

Eschatology

The Plot for the 70th Week The Trumpets are Sounded

“When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God and seven trumpets were given to them.” (Rev.8: 1-2)

The seventh seal is the last seal to be broken on the scroll that Jesus alone is worthy to open (Rev. 5:9). It is the breaking of this final seal that “sounds the alarm” of God’s wrath that is about to “poured out” on the earth and its rebellious inhabitants.

Concerning the use of the trumpets, William R. Newell writes:

- God appointed the trumpets in Israel for the calling of the princes, and the congregation, and for the journeying of the camps, as an alarm, or public notification (Numbers 10: 1-6).
- The trumpets were to be blown also in the days of Israel’s “gladness,” “set feasts,” and over the sacrifice in the beginning of their months – “for a memorial before you God.” Jehovah also loved them (Numbers 10:10).
- We find an especial use of the trumpet, in arousing to war the hosts of Jehovah against their enemies (Numbers 10:9). Compare Ezekiel 33:1-7, where the watchman’s trumpet blown faithfully could deliver all who would “take warning”.
- So with the seven angels, they blow the very trumpets of heaven against an earth that becomes “as it was in the days of Noah...as the days of Sodom,” as Joshua and Israel blew the trumpet against Jericho.

The trumpets, in Revelation 8, are God’s final warning to the inhabitants of the earth that His longsuffering with them is about to come to an end.

When Jesus broke the seventh seal a unique response occurred – silence. When the judgment becomes visible on the scroll, both the redeemed and the angels are reduced to silence. They face the reality of the future destruction they see written and answer with the silence of foreboding and awe at what God is about to do.

1st Trumpet: Against the Land

(Rev.8: 7) Hail and fire, mixed with blood were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth and trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

2nd Trumpet: Against the Sea

(Vs.8-9) Something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, and a third of the creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

3rd Trumpet: Against the Fresh Water

(Vs.10-11) A great star called Wormwood, fell from heaven and fell on a third of the rivers and springs of water. A third of the waters became bitter and many died.

Wormwood is a shrub whose leaves are used in the manufacturing of absinthe, a liqueur so toxic that it's banned in many countries.

Wormwood is mentioned 8 times in the Old Testament, where it is associated with bitterness, poison and death (Deut. 29:18; Prov. 5:4; Jer. 9:15; 13:15; Lam. 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7; 6:12).

The rivers will run with deadly poison, the wells will become springs of death, and the lakes and reservoirs will be filled with toxic waters. As destructive as that will be, the worst is yet to come.

4th Trumpet: Against the Heavens

(Vs. 12) The focus of divine judgment shifts from the earth to the heavens. A third of the sun, moon and stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened.

This judgment will severely disrupt the earth's weather patterns and the seas' tides, leading to violent, unpredictable storms and tide, the destruction of crops, and further loss of animal and human life.

(Vs. 13) **Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”**

The First Woe

5th Trumpet: Hell opens up

(Rev. 9: 1-12) With the sounding of the 5th trumpet the focus of the judgments will shift from the physical realm to the spiritual realm.

- The “fallen star” is not a piece of celestial matter, like the previous judgments, but an angelic being. That he was said to have fallen to the earth suggests that this is a reference to Satan – the leader of the fallen angels (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezek 28:12-16; Luke 10:18).
- The bottomless pit is literally translated “the pit of the abyss”. After he is allowed to open the abyss, smoke arises from the pit like a great furnace and pollutes the world with the corruption of hell.
- Out of the vast, billowing, ominous cloud of smoke that darkened the sky and caused panic among earth's inhabitants, John saw a new terror emerge. Vile demons, taking on the visible form resembling locusts, swarmed out of the abyss to plague the earth.
- The demons will have power to hurt ALL unsaved people. The pain will be so great that the people will try to commit suicide, but God will not permit it. They will suffer the judgment for five months (vs.10).
- Satan only unlocks the pit to free the demons. There will be a high-ranking demon in charge whose name is Abaddon (Hebrew) or Apollyon (Greek). Both names are translated to “destroyer”.

The Second Woe

6th Trumpet: An Army for the East

(Vs. 13 – 21) Like the fifth trumpet, the sounding of the sixth trumpet heralds another, more severe demonic attack on sinful mankind. This attack, unlike the previous one, brings death.

- In vs.14, the use of the definite article “the” suggests that these four angels form a specific group. Their identity is not revealed, but they may be the demons that controlled the four major world empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Daniel 10 provides insight into the warfare between angels and demons that influence individual nations.
- Remember the fourth seal rider named Death (Rev. 5:8)? He was forced to take a sabbatical in the 5th trumpet, but we see him come back with full vengeance in the 6th trumpet. The two hundred million army of demonic horsemen will kill one third of mankind. (Vs. 15-16).

John briefly described those who sat on the horses in vs.17: “The riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone”.

Fire is red.

Hyacinth is dark blue like smoke.

Brimstone is a sulfurous yellow, describing the rock which, when ignited, produces a burning flame and suffocating gas.

Those are the very colors and features of hell:

Rev. 14:10; 19:20; 20:10, 21:8

- Even after one third of the population is killed, the rest of mankind not killed by these plagues will still refuse to repent before a holy and just God. John concludes his vision by listing out five sins representative of the defiance of those who refuse to repent (Vs. 20-21).

“The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly”.

(Rev. 11:14)