

THE SEVENTH SEAL AND THE FIRST FOUR OF THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

Chapter 8

When the Lamb opens the seventh and final seal on the little scroll handed to Him in chapter five, the judgments intensify and expand dramatically. Unlike the first six seals which foretold plagues and judgments, the seventh seal contains neither plague nor judgment. ... Whereas the opening of three of the first four of the seals unleashed the red horse (symbolising a time of increasing war, 6:3-4), the black horse (symbolising a time of increasing famine, 6:5-6), and the pale horse (symbolising a time when a quarter of the world's population will be destroyed, 6:7-8) ... instead, when the seventh seal is opened, and the trumpets sound, it heralds the beginning of the end. As Jesus described, *Mt. 24:7* nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places *i.e. relating to the 'red horse' (a time of increasing war) ... the 'black horse' (a time of increasing famine) ... and the 'pale horse' (a time of increasing destruction)*.⁸ *All these are the beginning of sorrows* ... The more horrific and extensive judgments are yet to be released on the world!

The chapter begins with the opening of the seventh seal, followed by a half-hour of silence in Heaven (v.1). Since Heaven is eternal, time (a 'half-hour') is inconsequential, nevertheless, it *seemed* like a half-hour to John of absolute silence, - when not a sound was heard. It was the silence in Heaven of dreadful anticipation of the events which are about to occur on earth as the time of the end, - the 'day of the Lord', - approaches. Previously, there had been the sound of a trumpet (4:1), and flashings of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder (4:5), the praising of the angels (4:8,9), the twenty-four elders speaking (4:10,11), and singing (5:9), and the magnificent sound of all the inhabitants in Heaven speaking in a loud voice (5:12,13) ... but when the seventh and final seal was opened ... *there was total silence* for the citizens in Heaven awaited the judgments to be unleashed!

Following the silence, from the seventh and final seal, seven more angels were standing before God, awaiting instructions for the next stage. This is now entering the concluding brief period. ... Just before the judgments are unleashed, another angel (Gabriel? Cf. Dan. 9:20ff and 10:10ff) approaches and stands before the altar in Heaven, and he is holding a golden censer containing the prayers of the saints (v.3). All their prayers had been collated and saved and were about to be answered as God's judgment would fall upon the world (6:9-11). This also relates to the words of Jesus concerning the end, *Mt. 13:39* the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰ As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. ⁴¹ The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity ... ⁴⁹ So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰ And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

The sounding of each of the seven trumpets will unleash more intensive judgments than the judgments of the first six seals, yet not as destructive as the ‘seven vials/bowls of wrath’ in chapter sixteen. ... In chapter eight, though, the first four trumpets destroy the earth’s ecology (8:6-13). They involve natural catastrophes (8:7, 8-9, 10-11, 12-13), while the sounding of trumpets five and six announce judgments which fall on humanity (9:1-12, 13-21). The seventh trumpet (11:14-19) introduces the announcement preceding the final pouring out of Divine wrath, which will be contained in the seven vials (ch. 16).

The first trumpet destroys a *third* of the earth, ^{8:7} The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up *Ἰκατακαίω, entirely devastated!* Hail is frequently associated in the Bible with Divine judgment (e.g. Ex. 9:13-25), as is fire (Gen. 19:24). Fire mixed with blood is reminiscent of Joel 2:30, which describes the Day of the Lord. The shocking result was that a third of the earth was burned up and destroyed, with a third of the trees, and the green and living grass.

The second trumpet sounds and a burning mass fell out of the skies and into the sea. Whereas the first judgment relating to the sounding of the first trumpet destroyed a third of the land, the sounding of the second trumpet will cause great catastrophe upon a *third* of the sea and oceans, ^{8:8} And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast *Ἰβάλλω* into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; ⁹ And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. A massive and destructive object hurtles down upon the earth causing great carnage!

As the angel sounded the third trumpet, ¹⁰ ... there fell a great star *Ἰάστῆρ* from heaven, burning as it were a lamp *[as a flaming torch]*, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; ¹¹ And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. ... A blazing meteor rushes towards earth and no doubt, detected by scientists and astronomers, is hurtling towards the planet from outer space ... Consider the fear of earth’s inhabitants! This ‘great star from heaven’ disintegrates as it enters the earth’s atmosphere, and it showers its debris upon a third of the rivers and upon a third of the springs of waters. It contaminates them, polluting the fresh water around the world. It will be called ‘Wormwood’. ... The Greek word is ἄψινθος (*apsinthos*). ... In 1988 a devastating explosion took place in a nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, sixty miles north of Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine. It was described as “the world’s worst-ever civil nuclear incident” for it affected more than half-a-million people, and cost over an estimated £55 billion! The city remains a disaster area to this day. ... According to multiple sources, including *Wikipedia*,

the Ukrainian word ‘chernobyl’ (чорнобиль, *chornóbyl*) means ‘mugwort’ or more commonly, ‘wormwood’. In other words, what happened in the city of Chernobyl in 1988 is merely a shadow of what is prophesied in Rev. 8:11. In three of the eight times ‘wormwood’ is mentioned in Scripture, it is connected with poison and contaminated water (cf. Jer. 9:15; 23:15) ... and the wormwood in Rev. 8:11 affects a third of the waters on the earth with the most bitter taste, and its infected pollution will cause the deaths of many.

The fourth angel sounded the fourth trumpet, shifting attention from the earth to the heavens, ¹³ And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. ... The fourth plague affects the sun, moon, and stars ... and a third of them were darkened, resulting in a third of the day and a third of the night being darkened. This partial eclipse is temporary for God will later increase the amount of heat coming from the sun (16:8-9). In chapter eight though, the loss of heat from the sun will cause temperatures to drastically plummet all over the world, severely disrupting weather patterns and tides, leading to unpredictable storms, the destruction of crops, and further loss of life for animals and humans. This is consistent with the prophecies of Joel 2:10,31; 3:15 ... Isaiah 13:9-10 ... Amos 8:9 ... Ezekiel 32:7-8 ... and the Lord Jesus, ^{Lk. 21:25} And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring.

The first four of the trumpets have been sounded and the accompanying plagues is complete. The forces of nature have fallen under Divine judgment as a warning to sinful mankind ... for ‘only’ a third has been affected. The sounding of these first four trumpets is a warning and a precursor of worse to come which will fall directly on mankind, ¹³ And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven *isoaring high in the sky, visible to all, indicating the rapid and certain approach of God’s final vengeance*, saying *lannouncingl* with a loud *[μεγάλη]* voice *[φωνή]*, Woe, woe, woe *lin anticipation of the announcement of the final three trumpetsl*, to the inhabitants of the earth *lthe unbelieving world in its hostility to God, 3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:8; 17:2l* by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound! ... The unbelievers will hear the sounds, they will see the warnings, they will acknowledge the disasters, but *still* they will refuse to repent! They stubbornly face imminent and impending destruction, - not only a third of a destruction ... but *complete* destruction. Nevertheless, even at such a late stage, God is not willing for any to perish, but that they would come to Him in repentance (II Peter 3:9) while there is time, for the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (II Peter 3:10). Until then, God continues to offer the means to escape His wrath, *but they will not believe!*