

Bible Study Revelation 8-9

Seventh Seal: Prelude to the Seven Trumpets

8:1 When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

“Since the King of Creation is coming, and every angelic and supernatural power astounded at the exceeding greatness of the glory of Him Who was coming, for that reason became silent” (Oecumenius, 6th century)

“The ‘half hour’ shows the shortness of time, for when the plagues come and the events of the consummation upon the earth are occurring, the Kingdom of Christ will appear” (Andrew of Caesarea, early 6th century).

Silence in a large group is a sign of anticipation of a major event about to happen. We experience this sensation at Pascha, when the lights are turned out, and we wait a brief time for the lighting of the first candle, and the chant “Come and receive the light that is of the light that is never overcome by darkness.”

Chapters 6 and 7 described the “seal judgements,” with conquest, conflict, scarcity, widespread death, the cry of the martyrs, and cosmic disturbances. These judgements were fearful, and can be viewed as applying to the Church age, as well as the end times. These are what Christ described as:

“And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:6-8).

However, Chapters 8 and 9 mark an increase in the intensity of the woes that will befall the earth, worse than the previous ones. They are so intense that they appear more likely to describe the end times at the end of the Church age.

“And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:22).

These judgements are often called the Trumpet Judgements:

“² And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.”

In the Bible, trumpets are often used to signal action. At Mt. Sinai, God commanded: “You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, ‘Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death... When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain” (Exodus 19:12-14).

At the Jewish harvest feast, God said: “*Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation’*” (Leviticus 23:23-24).

During Israel’s wandering in the desert, God commanded: “*Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps*” (Numbers 10:2).

When the Israelites conquered Jericho, it was the blowing of the trumpets that caused the walls to collapse: “*So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city*” (Joshua 6:20).

When Christ returns and raises the dead, St. Paul writes: “...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52). “*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

We should use these biblical uses of trumpets as context to understand the use of trumpets in Revelation. In the end times, trumpets will call the suffering Church to come near, gather, move, conquer, and prepare for Christ’s return.

“³ Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand.”

This is how we Orthodox are accustomed to see incense. It is a rich symbol of our prayers lifted up to heaven and joined with the prayers of the saints. (It is also a symbol of the presence of the Holy Spirit). Incense is burned on hot coal in the censer, but now John saw the hot coal in the censer used as an instrument of judgement:

“⁵ Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.”

“Behold, I approach for Holy Communion, O Creator, burn me not as I partake, for You are fire which burns the unworthy. Wherefore, do You cleanse me from every stain...Tremble, O mortal, beholding the divine Blood, for it is to the unworthy as a live coal...”

The hot coal of the heavenly censer is now applied as a judgement on the earthly unworthy.

The Trumpet Judgements describe supernatural devastations of nature. The natural world partook of the Fall along with humanity. “*For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now*” (Romans 8:22). In the Trumpet Judgements, nature’s “groaning in the pains of childbirth” reaches unprecedented heights.

First Trumpet: Vegetation Struck

Each generation of Christians reads the book of Revelation and tries to understand it in terms they understand according to their times. For example, the deadly eruption of Mt. Vesuvius erupted in the 1st century, and the bubonic plague of the 14th century, caused many Christians to attribute the calamities to the book of Revelation. We can try understand the apocalyptic events in Revelation according to our current world, but we must understand that our speculations are just that – speculations. They may be right, or they may be wrong as were previous speculations.

“⁷ The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.”



Second Trumpet: The Seas Struck

“⁸ Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea...”

We do not know what this *“great mountain burning with fire thrown into the sea is”* will be. We can only speculate. We have access to science, and that science reveals this description resembles an asteroid strike into an ocean.



“¹¹ The name of the star is Wormwood... and a third of the sea became blood. ⁹ And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”

If the “*great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea*” was an asteroid strike into, then that would cause a huge tsunami, which would destroy many ships.



Third Trumpet: The Waters Struck

“¹⁰ Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water...and a third of the sea became blood...and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.”



Fourth Trumpet: The Heavens Struck

“¹² Then the fourth angel sounded: 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 were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.”

Today, we know that when an asteroid strike that hits the land, or a super volcano eruption, or widespread nuclear explosions, would throw thousands of tons of earth and debris up into the upper atmosphere. Those particles would block out the sun as described here, with catastrophic consequences.



National Park Service

ARTICLE

1816 - The Year Without Summer

[Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park](#)

1816, also known as the ‘Year Without Summer,’ ‘Poverty Year,’ and ‘Eighteen Hundred and Froze to Death.’

The eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia in 1815 triggered a change in the global climate. The heavier material fell to the ground and the ocean’s surface. However, when lighter particulates reached the stratosphere, they spread out and created an aerosol cloud the size of Australia. The cloud blocked sunlight from reaching the earth and changed the global climate by 2-7 degrees Fahrenheit, the effects of which devastated much of the world in what should have been the summer of 1816. Crops failed across Europe and the U.S. due to the cold or lack of sunshine causing grain and oat prices to soar, torrential rains flooded crops in Ireland, novel strains of cholera killed millions in India, crime became rampant, and people starved in many countries.

[YELLOWSTONE](#) | [HAZARDS](#)

Climate Change Potential as a Result of a Large Eruption of Yellowstone

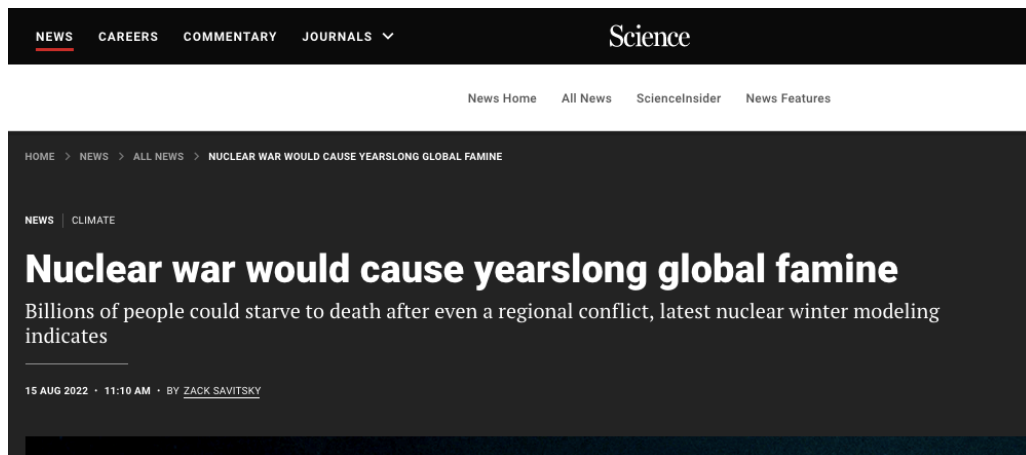
By [Yellowstone](#)

HOME

VOLCANO UPDATES

GEOLOGY AND HISTORY

If another catastrophic caldera-forming Yellowstone eruption were to occur, it quite likely would alter global weather patterns and have enormous effects on human activity, especially agricultural production, for one-to-two decades.



Fifth Trumpet: The Locusts from the Bottomless Pit

“9 Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. ² And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. ³ Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power...⁶ In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.””

What is described here is a massive explosion which released creatures that spread a painful plague. This description resembles biological warfare. Biological weapons are live organisms that are used to kill or incapacitate enemies.

Biological Agents

Ian Greaves FRCP, FCEM, FIMC, RCS(Ed), DTM&H, DMCC, DipMedEd, RAMC, Paul Hunt MBBS, DipIMC(RCSEd), MCEM, MRCSEd, DMCC, RAMC, in [Responding to Terrorism](#), 2010

Biological warfare

Biological warfare involves the intentional release of living pathogens either in their naturally occurring form, for example the diseased corpses of animals, or in the form of specific human-modified organisms (in this context also known as 'germ warfare'). This may include bacteria or viruses, or any pathogen that may cause disease. The intention is either to kill or incapacitate individuals, or to render an area of tactical importance impassable to unprotected persons.

Historically, biological weapons were the first form of non-conventional warfare. During the sixth century bc the Assyrians poisoned enemy water wells with ergot fungus in order to disorientate the enemy. During the fourth century bc Scythian archers used arrows tipped with animal faeces in order to cause the wounds of their enemies to become infected. In 204 bc Hannibal famously utilised a form of biowarfare when he instructed his soldiers to throw clay pots filled with venomous snakes on to the decks of Pergamene enemy ships. During the Middle Ages, victims of the bubonic plague were often used for biological attacks, as besieging armies flung the diseased corpses and excrement over castle walls using catapults.

Biological weapons exist today in the arsenals of many countries, including the US, Russia and China. The pathogens are genetically engineered and are so powerful that a small amount can kill millions.

To repeat, asteroid strikes or super volcanoes or nuclear explosions or biological weapons causing these woes upon the earth ARE ONLY SPECULATION. We do not know the causes of the woes will be.

Sixth Trumpet: The Angels from the Euphrates

¹³ Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, ¹⁴ saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." ¹⁵ So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.

¹⁶ Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.”

We tend to think of angels as ministers of mercy and protection, and indeed they are. “*Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*” (Hebrews 1:14) However, God also uses angels to war against His enemies.

“And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?”

So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” And Elisha prayed, and said, “LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Kings 6:15-17).

This army of angels unleashed on the unrepentant, described in Revelation, will be on a planetary scale.

The seventh Trumpet Judgement will be revealed in chapter 11.

⁴ They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

In this series of cataclysmic judgements upon the earth, this verse reminds us that the Church will be present through all of them. We saw in chapter seven that the 12 tribes of Israel (symbolizing the Church) will be “sealed.” This verse clarifies that they are sealed on their foreheads (a possible reference to chrismation). Their souls are under God’s complete protection. If they are martyred, or die in the judgements upon the earth, or survive until the Second Coming of Christ, their souls are safe with Him. As Paul wrote, “For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:8).

There are striking parallels between the Trumpet Judgements God will send on the earth in the End Times, and the plagues God sent on Egypt in the book of Exodus.

Trumpet Judgements in Revelation 8	Plagues on Egypt Exodus
<i>“And <u>hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.</u>”</i>	<i>“And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the LORD sent <u>thunder and hail, and fire</u> darted to the ground. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation” (Exodus 9: 23-24).</i>
<i>“... and <u>a third of the sea became blood. And a third of the living</u></i>	<i>“And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the LORD commanded. So he lifted up the rod and struck the</i>

<p><i>creatures in the sea died... and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water...and a third of the sea became blood...<u>and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.</u></i>"</p>	<p><i>waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. <u>And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. The fish that were in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river.</u> So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt" (Exodus 7:20-21).</i></p>
<p><i>"¹² Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, <u>so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.</u>"</i></p>	<p><i>"So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was <u>thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings</u>" (Exodus 10:22-23).</i></p>
<p><i><u>"Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power..."</u></i></p>	<p><i>"So Moses stretched out his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind on the land all that day and all that night. When it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. ¹⁴ And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt and rested on all the territory of Egypt. <u>They were very severe; previously there had been no such locusts as they, nor shall there be such after them</u>" (Exodus 10:13-14).</i></p>
<p><i><u>"So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them" (Revelation 9:15-16).</u></i></p>	<p><i>"For the LORD will pass through the land to strike down the Egyptians. But when he sees the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe, the LORD will pass over your home. <u>He will not permit his death angel to enter your house and strike you down... and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead.</u>" (Exodus 12:23, 30)</i></p>

With both the Israelites in the Exodus, and the Church in the Great Tribulation, God allows His people to experience it as a whole. After the Tribulation, Israel was liberated from slavery. After the Tribulation, the Church will be liberated by the return of Christ.