

8. The Opening of the Seventh Seal and Seven Angels with Seven Trumpets (Revelation 8)

Revelation 8:1-2

1 And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels that stand before God; and there were given unto them seven trumpets.

The preceding chapter ended with a description of what happened to the righteous, including those of the twelve tribes of Israel and the great multitude that no man could count. Against this is set the opening of the seventh and last seal. When he (the Lamb) opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven, indicating a period of readiness for the momentous events to follow. One might say the suspense also increased as all of heaven awaited the final revelation of the Lamb. It is important to remember that what John is about to see has remained a mystery throughout the ages. The rulers of old did not know, according to 1 Corinthians 2:7-10:

But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, (even) the (wisdom) that has been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this world have known: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; 9 but as it is written:

Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not,

And (which) entered not into the heart of man,

Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him.

10 But unto us God revealed (them) through the Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.

Nor did the prophets know, a situation eloquently described in 1 Peter 1:10-12:

10 Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that (should come) unto you: 11 searching what (time) or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. 12 To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to look into.

As Peter concluded, not even the angels knew what God had prepared.

The silence is deafening, as we might say, as the half an hour was passing. After the half an hour, John saw seven angels, described as the seven angels who stand before God. The description makes them unique in their identity. Who exactly are these seven angels? Two angels in the scriptures stand out as archangels—Gabriel and Michael. In addition, Jewish literature and tradition identify seven such angels. Jesus identified angels who always see the face of the father in Matthew 18:10:

10 See that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.

Gabriel identified himself in Luke 1:19:

And the angel answering said unto him, “I am Gabriel that stands in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak unto you, and to bring you these good tidings.”

Jude names Michael as the archangel in Jude 9:

9 But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, did not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke thee.”

Revelation 12:7 tells this story:

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels (going forth) to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels.

Both Gabriel and Michael play a role in the prophecies of Daniel (Daniel 8:16, 9:21, 12:13, 12:1-3). Michael is called one of the chief princes, implying more angels in this category.

In this study, we will only say the seven angels who stand before the throne of God are a class unto themselves, participating here in the final judgment of God. They are angels of presence and power, and each had a trumpet. The term *seven angels* is used only nine times in the Bible and each use of the term is in the Revelation.

Another Angel with a Golden Censer

Revelation 8:3-5

3 And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto 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 cast it upon the earth: and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

In verse 3, another angel appears at the altar with a golden censer. Perhaps the Old Testament shadow of this event was in the atonement rituals of the Hebrews in Numbers 16:46

46 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take your censer, and put fire in it from off the altar, and lay incense upon it, and carry it quickly unto the congregation, and make atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from Jehovah; the plague is begun.

With the incense, here in Revelation, were the prayers of the saints. The prayers of the saints were also prevalent when the Lamb took the scroll in Revelation 5:8

And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Two points need to be noted: A great deal happens in heaven when the saints pray, and the saints' prayers play a large role in the advent of the judgment.

When the saints pray, there is mediation of the highest order in heaven. We have already seen in Revelation 5:8 that when the Lamb took the scroll that the four living creatures and twenty-four elders held our prayers in bowls of incense. Paul taught in 1 Timothy 2:4-7 that Jesus Christ is our mediator:

5 For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, (himself) man, Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony (to be borne) in its own times;

1 John 2:1, John also affirmed that Jesus Christ speaks for us:

2 My little children, these things write I unto you that you may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."

To all this power is added the intercessory power of the Holy Spirit in Romans 8:26-27:

26 And in like manner the Spirit also helps our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for (us) with groanings which cannot be uttered; 27 and he that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to (the will of) God.

The saints' prayers play a large role in the advent of the judgment. When the prayers went up before the throne of God, judgment followed. The angel hurls fire from the altar of God to the earth and the power of heaven helps us as peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. As the revelation moves to the sounding of the trumpets and the final judgment, the saints need not fear for the same power turned to destroy the evil ones, turns to help and protect the victorious saints.

A final note before we listen to the sounding of the trumpets, some say the angel here is the Lamb. They think the angel in this passage is the Christ because the Christ is the

mediator between God and man. In addition, it is true Revelation 10:1 describes a mighty angel in a way only fitting to the Son of God. However, this angel, in reference to the seven angels, is like a priest angel, a description fitting only to the Son of God. This description fits exactly with the teaching in Hebrews:

Hebrews 8:1-2: 8 Now in the things which we are saying the chief point (is this): We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

Hebrews 6:19-20: Which we have as an anchor of the soul, (a hope) both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil; 20 where as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 5:6: As he said also in another (place,) you are a priest for ever After the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 4:14: Having then a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Hebrews 2:17-18: Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.

The angel's work is the fortifying of the saints' prayers in preparation for the destruction and chaos to follow. In this regard, it fits into the context and purpose of the opening of the seals: whatever comes in heaven or on the earth, those sealed are secure in eternity now and for evermore.

Seven Angels and Seven Trumpets (Revelation 8:6-13)

Revelation 8:6

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

The sounding of the trumpets parallels in meaning the opening of the seals. The opening of the seals demonstrates the protection and victory of the saints during the period of their individual lives whenever they might live. The destruction and chaos, the place of the martyrs, the destiny of the unrighteous, the sealing of the servants of God—all of these are real to each one who stands facing the temptations and trials of life or facing the end of this life by death or the sudden return of the Lord.

The sounding of the trumpets extends these tumultuous events across all dispensations and epochs of the struggle of good against evil, light against darkness, righteousness against unrighteousness. They are from before time, from in the beginning when the word was with God and the word was God (John 1:1), from the fall of Satan, from the sin and death of humankind, from the Paradise lost. They extend to the son who

conquered sin and rose from the dead, and to the redemption of humankind. The soundings herald events before time, during time and lead right up to, but do not include, the final destruction and the restoration of all things in the Lamb and his bride, the church, in chapters 15 through 22.

What happens next is from before the foundations of the world and extends into the ages of the ages. This is not the prophecy of puny oligarchs and transient historical events. This story is the climax of that one told of old: It is of heaven and hell; God Almighty and Satan; Christ and the antichrist; the apostles and prophets and the false prophets; the servants of God and the servants of the dragon; God the Alpha and the Omega and the Accuser.

Traditionally, trumpets are a call to battle. The trumpet sounds themselves are significant in announcing the presence of the Lord as in Exodus 19:16-19:

16 And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the far part of the mount. 18 And Mount Sinai, the whole of it, smoked, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. 19 And when the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice.

During the generations of humankind, we have all stood at the edge of horror and chaos. The picture painted at the opening of the seven seals repeats here with the sounding of the trumpets in grand and great proportions. In the first representation, the concluding message was the sealing of the servants of God described in chapter 7. In this representation, with the seven trumpets, the concluding message is to those who, facing the horrible plagues of life on this earth, fail to repent. The sounding of the sixth trumpet contains this pronouncement in Revelation 9:20-21:

20 And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not 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 repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

The sin and death in this present world are horrible beyond imagination, and still some miss the point of repentance.

The First Angel Sounded His Trumpet. (Revelation 8:7)

Revelation 8:7

Revelation 8:7

And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

The first five soundings of the trumpet represent the absolute devastation unleashed upon the earth and upon humankind at the fall of man. They follow in main the substance of the creation story which adorned the Paradise—the Garden of Eden—with splendor and beauty and immortality. The figures themselves show how devastated a place the earth has become since the fall. The imagery is foreshadowed in the scriptures. In Joel 2:30-31, there is the foretelling:

30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah comes.

This same foretelling is included in Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, where he also quotes Joel 2:32:

32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as Jehovah hath said, and among the remnant those whom Jehovah doth call.

From the beginning, vegetation brought sustenance and beauty to the earth, as described in Genesis 1:11-13:

11 And God said, "Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, (and) fruit-trees bearing fruit after their kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth." And it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, herbs yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, where in is the seed thereof, after their kind: and God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

God gave this gift of sustenance and beauty to man in Genesis 1:29:

29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food:

The gift was both pleasing to the eye and good to eat, as described in Genesis 2:9. In addition the Lord God gave them the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

9 And out of the ground made Jehovah God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But because of the sin of Adam and Eve, God cursed the ground and made it hard to grow and made life correspondingly hard in Genesis 3:17-19:

17 And unto Adam he said, “Because you have hearkened unto the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it:’ cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and shall eat the herb of the field; 19 in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return unto the ground; for out of it were you taken: for dust you are, and unto dust shall you return.”

Therefore, a third of the earth burned up with the trees and green grass. The destruction of the tidal surges after storms cover the land with salt makes the grass unable to grow. Pestilence remains on the earth until the end. Even in our time of plenty, vast regions and enormous areas cannot grow. People are hungry the world over. The lesson is clear: One would think that those of us who witness and experience this horrible state would repent and turn to the Lord; yet some do not.

The Second Angel Sounded His Trumpet, (Revelation 8:8-9)

Revelation 8:8-9

8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; 9 and there died the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, (even) they that had life; and the third part of the ships was destroyed.

Once again, that which God created for man fails him in every way after his fall. How different is the destruction following the fall from the glorious plenty of the creation of sea life in Genesis 1:20-21:

20 And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.” 21 And God created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that moves, wherewith the waters swarmed, after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind: and God saw that it was good.

In our day, we witness a tsunami, an earthquake, a meteor fall, or an oil spill. Our sustenance departs, and famine reigns. Will man see his plight, sense what is coming, and repent? Many will not repent, according to Revelation 9:20-21.

The Third Angel Sounded His Trumpet (Revelation 8:10:11)

Revelation 8:10-11

10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the 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.

At the sounding of the third trumpet, a great star—perhaps a meteor—falls, striking the very springs of water. This is different from the waters of the second trumpet sounding which were habitats for a human food source and seaways for commerce. Here,

the star—Wormwood—turns the water bitter and people die from drinking it. The word for wormwood means bitterness and has this meaning in Amos 5:7-9, where it also relates to the stars, Pleiades and Orion, to the water sources of the planet:

7 You who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth, 8 (seek him) that makes the Pleiades and Orion, and turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night; that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth (Jehovah is his name);

Water, a life-sustaining miracle, is so abundant; yet when withdrawn or poisoned by drought and pollutions or a meteor's crash to earth, brings suffering and pain. Job 5:10 describes the source of water: "Who gives rain upon the earth, and sends waters upon the fields."

Perhaps, this is the very reason that spiritual water takes such a powerful meaning. John wrote in John 4:13-14:

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, "Every one that drinks of this water shall thirst again: 14 but whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.

Jesus added in John 7:37-38:

37 Now on the last day, the great (day) of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. 38 He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water."

Revelation concluded in Revelation 22:17:

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And he that heareth, let him say, "Come." And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

The analogy is clear and true: physical life needs water without poison; spiritual life needs the water of life without the poison of error.

Our very thirst and need for water should bring us face to face, as it were, with the desperation of man dying, and awaken in us the need to repent. Of all the plagues brought upon man by his fall, can any be worse than the need for and the lack of water? A world in the horror of drought and the sickness of polluted water should wake us to repentance.

The Fourth Angel Sounded His Trumpet (Revelation 8:12)

Revelation 8:12

12 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; that the third part of them should

be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner.

God's habitat for man included the lights of day and night, described with elegance and beauty by Moses in Genesis 1:14-18:

Genesis 1:14-18

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years: 15 and let them be for lights in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth," and it was so. 16 And God made the two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: (he made) the stars also. 17 And God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth, 18 and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

However, with the fall of man, darkness took on the somber and dark cast of evil. So it is that the physical darkness should remind us of the spiritual darkness that finally will become the outer and blackest darkness. This story of man without light unfolds from the fall of man until the end. David poetically describes the inclusion of darkness in the plagues upon the Egyptians in Psalms 105:26-28:

26 He sent Moses his servant, (and) Aaron whom he had chosen.

27 They set among them his signs, and wonders in the land of Ham.

28 He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his words.

Joel included darkness in his prophecy in Joel 2:31-32:

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah comes. 32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered.

The Lord himself gave light and dark their symbolic meaning: in Matthew 6:22-23:

22 The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, how great is the darkness!

Not only is there this spiritual darkness present in our lives, but there is also a final fate of the evil ones as the outer darkness, both in the teaching of Jesus and in Jude. Jesus taught in Matthew 25:30 among other places: "And cast you out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

Jude describes the end of false teachers in Jude 13: "Wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved forever."

We have all experienced the despair of the dark. The electricity goes off in the nighttime. Dark storm clouds close out light even in midday. Huge sandstorms and snowstorms are known to cover the sun, stars, and moon for days. All of these and more should forewarn us of what we are in for if we do not repent.

The first four trumpets have sounded their warnings straight from the human experience created by God for man in the perfection of the garden, and lost to turn, oftentimes, against man after the fall. They bring us to the edge of desolation in the human experience. They should call us to repentance and obedience.

Before the sounding of the last three trumpets, an eagle shows a difference between the first four trumpets sounding and the last three trumpets sounding.

An eagle calls out in a loud voice (Revelation 8:13)

Revelation 8:13

13 And I saw, and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound.

At the end of the sounding of the fourth trumpet, an eagle flying in midair calls out “Woe!” three times. There are three points of notice.

First, the King James and the New King James versions have *angel* for *eagle*. *Eagle* is clearly the accurate reading according the other translations and the overwhelming weight of scholarly opinion. The Law of Moses lists the eagle among the unclean birds. Perhaps the offensiveness of this vulture-like bird to the Jews kept the proper translation out of the older English versions. To translate *eagle*, *angel* misses the point of the figure in this passage. Eagles eat carrion—the flesh of dead animals; dead and putrefying flesh; flesh unfit for food

Second, *woe* is an interjection of denunciation. Jesus used the word 27 times in the Gospels to condemn those not accepting his word. After that, the entire New Testament used the word only twice until Revelation, where the angels used it to pronounce the woes associated with the last three trumpet soundings and to denounce the wicked city of Babylon in Revelation 18. In his teaching, Christ mainly used the word *woe* in denouncing the Pharisees and false teachers (Matthew 23 and Luke 11). The prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, used the word *woe* to denounce the children of Israel for error and various conquerors for their assault against Jehovah.

Third, the entire 13th verse marks a transition between (1) the hardships and misery emanating from those things created by God for man and perverted by the fall (2) to those evil emanations created or allowed to happen for the punishment of man after his fall. Therefore, the first four soundings represented the degeneration of the creation. The last three soundings turn to the horrible happenings following the fall of man that did not exist before the fall: death and Hades, Satan’s control of darkness, and the beast and false prophet leading man astray. These were all the results, not of God’s creation, but of

Satan's success in the fall of man and, perhaps, because of his own fall. All of these brought man to the most horrible circumstances imaginable—circumstances far worse than famine, worse than war, and worse than catastrophic events of nature. Oh yes, they are worse than the imaginary wars and the future events forecast by many.

Now a bird that feasts on carrion calls out these devastating woes!