must be heard by all people.

In answer to his shout, the seven thunders spoke. "**The seven thunders**" are a symbol of *the voice of God making seven distinct revelations* (Ps 29:3-9). John is commanded not to write these revelations down, but to seal them up. The meaning is that besides the seven lampstands, the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls, there are other principles that operate in the universe and other forces at work in world-history, which God has not revealed to us (cf. Dt 29:29). We cannot know or describe all the factors and agencies that determine the present and the future. Therefore, Christians should not assume that they can make exact predictions regarding the future, because they may be leaving out a very important factor and thus misrepresent the truth!

The angel swears by God that there will be no more delay. The final judgement day is about to come. When the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet is blown, the mystery of God will be accomplished. "**The mystery of God**" refers to *God's decree concerning salvation and judgement in world-history*, which is not entirely unknown, but would have remained unknown if God had not revealed it. God's plan of salvation and judgement determines world-history and will reach its culmination on the final judgement day. Then God's people of both the Old and New Testament periods will receive their final inheritance, as God had promised his servants in the Old and New Testament.

At this point, we expect the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet and the description of the final judgement day. However, just as the 7<sup>th</sup> seal does not follow immediately after the 6<sup>th</sup> seal, but first describes the protection of the Church Militant, so the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet does not follow immediately after the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet, but first describes the suffering, power, task and final victory of the Church, so that the Christians may be consoled when judgements are inflicted on the wicked people in the world. The fact that the wicked people fail to heed God's trumpets of warning (9:20-21), rejected the very clear and definite testimony of his two witnesses (11:7-10) and absolutely refused to repent (16:9,11), shows that God's judgements and the outpouring of his wrath is completely justified. These **interventions** are however *not chronological interventions or intervals* between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> seals or trumpets, but simply descriptions of the present period between the first and second coming of Christ from different aspects.

The angel held a little scroll in his hand and commanded John to eat it. "**The little scroll**" (Ezek 2:9 to 3:11) is a symbol representing *the Word of God, the gospel in which God's mystery of salvation and judgement is revealed* (Rom 16:25-26; Eph 3:2-6; Col 2:2-3) and about which John must again prophesy (10:11; cf. ch. 17). In itself the gospel is sweet for everyone who accepts it, but its proclamation is always followed by bitter persecution of Christians. The apostle John must not merely understand and digest the message of the gospel. He must also experience its sweetness of salvation and bitterness of suffering (Lk 9:23). John himself experienced suffering by his exile on Patmos (1:9) and the Christians he addressed were experiencing severe tribulation (10:8-10).

**Second. The symbolic picture in Revelation 11:1-2 is concerning the measuring of the temple.**

In the *vision, picture or symbol*, John sees the earthly Jerusalem with its earthly temple. He measures the inner sanctuary, altar of incense and those worshipping in connection with it, but excludes the outer court. The picture is of worshippers reverently bowing their heads in prayer while incense is being offered on the altar of incense.

Hence, "**the temple of God**" is a symbol of *all the true Christians* who worship God in spirit and in truth (1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16-17; Eph 2:19-22).

Only they are "**measured**", which is a symbol of *being set apart from that which is profane and thus of being perfectly safe and protected from all harm* (21:15; Ezek 40:5; 42:20; 22:26; Zech 2:1-5). They are safeguarded while God's judgements are being inflicted on the wicked and persecuting world. They are protected, not from suffering severely, but from perishing together with the wicked world. Just as in Revelation 7 all true Christians are "sealed" as a sign that they belong to God and are protected by God, so in Revelation 11 all true Christians are "measured" as a sign that they are

set apart for God and protected by God. In both cases, the New Testament Church Militant is described in Old Testament terms as Israel's tribes (Gal 6:16; Js 1:1) and as Israel's temple (2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21-22).

"The outer court" is a symbol of *people who outwardly belong to the temple, but are cast out* (Jn 9:34). They are a symbol of *unfaithful church-members or nominal Christians*, who are excluded from being measured and are excluded from being the genuine people of God.

The earthly Jerusalem is called "the holy city" (Mt 27:53) simply because it used to be holy. In the past it was set apart for God. But in the present it is "*figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified*" (11:8). The present Jerusalem had become the symbol of *the immorality of Sodom and the persecution of Egypt*. The earthly Jerusalem had become the symbol of *antichristianity*, the symbol of *all the cities and countries in the world that have turned their back on the God of the Bible!* It is filled with "Gentiles", which is a symbol of *the godless and wicked people on earth*. Because verse 8 clearly refers to the *figurative or symbolical meaning* of Jerusalem, therefore the temple of God, the outer court, the two witnesses and the beast all have figurative or symbolical meaning!

The holy city and the outer court of the temple are trampled on by the Gentiles for 42 months. The godless and wicked people in the whole world will invade every institution and organisation on earth, whether political, economical, military, judicial, educational, religious, etc. and make it antichristian. The godless and wicked people on earth will also invade the nominal Christian churches in every country, take possession of it in the world and make it antichristian! The worldly nominal Christians will welcome the ideas and ways of the godless and wicked people in the world and will become conform to them.

The genuine Christians will live and work amidst the godless and wicked people in the world for "42 months". Jesus taught that Jerusalem would be trampled on by the Gentiles from the invasion of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 until the "*the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*" (Lk 21:24). The times of the Gentiles is fulfilled when the full number of the Gentiles that are being saved have come into the kingdom of God (Rom 11:25). Thus, the number 42 months is a symbol representing *the whole period from the first coming to the second coming of Jesus Christ*.

### **Third. The symbolic picture in Revelation 11:3-12 is concerning the two witnesses.**

In Revelation 11:1-2, the Church Militant is represented under the symbolism of the temple of God and is presented as set apart and protected. In Revelation 11:3-12, the Church Militant is represented under the symbolism of the two witnesses and is presented as bearing witness through its workers. Thus, "the two witnesses" (Lk 10:1) are a symbol representing *the Church in its task of proclaiming God's Word through its faithful workers from the first to the second coming of Christ*. As most of the symbolism in the book of Revelation, the two witnesses are characterised by Old Testament symbols. The two witnesses are described as being clothed in "sackcloth, showing that *they call people to repentance and faith*. They are the "two olive trees and two lampstands that stand before God". In Zechariah 4 this was a symbol that the ability and wisdom of the Holy Spirit would enable Zechariah to build the second temple. But in Revelation 11 this is a symbol that *especially the faithful and Spirit-filled Christian preachers and teachers will spread the light of the gospel all over the world*. Whenever the wicked world tries to harm them, they are authorised just as the prophets Jeremiah, Elijah and Moses to speak words of judgement that would result in the actual destruction of their opponents (Jer 5:14; 1 Ki 17:1; Ex 7:20; Mt 18:18; Jn 20:21-23; cf. Act 5:1-11; 13:4-12).

The number 1260 days (11:3; cf. 12:6) is a symbol representing *the period during which the genuine Church witnesses*. This period is parallel to the period of 42 months (11:2; cf. 13:5) during which the genuine Church is protected. The numbers 3½ years, 42 months and 1260 days are symbols representing *the period of affliction for the Church just as it was a period of affliction for God's Old Testament people* (cf. 1 Ki 17:1; Lk 4:25; Js 5:17). This period clearly begins with the first coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Church (12:5-6,14) and ends with the final battle and the second coming of Jesus Christ (11:7-12; 13:5-8). In Matthew 24:14 Jesus says that the end would come when the gospel has been preached in the whole world as a testimony for all the nations.

"The beast that comes up from the Abyss", will attack the two witnesses, overpower them and kill them. For 3½ days their dead bodies will lie openly exposed in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt. The meaning of this picture is that just before the second coming of Jesus Christ, the last antichrist will be released from the Abyss, which is hell. He will stir up the whole godless and wicked world to destroy the genuine Church as a mighty organisation and as a missionary movement on earth. Although there will still be Christians on earth, they will no longer be an organised institute and many Christian workers will be martyred. The earthly Jerusalem, which is a symbol of *the sexual immoral and persecuting antichristian world* (11:8; Jer 23:14) will then have become like Babylon, another symbol of *the sexual immoral and persecuting antichristian world* (17:5-6).

The godless and wicked antichristians in the world will celebrate the destruction of the genuine Church and the silencing of the gospel preaching. However, their celebration will be premature and will last only for 3½ days, which is a symbol of *a very short time* (cf. 20:7-9a; Mt 24:21-26).

The two witnesses will be taken up to heaven in a cloud. This is a symbol of *the sudden and unexpected second coming of Jesus Christ* (cf. Mt 24:27-31) *when the genuine Christians will be resurrected from the dead and taken up into the sky to meet Jesus Christ* (11:11-12; cf. 20:13; Mt 24:40-41; 1 Thes 4:15-17). All the godless and wicked people, who throughout the centuries have persecuted the genuine Christians, will look on and see all genuine Christians restored to life, to honour, to power and to influence. They will see them ascend upwards in a cloud of glory to meet Christ. There will be ‘a rapture’ of genuine Christians, but it will not be secret, because the second coming of Jesus Christ will be very audible and very visible (cf. 1:7; 6:15-17; 11:12; Mt 24:27-31; 1 Thes 4:16)!

The severe earthquake” and its destruction will immediately precede the final judgement (cf. 6:12-17; 16:17-21). Although the survivors of the earthquake on earth will be terrified and give glory to God, this does not mean that they will repent (cf. 9:20-21; Dan 4:34,37). This will end the 2<sup>nd</sup> woe (11:14).

The 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet (11:15-19)(the 3<sup>rd</sup> woe) introduces the final judgement. Throughout the period between the first and second coming of Christ it was not always apparent that Jesus Christ had all authority in heaven and on earth and it often seemed as if Satan had more power. But at the second coming it will be absolutely clear that Jesus Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords (Ps 2:8-12; 19:11-16). He will come with the full and visible sovereignty of God to vindicate Christians, to judge the godless and wicked people (11:18; cf. 20:9b-15; Mt 25:31-46) and to establish the kingdom of God in its final phase (11:15; cf. 21:1-22:5; Mt 25:34).

In the vision, God’s temple in heaven was opened and “the ark of the covenant” was clearly seen by all. “The ark of the covenant” is a symbol representing *real, intimate and perfect fellowship between God and his people*, a fellowship based on the atonement of sins (Ex 25:22). But for the godless and wicked people it is a symbol representing *God’s throne and thus God’s wrath*. “The flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, the earthquake and the great hailstorm” are symbols representing *the revelation of God’s wrath*.

#### **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Read Revelation 12. Tomorrow we will introduce Revelation 12.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and preach God’s Kingdom” and Internet on [www.dota.net](http://www.dota.net)

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.