



YES, NO AND MAYBE

1. If I came to The Bible Lab, and we just sat in silence for 30 minutes, I would feel very uncomfortable.
2. The Seventh Seal will be a scary time to live on earth.
3. The first 4 of the Trumpets display God's destructive wrath.
4. Many of God's people will suffer during the time of the Seven Trumpets.
5. We are currently inhabitants of the earth.

THE SEVENTH SEAL & FOUR TRUMPETS

➤ READ Revelation 8 (NIV)

When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. 3 Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. 4 The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

6 Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.

7 The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

8 The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, 9 a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

10 The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky 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 turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.

12 The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.

13 As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!"

« If you could only ask God to answer one prayer request for you, what would you ask for?

» **Vs. 1: Silence in heaven for about half an hour-** In Revelation the hour is used either as "a symbolic designation of salvation" (3:10; 9:15; 14:7, 15) or as "a circumlocution of the brevity of a period" (17:12). Moreover, half of a whole number "signals a situation of crisis and transition." Thus, the half an hour designates a period "that according to God's plan was particularly stressed but that is not the end, a transition in that it points beyond itself to something new, something final" (Roloff 1993:102).

» **Vs. 3: Golden censer...He was given much incense to offer -**

Because incense symbolizes prayer and because gold is a valuable metal, the value of the prayers of the saints is stressed in the image of the golden censer. Ironically, the censer that offers the prayers of the saints is the same as the one that inflicts God's judgment on the earth, indicating that the judgment of the wicked is brought about by the prayers of the righteous for justice.

« What does the golden censer represent to us?

DIG DEEPER



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DIG DEEPER...CONTINUED

» **Vs. 5: Filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth** - In answer to the prayers and longings of the saints, God at last visits the impenitent pagan world with a series of catastrophes (8, 9., cf. 9:4), which herald the end and also give (though in vain, 9:20, 21) an opportunity for repentance.

« **What is hurled on the earth, and what do you think this says about God's character?**

» **Vs. 7: First angel [hail and fire mixed with blood; 1/3 of earth]** - The sight of atmospheric fire always signified to the ancients the approach of various disasters, especially when stars fell. The fraction a third occurs twelve times in the first four trumpet judgments. Fractions in Revelation are a symbol of God's mercy and an invitation to repentance. The meaning is that the trumpet judgments are not completely devastating; they destroy only part of the vegetation upon which humans depend for their sustenance. This is not the final judgment but a warning to repent.

» **Vs. 8,9: Second angel [something like a huge mountain: 1/3 of sea]** - The effect of Trumpet 2 recalls the first of the plagues of Egypt (Ex. 7:20 ff.), as the effects of Trumpet 1 recalled the seventh plague (Ex. 9:24 ff.). The fouling of the seas and the consequent destruction of marine life might be another aspect of environmental damage, like the damage to the land which followed Trumpet 1. The particular mention of the loss of shipping, though, may mean that while the first plague was directed against man's environment, the second was directed against his commerce; for in New Testament times 'the sea' meant the Mediterranean, crisscrossed by the trade routes of the Empire.

» **Vs. 10: Third angel [a great star fell; 1/3 of rivers & springs of water]** - Wormwood denotes a class of plants noted for their bitterness and is used in the Old Testament to symbolize the bitterness of idolatry (Deut. 29:17-18), the punishment of God (Jer. 9:14-15; 23:15; Lam. 3:15, 19), and the lips of a strange woman (Prov. 5:3-4).

» **Vs. 12: Fourth angel [sun, moon, & stars; 1/3 darkened]** - The text seems to say that they shone only at two thirds of their normal intensity; but as the conclusion of the verse makes clear, it means that they shone only two thirds of the time. One third of the daytime was completely dark, for the sun stopped shining; likewise for one third of the night the moon and the stars stopped shining.

The four areas affected—earth, sea, fresh water and sky—made up the whole of the human environment as the ancients perceived it. These four spheres were what Jews and Christians acknowledged as God's creation.

« **What have you heard that these first 4 Trumpets represent? What is God doing here?**

» **Vs. 13: An eagle that was flying in midair** - *Aetou* can mean either "eagle" or "vulture." If the former is in mind, the emphasis is on protection from harm when one is borne up on, or sheltered by, the eagle's wings (Exod. 19:4; Deut. 32:11; Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 91:4; Rev. 12:14; Ps. 18:10; 2). If the meaning is vulture, the picture is of doom, represented by the animal that seeks out corpses to devour (Deut. 28:49; Jer. 48:40; Matt. 24:28; Luke 17:37). The latter meaning, announcing judgment, gains support from Hosea 8:1 where the vulture is also connected with a trumpet. Thus, the appearance of the vulture heightens the terror of the two trumpet judgments to follow.

• **Woe! Woe! Woe!** - The word woe (*ouai*) has an eerie sound—the foreboding voice of doom. It indicates that worse disasters are to follow.

• **To the inhabitants of the earth** - This phrase is consistently used in Revelation for those hostile to God (3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:8; 17:2) and is set over against the saints of God. The plagues fall on the evil society, but like the Israelites in Egypt, the faithful saints who carry God's protective seal are preserved (9:4; see also 1 John 5:18). **The fraction 1/3** represents the fallen who follow Satan (see Rev. 12:3,4). **These plagues do not fall on those with God's seal (see Rev. 7:3 and 9:4).**

« **What does it tell you about God that he will try anything to reach the stubborn sinful hearts of mankind?**

What then is God doing here? The damage is partial ('one third'), not total; which seems to show that the Trumpets are sounding not doom, but warning. The majority of mankind is allowed to survive, being shown God's wrath against sin, and given the chance to repent. Paradoxically, therefore, the miseries of this seal are really kindnesses. The Seals showed the suffering church pleading for justice to be done. But the Trumpets show the wicked world being offered mercy. The offer is not accepted, and the world will not in fact repent (9:20 f.); but let it never be said that God has not done all in his power, even to the devastation of his own once perfect earth, in order to bring men to their senses.

MY PRAYER...

1. Why am I in some ways fearful about the "end times"?
2. How does God need to use me to reach the 1/3 in my world?
3. What new aspect of God's character does He want me to know?



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