

“THE SEVENTH SEAL – THE SEVEN TRUMPETS”

Revelation 8:1-5 (NIV) ... “When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. (2) And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. (3) Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. (4) The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. (5) Then 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.”

Revelation 8 begins with the seventh seal opening. Remember ... Revelation 7 is an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals. During this time, John sees an innumerable throng of people before the throne of God, loudly proclaiming in chorus, **“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb”** (Revelation 7:10).

Then in Revelation 8:1 Jesus breaks the seventh seal. John says that, after this seal was broken, **“there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”** This silence immediately follows the loud and jubilant songs of heavenly worship in chapter 7, making the absolute, sudden silence even more dramatic. There is something about the seventh seal that stops every mouth and silences all of heaven. What does this silence represent?

THE QUIET BEFORE THE STORM

In the prophets there is a *call for silence* because God is acting in judgment. Notice Zechariah 2:13 — **“Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord, for He has roused Himself from His holy dwelling.”** In Habakkuk 2 judgment is pronounced and the images of judgment conclude with a call for silence. **“But the Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him”** (Habakkuk 2:20). **In other words, ... God is acting, sit silently and watch!**

The scene then reveals seven angels who stand before God. We have not read about these seven angels before. Each of the angels are given a trumpet and these trumpets will bring judgment on the earth. Verses 3-5 depict a beautiful picture. Another angel takes incense and puts it in his censer. The smoke of the incense *rises up* to God.

The prayers of all the people of God are shown rising before God. The incense is a symbol showing that their prayers are acceptable to God. *Then the angel takes the censer, fills it with fire from the altar, and throws it on the earth!*

Deuteronomy 32:35 (NKJV) ... **“Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; Their foot shall slip in due time; For the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things to come hasten upon them.”**

Recompense ... is a formal term meaning: to compensate, reward, or make amends to someone for loss, harm, or services. As a noun, it refers to the repayment or reward itself.

- Key synonyms: compensation, repayment, remuneration, restitution, and requital.
- Key synonymic phrases: *Setting something done wrong, right ... Returning for something done ... Making up for a loss ... Paying someone back!*

Deuteronomy 32:43 (NKJV) ... **“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people.”**

Hebrews 10:30-31 (NKJV) ... **“For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”**

ANSWERING PRAYERS

I believe ... God is responding to the prayers of all the saints! The silence serves as a pause for the prayers of God's people to be heard and answered. Immediately following this pause, an angel adds incense to these prayers, signifying their importance, and pours fire on the earth.

God in action are often depicted as thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and earthquakes (Exodus 19:16-19). **Therefore, these judgments are in response ... to the prayers of the holy people of God!**

Revelation 8:6-7 (NIV) ... **“Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them. (7) The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon 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.”**

The First Trumpet (8:6-7)

The first angel blows his trumpet and hail and fire mixed with blood are thrown upon the earth. The imagery is similar to the Egyptian plague of hail and fire (Exodus 9:22-25). *Hail and fire are common symbols of God's judgment.*

“With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him; and I will pour down torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur, upon him and his troops and the many peoples that are with him.” (Ezekiel 38:22 NRSV) Sodom and Gomorrah along with the cities of the plains were destroyed by raining fire and sulfur.

Notice the destruction that occurs when this first trumpet sounds. Only one-third of the earth is burned up. Only a third of the trees and green grass are burned up. Saying that a third is destroyed is God’s way of saying that a portion are destroyed. Notice another place in prophecy where God speaks of thirds in judgment.

“In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are my people’; and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’” (Zechariah 13:8–9 ESV)

These are images of partial judgments. In each of the first four trumpets ... we will read that only one-third are destroyed. These partial judgments were predicted in the first four seals of Revelation 6. Now those partial judgments are occurring.

Revelation 8:8-9 (NIV) ... ***“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, (9) a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”***

The Second Trumpet (8:8-9)

The second angel blows his trumpet and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea. **Then a third of the sea became blood.** A third of the living creatures in the sea died and a third of the ships were destroyed. This image of judgment is also patterned after the Egyptian plague when the Nile was turned to blood (Exodus 7:20-21). A great mountain is symbolic for the overthrow of a kingdom.

In speaking about Babylon’s coming judgment, Jeremiah prophesied: ***“Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, declares the LORD, which destroys the whole earth; I will stretch out my hand against you, and roll you down from the crags, and make you a burnt mountain.”*** (Jeremiah 51:25 ESV)

Remember also the first prophecy of Daniel with the large statue of different metals. The stone that strikes the image ... becomes a great mountain that fills the whole earth (Daniel 2:35) which represents the kingdom of God (Daniel 2:44). This image is not symbolizing a burning volcano or anything like that ... **A nation is being judged.** This trumpet also affects a third, continuing to show that partial judgments are unfolding against this nation.

Revelation 8:10-11 (NIV) ... **“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— (11) the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.”**

The Third Trumpet (8:10-11)

When the third trumpet sounds, a great star falls from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and springs of water. **The name of the great star that fell is Wormwood.** Wormwood was a plant with a bitter taste found in Palestine. This bitter plant is used a few times by the prophets. In speaking about Jerusalem, Jeremiah declared these messages ...

- **“Therefore, this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: “I am about to feed this people wormwood and give them poisonous water to drink.”** (Jeremiah 9:15 HCSB)
- **“Therefore, this is what the LORD of Hosts says concerning the prophets: I am about to feed them wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink, for from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has spread throughout the land.”** (Jeremiah 23:15 HCSB)

Jeremiah used the picture of wormwood to show that the punishment fit the crime. *The suffering will be bitter because of their bitter wickedness.* Jeremiah spoke of the prophets polluting Israel with idolatry. Therefore, God was polluting them with bad water, that is, with the bitterness of suffering. **“The springs of water”** is an important judgment and is commonly used in the Old Testament ... because most of Judah’s water came from natural springs. Therefore, bitter suffering is coming upon earth. Verse 11 reveals that many people would die from these judgments.

Revelation 8:12 (NIV) ... **“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.”**

The Fourth Trumpet (8:12)

The fourth trumpet sounds and a third of sun, moon, and stars are struck so that a third of their light is darkened. We learned in Revelation 6:12-14 ***that the sun no longer shine, the moon becoming like blood,*** and the stars falling from the sky are symbols of final judgment on a nation.

In Revelation 8:12 we again see only a third of these celestial bodies struck. Therefore, this is not yet the final judgment but only a partial judgment ... the great tribulation, affecting part of the earth. **The point of the first four trumpets shows devastation coming on part of the earth.** This is the great tribulation, but not the final judgment ... as a nation receiving God’s wrath for its sins.

Revelation 8:13 (NIV) ... **“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!”**

AN EAGLE

Then John hears an eagle flying overhead and crying out with a loud voice three more woes are to come. If you thought the first four trumpets were full of terrible judgments, the final three trumpets are even worse. *Woe to those who live on the earth because the rest of the trumpets are about to sound!*

The eagle is an image used by God as a harbinger of power and doom. The Old Testament uses the eagle as a picture of destruction.

- **“The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand, a hard-faced nation who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young.”** (Deuteronomy 28:49–50 ESV)

In Ezekiel 17 we read a parable of two eagles. The message of the parable was that Babylon was the eagle destroying Jerusalem. Ezekiel’s prophecy rests on God’s promise made at the inauguration of the nation of Israel. God promised curses on Israel if they disobeyed.

One of the images of this curse is in Deuteronomy 28:49 ... *that a foreign nation would destroy them, swooping down like an eagle*. John in Revelation 8 sees an eagle flying overhead declaring woes upon the nation ... as the rest of the judgments **are about to be executed!**

In a way, the silence in heaven at the beginning of chapter 8 ... could be seen as the calm before the storm—the storm of final judgment coming upon the earth.

With the opening of the seventh seal ... comes a climax in the Day of the Lord. EVIL HAD ITS DAY ... NOW THE LORD WILL HAVE HIS!

NEXT ... REVELATION CHAPTER 9 ...