

Shots Across the Bow

Revelation 8

As the apostle John observed the four living creatures in the throne room of heaven, he noted, “...they do not rest day or night, saying:

“Holy, holy, holy,

Lord God Almighty,

Who was and is and is to come!”

Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

“You are worthy, O Lord,

To receive glory and honor and power;

For You created all things,

And by Your will they exist and were created.” (Rev 4:8-11)

It is clear then that heaven is continually filled with the worshipful adoration of God. Nevertheless, chapter eight seems to present a contradiction of sorts:

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

Of course, it could be that this silence interrupts the worship of heaven and is a reverential prelude to what comes next, but that doesn't explain the very specific span of time. Most commentators treat this very lightly, but I'll offer a suggestion

that makes sense to me and sheds, perhaps, a new light on the text.

The first four seals that were opened resulted in a going forth of four riders that deceived and destroyed many people on earth. Then, with the fifth and sixth seals we witnessed the souls of the saints waiting upon God's judgment and then a seemingly catastrophic and perhaps nuclear war. It is quite possible that these events will occur in a fairly rapid fashion after the church has been raptured.

In any event, we know as well that during the first three and a half years of the seven year long tribulation, the antichrist will be promoting his devilish propaganda consummating in the placing of the “abomination of desolation” in the new Jewish temple and proclaiming that he is God. Daniel the prophet recorded:

The king (the antichrist) will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all. (Dan 11:36,37)

And John recorded concerning the antichrist:

The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling

place and those who live in heaven. (Rev 13:5,6)

Now, back to our first verse. “...silence in heaven...” can, and I believe should have been, translated as “...silence by heaven...”. In other words, while the antichrist is blaspheming God and saying unheard of things against Him, he will seemingly get away with it. Heaven will be silent for a period of time – a specific period of time – *about half an hour*.

This word for hour is translated as such the majority of the times we find it in the scripture and is the underpinning of our own English word, but it most literally means, “a certain definite time or season fixed by natural law and returning with the revolving year”. In other words, it doesn't have to mean a literal hour.

If it is symbolic and we search the Bible in order to interpret it, we can turn to Rev 17:12 which reads:

*The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for **one hour** will receive authority as kings along with the beast.*

Many of you already recognize these ten kings as also being represented in the ten toes of Daniel's prophetic image in chapter two of his book. Here in Rev 17, an angel is explaining to John the meaning of the ten horns on the beast seen in this same chapter. These ten kings will reign with the antichrist during the tribulation time – a seven year period also known as the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy in Dan 9. Even now, I submit, they are standing in the wings, waiting.

So, if the tribulation is prophetically symbolized as being “one hour”, then about half an hour would be about three and a half years or about 42 months. During this time, God lets the AC just mouth off but only until the midst of the “week”. In the midst of the week or seven year period, the AC will stand in the temple of God proclaiming that he is God and then, I think, heaven will answer with trumpet judgments that are both disciplines and final warnings to the world saying, “wake up!”

We should also note that this contrasts with the ministry of Christ Who for the same period of time glorified God in all that He said and did. While the antichrist will glorify himself, Jesus was glorified by God. While the AC will “exalt himself”, Jesus was meek and humble. To the ones who do not buy into “the lie” permeating the tribulation time, the “beast” will truly be a 180 degree opposite to the divine ministry of Christ.

And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. 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. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.

Trumpets throughout scripture were used as alarms, both for gathering the people together and for war. As such, we can see that

each of these trumpet judgments are not yet coming from an 'angry God' but are a call to the people of earth to reject the devil's lies and gather to their true Savior, then as a consequence, to do battle with Satan. God's wrath is on the way, but these are still warnings.

In addition, I'll suggest that at this point, our heavenly Father is beginning to fulfill the petitions of those dear saints we saw under the altar in chapter six. There, they prayed, "*How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?*" With the trumpets, we will see the judgment they asked for and with the coming bowls, we'll see the vengeance of wrath.

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. This action sets the tone for all that follows – virtually every trumpet and bowl after this will rain something terrible down on earth directly from heaven. The silence is over. As God has said to other wicked men: *Behold, it is written before Me: I will not **keep** silence, but will repay—
Even repay into their bosom—* (Isaiah 65:6)

So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. Here comes heaven's answer to the pompous boasting, lies, slanders and willful rebellion of depraved mankind:

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. As these judgments are thrown down from heaven, you Bible readers will flash back to the book of Exodus. There, the seventh judgment upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians was hail and fire as well. Bible students know that Egypt is often a type or picture of the world in scripture and just as those judgments came upon them so that God's people would be released to worship and be free, so these trumpet judgments are intended to produce a similar outcome spiritually. We may recall as well that despite the warnings of Moses (who **may be** around during the tribulation also), Pharaoh continued to be hard hearted against the Lord; so will the godless in our days also be.

Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. John uses the wording, "**like** a great mountain" so this could represent a large fiery mass such as a meteor. The sea is probably the Mediterranean as that was the sea to the Hebrews – that, or the Red Sea. Based upon the various components of this passage such as living creatures and ships, it doesn't make sense to spiritualize this passage.

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. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter. This again could be a meteor or something God makes uniquely for this situation. Wormwood is a very bitter or poisonous substance.

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. Jesus said: *the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light* (Matthew 24:29). This could be nuclear fallout in the sky or the result of all the burning vegetation. We recently had a lightning storm initiate literally thousands of fires here in northern California and the sky was a mess for weeks. You could hardly breathe at times. As with the other three trumpets, I don't think it makes sense to consider these as symbolic but rather literal events.

Whether that be the case or not, since the limits of the judgments will be so specific, it could be that in smiting a third of the above elements of nature, God will also be sending a message to consider another important "third" such as the third day, the day His Son rose from the dead. Or He could be prompting His people to consider His promise in Zechariah:

*I will bring the one-third through the fire,
Will refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them.
I will say, 'This is My people';
And each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.'* (Zech 13:8,9)
"The first four trumpets also reveal the *mercy* of God's judgment; these are partial judgments striking only one-third, and are meant to warn and lead a rebellious world to repentance before the final curtain. For now, God *spar*es more than He *sm*ites." -- Guzik

And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" One third of mankind will die in the next three judgments, but again, these woes are words of warning. They are 'shots across the bow' so to speak. God is saying, "Stop your insane course! Turn around! Come to Me and I will receive you." There still seems to be a short time left for the willfully rebellious to repent. To do so will likely mean death but how much better an eternity of life and love in heaven than the torturous isolation and suffering of hell forever!