

October 12, 2010

The Seventh Seal and the First Four Trumpets

Text: Revelation 8:1- 13



¹When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ²Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. ³And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, ⁴and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. ⁵Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

v.1 -"silence in heaven for half an hour"- expected by Jews familiar w/ 4 Ezra 6:39, 7:30 (apocrypha) also Hab 2:20, Zch 2:13, Zph 1:7

v.2 -the 7 angels before God- see 1 Enoch 20:1-8 (Jewish apocalyptic lit)
And Tobit 12:15 (apocrypha)

Angels in God's presence- Is 63:9, Luke 1:19

Any connection to the Seven Angels of the Seven Churches Rev 1 - 3??

-7 trumpets- Matt 24:31, Joshua 6:4-6, Zeph 1:14-16; Is 27:13; Zch 9:14

v.3-4 -altar- the incense altar seen in Rev. 6

-golden censer- plates for burning incense used in OT Temple/Tabernacle worship

Both verses resemble priestly service in the Tabernacle/Temple- this is Matins :-)

v.5 This action signals the 7 Angels to blow their trumpets, Is 29:5-8, Ezek 10:2

Before starting the next prophetic vision, let's remind ourselves: What is Biblical Prophecy?

Broadly speaking it is _____ing _____'s _____

That could take the form of:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Which is the most commonly understood in 21st century American use of the word?

Which is the most popular use by God in speaking through His prophets in the Bible?

⁶Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

⁷The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

Hail, fired, mixed with blood- Ex 9:13-33: The plague of hail strikes Egypt

Is it a natural phenomenon or a symbol of the horrors of warfare?

Either way, what is the overarching image?

A third of the earth- suggests partial, not total destruction. The real focal point is the earth, the trees, and the grass. Humans are not afflicted till trumpets 5-7.

⁸The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. ⁹A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Ships were destroyed- man's commercial activity and livelihood is afflicted (Ex 7:14-21: The plague of blood)

¹⁰*The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. ¹¹The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.*

A great, blazing star falls- Mark 13:24-27, here, like the fire hail and blazing mountain, we must take it symbolically and not as a historic event to pinpoint on a timeline. This one is NOT Satan (he's in 9:1, the 5th Trumpet)

From heaven- not just the natural origin of the meteor, but the metaphorical origin of the judgment! It is from God.

Wormwood- a kind of bitter poison- as a divine punishment it represents sorrow and bitterness in the human heart (Lam 3:19, Prov 5:3-4, Jer 9:13-16)

¹²*The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.*

Light is darkened- Ex. 10:21-23: Plague of darkness. What was the purpose of the plagues in Egypt? How is that similar to the 1st century Christians' circumstances?

Whether the darkness is spiritual or physical, the point of this trumpet and the whole first four trumpets is the impending judgment of God, they are calls to repentance before the judgment becomes immediate (when the 1/3 becomes whole)

¹³*Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!"*

The first four trumpets include the imagery of natural disasters. Trumpets 5-7 will be demonic woes. The eagle flying overhead helps the readers see the transition from natural disaster to supernatural disaster.

Three woes for the three remaining trumpets, 1-4 are bad, 5-7 are more foreboding!

"Eagle"- same Greek word for Vulture... perhaps a more suitable choice given the judgmental tone of the Trumpets, also Matthew 24:28!

Next Week

The Fallen Angel: Abaddon/Apollyon

A Bottomless Pit

Locust-Scorpions from Hell

Horses with Lion Heads and Serpent Tails