

Valley Bible Church – Book of Revelation

The 7th seal {The Beginning of the Trumpets}

Revelation 8

REVIEW:

-Remember that the judgments are both chronological and telescopic in nature. They follow one right after another except that the 7th seal judgment incorporates all seven trumpet judgments and the 7th trumpet incorporates all seven bowl judgments. So the 7th seal judgment includes both the trumpet and the bowl judgments. The trumpet and bowl judgments occur during the last half of the tribulation period (3 1/2 years). "Therefore, The seventh seal encompasses all of God's final wrath up to the triumphant return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory."²⁶⁷

-Remember also that the first six seal judgments have been poured out upon the earth and the result is severe, with wide spread devastation and destruction.

The First Half of the Tribulation: *The Beginning of Birth Pangs.* The first 5 seals occur during the first 3 1/2 years.

1st Seal: The rise of false christs and the anti-christ with his false peace.

2nd Seal: The widespread world war.

3rd Seal: The devastating worldwide famine.

4th Seal: The death of 1/4 of the population through war, famine, disease, and wild beasts.

5th Seal: The martyrdom of tribulation believers.

Mid-point: The Abomination of Desolation!

The Second Half of the Tribulation: *The Great Tribulation.*

The second half is much more devastating than the first.

6th Seal: The Occurrence of Various Natural Disasters.

{A great earthquake, volcanic eruptions darkening the sun, moon and stars, the falling of either meteors, asteroids or comets to the earth, an unusual atmospheric condition in which the sky will be split apart, every mountain and island moved out of place} The result is that the unrepentant and unbelieving population of the earth flee to the mountains, pleading for them to fall on them and crush them as they finally recognize these terrible disasters as being from the hand of the One who sits on the throne and from the Lamb.

1st Interlude: Remember that it is at this point between the 6th and 7th seal judgments in which the pouring out of God's judgment is restrained to answer the question posed in Revelation 6:17 by the unrepentant and unbelieving people, "*for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?*" The answer given in Revelation 7 was the Saints of the Great Tribulation. This included the 144,000 sealed of God and the innumerable martyrs of the tribulation period.

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The Seventh Seal Judgment: (8:1-5) {Preparation for The Trumpets}

"This chapter opens with the announcement that the seventh seal is opened. This is the last of the seven seals marking the prophetic judgments of God. With the opening of the seventh seal the narrative is resumed from the close of chapter 6. Though simply introduced, the seventh seal is obviously the most important development up to this point. Contained in the seventh seal are all the subsequent developments leading to the second coming of Christ, including the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of the wrath of God."²⁶⁸

The Silence: (8:1)

The first aspect of the opening of the seventh seal is that of silence. *And when He broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.* After the tremendous sounds of worship in chapters 4 and 5, and the frightening sounds of judgment from the first six seals in chapter 6, the seventh seal begins with an unusual period of silence. "Most commentators see this silence as a dramatic pause, one of hushed expectation as the last seal is removed. It has been compared to the calm before the storm, and probably signifies the awe and dread with which the heavenly hosts await the events about to happen."²⁶⁹ This short period of silence is not quietness of rest or peace but of intense expectation as God's final wrath is about to be poured out upon the world.

The Seven Angels: (8:2)

At this point John sees *the seven angels who stand before God.* These are angels who had been specifically set apart to participate in God's judgment. These are the seven angels who will blow the seven trumpets associated with the trumpet judgments. They are likely angels of a high rank due to the use of the definite article and the fact that they participate in God's judgment. In this vision these seven angels are given seven trumpets. "Josephus says that such trumpets were narrow tubes about a cubit in length, with a mouthpiece wide enough to admit breath and they had a bell-shaped extremity."²⁷⁰ Trumpets were used throughout both the Old and New Testaments to summon the congregation of Israel (Num. 10:2), to sound the alarm and gather Israel for war (Num. 10:9, 2 Chron. 13:12, Ezek. 33:3), to announce news (1 Sam. 13:3), to acclaim new kings (1 Kings 1:34,39), in ceremonial processions (Josh. 6:1, 1 Chron. 15:24), in worship (1 Chron. 16:6, 42; 2 Chron. 5:12-13), at religious feasts (Num. 10:10, Ps. 81:3), and in announcing the new year (Num. 29:1). Zephaniah 1:14-16 associates trumpets with the coming Day of the LORD, while the New Testament teaches that a trumpet will announce the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:52, 1 Thess. 4:16).²⁷¹

These trumpets were simply given to the seven angels at this point. They must wait for the appropriate time to sound them.

The Supplication: (8:3-4)

John now sees an additional angel who *came and stood at the altar* in heaven. There has been some disagreement as to the identity of this angel. Some have suggested that due to the priestly activity of this angel that it must be none other than Jesus Christ. There are problems with this view as noted by John MacArthur in his commentary on Revelation 1-11:

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First, Christ is already identified in the heavenly scene as the Lamb (5:6; 6:1; 7:17), distinguishing Him from this angel. Second, while the pre-incarnate Christ appeared as the Angel of the LORD in the Old Testament, Jesus is nowhere identified as an angel in the New Testament. Third, the reference in verse 2 to the seven actual angels defines the meaning of the term in this context. The angel in verse 3 is described as **another** (*allos*; another of the same kind; cf. 7:2) angel like those in verse 2. Finally everywhere He appears in Revelation, Jesus is clearly identified.²⁷²

So it seems clear that this angel is another of the same kind of angel as those who received the seven trumpets. He is an angel of high rank who is set apart for this special ministry. He is not an angelic form of Jesus Christ.

This angel *came and stood at the altar*. "That altar is the heavenly counterpart to the altar of incense in the temple which also was made with gold (Ex. 30:3). It was the same golden incense altar seen by Isaiah in his vision (Isa. 6:6) and by Ezekiel (cf. Ezek. 10:2)."²⁷³ So the angel has come and stood at the altar before the throne of God.

He is seen *holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him*. The burning of incense was common in the Old Testament as priests would take the hot coals from the brazen altar into the Holy Place to the incense altar, where they burned incense, which symbolized the prayers of the people (cf. Ex. 30:7, 8; 2 Chron. 29:11; 1 Kings 7:50; 2 Kings 25:15; Jer. 52:18-19). In the New Testament this is illustrated in Luke 1:8-10 as Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist is performing this priestly duty and an angel of the Lord appears to him.

The *much incense* symbolizes the multiplied prayers of God's people (Rev. 5:8; 6:9-11) who call for God's justice to be poured out upon an unbelieving and rejecting world.

Here in 8:3-4 the angel burns the incense adding it to the prayers of all the saints and these went up before God. The point in these verses is that God hears the prayers of the saints and the coming Judgment is an answer to their prayers. The answer to the saints question in Revelation 6:10, "*How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?*" is about to be answered.

The Storm: (8:6)

"Heaven's half hour of silence is abruptly shattered and judgment resumes as a divine firestorm bursts upon this planet. The angel standing before the golden incense altar took his censer and, removing the coals from the altar, filled it with the fire of the altar. Then in an act that must have stunned John and the assembled multitude in heaven, the angel threw it to the earth. The results are catastrophic, as God's judgment falls upon the earth like a massive fireball from the sky."²⁷⁴ "The clear implication is that the censer is here used as a symbol of judgment, apparently in response to the intercession and prayers of the suffering saints in the midst of the great tribulation."²⁷⁵ The result is that of peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake. This is a direct contrast with the half an hour of silence previously mentioned. The stage is now set, the preparations have been made, as the severity and intensity of God's wrath will follow with the beginning of the trumpet judgments.

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The Trumpet Judgments: (8:6-11:19)

In verse 6 the angels prepare themselves for the sounding of their trumpets. The preparatory activity here heightens the expectancy of the trumpet judgments. Keep in mind that these judgments are going to be hitting just as the people are coming out of the caves and rocks when they attempted to hide from God's wrath during the sixth seal judgment. They also have been through about 3 _ years of devastating wars, famines, death, earthquakes, celestial objects crashing to the earth, and the worldwide reign of anti-christ. The trumpet judgments will be more severe than the seal judgments were. Like the seal judgments the first four trumpets are distinct from the last three. The first four are briefly described while the last three are much more detailed. The first four deal directly with the earth while the last three concern human life in particular the godless inhabitants of the earth. There also seems to be some similarities or recollections of the plagues of Egypt seen in the trumpet judgments.

The First Trumpet Judgment: (8:7)

It is best to take this judgment as literally as possible. The first trumpet judgment is the raining of hail and fire mixed with blood upon the earth. "Hail is frequently associated in Scripture with divine judgment (cf. Ex. 9:13-25; Job 38:22-23; Ps. 105:32; Isa. 28:2; Hag. 2:17), as is fire (cf. Gen. 19:24; Ps. 11:6; Ezek. 38:22)." ²⁷⁶ Many struggle with the mixing of hail and fire with blood. Some want to see the blood as a symbolic reference. Others believe that it is not really blood but a blood red appearance possibly from a volcanic eruption associated with the earthquake in 8:5. Others see it as the blood of men or animals that are killed and then mingled with the hailstones. The reference to blood is quite literal here in this text and is best understood as hail and fire mixed with real literal blood and being thrown down on the earth. This is a supernatural judgment from God. It does not have to be explained scientifically. Large hailstones will pummel the earth as they fall in a shower of blood and fire creating quite a storm upon the earth. The impact of such a storm will come primarily from the fire as 1/3 of the earth will be burned up. This destruction will not simply effect a portion of the earth while the rest will remain untouched, but it will be a judgment upon the whole of the earth in which 1/3 of the surface of the earth will be burned up. 1/3 of all trees will be burned up resulting in the destruction of much fruit. In addition all of the green grass will be burned up. It is best to understand that all means all here in verse 7. Some have suggested that there is a problem here since in 9:4 there is the obvious existence of grass. There is no problem between the two verses. In 8:7 is the destruction of all the green grass. By the time of 9:4 and the fifth trumpet judgment some of the grass will have surely grown back. The result of this judgment will be catastrophic as widespread fires will destroy crops, kill animals, destroy massive amounts of wood and drastically reduce the quality of breathable air.

The Second Trumpet Judgment: (8:8-9)

The second trumpet judgment falls right on the heels of the first. While the first trumpet judgment brought destruction to the land, the second brings destruction to the sea. This second judgment was so great and terrifying that John could only describe it as looking like a great burning mountain. Most commentators believe that it is probably a huge meteor or asteroid which is set ablaze by the friction of the earth's atmosphere. It is a massive fireball falling from the sky and it strikes the earth somewhere in the oceans. The result will be catastrophic as 1/3 of the sea will be turned to blood, 1/3 of all sea creatures will die, and 1/3 of the ships in the ocean will be destroyed.

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There is once again a question as to the use of the term blood here. Some have determined that it might just have a blood red appearance. This cannot be the case since the text does not say it will look as blood. The text goes out of the way to say that 1/3 of the sea **became** blood. Whether this blood is a direct supernatural result of the impact of this meteor or whether it is from 1/3 of sea life being killed is not explained. The impact of such a meteor or asteroid falling into the sea will create huge tidal waves which will destroy 1/3 of the ships disrupting transportation and creating economic chaos. This second trumpet judgment will have an equally devastating effect on the sea as the first had on the land.

The Third Trumpet Judgment: (8:10-11)

The third trumpet judgment is another object falling to the earth. The term used for star here is the Greek *aster*, which we have said before can refer to any celestial body other than the sun or moon. It is likely either a meteor or comet due to its description *burning like a torch*. "*lampas* (torch) was used in ancient times to describe meteors and comets."²⁷⁷ This fiery object appeared as a burning torch falling to the earth. Unlike the previous judgment this one evidently breaks up as it falls upon fresh water rivers and springs. 1/3 of the rivers and springs are affected by this judgment. These rivers and springs become wormwood which is also the name of the meteor or comet. "Wormwood translates *apsinthos*, a word used only here in the New Testament. Wormwood is a shrub whose leaves are used in the manufacture of absinthe, a liqueur so toxic that its manufacture is banned in many countries."²⁷⁸ This bitter herb is found in alcoholic beverages in France and several varieties of the plant are found in Israel. The term means bitter and 1/3 of the fresh water supply is poisoned by this bitter herb from the meteor or comet that falls to the earth. As a result many men die from the poisoned waters as a significant portion of the fresh water supply will be affected by this poison.

The Fourth Trumpet Judgment: (8:12-13)

In this fourth trumpet judgment once again the focus changes this time from the earth to the heavens. At this point 1/3 of the earth and trees will be burned up, all the green grass will have been burned up, 1/3 of the sea will become blood, 1/3 of the sea life killed, 1/3 of the ships destroyed, and 1/3 of the fresh water rivers and springs will have been contaminated by a bitter poison. These resulting from falling hailstones, fire and blood, a huge flaming asteroid or meteor crashing into the sea and a flaming meteor or comet that breaks up over the rivers and springs. Immediately upon this destruction comes another strange atmospheric disturbance as 1/3 of the sun, moon, and stars are darkened. "*Plesso* (were smitten) is the verb from which the noun "plague" derives. The heavenly bodies are hit with a plague from God so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way. This partial eclipse, reminiscent of the ninth Egyptian plague (Ex. 10:21-22), is temporary, as God will later increase the amount of heat coming from the sun (cf. 16:8-9). At this point, however, the loss of heat from the sun will cause temperatures to plunge drastically all over the world. That will severely disrupt the earth's weather patterns and the seas' tides, leading to violent, unpredictable storms and tides, the destruction of crops, and further loss of animal and human lives."²⁷⁹ These first four trumpet judgments will be severe creating widespread destruction and wreaking havoc across the world. As chapter 8 closes there comes an ominous warning. John looks and sees an eagle flying in midheaven, which is about the height of the midday sun and would be visible to all upon the earth. The warning is a series of three woes pronounced upon the unbelievers on the earth. The series of three woes is an emphatic way to announce the coming judgments of the last three trumpets. The seals and the first four trumpets have been severe and devastating, but it can only get worse as God's judgment will continue to be poured out upon the earth.