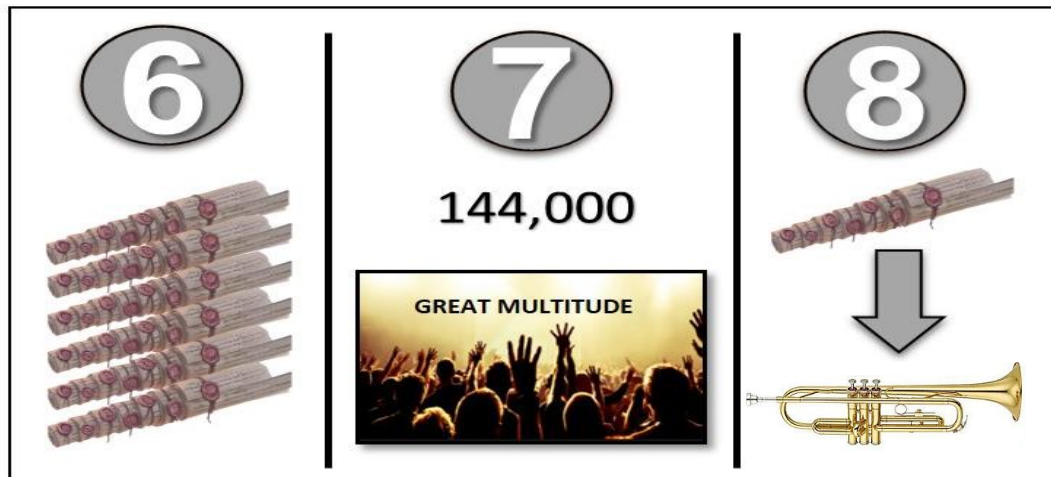


PART 6: THE TRIBULATION, CONT'D

REVELATION CHAPTERS 8-9

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I. MAIN IDEA

In Chapters 8 and 9 Jesus breaks the seventh seal, which after a period of silence in heaven, is followed by seven trumpet judgments. Trumpet judgments one through six are described in these two chapters. Even after colossal devastation those who survive will continue in their life of sin. They do not repent even though they have observed God's terrible judgment.

II. COMMENTS

The first six seal judgments were revealed in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven describes a hiatus in heaven where the 144,000 Christian Jews were sealed (given protection) and a great multitude of believers in heaven, who have come out of the great tribulation (martyrs), worshipping God for what he is doing. Chapter Eight begins with the opening of the seventh seal judgment with a 30-minute silence followed by the trumpet judgments.

The Seventh Seal (8:1-5): When Christ opened the seventh seal of the scroll, there was a silence in heaven which lasted for about 30 minutes. Though 30 minutes is not a long time, absolute silence for such a period was ominous and an indication of tremendous events to come.

After the 30 minutes of silence, trumpets were given to seven angels who were standing before God the Father. An eighth angel is also seen by John, holding a golden censer and standing in front of a golden altar which was located in front of God's

throne.

The eighth angel was given much incense to burn and offered it up before the altar, along with the prayers of all believers. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of believers, went up before God the Father.

This angel then filled the censer with live coals from the altar, and hurled it on the earth bringing “peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake” (8:5 NIV).

In the Old Testament a censer filled with live coals was used by the high priest during temple worship. Incense was poured on the coals, and the sweet-smelling smoke drifted upwards, symbolizing prayers ascending to God (Exodus 30:7-9).



The First Trumpet Judgment (8:6-7): The first three trumpet judgments are sometimes called the “judgment of thirds” as one-third of earthly objects are destroyed. When the first trumpet sounds, there came hail and fire mixed with blood.

- A third of the earth was burned up.
- A third of the trees were burned up.
- All grass was burned up. The word “grass” includes the idea of grain, such as wheat, rice, and oats.

The meaning of fire mixed with blood is not clear; however, these judgments can best be taken in their literal sense. The impact of this trumpet judgment is the destruction of a third of the earth’s vegetation resulting in famine, soil erosion, floods, and mudslides. The smoke from the fires will produce wide scale air pollution.



The Second Trumpet Judgment (8:8-9): When the second angel sounded his trumpet, something *like* a huge blazing mountain was thrown into the sea.

- A third of the sea turned into blood.
- A third of the living creatures in the sea died.
- A third of the ships were destroyed.

The literal explanation of a huge mountain being cast into the sea may be a reference to a large object, such as a meteor, or a falling star similar to those which fell during the sixth seal judgment. A more figurative interpretation may be that the mountain is a nuclear bomb capable of such mass destruction.



The Third Trumpet Judgment (8:10-11): When the third angel sounded his trumpet, a great star fell from the sky.

- A third of the rivers became contaminated.
- A third of the fresh water springs became contaminated.
- Many people died from drinking the contaminated water.

Wormwood is a plant species (Latin. *Artemisia judaica*, Heb. *la'ănâh*) related to our western sagebrush, and the source of an essential oil obtained from the dried leaves and tops of the plant. Absinthe, a liqueur, the continual use of which leads to mental deterioration and even death, derives its flavor from this oil (Lam. 3:15, 19). The plant is a symbol of bitterness.¹



The Fourth Trumpet Judgment (8:12-13): When the fourth angel sounded his trumpet series of conditions occurred resulting in the loss of light on the earth.

- The light from the sun was darkened by a third.
- The light from the moon was darkened by a third.
- The light from stars was darkened by a third.
- Both daytime light and night light was reduced by one-third creating an ominous world-wide visual condition of partial darkness.

In these judgments that relate to various parts of God's creation, it is significant that though God created them and they were good, now they are coming under divine judgment because of sin in the world.² The effects of these first three trumpet judgments will have a dramatic effect on the earth, yet the next three trumpet judgments will be even worse and are therefore preceded by an eagle flying in the air calling out in a loud voice "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth. Each of the three "Woes" represent the next three trumpet judgments.



The Fifth Trumpet Judgment (9:1-12): As the trumpets sound, each trumpet presents a disaster worse than the one before it.

- Star falls from heaven (9:1-6). When the fifth angel sounds his trumpet, a star falls to earth. The "star," which is most likely a reference to Satan, is given the keys to the Abyss (bottomless pit) where what appears as locusts are being held. These locusts are released and allowed to bring extreme pain to the unsaved for five months. The Abyss is a place that is best described as a place of detention for the wicked angels or demon world. Satan will spend 1,000 years here during the Millennial Period (Rev. 20:3).³

¹ Tenney, Merrill C. Gen. Editor. *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963, p. 669.

² Walvoord, p. 565.

³ Walvoord, p. 566.

- Locusts (9:7-11) – If the star that fell from the sky is Satan then it is very likely that the locusts represent fallen angels, or demons. There are two groups of demons, those who are free in the spirit realm seeking to indwell the bodies of people (Matt. 12:43-44), and those who are confined in “gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment” (II Peter 2:4). They were given the power to inflict incredible pain, similar to a scorpion’s sting. They were told not to harm any of the grasses, plants, or trees. They could not harm anyone who had the seal of God on their forehead. This is referring to the 144,000 who were previously sealed (Rev. 7:3-4). It is very likely that it would also include anyone else who accepts Christ as Savior during the Tribulation Period. The locusts had a king over them whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon, both meaning “destroyer” (vv. 7-11). This judgment represents the first “Woe” given in Rev. 8:13.



The Sixth Trumpet (9:13-21): When the sixth angel sounded his trumpet, four angels were released from the Euphrates River making possible a chain of events including the killing of a third of the earth’s remaining population. The River Euphrates is the eastern border of Israel’s Promised Land (Genesis 15:18-20).

- The four angels (9:13-19) mentioned here must refer to powerful demons or fallen angels, as holy angels are never bound. They have been kept for this very hour, day, month, and year. The time of their release is precise. They kill a third of mankind. Only half of the world’s population now remains as a result of this judgment and the fourth seal judgment (Rev. 6:8). John heard the number of the mounted troops (200 million) because obviously he could not count them. As in other cases of numbers in the Book of Revelation, the numbers should be taken literally even though the literal number sometimes has a spiritual meaning as well.⁴ The description of the horses does not resemble what is true of a horse, and some have suggested that they represent a form of modern warfare such as tanks which could be the source of fire power, smoke and sulfur. There is no explanation of the horses apart from what is given here.
- The rest of mankind (9:20-21). Those who survive such devastation will continue in their life of sin. They do not repent even though they have observed God’s terrible judgment. They continue to worship demons. They continue to worship idols as their religion, even though it did not redeem them or change them. They murder and feel no repentance. They continue to practice magic arts. They continue in sexual immorality. They continue to steal.

⁴ Walvoord, p. 568.

