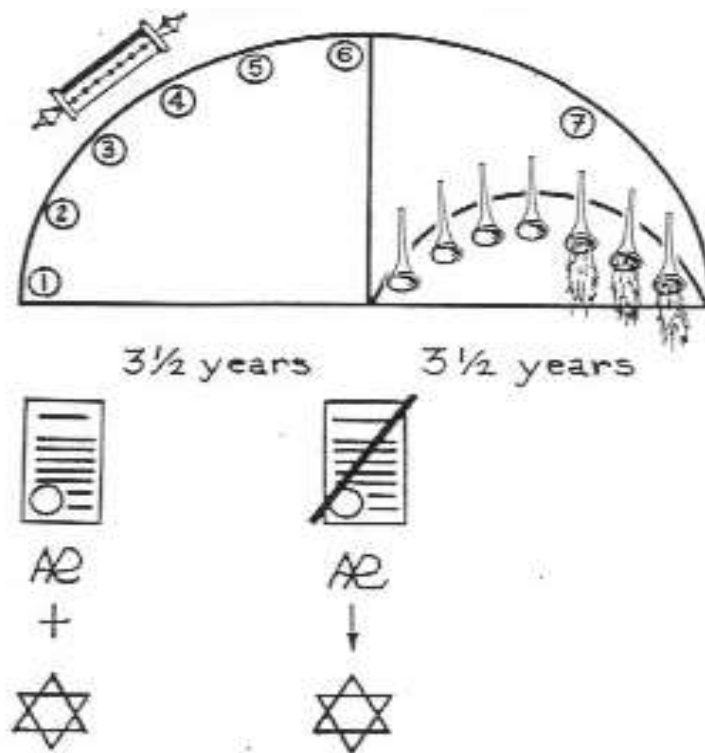


SIX TRUMPET JUDGMENTS

Summary and Historical Background

The introduction to Revelation 6-7 gives a summary of chapters 6-19. Chapters 8-9 include what are called the trumpet judgments. It is important to remember that the seven trumpets are actually contained in the seventh seal and the seven bowls are in the seventh trumpet (cf. Rev. 15-16). Therefore, within the seventh seal are all of the judgments of the trumpets and bowls. The seventh seal devastates Antichrist's kingdom and allows the establishment of Christ's Kingdom upon earth. So the seven trumpets and the seven bowls do not follow the seventh seal, but they are in fact the contents of the seventh seal. It is a fact, however, that there is a succession of the seven trumpets and bowls. The trumpet and bowl judgments are a direct result of God's wrath, whereas the first four seal judgments are an indirect result of His wrath, permitting Antichrist to cause the death of one-fourth of the earth's population.

TRUMPET JUDGMENTS Revelation 8:1-9:21; 11:1-19



This graph shows that Antichrist will make a 7-year covenant with Israel, but break it in the middle and attack Israel for the last 3½ years (Dan 9:27). Christ will open 6 seals during the first 3½ years of that covenant (Rev 6). This begins the Tribulation. After Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel, Christ opens the 7th seal and the trumpet judgments begin (Rev 8, 9, 11), which will be the greater part of the last half of the Tribulation, the Great Tribulation.

I. Introduction to the Trumpet Judgments – 8:1-6

A. Silence in Heaven – 8:1

8:1 – When Christ breaks the seventh seal and its judgments are completed, the kingdom of Antichrist will be finished, the scroll will be unrolled to reveal that Christ is the rightful ruler of the earth (cf. Rev. 5). Since no divine judgment is declared when this seal is broken, its judgment is in the seven trumpets (Rev 8-9) and the seven bowls (Rev 16). These judgments must be poured out to expel Satan, Antichrist and

their followers from the earth so Christ can establish His Kingdom on the earth.

After Christ breaks the seventh seal, there is about a half hour of silence in heaven. The significance of this silence is best understood by considering the context. Recall the sounds in Heaven: the rumble of thunder from the throne (4:5) and the choruses of praise to the Father and to the Lamb (Rev 4-5). But all will be quiet when the seventh seal is broken; there was total silence in Heaven. It was the calm before the storm, the “breathless silence” of a physician’s report after the surgery of a loved one, the “dramatic pause” in a musical or play.

B. Scene in Heaven – 8:2-6

8:2 – John saw seven specially chosen angels stand before God and each angel was given a trumpet. An angel is assigned to blow his trumpet before each of God’s seven judgments. These judgments will be released during the last half of the Tribulation.

Trumpets were used in the Old Testament to communicate messages from a leader to a large crowd. So it was critical that the trumpet give a clear signal so the message could be understood (1 Cor. 14:8). It might be a signal for war (Num. 10:9), or for convening the people (Num. 8), or for starting a feast (Num. 10:10) or for a king’s announcement (1 Kgs. 34:39). It could signal the overthrow of the ungodly (Josh. 6:13-16) or be used to praise God (Ezra 3:10). The trumpets used here in Revelation will announce seven severe judgments from God. The trumpet judgments were directly administered by God, whereas the first four seal judgments were indirectly administered by Him through the warfare of Antichrist.

8:3 – Another angel stands at the altar of incense in Heaven with a golden censer in his hand. Since this altar was directly related to the prayers of the saints, some identify this angel as Jesus Christ doing His work as their High Priest. This is based upon Old Testament references to Christ as the Angel of the Lord (Gen. 16:7; Ex. 3:2; Jud. 2:1, etc.) and to His present work as their intercessor to God. A second and more likely view simply identifies this as another angel.

8:3-4 – Much incense is given to this angel, which he will add to the prayers of the saints. To grasp the meaning of this vision, one needs to understand the symbolism of the altar of incense in the Old Testament tabernacle. The priest of the Old Testament would take some burning coals from the bronze altar (altar of burnt offering) and transfer them to the golden altar (altar of incense) to burn incense (Lev. 16:12-13). The incense symbolized the prayers of the saints (Ps. 141:1-2; Lk. 1:9-10). The rising smoke from the burning incense was symbolic of the saints’ prayers ascending to God. The censer itself is not minutely described in Scripture, but the Hebrew word indicates it was a fire pan for transferring coals. The modern censer used today was unknown in Bible times.

The prayers include those of saints before the Tribulation as well as those during the Tribulation who have asked God to take vengeance on the wicked sinners in rebellion against Him (Rev 6:10; 16:5-7; Ps 58:10-11). These prayers also may include the prayers of believers who have earnestly prayed for God’s will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven (cf. Mt. 6:9-10).

8:5 – The angel will take the censer, fill it with fire from the altar and throw it to the earth. The censer becomes a symbol of judgment. Immediately a powerful storm is seen, heard and felt: there is lightning, thunder, other sounds (possibly from wind – Rev 7:1) and an earthquake. This storm comes from the throne of God (cf Rev 4:5). The addition of an earthquake shows the storm is increasing in intensity (hail will be added in 11:19 and 16:18-21). This is in response to effectual fervent prayers of the saints.

8:6 – The seven angels are ready to sound their trumpets, because God is ready to pour out His wrath. It is noteworthy that trumpets were used in ancient wars to direct the soldiers as to where they should fight the enemy. So trumpets are associated with the defeat Satan’s army.

II. Identification of the Trumpet Judgments – 8:7-9:21

A. First Trumpet Judgment: Burned Earth – 8:7

8:7 – When the first angel blows his trumpet, the storm from the throne of God will descend to the earth.

It will come with hail and fire (seems to be lightning) mixed with blood. The blood is thought to be that of the people and animals that are killed or wounded from the hail and burned to death by fires started by the lightning. This judgment will burn 1/3 of the earth and 1/3 of the trees and all the green grass. An Old Testament parallel to this judgment was the seventh plague on Egypt when God sent lightning, thunder and hail to devastate Pharaoh's country (Ex. 9:23-25). God taught Pharaoh that He was the almighty God who controls nature so that it blesses those who worship Him and curses those who do not. Sinners during the Tribulation will be taught this truth as well when they experience the first trumpet judgment. Those who refuse to repent of their sins and will be cursed as Pharaoh was.

B. Second Trumpet Judgment: Bloody Sea – 8:8-9

8:8-9 – When the second angel blows his trumpet an object from the heavens like a great mountain burning with fire plunged into the sea. This might be the description of a huge fiery asteroid that plummets into the sea, perhaps the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf or possibly one of the oceans. The result is very clear: 1/3 of that sea will become blood; 1/3 of the sea life will perish; and 1/3 of the maritime vessels will be destroyed by gigantic tidal waves created by the meteor. The water being turned into blood has its Old Testament parallel when the Nile was turned into blood (Ex. 7:17-21).

C. Third Trumpet Judgment: Bitter Waters – 8:10-11

8:10-11 – When the third angel sounds his trumpet, a great star, i.e., another burning meteor or asteroid will fall from heaven. It does not say that this burning "star" will strike the ground, but it will pollute the rivers and streams of water. This is possible, if the "star" explodes in mid-air due to the dense atmospheric pressure it encounters as it nears the earth at a speed of 30,000 to 75,000 miles per hour. The dust from its disintegration would be spread across the earth by high level jet streams polluting 1/3 of the rivers and springs of water. The name of this meteor or asteroid is called Wormwood because it will make the waters bitter. There are many varieties of wormwood in Palestine, but they all have a strong and bitter taste. As a result many men will die from drinking these waters.

D. Fourth Trumpet Judgment: Blackened Heavens – 8:12-13

8:12 – When the fourth angel sounds off with his trumpet, God will darken the sun, moon and stars by a third of its normal light. It is possible that this is caused by a thick haze around the earth from the burnings in the first trumpet, the steam caused by burning asteroid striking the sea in the second trumpet and the dust from the exploding "star" in the third trumpet. This haze will be so thick that the sun, moon and stars will not be seen until they are a couple of hours past the horizon. Instead of twelve hours of sunlight at the equator, there will only be eight hours. The moon and stars will be affected in the same way at night. This decrease of sunlight will have an impact on growing crops during the second half of the Tribulation. It will also be a sign of Jesus' soon return. Jesus predicted that these celestial bodies would become signs during the Tribulation (Lk. 21:25; Mt. 24:29).

8:13 – John saw an angel ("an eagle" in many mss.) flying in the sky and he heard him cry out with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe." These three woes refer to the judgments associated with the last three angels when they blow their trumpets. The first four trumpet judgments were horrible, but the last three judgments will be much worse. The three woes are (1) the locust plague in 9:1-12; (2) the army of 200,000,000 horsemen in 9:13-19; and (3) the seven bowl-judgments in 16:1-21.

E. Fifth Trumpet Judgment by Locusts: First Woe – 9:1-12

1. Place of the locusts' origin – 9:1-3

9:1 – When the fifth angel announces God's judgment with his trumpet, John sees a star that had already fallen from Heaven to the earth. The pronouns and context indicate this star is not an astrological body but is an intelligent being. Stars can refer to angels (cf. Job 38:4-7). The star in this context is endowed with power since he is given the key to the bottomless pit and has the authority to open its door. Since he comes from Heaven, only two views will be considered to identify this star: a good angel or a bad one. Many commentators identify this star as Satan (cf. 9:11). He fell spiritually when he exalted himself

above God and lost his exclusive power over demons when Jesus gave His servants the power to cast demons out of people (Isa. 14:12-15; Lk. 10:18). He literally will fall from Heaven in the middle of the Tribulation when he is defeated by Michael and cast out of Heaven (Rev. 12:7-12). Since this Trumpet judgment comes after the middle of the Tribulation, Satan will be on earth at this time, looking for some means to keep his power as the god of this world. Even though Satan is under God's final control, he has maintained his power over the earth since he usurped it from Adam in the Garden of Eden. He will still have power over the demons and be the god of this world during the Tribulation. God will even grant him supernatural power to raise Antichrist from the dead. But God will limit his power to accomplish His will. Satan will not be able to hurt the Israelites that flee to the wilderness. He will not be able to kill the two witnesses until God allows it and then God will raise them from the dead and bring them to Heaven. He will not be able to kill the 144,000 witnesses that effectively preach the Gospel. Since it cannot be Satan, the other option is to identify this "fallen star" as a good angel sent by God from Heaven to open the door to the bottomless pit. "Fallen" means the angel literally descended to earth to open the door to the bottomless pit (cf. Rev. 20:1-3). He is given the key, a symbol of authority, to release these locust-demons. His mission is to cause the torment of the wicked followers of Antichrist, while Satan's mission is to cause the torment of the righteous followers of Christ. In the next judgment of "woe," the sixth angel that sounds his trumpet also will release four demons bound in the Euphrates (Rev 9:13-14).

9:2 – When the angel opens the door to the bottomless pit, smoke billows out of the pit as if it came out of a great furnace. The bottomless pit is literally the "shaft of the abyss." This refers to the very lowest part of the abyss, to the place of fire called Hell. The abyss was the abode of all souls after death. There is Scriptural evidence that the soul has an intermediate body after death and suffers in Hell as it awaits the resurrection. The abyss was properly identified as Sheol in the Old Testament and Hades in the New Testament. In the Old Testament it was divided into two major compartments: lowest Sheol was the abode of the lost (Dt. 32:22) and upper Sheol was the abode of the righteous. Jesus called the upper Sheol Abraham's bosom or paradise (Lk. 16:22; 23:43). The language of Scripture indicates that the abyss is in the heart of the earth which compares well with the present context (cf. Gen. 37:35; Isa. 5:14; Ezk. 32:18, 21; Mt. 12:40). When Christ arose from the dead and ascended to Heaven, He apparently took the Old Testament saints from upper Sheol with Him to Heaven (cf. Eph. 4:8; 2 Cor. 12:1-4). Lower Sheol or Hades remains the abode of the lost who await resurrection for judgment at the White Throne. The lower part of the abyss is the abode of the demons (Lk. 8:31). This may be the same as Tartarus where evil angels are chained in darkness awaiting judgment. This is the place where Satan will be bound during the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:1-3). The immediate reference to the abyss indicates that it will be the source from which this awful Tribulation judgment comes. When the door of the bottomless pit is opened the smoke from the pit is so dense that it darkens the sun.

9:3 – Locusts will come out of the smoke and they will be given the power of scorpions to bring the first "woe" judgment to the earth. Since these locusts come out of the bottomless pit and their leader's name means "destroyer," it is correct to conclude that these locusts are demons. The judgment that they bring to the earth will be far greater than anything experienced up to this time. The connection between locusts and God's judgment is established in two Old Testament Scriptures: in the plagues on Egypt and in Joel's prophecy (Ex. 10:12-20; Joel 1:4-7).

2. Purpose of the locusts – 9:4-6

9:4a, 5a – These locusts are forbidden to attack any vegetation (cf. Ex. 10:12), to attack the sealed Israelites (cf. 7:1-8) or to take the life of anyone. These limitations are put on them by God, not Satan.

9:4b, 5b – These locusts are instructed to attack those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (cf. 7:1-8), to torment men with a sting like that of a scorpion and to carry out a reign of torment for five months. It seems that demons delight to torment people as they have been tormented. Misery likes company. The demons not only suffer for their sin against God, but they have pleasure in the suffering of others that sin against God (cf Rom 1:32).

9:6 – The torment will be so terrible that men will want to die, but God will intervene so they will not be

able to die. The majority of men will continue in rebellion against God.

3. Portrayal of the locusts – 9:7-10

9:7-10 – Since these locust-demons are not of natural origin (9:1), John describes them in a series of similes to relate what they are like. They are shaped like horses prepared for battle. They have on their heads crowns of gold (victory crowns, not the crowns of a king) showing they have power over men. They have faces like that of men. They have hair like that of women. They have teeth like that of lions. These three descriptions are reminiscent of the appearance of some musicians that play hard rock. They have breastplates of iron. They have wings that make the sound of many chariots and horses hurrying off to battle. They have tails like that of scorpions with stingers to torment people for five months. It can readily be seen that these locusts are ferocious, venomous creatures that are indestructible during their five-month reign of terror.

4. Prince of the locusts – 9:11

9:11 –The locust-demons have a king. He is called the angel of the bottomless pit (abyss). His name is given in Hebrew (Abaddon) and in Greek (Apollyon); both mean “destroyer.” Some claim this is Satan, but that is doubtful since he does not enter the abyss until the Tribulation is past (20:1-3). It is better to consider this angel as a high-ranking evil angel under Satan. Paul spoke of a hierarchy of angels that oppose believers (Eph 6:12). There is further evidence of a hierarchy of evil angels later in this chapter (9:14-16).

5. Passing of the first woe – 9:12

9:12 – The preceding verses describe the calamitous results of the first “woe” (the fifth trumpet), but even so, there are two more “woes” remaining, those associated with the sixth and seventh trumpets.

F. Sixth Trumpet Judgment by a Demonic Army: Second Woe – 9:13-21

1. Demonic Leaders of this army – 9:13-15

9:13 – When the sixth angel sounds his trumpet (the second “woe”), a voice comes from the four horns of the golden altar (cf 8:1-5). The golden altar represents the prayers of the saints, which God will answer. Horns represent power, so the horns of the altar represent God’s power to answer the prayers of the saints. He will successfully execute judgment against the wicked in answer to the many prayers of the saints.

9:14 – The sixth angel is instructed to release the four angels bound in the Euphrates River. Since the Scriptures never mention that holy angels are bound, it is best to conclude that these angels are four evil angels that are released for a short time.

These four demons have been bound in river that flows by Babylon, where idolatry began and demon-worship was practiced (17:5). Maybe these demons have been bound in the river since the days of Nimrod and the tower of Babel. Apparently these demons will begin their destructive work in the Euphrates region

9:15 – These demons were prepared to do their destructive work at a particular time (an hour of a specific day, month and year). Some add the hour, day, month and year to get 13 months for this destruction to take place. They will be used to inflict death upon 1/3 of the earth’s population. The destruction of people’s lives by these four demons, coupled with the destruction under the fourth seal, plus other Tribulation deaths, add up to more than one-half of the world’s population being destroyed before the end of the trumpet judgments. This means billions of people will die before the Battle of Armageddon.

2. Destruction by this army – 9:16

9:16 – This verse speaks of a huge army. Apparently the four demons are the generals of this army of 200,000,000 horsemen. Some believe this is an army of men from the Orient (perhaps China) who will

ruthlessly murder men in an attempt to gain world supremacy. They relate this army to the one from the East in Revelation 16:12-16, but this does not fit the context. This army is related to the sixth trumpet and the army from the East is related to the sixth bowl. It seems far better to view this as an army of demons since its weapons are symbolic of Hell (fire, smoke, and brimstone).

3. Description of this army – 9:17-19

9:17-19 – It is best not to think of this army in terms of modern warfare. Such an interpretation is not consistent with the literal, grammatical, historical, theological hermeneutic for interpreting Scripture. If the terms are “modernized,” the door is opened to all kinds of fanciful interpretations and the true meaning of Scripture is lost. One may not understand all of the symbolism, but two facts are clear. First, these horses and the horsemen are not like a normal army. The heads of the horses are like the heads of lions and out of their mouths come fire, smoke and brimstone. Second, they have the power to kill 1/3 of the world’s population by the plague of fire, smoke and brimstone that come out of the horses’ mouths. This is more than all the people that live in China and the United States. In addition the horses have tails like serpents with power in them to harm mankind. It is best to conclude that this is a supernatural army of demons.

4. Determined rebellion of mankind – 9:20-21

9:20 – The men whose lives are not destroyed by this demonic army will continue to worship the demons and the idols that they have made. Evidently they are convinced that their worship of these false gods spared their lives. Satan continues to deceive them so that the judgments of God do not soften their hearts, but they refuse to repent like Pharaoh in Moses’ day.

9:21 – They will continue to murder, practice sorcery (related to drugs), carry on with their immorality and steal from one another. As a result they will experience more of God’s wrath under the bowl judgments before they are finally sentenced to eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire. They refuse to listen to the admonition of Amos, “Prepare to meet thy God” (Amos 4:12).

PROGRESSION OF THE JUDGMENTS: THE TRUMPETS

Storm from God's Throne [4:5]	Storm after the Seals [8:5]	Storm after the Trumpets [11:19]	Storm after the Bowls [16:18, 21]							
SEAL JUDGMENTS [Revelation 6:1-17; 8:1]										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				
Conquest by threat of War	War	Famine	¼ of All People Die	Martyrs Prayer	Lamb's Wrath	7 th Seal [Introduces the Trumpet Judgments]				
SEAL JUDGMENTS [Revelation 6:1-17; 8:1-6]				TRUMPET JUDGMENTS [Revelation 8:2-9:21; 11:15-19]						
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7
				1/3 Plants Burned	1/3 Sea is Blood	1/3 Waters Bitter	1/3 Heavens Darkened	Locust Sting: 5 mos.	1/3 People Die	7 th Trumpet [Bowls]
				1 st Woe 2 nd Woe 3 rd Woe						
1 st SEAL: White Horse: Antichrist Conquers By Threats (6:1-2)				1 st TRUMPET: Hail, fire and blood burn 1/3 of the plants (8:7)						
2 nd SEAL: Red Horse: Great War Destroys Peace (6:3-4)				2 nd TRUMPET: "Meteor" plunges into the sea making 1/3 of it bloody: destroys 1/3 of the ships and sea life (8:8-9)						
3 rd SEAL: Black Horse: Great War Brings Famine (6:5-6)				3 rd TRUMPET: Star (meteor) falls on fresh waters, making 1/3 of them bitter (8:10-11)						
4 th SEAL: Pale Green Horse: One Fourth of the People on Earth Die (6:7-8)				4 th TRUMPET: Heavens are darkened for 1/3 of the day and night ((8:12)						
5 th SEAL: Martyrs Pray for God to Judge Antichrist (6:9-12)				5 th TRUMPET: 1 st WOE: demons as locusts torment mankind for 5 months (9:1-11)						
6 th SEAL: Lamb's Wrath Is Prepared for Antichrist's Kingdom (6:12-17)				6 th TRUMPET: 2 nd WOE: demon "army" of 200 million kills 1/3 of mankind (9:13-21; 11:1-13)						
7 th SEAL: Introduces the Trumpet Judgments (8:1-6)				7 th TRUMPET: 3 rd WOE: all of the Bowl Judgments (11:14-19; CF 15:5-8; 16:17-21)						
First Half of the Tribulation [3 ½ years] Antichrist Rules over Europe [Revived Rome]				Second Half of the Tribulation [3 ½ years] LAMB'S WRATH on Antichrist: Great Tribulation						