

Session 8. The First Four Trumpet Judgments (Rev. 8:7-13)

I. THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS: JUDGMENT ON NATURAL RESOURCES

The first angel sounded: hail and fire followed ... they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.⁸ The second angel sounded: something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood ...¹⁰ The third angel sounded: a great star fell from heaven ... on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water ...¹¹ a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.¹² The fourth angel sounded: a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. (Rev. 8:7-12)

- A. The first four trumpet judgments will destroy the resources of the people in the Antichrist's reprobate empire (Rev. 8:6-12). The fifth and sixth trumpets will affect their bodies as God releases demons to torment and kill, intensifying His judgment.
- B. Each of the first four trumpet judgments will affect a different area of the environment (trees, grass, sea, rivers, and sky), food supply (vegetation, meat, and fish), as well as sea trade, water supply, and light and heat (sun, moon, and stars). Their purpose is to punish, not kill. The first four trumpets are supernatural acts of God in nature. They are not merely natural acts portrayed in symbolic language. The seals and trumpets have a similar 4 + 2 + 1 organization.
- C. The trumpet judgments are released in answer to the prayers of the saints against those who persecuted them (Rev. 6:10). God's judgments are not released on the saints, but by the saints (Rev. 5:8; 6:10; 8:3-5; 9:13; 14:18; 16:7; 19:2; 22:17). The prayers of all the saints are both accumulated from history as well as from the generation in which the Lord returns.

He should offer it [incense] with the prayers of all the saints ...⁴ The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.⁵ Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. (Rev. 8:3-5)

- D. As Moses released plagues through prayer, so the end-time judgments will be released by prayer.
Let the high praises of God be in their mouth ...⁷ To execute vengeance on the nations ...⁹ To execute on them the written judgment--this honor have all His saints. (Ps. 149:6-9)
- E. The limitation of the trumpet judgments to a one-third, or partial, judgment gives the opportunity for repentance before the judgments are intensified in the bowls (doubling the trumpets). The limitation of one-third is used 14 times in Revelation 8-9, as in the OT (Ezek. 5:2, 12).

II. PROMINENT END-TIME SIGNS: BLOOD, FIRE, AND SMOKE

- A. The first three trumpets involve fire, blood, and smoke as Joel prophesied.

I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke ...³¹ Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. (Joel 2:30-31)

- B. The two witnesses will participate in the trumpet judgments involving blood, fire, and smoke.
Fire proceeds from their mouth ...⁶ They have power ... to turn [waters] to blood (Rev. 11:5-6)
- C. Since the ten plagues of Egypt (Ex. 7-12) foreshadow the trumpets and bowls, it is not surprising that they also show forth the signs of blood, fire and smoke. They parallel the Egyptian plagues in exposing the inferiority of false gods. Jesus will also display the Antichrist's power as inferior.

III. FIRST TRUMPET (*FOOD SUPPLY*): BURNING 1/3 OF THE EARTH'S VEGETATION

The first angel sounded: hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. A third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up. (Rev. 8:7)

- A. This judgment destroys the food supply in burning one-third of the earth's vegetation (Rev. 8:7). A supernatural, meteor storm-like event with hail and fire will burn one-third of the earth's trees and all green grass. The combination of fire balls with ice balls (hail) mingled with blood will be thrown by angels to the earth and will cause the greatest agricultural crisis up to that time.
- B. ***Hailstones:*** God will use hail in the end times (Isa. 28:2, 17; Rev. 11:19; 16:21). God released hail stones on the Amorite army (Canaanites) to help Joshua in battle (Josh. 10:11). God reserves storehouses of hail to judge His enemies (Job 38:22-23; Ps. 78:47; 105:32-33; 148:8).
- C. ***Fire:*** God will cast fire to the earth (lightning?) like He did on Sodom (Gen. 19). Fires will break out in large forests (Amazon, Congo, Yellowstone, etc.) releasing vast amounts of smoke.
- D. ***Burning trees and grass:*** this will undoubtedly destroy the wheat, corn, and barley used to feed cattle, causing more famine (Rev. 6:6). This will disrupt the Antichrist's kingdom. Armies may use military force to confiscate the food and water resources of neighboring countries.
1. A worldwide drought will last for 3½ years (Rev. 11:6), making green grass rare. Add to this the fact that most of the world's grass is not green at the same time of the year.
They will prophesy 1,260 days ...⁶ These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy. (Rev. 11:3-6)
 2. The prohibition not to hurt the green grass in the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:4) points to the fact that the grass will have time to grow back after the first trumpet some months earlier.
- E. We gain much insight into the first trumpet by seeing how it parallels the hailstones in the seventh bowl (Rev. 16:21), fire mingled with blood in the seventh plague (Ex. 9:13-35), and locusts that destroyed the grass in the eighth plague (Ex. 10:12-20).
Great hail from heaven fell on men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. (Rev. 16:21)

- F. The hail in the seventh plague of Egypt (Ex. 9:13-35) was released by the prayer of Moses. It destroyed trees, herbs, and wheat, yet Israel was protected from this judgment.

Moses stretched out his rod ... the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground ... ²⁴ So there was ... fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it ... ²⁵ The hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field. ²⁶ Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail. (Ex. 9:23-26)

He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. ³³ He struck their vines also, and their fig trees, and splintered the trees of their territory. (Ps. 105:32-33)

He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. (Ps. 78:47)

- G. God will send the same combination of hail and fire to destroy Gog and Magog in the end times.

I will bring him to judgment ... I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. (Ezek. 38:22)

- H. God will send the combination of hail and fire in the end times causing all people to praise Him.

Fire and hail, snow and clouds; stormy wind, fulfilling His word ... ¹¹ Kings of the earth and all peoples; princes and all judges of the earth ... ¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD, for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven. (Ps. 148:8-13)

The Lord from heaven ... and uttered His voice, hailstones and coals of fire. (Ps. 18:13)

IV. SECOND TRUMPET (FOOD SUPPLY AND SEA TRADE): DESTROYING 1/3 OF THE SEAS

⁸ *Then the second angel sounded: something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. ⁹ A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. (Rev. 8:8-9)*

- A. The second trumpet will destroy the food supply and sea trade. A burning object like a mountain will fall from heaven, turning one-third of the sea into blood destroying sea life and ships.

- B. **Great mountain**: something as large as a mountain burning with fire will be thrown into the sea. This is not a mountain, but something like one. It may involve a vast meteorite set aflame. Jesus spoke about the prayer of faith throwing a “mountain” into the sea (Mk. 11:23).

Whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and ... believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says. (Mk. 11:23)

- C. **The sea turns to blood**: God will judge the shedding of the blood of the righteous with blood (Joel 2:30; Rev. 16:3-6; 6:12; Isa. 9:5; Ezek. 21:32; 38:22). He will first cause the moon to look like blood (sixth seal), then He pours blood on the reprobate (first trumpet), then turns the sea into blood (second trumpet), then shed their blood (sixth trumpet), then gives them blood to drink by turning rivers to blood (third bowl), and finally causes blood to flow three feet deep (seventh bowl; Rev. 14:20). The first and last plagues of Egypt were about blood.

- D. ***Sea life destroyed:*** both the sea life and ships will be destroyed causing a great disruption of the Antichrist's commerce and naval military power (Rev. 18:18; Isa. 2:12-16).
- E. The second trumpet judgment is intensified by the second bowl judgment (Rev. 16:3).
The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died. (Rev. 16:3)
- F. Which sea is this? Do all the seas turn to blood? Some understand "the sea" in being intentionally in the singular—as referring to one specific sea (Mediterranean Sea?). The second bowl intensifies this judgment causing "the whole sea" to turn to blood. However, the seas of the earth will still be functioning at the time of the seventh bowl (Rev. 18:17-19). Thus, some conclude that "the sea" in the second trumpet and bowl is one sea, not all the seas.
- G. The second and third trumpets correspond to the first plague in which the waters of Egypt became as blood, causing the fish to die (Ex. 7:14-25; Ps. 105:29; 78:43-44).

V. **THIRD TRUMPET (WATER SUPPLY): POISONING 1/3 OF THE EARTH'S FRESH WATER**

Third angel sounded: A great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch ... fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.¹¹ The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood ... many men died from the water, because it was made bitter. (Rev. 8:10-11)

- A. The third trumpet will poison one-third of the earth's fresh water supply (Rev. 8:10-11). A great burning star will fall from heaven. This meteoric mass blazing through the atmosphere will poison the fresh water (rivers and springs), causing the inland fresh water supply to be contaminated and intensifying the worldwide famine (Rev. 6:5-6).
- B. The rivers and fountains are poisoned, yet with a one-third limitation causing many to die. In the third bowl the rivers become blood (Rev. 16:4). Divine providence becomes divine punishment.
Poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. (Rev. 16:4)
- C. ***Wormwood:*** the star is named for the effect it has in polluting the fresh water. Wormwood in the OT is a symbol for divine punishment (Jer. 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:15, 19). It is an herb with a bitter taste that can poison water (Deut. 29:17-18; Prov. 5:4; Lam. 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7; 6:12; Hos. 10:4). God promised to give Israel wormwood, or poisoned water (Jer. 8:14; 9:13-15; 23:15), because Israel's leaders were spiritually polluting Israel with idol worship.
- D. At Marah, the reverse of the third bowl happened as bitter water miraculously became fresh (Ex. 15:23-27). This is where God revealed Himself as Jehovah Rapha, "The LORD who heals" (His healing covenant Name). Elisha prayed for bitter waters to be healed (2 Kgs. 2:19-21; 4:40-43).

- E. The second and third trumpets correspond to the first plague, in which the waters of Egypt were polluted, causing the fish to die and the land to be polluted (Ex. 7:14-25; Ps. 105:29; 78:43-44).
- Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their streams, over their rivers, over their ponds, and over all their pools of water, that they may become blood. And there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in buckets of wood and pitchers of stone.'" ²⁰ So he [Aaron] lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were in the [Nile] river, in the sight of Pharaoh and ... his servants. All the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. ²¹ The fish that were in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river ... ²⁵ Seven days passed after the LORD had struck the river. (Ex. 7:19-25)*

VI. FOURTH TRUMPET (LIGHT, ENERGY): DARKENING 1/3 OF THE LIGHT

Fourth angel sounded: A third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine ... likewise the night. (Rev. 8:12)

- A. The fourth trumpet will destroy light and heat by darkening one-third of the sun, moon and stars (Rev. 8:12). This supernatural work of God will reduce one-third of the daylight, moonlight, and starlight. Our lack of understanding of how this will occur is not sufficient reason to see this as merely symbolic. The impact will affect heat, health, agriculture, navigation, etc.
- B. This judgment will affect both the day and night. John describes this in two different ways so we do not miss his meaning. First, the sun, moon, and stars were darkened, and second, they did not shine. Light will be diminished in its duration (hours per day) and intensity (brightness). This is more than a natural eclipse.
- C. This reduction of light is a warning of more intense judgments soon to come (Rev. 8:13). God will speak to the nations in this partial judgment, calling them to repentance. The diminishing of natural light prophetically warns the earth of its rejection of spiritual light.
- D. This judgment will send a clear prophetic message and will not be easily explained away by scientists. The Antichrist will be unable to explain or solve this worldwide problem.
- E. The fourth trumpet judgment corresponds to the fifth bowl and the ninth plague (Ex. 10:21-23). In Egypt, total darkness lasted for three days and could be felt as the powers of darkness operated in a way that could be discerned.
- Over the land of Egypt ... darkness which may even be felt. ²² ... There was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. ²³ They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. All the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. (Ex. 10:21-23)*
- F. Jesus said signs (plural) would occur in the sun, moon and stars (Mt. 24:31; Lk. 21:25-28).
- There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars ... ²⁶ men's hearts failing them from fear ... for the powers of heaven will be shaken. (Lk. 21:25-26)*

- G. The sun will be darkened in the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-17); one-third of the sun will be diminished in the fourth trumpet (Rev. 8:12); the sun will scorch people with heat in the fourth bowl (Rev. 16:8-9); the sun is fully darkened in the fifth bowl (Rev. 16:10-11).
- H. The Old Testament prophets prophesied of the sun being darkened in the end times (Isa. 5:30; 13:9-10; Joel 2:10, 30; 3:13-15; Amos 5:20; 8:9; Zeph. 1:14-16).
- I. God altered the operation of the sun when darkness came over Israel for three hours when Jesus died, in Egypt for three days (which is the same amount of time that Jesus was in the tomb. Ex. 10:21-23), when the sun obeyed Joshua (Josh. 10) and when Hezekiah asked for the sun to be turned back ten degrees as a sign (Isa. 38).

VII. COMPARING THE TRUMPETS AND THE BOWLS

- A. Some teach that the trumpet and bowl judgments occur at the same time. They conclude that they describe the same judgment in different ways. There are clearly similarities. However, the differences are too significant to overlook. Therefore, many see them as consecutive. In other words, the seven bowl judgments follow the seven trumpet judgments in chronological sequence.
- B. The **first trumpet** is hail and fire mixed with blood, which burns up one-third of the earth's trees and all its green grass (Rev. 8:7-8). The **first bowl** is loathsome sores (Rev. 16:2).
- C. The **second trumpet** is a mountain burning with fire thrown into the sea that causes one-third of the sea to become blood, destroying one-third of its sea life and ships (Rev. 8:8-9). The **second bowl** is the entire sea becoming blood and every living thing in it dying (Rev. 16:3).
- D. The **third trumpet** is a burning star poisoning one-third of the rivers and springs of water (Rev. 8:10-11). The **third bowl** is all rivers becoming blood (Rev. 16:4).
- E. The **fourth trumpet** is one-third of the sun, moon, and stars being darkened (Rev. 8:12). The **fourth bowl** is the sun scorching people with great heat (Rev. 16:8).
- F. The **fifth trumpet** is demonic locusts stinging people for 5 months (Rev. 9:1-11). The **fifth bowl** is when the Antichrist's kingdom becomes darkened (Rev. 16:10-11).
- G. The **sixth trumpet** is the release of four ruling demons at the Euphrates River who lead 200 million demons in killing one-third of the human race (Rev. 9:13-19). The **sixth bowl** is the Euphrates River being dried up so that the kings from the east may gather to Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16).
- H. The **seventh trumpet** is the announcement that all the kingdoms of the world will come under Jesus' authority (Rev. 11:15-18). The **seventh bowl** is a great earthquake and 100-pound hailstones that destroy Babylon and the cities of the earth (Rev. 16:17-21).