

# The Book of Revelation



## Bruce Metzger, Breaking the Code, 62

*“The sequence of the opening of the seven seals, broken by chapter 7, is now resumed: one more seal is to be opened, the last. And that, one would have thought, would be the end of the drama; after the earth had received such punishment, what more could still be in store? And so, with the seventh seal, the reader expects the final cataclysm. But nothing happens. Instead, ‘there was silence in heaven for about half an hour’ (8:1). It is like the solemn hush before the bursting of a hurricane. The effect of the pause is to heighten the horror of the next series of God’s judgments, each to be announced by the sounding of a trumpet.”*

# The Seventh Seal (8:1-6)

- Silence – trembling, fear, solitude, death because of divine judgment (Psa. 31:17; Isa. 47:5; Ezek. 27:32; Zeph. 1:7, 11; Hab. 2:20; Zech. 2:13)
  - This is in contrast to the great noise heard thus far and is very drawn out (a half-hour of silence?!)
  - Like a drumroll or delay before a jury shares a verdict
- Seven Angels – Jews believed there were 7 archangels who were given authority over the nations (Psa. 78:49) – these were named Raphael, Uriel, Raguel, Michael, Sariel, Gabriel, and Remiel (Tobit 12:15; 1 Enoch 20; cf. Dan. 10:13; 1Thess. 4:16; Jude 9); could be cultural or merely symbolic like the other sevens throughout the book



# The Symbolism of Trumpets

- A signal that holy war was about to begin; thus another symbol of judgment
- A call to assemble for attention/war/attack (Num. 10:1-5; Ezek. 33:3; Jer. 51:27; Joel 2:1-2)
- Clear Jericho allusions
  - 6 days of trumpeting + 1 climactic day
  - Jericho is a type of the city of man, a symbol of evil; the great city in 11:13 falls just as Jericho did



# The Symbolism of Altars

- Ascending smoke and aroma indicates divine acceptance (e.g., Ex. 29:18, 25; Lev. 1:9, 13, 17; 2:2, 9; etc.; cf. also Josh. 6:24 when Jericho is burned)
- In apocalyptic imagery, the altar takes on qualities of both incense and sacrifice (e.g., Lev. 16:11-19; Psa. 141:2; Ezek. 10:1-2; Gen. 19:24)
- Prayers ascend to God & He cares (Luke 18:1-8)
- *“Some readers of Revelation concentrate upon the fire, earthquakes, and other frightful events. Those who know the Lord read the same book and find comfort, peace, and blissful hope. The difference in what one finds in Revelation is usually determined by the quality of life being lived and how much time is spent in prayer (Luke 18:1-8; Heb. 9:3-6).”* (Harkrider, *Truth*, 99)

# The Symbolism of Fourfold Terror

- This image is used in the OT to accompany divine judgment
- Compare the Sinai theophany (Ex. 19:16)
- Examples:
  - Isa. 29:6 – punishment by the Lord of armies
  - Psa. 18:7-13 – the righteous are rescued by judgment upon the wicked
- *“The oppressor is being punished—brought to his knees. As it was in the days of Moses, so it is in the days of the Revelation period. The ungodly is badly hurt, but as it turns out, not hurt sufficiently to turn him from iniquity...Their whole world is being hit. Their home is no longer a home—it is a palace of horrors.”*  
(McGuiggan, 124, 131; see Rev. 9:20-22)

# The 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet

- The purpose of the plagues on Egypt: to harden Pharaoh's heart, to display the great power of God, and to judge the gods of Egypt (Ex. 12:12; 6:6; 7:4). This climaxes at their defeat at the Red Sea.
- Hail, Fire/Lightning, Blood (cf. Job 38:22f; Isa.28:2, 17; 30:30f; Ex. 9; etc.; Famine imagery also
- Use of plague imagery evokes the larger exodus motif; a release for God's people and a victory over the enemy
- Affects 1/3 of the earth (i.e., the unregenerate; cf. 1/4 in 6:8)

# The 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet

- The Great Mountain – a great kingdom (cf. Jer. 51:25, 42; Isa. 2:2; 41:15; 64:1; Dan. 2; Amos 4:1) – Mount Vesuvius had erupted in 79 A.D. and would be fresh on the memory for many (cf. 8:8). God removes mountains for His people (cf. Matt. 21:21)
- This trumpet affects maritime trade and commerce; overthrow of civil power
- The sea was a place of danger and death
- The sea being turned to blood is reminiscent of Egypt's 1<sup>st</sup> plague



# The 3<sup>rd</sup> Trumpet

- A Star thrown from Heaven – used of the king of Babylon in Isa. 14:12-17 and the king of Tyre in Ezek. 28:12-15
- Stars are symbolic of things that are high, lofty, and exalted; in the case of evil, things that are proud and arrogant; God will bring them down; this would parallel the mountain in the 2<sup>nd</sup> trumpet.
- Named Wormwood – a well-known poison in the ancient world; a symbol of divine punishment, specifically for idolatry (e.g., Jer. 9:13-16; 23:15; Deut. 29:17-18; Amos 5:7; 6:12); *“When men prefer the bitter waters of idolatry to the fountain of the living water, they will receive these bitter waters with the fatal consequences which follow.”* (Hailey, Revelation, 222)

# The 4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet

- Luminaries are affected – compare the 9<sup>th</sup> plague of darkness
  - Compare judgment passages (e.g., Isa. 13:10f; Jer. 4:23; Ezek. 32:6-8; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15; Amos 5:8, 20; 8:9; Mic. 3:6)
- Darkness is often a symbol for evil and deception (e.g., John 9; Acts 13:11; 2Thess. 2:8-12)
  - Darkness indicates a return to primeval chaos; a de-creation and a curse
  - A sign that the world is not right – God is warning the people of earth of the error of their ways; *“Before total darkness engulfs any society, God sounds a trumpet warning to that society. He sends minor judgments which mark the beginning of the society’s destruction unless repentance turns the course of its destiny.”* (Hailey, *Revelation*, 223)
  - The disruption of the cosmic order is a reflection of man’s disruption of the equally universal moral order ordained by God

# The Symbolism of the Eagle

- A brief pause highlights the greater severity of the last three trumpets to come (they will be called “woes”)
- An eagle indicated judgment from above (e.g., Deut. 28:49-51) or through divine use of the nations (e.g., Ezek. 17)
- Symbolic of divine protection as well (e.g., Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11f)



# The Symbolism of the Eagle

- In 102 B.C., the Roman consul Gaius Marius decreed that the eagle would be the symbol of the Senate and People of Rome. It also became the symbol the Roman legions and the god Jupiter. It was used on Roman coinage (e.g., the tetradrachm)
- To Romans, an eagle flying in the sky after the death of the emperor was a sign that the emperor had joined the gods and been deified; here, it is a symbol of judgment (compare 4 Ezra 11-12 in a vision of Rome as an eagle)





# The Overall Message

*“Although the first readers of this book witnessed the fulfillment of these symbols, the living message of Revelation is that when conditions repeat themselves in later periods of history, the Lord will deal with mankind in the same manner as he has in the past.”*

*(Robert Harkrider, Truth Commentaries, 98)*



In the end;  
**GOD WINS**