

## **The Seventh Seal and the First 4 Trumpets** **A Series on Divine Judgment: Part 9**

As the apostle John observes Jesus Christ sequentially breaking the seals, there is a pause (an interlude), in which John is introduced to the 144,000 sealed bond servants. Jesus Christ wants the apostle to know this background so that John would record his ongoing observations in their proper context.

After this I saw **four angels standing at the four corners of the earth**, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to **the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea**, saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads." (Rev 7:1-3)

In preparation of understanding the breaking of the seventh seal, it is important to make two observations:

1. The "four angels standing at the four corners of the earth" are not in heaven.
2. An angel "ascending from the rising sun" commands the four angels not to "harm the earth or the sea or the trees" until the bond-servants of God have been sealed. This identifies the four angels as the ones who would be introduced later dispensing the judgments of the first four trumpets that harm the earth and sea.

The first trumpet results in a third of the earth, a third of the trees and all of the grasses being burned up (Rev 8:7).

The second trumpet results in the third of the sea becoming blood, killing a third of all sea life and destroying a third of all sea going ships (Rev 8:8-9)

The third trumpet results in a third of all rivers and springs to be poisoned and lethal (Rev 8:10-11).

The fourth trumpet results in no sunlight for a third of the day and no light for a third of the night (Rev 8:12).

Because of what is revealed in the interlude, one can understand why there is thirty minutes of silence in heaven when Jesus Christ breaks the seventh seal. No harm can come upon the earth and sea until the sealing of the 144,000 bond servants of God on earth is completed. This sealing is apparently so important that the heavenly angels do not receive their trumpets until after this period of silence.

When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. (Rev 8:1-2)

There is an important observation to make here.

1. The seven angels who receive their trumpets are in heaven before God. The four angels "to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea" are located outside of third heaven (Rev 7:2).

After the seven angels receive their trumpets, an angel is seen standing at the golden altar upon which are the prayers of the tribulation saints. With a golden censer with much incense, the smoke produced with the prayers of the saints went up before God (Rev 8:2-4). An incident in the Old Testament provides some perspective in understanding this scene occurring in heaven.

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Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer and put in it fire from the altar, and lay incense on it; then bring it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone forth from the Lord, the plague has begun!" Then Aaron took it as Moses had spoken, and ran into the midst of the assembly, for behold, the plague had begun among the people. So he put on the incense and made atonement for the people. He took his stand between the dead and the living, so that the plague was checked. (Num 16:46-48)

With the smoke of the incense and prayers of the tribulation saints, God's wrath is temporarily halted – until the incense is burned up and perhaps also the prayers upon the golden altar. Refilling the censer with fire from the altar, the angel throws it down to earth, and God's wrath is set to resume.

Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them. (Rev 8:5-6)

When the seven angels with their trumpets are set to sound, it is important to observe that, with the exception of the sixth, their role is limited to signaling an event; they are not directly involved with carrying out God's judgment. This is apparent in the first five trumpet events, and the first four trumpets can be easily seen in this chart:

<b>Angel in Heaven</b>	<b>Angel standing at the Four Corners of Earth</b>	<b>Harm upon Earth and Sea</b>
#1 blows the first trumpet (Rev 8:7)	Throws hail and fire mixed with blood to earth	A third of the earth, including a third of the trees and all of the grasses, is burned up
#2 blows the second trumpet (Rev 8:8-9)	Throws something like a great mountain burning with fire into the sea	A third of the sea turns to blood, killing a third of all sea creatures and destroying a third of all sea ships
#3 blows the third trumpet (Rev 8:10-11)	Throws a great star burning like a torch called Wormwood	A third of all fresh water becomes bitter and kills many
#4 blows the fourth trumpet (Rev 8:12)	Strikes a third of the sun, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars	A third of a day is without sunlight and a third of the night is without any light from the moon or stars

As bad as these events appear, the apostle John indicates that God's wrath is about to get worse.

Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" (Rev 8:13)