

The Revelation to John
Chapter Eight
The Wrath Continues
The First Four Trumpets

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Chapter seven was an interlude to show the future praise of God for His sovereignty and a preview of our final state. After a wonderful time of praise and comfort, the vision continues with the opening of the seventh seal. Now we will see that Jesus breaks the final seventh seal.

Rev 8:1 “And when He broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

Rev 8:2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God; and seven trumpets were given to them.”

A time of quiet after some event usually indicates some awesome event has occurred and there is no word to describe it. After all of the praise that preceded this event the silence is really deafening! The opening of the last seal is an awesome event but it does not signify the end. There is much more to happen. The vision of the seven angels is for a specific number who have the authority of God since they are standing before Him. Some Jewish writings refer to the seven angels who enter the presence of God and they have names for them as I previously stated: Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Saraqael, Gabriel, and Remiel. Their close connection to God is vividly implied by the “el” ending of their names. The trumpets that they are given are war horns and often play a significant role in apocalyptic writings. The opening of the seventh seal is to reveal a new set of seven events to occur.

Rev 8:3 “And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

Rev 8:4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.”

Before anything may happen the angel brings the prayers of all the saints onto the golden altar before the throne. God waits until the prayers of His children are offered before He acts. We must never think that our prayers are useless for God values our prayers even enough to be placed upon the golden altar before His throne. Remember that the altar of sacrifice has already been fulfilled by our Lord Jesus so this altar is only the altar of incense. God is pleased to receive the prayers of His saints and the fact that they went up to God out of the angel's hand is an indication of the close interaction of the angels with the saints.

Heb 1:13 “But to which of the angels has He ever said, “Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies A footstool for Thy feet”?

Heb 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?"

Rev 8:5 And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake."

The angel now took the censor for another purpose. The fire came from the same altar on which were placed the prayers of the saints. Our prayers are instrumental in the pouring forth of the wrath of God. Perhaps the fire of the altar is indicative that our prayers are tested with fire themselves and the ones that are in the will of the Father are the ones that He uses in the fire thrown to the earth. The silence that was present at first might have made some people think that maybe the worst was over. However the natural forces that are now made apparent are meant to get everyone's attention that something is about to happen. Certainly these events would have gotten the attention of John!

The Trumpets Begin

Now we are ready to study the sounding of the seven trumpets and the wrath of God that they signify coming. It is very important to remember that God does not punish His children because His wrath on account of our sins was poured out on Jesus. However He certainly does discipline us. The action of the trumpets follows the pattern set with the seals. First there are a set of four trumpets dealing mainly with the forces of nature. The following three deals with the people but there is another interlude before the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The pattern then is four, two, and one as with the seals. Also we will note that judgment does not fall on all the people so there will be more wrath to follow. The sound of the trumpet is mainly used as a warning that more will come such as in:

Ezek 33:3 "and he sees the sword coming upon the land, and he blows on the trumpet and warns the people,

Ezek 33:4 then he who hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his own head."

God gives the warning and those who do not respond are the only ones to blame. Dawkins and Bertrand Russell both say that if they die and see God they will ask Him "Why have you hidden yourself so well?" or something to that effect. What an arrogant, ignorant question since God has revealed Himself for all to see who will do so (Rom 1).

The First Trumpet

Rev 8:6 "And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.

Rev 8:7 And the first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up."

There is no explanation of what is involved as the angels prepare to sound the trumpets. Perhaps they are synchronizing their actions so that the proper order is followed. They are preparing themselves so they already have God's "script" for the events. All they have to do is to follow orders precisely. The first angel then sounds his trumpet and we see that a third of the earth is affected by this proclamation. Joel wrote about similar events:

Joel 2:28 "And it will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions.

Joel 2:29 "And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

Joel 2:30 "And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire, and columns of smoke."

John is not giving us a scientific recount of the events but what he saw in his vision. Hail mixed with fire could be like the hail in a thunderstorm amid the accompanying electrical discharges. I am also not trying to detract from the horror and the destruction of the event but just to give a possible scenario for the events. We have seen hail storms that are terribly dangerous and destructive but these will be even worse. Carol and I also saw a ball of lightening on the highway once and that got our attention! But the result of this bombardment was worse than anything that has happened previously. One third of the earth was burned up including the trees and grass in that third. The destruction was not total but it was awful.

The Second Trumpet

Rev 8:8 "And the second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood; Rev 8:9 and a third of the creatures, which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed."

The second trumpet brings destruction to the sea. We do not know exactly what was thrown down or who threw it but it was something like a great mountain on fire. Certainly an asteroid that was burning as it entered the atmosphere would be seen as John described it. Even though I may sound like I am trying to determine a natural explanation to events, I know that these events have God as the cause. He uses His creations often in helping and punishing so I see nothing wrong with trying to see what possible creations of His He is using in this book. He often used evil nations to punish Israel in the Old Testament times. In the plagues He released on Egypt He also used supernatural timing and forces but utilized elements of His creation. Whatever this "mountain" was, it destroyed a third of the sea creatures and ships.

The oceans are interconnected so the action on one of them will affect all of them to some extent. The blood may be the result of the destruction of the sea creatures. The

ships would probably be destroyed by the huge waves resulting from the collision of the “mountain” with the sea. The sea creatures and boats on lakes and waters not connected to the oceans would not be directly affected but those water areas do not make up 2/3 of the “seas” on the earth so we do not know exactly how the effect dissipated.

Rev 8:10 “And the third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters; Rev 8:11 and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.”

The third angel sounded his trumpet and it seems like another asteroid hits the earth but this time it damages the waters that were not impacted with the first asteroid. This object apparently disintegrated upon entering the atmosphere as it burned like a torch. The ancients frequently called comets and meteorites torches. A third of the rivers and sources of the rivers were impacted by the fragments. There are Old Testament references to wormwood:

- *Jer 9:15 “therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, “behold, I will feed them, this people, with wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink.”*
- *Lam 3:19 “Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness.”*

Wormwood itself is not poisonous and we note that the Jeremiah verse does not connect it with the poisoned water. However it would impart an extreme bitterness to the water and people would not want to drink it. The Revelation verse clearly says that the people died because the water was bitter. We do not know why more people did not die since the water would be undrinkable. Some method of removing the bitterness must have been developed before more people died. We know that the ancients knew about charcoal filters for removing impurities so perhaps they used them and thought that they could then drink the water, but they could not remove the poison.

The Fourth Trumpet

Rev 8:12 “And the fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were smitten, so that a third of them might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.”

The sounding of the trumpet of the fourth angel brought a terrifying event. The focus is now on the heavens although the result on the earth will be terrible also. This type of event was also prophesied by Ezekiel:

Ezek 32:7 “And when I extinguish you, I will cover the heavens, and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, And the moon shall not give its light.

Ezek 32:8 "All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you And will set darkness on your land," Declares the Lord God."

This is not a permanent effect for later God will cause the sun to increase its radiance upon the earth. It may be that now God causes the clouds of dust and debris flung up by the asteroid collisions to cover the earth so that portions of the earth do not receive their sunlight. The result, if maintained, would be a winter as temperatures would rapidly decline. In describing the results of a nuclear war people talk about a nuclear winter caused by the darkening of the sky by debris from nuclear bomb explosions.

Rev 8:13 "And I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe, to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!""

Midheaven would be where we would see a bird flying now but also at the highest point at which we would observe the sun – like “high noon”. The eagle or vulture (as this word may mean) is often a sign of disaster.

Matt 24:28 "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."

The eagle speaks in a human voice and with the three-time repeat of the word “woe” we see that all are to pay close attention and could also indicate that three more trumpets are to be heard with the attending visions. I am reminded of a bull hawk that my grandfather used to show me. This hawk would fly in circles as it got higher and higher and it seemed to be at midheaven also. Then when it was ready, it would start its descent and it would make a horrible sound to freeze its victim as it swooped down. This eagle could be like the hawk at its peak and ready to swoop.

This is the final warning “bell” before severe action starts. The indication is that what is to follow is worse than what has preceded. The phrase “those who dwell on the earth” is often used to mean those who only live on earth and have no spiritual home with God. These people will even acknowledge that the disasters are from God but they will not accept Him as their God.

This brief interlude is over and the fifth angel will next enter the stage.