

Revelation 8:1-13, The Seventh Seal

In chapter 8 we have the opening of the seventh seal, introducing the seven angels blowing seven trumpets. Four of the trumpets will be dealt with in this chapter - opening of the seals resumed. Only the seventh seal remains to be opened.

Pattern: There will be four series of sevens. John will give the first six of whatever the series is. Then he will present parenthetical material that contributes to the understanding of that particular series. Finally, the opening of the seventh of the series will introduce the next series of seven, which means that these series are interrelated, tied together, and actually belong to the same period.

These seven trumpets will bring us to the full intensity of the Great Tribulation. The seven seals bring judgments which are the natural results of the activities of sinful man apart from God. The sixth seal brings the judgment of nature. The seven trumpets reveal that God is directly and supernaturally judging a rebellious race.

The seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven personalities, and the seven vials or bowls of wrath all concern the same period, but from a little different angle.

7 seals: we see the judgment which is the result of man's willful activity.

7 trumpets: we see the judgment which is the direct activity of God.

7 personalities: we see the judgment which is the result of Satan's fight against God.

7 seven bowls of wrath: which is the direct activity of God because of man's and Satan's rebellion

A symbol is a symbol of a fact. We will find that there is a strange and strong similarity between the plagues of Egypt in Moses' day and the trumpet judgments. It is reasonable to conclude that if the plagues of Moses were literal, then the plagues that are coming in the Great Tribulation period are going to be literal. The symbols that are used are symbols of the reality which is coming. The symbols will be explained in the text.

8:1, *And when he had opened the seventh seal* - Καὶ ὅταν ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν ἑβδόμην -

There was silence in heaven - ἐγένετο σιγή ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ - ominous events are about to transpire / no voice, no motion, no sound, 30 minutes of intense waiting - The Lord Jesus Christ is still in command. He opens the seventh seal, and there is introduced a fanfare of seven trumpets. He directs the action now from heaven. We need to keep that before us through the entire book. Do not lose sight of the fact that Revelation presents Him in His glory as the Judge of all the earth.

About the space of half an hour - ὡς ἡμιώριον - This is a very solemn scene. The Lord Jesus Christ orders a halt on all fronts: heaven, hell, and earth. Nothing can move without his permission. He had already ordered the cessation of natural forces on the earth when He ordered the sealing and saving of two definite groups. Now, for a brief moment, there is a lull in judgment activity; there is a heavenly hush.

Godet defined it: "This silence is a pause of action." It is the lull before the storm. Why is there this strange silence? God's patience is not exhausted. When the sixth seal was opened and nature responded with a mighty convulsion, brave men weakened for a moment. Christ gave them opportunity to repent. As someone has said, "The steps of God from mercy to judgment are always slow, reluctant, and measured." God is slow to anger.

8:2, *And I saw the seven angels which stood before God;* - καὶ εἶδον τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλους οἱ ἑνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστήκασιν -

and to them were given seven trumpets. - καὶ ἐδόθησαν αὐτοῖς ἑπτὰ σάλπιγγες. - Seven angels to direct the series of judgments prophesied by Enoch/ Jude 14; expected by Psalmist in 96:13 and verified by Paul in Acts 17:31 - These "seven angels" are introduced to us as a special group.

"Seven trumpets" have a special meaning for Israel. In the Book of Numbers, Moses was given instructions by God for the making of two silver trumpets. These two trumpets were used for the calling of the assembly, and to start the procession moving on the wilderness march (Num. 10:2).

When Israel entered the land, the trumpets were used for two other purposes: *"And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets...and ye shall be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God"* (Num. 10:9-10).

A single trumpet was blown on the wilderness march to assemble the princes: *"And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes, which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee"* (Num. 10:4).

The "shout" is the voice of the Lord Jesus. "The voice of the archangel" means that His voice is like that of an archangel. "The trump of God" is still His voice -- His voice will sound like a trumpet.

In 1:10, where John says that he heard a voice like the sound of a trumpet, and he turned to see the glorified Christ. The glorified Christ is going to call His own out of the earth. When Paul speaks of "the last trump" -- "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised" -- he means the call of the Lord Jesus. It is the last call that He makes to the church, and it is therefore called "the last trump."

"However, the trumpets did sound an alarm which moved Israel on the wilderness march, and an alarm was sounded to move each division. The tribes were divided into four groups of three tribes each which divided into four groups of three tribes each which camped on the four sides of the tabernacle.

In addition, there were three separate families of Levi who carried the articles of furniture of the tabernacle: Kohath, Gershon, and Merari. Four and three make seven. There were seven blowings of the trumpets to move Israel out. When the first trumpet was blown, the ark moved out with the Kohathites carrying it. Then the tribe of Judah moved out with the two other tribes under the banner of Judah, and so on until they were all on the march. Every man knew his place and stayed in his station. There was no disorder in the camp of Israel whatsoever." J. Vernon McGee

The seven trumpets of Revelation will stimulate Israel into moving to the land of Palestine. I believe that it will take these seven trumpets to get all of Israel back into that land. Their present return to the land is not a fulfillment of prophecy. Rather, it will be fulfilled in the Great Tribulation with the blowing of the seven trumpets as they were on the wilderness march. After the seventh trumpet, Israel is identified for us in chapter 12 as the special object of God's protection.

“As the trumpets of Israel were used at the battle of Jericho, so the walls of this world's opposition to God will crumble and fall during the Great Tribulation. When the Lord Jesus comes, He will put down the last vestige of rebellion against Himself and against God and establish His Kingdom here upon this earth. This is a book of triumph and of victory for our God. At the end it has the Hallelujah Chorus, and maybe you and I can sing it when we get there!” McGee

8:3, *And another angel came and stood at the altar*, - Καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος ἦλθεν καὶ ἐστάθη ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου - "Another angel" is not Christ. Christ moved away from the position of intercessor in chapters 4-5. He is in heaven with the church, and He is not the intercessor. He is now in the place of judgment. He holds the book of the seven seals, and He directs all the activities from the throne. This angel is, "another angel."

having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, - ἔχων λιβανωτὸν χρυσοῦν, ἵνα δώσει ἐπὶ...καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ θυμιάματα πολλὰ - Incense is likened unto prayer and is a type of prayer. David said in Psalm 141:2, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense..." It is interesting that the incense was given to this angel. Christ didn't need anything given to Him when He prayed.

that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints - ταῖς προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων πάντων - The prayers of saints which were offered under the fifth seal (see Rev. 6:9-11) are now being answered because of the person and sacrifice of Christ.

upon the golden altar which was before the throne. - χρυσοῦν τὸ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου - The "golden altar" is the place where prayer is offered. Christ is not in the place of intercession before the golden altar. He is now upon the throne.

8:5, *And the angel took the censer*, - ὁ ἄγγελος τὸν λιβανωτὸν -

and filled it with fire of the altar, - καὶ ἐγένετο... αὐτὸν ἐκ τοῦ πυρὸς τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου - Immediately after the prayers ascend, the judgment of God descends / *fire of the altar and cast it to earth* / those on the earth without Christ had rejected the all sufficient sacrifice of Christ, therefore the Savior has become the judge. The Great Tribulation is going to get under way.

and cast it into the earth: - καὶ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν γῆν· -

and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake. - καὶ ἐγένοντο βρονταὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ ἀστραπαὶ καὶ σεισμός. -

1. "Voices" reveals the intelligent direction of God - not the purposeless working of natural forces.
2. "Thunders" denotes the approach of the coming storm of God's judgment.
3. "Lightning" follows the thunder.

4. earthquake" is the earth's response to the severe pressure which will be placed upon it during this time

8:6, And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. This is a solemn moment. The half hour of silence is over. The prayers of the saints have been heard. The order is issued to prepare to blow the trumpets! The angels come to attention, and at the blowing of the trumpets, "divine wrath is visited upon rebellious men."

8:7, First Trumpet: Judgment falls upon one-third of the plant life, from the grass to the great trees and makes a tremendous impact upon the earth. Fire is the instrument God uses. Plant life was the first to be created, and it is the first to be destroyed. This is a literal judgment upon plant life in the same way that the seventh plague of Egypt was literal (see Exod. 9:18-26).

8:8-9, Second Trumpet: John does not say that a burning mountain was cast into the sea but rather he indicates that a great mass or force "as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea" - as it were a great mountain. The mountain represents something literal and tangible. This literal mass falls into the literal sea, one-third becomes literal blood, and one-third of all the literal living creatures in the literal sea die a literal death. One-third of the literal ships of all literal nations are literally destroyed.

8:10-11, Third Trumpet: "*fell a great star from heaven*" / ruined the waters of the earth / Example: *Aleutian Islands, March 1823, a volcano polluted the water system. "This star is literal and is a meteor containing poison which contaminates one-third of the earth's fresh water supply.

Wormwood: "The star's name suggests that this is a judgment upon man for idolatry and injustice. Calamity and sorrow are the natural compensations that are coming upon man because of this judgment." McGee

Wormwood is a name used metaphorically in the Old Testament, according to Vincent (Word Studies in the New Testament, vol. 2, p. 506), in the following ways: (1) idolatry of Israel (see Deut. 29:18); (2) calamity and sorrow (see Jer. 9:15; Jer. 23:15; Lam. 3:15, 19); and (3) false judgment (see Amos 5:7).

8:12, Fourth Trumpet: Another phase of creation upon which mankind on this earth is solely dependent for light and life is the sun. The Lord Jesus indicated that in the Great Tribulation there would be special signs in these heavenly bodies: (Matt. 24:29). The intensity of the light will be reduced by one-third. However, the Lord has made it clear, "*While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease*" (Gen. 8:22).

8:13, When the fourth trumpet is blown, the announcement is made of a peculiar intensity of woe and judgment that is coming on the earth. The last three trumpets are separated from the other four; they are "woe" trumpets.