

Chapter 8

Note: This chapter begins where the 6th chapter closed. John is still in heaven taking notice of all that is going on here on earth. He has seen the two companies recorded in chapter 7 (144,000 Jews, and, the Great Multitude that had been saved during early years of tribulation). Now he sees the opening of the 'seals' resumed.

I. Opening of 7th Seal (v.1).

- 'Silence in heaven about the space of half an hour'. 'A period of silent preparation for the awful judgments about to break forth in the earth under the trumpet blasts' (Larkin).
- 'It is a silence of intense interest and awful expectancy with reference to the results of the breaking of the 7th seal' (Seiss). A 'lull' before the storm.
- Not a voice is heard; not a motion is seen. **Note:** There are many opinions as to what the silence means: (1) A 'blank', leaving everything belonging to the 7th Seal unrevealed. (2) A 'poetic invention' to heighten the dramatic effect, having no particular significance. (3) A 'prophetic symbol' of scenes and experiences in the early history of man. (4) The 'freedom granted to the church under the reign of Constantine'. And many others.
- **Ex.** Paul, on the stairs of castle in Jerusalem (Acts 21): There was 'A great silence', that of surprise, wonder, and interest to catch what was being said.
- Think about it:
 - a. The 24 elders cease playing their harps.
 - b. Heaven's angels hush their singing.
 - c. The Cherubim and Seraphim cease to praise God.
 - d. The host of heaven stands in awe.
 - e. Heaven is in complete silence for half an hour anticipating the judgments of misery, blood, and fire to be poured out upon mankind, the sight, of which, renders all heaven speechless and silent.
- Then, after this pause of silence, the 'action' is resumed.

II. Seven angels, standing before God, given trumpets.

- A. They are of a particular rank and distinction. **Note:** All angels are not of the same dignity and office. Jesus said of some angels: 'Who do always behold the face of the Father which is in heaven' (Matt.18:10).
 - a) Gabriel is such an angel. He said to Zacharias, 'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God' (Lu.1:19).
 - b) Daniel's writings seem to make 'Michael' one in this classification of angels. He is called 'the great prince' of the prophet's people (Jews).

Note: The book of Enoch (ch.20, mentions names of 7 angels of the highest order: Lucifer, Gabriel, Michael, Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, and Sarakiel - with each having a specific duty, or ministry, as messengers of God.

- B. 'Angels stood before God'. This is the posture of 'service'. Their standing in the presence of God places them above all other servants. **Ex.** Seven Persian princes who 'saw the king's face' (Esther 1:14). What these princes were to the Persian kings, these angels are to God.

- Jesus said, 'In the end of this world, the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire' (Matt.13:40-42).

III. Seven Trumpets (expressive trumpets).

1. Trumpets call to battle (war).
2. They proclaim great festivals.
3. They announce royalty.
4. They have part in overthrow of the ungodly (Jericho - Jos.6:13-16). And many others.

Note: There are some ministries of our day that blow ram's horns in service. (There is no place for such in the New Testament Church.)

IV. Another Angel - came and stood at the altar. 'This is not Christ. He is no longer in the position of intercessor. This is just another angel' (McGee).

- A. The angel has a 'golden censer' (an implement belonging to the Holy of Holies, and used only by the high priest). He casts fire into the earth.
- Jesus said of Himself, 'I came to cast fire into the earth; and what could I wish if it were already kindled? Suppose ye that I came to give peace in the earth? I tell you nay, but rather division' (Lu.12:49-52).

Note: I believe (with others) this angel to be Christ, our High Priest.

- B. He offers incense with prayers of the saints upon the golden altar before the throne – the smoke of which ascends before God (vs.3,4). **Note:** There are varying opinions concerning the prayers:
 - a) They are all the holy prayers ever prayed.
 - b) They are prayers of the saints whose souls are under the altar in Ch.6.
 - c) They are prayers of all tribulation saints. **Note:** I believe they include the prayers of all saints of all times. (For 2000 years the Church has prayed, 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth, as it is in heaven'. (And those prayers are here being answered.)
- C. Censer with fire from the altar.
 - In Old Testament times, the high priest took a censer of incense as he carried the blood into the Holy of Holies. But here, the ritual is reversed. The fire of the censer is hurled upon the earth, rather than waved before God. 'The inhabitants of the earth had rejected Christ and His redemption for the penalty (judgment) for their sins. Now, they must bear the judgment themselves' (McGee).
 - 'Voices', thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake (v.5). These events are at the direction of God, and not just the working of natural forces. The storm of God's judgment is about to break forth (v.6). Angels prepare to sound.
 - There are many and varied interpretations as to the meaning of the 'Trumpet judgments': (1) 'The sounding of these first four trumpets seem to announce the releasing of the 'Four Winds of the Lamb's Wrath' (6:16-7:3), held back while the 'elect' were being sealed' (Haley). (2) Others believe the 'sounding of the trumpets' speaks of the fall of the Roman Empire. **Note:** I believe these events are to be taken literally. God had said, 'I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke' (Joel 2:30). The participants in this scene are angels, the occasion is the day of judgment, and the results are the closing out of the history of a doomed world as we know it.

V. The First Trumpet Sounds (v.7).

- 'Hail and fire mingled with blood cast upon the earth'. **Note:** This is similar to the 7th plague upon Egypt during the days of Moses (Exo.9:22-26); yet, the situation will be reversed. On that occasion the 'Children of Israel' escaped; here, they will suffer. The judgments upon Egypt were directed against Pharaoh; this judgment will be directed, primarily, against Israel.
- Third part of trees and all green grass was burnt up. Again, lots of differing opinions: (1) 'The 'trees' mean princes and great men; the 'grass' the glory and power of men' (Wordsworth). (2) 'The trees mean great men, and the grass the people generally' (Williams). (3) 'The earth means the 'visible church', the trees - those most strong in the church; and the grass its lesser excellencies' (Durham). 'The truth is, if earth, trees, and grass do not mean earth, trees, and grass, no man can tell what they mean' (Seiss). **Note:** I agree with Seiss; and am confident that these trees and grass are just as literal as the plagues upon Egypt. The plague upon Egypt was local; here it is global. Too, remember, 'plant life' was the first to be created, and it is first to be destroyed (Gen.1:11,12).

VI. The Second Trumpet Sounds (v.8).

- 'As it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea'. 'The Holy Spirit is careful to point out that this is not a literal mountain - but 'as it were' a great mountain' (Green). **Note:** One un-named writer insists that the plague under this trumpet is not to be taken literally, because a mountain falling into the sea could never turn it into blood. Larkin said, 'This is not a burning volcano, but an immense meteoric mass out of the heavens, ablaze with fire, cast into the sea'. (I agree, along with Seiss, Dake, Green, Donald Stamp (Full Life Study Bible) and many others.)
- **Note:** 'The verse says 'sea', not seas, possibly referring to the Mediterranean Sea. At this time Israel will be back in its own land, the Antichrist will be reigning from Jerusalem, and the center of all these judgments will be upon the land of Israel. The judgments will reach to the four corners of the earth, but will be most severe in the land of Israel' (Green). (I agree with a portion of Green's statement, but believe John is speaking of a third part of all the seas becoming blood.)
- 'Third part of sea became blood; Third part of creatures in the sea, die; Third part of ships will be destroyed'.
- As with the first trumpet, there are varied interpretations. One writer says, 'the fiery mountain is 'Satan'; the sea is the 'nations'; the sea turning to blood and the dying of the fishes, the 'persecution and slaughter of Christians'; the destruction of the ships, 'the extinction of congregations'. Hosea said, 'The fishes of the sea also shall be taken away' (4:1-3). Too, concerning the ships, Isaiah declares, 'The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is high and lofty...and upon all the ships of Tarshish' (Isa.2:16). **Note:** The statement here in v.8 means the literal 'mass' falls into the literal 'sea'; one third of the sea becomes literal 'blood'; one third of all the literal living creatures in the literal sea die a literal 'death'; and one-third of the literal ships in the literal sea are literally 'destroyed'. Nothing could be plainer.

VII. The Third Trumpet Sounds (vs.10,11)

- A great star falls from heaven, burning as it were a lamp. John, here, uses a 'lamp' to illustrate the tremendous burning light that falls from the sky, just as he used the 'mountain' to illustrate the burning mass under the 'second trumpet'. 'Could not a meteor fall from heaven and poison the drinking waters of mankind so that many will die' (Dake)? **Note:** Some say this 'star' denotes an eminent teacher or angel of the Church. Others say it speaks of an apostate teacher, using Rev.1 as a basis for their belief. Seiss says, 'This is another meteoric phenomenon, perhaps a comet striking the earth'. (I agree.)

- The name of the star is 'Wormwood'. 'A name is assigned to this 'meteor', not as though it had previously been known, or should become known by this name, but in a way descriptive of its qualities and effects' (Seiss). It causes a third part of the rivers and fountains of water to be poisoned by its gasses. **Note:** Wormwood (or absinthe) is a bitter intoxicant, a poisonous herb which can produce convulsions, paralysis, and death. Think about it: If one meteor could turn the waters of the sea to blood, another may readily turn the waters of the rivers and wells to the deadly bitterness of 'wormwood'. It seems something of this sort is indicated in Jer.9:13-15, 'Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein, but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink'.

VIII. The Fourth Trumpet Sounds (vs.12,13).

- A third part of the sun, moon, and stars are smitten, causing 'darkness' upon a third part of the day and of the night. Dake says, 'Could not the planets become darkened as stated here? This is what was done in Egypt' (Exo.10:21-23). (The 'darkness' that covered Egypt under the ninth plague lasted three days.) Too, this judgment is similar to that of the 'sixth seal' mentioned in ch.6, yet there are various interpretations. Hammond says the 'sun' is the Jewish temple; the 'moon', Jerusalem; the 'stars', population of Jerusalem; 'their obscuration', the persecution of the African Church by Vandals. (I believe this is just as literal as that which Christ Himself said in Lu.21:25, 'And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars'. (Read Matt.24:29, as well.)
- The Prophet Joel said, 'the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness' (Joel 2:2). 'This is a judgment scene of the great day that is foreshown, and it is a fearful and disastrous observation of the sources of light and heat of our world, so that sun, moon, and stars will shine with only the third of their force, disturbing the seasons, hindering the ripening of fruits and harvest, and filling the world with chilliness and sickening gloom' (Seiss).
- **Note:** The first four 'Trumpet Judgments' have to do with literal plagues affecting vegetation, seas, rivers, and planets. They have dealt with the 'material creation'. (The last three trumpet judgments will deal with the 'moral creation'.)

IX. Woe, Woe, Woe (v.13).

- An angel flies through the midst of heaven (in mid-heaven; in the atmospheric heavens above the earth) 'giving warning' that what is to follow is going to be even more devastating, judgments that are beyond the imagination of man. **Note:** And the wonderful 'good news' is: Jesus has made a way of escape. No one needs to be here. Salvation has been purchased for all; paid for by the 'blood of the Lamb'. Amen!