

CHAPTER 8

"When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. 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" (8:1-3).

We now begin to read about the trumpet judgments, seven in all. The first four are described here in chapter 8. These first four describe devastation of the natural realm while the last three, in chapter 9, describe judgments upon men. There is no reason not to take the first four literally, although some words may be hard to pin down.

Where in sequence with the seals do the trumpets fall? The wording in 8:1-2 distinctly implies that the first six seals are prior in time to the trumpets: *"When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets."* A literal reading would definitely give the impression that all the seven trumpets are, in fact, part of the seventh seal. According to Frost, these trumpet judgments take place in the latter portion of the first three and a half years.¹

First Trumpet - A third of the trees are burned up and all the green grass, this being due to hail and fire, mingled with blood.

Second Trumpet - The sea is struck presumably by a huge meteor. One third of all ocean creatures are killed (accounting for the sea becoming blood?) and a third of the ships destroyed.

Third Trumpet - A blazing meteor descends to earth like a burning torch. Its burning particles fall on a third of the rivers and springs of water, making them poisonous to mankind.

Fourth Trumpet - A third of the sun, moon, and stars are struck so as to darken the earth for a portion of the day and night. *"A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night."* Johnson writes that this refers *"to a partial impairment of the ordinary light from these bodies."*²

This chapter closes with verse 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!'"* How do these three woes relate to the last three trumpets? According to Johnson,

Before the last three trumpets sound, John hears a flying eagle call out "woe" three times. His cry announces the especially grievous nature of the last three plagues, which kill a third part of the population of the earth (9:18). Two of the woes are identified with the fifth and sixth trumpets (9:12; 11:14) . . . which argue that the third woe should be seen as the seven bowl judgments (in 16:1ff.)³

1 Frost, *Matthew and the Revelation*, pg. 197.

2 Johnson, *Revelation*, pg. 492.

3 *Ibid.*

Before bringing to an end this brief discussion of chapter 8, let those who are still unbelievers take to heart verses 3-5:

"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. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. 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."

Nathanael Emmons gives this warning:

This subject may remind sinners of what they have to fear from the prayers of saints. Their united supplications for the honor of God, the accomplishment of his designs, and the overthrow of all his incorrigible enemies, forebode terrible and eternal evils to impenitent sinners. The prayers of Noah proved fatal to the old world. The prayers of Lot proved fatal to Sodom. The prayers of Moses proved fatal to the Egyptians and the Amalekites. The prayers of Joshua proved fatal to the inhabitants of Canaan. The prayers of Elijah proved the ruin of Ahab. The prayers of David destroyed Ahitophel. And the Apostle John represents the prayers of saints as one procuring cause of the wasting judgments, which God has sent, and is still sending upon the Antichristian world, by the ministers of his vengeance. . . . This is a lively representation of the power of prayer, to enkindle the wrath of God against the enemies of his church. The wicked, therefore, have abundant reason to tremble at the powerful intercession of the people of God against them. In their present state they have nothing to expect, but that the prayers of saints will prove their final ruin. They certainly will, unless they repent and believe the gospel.⁴

⁴ Emmons, Nathanael, *Sermons on Some of the First Principles and Doctrines of True Religion*, pp. 382-383.