

## **The First Four Trumpet Judgments**

(Revelation 8:1-13)

8:1 And when He broke 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 seven trumpets were given to them. 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. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. 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.

6 And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.

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.

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; 9 and a third of the creatures, which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

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; 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.

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.

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!"

Intro: This morning we resume our study of the seven seal judgments of chapter 6. You will recall that the narrative sequence of judgment introduced by the first six seals in chapter 6 was interrupted by the first of four literary ( ) or Interludes in chapter 7. The catastrophic judgment released by Christ's breaking of the sixth seal suggested that no one could or would be saved. This prompted the question contained in the closing words of chapter 6, verse 17, "***Who is able to stand?***" The Interlude in chapter 7 answered this question, and demonstrated that even in the midst of judgment, God's mercy is available to anyone who will turn to Him in faith.

Chapter 8 opens with the Lamb, Jesus Christ's breaking of the seventh seal. Keep in mind that the seven-sealed scroll contains all the judgments for the entire Book of Revelation. This includes both the seven trumpet judgments here in chapters 8 and 9, and the seven bowl judgments in chapter 16. In fact, the seventh seal introduces the seven trumpet judgments and is explained by them; and the seventh trumpet judgment introduces the final seven bowl judgments and is explained by them. As previously noted, some interpreters view these three series of sevenfold judgments as describing the same period three times (*simultaneous* or *successive*). Others, myself included, favor the view that these three series of judgments are *successive*. This is referred to as the "*telescopic*" arrangement. I have provided you with a copy of these various views on the back of your handout.

## I. The Opening Of The Seventh Seal (8:1-6)

### A. Silence in heaven (v. 1)

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

Christ's breaking of the seventh seal is followed by a half hour of silence in heaven. This silence is referred to as "a silence of expectancy." Silence at this point, after all the vocal expressions of worship and praise in chapter 4 and 5, would have been an awesome experience for John. The silence here foreshadows the frightening judgment that is to be released upon this Christ-rejecting world. **Psalm 76:8-9**—"Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; The earth feared, and was *silent*, 9 When God arose to carry out judgment." And the prophet **Zephaniah says in 1:7** "Be *silent* before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD [*the day of reckoning and judgment*] is near." This reminds me of the silence that followed the 9/11 attack. All air traffic was grounded, which produced an eerie silence in the sky.

## B. The seven angels and seven trumpets (v. 2)

John watches in v. 2 as the seven angels who stand before God's throne, ready to carry out His orders, are given 7 trumpets. This special class of angels is referred to as the "*presence angels*" because they continuously stand (*Greek present tense*) in God's presence. The trumpets consigned to these 7 angels represent God's authority, and their sounding the trumpets proceeds the pouring out God's judgments on this earth.

## C. An eighth angel with a golden censer (vv. 3-6)

John next sees v. 3 "another angel come and stand 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."

This angel is often referred to as the "priest angel" because his actions resemble those of an Old Testament priest. Some identify this angel as Christ our High Priest. The fact that the text introduces this angel as another, Greek *allos*, meaning another angelic being of the same order as the seven, it is best to view this as another angel.

We note that this priest angel came and stood before the altar of incense, the golden altar in the holy place that stood before the Ark of the Covenant just outside the veil. He was holding a golden censer that was used to transport live coals from the bronze altar of judgment at the entrance to the Tabernacle and Temple to this altar of incense inside the holy place. The High priest would pour incense on top of the hot coals and the resulting smoke symbolizing the prayers of the people would ascend upward to God.

We note in **verse 4** that the angel combined the prayers of the saints with the smoke of the incense and it went up before God out of the angel's hand. The prayers of the saints are understood to be the *imprecatory prayers of the Tribulation saints*, both Jews and Gentiles, who according to **Revelation 6:9-10** cry out to God to avenge their martyrdom. Their prayer is "How long O Lord until you judge and avenge our blood on the wicked earth dwellers." Need I remind you that God treasure the prayers of His people and answers in His own mysterious way and time, according to His sovereign will.

After prayers ascend, judgment descends. **vv. 5-6** The angel filled his censer with fire from the bronze altar of judgment, and threw it to the earth. The

angel's actions of pouring out the golden censer filled with fire from the bronze altar, which is followed by peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake, signals the commencement of the great day of God's wrath. The Great Tribulation, the last three-and-a-half years of the seven-year Tribulation, will conclude with the seven trumpet judgments and seven bowl judgments.

6 "And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them." Revelation 6:7-13 which follows records the sounding of the first four trumpets, and their devastating judgments.

## II. The First Four Trumpets (8:7-12)

A. The first trumpet: *A Third of the earth Smitten* (v. 7)

7 The first angel sounded his trumpet, 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.

While the Book of Revelation is admittedly filled with symbolic language, there is no reason not to take these judgments literally. One of my professors used to say, "If the literal sense makes good sense, and if there is no compelling reason in the passage itself which suggests a symbolical interpretation, then the verses should be taken literally." Dr. Ryrie likewise points out "It would be very inconsistent to understand these [Tribulation] judgments symbolically and interpret the plagues in Egypt plainly and factually. The judgment of the first trumpet presents a grim picture of devastation on the vegetation of the world" (*Revelation*, 58).

No one can begin to fathom the ecological devastation that these judgments are going to inflict on this earth. Just imagine a third of the earth will be burned up, and a third of the trees burned up, and all the green grass will be burned up. Each of these trumpet judgments affect a third part of the earth.

B. The second trumpet: *A Third of the sea smitten* (vv. 8-9)

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; 9 and a third of the creatures, which were in the sea and had life,

died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

This second trumpet judgment was first shared with me by Tempa's grandmother, Savannah Fausett. It was my first trip to Missouri, around June of 1974. We had just finished dinner and Mimi, as she was affectionately called, invited me to come sit with her on the front porch swing. As we sat down on the swing I noticed that Mimi had a Bible with her. She turned to this passage in Revelation 8:8 and 9 and began reading it to me.

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; 9 and a third of the creatures, which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

When Mimi finished reading this passage, she asked me what I would do if I was out fishing and this great fire-ball from heaven struck near my fishing boat? Even worse, what would I do with a third of the tuna being killed? I was not a believer at the time, and I have to say, this passage frightened me. I think Mimi went on to tell me that Jesus loved me, and if I accepted Him as my Savior I would never have to face this terrible trumpet judgment. As I reflect back, I didn't hear her loving words offering me salvation, but only wanted to run for the hills.

A short time after we returned home to San Diego, we received a phone call telling us Mimi had died of a heart attack. I recall being devastated because I hadn't been able to spend more time with this godly woman. Even though she had not led me to faith in Christ that night on her porch swing, she had planted a seed of faith that God brought to fruition only a short time later.

I share this story with you because as believers our time on this earth is quickly drawing to a close. We all need to follow Mimi's example and pray for opportunities to share God's marvelous plan of salvation with lost souls.

Alright back to our passage. The object which John sees cast into the sea is described as resembling a huge mountain-like ball of fire. This is an avid description of what we know today about asteroids. Asteroids are literally masses of interstellar rock hurling through space at hundreds of miles per hour. There is one family of asteroids called the Apollo group that vary in size anywhere from a few miles to hundreds of miles in diameter.

About 3,500 asteroids have been cataloged, and more are discovered each year. Their orbits are generally very elliptical, with one end closer to the sun than the other. The largest asteroid, Ceres, is about 620 miles (1,000 kilometers) in diameter. Next in size are Pallas, about 332 miles (534 kilometers); and Vesta, about 240 miles (386 kilometers) [*Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia*. 1995 Compton's NewMedia, Inc.].

Notice the devastating results that this fiery mountain's being cast into the sea causes. **v. 8** A third of the sea became blood. Here again, I take this literally to mean just what it says. "A third of the sea became blood." This could be the direct result of God's supernatural judgment, just like when He turned the Nile River to blood in Exodus 7:20. In any event, according to **v. 9** a third of the creatures, which were in the sea died. The pollution and stench caused by the death of so many sea creatures is unimaginable.

We also note that a third of the ships were destroyed, presumably by the impact of the great mountain burning with fire being cast into the sea, and the enormous Tsunami that will be generated by this great mountain impact.

C. The third trumpet: *A Third of the fresh water's smitten* (vv. 10-11)

**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; **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 instrument of the third trumpet judgment is described as a great star called Wormwood. Whereas the first heavenly body burning with fire fell upon the sea, this great flaming star falls upon a third of the fresh water rivers and springs. The name of the star is Wormwood, which in the Old Testament signifies bitterness, sorrow and calamity. This star poisons a third of the fresh water, resulting in the deaths of many who drink it.

D. The fourth trumpet: *A Third of the heavenly bodies smitten* (v. 12)

**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.

With the sounding of the fourth trumpet the light omitted by the astral bodies in heaven, the sun, moon, and stars is reduced by a third. This reduction of the light produced by the sun and moon will directly impact the earth's 24-hour cycle, which will apparently be shortened to a 16-hour cycle. It is interesting to note that it was on the fourth day that God made visible to the Earth the light radiated by the sun, the moon and the stars. So now the fourth trumpet judgment is aimed at these heavenly bodies—that which men have taken advantage of, but rejected as provisions of God's common grace. Jesus, in His Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:29 warned that "the powers of the heavens will be shaken." The heavenly bodies, so consistent in their orbits, as assigned to them by God, will in some way be smitten by the very God who created and appointed them.

### III. The Eagle's Proclamation (8:13)

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!"

John next sees an eagle flying in the midheavens, and hears it proclaiming with a loud voice three woes, warning those who dwell on the earth that the next three trumpets would be far more severe and devastating than the four which preceded them. The fact that God continues to warn men of the devastating judgments to come, implies that He desires for them to repent and turn to Him in faith. Sadly, according to **Revelation 9:20-21** "Those who are not killed by these horrific judgments, refuse to repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; 21 and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts."

It is clear from **Revelation 9:20-21** that the lost people of earth must go through this horrific cycle of judgments, because they hate God and reject His righteous standards. The good news is that no one listening to this message will have to experience these horrible judgments. We can all go up to heaven at the end of chapter 3. As I close in prayer I would invite you to pray and ask the Lord Jesus Christ to come into you life this morning and He will. I urge you to accept Jesus as your Savior while the opportunity is still available to you.

As believers, we need to ask God to give us an urgency to share Christ with the lost. I truly believe our time is short, and only what we do here and now for the cause of Christ is all that will last. Pray and ask God to equip you spiritually to accomplish the work He has for you to do!

Closing prayer:

**Closing song: “Midnight Cry” by Cherye Fulks**