

THE APOCALYPSE – A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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THE SEVEN TRUMPETS JUDGEMENT—Rev 8

1. Blowing of the Seven Trumpets – 8:1-11:19

a The Calm Before the Storm – 8:1-5

Revelation 8:1-5, *"And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake."*

“Silence in heaven about the space of half and hour” – This is the calm before the storm, the storm of God’s judgment upon sinful men. When impending judgment is about to fall, the intense expectation, foreboding fear and jubilation (as the justice of God is about to descend on sinful man, finally) and the awe of the awesome power of God Almighty caused the silence in heaven.

This was a most unusual phenomenon as the praises of the thrice Holy God in heaven never stops. For the first time since the creation of the third heaven, there was complete and total silence in heaven!

The stillness must have been deafening as everyone awaits the “Commander-in-chief” to give the green light for the final curtain to fall!!

Psalms 76:6-9, *"At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep. Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah."*

Habakkuk 2:18-20, *"What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him."*

Zephaniah 1:5-10, *"And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham; And them that are turned back from the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for him. Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel. In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills."*

MacArthur rightly comments, "While eternal heaven has no time, the apostle John who is seeing the vision does. Each minute of that half hour of silence must have increased the sense of agonizing suspense for John. Heaven, which had resounded with loud praises from the vast crowd of redeemed people and angels, became deathly still. The hour of God's judgment had come – the hour when the saints will be vindicated, sin punished, Satan vanquished, and Christ exalted. The greatest event since the Fall is about to take place and all heaven is seen waiting in suspenseful expectancy (**MacArthur**, vol. 1, page 238)."

"The Seven Angels which stood before God . . . given Seven Trumpets" – The use of the definite article to describe the seven angels here point to the fact that these were perhaps a unique group of seven angels appointed by God specially for this judgment. They had been standing there for sometime as seen in the usage of the "perfect tense" to describe their standing. Literally it means they started standing for some time in the past and remained in a standing position before God waiting for His command before they begin. They were then given seven trumpets each.

"To stand" points to the readiness of the angelic beings in carrying out the Lord's orders.

Trumpets have very distinct purposes in Israel's history.

- A. To summons the congregation to break camp and march during the wilderness wandering (cf. Num. 10:1-8);
- B. Preparation for war (Num. 10:9);
- C. In the days of gladness and rejoicing and when they offer burnt offerings before the Lord (Num. 10:10);

- D. To announce news (1 Sam. 13:3);
- E. To acclaim new kings (1 Ki. 1:34, 39);
- F. In worship (1 Chron. 16:6, 42; 2 Chron. 5:12-13);
- G. A day of the impending Judgment from God, the Coming of the Day of the Lord (Zeph. 1:14-16);
- H. The New Testament teaches that a Trumpet will announce the Rapture and First Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16);
- I. In Rev 8, we have the judgment of the God upon the whole earth (8:6ff.).

“Each of the seven trumpets unleashes a specific judgment of greater intensity than the first six seals, but not as destructive as the seven bowls (16:1-21). The first four trumpets destroy the earth’s ecology (8:6-12), the next two produce demonic destruction of humanity (8:13; 9:1-11, 13-19), and the seventh trumpet introduces the final outpouring of God’s wrath contained in the seven bowl judgment (**MacArthur, 239**).”

“Another angel came and stood at the altar having a golden censer . . . given much incense” –

The word “another” is “*allos*” which means “another of the same kind.” This angel would be like the seven angels. This could not be a reference to Jesus Christ but just another angel. In the Old Testament, the golden incense was found inside the most Holy Place.

Hebrews 9:1-5, *"Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly."*

The high priest was supposed to burn the incense twice a day, once in the morning to start the day and the second time in the evening at the close of the day. This was to be done throughout their generations (cf. Exo. 20:1-10). The incense represents the prayers of the saints being presented to God before the ark with the mercy seat covering the ark inside the most Holy Place.

Just as it represented the prayers of the saints in OT times, it too will represent the prayers of the saints here in Revelation 8. The prayers of the saints were literally handed to God out of the angel’s hand. The prayers of the saints will definitely include Rev. 6:10, the cry for God’s justice to come!

“Took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and cast in unto the earth . . .” --

The judgment finally came. This is represented by the fire taken from the altar. The action that followed next is very frightening . . . , *“and cast it into the earth.”* The earth is doomed!

The result is, *“and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.”* The destruction of planet earth begins.

2 Peter 3:7-9, *“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”*

2. Sounding of the Trumpets – 8:6-9:21; 11:15-19

A. The First Trumpet – 8:6-7

Revelation 8:6-7, *“And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.”*

Hail and Fire – this is frequently associated with divine judgment (cf. Ex. 9:13-25; Job 38:22-23; Ps. 105:32; Isa. 28:2; Hag. 2:17). Fire is another form of God's judgment used by God (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1-2; Ps. 11:6; Eze. 38:22). The combination of both hail and fire reminds us of the fulfillment of Joel 2 and Acts 2.

Acts 2:19-20, *“And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:”*

Joel 2:28-31, *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.”*

One third of all vegetation will be destroyed. Man continues to “save the earth” today. Do you think Christians ought to be involved in saving the earth, knowing that it will be destroyed one day?

The devastation would mean no more food and fresh air. The climate will be hot and temperatures will rise. Life on earth will be one of famine, thirst, and suffocation on a global scale. Man cannot run to other continents for relief. There will no need to move house to look for greener pastures. There will none on earth.

The mingling of blood with hail and fire points to a bloody destruction on earth. The entire global food chain will be destroyed forever. The world’s economy will be turned up side down and every financial prediction made by man will be wrong. Shock and despair would follow in the wake of the financial collapse of the world’s economic system.

B. The Second Trumpet – 8:8-9

Revelation 8:8-9, *"And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed."*

It appears that the catastrophes of these trumpet judgements overlap. When they were blown one after the other, one thing is certain, man who had exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator will now pay for his idolatry. The first judgement of the trumpet fell upon the land and now the second will afflict the seas. Like the earth, the sea was also created for man’s blessing and enjoyment. It provides mankind with food and oxygen [much of the Earth’s oxygen comes from the phytoplankton and algae in the world’s oceans] and water and cool breeze and the entire ecosystem depend upon the oceans. Instead of worshipping the God who had been so gracious to mankind, man has replaced Him with the worship of creatures.

“The massive object plunging through the sky looked to the terrified observers on earth like a great mountain burning with fire. This is evidently a giant meteorite or asteroid, surrounded by flaming gases set ablaze by the friction of the earth’s atmosphere, on a collision course with the earth. The current doomsday scenarios about an asteroid hitting the earth will come true with a vengeance. Everyone will see it, either live or on television, and as the world’s telescopes see it coming, many predictions will no doubt be made about the weather it will hit the earth or not. It will hit, striking somewhere in the world’s oceans with an explosive power far greater than that of an atomic bomb. Because all the world’s oceans are connected, the devastation from that hit will spread across one-third of the ocean waters, causing a third of the sea to become blood [MacArthur, 247-248].”

With one third of the ocean turned to blood, the water area of the earth is 361.132 million square kilometers (70.8% of the world is

water and 29.2 % is land). One third of this figure would equal 120.37733 million square kilometers or about 13 times the size of the United States. The stench would be horrendous and most unbearable if not poisonous.

The result of turning one third of the oceans into blood is death of one third of all the sea creatures in the ocean. This will definitely add to the foulness of the air. The whole ecosystem will be destroyed instantly. There will be global famine and this time the “land” cannot help the sea and neither can the sea help the land. Man will be cornered and would have no where to go and no one to turn to for help. The United Nations, Europe, Australia, China and America will not be able to feed themselves. They will not be able to help other nations.

Further damage would be caused by the might tidal waves of tsunamic proportions will destroy one third of the world’s ships. Companies will go bankrupt. Even if mankind has food to spare they would not have ships to load them into. There will be unimaginable global economic chaos the world has never seen before. With the destruction of a third of the world’s ecosystem on both land and sea, the world would literally be reduced to nothing but a near wasteland. It is slowly but surely becoming uninhabitable. It is a nightmare of enormous proportion that the world has never seen or known.

C. The Third Trumpet – 8:10-11

Revelation 8:10-11, *"And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter."*

Just in case some may think that if there is no food at least we have fresh to drinkable water to quench our thirst. Think again.

The third trumpet was blown and a great star (can refer to any celestial body other than the sun and the moon) will fall from outer space and unlike the second trumpet, this “great star” will disintegrate into smaller pieces as it enters the earth atmosphere. It was be raining showers of fire falling upon a third of the rivers and the fountain of waters. These will be like little fiery missiles aimed accurately by God for the rivers and springs only. The fresh water will become poisonous.

“Because of its deadly effects, the star will be called Wormwood, although the text does not reveal who will name it. 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 green, bitter liqueur with the flavour of wormwood and anise), a liqueur so toxic that its manufacture is banned in many countries. Wormwood is mentioned eight times in the Old Testament, where it is associated with bitterness, poison, and death (Deu. 29:18; Prov. 5:4; Jer. 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7; 6:12) . In three of those uses, wormwood is connected with poisoned water. In Jeremiah 9:15, for example, God says of rebellious Israel, “Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink (cf. Jer. 23:15; Lam. 3:15) [MacArthur, 249].”

The result was that anyone who drank from it will die. No human deaths were mentioned in the first two trumpet judgements but here we have the first mention of human deaths, many of them will die.

No food, no water, no fresh air, no coolness of temperature, only deaths and great discomfort and a sense of utter and complete hopelessness will befall mankind by the time of the Third trumpet.

Despite the global catastrophe, this was only the beginning. This is the beginning of the great tribulation that our Lord prophesied will befall sinful man.

Matthew 24:21, *"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."*

Revelation 2:21-22, *"And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds."*

D. The Fourth Trumpet – 8:12

Revelation 8:12, *"And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise."*

The divine judgement shifts from the earth to the heavens. This new disaster will reverse the intense heat that the earth would be wreaking from all this while. Temperatures will plunge when there is compulsory darkness for one third of the day. There will be global disruption to the weather. Severe tidal waves and tsunamis will become a global phenomenon. Crops will be devastated by these tidal waves. Cities will be washed away. Islands will sink to the bottom of oceans. Whole cities will submerge into the seas, including Singapore too. Untold millions will die. Those who survive will suffer famine and drought and perhaps even cannibalism in order to survive.

In the Old Testament such heavenward destruction was a clear sign from God that he is undoubtedly the One who is judging Israel.

Isaiah 13:9-11, *"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give*

their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible."

Ezekiel 32:7-9, *"And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord GOD. I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known."*

Is it not true that one of the things that man is most afraid of is darkness?

E. The Three Woes Announced – 8:13

Revelation 8:13, *"And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!"*

The remaining three trumpet judgements are more severe than the preceding four. An angel in heaven flew above in the heavenly realm announcing the greater judgements that will follow. The announcement perhaps could be likened to the entrance into the next level of punishment. The silence was the clam before the storm. This announcement is perhaps likened to the next level of alert of greater destruction and doom.

“Woe” is used in the Bible as an expression of judgement, destruction and great condemnation [Cf. Num. 21:29; 1 Sam. 4:7-8; Job 10:15; Psalm 120:5; Eccl. 10:16; Isa. 3:9; Jer. 4:13; Lam. 5:16; Eze. 13:3; Hos. 7:13; Amos 6:1; Mic. 2:1; Nah. 3:1; Hab. 2:6; Zeph. 2:5; Matt. 11:21; Jude 11].

There are 98 occurrences of the use of woe in the Bible. Out of these 98, only one have two woes (cf. Eze. 16:23) and once with three (cf. Rev 8:13). This triple woes is the highest form of judgement that mankind will face in the last days from God Almighty Himself. May God have mercy on all mankind.

The woes will be directed against the ones who live on the earth. “That descriptive phrase is used in Revelation as a technical term for those who reject the gospel (cf. 6:10; 11:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 17:2, 8). Although they will acknowledge that the disasters they have experienced have come from God (6:15-17), they will not repent [MacArthur, 251].”