

REVELATION CHAPTER 8

GOD'S CONTINUAL WARNING TO REPENT THROUGH THE SEVEN TRUMPETS OF JUDGMENT

PART 1. Revelation 8:1. THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL.

(1) Explanation of the symbols.

8:1 And when he opened (*ao*rist) the seventh (*Greek: hebdomen*) seal (*Greek: sphragis*), there was (*Greek: ginomai*) (*ao*rist) silence (*Greek: sige*) in heaven for about (*Greek: hos*) half an hour (*Greek: hemioron*). The seventh seal represents the unfathomable phenomenon of delay or of slowing down the movement of history towards the end.

(2) The reasons for the delay.

The book of Revelation teaches that bringing the last things on earth to an end is also dependent on what happens in the Church on earth! God has incorporated the following in the process towards the end: the faithful proclamation of the gospel to all the nations (Matthew 24:14), the sanctified prayers of Christians in all the congregations (8:3-5) and the complete submission to God and his plan on earth (6:1-17)! But the Church has lagged behind and has not kept pace with God in heaven and his mighty acts. The Church has been too occupied with worldly affairs (the power politics of church leaders, traditions in congregations that bring disunity among the congregations, false teachings, the prosperity gospel and comfortable living). The Church is not yet ready for the end-time events. The task of proclaiming the gospel has not yet been completed! The Church does not yet pray as they should! The Church is waiting for the Lord to come. But the Lord is waiting for the Church to act! It is not God who is the cause of the delay, but the Church! The Church must pray with greater sincerity, become more mission minded and bear persecution and suffering more willingly!¹

• **There is a delay, because the Church is too little a praying Church (8:3-5).**

First the Church on earth must pray in unison that God's will on earth is carried out (Matthew 6:10; 18:19). The final events on earth can only be executed when the reality on earth corresponds to the reality in heaven.

• **There is a delay, because the Church is too little a missionary Church (chapter 2 and 3).**

The Church is not ready for the final end and she does not long enough for the final fulfilment. The Church is not proclaiming the gospel as she should. The Church is still too much involved in the things of this world and focuses too much on the historical, economical, political and religious events in this world. First the *great commission* of the Church to proclaim the gospel as a testimony to all the nations and to make disciples in all the nations must be accomplished (Matthew 24:14; 28:19)! First the time for the harvest must arrive when the full number of the elect (the genuine Christians) has been gathered into the Kingdom (Romans 11:25-26; Mark 4:29; Revelation 14:14-16).

• **There is a delay, because the Church is too often fleeing from spiritual battles and suffering.**

The Church often refrains from spiritual battles against Satan and his demons, against the godless and wicked world with its false religions, and against the unrighteousness and unholiness of leaders and against the sins of the flesh that attack the heart. The opposition of Satan and his co-workers (the beast out of the sea, the beast out of the earth, the great prostitute Babylon and the kings of the earth) must first reach their highest point in the kingdom of the world before Christ destroys them by the splendour of his coming (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8). God's final and complete retribution will only be rendered on the final judgement day.

• **There is a delay, because the world must ripen for the final judgement (Genesis 15:16).**

Things in the world (their godlessness and wickedness, corruption and lies) are not yet what they really are. The world tries to camouflage her real identity and condition and hides behind progress, affluence, democracy and world peace. First the real nature of the world must be fully revealed as being godless, wicked, corrupt and deceitful. First all things must become what they really are. God's government of the world through the seals of oppression, persecution and afflictions and through the trumpets of judgement brings this about.

(3) The reason for the silence.

In the Old Testament the going forth of the Lord in judgement is introduced by a reference to silence. "Be silent before the Sovereign LORD, for the Day of the LORD is near" (Zephaniah 1:7; cf. Isaiah 41:1; Zechariah 2:13). The silence in heaven in Revelation 8:1 is also a prelude to the terrible judgements of God throughout the New Testament period until the end. The silence in heaven has to do with the delay (10:6) of the final fulfilment of the end. Everything in heaven is ready for the end, but everything on earth is not yet ready for the end!

The seals reveal and execute God's eternal decree: that Christ and his proclamation of the good news are followed by especially the persecution and oppression of Christians, but also by wars and disasters affecting everyone on earth. The seventh seal reveals that there is a delay before God brings his plan of salvation and judgement to a close.

During this delay:

- God sounds his trumpets of warning (chapters 8 and 9)

¹ cf. Bavinck, pp. 210-214

- the gospel is proclaimed amidst persecution (chapters 10 and 11)
- allows Satan and his allies to reveal their real identity (chapters 12 and 13)
- pours out his bowls of final punishments (chapters 15 and 16).

Thus in God's government of the world the seals of oppression, persecution and affliction are again and again followed by the trumpets of judgement. The trumpet judgements are God's initial judgements for their opposition to the cause of Christ and their persecution of Christians. But by these judgements God is constantly calling the ungodly to repent, giving them a chance to repent (9:20-21). God's silence (cf. 2 Peter 3:3-4) is an expression of his patience. He does not want the addressed to perish, but every one of them to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Christ, his gospel and the resulting Church will certainly be victorious. Everyone who rejects Christ or the gospel and persecutes Christians will certainly be affected by his righteous judgements².

These trumpet judgements cause people and things in the world to become more and more what they really are. Nevertheless, all people and all things will become what they really are only right at the end.

The end arrives when:

- all nations have heard the gospel
- all people have been warned to repent
- all the elect have entered the Kingdom of God (i.e. have been saved)
- and all evil (unholiness and unrighteousness) has reached its highest peak in the kingdom of the final antichrist

Everyone in heaven is waiting for the final salvation of God's people and the final judgement of his enemies. That is why there is an unbearable tension and silence in heaven!

There is a delay towards the end and it is God who causes this delay! This delay is an expression of God's patience. The "half hour" in heaven projected against the history of the world on earth appears to have already lasted two millennia! Nevertheless, the fact that the time is halved (i.e. half an hour instead of an hour) depicts that this time is divinely limited.

Heaven is the place of joy and full salvation. It is the place where sin, lack and sorrow are absent (7:15-17; 21:4). And yet the heavenly beings are struck with silence. This is remarkable. They are not silent because they think that God's punishments are too severe or because they sympathise with the fate of the sinful world. They are silent in great awe at God's majesty, holiness and righteousness and in deep regret that the world and its people harden their hearts and do not turn away from their godlessness and wickedness in spite of all that which God in Christ is doing (cf. the lament of Jesus in Matthew 23:37). Although God's perfect holiness and righteousness demands that people live perfect lives and that all ungodliness and wickedness must be punished, God is perfectly patient (the first characteristic of love in 1 Cor 13:4-8) and he gives people a chance to repent!³ God's silence indicates that he does not inflict judgements willingly. "'Say to them: As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek 33:11). In a way the silence points to something terrible that is coming. This silence is finally broken with the peals of thunder, rumblings (lit. voices, sounds, exclamations), flashes of lightning and an earthquake (8:5).

The seventh seal of silence in heaven reveals God's moral principle of governing the world, namely, that "*throughout world history*, the seals of persecution ever give rise to the trumpets of judgement".

(4) Different views about the seventh seal of silence (8:1).

A futurist view. The seventh seal of silence in heaven is the period of silence for the awful judgements that were to burst forth on the earth under the seven trumpets, the even more awful judgements of the seven bowls under the seventh trumpet and the judgements up to the beginning of the future millennial kingdom. All are judgements *during the end of the future tribulation period* (Larkin)⁴.

A second view (possible). The seventh seal of silence in heaven is the awesome prelude to the terrible judgements of God on the impenitent *during the whole New Testament period* (Greijdanus, Groenewald)⁵.

A third view (possible). The seventh seal of silence in heaven reveals God's moral principle of governing the world, namely, that "*throughout world history*, the seals of persecution ever give rise to the trumpets of judgement" (Hendriksen)⁶.

The best explanation. The seventh seal of silence in heaven is connected to the riddle of the delay (the slowing down of the movement of the apocalyptic events) and God's patience *throughout the whole New Testament period* towards the final end (Bavinck)⁷.

² Hendriksen p.140

³ Greijdanus pp.139,141-142, Groenewald pp. 100-101

⁴ Larkin, Revelation p.68

⁵ Greijdanus pp.139,141-142, Groenewald pp. 100-101

⁶ Hendriksen p.140

⁷ cf. Bavinck, pp. 210-214

PART 2. Revelation 8:2. INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVEN TRUMPETS.

(1) Explanation of the symbols.

8:2 And I saw (*ao*rist) the seven angels who stand (*Greek: histemi, steso, esteka, hesteka*)(*perfect*) before God. The angels that stand before God's throne are a very high order of angels (Luke 1:19). That fact points to the greatness of their task and show that they act on behalf of God's honour and majesty and with very great authority and power. In Jewish tradition there are seven *archangels* (apocryphal Tobit 12:15). The number 7 indicates that they are a specific group of angels appointed by God for a specific task (cf. 15:1).

and to them were given (*ao*rist) seven trumpets (*Greek: salpigx*). God in his sovereign power gave these trumpets to his angels. This signifies that what happens (the warning judgements) is determined by God and is dependent on God. Although the violent forces of nature (8:7-12), the fearsome forces of hell (9:1-11) and the evil forces of mankind itself (9:16-19) are active when these judgements strike, they are no more than *instruments* in God's sovereign hands and serve his sovereign plan (Isa 10:5-6; Isaiah 14:24-27; Amos 3:6)! God is called "he who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (14:7). Compare this with the first four trumpet judgements that affect the earth, the sea, the springs of water and the constellations in heaven or the universe (8:7-12).

The trumpets are a symbol of God's initial warning judgements on a godless and wicked world. These judgements serve as punishments for the oppressions, persecutions and seductions of people who refuse to repent (9:20-21) and as warnings for the rest of mankind to repent before it is too late. The trumpet judgements cause suffering. Suffering is God's megaphone calling people to give attention to his reality, his nearness and his message (the Word). These judgements do not symbolise single and separate events that occur only once in history somewhere in the future only⁸, but refer to woes and calamities that will occur again and again and at any time anywhere throughout the whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. The trumpet judgements affect non-Christians and Christians alike, but because Christians are sealed they will never suffer damnation in hell.

The number 7 is a symbol of divine completeness and perfection. Here it indicates that God's intended task (judgement and warning) through the angels will be carried out fully (completely, perfectly) until the final judgement day has arrived and the kingdoms of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ (11:15,18). No one in history will be able to say on the final judgement day that he never knew (Romans 3:19) or that he has never been warned.

The trumpet judgements affect a third of the earth, the sea, the water sources and the constellations in the universe. The trumpet judgements are very serious warnings. Symbolically they strike a third of mankind and the environment of man with judgements and call the other two-thirds of mankind to repentance (9:20-21)! Earthquakes on earth; tsunamis in the sea; droughts, floods and pollution effected by water resources; and the climate affected by the sun are all examples of God's trumpet judgements.

The trumpet judgements (except the fifth) also affect Christians and also Christians suffer under these judgements! But Christians have been sealed and are protected before against *the final destruction and doom* of these judgements (7:1-4). That is why the sovereign God specifically instructs the locusts not to harm the believers, but only the unbelievers, that is, those who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads (9:4).

PART 3. Revelation 8:3-5. THE GOLDEN CENSER.

(1) Explanation of the symbols.

8:3 And another (*Greek: allos*) angel came (*ao*rist) and took his place (*Greek: histemi*)(*ingressive aorist*) at the altar (*Greek: thusiasterion*) having (*present*) a golden (*Greek: chrusous*) censer (*Greek: libanotos*). In the vision of the temple in heaven, an angel with a golden censer came and stood at the golden altar. The altar and censer are golden because they are employed in the service of God in heaven. It does not refer to the altar of burnt-offering (6:9), but to the altar of incense (8:3), which stood in front of the curtain that separated the ark of the Testimony from the people (Exodus 30:1-8).

In the Old Testament the ark of Testimony standing in the Most Holy Place was a symbol of God's throne and God's presence (1 Chronicles 13:6). The altar of incense was separated from the ark of Testimony by a curtain. The curtain was a symbol that "the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been opened as long as the first tabernacle was still standing" (Hebrews 9:7-8).

However now in the New Testament period the curtain has been removed (Matthew 27:51) and the altar of incense stands directly in front of God's throne without any separation in between. This is a symbol that Christians have the complete freedom to approach the throne of grace with confidence so that they may receive mercy and find grace to help in their time of need (Hebrews 4:16; cf. Ephesians 2:18; Ephesians 3:12,20)!

and he was given (*ao*rist) much incense (*Greek: thumiama*) to offer (*future*) with the prayers (*Greek: proseuche*) of all the saints (*Greek: hagios*), on the golden altar before the throne. In chapter 5 the golden bowls full of incense (5:8)

⁸ As the followers of dispensational teaching say.

represent the prayers of the saints (the Christians). The golden colour signifies that praying is a high and glorious service in God's eyes.

Here in chapter 8 the angel was "given" (by God) much incense⁹. He offers this incense together with the prayers of all the saints. This incense is not produced by the saints or brought by the angel. Thus, while incense signifies the prayers of the saints in Revelation 5:8, it signifies the prayers of the exalted Christ in Revelation 8:3! The prayers of the saints cannot rise to God by itself, because people are sinners and wrong cleaves to the prayers of even the most righteous among people. In order to please God, atonement of sins of people must take place and. Prayers that are heard and answered by God must be connected to the Mediator, Jesus Christ. "Until now you have not asked for anything in my Name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete" (John 16:24). The imperfect prayers of Christians are mixed with the perfect prayers of Jesus Christ before they rise up to God. The "much incense" represents Christ's completed work of salvation (atonement) which he attained on the cross and which he applies through the Holy Spirit and his own intercessory prayers for his people (his Church). It represents the continual and perfect intercessions of Christ in heaven for Christians on earth, not least for his persecuted Church on earth (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:24-25; Hebrews 9:24). The perfect prayers of Christ purify and sanctify the imperfect prayers of Christians on earth. The prayers of Christ remove every sinful motive and all selfishness from their prayers. The prayers of Christ cause the incomplete and imperfect prayers of Christians to rise as complete and perfect prayers to God!

"The saints" (cf. 13:7). The word "saints" means the people that are set apart from the wicked world in order to be dedicated to God within this wicked world (John 17:11,14). The Christians in Rome are saints by virtue of having been effectively called to belong to Christ (Romans 1:6-7). The letters in the New Testament are addressed to the saints, that is, to Christians (1 Corinthians 14:33; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 4:21). The saints are the born-again Christians that have been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ from every nation in the world (5:8-10). The saints, that is, the Christians are throughout the whole New Testament period being persecuted by the antichrists in the world (1 John 2:18) (13:7), but they remain faithful to Jesus (14:12). At the final judgement the saints will rejoice together with the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles (18:20). There is no evidence in the Bible that "the saints" are only Jews or Jews in the period after the so-called removal of the Church from the earth as the futurist view asserts. The saints are Christians *from* Christ's first coming (12:5-6) *up to* Christ's second coming (13:7)!

The prayers of the saints certainly include the following. They ask God to confuse the wicked (Psalm 55:9) and cause their evil plans to fail. They ask forgiveness for their enemies (Luke 6:27-28; Luke 23:34). They entrust themselves to God who judges justly about their difficult situation of persecution and oppression (1 Pet 2:21-23). They pray prayers as Colossians 1:9-12 for themselves and other Christians. They intercede for the salvation of people and their governments (1 Tim 2:1-6). They pray for open doors and open hearts to proclaim the gospel (Colossians 4:2-4). And they pray that God's kingdom or kingship may spread externally to more places and internally to many hearts (Matthew 6:10a; Matthew 13:31-33)!

8:4 and the smoke (*Greek: kapnos*) of the incense (*Greek: thumiama*), together with the prayers of the saints, went up (*aorist*) before God from the angel's hand. The prayers of Christians that rise as smoke before God's throne symbolise that God in heaven hears and answers the prayers of Christians on earth, no matter how imperfect! They are heard and accepted "in the name of Jesus Christ", that is, on the ground of Christ's completed work of salvation. That is why Christ taught his disciples to pray "in his name" (John 16:24). And that is why Christians confidently pray: "Not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42)!

8:5 and (then) the angel took (*Greek: lambano, lempsomai, elabon, eilepha*)(*perfect*) the censer (*Greek: libanoton*) and filled (*Greek: gemo*)(*aorist*) it with fire from the altar and hurled (*Greek: ballo*)(*aorist*) it on the earth. The censer, now emptied of its incense, is filled with fire from the altar in heaven and the fire is hurled onto the wicked earth. Fire is reserved as the judgement for the godless and wicked (Matthew 3:10-12; Matthew 13:40-42). God in heaven hears and accepts the prayers of Christians, who suffer slaughtering and oppression on earth. God's judgements upon the earth are God's answer to these prayers. The angel hurled the fire from heaven onto the earth, that is, the wicked people in the world are struck from above, from heaven (cf. 8:7). This symbolises that Christ uses these judgments as his instruments to punish and to warn. These judgements in so far they affect Christians are not to punish Christians, but to sanctify them (Romans 5:3-5; 1 Peter 1:6-7; James 1:2-4) and to extend his kingdom (Romans 8:28).

and there came (*Greek: ginomai*)(*aorist*) peals of thunder (*Greek: bronte*), rumblings (*sound, tone, noise, voice*)(*Greek: phone*), flashes of lightning (*Greek: astrape*) and an earthquake (*Greek: seismos*). These awesome signs in the air and on the earth symbolise the majestic manifestation of God whenever he reveals his will (cf. Exodus 20:18). They symbolize that the hurling of fire on the earth is not simply natural disasters (or actions of supernatural powers), but a response authorised by God's command. They symbolise the awesome majesty, exalted glory, immense power and terrible justice of God (4:5). And they symbolise that the events on earth are now definitely moving towards their final fulfilment. Things and people are becoming more and more what they really are!

(2) Christians who have already died do not pray for Christians still alive on earth.

⁹ The verb is a divine passive indicating that God is the subject.

The view that Christians who have already died and are in heaven pray for people and events on earth, is not correct. The Bible is against praying *for* the dead (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:29). The Bible is also against praying *to* the dead (Isaiah 8:19-20). And the Bible is against praying *by* the dead (1 Timothy 2:5). Those asleep in Jesus are not unconscious about what happens in heaven, but are unconscious of what happens on earth. That is why they cannot pray for people still on earth.

Isaiah 63:16 says that the forefathers Abraham and Jacob, who had died long ago, do not know or acknowledge the Israelites still living on earth. And Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 says that people, who have died, never again have a part in anything that happens under the sun (cf. Job 14:21). God forbids Christians to follow the practice of non-Christian nations who consult their dead (Deuteronomy 18:9-12)! God puts a curse on every person who depends on human beings, whether they are still alive or already dead (Jeremiah 17:5-6). In heaven there is only one Mediator between God and people (1 Timothy 2:5) and only one who prays for us, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

Conclusion: the departed Christians in heaven do not pray for us on earth and Christians are forbidden to pray to so-called "saints" who are now in heaven.

(3) Different views about the saints and their prayers (8:3-5).

A futurist view. The saints are the saints of *the future tribulation period*. Their prayers concern their deliverance from their enemies and their cry for vengeance on their enemies. They are not Christians, but Jews and Gentiles who believe in the message of the Jews about the (Jewish) millennial kingdom. The judgements on earth that follows the sounding of the seven trumpets and the outpouring of the seven bowls are answers to their prayers (Larkin)¹⁰.

A second view. The saints are *Christians who have already died and are in heaven*. Their prayers affect God's judgements on earth (Robert H. Mounce)¹¹. Scripture is against prayers *for* the dead. It is also against praying *to* the dead. But, apparently, it is not against prayers *of (by)* the dead. Those asleep in Jesus are not unconscious, but are engaged in praying for us. Thus, both the saints on earth as well as the departed saints in heaven pray and thus participate in Christ's reign over the present history. Their prayers affect God's judgements in the history on earth.

Remarks. Isaiah 63:16 says that the forefathers Abraham and Jacob, who had died long ago, do not know or acknowledge the Israelites still living on earth. And Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 says that people, who have died, never again have a part in anything that happens under the sun (cf. Job 14:21). God forbids Christians to follow the practice of non-Christian nations who consult their dead (Deuteronomy 18:9-12)! God puts a curse on every person who depends on human beings, whether they are still alive or already dead (Jeremiah 17:5-6). In heaven there is only one Mediator between God and people (1 Tim 2:5) and only one who prays for us, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1). Conclusion: the departed Christians in heaven do not pray for us on earth and Christians are forbidden to pray to so-called 'saints' who are now in heaven.

The correct explanation. The saints are Christians living on the earth *throughout the whole New Testament period*.

PART 4. Revelation 8:6-7. THE BLOWING OF THE FIRST TRUMPET.

(1) Explanation of the symbols.

8:6 And (then) the seven angels who had (*present*) the seven trumpets (*Greek: salpigx*) prepared (*Greek: hetoimazo*) (*aorist*) to sound (*Greek: salpizo*)(*subjunctive, aorist*) them. As a result of the prayers of Christians on earth the seven angels prepare to blow their trumpets. Now that the relationship between the prayers of Christians on earth and God's present judgements on the wicked has been shown, the seven angels prepare to execute their judgements. The angels will take turns to blow their trumpets. Everything, even God's judgements, happens in order, happen at the exact time that is determined by God and will be perfectly just (15:3b) and complete (the number 7 is the divine perfect number)!

8:7 The first (angel) sounded his trumpet (*Greek: salpizo*)(*aorist*) and there came (*Greek: ginomai*)(*aorist*) hail (*Greek: chalaza*) and fire mixed (*Greek: meignummi, memigmenos*)(*perfect*) with blood (*Greek: haima*). Hail is used as an instrument of God's judgement in Scripture (16:21; Joshua 10:11; Isaiah 28:17; Isaiah 32:19). Fire speaks of judgement and blood speaks of death. It is possible that the colour of the blood refers to fire and the red-hot sky when a third of the land is burned, but is rather a reference to the fact that many people die as a result of this judgement.

and it was hurled (*Greek: ballo*)(*aorist*) to the earth. The first trumpet judgement affects the earth or *land*. Compare the seventh plague on Egypt (Exodus 9:23-26). Hail and fire, mixed with blood, is hurled onto the earth and a third of the earth with its trees and green vegetation is burned up. These symbols emphasise the *destructive* nature of God's judgements.

and a third (*Greek: triton*) of the earth was burned up (*Greek: katakaiio*)(*aorist*), a third of the trees (*Greek: dendron*) were burned up (*aorist*), and all the green (*Greek: gloros*) grass (*Greek: chortos*) was burned up (*aorist*). In Revelation 7:3 the four angels were commanded not to harm the land or the sea or the trees until the servants of God were sealed.

¹⁰ Larkin, Revelation p. 69

¹¹ Robert H. Mounce, The Book of Revelation, p. 182

But here in Revelation 8:7 a third of the earth, its trees and green grass is burned up! The Christians have been sealed (protected against eternal doom) and therefore the warning judgements of God may be executed. The emphasis is on “burned up” (three times). The number 3 is the number of the Triune God and it symbolises that this is *a divine judgement*. Destruction of food resources (grass, plants and trees) will cause scarcity (hunger) for both people and animals. This judgement is not limited to just one event. Throughout the ages, drought caused by the burning of the sun, forest fires and other fires will cause enormous destruction on earth. It will only increase with time and in the end it will be the worst.

(2) The first trumpet judgement.

The first trumpet judgement represents disasters that will take place on earth, that is, on the land throughout the whole New Testament period as a warning of the coming final judgement. These calamities, of whatever nature they may be, are controlled by God in heaven! The first trumpet judgement emphasises that God’s judgements are destructive.

(3) Different views about the first trumpet judgement (8:7).

A futurist view. The first trumpet judgement is literally hail, fire and blood, which the Jews will suffer *during the second half of the future tribulation period* (Larkin).

A second view. The first trumpet judgement is literally the destruction of a great part of the vegetation and food resources on earth through fires *throughout the whole New Testament period* as a warning of the coming final judgement (Greijdanus, Groenewald)¹².

The correct explanation. The first trumpet judgement represents disasters that will take place on earth, that is, on the land *throughout the whole New Testament period* as a warning of the coming final judgement. These calamities, of whatever nature they may be, are controlled by God in heaven (Hendriksen)¹³!

PART 5. Revelation 8:8-9. THE BLOWING OF THE SECOND TRUMPET.

(1) Explanation of the symbols.

8:8 and the second (*Greek: deuteros*) angel sounded his trumpet (*Greek: salpizo*)(aorist) and something *what looked like* (*Greek: hos*) a huge mountain (*Greek: oros*) blazing (*Greek: kaio*)(present) with fire was thrown (*Greek: ballo*)(aorist) into the sea. Thus it was not a real mountain, but “something like a huge mountain”. The figure of a mountain falling into the sea is the most vivid symbol of awe-inspiring maritime calamities (6:14; Job 9:5-6; Psalm 46:2; Ezekiel 38:20).

It does not refer to any specific event in history like the volcanic outburst of Vesuvius in A.D. 79 that buried Pompei and Herculaneum under lava in the sea. There is also no compelling reason to explain “the mountain” as a symbol of a nation (Babylon as a mountain)(Jeremiah 51:25) and particularly the nation of Israel, and to explain “the sea” as representing the Gentile nations (17:15; Psalm 93:3-4; Isaiah 8:7) and then interpret the sentence as the nation of Israel being dispersed among the Gentile nations. The dispersion of Israel has already taken place since the exile of Israel to Assyria (722 B.C.) and the exile of Judah to Babylon (586 B.C.).

In agreement with the interpretation of the whole book of Revelation, it is rather a symbolic presentation of God’s wrath that causes enormous destruction in and on the seas and causes terror among people. The second trumpet judgement affects the *sea*.

and a third (*Greek: triton*) of the sea became (turned into) (*Greek: ginomai*)(aorist) blood.

8:9 and a third of the creatures (*Greek: ktisma*) in the sea having (present) souls (life) (*Greek: psuche*) died (*Greek: apothnesko, apethanon*)(aorist), and a third of the ships (*Greek: ploion*) were destroyed (*Greek: diaphtheiro, diephtharen*)(aorist). Three areas are affected: the water of the sea, the creatures in the sea and the ships sailing on the sea. The number “3” is the number of the Triune God and it symbolises that this is *a divine judgement*. The description of a third of the waters turning into blood (Exodus 7:20) describes the terrible disturbance caused in the sea and enhances the terror among people. The fact that a third of the living creatures in the sea died shows that they were killed violently and did not simply die a natural death. Throughout the ages, disasters like floods (tsunamis), sinking ships and havoc caused by sea pollution, etc. are permitted by God and cause enormous destruction at sea. It will only increase with time and in the end it will be the worst.

¹² Greijdanus p. 142, Groenewald p. 104

¹³ Hendriksen p.143

(2) The second trumpet judgement.

The second trumpet judgement represents disasters that will take place throughout the whole New Testament period on and in the sea as a warning of the coming final judgement. The second trumpet judgement emphasises the destruction and terror of God's judgements.

(3) Different views about the second trumpet judgement (8:8-9).

A futurist view. The second trumpet judgement is literally an immense meteoric mass ablaze with fire that will be hurled in the Mediterranean Sea *during the second half of the future tribulation period.*

The correct explanation. The second trumpet judgement represents disasters that will take place on and in the sea *throughout the whole New Testament period* as a warning of the coming final judgement (Greijdanus, Hendriksen, Groenewald)¹⁴.

PART 6. Revelation 8:10-11. THE BLOWING OF THE THIRD TRUMPET.

(1) Explanation of the symbols.

8:10 and the third (*Greek: tritos*) angel sounded his trumpet (*Greek: salpizo*)(aorist), and a great star (*Greek: aster*), blazing (*Greek: kaio*)(present) like a torch (*Greek: lampas*), fell (*Greek: pipto*)(aorist) from the sky (*Greek: ouranos*) on a third of the rivers (*Greek: potamos*) and on the springs (*Greek: pege*) of water. Like the blazing mountain, the blazing star is probably a symbol. Normally, stars stand fixed in the sky. Thus a falling star that is also ablaze is a *ominous* symbol.

The blazing star dropping out of the sky symbolises that this judgement is an act of God, not merely a natural disaster. The media has secularised God's acts on earth. They report calamities (floods, earthquakes, epidemics) in their newspapers and TV shows, but fail to say that these calamities are judgements and warnings from God! The world does not occupy itself with God or his message!

The third trumpet judgement affects the water sources on the land: the rivers and fountains produce bitter and deadly water (Jeremiah 23:15). The symbol emphasises the unpredictable and threatening nature of God's judgements.

8:11 and the name of the star is called (*Greek: lego*)(present) Wormwood (*Greek: apsinthos*). Wormwood is a bitter plant, also *regarded* as poisonous. It is a symbol of bitter sorrow (Lam 3:19) The hearts of the wicked are filled with bitter sorrow. The wicked persecutors nowhere find rest, peace or lasting enjoyment. "The wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. There is no peace", says my God, "for the wicked" (Isaiah 57:20-21).

and a third of the waters turned (GReek: ginomai)(aorist) bitter (Greek: apsinthon), and many people died (Greek: apothnesko)(aorist) from the waters that had become bitter (Greek: pikraino)(aorist). Without water, man cannot live. Man's need for water summarises everything man needs to maintain life. The rivers and fountains are the sources of drinking water and its pollution by wormwood causes enormous droughts, famines, all kinds of diseases and death. The picture symbolises the disturbance and destruction of whatever serves the livelihood of mankind: food, agriculture, industry and commerce – all of which are dependent on water. Throughout the ages, the absence of water and the pollution of water will cause enormous destruction on earth. It will only increase with time and in the end it will be the worst.

(2) The third trumpet judgement.

The third trumpet judgement represents disasters through unpredictable and ominous events that will take place on a great part of the water sources on earth throughout the whole New Testament period as a warning of the coming final judgement. The third trumpet judgement emphasises that God's judgements are unpredictable, ominous, bitter and deadly.

(3) Different views about the third trumpet judgement (8:3-5).

A futurist view. The third trumpet judgement is *doubtless* another meteor *during the second half of the future tribulation period* (Larkin)¹⁵.

The correct explanation. The third trumpet judgement represents disasters through unpredictable and ominous events that will take place on a great part of the water sources on earth *throughout the whole New Testament period* as a warning of the coming final judgement (Greijdanus, Hendriksen, Groenewald)¹⁶.

¹⁴ Greijdanus p. 143, Hendriksen p. 143, Groenewald p. 104

¹⁵ Larkin, Revelation p. 72

¹⁶ Greijdanus p. 144, Hendriksen pp. 143-144, Groenewald pp. 104-105

PART 7. Revelation 8:8-12. THE BLOWING OF THE FOURTH TRUMPET.

(1) Explanation of the symbols.

8:12 and the fourth (*Greek: tetartos*) angel sounded his trumpet (*Greek: salpizo*)(*aorist*) and a third of the sun was struck (*Greek: plesso, eplegen*)(*aorist*), a third of the moon (*Greek: selene*), and a third of the stars (*Greek: aster*) so that a third of them turned dark (*Greek: skotizo*)(*aorist*). The fourth trumpet judgement affects the heavenly bodies. Compare this with the ninth plague in Egypt (Ex 10:21-23).

and a third of the day (*Greek: hemera*) did not shine (*Greek: phainomai*)(*subjunctive, aorist*), and also a third of the night (*Greek: nux*). The mentioning of the word 'third' serves to show the long duration of darkness. Three areas are affected. The number 3 is the number of the Triune God and it symbolises that this is *a divine judgement*. This trumpet judgement does not merely refer to a normal eclipse of the sun, but to divine interventions in the functioning of the heavenly bodies. God uses even the stars to fight against his enemies. Judges 5:20-21 probably refers to a great rainstorm, darkening the stars, accompanied by hailstones (Josh 10:11) and flooding of the Kishon River. But here the causes are much greater. The long periods of darkness are a repeated warning for the final darkening of the heavenly bodies on the final judgement day (6:12-13; Matthew 24:29). The absence of sunlight for long periods of time that is needed for growth and health will cause much misery. Possible examples may include severe air pollution, climate changes and enormous tropical storms. Lack of sunlight and darkness will bring work to a standstill (Exodus 10:23). God uses the entire universe, including the sun, moon and stars, to judge and warn people. Throughout the ages, the absence of sunlight and daylight will cause enormous destruction on earth. It will only increase with time and in the end it will be the worst.

(2) The fourth trumpet judgment.

The fourth trumpet judgement represents disasters through ominous events that will take place in the universe, affecting the light of the sun, moon and stars on earth throughout the whole New Testament period as a warning of the coming final judgement. The symbol emphasises that the judgements of God are ominous and terrifying.

(3) The trumpet judgements.

The trumpet judgements are God's initial judgements that punish the unrepentant and warn all other people to repent throughout the whole New Testament period (9:20-21). They are God's response to the seals of oppression, persecution and disasters in answer to the prayers of Christians (8:5). The wicked people on earth are struck by disasters that affect the various parts of the universe: the land (earth), the sea, the land-waters and even the heavenly bodies. Nowhere is there safety for the godless and the wicked!

(4) Different views about the fourth trumpet judgement (8:12).

A futurist view. The fourth trumpet judgement is similar to what happened under the sixth seal (6:12-17). They are *not final events*, but great physical convulsions (darkness and an earthquake) that would shake the earth *during the second half of the future tribulation period* (Larkin)¹⁷.

The correct explanation. The fourth trumpet judgement represents disasters through ominous events that will take place in the universe, affecting the light of the sun, moon and stars on earth *throughout the whole New Testament period* as a warning of the coming final judgement (Greijsdanus, Hendriksen, Groenewald)¹⁸.

(5) Different views about the trumpet judgements.

A futurist view. The trumpet judgements are more concentrated judgements than the seal judgements, are directed against the Jews and occur *only during the second half of the future tribulation period* (Larkin)¹⁹.

A second futurist view. The trumpet judgements are all drastic physical judgements *only during the second half of the future tribulation period*. While the seals are general judgements, the trumpets are more specific, drastic and final judgements (Tenney)²⁰.

A third view. The trumpet judgements are to a certain extent a repetition of the seal judgements, but only with greater intensity *throughout the whole New Testament period*. While under the seals only *one quarter* of the earth was affected (6:8), under the trumpets *one third* of the earth is affected (Groenewald)²¹.

The best explanation. The trumpet judgements are God's initial judgements that punish the unrepentant and warn all other people to repent *throughout the whole New Testament period* (9:20-21). They are God's response to the seals of oppression and persecution and the prayers of Christians (8:5). The wicked people on earth are struck by disasters that

¹⁷ Larkin, Revelation p. 72

¹⁸ Greijsdanus pp. 144-145, Hendriksen p. 144, Groenewald p.105

¹⁹ Larkin, Revelation p.68, cf. his 6th seal on p. 60

²⁰ Tenney pp.74-75

²¹ Groenewald p. 103

affect the various parts of the universe: the land (earth), the sea, the land-waters and even the heavens (universe). Nowhere is there safety for the wicked (Greijdanus, Hendriksen)²².

(6) The number “one third”.

Each trumpet judgement destroys “one third” area. Although the destruction is enormous, the number symbolizes that God in his sovereignty limits and controls every disaster.

(7) The trumpet judgements and the plagues of Egypt.

The descriptions of these disasters resemble the ten plagues in Egypt:

- the seventh plague of hail and lightning (Exodus 9:23-24)
- the eighth plague of locusts (Exodus 10:12-15)
- and the ninth plague of darkness covering Egypt for three days (Exodus 10:21-23)

But the descriptions of the trumpet judgements are nevertheless far more terrible:

- hail and fire mixed with blood
- locusts that do not hurt grass or trees, but people!
- darkness covering a third of the day and night on the whole earth

While the plagues in the Old Testament only affected one country (Egypt), the plagues in the New Testament affect every country, the whole creation and throughout the whole New Testament period! The descriptions serve to emphasise their destructive nature, their terror and their bitter results.

PART 8. Revelation 8:8-13. THE EAGLE FLYING IN MID-AIR.

(1) Explanation of the symbols.

8:13 and I saw (*Greek: horao, opsomai, eidon, ophthen, heoraka*)(*aorist*), I heard (*Greek: akouo*)(*aorist*) an eagle (*Greek: aetos*) that was flying (*Greek: petomai*)(*present*) in midair (*Greek: mesouranema*). John sees and hears an eagle flying in mid-air. It flies so high so that all people are able to hear it and it flies with such powerful wings that all people are able to hear it fly. The eagle is a bird of prey, which bodes evil (Matthew 24:28). It announces destruction and death.

calling out (*present*) in a loud voice: Woe (*Greek: ouai*)! Woe! Woe! to the inhabitants (*Greek: katoikeo*)(*present*) of the earth, because of (*Greek: ek*) the rest (*Greek: loipos*) of the blasts (*Greek: phone*) of the trumpets of (by) the three angels about to be (*Greek: mello*)(*present*) sounded (*Greek: salpizo*)(*present*)! The eagle warns all inhabitants of the earth, unbelievers as well as believers, with a three-fold “woe” that the remaining three trumpets of judgement will be worse than the first four, because they will affect people *directly*. They will affect the soul, the wellbeing and the eternal destiny of people. Although Christians will also be struck by these judgements and suffer under them, they are sealed and protected against the final destruction (eternal doom) of their souls.

The “woe” is not only a warning, but also a call to repentance and conversion for the unbelievers (9:20-21). The number “3” is the number of the Trinity. The three woes symbolise that they are nothing less than *divine judgements* and at the same time *God’s complete warning and final call to repentance and conversion*. It is still the time of God’s grace – repentance and conversion are still possible!

- “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth” (Proverbs 27:1)
- “Now is the time of God’s favour, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:1-2)!

²² Greijdanus pp. 141-142, Hendriksen pp. 140-141