

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Session 13, Revelation 7 Multitude, Ch. 8 Final Seal

Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

All right, buckle up, everybody. We're diving deep into Revelation today. Ooh, Revelation.

Yeah, chapters seven and eight, to be exact. Okay. We're working with some really cool lecture notes from Dr. Dave Mathewson's Revelation course.

Oh, nice. And we're going to try to figure out who can stand during tribulation and how God's judgment all works. Well, I'm ready.

I am too. And it's kind of mind-blowing to see how John uses all this vivid imagery to explore those ideas. Yeah, it's very visual, right? It is.

And speaking of God's people, chapter seven starts off with what seems like two totally different groups. Right. You've got the 144,000 numbered from the tribes of Israel, and then this massive innumerable multitude from everywhere.

Like every nation. Yeah. And so at first I was like, wait, are these two separate groups? Right.

Like, what's the connection? Exactly. But then Dr. Mathewson throws in this totally different perspective. Oh, what's that? He suggests that maybe it's the same group seen from two different angles.

Oh, that's interesting. Yeah. So the 144,000, maybe they're the earthly view, like an army getting ready for battle.

Right, right. And then the innumerable multitude, that's like the heavenly perspective. Oh, wow.

So like we're seeing them victorious. Yeah. Like standing before God's throne in heaven.

That makes a lot of sense. It does, right. Yeah.

And it makes you think about your own life, you know? Totally. Like, are there situations where we're stuck in just one way of seeing things? Hmm. That's a good point.

Like, maybe we're missing the bigger picture? Yeah, the ultimate victory. Yeah, even if things are tough. Like, maybe we're in the middle of something hard, but God sees the end result.

Exactly. And that idea of the bigger picture, that's where Abraham comes in. Oh, yeah.

I remember Dr. Mathewson talking about that. Yeah. This innumerable multitude, it echoes God's promise to Abraham.

Right. About his descendants being as numerous as the stars. Exactly.

And what's even crazier is how John expands that promise. Oh, how so? He's not just talking about Abraham's physical descendants, but all believers. Oh, that's big good.

It is, right? He's widening the circle. Yeah, like redefining who's part of God's family. It's not about ethnicity or lineage.

It's about faith. That changes things. It does.

It really blew my mind when I realized that. Yeah, me too. It changes how we understand who God's people are and where they come from.

It makes you realize how inclusive God's love really is. So we've got this expanded view of God's people, right? Right. And then chapter seven drops this heavy term, the Great Tribulation.

We hear it a lot, but have you ever really thought about what it means? It's a big concept. It is. And Dr. Mathewson suggests it might not be one single future event.

Oh, really? Yeah. He thinks it could be an ongoing reality for God's people. Interesting.

The period marked by suffering and persecution. That makes sense when you think about it. Right.

And he says it started with Christ's death and continues even to this day. That's intense. It is, right? Yeah.

It makes you think about the tough stuff we all go through. The setbacks, the losses. Yeah, like maybe those are forms of tribulation too.

And if they are, how does Revelation's message of hope and perseverance apply? That's a good question. Like, how do we face those challenges? Yeah. How do we find strength in those moments? Right.

So we've got these two groups: this broadened understanding of God's people and this concept of ongoing tribulation. Yeah. It's a lot to think about.

It is, right? But then we hit chapter eight, and things get really dramatic. Uh-huh. Where, at the moment, everyone's been waiting for- the seventh seal.

Yes. And it's opened, and well, nothing happens. What? Yeah, just silence.

You're kidding. I thought something earth-shattering would happen. I know, right? But instead, it's quiet.

That's almost scarier. It is. Dr. Mathewson has some interesting thoughts about why.

Well, I'd love to hear them. Well, he says it could be a dramatic pause. Like before a big storm.

Exactly. Like, hold your breath; something big is coming. Oh, that makes sense.

It does, right? And it plays on our human instinct. Yeah, to anticipate the worst when things go quiet.

Exactly. But then there's another interpretation. Oh, what's that? He says the silence could be a space for the prayers of the saints to be heard.

Oh, like God acknowledging their cries. Yeah, remember back in chapter six? The martyrs asking, "How long, O Lord? Yes. So maybe this silence is God creating a space for their prayers to rise before he acts.

That's a beautiful thought. It is, right. And then there's a third interpretation.

Okay. Dr. Mathewson says it draws on this Old Testament motif where silence signifies awe and anticipation. Before God's judgment.

Like that stillness before a storm. Exactly. You can almost feel God's presence.

I know, right? But, you know, I was also thinking maybe the silence isn't just about what's coming next. What do you mean? Maybe it's also about reflecting on what's already happened. Oh, I see.

All the chaos and destruction before the seventh seal. So, like, a moment to absorb the gravity of it all. Exactly.

And that leads us to the trumpet plagues. Oh, yeah. Those trumpet plagues in chapters eight and nine.

They definitely bring the drama. Yeah. Hail, fire, a mountain falling into the sea.

It's wild. And what's so fascinating is that they echo the plagues God sent on Egypt. You're right.

The Exodus story all over again. Exactly. But Dr. Mathewson points out that the order and number of plagues are different here.

So what does that mean? Well, he says it's not about predicting specific events or matching them up perfectly with the Exodus. So it's more symbolic. Exactly.

John isn't a fortune teller. He's using these plagues as symbols to convey a deeper message. So it's not about whether this specific plague will happen, but more about what can we learn from the Exodus for our own lives? Exactly.

And I think that's a great place to pause for now. We've covered a lot of ground. We have.

God's people, silence, plagues. But there's so much more to unpack. Can't wait to dive back in.

Me too. Right after this break. It's like he's saying, hey, this stuff is still relevant today.

Yeah. God's still working in the world. Right.

And it's not just about looking back. Okay. It's also about looking forward to what's coming.

Oh. These plagues, they point to the culmination of God's plan. So, like, his kingdom being established.

Yes. And creation being renewed. Wow.

It's all building towards something much bigger. It is. Okay.

So we've got the Exodus connection, right? Uh huh. But what about the specifics of these plagues? Like what they represent? Yeah. I mean, we've got hail and fire, a mountain falling into the sea.

A star called Wormwood poisoning the waters. It's intense. What do you think it all means for us? Well, remember John was writing to a specific audience.

The churches facing persecution? Exactly. These plagues would have resonated with their experience. Oh, I see.

You know, oppression, injustice. So he's using imagery they understand to convey a deeper message about God's power and justice. Exactly.

And remember, these plagues aren't random. Okay. They're targeted towards those who've rejected God.

Like those who've aligned themselves with evil. Exactly. Think about the Roman Empire back then.

It makes you wonder: what are the modern-day equivalents? Yeah, like what are those mountains in our world today? Those powers and systems that cause so much suffering. Right. The structures that oppress people.

It's a challenge, isn't it? It is. To identify those systems. And then figure out how to be agents of change.

Yeah. To be part of God's justice and healing. It's a tough but important question.

And then we have those three woes announced by the eagle in chapter 9. Oh yeah, things definitely escalate there. Yeah, God's judgment intensifies. It reminds us that God doesn't just sit back and watch injustice happen.

He acts. Yes. He defends the oppressed and brings about justice.

And speaking of intense, we have demonic locusts tormenting people. And a massive army unleashed from the abyss. It's pretty wild.

It is. But even amidst all this judgment, there's still a chance for repentance. Oh, that's right.

The locusts can harm those with God's seal. Exactly. God's offering a way out even as his judgment unfolds.

So it's not about wiping everyone out. No, it's about giving people a chance to turn back to him. It's a reminder that God's judgment isn't vindictive.

It's motivated by love. And there's always that invitation to repentance and restoration. Always.

So even though those plagues are terrifying, they're ultimately about redemption. Like birth pangs for a new age? The kingdom of God, where justice and righteousness will reign. What a powerful image.

God's at work, even in the midst of chaos. Bringing about his purpose of renewal and restoration. It's amazing.

You know, before the climax of the 7th trumpet, there's another one of those interludes in chapter 10. Right. I think those pauses are so important.

They really are. They offer these crucial insights. Chapter 10, with that mighty angel and the scroll.

Yeah, John has to eat the scroll. And it tastes sweet, but then turns bitter. What do you think that symbolizes? I think it describes the prophetic message perfectly.

Oh, how so? The truth can be beautiful and inspiring, but it can also be challenging and even painful. Yeah, like sometimes the truth is hard to swallow. Exactly.

Even if it's ultimately good for us. And that interlude also emphasizes that God's plan is still unfolding. Right.

John's told to prophesy again. To many peoples, nations, languages, and kings. So much more to come.

The story isn't over yet. Not even close. Even as God's judgment unfolds, his mission of redemption continues.

It does. And we're all part of this larger story. It's amazing to think about.

What we do matters. It really does. How we respond to what's happening around us.

Absolutely. And then in chapter 11, we finally reach the seventh trumpet. The moment we've all been waiting for.

What happens? Well, it's not like the other trumpets. Okay. It doesn't unleash another plague.

Instead, it brings in a whole new era. What do you mean? Loud voices in heaven proclaim, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever. Wow, that gives me chills.

It's the ultimate victory fanfare. The climax of everything we've seen so far. God's plan fulfilled.

Evil defeated. And his eternal kingdom established. Remember those cries of the martyrs? How long, O Lord? This is the answer.

Justice prevails. And God's reign is finally here. It's such a powerful image of hope.

Especially for those who've suffered. God is faithful to his promises. And he will make things right in the end.

It's a reminder that even though the journey is tough, the destination is worth it. God's eternal kingdom. Where justice and righteousness reign forever.

It's a beautiful picture. It is. Yeah, it really does feel like a whole new beginning.

It is. Right. Like everything's been leading up to this moment.

And it all ties back to those big themes we've been talking about. God's people. Tribulation.

And then ultimately victory. Exactly. It's the culmination of everything.

Good over evil. God's kingdom established. Vindication for those who have suffered.

Such a powerful message of hope. It is. But what really strikes me is that this declaration of God's kingdom, it's not just about some far-off future event.

Right. It has implications for us now. Like, how are we supposed to live knowing this? How do we participate in God's kingdom in our own lives? And in the world around us? Big questions.

They are. And I think Revelation gives us some clues. Oh, yeah.

Like what? Well, throughout the book, there's this call to faithfulness, to persevere even when things are tough. Right. And to be committed to justice and righteousness.

It's not about escaping this world. It's about engaging with it. Bringing God's light and love into the darkness.

Exactly. So as we wrap up our deep dive into chapters 7 and 8. Yeah. What are the key takeaways? What do we take with us? Well, I think the biggest one is that God's people are defined by faith, not ethnicity.

It's a diverse global family. United by their belief in Jesus. It's a powerful reminder for us today.

Especially with all the division in the world. It really challenges us to look beyond our own little circles. And recognize the beauty of God's diverse kingdom.

Absolutely. And we also see that tribulation. Yeah, that's a tough one.

It's an ongoing reality for those who follow Christ. It's been present throughout history. And it's still happening today.

But Revelation doesn't offer despair. Right. It offers hope and perseverance.

Knowing that God is with us in the suffering. And that he will ultimately bring justice and redemption. He will.

And finally, we see God's judgment. Yeah. It's not random or unfair.

It's purposeful and just. He defends the oppressed and holds evil accountable. And even in his judgment.

Yeah. There's always that invitation to repent and be restored. He wants transformation, not punishment.

Exactly. It's a reminder that God is always working. Even in the darkest moments.

Bringing about renewal and restoration. It's amazing to think about. So as we leave chapters 7 and 8, the big question is: what does all this mean for us today? Right.

How do we apply these things to our lives? If the trumpet plagues are symbolic of God's judgment, what are those symbols pointing to in our world? What are the modern-day equivalents of the burning mountain or the star wormwood? It's a question we all have to grapple with. It is. Look around at the world, at the injustices and oppression.

And ask ourselves: how are we called to respond? What can we do to be agents of God's justice and healing? Individually and collectively. It's a challenge to live out the message of Revelation. It is.

To embody hope, perseverance, and faithfulness in the face of tribulation. But it's a challenge worth taking on. Absolutely.

And remember, even amidst all the chaos and uncertainty, God's kingdom is breaking through. It is. And we have the incredible privilege of being a part of it.

So keep exploring, keep pondering, keep seeking. How do these ancient words speak to us in the here and now? Or may we live lives that reflect the hope, justice, and love at the heart of God's kingdom. Until next time, keep diving deep.