

# 17

## Silence in Heaven (II)

**And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.**

**And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets...**

**The first angel sounded...** (Rev. 8:1, 2, 7a).

All of the judgments having to do with the redemptive terms of the inheritance are seen in the breaking of the seals of the seven-sealed scroll. This scroll was the only thing seen in the Father's right hand in chapter five, this scroll was the only thing in view when the Son took it from His Father's hand, and this scroll was the only thing in view when the Son began to break the seals in chapter six (breaking six seals in this chapter).

Judgments connected with the seven trumpets and seven vials are introduced later in the book, when the seventh seal is broken (chs. 8-10, 11b, 15, 16). But these *are not* judgments in addition to those seen when the first six seals of the scroll were broken. These are judgments providing *a further explanation, revealing detail and forming commentary*, concerning judgments previously introduced, or the results of these judgments, when the first six seals of the scroll were broken.

### Comparing the Trumpet and Vial Judgments

When the seventh seal is broken, *seven trumpets* are seen. These seven trumpets are given to seven angels, and as each an-

gel sounds, different judgments ensue. And, when the seventh angel sounds, seven judgments are again seen (ch. 10), which are apparently a reference to *the seven vials of wrath* (chs. 15, 16).

The seven vials are then seen *to parallel* the seven trumpets. Judgments seen when the seven vials are poured out are not similar, subsequent judgments to those previously seen through the sounding of the seven trumpets, but, rather, they are *the same judgments*. They are *further descriptions of the same judgments, providing more information and detail* (ref. Chapter XVI in this book).

And, beyond that, the trumpet and corresponding vial judgments, though not seen until the seventh seal is broken, *do not* describe judgments in addition to those previously seen when the first six seals were broken. Rather, they form *further descriptions of the same judgments*. They reveal detail and form commentary for the judgments occurring when these previous seals were broken.

Putting matters together from the beginning, the breaking of the first four seals — that occurring when four horsemen rode forth, each on a different colored horse — described, in *an overall capsulated manner, events covering the whole of the Tribulation* (Daniel's Seventieth Week), along with events occurring immediately following, at the time of Christ's return; that seen when the fifth seal was broken — Tribulation martyrs in heaven — *resulted from that which occurred when the first four seals were broken*; that seen when the sixth seal was broken — the complete disarray and collapse of world government, with its interrelated trade and commerce — *described the end result of that previously depicted by the four horsemen riding forth*; and the breaking of the seventh and last seal simply *provides details for that previously seen, particularly that seen when the sixth seal was broken*.

Thus, the whole of that revealed when the seventh seal is broken (seven trumpets, then seven vials) must be looked upon and studied *together, as a unit*; and this must be done in the light of *that previously revealed when the first six seals were broken*. The trumpet and vial judgments actually describe different facets of *one picture* — the complete disarray and collapse of world government, with its interrelated trade and commerce, as previously seen in an overall scope when the sixth seal was broken. Each

corresponding trumpet and vial judgment (the first with the first, the second with the second, etc.) simply presents a *part of the same picture*, and together they fill in all the details which God has deemed necessary.

The whole of the matter could be likened to an artist painting a picture. *First*, through the breaking of the first four seals (activities seen when four horsemen rode forth), the artist would paint a somewhat overall, skeletal picture of events during the Tribulation. *Then*, when the fifth and six seals were broken, the artist would add more detail (from both heavenly and earthly perspectives). *Then*, when the seventh seal was broken, the artist could finish the picture through adding all the details which God deemed necessary for the picture presented by that seen through the breaking of the seven seals of the scroll. Numerous other details, of course, could be added through the interrelated asides in the book (chs. 7, 11a, 12-14, 17-19), plus that seen in all previous Scripture, beginning with Moses.

### Seeing the Trumpet and Vial Judgments Together

(The trumpet and vial judgments set forth a Divinely designed orderly progression in *the ruin, utter collapse, and destruction* of the end-time world system under Antichrist, who will occupy a position of worldwide power and authority, ruling from Satan's throne. These judgments provide detail and commentary, particularly on that seen when the sixth seal of the scroll was broken. And the breaking of this sixth seal, in turn, answers a question asked when the previous seal was broken, along with providing detail and commentary for that seen when the first four seals of the scroll were broken.

This is *the orderly arrangement, with all of the necessary information*, in which matters surrounding the redemption of the inheritance are revealed through the breaking of the seals on the seven-sealed scroll.)

The trumpet and vial judgments are to be understood in complete keeping with the manner in which the book is structured ("signified" [1:1]), along with the extensive use of *metaphors*. And this would simply be a continuation of and be in complete keep-

ing with that previously seen when the first six seals were broken (ref. Chapters I, XIII-XV in this book).

Using metaphors or similes, a symbolic type language, can often convey *a more forceful or vivid picture* than a lengthy statement. And this is perhaps the main reason we find the extensive use of this type language throughout Scripture, particularly in this closing book.

### 1) *First Trumpet, First Vial (8:7; 16:2)*

Both have to do with *the earth*.

The sounding of the first trumpet and the pouring out of the first vial, describing the first judgment two different ways, provides beginning detail and commentary for that previously dealt with in an overall scope. This first judgment provides *beginning detail and commentary* for that dealt with when the sixth seal was broken (showing the complete collapse and utter disarray of world government, along with its interrelated trade and commerce). And this, in turn, provides detail and forms commentary for that dealt with when the first four seals were broken, particularly in relation to where the whole of the matter leads.

The first trumpet judgment presents “hail and fire mingled with blood,” which were “cast upon the earth.” “The third part” of *the earth and trees* was burned up, and “all” *green grass* was burned up.

Then, paralleling the preceding, by way of further explanation and comment when the first vial was poured out, it is stated, “there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.”

“Hail and fire” from above, “cast upon the earth,” points to *sudden judgment from God* befalling the earth-dwellers. “Hail” is used in this manner in Isa. 28:2, 17, and “fire” is used in this manner more than any other symbol in Scripture (e.g., Gen. 3:24; Ex. 3:2; Rev. 1:14, 15). “Hail and fire” used together, as in the seventh plague in Egypt during Moses’ day, could only show *intensity* relative to this judgment.

Then, the “hail and fire” are seen “mingled with blood.” “Blood” could point to either *life* or *death*. But, in the manner seen here, it is *death*. Thus, the end result of this judgment, as is

characteristic of the judgments seen throughout the breaking of the seals on the scroll, is *death* (which would be mainly in relation to that in view — the government, trade and commerce [affecting man in relation to death indirectly]).

“The third part” of *the earth and trees* was burned up, and “all” *green grass* was burned up (the KJV does not include “the earth,” but the better Greek manuscripts available today do include it).

“The earth” is simply *the sphere of Satan’s domain* as he rules the earth and *the sphere of man’s domain* as he rules under Satan and his angels. And “trees” upon this sphere of Satan’s domain would apparently be used in a dual sense.

“Trees” are used in Scripture two ways. They are used of *man’s loftiness* (Ezek. 31:1ff) and of *national powers* in the kingdom of men (Judges 9:8-15; Luke 21:29, 30). Both symbolic usages appear to be combined in Nebuchadnezzar’s experiences seen in Dan. 4:4-37.

Then, “grass” is used in Scripture to reference *those in the human race* (Isa. 40:6, 7; I Peter 1:24). And “green grass,” as seen in the text, could only point to *a prosperous condition*, or *a lofty condition* (in keeping with the symbolism of a “tree”), of those in the kingdom.

Thus, the picture is in complete keeping with that previously seen through the breaking of the first six seals, with detail added. It is a picture of *worldwide judgment in the kingdom of men*, which here affects one-third of mankind within the kingdom of Antichrist but is enlarged to include the whole of mankind when the seven vials are poured out.

*Kingdoms are brought down, the loftiness of man is reduced to naught, and the final picture is one of utter chaos and desolation in the kingdom of Antichrist.*

Now, that seen through the pouring out of the first vial must be understood within this same framework, adding further information. Seemingly, the parallel doesn’t appear to exist. But bear in mind that symbolic language is being used.

The first vial judgment refers to “a noisome and grievous sore [‘a painfully bad wound’]” befalling those “which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.”

To see that which occurs when the first vial is poured out

as a *physical wound* wouldn't really fit within the parallel which must exist between the first trumpet and vial judgments. But, on the other hand, seeing this wound as *mental rather than physical* would be perfectly in line with that brought to pass when the first trumpet is sounded.

Something often overlooked is the fact that sickness and disease, which can result in death, can have to do with either *the physical* or *the mental* part of man. And the two are so inseparably related that sickness or disease in one can often end up affecting the other as well.

In keeping with the first trumpet judgment, *the painfully bad wound* seen when the first vial was poured out undoubtedly refers to a *mental* rather than to a physical condition. Mental suffering is something which can, at times, far exceed the physical, which would account for the state in which individuals will find themselves because of that occurring when the first trumpet sounds. The picture apparently shows *the mental state* of those in the kingdom of Antichrist when the whole of that which exists in the kingdom is collapsing all around them.

And unlike Nebuchadnezzar, the first king in Babylon during the Times of the Gentiles in Dan. 4:30-37 (*cf.* 5:18-21), whose *understanding* and *kingdom* were restored, neither will be restored to those in the kingdom of Antichrist in that coming day, those in the final form of the kingdom of Babylon during the Times of the Gentiles. Only utter, complete destruction will await them.

## 2) *Second Trumpet, Second Vial (8:8, 9; 16:3)*

Both have to do with *the sea*.

When the second angel sounded his trumpet, "a great mountain burning with fire was cast into *the sea*." A third part of the sea *became blood*, a third part of the living creatures in the sea *died*, and a third part of the ships *were destroyed*.

"A mountain" in Scripture signifies a *kingdom* (Isa. 2:1-5; Dan. 2:35, 44, 45; Matt. 16:28-17:5). "Fire," as previously seen, has to do with *judgment*. And "the sea" is used several ways in Scripture — having to do with *death* (Ex. 14:21-28; *cf.* I Cor. 10:2; Col. 2:12), with *the Gentiles* (Dan. 7:2, 3; Rev. 13:1), and with *restlessness* (Isa. 57:20).

The “great mountain” would have to do with *the kingdom of Antichrist*, “burning with fire” would have to do with *God’s judgment befalling the kingdom*, and being cast into the sea could only include all three symbolic usages of the sea. It will be *a Gentile kingdom in its death throes*, and only a state of *restlessness* could possibly exist in the kingdom at this time.

Isaiah 57:20, 21 would be an apt description of the kingdom in that coming day:

“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”

Then, the result of this great mountain burning with fire, cast into the sea, is seen to be *death and the destruction of ships in the sea*. “Death” could have to do with individuals in the kingdom, but it is apparent, particularly as seen in the related vial judgment, that this refers more specifically to that being dealt with — *the government, along with its interrelated trade and commerce*. And the latter (trade and commerce) is specifically singled out through attention being called to the destruction of ships in the sea, for *ships are used primarily to transport goods from one place to another* (cf. Rev. 18:17-19).

And exactly the same thing is seen when the second vial is poured out. An angel poured out the second vial on *the sea*. And the sea “became as the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea.” The second trumpet judgment dealt with *one-third* of that affected, but the second vial judgment dealt with *the whole*, carrying the matter to completion. And it is evident from information given when this vial is poured out that “death,” which is seen as all-inclusive, cannot be a reference to individuals in the kingdom but rather to *the government, along with its interrelated trade and commerce*.

Both the sounding of the second trumpet and pouring out of the second vial show exactly the same thing as seen when the sixth seal was broken, with detail added. Both together form a further description of the utter and complete collapse and destruction of the whole of Antichrist’s kingdom.

Each of the trumpet and vial judgments shows a different facet of the matter.

3) *Third Trumpet, Third Vial (8:10, 11; 16:4-7)*

Both have to do with *the rivers and fountains of waters*.

When the third angel sounded his trumpet, “a great star” fell from heaven. And the star fell upon *the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters*, resulting in the waters becoming *bitter* and causing *the deaths* of numerous individuals.

When an angel poured out the third vial upon *the rivers and fountains of waters*, “they became blood.” Then attention is called to the righteous judgments of the Lord. Those on the earth “have shed the blood of saints and prophets,” and these same individuals have been given “blood to drink; for they are worthy” (cf. Gen. 9:6).

“Stars” are used in the Book of Revelation to denote *individuals (both angels and men) in positions of authority, spiritual and/or political* (1:16, 20; 6:13; 12:1, 4). “Waters” are used to denote “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (Isa. 17:12, 13; Rev. 17:1, 15). “Waters” form *the source of life* (Ex. 17:3-6; Isa. 55:1; John 4:6-14; 7:37, 38), but in the text the waters not only become *blood*, but they become *bitter*. Thus, the waters here are associated, not with life, but with *death*. And they are actually associated with something *beyond simply death itself*. They are associated with a *bitterness in connection with death, which takes one beyond the normal thought of death*. And the whole of the matter is associated with both the kingdom of Antichrist and those in the kingdom.

The sources of all national life become associated with a *death beyond the normal thought of death — the continuing collapse of the kingdom, trade and commerce, and the continuing deterioration of the mental state of those in the kingdom*.

And the punishment — *a drinking, a partaking of the whole of the matter* — is as *terrible* on the one hand as it is *righteous* on the other. It is here that the cry of the saints seen under the altar begins to be addressed:

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (6:9, 10).

"And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy" (16:5, 6).

The reference, of course, is not to a physical drinking, but to *something far worse*. Those in the kingdom in that coming day will find themselves having to pass through something *far worse than physical death, and they will fully know and experience its bitterness*.

#### 4) Fourth Trumpet, Fourth Vial (8:12, 13; 16:8, 9)

Both have to do with *heavenly bodies*.

When the fourth angel sounded his trumpet, *a third part of the sun, moon, and stars were smitten*; and this resulted in darkness for "a third part" of both the day and the night.

When an angel poured out the fourth vial on *the sun*, power was given unto the sun "to scorch men with fire."

*The sun, moon, and stars* are used in a collective sense to reference *the whole of the governing powers in Antichrist's kingdom*. There is a universal crash in the government; and where *life* and *light* once existed *death* and *darkness* begin to pervade the kingdom, and this continues until *the whole is affected* (cf. Matt. 13:33).

This is the same thing previously seen when the sixth seal was broken. Also, the fourth trumpet and vial judgments are similar to the succeeding fifth trumpet and vial judgments and belong together in the sense of the former being continued and carried to completion in the latter. Only *one-third* is affected in the fourth trumpet judgment, with nothing being stated along these lines in the fourth vial judgment. But the matter is carried to completion in both the fifth trumpet and vial judgments, with *the whole* being affected.

The fourth vial judgment has to do with one central thing — individuals being "scorched" by "great heat" from *the smitten sun*, as it is seen when the fourth trumpet sounds. This, of course, is

not a reference to the intensity of the sun itself being increased, for the “sun” is being used in a metaphorical sense, referring to *the main governing authority in the kingdom*. And being scorched with great heat must be understood in line with the way that the “sun” is being used in the passage.

The reference is to the utter collapse of the government, seen at its center (the sun), being the cause of not just *anguish* but of *intense anguish* among those in the kingdom (note *the painfully bad wound* when the first vial was poured out). And this results, not in a change of mind (repentance), but in their blaspheming the name of the One in control of the entire matter (*ref.* to a corresponding and continuing scene in the fifth trumpet and vial judgments).

#### 5) Fifth Trumpet, Fifth Vial (9:1-12; 16:10, 11)

Both have to do with *darkness throughout the kingdom of the Beast*.

When the fifth angel sounded his trumpet, a star fell “from heaven unto the earth.” This star, an angel, held the key to “the bottomless pit [*lit., ‘the shaft of the underworld,’ i.e. a shaft going down into the underworld*].” He opened the shaft, and smoke so thick that it blotted out the sun came up from the shaft, producing darkness; and locusts came out of the smoke.

The locusts had tails like scorpions, and they were given power over those having received the mark of the Beast *to torment men “five months.”*

When an angel poured out the fifth vial “upon the seat [‘throne’] of the beast, ...his kingdom was full of darkness.” Those in the kingdom are then seen *gnawing their tongues for pain and blaspheming* “the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores.”

The fifth trumpet and vial judgments simply form a continuation from the fourth trumpet and vial judgments, bringing the kingdom of Antichrist into *its final form immediately before it is destroyed*.

As previously seen, an angel came down and opened a shaft going down into the underworld. And *smoke* came up out of the shaft, with *locusts* coming out of the smoke. The smoke was so thick that it blotted out the sun, producing *darkness throughout the kingdom*; and the locusts coming out of the smoke had tails like

scorpions, and they were given power over men *to torment them* for “five months” (the normal life-span of locusts, which may or may not be a reference to literal time [note *the five months of judgment* in a type of the Tribulation during the Flood in Noah’s day, with torrential rain falling for one hundred fifty days — Gen. 7, 11, 12, 24; 8:1, 2]).

Again, the “sun” is a reference to *the central governing authority in the kingdom*, and the sun being darkened by smoke can only be a reference to *the utter collapse and ruin of the central governing authority in the kingdom, wrought through judgment from God (smoke associated with fire)*.

The locusts have “a king over them,” *the angel of the underworld*, whose name in the Hebrew is “Abaddon” and in the Greek “Apollyon” (9:11). Both words mean *Destroyer*. “The underworld” in view (Gk., *abussos*, “abyss”) is seen in Scripture as *an abode of demons and the place where Satan will be bound during the Millennium* (Luke 8:31; Rev. 20:3; cf. Rev. 17:8). In this respect, it appears evident that the locusts coming up in the smoke from the shaft going down into the underworld can only refer to *a demonic plague* (possibly a loosing of the angels in II Peter 2:4 and Jude 6).

Thus, the picture is that of *a kingdom in utter collapse and men who are already in unimaginable anguish being tormented by demonic spirits unleashed throughout the kingdom* (cf. Luke 8:26-33; 9:38, 39), *with these individuals seen gnawing their tongues for pain* (an expression found only here in Scripture [16:10]).

Is it any wonder that Scripture reads:

“And *in those days* shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them” (Rev. 9:6).

This is what Gentile world power under Antichrist will be reduced to immediately before it is destroyed.

(The last two trumpet and vial judgments are different than the first five. The first five describe different facets of *how the kingdom of Antichrist will be brought into utter and complete disarray and ruin*. The last two then describe not only *how the Lord will destroy that which had previously been brought into utter and complete disarray and ruin* [sixth

*trumpet and vial judgment] but also how everything will be brought to a full and complete end [seventh trumpet and vial judgment].*

These last two trumpet and vial judgments are dealt with in the next chapter of this book [Chapter XVIII], with the last trumpet and vial judgment further dealt with in the following chapter [Chapter XIX].)