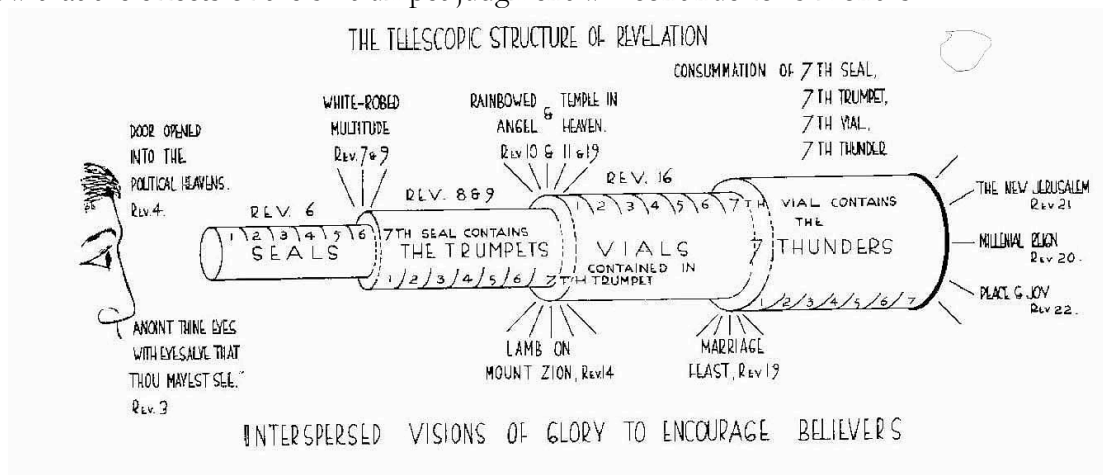


“APOCALYPSE SOON”

“Silence in Heaven” (Revelation 8:1-13)

There is one final seal to be opened of the seven seals. It is followed by 7 trumpet judgments and 7 bowl judgments. The exact timescale for these judgments is not set out in detail. We only know that the effects of the 5th trumpet judgment will continue for 5 months.



All these judgments take place in the second part of the Tribulation Period with increasing effect. It is as if God is trying to get man's attention by increasing the pressure. If the world won't listen the easy way they will have to listen the hard way. We know that many will eventually listen and repent, including the Tribulation martyrs and the nation of Israel.

And when He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. (v1)

Just as in the other six seals, the Lord Jesus Christ opens this last one. Because there is no direct judgment from this seal, many feel that the 7 trumpet judgments are contained in the 7th seal. Previously there was loud praise and worship continually echoing throughout heaven, but now there is unprecedented silence. This may be in anticipation to the final apocalyptic judgments that are now about to be unleashed. The 6 seals were terrible but this 7th seal will be the worst of all. As the glorified beings in heaven see the Lamb break the final seal they are reduced to awestruck silence as they discern what is about to unfold. It is a kind of celestial calm before the storm! When God is aroused in anger to pour out His great judgment, silence from the creatures to the Creator is the appropriate response, “*Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord is at hand....*” (Zeph. 1:7; cf. Hab. 2:20; Psa. 76:8) Each second and minute that passed of this half an hour of silence must have intensified the tension in the watchers minds.

The rebellious world had ran to the dens and the caves at the end of the 6th seal in Revelation 6:15-16. Now after the sealing of the 144,000 and the silence in heaven, they may have assumed that the worst was now over. In fact what they had lived through before was only a minor foretaste of what was ahead for this world. The God of nature, who holds all the atoms together by the Word of His power, will now unleash nature against fallen humanity. This will culminate in the return of Christ and the utter destruction of the earth with fire.

And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should

offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand (v2-4)

There now appeared 7 angels with 7 trumpets. They will herald in 7 more judgments upon the earth. These judgments will follow a sequential pattern.

The Seven Trumpets		
1st Trumpet	8:7	Hail, fire and blood
2nd Trumpet	8:8-9	Mountain burning with fire
3rd Trumpet	8:10-11	Star falls from heaven
4th Trumpet	8:12	Sun, moon and stars darkened
5th Trumpet	9:1-11	Bottomless pit opened
6th Trumpet	9:13-21	200 million man army
7th Trumpet	11:15-19	World's kingdom becomes God's kingdom

Each trumpet is a window of mercy to sinners to repent before further judgment falls. MacArthur notes,

“Each of the seven trumpets unleashes a specific judgment of greater intensity than the first six seals, but not as destructive as the seven bowls (16:1-21). The first four trumpets destroy the earth's ecology (8:6-12), the next two produce demonic destruction of humanity (8:13; 9:1-11, 13-19), and the seventh trumpet introduces the final outpouring of God's wrath contained in the seven bowl judgments.”

Another angel now appears on the scene in v3 at the altar. The word “another” is *allos* which means “another of the same kind.” So this angel is not the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a similar angel to the other 7. He stands at an altar of incense with a golden censer. In the Old Testament temple the priest would twice a day take fiery coals from the brazen altar and place them in the incense altar in the Holy Place. This ignited the incense there and a sweet savour arose as the incense burned upwards. This was a symbol of the prayers of the saints ascending to heaven.

These prayers of the saints we know included a cry for Christ to return, establish His kingdom, save Israel, and judge the wicked, “*And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*” (Rev. 6:10) These prayers that have been offered down the centuries are noted, recorded, and now about to be answered in a most wonderful way. It is notable that it explicitly states here in the text, “*with the prayers of all saints.*” God doesn't discriminate as to *whose* prayers He notes and answers within His people. It is not simply those with the loudest voices, best grammar or most eloquent theological phrases. Alan Carr rightly notes,

“There are no Ph. D's in prayer. There are no experts in prayer. We may struggle in the arena of prayer, but if we are saved, we have power with God in prayer.”

This thought should be the greatest encouragement to us all to pray privately and corporately.

And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. (v5)

The silence in heaven is shattered by what happened next. Instead of silence we have “*voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake.*” We must note the direct correlation of cause and effect here between the prayers of God’s saints and the answer to those prayer. All are noted and answered by God directly. It may not have been according to the timescale of those who prayed or even in the manner that they prayed for as the timing and the method is God’s sovereign prerogative. But the critical point is that these prayers were answered. In some cases thousands of years later. But not one prayer was wasted or lost! There is power in prayer. John Phillips says,

“What a potent force is prayer! The saints go into their bedrooms, close the doors, kneel down and pray. They spread out before God their petitions and God hears. The prayers are placed in the scales of judgment. In some mysterious way not explained to us, prayer changes things. This is true in every age...”

And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. (v6-7)

The first angel now blows his trumpet. This unleashed catastrophic judgments on the ecology of the earth, “*and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.*” We can imagine this will have a devastating effect on the world’s trade, food supply, and exacerbate the terrible effects of the famine during the first half of the Tribulation Period. This is real global warming! It will be a time of immense geological, ecological and economic disaster. John MacArthur notes,

“The effects of such catastrophic fires would be widespread and devastating, including destruction of crops, death of animals on a massive scale, loss of wood for construction, and the destruction of watersheds. That is a fitting judgment for those who “exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). Fallen mankind has failed to recognize and honor God as Creator, choosing instead to make a god out of the earth. But the environmental, evolutionary pantheism that devalues man, elevates animals and plants, and ignores the Creator will be severely judged. “Earth Day” that year will be a gloomy and dismal affair; in a scorched and ravaged world there will be little of the environment left to celebrate.”

And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. (v8-9)

The second angel sounded his trumpet soon after. This unleashed further pain on the earth but this time the prime target is the sea and oceans, “*and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood.*” The picture of the sea turning into blood is reminiscent of the judgment on the Nile that God brought on the Egyptians in Exodus 7:17-19. Mankind is getting a clear message. They rejected the blood of Christ and now their blood will be spilt. This object lesson of the blood is a final window of grace for many of them to seek the cleansing of Christ’s blood. Over 80-90% of the world’s trade is carried by sea today. Much of our food and oxygen supply comes from the sea also. Doubtless, this catastrophic judgment would have a tremendous impact directly and indirectly on global trade and we can imagine

further panic and deprivation will ensue. It would disrupt the trade of basic food supplies as well as limit the powers of the Antichrist to control his Empire through sea vessels.

And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

(v10-11)

The 3rd angel now issues another trumpet blast, which is directed at the water supplies of the world. The second trumpet judgment undermined global trade and security, but this third judgment will attack one of the basic necessities of life – drinking water. We are told one third of the freshwater springs, rivers, streams etc. are contaminated and rendered poisonous. This is caused by a burning star or comet called “*Wormwood*.” The wormwood is a bitter herb that grows in desert places. Mankind cannot survive long without fresh supplies of water. As a direct consequence of this pollution of so much of the world’s drinking waters much death occurs among humanity, “*and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.*” The bitterness of spirit towards God gives way to bitterness of physical taste.

God has now destroyed one-third of the trees on the earth and all the grass (v7); one-third of the sea has been turned into blood (v8), and one-third of the fishes in the sea have been killed and one-third of the ships destroyed (v9). This is a powerful message. Now God turns His attention to the heavenlies above to send a message from there.

And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound! (v12-13)

A 4th trumpet now sounded from a 4th angel. Instead of the water and vegetation, this time the skies are struck. The sun, moon, and stars are reduced in power by one third. This reduction in light will bring a sense of foreboding on the earth as seasons, plant life, and weather patterns are wildly unpredictable. Temperatures will plunge around the world. A real ice age will be birthed. The loss of daylight will inevitably interrupt sleep patterns and there will be emotional and physical breakdowns amongst humanity. The world is literally falling apart.

We can imagine that the forces of law and order will inevitably breakdown in the global catastrophe. The scarcity of food and drinking water will result in rioting, looting, and bloodshed over the planet as mankind fights for survival in the midst of such unprecedented chaos. People will cry to governments, corporations, the UN, and even the Antichrist to help. But all will be rendered impotent in the face of such power. Alan Carr makes a useful observation of the message that the Creator is sending to His rebellious creatures,

“Since the beginning of time, man has taken God for granted. Man has ignored Him, blasphemed Him and lived as though He did not exist. Man has also taken God’s creation for granted. There have always been plenty of trees and green grass. There has always been plenty of oxygen to breath. The sea has always been there and it has always yielded its bounty to man as he has traveled and fished its waters. There has always been plenty of fresh water to drink. Just go to the faucet or the water fountain and turn it on.

The sun, moon and stars have always been in their places and they have always given their light. During the tribulation God will take away what man has always taken for granted. Man will be judged for his refusal to bow before God and to acknowledge His Lordship.”

The flying angel warned that things would get much worse before they will get better. Things will only get darker. This is only the beginning of the end and worse judgment lies ahead, “*And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!*” The fact that God sends this angel with the loud voice to deliver this ominous message is another window of grace for sinners to repent.

The judgments unleashed by the first 4 trumpet blasts are truly shocking. Some may even be tempted to doubt they are literally true. The flying angels words are equally applicable to any skeptical heart, “*Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth.*” None of these judgments is without significance. They all convey a message to the world and to us. These messages will continue to be sent until we all stand before the throne of God and all will bow the knee. We either do that here or we will be forced to do it over there.