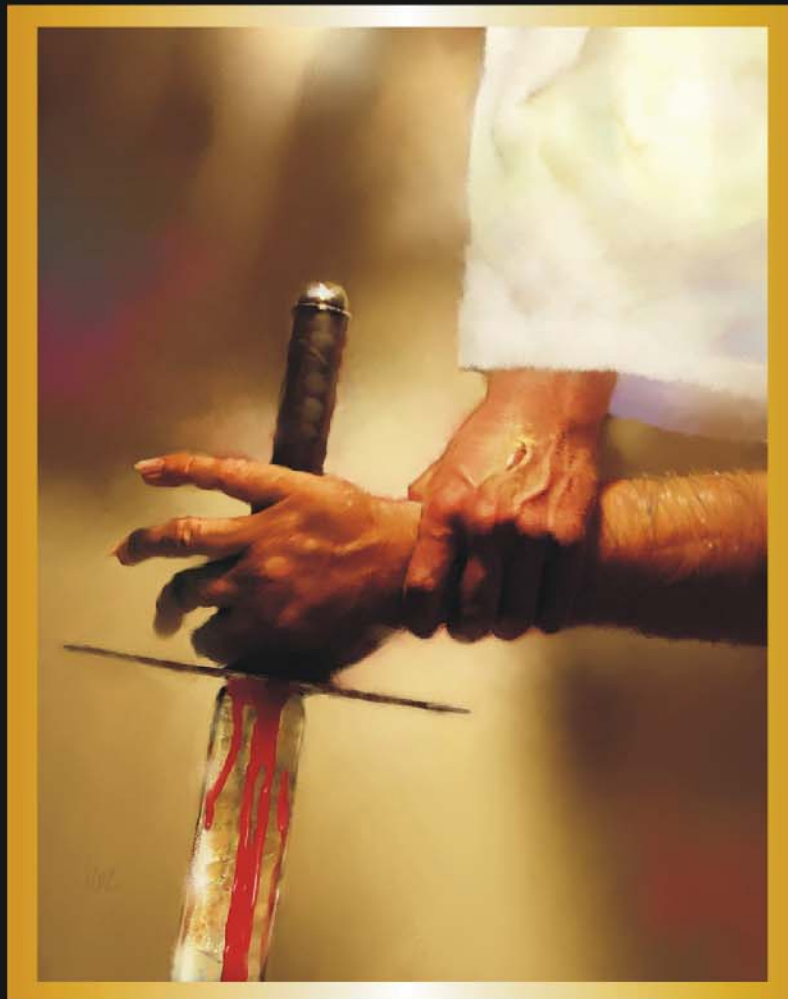


# The Revelation



## Chapter 8



## REVELATION 8

The interlude now ended, John launches into the final seal and seven trumpets which announce the impending arrival of Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit to planet earth.

*Revelation 8:1 - When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.*

The Lamb now opens the 7th seal. “And there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.” If a day in Bible prophetic time equals a year of earth time<sup>282</sup>, then an hour would equal 2 weeks (12 months/24 hours) and a half hour would equate with a little more than 1 week of earth time. In this verse, a literal reading of 1/2 hour probably makes more sense than a week of total silence in heaven. Considering that time on earth is measured by the rotation of the earth - a chronograph probably not used as the standard in heaven - John is probably using earth time as a way of describing a time of silence in heaven that lasted about 1/2 earth hour.

The scene is a dramatic one for John and for the rest of the universe. The lamb opens the last seal and everyone holds their breath. It is like everything freezes in heaven - animals, humans, angels, Elders, Living Creatures, 144,000, representatives of un-fallen worlds, everyone stops

---

282 This principle, first elucidated in the fourth century, recognizes that sometimes when speaking prophetically, God has used a day to represent a year. When looking for a way to understand Daniel 9:24-27, which predicted the beginning of Jesus’ ministry on earth and crucifixion, it was discovered that using a day to represent a year as God did in Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34 resulted in the prophecy accurately predicting the exact timing of Jesus’ death. Using the same principle, it accurately lined up the events of what has become known as the 1260 Day (or Year) Prophecy of Daniel and The Revelation (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 11:2; 11:3; 12:6; 12:14; 13:5) that made sense historically.

motionless and watches with bated breath to see what will happen next. No one but God knows.

That moment of silence, whether literally a half hour as some would see it, symbolically a week, or figurative as in what seemed like a half-hour, lasted a long time. This pregnant pause is high drama at its most riveting! It echoes the prophecies of Habakkuk, Zephaniah and Zechariah<sup>283</sup> where the inhabitants of earth are called to respectful silence in view of the coming judgment of God from his temple.

One can almost imagine everyone watching as the Three-in-One stop to consider one last time to be certain that everything is ready. You can see them look at each other, raise their eyebrows in question and then look off into space, carefully thought ticking off the list of everything which had to be done before this final moment. Finally we see them lock eyes again and nod and the action begins.

*Revelation 8:2 - Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.*

The seven angels who stand before God are handed seven trumpets. It is interesting how John keeps introducing new and additional beings who are regularly involved in the goings-on of the throne room of God. This is the first mention of these seven angels who apparently are always in God's presence.

*Revelation 8:1-4 - And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne; and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God.*

Next, another angel comes and stands at the altar with a golden censer and "he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne; and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God."

Throughout the Old Testament incense is always associated with worship.<sup>284</sup> David

---

283 Habakkuk 2:20; Zephaniah 1:7 and Zechariah 2:13

284 One of the sad consequences of the Protestant Reformation was that many "threw the baby out with the bathwater" and, as a reaction against the excesses and misuse of many of the sensory

prayed “Let my prayer be counted as incense before thee, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice!”<sup>285</sup> Note that the incense is not the prayer, as some religions believe, but rather they are a symbol of the prayers of the saint. David said, “let my prayers be counted as incense before you.” In The Revelation, it accompanies the prayers. It helps the pray-ers sense the presence of God and as it ascended it reminded them that their prayers were ascending to his presence.

God gave very careful instructions about every aspect of Israelite worship, When it came to the incense used in their worship, he was very specific - what ingredients it should have, how it should be blended, how and when it should be burned, etc.<sup>286</sup>

Because worship, the focus and adoration we place on those beings or people or things most important to us, was to be the continual state of the hearts of the citizens of the Kingdom of Light, the alter of incense in the sanctuary was to be kept burning perpetually as long as the world lasted as a symbol of their loyalty and love.<sup>287</sup>

It is interesting that a censer full of incense was a very important part of the yearly Day of Atonement services. The High Priest carried a censer burning incense before him as he went into the Most Holy Place as a symbol of his single minded loyalty to God. If he had not, he would have been struck dead.<sup>288</sup>

That symbol of loyal, committed citizenship was why burning incense to idols was so offensive to God - it was a visible, olfactory sign of the worshiper’s allegiance to Satan. And it is why, in heaven, incense is associated with the prayers of the citizens of God’s Kingdom.<sup>289</sup>

Yet, incense symbolizes more than just allegiance in the normal sense. It is sym-

---

elements of worship which had been originally instituted by God for the pleasure and instruction of his multi-sensory people, removed them all from their worship. Much current worship is the lesser for it!

285 Psalms 141:2

286 Exodus 30:1-10

287 Exodus 30:9

288 Leviticus 16:12-13

289 Revelation 5:8-9

bolic of the belief in the active presence of God; it is not loyalty from afar but intimate friendship; it is the active presence of God or a god in a person's life in such an intimate way that you are aware of their presence when you are around them. It is either the sweet fresh awareness of God's presence with us or the sickly smell of death that signals wraithy companionship with Satan.<sup>290</sup>

When the angel takes the censer with incense in the bowl and fills it with fire from the altar and throws it down to the earth,<sup>291</sup> it is reminiscent of the scene in Ezekiel's vision where the man clothed in linen takes coals of fire from between the cherubin and scatters them over Jerusalem as a symbol of God's judgment because of the abominations committed in it.<sup>292</sup>

We have now arrived at the end of the world as we know it. What happens next are the final acts in the consummation of the war between God and Satan. The presence of God symbolized by the incense and symbolizing the presence of God on behalf of his citizen saints becomes a fire of destruction to those who are in rebellion.

*Revelation 8:5 - Then 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, voices, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.*

These four - thunder, disembodied voices, flashing lightning and earthquakes are a picture of what often happens in the presence of God in all of his majesty.<sup>293</sup> All four, and especially earthquakes, are frightening in our world today - they almost always signal some kind of destruction. But, in a perfect world or in heaven, where buildings do not fall apart and underwater landslides do not trigger tsunamis, and people are not struck by lightning or washed away by flash-floods, the shaking of the ground and the crackle and rumble of lightning at God's presence is just a picture of the incredible power of someone we love.

The Roman historian, Josephus, tells us that all four - peals of thunder that rolled throug the city, random lightning flashes, eerie voices calling and moaning and a

---

290 2nd Corinthians 2:14-17

291 Revelation 8:5

292 Ezekiel 10:1-2

293 Isaiah 6:4; Exodus 19:16, 18-19

tremendous earthquake occurred throughout the city of Jerusalem just before it was destroyed by the Roman general Titus in A.D. 70.

For rebels against God and his Kingdom of Light, these occurrences are a source of stark terror; for loyal citizens of God they are the delightful, all consuming, sensory bathing, adrenalin pumping, mentally and emotionally exhilarating; flat-out most incredibly fantastic experience a person can imagine because they mean that the one they have waited for is finally on his way!

*Revelation 8:6 - Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets made ready to blow them.*

Revelation is a book of symbols. It often uses the symbols of the Old Testament and references to occurrences, situations, or customs and practices from the Old Testament to save space, to reference material the readers were very familiar and comfortable with, and as a kind of shorthand code to protect the message from unfriendly eyes and ears. So, to understand the trumpets of Revelation 8, 9 and 11 we have to look at the significance of trumpets in the rest of Scripture.

Almost without exception, in the Bible trumpets were used as attention-getters for announcements<sup>294</sup> or as announcements or signals themselves.<sup>295</sup> In those days trumpets were not the metal instruments with valves we call trumpets today. They were more akin to a bugle. They were either made from metal<sup>296</sup> or were made from the horns of various animals. The Jewish Shofar is an example of this latter kind of instrument. While there were several notes the player could produce by tightening or loosening his lips, the range and key were limited. Even in worship the trumpet was not generally played as a solo instrument or in a band as we would imagine today but was rather used as an attention getter or heraldic instrument.

In martial settings it was used as a signal instrument and throughout the Israelite wanderings in the desert we see it used in this manner.<sup>297</sup> In populated areas they

---

294 i.e. Leviticus 23:24; 25:9; Judges 3:27

295 i.e. Joel 2:15; Judges 6:34; Exodus 19:13; Numbers 10:10; Joshua 6:4-20

296 i.e. Numbers 10:2

297 i.e. Numbers 10:9; 31:6 and in the Judges 7 story of Gideon

were often used as warning signals.<sup>298</sup> Trumpets were also used in celebrations much as we would blow horns on New Years Eve in the United States to usher in the new year.<sup>299</sup>)

Jesus is only recorded in the Gospels as using the word trumpet twice - once when he counsels his followers and students not to have a trumpet player walk in front of them to announce their presence and the generosity of their contribution when they came to the temple to bring their offerings and tithes.<sup>300</sup> The other correlates with the use of trumpet in Revelation.

In Matthew 24:31 Jesus says that God will “send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other at the very end of the world.”

Paul picks up this picture in 1st Corinthians 15:52 where he says: “Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ and ‘O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?’”

In 1st Thessalonians 4:16-17 he tells us that” the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.”

In the Revelation we hear trumpet blasts at least 15 times. Two of these involve voices that sound like trumpets and one describes the absence of trumpet sounds when the harlot of Revelation 18 is abandoned by her supporters; the rest, the other 12 are all associated with the 7 Trumpets of Revelation 8 through Revelation 11.

---

298 i.e. Hosea 8:1; Joel 2:1

299 i.e. Numbers 29:1

300 Matthew 6:2

These trumpet blasts and the omens which accompany them herald the end of Satan's Kingdom of Darkness. The King of Light is riding victorious into battle to the sound of bugles and Satan's kingdom is collapsing all around him.

Before we look at the trumpets lets review for a moment where we stand. The seals and trumpets are at the end of the world. Each seal represents another level of deterioration of the world and the situation on earth. Now the end has come. God's people are eternally sealed in their loyalty and commitment to God and his Kingdom of Light. Every decision has been finally made precipitated by the increasing pressure of what is happening. The earth is reeling and rocking as its Creator approaches. Now the first trumpet sounds signaling his arrival for the final battle.<sup>301</sup>

*Revelation 8:7 - The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, which fell on the earth; and a third of the earth was burnt up, and a third of the trees were burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.*

The first wave of cosmic material blasting through the cosmos like leaves before a fall storm in advance of God's appearance arrives. Chunks of iron-rich comets and fiery meteorites pelt the earth and a third of the world's plant life and a third of the globe's created and manufactured material catches fire and burns in a worldwide conflagration. Buildings burst into flame like brush in a Santa Ana windstorm; a third of earth's flora turns yellow and brittle in the heat then ignites in fiery infernos that sweep the planet; asphalt roads catch fire and become rivers of molten petroleum; huge hailstones from interplanetary comets slam into the earth creating huge craters.

John's intent in giving the numbers in this and the rest of the trumpets is not to provide a statistically accurate count that is precise down to the last item. A "third" is an approximation - less than half and more than a fourth. In other words, a major portion, a very significant number, but not half.

*Revelation 8:8-9 - The 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*

---

301 (Revelation 8:1-6; Revelation 8:7; Revelation 8:10-11; Revelation 8:12-13; Revelation 8:8-9; Revelation 9:1-12)

*blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.*

The next thing to strike the planet is another iron-rich meteor/asteroid that appears as large as a mountain which slams into the ocean. The sediment boiled into the water destroys a third of the living creatures in the sea and the tidal wave destroys a third of the ships on the ocean. Then, as the sea settles, the iron dispersed into the ocean triggers wide-spread algae blooms.

The scientific literature is increasingly filled with evidence of what similar meteor strikes on earth have done in the past - including huge craters and sedimentary evidence from virtually every landmass on the planet. And, algae blooms that turn portions of the ocean red occur on a regular basis.

*Revelation 8:10-11 - 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 fountains of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died of the water, because it was made bitter.*

The next gargantuan meteor to enter our atmosphere breaks apart during entry and the material which lands contaminates a third of the earth's fresh water supplies. The name "Wormwood" describes any one of five shrubs growing in Palestine which produce a green, extremely bitter oil. Often the Greek word translated "Wormwood" in most English Bibles is associated with the Greek word for "gall" or "bile."

The Bible's description of what happens as these seven final announcements of Jesus' eminent arrival at earth is amazingly in its clarity. When you just allow the Bible to speak without trying to read into it any more than what is literally there, it reads like the front page of the San Francisco Chronicle describing things which both the scientific literature and Hollywood portray as the future of our planet.

Large numbers of people die from the poisonous material scattered into the water supply from outer space.

*Revelation 8:12 - 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 was darkened; a third of the day was kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.*

An eerie twilight begins to cover the earth as the debris blasted into the atmosphere by the meteors hitting the earth spreads around the globe. It appears from the perspective of our planet that an unseen force is turning down the lights which define night and day on our world.

Again, this could be the description in Nature or National Geographic or Scientific American or a Discovery Channel special of the effects of past large meteor strikes on our planet

*Revelation 8:13 - Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice, as it flew in mid-heaven, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth at the blasts of the other trumpets which the three angels are about to blow!"*

It is interesting that while the specific word translated eagle in this verse literally means a large raptor, many interlinear Bibles and Greek and Aramaic scholars recognize the symbolic use of the term in this context to mean an angel flying like a soaring eagle. The idea is one of a messenger of the Kingdom of Light floating on the air currents like a large raptor, gliding over the earth's surface crying out a message much as one would hear an eagle's piercing call as it soars updrafts without ever beating its wings. The word in the original is derived from the Greek word for breathing unconsciously, naturally, as opposed to with effort.

The messenger, in this word picture, its wings spread like an eagle's wings slowly and effortlessly soars over the earth with its message, as opposed to streaking across the sky as other messengers had done.

As it floats above the earth, it keeps a message of disaster and misfortune for those who live on planet earth as the last three angels blow their trumpets.