

The Seventh Seal and the First Four Trumpets

Revelation 8:1-13

Indeed, even as we have just sung, the Lord will one day be magnified. He will be sovereign over all things in such a way that everyone will know it, even though he is sovereign over all things now. And we read more of this and understand more of this in the book of Revelation.

So will you take your Bibles and turn to Revelation chapter eight. And let me read this text for you as we continue our verse by verse study of this marvelous prophecy that describes the consummation of all things and the ultimate glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation chapter eight beginning with verse one.

And when He 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. And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.

And the first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

And the second angel sounded, and 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, which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

And the third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.

And the fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were smitten, so that a third of them might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.

And I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe, to those who dwell on the earth, because of the

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remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"¹

Here we begin to witness the birth pains of divine wrath begin to increase in frequency and in severity. Our holy and sovereign God is now setting into motion the final judgments that will ultimately destroy most of the population of the world and will finally restore the nation of Israel to their Messiah along with millions of Gentiles from every nation and all the tribes and peoples and tongues of the earth. The terrorizing reign of the antichrist will soon be over and the King of kings will soon establish his glorious throne in Jerusalem for 1000 year reign prior to the eternal state.

Before we examine the text more closely I would ask you to think about the issue of sin for a few minutes. Ever since sin entered the world in the garden, we have seen its metastasizing corruption increase exponentially. Despite all of the accomplishments of science and all of the accomplishments of industry, man's wickedness increases unabated.

As we look around the world today there is no corner of man's existence that is not corrupted by sin and by the suffering that it brings. From government to education, from literature to the arts, evil dominates the world's system. It is hard to fathom that 46 million infants are aborted every year. That is 126,000 every day. In fact, 4000 per day in the United States alone. Who would have believed that 30 years ago we would be living in a society that is legitimizing homosexuality and in some states legalizing same sex marriage and allowing them to adopt children? It is inconceivable. And to think now—this is frightening—that if your conscience and your convictions disagrees with that (that political correctness that now the state is basically legalizing) then you must go to "sensitivity training" in order to conform to the state.

Who would have believed back in the days of Ronald Reagan that the unbiblical ideologies of Marxism, Socialism would now dominate our government in 2009? Who would believe that there would be such a blatant violation of the Word of God that basically says if a man doesn't work he doesn't eat? But today we say if a man doesn't work we will feed you. And therefore we have bred a whole generation of people with their hands out. Margaret Thatcher said it well and I quote, "The problem with socialism is that eventually you run out of other people's money." And what is even more amazing is that the majority of Americans don't see this.

In the state of California, Marxist liberals have had their way redistributing wealth and massive government spending, and today they are financially insolvent and morally bankrupt—a harbinger of what lies ahead for our entire nation given the leftist ideologies that now control our federal government. I might remind you that dependence on a state controlled government will lead inevitably to a global government. And, of course, this is precisely what the prophecies predict will happen under the totalitarian rule of the antichrist.

¹ Revelation 8:1-13.

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Who would have thought that ostensibly Christian churches would exchange the narrow gate that leads to life for the seeker sensitive wide gate that leads to destruction? In a recent Barna survey they tried to determine how many people in the United States had a biblical world view defined as: believing that absolute moral truth exists, that the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches, that Satan is considered to be a real being or force, not merely symbolic, that a person cannot earn their way into heaven by trying to be good or do good works and that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth and that God is the all knowing, all powerful Creator of the world who still rules the universe today.

They were trying to determine how many people held that world view which is just a basic biblical world view. Well, as might be expected, only 9% of Americans believe that. But tragically, only 19% of so called “born again” Christians believe that. Of course, this tells you that those people are not truly born again.

The cancer of sin is also eating away at our physical bodies. The AIDS epidemic continues to wreak havoc around the world today. According to the CDC the overall incidences of sexually transmitted diseases in the United States has increased drastically over the last few years. They estimate that 19 million new infections occur each year and almost half of them among young people ages 15 to 24.

The apostle Paul described the progression of sin in Romans chapter one and made it clear that eventually God abandons men over to the consequences of their iniquity. In verse 28 we read that he “gives them over to a depraved mind to do those things which are not proper.” And in chapter two beginning in verse five he says:

Because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who WILL RENDER TO EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil.²

And as we examine our text here this morning we see a sample of divine wrath that will one day—and we believe one day soon—come upon the earth in the final days of redemptive history. A sample of the eternal wrath that now awaits every unregenerate soul, those who refuse to bow in repentant faith before a holy and merciful God who forgives. Those who refuse to confess the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, the only hope of salvation.

I have divided these 13 verses of Revelation eight into four sections that I hope will help us grasp the truths that the Spirit of God has gone to such great lengths to reveal to us.

² Romans 2:5-9.

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First, we will see a *hush of awe*, a solemn silence among the host of heaven in anticipation of the next series of judgments revealed at the opening of the seventh seal. Then, secondly, *an angelic preparation* as the angels ready themselves to do the bidding of Jehovah in response to the prayers of the saints. And then, thirdly, *the signal of avenging wrath* as the first volley of destruction is fired striking the earth and signaling the attack of seven trumpets. Then, finally, the *first four trumpet judgments*.

As we examine these truths, I hope that you will bear in mind the promise that the Lord gives us at the beginning of the apocalypse. In chapter one and verse three you will recall he says that there is a blessing for all “who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”³ Now, some might say, “Well, how can I possibly heed this? I don’t even understand it.”

Well, if you don’t understand it, then you need to sit at the feet of someone who does. And you need to study and you need to learn because the Lord has not written it in some kind of a fashion that would leave us basically unable to understand this. But what we need to do is understand that the Lord is clear in the sense that *he is going to reveal those things that he wants us to understand* and to know and you have to interpret the book of Revelation with the rest of the Bible. Certainly, there are some things in it that we just simply don’t fully understand. But for the most part we do understand what he is saying.

Then, based on that, we heed it by praising God for his sovereign rule over all things, that he is the mighty sovereign over all of history and that he has revealed to us how it is all going to end. And it ends in triumph, not in defeat. We must heed it by recognizing that the book of Revelation is a book of celebration. In the gospels we see the Lord in his humiliation and then in the Revelation we see him in his glorification. We also heed it by increasing our zeal for evangelism. Knowing that these things are going to come upon the earth, we persuade men to examine the gospel of Christ. And then, finally, we heed it by committing ourselves afresh to the lordship of Christ knowing that our king is coming. In fact, in 1 John chapter three verse two we read, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.”⁴ And, beloved, if we were not like him, if we’re not glorified, we would not even be able to look upon his glory. And certainly the book of Revelation helps us understand these thrilling truths. Then he goes on to say, “And whoever has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”⁵

So as Jesus said in Luke 12 verse 35, we need to, “Be dressed in readiness, and keep [our] lamps [lit].”⁶ He said, “Be like men who are waiting for their master.”⁷ And in verse 40 he said, “Be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”⁸

³ Revelation 1:3.

⁴ 1 John 3:2.

⁵ 1 John 3:3.

⁶ Luke 12:35.

⁷ Luke 12:36.

⁸ Luke 12:40.

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So, first of all, we want to examine *a hush of awe* that begins in verse one and there we read, “And when He broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”⁹ The seventh seal contains the totality of the ensuing trumpet and bowl judgments that will sequentially erupt like the sequential explosions of a roman candle. We are all familiar with those on the Fourth of July.

As catastrophic as the previous seal judgments have been, they will pale in comparison to the inconceivable horrors of the trumpet and bowl judgments. As the heavenly hosts of heaven gaze upon the shocking realities that are about to occur they are utterly silent in shock and in suspense, a hush of awe that lasts, the text says, about an half an hour.

Many times as I spend hours in the vault of study exegeting and meditating upon these great truths, I often find myself in silence just lost in the wonder of the glory of God, to think that some day he is going to rise from his throne in unimaginable righteous indignation reminiscent of the words of the prophet Zephaniah in chapter one verse seven that we read earlier where the prophet says, “Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near.”¹⁰

And in verse 14:

Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness.¹¹

And the prophet Zechariah tells us in chapter two and verse 13 to “Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD; for He is aroused from His holy habitation.”¹²

Next, after this solemn silence among the host of heaven and in anticipation of the next series of judgments, John witnesses, number two, *an angelic preparation*. Notice in verse two, “And I saw the seven angels who stand before God; and seven trumpets were given to them.”¹³

The Greek grammar indicates to us that these angels had been standing in the presence of God for an undisclosed period of time like the angel Gabriel who identified himself to Zacharias in Luke chapter one verse 19 as, “Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God.”¹⁴ Notice they are each given a trumpet. The trumpet is that magnificent instrument throughout the history of Israel that was used to call people, to call the people of God to

⁹ Revelation 13:1.

¹⁰ Zephaniah 1:7.

¹¹ Zephaniah 1:14-15.

¹² Zechariah 2:13.

¹³ Revelation 8:2.

¹⁴ Luke 1:19.

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worship and to announce the arrival of a king or to call them to war and even to signal the charge into battle, all of which bears some measure of parallel here in this scene.

Again, back to Zephaniah chapter one and verse 16. The prophet described the arrival of the day of the Lord as, “A day of trumpet and battle cry.”¹⁵

And then beginning verse 17 he says:

And I will bring distress on men, So that they will walk like the blind,
Because they have sinned against the LORD; And their blood will be
poured out like dust, And their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor
their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the LORD’S wrath;
And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will
make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the
earth.¹⁶

And as the angels stand ready to execute the command, John is shown another fascinating scene in verse three. “And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.”¹⁷

Where we read, “And another angel...” we understand the Greek word is *allos* (al’-los) which means “another of the same kind.” So this is another angel like the angel that we saw in verse two. The imagery here is rooted in the Old Testament tabernacle and the temple of Israel. The altar of incense stood nearest to the holy of holies in which the Shekinah, that glorious light of God’s presence would hover and was housed. Now in the celestial court in heaven, as we read here, it is likewise situated nearest to the presence of God, the text tells us, before the throne. This was also the altar in Isaiah’s vision in Isaiah six as well as Ezekiel’s vision in Ezekiel 10.

We also read here of a “golden censer.” This was literally a “fire pan” in the Old Testament. And here we see that it is held by an angel. And this finds its parallel, as well, in the duties of the Old Testament priests where every morning and every evening he would place red hot fiery coals from the brazen altar, which was that altar where sacrifices were offered, and he would place these coals in this golden censer. And then he would transfer the coals to the altar of incense where he would pour the coals on to the altar. Then the smoke from the ignited incense would rise heavenward symbolizing the prayers of the Israelites who would, during this time be assembled together in prayer watching that fragrant cloud of smoke ascend, symbolically carrying their prayers unto God.

Now notice here in verse three we see that “much incense was given to him.” No doubt it was given to him by God since this verb in the Greek form frequently refers to something

¹⁵ Zephaniah 1:16.

¹⁶ Zephaniah 1:17-18.

¹⁷ Revelation 8:3.

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given by God in the book of Revelation. So “much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints.”¹⁸ Now this would signify God’s affirmation of the prayers of vengeance and justice being offered by these martyred saints that we read about first in chapter six verses nine through 11.

Now, dear Christian, please hear me. There is a great lesson to be learned here. All of the prayers for God to avenge himself, for his justice to prevail, for his justice to be executed, will one day be answered, *but only in God’s timing*. When all of his purposes are accomplished he will act for his glory. And here we witness that time when he finally acts in vengeance in answer to the prayers of the martyred saints, prayers which he himself adds additional incense of acceptance and, therefore, the guarantee to execute judgment.

Notice, next in verse four, “And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel’s hand.”¹⁹ You will remember in chapter six and verse 10 the martyred saints cried out to the Lord, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”²⁰ Well, friends, here we see their prayers are about to be answered.

And this moves us, thirdly, to *the signal of avenging wrath*, as the 30 minute calm before the storm is violently interrupted we read in verse five:

And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.²¹

This is a breathtaking scene. Suddenly, in response to the divine command, in a miraculous act of supernatural fury, the angel takes the censer that symbolizes the prayers of the saints. He fills it with fire from the altar and, thus, transforms those prayers into a fire storm of divine wrath and hurls it to the earth. What a vivid picture of answered prayer. The supersonic force of this act results in, quote, “peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.”²²

Now, think about it. The persecutors of the tribulation saints have, by now, crawled out from their caves and their fortresses thinking that, perhaps, the worst of it all is over, that the wrath of the lamb has finally been exhausted. And then suddenly they discover that more is to come. And, frankly, only those who have studied the prophetic word will have any idea of the destruction that awaits them.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Revelation 8:4.

²⁰ Revelation 6:10.

²¹ Revelation 8:5-6.

²² Revelation 8:5.

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Now this particular event will signal the sequential judgments released at the sounding of the seven trumpets followed by the pouring of the seven bowls, all of which telescope from the seventh seal judgment. These first four judgments will release plagues that will target the natural objects of the earth's ecosystems. Unlike the last three plagues that will unleash a demonic onslaught that will target human beings specifically.

Now I want you to remember that God is not only judging those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ among the Gentile nations, but also the Jews. Remember that he has preserved 144,000, 12,000 from each of the tribes of Israel as his evangelists and they are being used to reconcile a remnant of the nation of Israel, ethnic Jews, the descendants of Abraham. And I want you to remember, again, that this is Daniel's 70th week, this time of tribulation, this seven year period. These are pre-kingdom judgments for Israel's long awaited kingdom. The Church is no longer in the picture.

Daniel nine verse 24 says, "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place."²³ And it is for this reason the pre-kingdom judgments that unfold here are reminiscent of the first time God established a mediatorial kingdom upon the earth in the wilderness of Sinai with Moses, the divinely authorized mediatorial ruler of the historical kingdom and the children of Israel as the chosen nation. In Exodus 19:6 we read that God chose Moses and he said to Moses that they were to "be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."²⁴

I want to remind you of something that is very important here. Prior to the establishment of the theocratic kingdom, God poured out his wrath upon the Gentiles of Egypt and the surrounding nations. And he did this in the form of 10 plagues and the Red Sea judgment that destroyed Pharaoh's army. And those miraculous events proved to the Egyptians and the world, the absolute sovereignty of Jehovah over all of the alleged gods. It also proved that Jehovah favored Israel over all nations and that Moses was the divinely appointed mediator of Jehovah God.

And, of course, all of this pointed to the greater ruler of Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ who would finally and permanently establish his earthly kingdom pictured in the historical kingdom of ancient Israel. It is little wonder, therefore, that the six trumpet judgments that we find in Revelation find their parallel in the plagues of Pharaoh. In fact, the Old Testament prophets understood that the plagues against Egypt were to be repeated during the day of the Lord.

For example, Micah tells us in chapter seven and verse 15, "As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt, I will show you miracles."²⁵ Beloved, even as the arrogant Pharaoh and his armies were destroyed so, too, will the antichrist and his armies be judged at Armageddon, and, once again, Jehovah will deliver Israel. Even as Israel

²³ Daniel 9:24.

²⁴ Exodus 19:6.

²⁵ Micah 7:15.

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believed the Lord and his servant Moses after their supernatural deliverance according to Exodus 14:31 and the fear of God spread to all of the surrounding Gentile nations, likewise Israel will, once again, worship their deliverer and the nations of the earth will tremble again as they did 3,500 years ago.

So the fireball and the subsequent earthquake serve as *the signal of avenging wrath*. And in verse six we read, “And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.”²⁶ So here we come, finally, to the first four trumpets, judgments upon the earth’s ecosystem.

The first trumpet destroys one third of the earth’s vegetation, verse seven. “And the first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.”²⁷ You may ask, “If all the green grass is burned up, then why does grass still exist later on in the fifth trumpet?” The answer is really two fold. First of all, it grows back before the fifth trumpet. But, secondly, grass is seasonal and much of the grass lands will be dormant when this first trumpet occurs and, thus, protected, but will become vulnerable, later on, by the fifth. So there is no contradiction.

Notice he describes this as “hail and fire mixed with blood” that his thrown to the earth. “Hail and fire” were often used historically by God to rain upon the wicked in divine judgment. We see that throughout Scripture. This combined with the previous fire brand and earthquake would, once again, trigger massive volcanic eruptions around the globe, spewing out enormous amounts of ash and lava and gases into the atmosphere, giving the appearance of blood. While we cannot fathom completely all that is going on here, certainly we can’t understand it completely, whatever this is, we know it will be catastrophic. Imagine the fires on the earth’s surface. Imagine the loss of oxygen. Imagine the globe being enveloped with smoke, the loss of pasture lands, the loss of livestock, the result now of the fire would cause millions and millions of animals to die. Think of the instant destruction of crops and forests and the wood products that they produce, not to mention the plant medicines. I understand that 25% of western pharmaceuticals are derived just from the rain forest and the ingredients they find in those forests. So the death toll here on human beings will be enormous. That is the first trumpet.

Second, the second trumpet judgments destroy one third of the sea, verse eight:

And the second angel sounded, and 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, which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.²⁸

²⁶ Revelation 8:6.

²⁷ Revelation 8:7.

²⁸ Revelation 8:8-9.

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Perhaps this is a great asteroid or meteorite. I can only imagine the look on the faces of the Christ-mocking news media reporting what they see approaching the earth. Those who have during this time of tribulation been joyfully reporting the systematic extermination of Christians because of the Word of God and because of the testimony which they had maintained, according to, chapter six, verse nine.

And keep in mind, while on the one hand the antichrist will demand the world to worship him during this period of time, on the other, the whole world understands that this is, according to chapter six verse 16, the wrath of the Lamb, “For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”²⁹ And yet most will refuse to submit.

To be sure, the force of this collision will result in enormous tsunamis. We read here that it is going to destroy a third of the world’s sea vessels. It will destroy a third of marine life causing a third of the sea to become like blood and, perhaps, God will transform some of the water into blood like he did in the waters of the Nile in Exodus chapter seven. But, again, the devastation of life on the planet will be beyond description.

The third trumpet judgment destroys one third of the world’s fresh water, verse 10.

And the third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.³⁰

The word “star” in Greek is *aster* (as-tare’) and it can refer to any celestial body like the sun or the moon, but this is probably a reference to a meteor or a comet because we see the word “torch” here which translates the Greek term *lampas* (lam-pas’) which was used in the ancient days to describe meteors and comets. And then the added phrase, “burning like a torch”³¹ would seem to describe a comet or meteor entering the earth’s atmosphere with its tail of fire.

And, evidently, the debris field is so enormous as this object fragments in every direction, that it pollutes a third of the rivers and the springs. Again, catastrophic destruction on fresh water.

It is interesting to note that we see here in this particular judgment the reversal of the miracle of Marah in Exodus 15 where you will recall God miraculously used a tree to make the bitter waters sweet to sustain the covenant people in the wilderness. And notice the name of the star is called Wormwood, *apsinthos* (ap’-sin-thos) in Greek. It is used only here in the New Testament. This is a shrub like plant that produces a very bitter aromatic oil used to make absinthe, a highly valued liquor in the ancient days. It was one of those things that would “cure whatever ails you” and it is still available in some

²⁹ Revelation 6:17.

³⁰ Revelation 8:10-11.

³¹ Ibid.

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countries although it is so toxic that its manufacture is banned in many countries because it has been known to kill people. I checked, just out of curiosity, on the internet and I found that I could purchase a bottle for a mere \$135.

But the emphasis here in verse 11 is on the bitterness or the toxicity of the fresh water as a result of this meteor or asteroid. Now some scientists theorize, quote, “a chemical change in the earth’s atmosphere due to heat shock during entry and/or impact of a large asteroid or comet reacting oxygen and nitrogen in the atmosphere to produce nitric acid rain,” end quote. Maybe, we don’t know for sure. But regardless the scientific explanation, once again, the result will be catastrophic.

And while mentioned only once here in the New Testament, the term wormwood is mentioned eight times in the Old Testament and three times it is associated with poisoned water. And every time it is associated with bitterness, with poison and with death. In fact, in Jeremiah 9:15 God predicted judgment upon Israel for their rebellion and he said, “Behold, I will feed them, this people, with wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink.”³²

This third trumpet is a judgment that is reminiscent of the third plague that fell upon the Egyptians when God poisoned the fresh water. In Exodus seven and verse 20 we read that “all the water that was in the Nile was turned to blood.”³³ And even extra biblical literature verifies that. Now think about it. Without fresh water man cannot live. Therefore John tells us in the end of verse 11 that man men died from the waters because they were made bitter.

Then on the heels of this plague is the fourth trumpet judgment that darkens one third of the heavenly bodies, verse 12. “And the fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were smitten, so that a third of them might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.”³⁴ The phrase, “were smitten” is *eplege* (ep-leg’-ay)n Greek and it is a verb form of the noun *plege* (play-gay’) translated “plague.” So this is yet another plague. And this judgment also parallels the ninth Egyptian plague in Exodus 10 verses 21 and 22.

Jesus warned when he was here on earth in Luke chapter 21 verse 25, “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars.”³⁵ He meant what he said. The prophet Amos, likewise, in chapter eight verse nine said, “And it will come about in that day,” declares the Lord GOD, “That I shall make the sun go down at noon And make the earth dark in broad daylight.”³⁶ And the prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 13 verse nine:

Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning
anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners

³² Jeremiah 9:15.

³³ Exodus 7:20.

³⁴ Revelation 8:12.

³⁵ Luke 21:25.

³⁶ Amos 8:9.

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from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises, And the moon will not shed its light.³⁷

And also the prophet Joel tells us in chapter two verse 10, “The heavens tremble, The sun and the moon grow dark, And the stars lose their brightness.”³⁸ And in verse 31 he says, “The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.”³⁹ In light of the hundreds of prophecies that are simply a matter of historical record that they were fulfilled literally, only a fool would think that these will not also be so fulfilled.

Think about this. Here the reduction of light is not only a harbinger of worst plagues to come, but also another horror that falls upon the earth. The loss of light would severely alter the temperature of the earth, the very opposite of global warming. This will be global cooling. However, later in the fourth bowl in chapter 16 there will be global warming where God will dramatically increase temperature. But this will have a dramatic effect on the weather patterns of the earth. It would trigger wide scale storms and hurricanes and tornadoes and certainly disrupt the tides of the oceans.

And again, my friends, God meant what he said. Even though a lot of people ignore the prophecies and just allegorize them away, but God meant what he said when he spoke through his prophet Ezekiel in chapter when he said:

I will cover the heavens, and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, And the moon shall not give its light. All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you And will set darkness on your land.⁴⁰

Now, finally, notice the frightening warning that will be announced during this season of terror in verse 13. “And I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe.”⁴¹ In other words, “Cursed, cursed, cursed,” a triple curse to be enacted in the next three trumpet judgments. “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!”⁴²

But, dear friends, here we see yet another example of God’s mercy as he warns sinners that the worst is yet to come. Therefore here we see an indirect appeal, once again, to repent and to believe.

Now it is impossible to identify what this eagle is with any certainty, whether God will give voice to animate creation as he has done in the past we cannot say. But, frankly, this

³⁷ Isaiah 13:9-10.

³⁸ Joel 2:10.

³⁹ Joel 2:31.

⁴⁰ Ezekiel 32:7.

⁴¹ Revelation 8:13.

⁴² Ibid.

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is not the focus. The imagery here is that of a fierce bird of prey diving upon its prey, emblematic of the swift descent of the remaining plagues of divine vengeance that will fall upon the earth. And for the unbelieving remnant of Israel and many Gentiles who, by now, during this period of time have confessed Jesus as Savior and Lord, this birth of prey will be a reminder of the salvation that is rapidly approaching. But for those who worship the antichrist, for the idolatrous worshipers of astrology, for all of the worshipers of mother nature, for all of the worshipers of animals and trees in the earth's environment, this will be an ominous sign of greater terror yet to come.

It is amazing, isn't it, how God tears down all of the idols before he reveals himself. The terrors that are about to come will be that of a demonic invasion that is so fierce when it falls upon mankind that it literally begs language.

Dear friends, please hear me. Because God is holy, he will punish sin. A day of vengeance is coming. But God offers forgiveness for all who will repent. And in these days of pleasure, in these days where the world has so much to offer, we tend to get blinded to the fact that there is a holy God and a day of reckoning is coming. But please keep in mind that even though here we see him in his wrath, even in the time of his wrath he gives opportunity for mercy.

In fact, in Ezekiel 33 and verse 11 we read, “‘As I live!’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’”⁴³

Dear friends, God has been patient for many, many years. The gospel has gone forth to every corner of the earth and he remains patient to this day. But that patience will one day run out and the cup of his indignation will overflow. And then it will be too late. Most will never take the fork in the road that God so often gives us when he, through his providence, causes certain things to happen in our life that would cause us to realize, “oh, my, I am going in the wrong direction. I am worshipping myself. I am worshipping the things of the world.” I hope you will not ignore these times that God brings into your life.

Yet even here during the time of his wrath he gives opportunities for sinners to repent. And what is amazing is that most won't, but some will. In spite countless warnings, they will ignore God and continue to live unto themselves. As the Word of God says, “They prefer darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.”⁴⁴ And therefore one day they will pay the penalty for their sin.

I pray that this does not describe you.

Let's bow our heads together in prayer.

⁴³ Ezekiel 33:11.

⁴⁴ See John 3:19.

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Father, we are struck afresh as we study this text by the fact that you are a sovereign God, that you are a holy God. Lord, we are struck, again, with your goodness and with your greatness. Lord, even here we see your glory in your wrath and certainly your glory in your mercy, and I pray, Lord, that you will cause these truths to take root in our hearts and I pray that they will bear much fruit for our good and certainly for your glory. I ask all of this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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