

War of the Worlds
Revelation Series #6
Revelation 8 & 9

Introduction: With the advent of space travel and rockets and jets, there has been a tremendous interest in that genre of literature and film known as "science fiction." One of the blockbuster movies of all time was about a little creature from outer space by the name of "ET."

One of the most popular television shows of all time was "star trek." I used to love watching that show and other science fiction stuff.

There has developed along with that a fascination the possibility of an invasion from outer space. In 1938 a famous incident took place involving the actor Orson Wells. He was narrating a part in the play entitled "the war of the worlds" over radio.

Unsuspecting listeners who tuned in, not realizing that it was simply play-acting, believed that the state of New Jersey was being invaded by Martians. So realistic was this actor's portrayal, it almost sent an entire nation into panic.

Ironically, the bible teaches that someday a worldwide invasion is going to take place, but it will not be an invasion from outer space, but rather, from inner space. There is going to be unleashed an army of demon locusts and an army of 200 million satanic soldiers who will do battle with the forces of earth. It will truly be "the war of the worlds."

It will see more people killed than all the other wars in human history combined.

Today we are going to read a descriptive picture of this war. But I warn you it will be both depressing and demoralizing. You are going to see horror, hurt, heartache, and heartbreak on an unprecedented scale, you are going to see the hardness of the hearts of lost mankind.

As you move through the book of Revelation you will find that there are many series of sevens. In chapters 2 and 3 we have the seven churches.

Last week we saw how God's judgment has been wrapped up in a seven-sealed scroll. The first six seals have been broken and with their breaking we have seen war, death, destruction, and calamity on an unprecedented scale. Those on the earth during this time will think surely the end has come. But with the opening of the seventh seal, we are ushered into another period of judgment introduced by the blowing of seven trumpets. When the seventh trumpet is blown there follows seven bowls of even greater judgment poured out upon this earth.

The seven seals give us a picture of a world **ruined by man**. The seven trumpet judgments tell us about a world **ruled by Satan**. Then the seven bowls will tell us about a world **rescued by God**.

Turn with me to Revelation, chapter 8

1When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

Normally, when you read about heaven you read about singing and praise and rejoicing. But now, the choirs are still. The harps cease. The angels are not singing. There is silence in heaven. I believe that this is like the calm before the storm. The lightening crashes and the sky crackles with electricity. Then there is a quiet. And then BOOM with thunder. (STORY of AF Flyover in Spain)

That's what we have here. God is getting ready to pour judgment upon an earth that has rejected His son the Lord Jesus Christ.

A half an hour may not seem like a long time to you but think about it.

Thirty minutes can be an absolutely deafening experience. You take a man proposing marriage to his girlfriend. She stands there and looks at him silently for 30 minutes.

Think of a courtroom where a man is on trial for his very life. The jury comes back in. The judge asks the foreman, "have you reached a verdict?"; the foreman says, "we have." The judge says, "what is it?" then just imagine silence for thirty minutes.

Or think for an example of a man who has been told he may have a terminal illness. He is waiting in the doctor's office; the doctor comes in holding the

x-rays. The man says, "doctor. What is the diagnosis?" the doctor just stares and says not a word.

All of heaven is frozen in awe at what they are seeing. The final chapter of time, as we know it, is about to be revealed.

This silence is the "lull before the storm." Zephaniah said in 1:7: "***Be silent before the Sovereign Lord, for the day of the Lord is near.***" [NIV]

The seven trumpets are about to sound. These are not worship trumpets. It is too late to worship. These are not work trumpets, for the night has come when no man can work. These are war trumpets, for God has now declared war on the world that has rejected his only son.

Revelation 8: 1-3 ***"When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. 3Another angel, who had a golden censer, came, and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne."*** [NIV]

A censer is a vessel which holds incense. Incense in the bible is a symbol of prayer and intercession. Notice this censer contains the prayers of "***all God's people.***"

Here is what we see in vs. 4-5: ***"The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand. 5Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake."*** [NIV]

When the heavenly time-out ended, it did so with a bang. What an amazing visual of the power of prayer! At the end of the half-hour of peace, when the prayer ascends to God, the judgment descends from God.

The altar is not only a place of sacrifice, but also a place of judgment. When God sacrificed his son on the altar of the cross, His judgment fell on Jesus. God's fire always falls on the altar of sacrifice. If you accept the sacrifice, you avoid the judgment. But if you reject the sacrifice, you receive the judgment.

We learn in Hebrews 10:26-27. ***“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.” [NIV]***

So, we must keep in mind that God's judgment is being poured out upon this earth not because of what this earth has done, but because of what this earth has not done. Some think that people go to hell because they do bad things. If someone goes to hell, it is not because of what they did, but rather because of what they failed to do. They failed to receive Jesus as savior and lord.

There are some who do not take these upcoming judgments as literal physical judgments upon the earth. But I do, for three reasons.

First, because of the words of Jesus; ***“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”*** (Luke 21:25-26 NIV)

Second, we also have the witness of the bible, Isaiah 13:9-10 says, ***“See, the day of the Lord is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. 10The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light. 11I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.”*** [NIV]

Third, there is also the wickedness of man. Isaiah goes on to say in verse 11, ***11I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.”***

We now see that each trumpet brings with it a different type of destruction.

1. The fiery storm (vs. 7)

“The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth

was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.” [NIV]

Today, when we hear about forest fires, the damage is measured in acres or miles. When the first trumpet sounds, the damage will be measured by countries, maybe even continents. The ecology of the entire earth will be turned upside down. Economic collapse will ensue, along with food shortages and massive property damage from the fires.

If we just limited these judgments to America, imagine 1/3 of America’s forests on fire, 1/3 of the waves of grain, 1/3 of the fruited plain becoming a parched desert. Fire spreading over all the earth. A third of the wheat fields. A third of the rice fields. A third of the oat fields on this earth. Ecological disaster!

Think about how this would affect the food supply, furthermore, the destruction of pasturelands would devastate the meat and the milk industries. Think of the pungent smoke and the air pollution that would come. Think again of how many birds of the air and beasts of the field would die. The balance of our ecological system, which many today worship, would be destroyed.

What we have here is a picture of a world that has rejected Christ, the Bread of Life. Now, one third of all vegetation is destroyed.

2. The filthy sea (vs. 8–9)

“The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, 9a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.” [NIV]

The second trumpet will bring saltwater devastation. A massive, poisoned, burning something will be thrown into the sea. It could be a meteor or the contents of a volcanic eruption. Whatever it is, we know that it is not just a natural disaster.

The fact that it is "thrown" means that someone had to throw it. The resulting tsunami will be large enough to overturn, sink, or carry far onto shore a third of all ships. In 2016, the number of ships on the ocean at any given time was

around 50,000. That means that nearly 17,000 ships and their crews will be destroyed in this one cataclysmic act.

The damage to supply lines would be irreparable. But what's significant is not just the size of this "great mountain," but its composition. There is something about it that will cause the sea to turn to blood and one-third of all sea life to be destroyed. Fishing companies will have to close their doors. The economies of many coastal countries will implode. The world will be reeling. Fish would die in record numbers.

If 1/3 of the ships were to be destroyed the maritime industry would be in total chaos. Major oil spills that today are getting front page news, would look like an ink blot. Imagine beaches littered with bodies and fish, and ships washing up on shore like the sands of the sea.

The Bible says, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." When Jesus died on the cross and the blood came streaming down, every drop represented the sacrifice of His life for the sins of the world. But a Christ-rejecting world says, "I don't want that old blood religion."

c. The fallen star (vs. 10–11)

“The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water— 11the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.” [NIV]

God has set aside a special star to carry out his judgment. He has given this star the name of wormwood. Wormwood is a plant that is found in Palestine. Horticulturists tell us that the wormwood is among the most bitter tasting plant on earth. When this star falls into the fresh waters of this world, the rivers and the streams and the lakes will become so bitter to the taste they cannot be humanly consumed.

Knowing that water comprises 65% of the human body, you can see the havoc and the chaos that would come just by the pollution of the water on this earth.

Jesus is the Water of Life. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ and drink of the Water of Eternal Life and be saved. But a world that rejects the Water of Life which

comes from Jesus Christ will have only to drink the bitter waters of judgment and sin.

d. The failing sun (v.12)

“The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, 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 turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.” [NIV]

I don't think I have to go into detail to tell you the ecological affect this could have upon the earth.

STORY: I heard about a science teacher who asked the class the question: "which is more important to us - the moon or the sun?" a little boy said, "well the moon, of course." The teacher said, "why?"

The little boy said, "because the moon gives us light at night when we need it. The sun gives us light in the daytime when we don't need it."

The fact of the matter is the sun gives us light at all times. Without the power and the heat and the light of the sun we could not grow vegetables and fruit and grain and food to feed us and to sustain us.

Why is it that only 1/3 of the earth and the sky is affected in these judgments? Why is it that the judgment of God here is limited? Why doesn't he let loose of all of his judgment all at once and get it over with? Because God oversees this judgment with a firm hand, and with a broken heart.

2 Peter 3:9 says, ***"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*** [NIV]

Think about a time on this earth when the Bible says that the sun and the moon and the stars will be dimmed. And then when you come to the 16th chapter of Revelation, evidently these light sources are going to be turned back up, when you read, ***"and the fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire."***

Not only can God turn His light sources down, but God can also turn His light sources up. So, there is judgment on light.

We are living in a world where Jesus Christ came, 2000 years ago. When Jesus came, He said, "I am the Light of the world." but the Bible says that men loved darkness rather than light and they turned their back on the Light of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, God says to a world that didn't want light, "Alright, you don't want light, I'll take the light away."

You remember all those plagues in Egypt were attacks on the many gods that the Egyptians worshipped and in these judgements, the gods of this world are once again being mocked by God...but there's more.

Let's continue with 13, ***"As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!"***

The first four judgments have been judgments of natural causes. The next three trumpet judgments will be of supernatural forces on the earth. He says, ***"Woe to the inhabitants of the earth."***

Now there are two words in the Greek language for people who live on the earth. One word means simply, "people who live on the earth." But the word used here refers to a certain kind of people who not only live on the earth, but people who have settled down, put their roots into this world and made their world not only their home, but also their god. James 4:4 reminds us that, ***"friendship with the world means enmity against God?" [NIV]***

This passage warns you that if you pick this world instead of heaven, if you put your roots down in this world instead of letting your citizenship be in heaven, God says you will one day hear the trumpets of judgment.

A question I would ask at this point, is, which do you want to hear? Do you want to hear the trumpets? Or do you want to hear THE trumpet? The trumpet mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, ***"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the arch angel and the trumpet of God will sound and the dead in Christ will be raised first and then we who are alive will be caught up together to meet them in the air."***

One of these days the trumpet will sound, and the rapture will occur. But those that miss the rapture trumpet will hear the trumpets of judgment. **Which is it going to be for you? The trumpets or the trumpet?**

As soon as the angel had flown by crying out "Woe, woe, woe" for those who still survive on the earth, the first of the three woes begin. ***"The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss."*** (Revelation 9:1).

But this is not just an ordinary star. This star has fallen from heaven to earth. Now that immediately gives us a clue as to who this star is. This star is none other than Satan himself. One of the names for Satan is lucifer which means "brightness." in Isaiah. He is compared to the "morning star." (isa. 14:12-1.4) the lord Jesus even said on one occasion to his disciples "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." (Luke 10:18)

The Greek word is *abussos*, from which we get the word abyss. Some translations say bottomless pit. The word is found nine times in the Bible, seven of which are in the book of Revelation. What is the abyss?

When Jesus went to the Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee, he met a man who was possessed by a demonic horde. Jesus asked the name of the demons, and they answered "Legion" because there were so many of them (Luke 8:30). As Jesus prepared to cast them out, the demons became terrified and pleaded with Him not to send them into the abyss (verse 31). Jesus instead sent them into a nearby herd of swine. The pigs panicked and ran down the hill into the sea, where they drowned.

Similarly, every time that we find the abyss or the bottomless pit in Scripture, it is associated with demonic forces. So, we can be confident that whatever goes into the abyss or comes out of it is demonic in nature.

Revelation 9 goes on to say, ***"When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. 3And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. 4They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5They were not***

allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes. 6During those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.” [NIV]

This will not be like the plague of locusts that came on the Egyptians in the time of Moses. Those locusts were directed toward the food supplies of Pharaoh and his people. The Revelation locusts will be commanded to avoid the crops altogether. They will feed on the people. Also, the Egyptian locusts only stayed for days; these tribulation locusts will remain for five months. Imagine that.

But the 144,000 witnesses will be bug-proof because they have received the seal of protection from God Himself. There will be many who will resent them, but there will be others who will recognize that their protection is divine in nature and turn to God.

There has been much controversy about whether these are actually locusts. John gets quite descriptive as he talks about them, and much of what he says is quite unlocustlike. Look at their description starting in verse 7...

“The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. 8Their hair was like women’s hair, and their teeth were like lions’ teeth. 9They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. 10They had tails with stingers, like scorpions, and in their tails, they had power to torment people for five months. 11They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer). [NIV]

Crowns, faces like men, hair like women, teeth like lions, breastplates of iron, tails like scorpions. What are these things? Some commentators believe that John is describing modern helicopters, and there are elements of the description here that would fit. But unless the pilot has little red horns and a pointy tail, it doesn't quite work.

Remember, these locusts didn't come from a helicopter factory; they came flying up from the abyss. There is no reason to allegorize their origin. John said that these are demonic locusts, and they sound exactly like he said they are.

One more reason to look at them as demonic creatures is the fact that they have a king leading them. He is the angel of the abyss with a very fitting name-"Destruction" or "Destroyer."

Five months of this horror qualifies as the first woe. But hold on, there is more woe to come...verse 12.

“The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come. 13The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God. 14It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” (Revelation 9:12-14, NIV)

The Euphrates River is well known in the Middle East, but those in the West heard little about it until Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990. Suddenly, the Euphrates was on every newscast. Many readers of the Bible, however, were aware of the Euphrates, because when God created man, He also planted a garden where he could live. This was in Eden. Flowing through the garden was a river that kept all the plants and trees lush and fruitful. Once the river exited the garden, it split into four rivers.

Genesis 2:11-14 says, ***“The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Hiddekel, it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.”***

They have been locked there for centuries, awaiting their release. Who are they? There have been four worldwide kingdoms in history; all four began at the river Euphrates. They were the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian and the Roman empires. It's possible these angels are four demon princes who ruled and reigned over these various empires. You remember that an angel

was delayed in answering Daniel's prayer because he was held up by the Prince of Persia?

The Euphrates River is fraught with importance for other reasons. It was in the region of the Euphrates that man first saw the light of day. It was here that Satan caused the fall of humanity. It was here that the first murder was committed, it was here that man's first organized rebellion against God took place. The tower of Babel was built and with that tower secularism and humanism made its grand entrance into the mind of man.

Notice that these angels are not released until God gives the command. Vs.15...

“And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. 16The number of the mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number.

17The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. 18A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. 19The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.” (Revelation 9:15-19, NIV).

Unlike the locusts, we don't know the origin of the army, so their makeup is dependent upon speculation. Another one-third of humanity will be wiped out by this terrible militia. That equates to a number in the billions, which makes it that much easier to see this army is not of this world. Surely, after all the devastation that occurs after the sounding of the six trumpets, humanity would have to be on their knees in repentance, crying out for mercy from God. But that is far from the case.

After all this devastation and destruction, the last two verses of Revelation, chapter 9 says, ***“20The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot***

see or hear or walk. 21Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality, or their thefts.” (Revelation 9:20-21).

Notice the kinds of sin that will be prevalent and prominent in the last days of the tribulation. The three kinds of sin that men will refuse to give up.

1. **There is the sin of spiritual idolatry.** *The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk.* (v.20)

Three false religions will consume the hearts and minds of men: humanism ("the works of their hands.") satanism ("that they should not worship demons;) materialism (idols of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood."

We are seeing the resurgence and emergence of these three religions today, humanism has taken over our public and higher educational system, satanism is on the rise. We see an increasing interest in the occult, horoscopes and astrology.

2. **There is the sin of social impropriety.** *"And they did not repent of their murders."* (v. 21) Even today we see the prices of things going up while the value of life is going down.

"or their magic arts, or sorceries" (v.21) the word for sorceries is the Greek word *pharmekia* from which we get the word pharmacy. It literally means "the use of drugs." drugs in that day will be sold at bargain basement prices.

"or their thefts." (v.21) you will not be able to trust anybody in that day, your private property will be everyone's public property. If you've got it and they want it, they will take it, and there will be no one to defend you. People will steal you blind. Robbery and burglary will become everyday hobbies.

All these things are inter-related, David Wilkerson once said, "I have yet to see a person worshipping devils who did not first open their minds to mystical experiences through the use of drugs." Many murders are drug related. Many today are stealing and killing to pay for their drug habit.

3. **There will be the sin of sexual immorality.**

The Greek word for immorality is the word *porneia* from which we get the word pornography. This refers to all kinds of sexual perversion: homosexuality, bestiality, orgies, wife swapping, child molestation, rape will be seen on an unprecedented scale.

CONCLUSION:

If you study the bible, you will find that God is totally in control of this world. But because there is evil and suffering in this world there have been some who have tried to argue against the existence of God. The question is "how can a sovereign and a gracious god allow evil to be in this world?"

The Greek philosopher, Epicurus, said:

God either wishes to take away evil and is unable; or he is able and unwilling; or he is neither willing nor able; or he is both willing and able.

If he is willing but unable, he is feeble, which is not the character of God.

If he is neither willing nor able, he is both resentful and feeble, and therefore not God.

If he is both willing and able, which alone is suitable for God, why does he not remove them?

Now at first that seems to be a formidable argument. The argument goes "**if there is evil in the world, it is proof that either God does not exist, or he cannot do anything about it. But if he cannot do anything about it then he is not God. Therefore, God does not exist.**"

Why does it seem like God is prolonging the agony? Why all the woes? Why all the trumpets? Why all the seals? Why all the bowls? Why doesn't God just get it all over with and wipe out rebellious man from the face of the earth?

Dr. Joe Henry Hankins was a preacher who lived a generation or two ago. He once preached a message entitled "Who cares if a sinner goes to hell!"

God cares.

God specifically says in Ezekiel 33:11, "***say to them: 'as I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.'***" There is one thing throughout all the revelation that never changes and that is that God desires that none should perish.

God shows us through all these judgments that the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart. Man does not need reformation, rehabilitation, re-education, or re-orientation. What man needs is regeneration. He needs to be saved. The real message of this sermon is, if you need to be saved you can be saved if you want to be saved.

The unbelievers of the tribulation still have the option to turn to God for forgiveness. But their desire for sin outweighs the price they are paying. Sadly, with the last trumpet preparing to sound, their window of opportunity for repentance is rapidly closing. But yours is not, what will you do with Jesus today?