

OPENING THE SEVENTH SEAL

DEPICTING FINAL JUDGMENTS FOLLOWING CHRIST'S RETURN

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“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.

And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightning, and an earthquake.

And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound...

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God...

And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth..."(Rev. 8:1-6; 15:1; 16:1).

The preceding verses have to do with a sequence of judgments occurring in the Book of Revelation once the seventh and last seal of the seven-sealed scroll in Revelation chapter five has been broken, which reveals the seven-trumpet and seven-vial judgments. And, as will be shown, the seven trumpet judgments and the seven vial judgments are two depictions of *the same judgments*, not different, sequential judgments.

Most commentators see the trumpet judgments occurring first, then the vial judgments sequentially following, for this is the way that they see them laid out in the book (chs. 8-11 [the trumpets], then chs. 15, 16 [the vials]). In this respect, these same commentators usually attempt to see one complete, continuous sequence of events depicted throughout chs. 6-19, which is where the mistake is made.

The Book of Revelation is simply not structured in a sequential manner of this nature; nor is a good portion of Scripture which precedes structured in such a manner, particularly when one views matters from a typical standpoint.

Sequences of events are depicted, but the book will often drop back and cover the same events from another vantage point or cover other events occurring during the same time.

In this respect, note that Christ's return is seen three places in chs. 6-19 (depicted different ways in each place):

1) In conjunction with the breaking of the sixth seal (6:12-17), immediately before the trumpet judgments of the seventh seal (8:1ff [though information concerning the 144,000 and the results of their ministry lie between, in ch. 7, providing introductory information for later dealings with the 144,000 in chs. 12 and 14a]).

2) Immediately before the vial judgments of the seventh seal, at the end of ch. 14 (vv. 14-20), with the sixth and seventh vial judgments depicted in these verses in connection with His return (chs. 15, 16).

3) And then again at the end of ch. 19, vv. 11-21 (with only the judgments seen in the sixth and seventh trumpets, the sixth and seventh vials, depicted following the third and last mention of Christ's return [as previously seen in ch. 14b]).

It is evident that a sequence of events can be followed at this point in the book (seen from comparing Scripture with Scripture in the book, along with going back to the type in Exodus [*i.e.*, in a respect, running all the checks and balances which Scripture provides]). And this sequence of events which one can follow at this point in the book shows that the entirety of the judgments revealed when the seventh seal is broken (trumpets/vials) occurs following Christ's return.

(When Christ returns, He will be accompanied by Moses and Elijah, along with His mighty angels. Numerous judgmental events will occur when He returns [events continuing from those having previously occurred during the Tribulation and now brought to completion, with Christ personally present].

These events are seen in the overall type in Ex. 4-14. Moses will have a part in one aspect of the matter, Elijah in another, and angels in another.

For information on the preceding, refer to the author's book, "Coming in His Kingdom." Or, for a more exhaustive treatment, refer to the author's book, "The Time of the End," Chs. VIII-XIX.)

To say that the trumpet judgments and vial judgments are different judgments, as most commentators do, can easily be shown to be incorrect. They both have

to do with *exactly the same thing* (the first trumpet and first vial, the second trumpet and second vial, etc); and, as previously noted, they can only both occur *at the same time following Christ's return* (not only clearly shown in the Book of Revelation in each instance but clearly shown as well from the single series of judgments in the type in Exodus).

And they will evidently occur during the seventy-five-day period seen at the end of the Book of Daniel — which could only be a period of time set aside for the numerous, revealed events which must occur between the time of Christ's return and the beginning of His 1,000-year reign.

Note what one finds when comparing the trumpet and vial judgments:

- 1) First trumpet and vial — both have to do with *the earth*.
- 2) Second trumpet and vial — both have to do with *the sea*.
- 3) Third trumpet and vial — both have to do with *the rivers and fountains of waters*.
- 4) Fourth trumpet and vial — both have to do with *heavenly bodies*.
- 5) Fifth trumpet and vial — both have to do with *darkness throughout the kingdom of the Beast*.
- 6) Sixth trumpet and vial — both have to do with *the great river Euphrates*.
- 7) Seventh trumpet and vial — both have to do with *a full and complete end*.

Note that the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the pouring out of the seventh vial not only both depict *the same scene but also the finality of the matter with regard to that scene* (10:1-7; 11:15-19; 16:17-21). And it would be impossible to have two finalities in the preceding manner but yet somehow see them as depicting something different.

(A perfect tense is used in the Greek text of Rev. 16:17 regarding the completion of the vial judgments — "It is done [*lit.*, 'It has been done,' or 'It has been brought to pass']." And though the perfect tense is not used regarding the completion of the trumpet judgments in chs. 10, 11, it's clearly evident from the text that all judgment having to do with the seven-sealed scroll is past.

The perfect tense is used to indicate past action presently existing in a finished state. This is the same tense Christ used in John 19:30 when He cried out from the Cross, immediately before He willingly relinquished His life, immediately before He breathed out, "It is finished [*lit.*, 'It has been finished']"; or, this is the tense used in Eph. 2:8 referring to one's presently possessed eternal salvation, "For by grace are ye saved through faith [*lit.*, 'For by grace you have been saved through faith']..."

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