

**"REVELATION MADE RELEVANT"**

*A verse by verse exposition of the Bible's most controversial book*

*Notes are Fr. Ward's personal observations with the exception of the historical background information*

**\*\*\*Brief Review of Revelation 7 (see last study notes!)**

### **III. Worship, Wrath and Witness (Revelation 4-8)**

In chapter 7, there is silence in heaven before the breaking of the seventh and final seal. This unveiling actually sets into motion the Seven Trumpets of Judgment. If the Christ, the Lamb, breaks the seals, it is the angels of the Lord who blow the trumpets. Again, each trumpet symbolizes the impending judgement of the Lord upon the earth. We will see what this means for the future and the faithful below.

#### **D. The Seven Trumpets (Rev. 8) – God's Wrath Continues**

**1. Silence in Heaven and Seven Angels (Rev. 8:1-2):** *"When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them."*

As mentioned in our last study, angels are God's ministering servants for His purposes. They are often instruments of God's loving assistance for the elect (**Heb. 1:14**), as well as administrators of God's judgment (**Heb. 1:7**) for those who are evil. Here we have seven angels who are before God's throne. Interestingly, in Jewish tradition (c.f. 1 Enoch 20:2-8), reference is made to seven angels who stand before God - Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michale, Saraqael, Gabriel, and Remiel. The "*silence in heaven for half an hour*" is significant. The noise of praise and song earlier in chapters 4 & 5 and the prayers of the saints in Rev. 6:10 cease. There is silence. The symbolism of rest, akin to the Sabbath rest, may be in mind here. This silent pause, albeit brief, highlights God's holiness (be still before the Lord God) and the coming storm that He will inflict upon the earth (His judgment). Such silence also reflects the tension and anticipation that John, along with the heavenly host, undoubtedly experienced as they await the sounding of the seven trumpets. The martyrs, however, will not have to wait long for justice!

**2. The Angel and the Golden Censer (Rev. 8:3-5):** - *"Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. 4And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. 5Then the angel took the censer and 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."*

Some believe that this angel is Christ since He is our High Priest, and the high priest was responsible for burning incense before the Lord in the Temple. However, it is more likely that this angel is in service of our Lord who has given the angel the incense to burn. Again, we see the link of the heavenly temple of God with the earthly one. We also see once more the importance that our

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Lord God places on the prayers of His faithful. He honors our suffering and faithfulness. *"The fire of the altar"* would be a reference to the burning coals of the censor. These coals represent the fiery judgment of God which is coming to the earth. The imagery also takes us back to Sinai when the Lord thundered from the mountain with flashes of lightening before Moses and the people of Israel, and warned them not to violate the holiness of God (**Ex. 19:16-25**).

**3. Trumpets Made Ready and the First Trumpet Is Sounded (Rev. 8:6-7):** *"And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them. 7The 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 nothing subtle about a trumpet! Such instruments were used in the ancient world for celebrations, to sound a day of remembrance (**Lev. 23:24**), a triumph (**Josh. 6:4**), or a coronation (**1 Kings 1:34**). They were also used as a call to battle. The *shofar*, or ram's horn, was the primary way to do such things in ancient Israel.

Each of the trumpets represent a judgment by the Lord on the earth. Historicists, Preterists, and Idealists all view the imagery as mainly symbolic with literal overtones (see last page). Futurists (those who believe Revelation deals primarily with the last decade before Christ's return) take a more literal approach. The problem with making such imagery mainly symbolic, is that it makes it virtually impossible to interpret. Almost always, when God's Word uses symbolic language, it either identifies what the symbolism represents in the passage or gives us hints to its meaning through the use of the language in other contexts. For example, in **Revelation 12**, "dragon" and the "stars of heaven" are later identified as Satan and the angels who have rebelled against God.

There is no reason not to believe that the first four trumpets reflect *actual supernatural earthly* disasters that use the existing laws of physics and natural order to accomplish God's purposes. The plagues the Lord inflicted upon the Egyptians as recorded in Exodus are perfect examples. In fact, there are some parallels between those plagues and what the trumpets unleash. We see this now in the first trumpet. *"Hail and fire"* are reminiscent of the fourth Egyptian plague (**Ex. 9:23-26**). There is added intensity with the mention of "blood" (c.f. **Ez. 38:22**). Note that for the first four trumpets, there is always a third of the area mentioned affected. Some believe it is a literally third or just represents a fraction. Some believe it is a third of the planet while still others think that it only refers to a third of the area around the Mediterranean Sea (i.e. the Revived Roman Empire – Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East). But why a third? I (Fr. Ward) believe it has something to do with the fact that a third of the angels joined Satan in his rebellion against the Lord in **Rev. 12:7-9**. God's judgment upon the earth is directly related to Satan being the "god of this world." (**2 Cor. 4:4**)

So what do the hail, fire and blood represent? They either represent powerful natural storms triggered by either volcanic eruptions or actual nuclear missiles hitting parts of the earth. With the advent of the nuclear age, man now has the power to inflict massive damage on the entire planet.

**4. The Second Trumpet Is Sounded (Rev. 8:8-9):** *"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, 9and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed."*

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Note that John describes the object as "like" a great mountain. This undoubtedly could refer to a meteor which is composed of rock and will be enflamed when it hits the earth's atmosphere. The "sea" could very well mean the Mediterranean or another area in one of earth's oceans. A mega-tsunami (super tidal wave) would significantly destroy anything on the water and on the shore of the areas. When the *"sea turns blood"* could very well indicate a "red tide" or when waters that do not have enough oxygen turn a reddish color and all their aquatic life dies.

**5. The Third Trumpet is Sounded (Rev. 8:10-11): "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. 11The 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."**

Here John sees a great star. Is it another meteor or is it an angel? Recall "star" is another term for angel in the Hebrew just as we use the term "star" to refer to a successful athlete or entertainer. Is it a nuclear missile? Interestingly, it has a name – "Wormwood" – which is a very bitter herb – *Artemesia absinthium* – used in the manufacture of *Absinthe*. It is used in the Hebrew Scriptures to denote bitterness (**Jer. 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7**). It has been known to be used in certain liquors to make them more potent! Here the fresh water is affected. Many here remember the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl, Ukraine in the 1980s. "*Chernobyl*" means *wormwood* in Ukrainian. Just a coincidence? Could it maybe foreshadow the nuclear fall-out from a "great star" (nuclear missile) that will affect the waters with poisonous radiation?

**6. The Fourth Trumpet is Sounded (Rev. 8:12): "The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, 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."**

Again, there are those who believe the "sun, the moon, and the stars" refer to political and religious figures in history. But who? Certainly, the impact of volcanoes, meteors, and/or a nuclear exchange will affect the light and energy emanating from the planetary bodies. Either the overall light coming through the atmosphere will be reduced, or the actual time of daylight will be shortened. The notion that the heavens are darkened is inextricably linked to God's appearance in judgment throughout God's Word (**Is. 13:10; Ez. 32:7-8; Joel 2:10; 3:15**; recall Jesus' words in **Mt. 24:29 & Lk. 21:25-28**). Recall how darkness also covered the land during Christ's crucifixion (**Mt. 27:45**).

**7. The Eagle's Warning of Three More Trumpets (Rev. 8:13): "Then 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!"**

Some like to believe that this eagle is really an angel (recall the face of one of the living creatures in Rev. 4). Whether it was an eagle or an angel, the point is clear. The eagle announces that even worse judgments are to come. The first four trumpets affected the four main parts of life in which natural man places his trust – land, sea, fresh water, and the sun and moon/atmosphere. They were judgments upon the natural world. The next three trumpets are spiritual in character (hence, the eagle). They will come upon not just upon the earth but upon the spirit of man. They will be far worse for they will result in one third of the earth's population being lost.