

INTRODUCTORY NOTES:

- In chapter 7 we had an interlude following the first six seals (chapter 6). The 7th seal is now opened.
- There are three sets of seven judgments. The 7th seal contains the 7 trumpet judgments. Later we will see that the 7th trumpet contains the 7 bowl judgments. These judgments are literally “nested” within one another.
- With the opening of this 7th seal, we will move into the 7 trumpet judgments.
- The first four trumpets in this chapter bring cataclysmic, physical and environmental devastation to this planet. These are physical, or natural (although of a supernatural character!) judgments, unlike the coming demonic judgments.
- These first four trumpets also are judgments in “thirds.” Not ALL of these things are destroyed (trees, seas, fish, waters, sky, etc.) just a third of them. Enough to terrify the entire human population and cause extreme devastation.

¹“When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”

- The scroll is now completely open. All the judgments will proceed. This is a dramatic pause to indicate the coming horrors. Reminds us of Habakkuk 2:20 – ***“But the LORD is in His holy Temple, let all the earth be silent before Him.”***
- This is the calm before the coming storm. It is a huge contrast to the thundering praise of the previous chapter. Silence also indicates reverence, and awe for what is coming.

² And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

- ***“..the seven angels who stand before God ...”*** These are not mentioned as such in the canonized scriptures, but there is a reference to them in the Apocrypha, as the Angels of the Presence. We are even given their names (mentioned in books of Tobit, Esdras, etc.): Uriel, Raphael, Raquel, Michael, Sariel, Gabriel, Remiel (note all of these names contain the name of God = El). Tobit 12:15 states ***“I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angles, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One.”*** We must caution that the books of the Apocrypha are not considered as inspired, although they do have bits and pieces of information which may indeed be accurate. It is best to trust the Bible as we know it today, as our singular source of God’s truth, but these “extrabiblical” books may contain some nuggets of truth. These angels also interact with the prayers of believers.



- **Trumpets always announce, proclaim, warn** and lead the people. Each of these trumpets will be blown to announce another judgment. The 7th seal opens 7 trumpets of judgment.

³ *“Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with 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, ascended before God from the angel’s hand.”*

- *“Then another angel ...”* Some wrongly interpret this as Jesus. It is merely another angel, as the text says. (We KNOW when we are seeing Jesus, as there is no mistaking His identity in this book.)

- This angel, one of those who apparently interact with the prayers of the saints, now has the **firepan of coals from the altar of incense** in the heavenly Temple. The altar represents our communication, our prayers with God.



- **The altar of incense (golden altar)** set immediately before the curtain that separated us from the Holy of Holies, the place where God dwelled between the cherubim on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant.

- This altar has always represented the prayers of believers, and the smoke from this altar would keep the High Priest from being slain when he entered the Holy of Holies once a year and stood in the presence of God. The smoke would obscure his vision so he would not “see” God.



- Here, this angel holds burning coals from this heavenly altar. These are OUR prayers, which are offered to God! Psalm 141:2 states *“Let my prayer be set before you as incense.”* Our prayers are indeed set before Him as incense. Consider that every time we pray *“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...”* we are fueling this censer that will be soon be hurled to earth.

⁵ *“Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. ⁶ So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.”*

- It is now time to bring the final answer to all the prayers of all believers over the millennia. God’s will is about to be done on earth, as it is in heaven. The action is initiated in heaven, and will play out on earth. The silence that began with the opening of the 7th seal is short-lived.



- **Another earthquake.** There are three of them in this book. Earthquakes do seem to get the attention of earth dwellers!

- Noises, thunderings and lightnings always accompany a view of the throne of God in Revelation, especially when some action originates from there. It is a solemn reminder of the power of our almighty God. His awesome majesty and unlimited power are never to be taken for granted. These “signs” remind us of this.
- **The silence is now over.** The earth is about to experience cataclysmic changes. The seven angels with the seven trumpets are ready to blow.



1st TRUMPET: Hail, fire mingled with blood, 1/3 of trees and ALL grass burned

⁷ “The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.”

- We are going to see that many of these judgments brought on the earth will **resemble the plagues of Egypt**. Those plagues were brought on by the hardened heart of Pharaoh. The same thing will bring these plagues – the hardened hearts of God’s dearest creation, mankind.
- **Egypt is symbolic for the world**, and it makes sense that what was used in Egypt originally will be used here again.
- Five of the Egyptian plagues are used here in Revelation 8, and have happened in other places of scripture (Sodom and Gomorrah, Genesis 10, predicted in Joel 2, etc.)
- It is important to remember that the **Israelites in Goshen were not affected** by the plagues of Egypt! Does this mean believers won’t be here either? We don’t know.
- The **plagues of Egypt were real, physical and literal**. There is no reason to believe that these will not be. Don’t try to make these things symbolic, they were literal in Egypt and they are literal here.
- In the original judgment in Genesis 6, God used a flood, but promised he would never send such a thing again. Instead, here He uses fire.
- Note that **hail is always a sign of judgment** in scripture.
- Plants were the first living things created, and now the first to be destroyed.
- The word for trees here is *dendron*, which literally means “fruit trees.” Perhaps this is a reference to all trees that bear food.
- Notice that his is a **limited and “controlled” judgment**. A bit at a time. Only a third of the trees instead of all of them. But all the grass is gone. The earth’s environment is drastically altered.

2nd TRUMPET: Burning mountain thrown in seas, 1/3 of seas blood, 1/3 of creatures die, 1/3 ships destroyed



⁸ “Then 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 living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”

- **“something like a great mountain”** has caused all sorts of wild speculation. We simply don’t know what this is. Notice the word “like.” It was NOT a mountain, but something that *appeared like* one. It is said to be burning with fire, so perhaps **it could be a meteor, or a volcano, a nuclear bomb?** It is thrown into the sea, and does not seem to come from heaven. It could be something we have never seen before. Whatever it is, it causes massive environmental damage, has a huge impact on commerce, agriculture, commercial trade, and just about everything else on this planet.



- There is an interesting scripture in Jeremiah 51:25 which may or may not have relevance here. The prophet speaks of the destruction of Babylon (we will see that in chapters 17 and 18 of Revelation): **“Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, Who destroys all the earth,” says the LORD. “And I will stretch out My hand against you, Roll you down from the rocks, And make you a burnt mountain.”**
- The seas cover ¾ of the earth. Vast populations are fed by the fish of the seas. This plague will result in many hundreds of thousands of deaths.
- The separation of land and sea during creation happened on the same day as the plants were created. Perhaps God is “unmaking” His creation a little at a time in these judgments??

3rd TRUMPET:

Burning star from heaven, rivers and springs of water made bitter



¹⁰ “Then 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 water. ¹¹ The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.”

- Once again, this **“great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch”** is subject to much speculation. This could be a meteor, but stars in scripture are also symbolic for powerful leaders. This could be a literal star, such as a meteor, or it could be figurative for someone or something else. However, there is no reason not to believe that this is not a literal devastation of 1/3 or the drinking water sources on the planet.
- The 2nd trumpet affected the seas, now this trumpet **affects the drinking water in rivers and springs**. These waters are not said to turn to blood, but they are rendered non-potable (undrinkable). (In the 3rd Bowl Judgment ALL rivers and streams, all supplies of drinking water, are turned to blood.) This will create massive water shortages and drinking water will be in very short supply.



- The word **“Wormwood” in Greek is *absinthe*, which means “undrinkable”** probably due to its very bitter taste. Absinthe is actually made from the herb called wormwood. The liquor known as Absinthe, very high alcohol content, can actually cause death. Pure oil of wormwood is very poisonous. It is unclear as to whether people die due to the lack of drinking water, or from actually drinking this “undrinkable” water. In scripture, wormwood is associated with sorrow, calamity, hemlock (poison) and bitterness, both physical and spiritual.
- It is very interesting to note that the Russian word for Wormwood is Chernobyl. The origins of this word actually come from the mugwort plant, which grew profusely in the area of this massive nuclear reactor accident. Over time, however, it was mixed up with the word for wormwood, and now Russians would identify it as meaning wormwood. This may or may not be a meaningful “coincidence.” The nuclear reaction process has been identified at times as “burning like a torch.” Perhaps this is a God-allowed nuclear exchange or incident that poisons a third of the earth’s drinking water. We simply don’t know. (Note, the drinking waters of Europe are still polluted in places from the Chernobyl accident.)
- **Water shortages are already becoming an issue today.** Watch for water to become a very sought-after commodity. People will most likely even be buying up large water sources to control them and even profit from them (this has already started). Drinking water may be a problem throughout the tribulation period.



4th Trumpet: A third of the heavenly light sources are darkened

12 “Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.”

- **Darkness was the 9th plague in Egypt.** We will see an even greater darkness appear later in the bowl judgments (the kind of darkness that can be felt and is terrifying).
- Isaiah 13 contains prophecies regarding the ultimate **destruction of Babylon** (*there are six major chapters in scripture that deal with this subject: Isaiah 13 and 14, Jeremiah 50 and 51, and Revelation 17 and 18*). One passage sounds very familiar as we look at this chapter: ***“Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine.”*** (Isaiah 13:9-10). There is another passage like it in Joel, which discusses the coming “Day of the Lord”: ***“And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.”*** (Joel 2:30-31). As we have said before, most of what is prophesied in Revelation, has first been prophesied somewhere else in the Old Testament. Revelation is the collection of all of these, putting them in their final fulfillment format.



- This first **darkening of the sun, moon and stars is only a third**. That means less light during the day, which can cause havoc with agriculture and all sorts of other economies, as well as power generation. (Could mean fewer daylight hours, or less light that actually hits the earth during normal day or night hours) This alone will cause a lot of problems (including ongoing food shortages), but the coming total darkness in chapter 16 will be complete. That darkness, however, only falls on the “throne of the beast” (the center of the evil world leader’s government).
- This darkness will **defy a natural explanation**. The size and scope of these trumpet judgments will be seen as the hand of God. There are no “natural” explanations, although some will try to promote that. Our God is in control of both the “natural” and the supernatural. He will use His power to bring about these judgments. These cannot be explained away.

These first four trumpets can be seen by some as “natural” events, though they are of a supernatural scope and origin. Both physical and spiritual bitterness, darkness and death will occur. The bottom line: The thing man has put his entire trust and hope in – this world – is being destroyed piece by piece. The air, water, vegetation, light, food, all the things mankind needs for survival here are in really bad shape after these judgments, and it only gets worse.

¹³ *“And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”*”

- **“angel”** – some translations say “eagle.” The Greek word used here, however, is *aggelos*, which is the word for angel, literally meaning “messenger.” Some prefer “eagle” especially since it is a bird of prey, but is also used in scripture to symbolize God’s care of those who love Him (help coming on the wings of an eagle). Either way, the earth is being delivered some bad news here.
- **“through the midst of heaven”** literally means the “zenith of the sky” which is about where the sun is at midday. Some speculate that this messenger is a satellite enabling the teaching of the gospel around the world. The word literally indicates a messenger, in whatever form that may take.
- This is known as the **“3 woes”** and can be **summed up** by saying: *“You think THIS was bad, you ain’t seen nothin’ yet!”* Things will be progressively worse from here. Unfortunately, even though hard to believe, man’s rebellion also gets worse.
- The three woes are actually the 5th, 6th, and 7th trumpets (remember that the 7th trumpet sounds and contains the 7 bowl judgments), so essentially these three woes contain the rest of the judgments.



- The phrase *“inhabitants of the earth”* is similar to the one we saw in chapter 6: **“those who dwell on the earth.”** Again, these are those people who have decided their home is earth. They aren’t going anywhere else. This is their permanent home and they don’t want to go anywhere else. This is in contrast to those who only sojourn on earth, traveling through to their home with the Lamb. This phrase is used repeatedly throughout Revelation and indicates unbelievers, citizens of earth. Believers are citizens of heaven. These “inhabitants of the earth” have been described like this:

**Into this world, To eat and to sleep;
And to know no reason Why he was born,
Save to consume the corn, Devour the cattle, flock, and fish,
And leave behind an empty dish. (author unknown)**

These people tend to be selfish, self-consumed people. That is why pride is at the top of the list of the sins that God hates. It separates us from Him.

We should think of Revelation as a developing story or canvas. A strict timeline can be confusing, but we can visualize conditions worsening. After these 4 trumpets that affected our natural world, we see a stark messenger with a harsh message of woe to come. The earth is a mess at this point, so what is next? The last three trumpet judgments are demonic in nature.

(see optional exercise on next page...)



EXERCISE: If you wish to really get more into a study of this book, it is helpful to have a knowledge of **types** in scripture. That is, images and references that stand for something in scripture. For example, gold is used to symbolize deity, God. Silver stands for redemption, black and darkness for sin, and so on. It is more than just color here, as there are other items that can symbolize other things in scripture. You might want to do some personal research and take the time to look up references that relate to some of the things we've just discussed. Here's a place to start, below. See what you can find, and how it might broaden your understanding of these things. *(Use your own exhaustive concordance to find more references, there are plenty more than what we've indicated here.)* While we believe they have very literal, physical meanings, they will also have more expansive spiritual meanings.

PHYSICAL	Scripture reference	Meanings (Physical and Spiritual) and Notes
Hail	Psalm 78, 105; Isaiah 28:2, 17, 32:19; Job 38:22- 23	
Fire	Numbers 16:35; Deuteronomy 4:24, 32:22; Isaiah 33:14	
Sea	Daniel 7:2,3; Isaiah 57:20	
Trees	Daniel 4:10, 20-22; Ezekiel 31:31	
Grass	Deuteronomy 11:15; Job 5:25; Isaiah 40:6, 7	
Mountain	Psalm 30:7; Jeremiah 51:25; Daniel 2; Isaiah 40:3-5;	
Star	Numbers 24:17; Amos 5:26; Revelation 1, 8, 9, 22:16	
Rivers, Fountains, springs	Psalm 78:20; Song of Solomon 4:15; Ezekiel 47:1-5, John 4:10-14	