

Revelation 8: Silence in Heaven and the First Two Trumpets

Revelation 8:1–9 | Sunday, May 31 | Revelation Series

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OVERVIEW

With the sealing of chapter 7 behind him, Hal returns to the chronology and opens the seventh seal. There is a silence in heaven for about half an hour — an interlude even in heaven, he says, where there had been praise and excitement — and seven angels who stand before God are given seven trumpets. He identifies them as the archangels out of the carefully delineated ranking of angels the Bible describes, and reads the next angel, the one at the golden altar with the censer and the incense, as the high priest, which makes him Jesus. The prayers of the saints go up; the censer comes back down full of fire; and the trumpet judgments begin. Hal calls them the judgment of the thirds, against the fourths of the seal judgments. A third of the earth and of the trees burned, and all the grass and grain with it — trees being the lungs of the planet, grain the staff of life. Hail mixed with fire is the puzzle he spends the rest of the message on, through Ezekiel 38 and the first hydrogen bomb test at Enewetak.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Revelation 8:1–2 — The seventh seal broken; silence in heaven for about half an hour; seven angels given seven trumpets

Revelation 8:3–4 — Another angel at the golden altar with the censer and much incense, added to the prayers of the saints

Revelation 8:5 — The censer filled with fire from the altar and thrown to the earth — thunder, lightning and an earthquake

Revelation 8:7 — The first trumpet: hail and fire mixed with blood; a third of the earth and the trees burned up

Revelation 8:8–9 — The second trumpet: something like a great mountain burning with fire thrown into the sea

Revelation 7 — Where God seals his evangelists before allowing any harm to touch the earth

Revelation 6 — The seal judgments Jesus opened, in which a fourth of the population of the earth was killed

Ezekiel 38:21–22 — Torrential hailstones, fire and brimstone rained on the invader and his troops

KEY TERMS

The seventh seal — the seal Jesus breaks in verse 1; it brings no judgment of its own but silence, and then the giving of the trumpets

Silence in heaven — about half an hour of stillness where there had been praise and excitement — an interlude even in heaven

The seven angels who stand before God — the archangels; angelic rank is carefully delineated and mentioned many times in the Bible — these are not fairy tales, but real great persons

The judgment of the thirds — Hal's name for the trumpet judgments, which destroy a third of everything, against the fourths of the seal judgments

The golden altar of incense — one of only two pieces of furniture in the holy of holies, with the ark of the covenant; the incense pictures the prayers of God's people going up as a sweet essence

The other angel — the one who ministers at the golden altar; since that ministry belongs to the high priest, Hal concludes this angel has to be Jesus

Grass and grain — how Hal translates the "green grass" of verse 7 — grain is the staff of life, and even the animals we eat live on grass and grain

Magog, Meshech and Tubal — the ancient tribes of Ezekiel 38, whose descendants Hal says can only be Russia, the one nation to the extreme north

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Answer from the message itself. Every answer is in the teaching.

1. Where does this message pick up, and what has just happened in the story?

2. What are the seal judgments, and how were they delivered?

3. What happens when Jesus breaks the seventh seal?

4. Who does Hal say those seven angels are?

5. Why does Hal call the silence an interlude?

6. Where does Hal locate the golden altar of incense, and on what grounds?

7. Who does Hal conclude the "other angel" of verse 3 is, and how does he get there?

8. What does the angel do with the censer after the prayers have gone up?

9. What falls at the first trumpet, and what is destroyed?

10. Why does Hal say the loss of the trees and the grain matters so much?

11. What puzzle does “hail and fire mixed” pose, and what parallel does Hal draw from Ezekiel?

12. What does Hal say happened at Enewetak, and what does he take from it?

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Heaven falls silent for half an hour. What do you think that silence is for, and when has silence done something in your own life that words could not?

2. The prayers of the saints go up, and then the fire comes down. What does it do to your praying to see it tied that directly to what happens on earth?

3. Hal insists angels are real great persons, not fairy tales. How much room does your working picture of the world actually leave for them?

4. The judgments move from fourths to thirds, and Hal says this is only the beginning. How do you hold that alongside the God who gives grace before judgment?

5. Hal says it is not God who makes men do this — it is God releasing his restraint. What difference does that distinction make to you?

6. He describes a world unable to feed itself. What would it look like for a believer to be useful, rather than only afraid, in a season like that?

MEMORY VERSE

“And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel’s hand.”

— Revelation 8:4, as Hal reads it in this message