

Lesson # 28 The First Trumpet Judgment Revelation 8: 6-7

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Revelation 8:6-7 (ESV)

⁶Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

⁷The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

I. Introduction to the 7 Trumpets

Once the angel at the altar has thrown the fire from the altar in heaven to the earth, the result is thunder, rumblings, lightning and an earthquake. Directly on the heels of this, the 7 angels prepare to sound their 7 trumpets – cf. Rev. 8:2,6.

The earth & its' inhabitants has been prepared by virtue of the 7 Seals to expect “the other shoe to drop”. People have begun to be aware that, although the events have appeared to be ‘natural’ outcomes of the greed, hatred and warmongering of mankind, a supernatural power is at work here as well. By the 6th Seal (Rev. 6:12-17), people are trying to escape the plagues by calling on the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of God and the Lamb! ①

Try as they might to suppress the truth about God (Rom. 1:18-20), man innately knows that judgment on their wickedness will eventually come – both personally and a time of worldwide reckoning on a grander scale will arrive. Only a foolish, history-denying sinner could look at man’s record of atrocities over thousands of years of world history and conclude that man is deserving of anything but destruction; especially within the last 100 years of our own modern times.

Following a similar pattern to the 7 Seals, the first 4 Trumpets differ from the final 3. The first 4 trigger forces of nature – creation itself – to wreak massive destruction on the natural elements that comprise planet earth as we know it. There are 15 elements affected during the first 4 Trumpets, and 1/3rd receives some devastation in 12 events (except for 8:7,10,11).

The final 3 Trumpets, the onslaught of demonic creatures is unleashed to torment man (but not kill him); a massive army of men (?) / demons (?) forms and advances across the Euphrates River; and after an explanatory interlude (Rev. 10:1-11:14) along with the account of the 2 OT prophet style witnesses, the 7th Trumpet announces the victory of God over the wicked. After the 7 Trumpets have sounded (by 11:19), the Bowl judgments do not occur until Rev. 16:1.

Both the Trumpet & Bowl judgments remind the Bible reader of their similarity to the 10 plagues against Egypt in Ex. 7:14-12:51; many of these plagues paralleling directly one of the plague against Egypt – all judgments against those who oppress God’s people and rebel against Him, as well as providing the means of deliverance for God’s people –

ultimately bringing God great glory. His judgment is just as much a component of His redemptive plan as His deliverance of His elect. Notice the purpose God gives for the plagues He sends on Egypt – cf. Ex. 7:5; 7:17; 8:10; 9:16; 10:2; 11:9; 13:16; 14:4; 14:17-18; 14:31; Josh. 2:9-11; 5:23-24.

The fury of God’s vengeance against the constant historical barrage of sin against His Holy name is displayed in full vibrant colour in the 7 Trumpets, and the 7 Bowls to follow.

II. The First Trumpet

vv. 6-7

We are not told how elaborate the preparation of the 7 angels is as they make ready to blow their trumpets – it may be as simple as arranging themselves in some order and then lifting the trumpets to their lips. We can be sure that this preparatory ceremony adds to the anticipation of what the breaking of the 7th Seal has revealed. The incense and casting of fire to the earth were the signal that it was time to prepare.

i.) Hail, fire and blood

v. 7a

See **Joel 1:15-20**. This 1st Trumpet begins an onslaught against natural objects on earth that the next 3 trumpets will add to. These 4 are inter-dependant and affect the world itself while #'s 5 & 6 are separate and are directed at people themselves. An eagle in **Rev. 8:13** separates the 4 from the final 3.

The judgments that now begin to unfold are the ones held back in **7:3** until the 144,000 could be sealed. ②

There are certainly allusions to the OT found in these judgments, as we’ve already seen in **Joel 1:15-20**, and cf. **Joel 2:30** & **Ex. 9:23-25**; and **Ps. 105:32-33**. Again, we must acknowledge that God is the One who is sending this disastrous vengeance onto the earth. The natural source of the hail, blood and fire – if a natural source can be attributed to these things – could be associated with the storms mentioned in 8:5, coupled with volcanic activity. There is no reason to see this only as symbolic, since literal fulfillment is certainly possible. The “mixed with blood” tends to throw us, as we wonder how blood could be coming down with the fire & hail. And what type of blood is it? Human? Animal?

The answer could be as simple as understanding that the hail & fire are bringing death with them – as the trees are burned up, the earth, the grass...surely there will be a tremendous loss of life during this heavenly bombardment.

ii.) earth, trees and grass

Although some attempt to make the case that this is symbolic language and the earth, the trees and grass are symbols for nations and people, but in Trumpets 3, 5 & 7, these natural objects appear side by side with menⁱ (8:11; 9:4,15). There is really no justifiable reason to allegorize this text because literal interpretation methods allow for what is being described to be scientifically accurate.

The OT prophets often drew on judgments from the Exodus to describe future judgmentsⁱⁱ. There is no need to spiritualize the text here, either to make it somehow blend with some sort of symbolism or because it can't make sense literally.

This judgment wreaks havoc on earth and results in hitherto unknown devastation as 1/3rd of the earth, 1/3rd of the trees and all green grass is burned up. Where the hail devastated the crops and vegetation in Egypt during the Exodus plagues, here the most dangerous aspect seems to be the fire.

Obviously, these elements under attack are extremely important aspects of life on earth and their absence will affect the quality of life – which by this time has already been severely & adversely affected by the 7 Seal judgments. This will now affect not only crops and thus food and livelihoods, but green vegetation produces oxygen and this will now be hampered by 33%.

There is one dilemma to deal with as a result of the mention of “all green grass” being burned up here, because during the 5th Trumpet – **Rev. 9:4** – the demonic locusts are told not to harm the grass. If the grass is all burned up in the first Trumpet, how can it still exist to be ‘left alone’ in the 5th Trumpet? There are 2 plausible explanations for thisⁱⁱⁱ.

1.) A time interval between the 1st & 5th trumpets would allow the grass to grow back to a certain extent
2.) The grass that is burnt is ‘green grass’, therefore it could mean a seasonal aspect, where grass that is not green but dormant in whatever hemisphere is not in growing season when the first judgment falls is not harmed

Either of these explanations make sense so it is not really a contradiction. In any case, this is a horrible and devastating plague which falls on the earth, and is really just the beginning of what will become increasingly obvious supernatural judgments as the tribulation continues to snowball towards the end. ③

Next lesson – Lesson # 29 The Second Trumpet Rev. 8:8-9

ⁱ Robert Thomas; Revelation 8-22; pg. 17

ⁱⁱ IBID – p. 16 – cf. Isa. 10:22-25; 11:12-16; 30:30; Jer. 16:14-15; 23:7-8; Ezek. 38:22; Micah 7:15

ⁱⁱⁱ IBID – pg. 18