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**A0547 – November 20, 2005 – Revelation 8:7-13 – The First Four Trumpets**

**Revelation 8:7-13** 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. <sup>8</sup> 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, <sup>9</sup> and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way. <sup>13</sup> Then 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 remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

**Outline**

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- I.    The First Six Trumpets (Rev 8:7-9:21)**

Like the first four seals were a distinct group (known as the "Four Horsemen) so the first four trumpets are a distinct group that affects objects of nature; 1/3 of either the earth or

the heavens. The last three trumpets are distinctly described as the “three woes” and are directed toward men (cf Rev 8:13; 9:12; 11:14). Thus, the first four trumpets will only have an indirect effect on mankind but the last three a direct effect on them. The reason God is sending such cataclysmic judgments on the earth is to lead unbelievers to repentance (Rev 9:20-21). God uses supernatural judgment as a means of causing men to change their mind. A clear example of this was God’s use of the 10 plagues in Egypt which were designed to change Pharaoh’s mind so that he would let the Israelites go. As terrible as these plagues are, affecting a third part of the earth and heavens in the first four trumpets and the fifth and sixth directly against mankind, their limits indicate these are not the ultimate ones. The judgments now beginning are those which were held back by the four angels at the four compass points while the 144,000 were sealed in Rev 7:3-4.

#### **A. 1st Trumpet: 1/3 of Land Burned (8:7)**

***Revelation 8:7 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.***

At the sound of the *first* trumpet God answers the martyr’s prayer and throws ***hail and fire, mixed with blood...to the earth***. Without doubt, five or even six of the trumpet judgments are similar to the Exodus Plagues. Throughout the OT the prophets liken the future judgments in the Tribulation to those of Egypt. God has given us a snapshot of the Tribulation in the Exodus plagues. The key to all these judgments is their supernatural character.

**Micah 7:15** "As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt, I will show you miracles."

The 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet is similar to the 7<sup>th</sup> Plague in Exodus 9:22ff. In that plague hail struck the vegetation, beasts of the field, and men of Egypt. In the midst of the hail was fire flashing, perhaps a reference to lightning, along with thunder. The only new addition here is ***blood***. The ***fire*** is probably like volcanic lava falling from the sky ***to the earth*** in the midst of ***hail***. Hailstones will fall in a shower of blood as hail and/or volcanic fireballs commonly fall in a shower of rain. Joel spoke of these judgments in the context of “the day of the Lord” when he said,

**Joel 2:30** "I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, ***Blood, fire*** and columns of smoke.

The results are three fold: *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.* *a third of the earth* refers to the cultivated land: land used for cattle grazing or vegetation. *a third of the trees* on earth are *burned up* too. This is described more fully in the context of “the day of the Lord” in

**Joel 1:15-20** Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty. <sup>16</sup> Has not food been cut off before our eyes, Gladness and joy from the house of our God? <sup>17</sup> The seeds shrivel under their clods; The storehouses are desolate, The barns are torn down, For the grain is dried up. <sup>18</sup> How the beasts groan! The herds of cattle wander aimlessly Because there is no pasture for them; Even the flocks of sheep suffer. <sup>19</sup> To You, O LORD, I cry; For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness And the flame has burned up all the trees of the field. <sup>20</sup> Even the beasts of the field pant for You; For the water brooks are dried up And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

Land makes up ~ 30% of the earth’s surface while water makes up the other 70%. The entire earth’s land surface is about 57,500,000 square miles. “The percentages of earth’s land surface can be divided into different types: 20% covered by snow, 20% mountains, 20% dry land, 30% good land that can be farmed, 10% land doesn’t have topsoil.”<sup>i</sup> The 30% of good land that can be cultivated or used for farming purposes is about 17,250,000 square miles. This judgment will burn one third of that or 5,750,000 square miles.<sup>ii</sup> While the judgment will not directly affect men it should be obvious that it will affect mankind indirectly and in great measures. It hardly goes without saying that our agriculture, range and wildlife, economy, and environment will be impacted beyond human estimation.

Finally, *all the green grass* will be *burned up*. Not 1/3 or 1/2 but *all the green grass*. When we compare this with 9:4

**Revelation 9:4** They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

Many expositors think this is a problem. If all the green grass is burned up under the 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet then how can there be any green grass under the 5<sup>th</sup> Trumpet? Thus, many expositors have argued we have to interpret the grass symbolically. However, this is really not problematic when we take two things into account. *First*, the 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet judgment occurs months if not years before the 5<sup>th</sup> Trumpet. There would be plenty of time for more grass to grow between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Trumpets. *Second*, all the grass on planet earth is not

green at the same time. Grass is seasonal and the southern hemisphere has winter while the northern has summer and vice versa. Thus, since the 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet will burn all the green grass during that time it will not affect any of the grass that is not green at that time. Either of these solutions allows us to maintain a literal interpretation of the text. In conclusion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet, this burning of the earth is also described by Peter in

**2 Peter 3:10** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

## **B. 2nd Trumpet: 1/3 of Sea Became Blood (8:8-9)**

***Revelation 8:8-9 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, <sup>9</sup> and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.***

After the 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet judgment is complete the *second angel sounded*. The object of judgment is no longer the *land* but the *sea* or *oceans*. In answer to the martyr's prayers God throws *something like a great mountain burning with fire...into the sea*. There is debate about what this *great object* is. We might be tempted to say it's a mountain but John says what he saw was *something like a...mountain*. The most likely candidate for such an explanation is a huge burning chunk of a meteor on fire but the next trumpet clearly pictures a meteor. I do not know what this is but it appears *like a great mountain burning with fire*. The size of which I cannot say except by the results; *a third of the sea became blood...a third of the sea life died, and a third of the ships destroyed*. The seas or oceans make up 70% of the earth's surface. The average depth of the oceans is 2 miles deep. Shortly put, my estimate is that the oceans contain the following number of cubic miles of water.<sup>iii</sup>

717,293,893,396,405,297,246.6 cubic miles

One third of this would be

239,097,964,465,468,432,415.5 cubic miles

The first result is that this number of cubic miles of *the sea became blood*. Is this literal blood or blood-like? One of my professors said this referred to "pollution" but the text does not say it was *blood-like* but that it *became blood*. Whatever this *burning mountain-like*

thing is it changes the oceans to *blood* either naturally or supernaturally. This closely parallels the supernatural 1<sup>st</sup> Plague in Egypt when the Nile was turned to blood (cf Exod 7:17ff). Since we are in an equally if not more supernatural time on earth there is no reason to think that this will not be literal blood, just as the text says.

The second result is found in verse 9. 1/3 of the marine life (*psuche* – soul life) which probably lived in the cubic miles of the sea which turned to blood, perished. This also parallels the 1<sup>st</sup> Plague in Egypt because the marine life in the Nile also perished. No doubt they perish because of the environment change. Many cultures depend on marine life for food. This will obviously have tremendous economic and nutritional implications.

The third result was that *a third of the ships* were *destroyed* by some mechanism either tidal wave or something else unpredictable from the text. Of course, many of these ships harbor men who will lose their lives. This recalls what I consider a very important application from

**Isaiah 2:16-22** Against all the ships of Tarshish And against all the beautiful craft.  
<sup>17</sup> The pride of man will be humbled And the loftiness of men will be abased; And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, <sup>18</sup> But the idols will completely vanish.  
<sup>19</sup> Men will go into caves of the rocks And into holes of the ground Before the terror of the LORD And the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble. <sup>20</sup> In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats Their idols of silver and their idols of gold, Which they made for themselves to worship, <sup>21</sup> In order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs Before the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble. <sup>22</sup> Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils; For why should he be esteemed?

Who can do such things? Who can cause the earth to shake? Can a man do this? Even with atomic energy man cannot even get close to causing the earth to tremble as God does. Who is this God who sits in the heavens? Whose power is beyond comprehension. Whose majesty is beyond our wildest imaginations. God and God alone is to be esteemed. Man is just a creature. His life is in his breath. God's life is eternal. We are dependent on oxygen in God's created atmosphere. God is dependent on nothing. Our lives are but a vapor. Far too many Christians regard man. We have Calvinism, Arminianism, Lutheranism, Wesleyan's, etc., and each of these titles regards a man. Paul rebuked the men of his day for regarding men.

**1 Corinthians 3:4-7** "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not *mere* men? <sup>5</sup> What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave *opportunity* to each one. <sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. <sup>7</sup> So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

Do not esteem me, do not esteem another Bible teacher. Do not esteem any man. At best other men are servants. But according to Paul neither you nor I are anything. God is everything. Do not fear men but God. For what can man do to you? "Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils; For why should he be esteemed?" God alone is to be esteemed.

### C. 3rd Trumpet: 1/3 of Rivers Made Bitter (8:10-11)

**Revelation 8:10-11** *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. <sup>11</sup> 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.*

After the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet judgment concludes *the third angel sounded*. And immediately, *a great star fell from heaven*. This is clearly a *great meteor* (cf *aster* in Rev 6:13). The sun, moon, and other stars are still present at the 4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet (8:12-13). This *great star...burning like a torch* probably breaks up and falls *on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters*. While the seas contain salt water (salt water makes up 97% of the earth's water), the rivers and springs are fresh water (fresh water makes up 3% of the earth's water).

*The name of the star is called Wormwood* or *apsinthos* and is used only here in the Greek NT (*hapax legomenon*). Some have supposed this is an angel or demon but that is unlikely. The result of this *great meteor* falling on *a third of the rivers* is that *the waters became wormwood* or *apsinthon*, a play on words in the Greek. The word *wormwood* means "bitterness". It was not necessarily a poison but sometimes poisonous effects were connected with it (cf Jer 3:15). The waters of Marah in the OT record an opposite effect.

**Exodus 15:23-25** When they came to Marah, they could not drink the *waters* of Marah, for they were *bitter*; therefore, it was named Marah. <sup>24</sup> So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" <sup>25</sup> Then he cried out to the

LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw *it* into the waters, and the waters became sweet.

While the Lord made the water's sweet at Marah so the Israelites could safely drink from them, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Trumpet judgment causes 1/3 of the river and spring waters to become bitter.<sup>iv</sup>

The result of the bitterness is that *many men died*. Not all men who drank from the bitter water died but *many* who did *die*. Most likely they became so thirsty that they overlooked the change in taste and died from the poisonous effects of the *bitterness*. While quenching their thirst they were killing their bodies.

#### **D. 4th Trumpet: 1/3 of Heavenly Bodies Darkened (8:12)**

*Revelation 8:12-13 The fourth angel sounded, and plagued a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars, so that a third part of them would be darkened and the day would not brighten for a third part of it, and the night in the same way. Then 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 remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"*

After the 3<sup>rd</sup> Trumpet judgment concludes *the fourth angel sounded*. This is not a judgment on the land, the sea or the rivers and springs, but upon the heavenly bodies. Historically, the heavenly bodies have been primary objects of worship of men. Immanuel Velikovsky argued that the names of our months and days of the weeks are named after heavenly bodies that were considered cosmic gods and goddesses. Sun worship was very common in the ancient world (e.g. Re, the Egyptian sun God). If you think planetary worship is an ancient and not modern phenomenon you are mistaken. Modern day horoscopes based on astral movements are a chief source of guidance for millions of superstitious humans. The movement of the 'planets' including the sun and moon serve as replacements of God's personal sovereignty. Hoping to find in them guidance for daily life horoscopes replace the only true source of guidance, the personally sovereign God.<sup>v</sup> Because of man's tendency to worship the heavens God explicitly warned the Israelites not to worship them.

**Deuteronomy 4:19** "And *beware* not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

Being creations of God, the sun, moon, and stars are not to be praised but actually praise their creator by reflecting the glory of God.

**Psalm 148:3-5** Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light! <sup>4</sup> Praise Him, highest heavens, And the waters that are above the heavens! <sup>5</sup> Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created.

Thus, they should not be worshipped for any reason, nor should their movements be interpreted as guiding our futures. Here the God who created heavenly bodies judges them and the effects are felt by man. When the *fourth angel sounded, and plagued a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars, so that a third part of them would be darkened and the day would not brighten for a third part of it, and the night in the same way*. This darkening of the heavenly bodies was prophesied in the OT and associated with “the day of the Lord”.

**Isaiah 13:9-10** 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 from it. <sup>10</sup> 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.

**Joel 2:10** The sun and the moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness.

How 1/3 of the *sun...moon...and stars* could be *plagued* is not mentioned. It must be supernatural judgment by the God who created them. What should be noted is that the judgment will decrease by 1/3 the duration of light both during the day and the night. In this part of the world, at this time of year we get about 10 ½ hours of daylight and about 13 ½ hours of darkness. Thus, we would only get about 6 ½ hours of daylight and at night the moon would not reflect the sunlight for about 4-5 hours. Darkness is a symbol of judgment. This darkness reminds us of the 9<sup>th</sup> Egyptian Plague of darkness. Amos called the day of the Lord a day of darkness. This darkening will no doubt affect agriculture, navigation, human health, productivity, etc. A few weeks ago, we ate at the Double Jade restaurant and in my fortune cookie the fortune read:

“The sun rises and sets each day; everything is going to be ok.”

There will be a day when the sun will rise but no light will reach the earth for a third part of the day. Thus, I assume everything will not be ok in that day.

***Revelation 8:13 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 remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"***

Some manuscripts read “an angel” (Textus Receptus) rather than *an eagle* but the best manuscripts read *an eagle* (cf UBS, NA27, Robinson-Pierpont MT 1995). The words ***And I looked*** (*kai eidon*) signal a new scene in John’s vision. His attention is turned toward *an eagle flying in midheaven*. *midheaven* is high in our visible sky. And he says with a *loud voice* (*phone megale*) ***“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!”*** His message is short but dreadful. If you thought the first four trumpets were bad then you are mistaken. Things are only going to get worse. This will, no doubt, cause the earth-dwellers to fall into a state of dread, anxiety, and fear. That an *eagle* could speak is no doubt odd but not unfounded in Scripture. In Gen 3:1-5 a serpent received the ability to speak and in Numb 22:28-30 Balaam’s donkey received the ability to speak. The *eagle*, one of the swiftest animals on earth, able to dive at speeds up to 100mph<sup>vi</sup>, may look forward to Israel’s rescue and salvation by God at the end of the Great Tribulation.

The announcement of this eagle concerns three *woe*’s that are coming upon the earth dwellers. The last three *trumpets* are also known as the three *woe*’s (cf Rev 8:13; 9:12; 11:14).

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<sup>i</sup> <http://hypertextbook.com/facts/2001/DanielChen.shtml>

<sup>ii</sup> One website estimates that 11% of earth’s surface is used to grow food.

<http://www.planetpals.com/planet2.html> which would increase the burned area from 5,750,000 square miles to 7,333,333 square miles at present.

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.personal.psu.edu/users/m/b/mbm210/edg100/homework\\_7.html](http://www.personal.psu.edu/users/m/b/mbm210/edg100/homework_7.html)

<sup>iv</sup> One might recall the Sprite commercial slogan “Obey Your Thirst”. That might not be in wisdom during the Great Tribulation.

<sup>v</sup> Astrology is the study of how events on Earth are influenced by the Sun, Moon, stars and planets. Astrologers believe that the positions of the planets in the sky affect nearly every aspect of a person's life. In astrology, the celestial bodies around the Earth are called planets. Each planet is associated with a sign and a different energy in life. For more questions and answers on horoscopes see <http://astrology.horoscope.com/horoscopes/>

<sup>vi</sup> The fastest animal is the Peregrine Falcon which has been reported to reach speeds of up to 200 miles per hour during vertical dives.

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