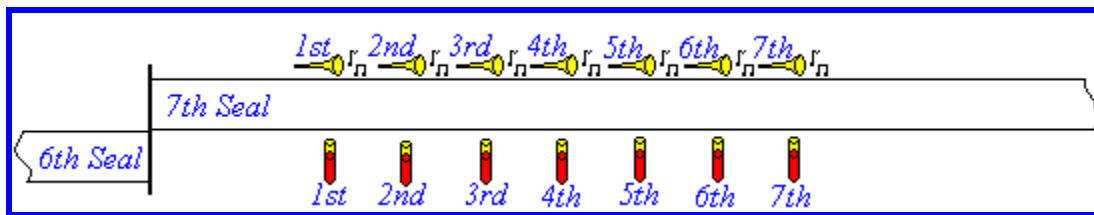



Chapter 8

This chapter, and in following chapters, we will begin to see the unfolding of the most foreign and puzzling part of John's vision to us. John sees what is our future. He sees the preceding signs of the second coming. Before the second coming, John sees and hears seven (7) angels blowing seven (7) trumps, each followed by marvelous signs. Later in the vision, he will again see the same marvelous signs only they will be represented by the seven (7) angles opening seven (7) vials. The trumps or vials will prepare the earth for the second coming of Jesus Christ. After the trumps and vials, John will behold the coming of the Son of the Man of Holiness.



This chapter recounts John's vision of the opening of the seventh (7th) seal, the blowing of the first four trumps, followed by their signs. To this point, analyzing John's symbolism has been relatively easy, though not without effort. This was due namely to the fact that the events had already occurred and history was a great tool in understanding John's writings; however, now we embark on the future and have no historical setting to reference. The interpretation of John's writing hereafter might have several possible meanings that can't be proven until they actual occur.

Verse 1:

The **seventh and final seal**  is opened by the Savior. At it's opening the Earth experiences a half an hour of silence. The silence spoken of could be taken as a literal silence, like the silence experienced before the Lord visited the American continent after his crucifixion. In 3rd Nephi, chapter 10, we read that, "*there was silence in the land for the space of many hours*". After the silence the Father did introduce the Son, and the Son manifest Himself, in the flesh, to the Nephites. The silence was not explained in detail; however, one would guess that no sounds could be uttered or heard. Another interpretation of the silence described by John might be that John was using the silence as a metaphor to suggest that the Lord would close the heavens for a short period before the day of wrath. In Lamentations chapter 2, verses 9 to 10, we find an example of silence being used when the Lord stopped communication with the people. We read that the elders sat in "*silence*" or in a state of mourning

because the prophets found "no vision from the Lord". The Doctrine and Covenants says that the silence John speaks about is actually a silence in heaven. *"There shall be silence in heaven for the space of half an hour; and immediately after shall the curtain of heaven be unfolded, as a scroll is unfolded after it is rolled up, and the face of the Lord shall be unveiled (Doctrine and Covenants 88:95)".* This scripture would also support the idea of the silence being the loss of communication with heaven. The word silence is also used in the scriptures to indicate peace or the silencing of the wicked. The Lord says, *"For all flesh is corrupted before me; and the **powers of darkness** prevail upon the earth, among the children of men, in the presence of all the host of heaven- **which causeth silence to reign**, and all eternity is pained, and the angels are waiting the great command to reap down the earth, to gather the tares that they may be burned; and, behold the enemy is combined (Doctrine and Covenants 38:11-12)".* Even the Apostle Peter preached of the Lord silencing the wicked, *"For so it is the will of God.....to silence the ignorance of foolish men (1 Peter 2:15)".* In the book of Job we read, *"He (God) giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only (Job 34:29)"!* Whether the silence spoken of by John is literal, metaphoric, or both, I believe that the scriptures are clear that the time surrounding the half hour of silence will be one of great wickedness on the earth, that the host of heaven are anxiously waiting the call to **silence** the wicked. The Lords' blessings to the earth will be withheld as "all flesh is corrupt" before Him. The period of silence is a warning to the earth, as the silence in the eye of a hurricane before it's wrath, the Lord will send silence to the earth before He will reap down upon the earth. Elder Orson Pratt once said, *"...there will be 'silence in heaven for the space of half an hour.' Whether the half an hour spoken of is according to our reckoning-thirty minutes, or whether it be according to the reckoning of the Lord we do not know. We know that the word hour is used in some portions of Scriptures to represent quite a lengthy period of time. For instance, we, the Latter-day Saints, are living in the eleventh hour, that is in the eleventh period of time; and for aught we know the half an hour during which silence is to prevail in heaven may be quite an extensive period of time. During the period of silence all things are perfectly still; no angels flying during that half hour; no trumpets sounding; no noise in the heavens above; but immediately after this great silence the curtain of heaven shall be unfolded as a scroll is unfolded. School children, who are in the habit of seeing maps hung on the wall, know that they have rollers upon which they are rolled up, and that to expose the face of the map they are let down. So will the curtain of heaven be unrolled so that the people may gaze upon those celestial*

beings who will make their appearance in the clouds (Journal of Discourses, Volume 16, page 328)".

Joshua the Jew, a false teacher during the prophet Joseph Smith time, said, "*The silence spoken of by John the Revelator, which is to be in heaven for the space of half an hour, is between 1830 and 1851, during which time the judgment of God will be poured out, after that time there will be peace (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, page 124)*". Such doctrine was not supported by the young prophet.

Verse 2:

After the silence, there appears seven (7) angels who stood before God. The angels were obviously about the Father's will, having stood before Him. The number seven (7) will continue to be used after the period of silence. The reason for the use of this number might lie in its symbolic meaning. The number seven (7) represents completeness. The world was created in seven (7) days, one week is seven (7) days, and the span of earth temporal existence is seven (7) dispensations. The number seven also represents the completeness of heaven and earth. The earth being air, earth, wind, and fire and the heaven being telestial, terrestrial, and celestial, thus equaling seven (7). What better symbol to be in the final dispensation, but one of completion. It symbolizes that the Lord's plan will be completed despite any attempts by the adversary. The angels are said to have been given seven (7) trumps. The trump is often used as the symbol of important announcements or proclamations. Royalty is introduced by trumps. Victory is also announced by the use of trumps. It is apparent that the Lord is preparing to announce his coming. The angels are to proclaim this to the earth and usher in His arrival. With each blast of the trump we will see the cleansing of the earth, the burning of the tares, that the earth might be ready to receive her King.

Verse 3:

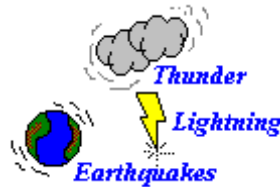
John says that another angel stood before the altar. The altar symbolizes being before God. It can also symbolize sacrifice as the ancients offered sacrifice upon altars. He is said to have a golden censer. The color gold is a symbol of royalty. The censer does not have any direct meaning; however, censers were vessels in which incense was burned. Incense is used to symbolize prayer and communication with God. Before prayers were offered in the ancient temple, incense was burned. John continues by saying that the angel was given incense that he should offer it "***with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar before the throne***". What was the prayer of the saints? In the Book of Revelation chapter 6, verse 11, John saw the saints ask the Lord when He was going to avenge them. The offering of the incense on the altar before the Father's throne would indicate that the time for answering those prayers had arrived.

Verse 4:

John sees smoke from the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints. Smoke is used as a symbol of the link between heaven and earth. As smoke rises from the earth to the sky, so does the prayers of saints rise from the earth to the heavens. The image given by John would say that the Lord is receiving the prayers of the saints. An angel is said to have carried the prayers of the saints before God. The prayers "*ascended up before God out of the angels hand*". The hand is a symbol of action or movement. We might draw the conclusion that the angel pleaded with the Lord to answer the prayers of the saints.

Verse 5:

The prayers of the saints are heard. The angel is said to have taken the censer, and filled it with fire from the altar before God. Fire is a symbol of purification and renewal. It can also be a symbol of wrath. In either case, the earth is to be renewed and purified. The wicked shall be removed. The earth shall feel the wrath of God for her corruption. The fact that the fire came from the altar before God would indicate that wrath is being sent under God's direction. The angel cast the censer down upon the earth. Indicating that the prayers of the saints will be answered. John said that as the censer was cast onto the earth, he heard the voices of **Thunderings**, **Lightnings**, and **Earthquakes**.



Voices are sometimes used in reference to testimony. For example, a voice of warning is testimony of warning. The Topical Guide to the standard works references the word voice by saying, see Common consent, manifestations of God, warning, preaching, and revelation. The Lord warned Laman and Lemuel in the Book of Mormon with a **voice** of thunder (1 Nephi 17:45). The warning and voice of the Lord is often referred to as thunder and lightning and other powers of nature. "*God thundered marvelously with His voice* (Job 37:5)". In the Doctrine and Covenant section 45 verse 25 we read, "*I called upon you.....by the voice of thunder, and by the voice of lightning, and by the voice of earthquakes*". We might conclude that the calamities spoken of, are warnings and testimonies from God to His people.

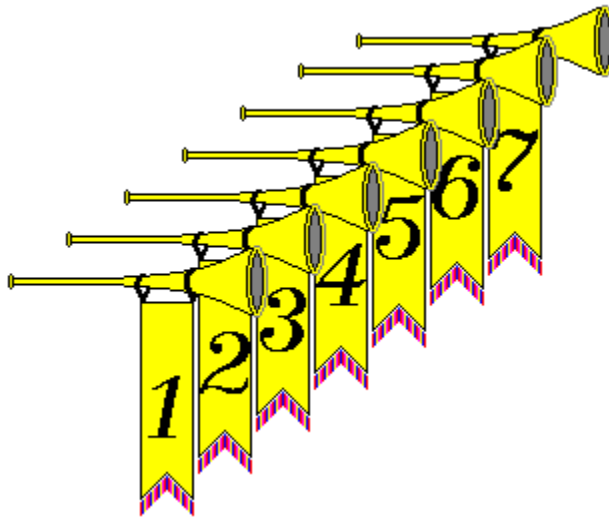
Thunder, lightning, and earthquakes carry very similar symbolic meanings. They are used to refer to divine power, destruction, and the wrath of judgment. The thundering, lightning and earthquakes spoken of in this verse of the book of revelation appear to be literal; though, they are signs and testimony to the judgment and wrath of God. We read in the Book of Mormon, as the prophet Zenos' words are recounted to us, that the Lord will visit the righteous by his voice and the wicked by his wrath (1 Nephi 19). The Lord said that

after the testimonies and warnings of man will come the testimony of earthquakes, thundering, lightnings, tempest and waves. *"All things shall be in commotion; and surely, men's hearts shall fail them: for fear shall come upon all people (Doctrine and Covenants 88:88-91)"*. The Lord will use the powers of nature to chasten men. The Lord said, with many calamities, such as *"vivid lightning shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of the Almighty God, until the consumption decree hath made full the ends of all nations."* The Lord explains that this is done that the prayers of the saints *"shall cease to come up into the ears of the Lord"*. He will also send such calamities to call men to repentance, *"the lightning shall streak forth from the east unto the west, and shall utter forth their voices unto all that live, and make the ears of all tingle that hear, saying these words - Repent ye, for the great day of the Lord is come (Doctrine and Covenants 43:22)"*? The voice of warning will call the righteous unto repentance and the wicked unto destruction. It is plain to see that the Lord is purifying the earth.


Man will learn that even though they ignore the testimony of God's servants, they cannot ignore the reality of God plan. The great calamities of the (7) seven trumps will begin the destruction of the worldly possessions that are so valued by men and begin the renewal of the earth in preparation for her King.

Verse 6:

The seven (7) angels with seven (7) trumps prepare to sound. As stated previously, the trump is often used as the symbol of important announcements or proclamations. Royalty is introduced by trumps. Victory is also announced by the use of trumps. It is apparent that the Lord is preparing to announce His coming, His victory, and His Kingship.




Verse 7:

The 1st  Trump is sounded, sending hail with fire mingled with blood. Hail, like other calamities, makes reference to the judgment sent forth from God to encourage men to repent. It also refers to the destruction of the wicked in purifying and renewing the earth. The hail sent by God is said to be with fire. Fire is a symbol of purification and cleansing. Fire represents the cleansing of the earth. It is said to purify the righteous (Isaiah 34:1-2) and destroy the wicked (2 Nephi 30:10). This calamity is very similar to one of the ten plagues placed on ancient Egypt during the captivity of the children of Israel. In the book of Exodus we read, "*The Lord sent fire mingled with hail upon Egypt...it smote every herb of the field and broke every tree....Fire ran upon the ground (Exodus 9:23-25)*". This must have been a indescribably dreadful sight; however, we read that the calamity did not fall on the section of land were the children of Israel dwelt. This might also be the case for the future calamity. The Doctrine and Covenants says, "*if the fire can scathe a green tree for the Glory of God, how easy it will burn up the dry trees to purify the vineyard of corruption. (Doctrine and Covenants 135:6)*". It would appear that the righteous might not go unharmed; however the destruction is sent for the wicked not the righteous. The difference between the plague of hail in ancient Egypt and the one prophesied for the future, is that the futures hail and fire will be mingled with blood. Blood symbolizes purification in reference to the atonement; however, it also represents the sealing of a covenant. Many covenants are sealed in blood. Did not God covenant to avenge the his servants by destroying those that lie against them (Doctrine and Covenants 109:30)? Blood can also be used as a symbol of death.



We can summarize that a great fiery hailstorm will fall upon the earth as another voice or warning to the Lords' people (Doctrine and Covenants 43:25). We will see the death of the wicked and the calling of the righteous unto repentance. The verse goes on to say that all of the green grass will be burned as well as one-third of the trees. The crops of the earth are said to be destroyed (Doctrine and Covenants 29:16). Though this literally might be the case knowing the outcome of the plague in ancient Egypt, this passage might also symbolize something else. Green symbolizes the living. Grass is often used in the scriptures in reference to man (1 Peter 1:24, Isaiah 40:6-8). More specifically the scriptures refer to grass as being the


"Kings and Authorities" of the earth (Doctrine & Covenants 124:7). We know that for the Lord to reign on earth, that would mean the fall of all other governments and leadership. The burning of the green grass might mean the destruction of the earth's leaders. Trees like grass are used to symbolize man. The scriptures often refer to the fact that the "*tree that brings not forth good fruit will be hewn down (Doctrine and Covenants 97:7)*". If the last days are to be a time of great wickedness and the trees spoken of in this verse symbolize man, would it therefore be surprising that the Lord would destroy *1/3* of mankind in this calamity? He did promise to hew down the tree that does not bring forth good fruit.

Verses 8-9: The 2nd  Trump is sounded. The time period between the first trump and the second is not given. John says he sees "*as it were a great mountain burning with fire*".



The word “great” makes reference to either the importance of the mountain and/or it's size. The possible meaning behind the mountain is either literal, figurative, or both. If figurative, the possible symbolic meanings are; 1. the dwelling place of God, i.e. the temple, 2. since mountains reach from the earth to the heaven, it could represent the joining of heaven and earth, 3. mountains can be used to symbolize spiritual development. Note that none of these symbolic meanings fit into the context of John's account. John says that the mountain was burning with fire, which would symbolize destruction, purification, renewal, or rebirth at a higher level. On the other hand, if the mountain was used as a symbol of the earth, the symbolism of fire would make sense, since the earth will be purified before the coming of the Lord. In the Book of Isaiah we see reference to the word mountain used as a symbol for a nation or country. Could it be that an entire nation will be destroyed? In contrast to some of John's other accountings, he makes reference to the fact that the great mountain might not be a mountain at all. He uses the words, "*As it were...*". It is hard to say whether or not the thing John saw was a mountain or some other "great" object. One's imagination could run wild with ideas of giant meteors, land masses, or nuclear explosions; however, the fact remains that we have no real way of knowing until it actually happens. The "*great mountain burning with fire*" is said to be cast


into the sea. Again, we see reference made to bodily, emotional, and spiritual cleaning, as the sea is introduced in this calamity. The sea, or the water thereof, symbolizes renewal. One-third of the sea is said to become as blood, another reference to renewal. One-third of the sea life dies and one-third of the ships in the sea are destroyed. Considering the theme behind the calamities of the last days, it is probably safe to assume that the symbolic meanings behind the figures are the renewal and purification of the earth. The calamity, like the previous, calls the righteous unto repentance and the wicked unto destruction.

Verses 10-11: The 3rd  Trump is sounded, and again we do not know how much time passes between the sounding of the trumpets. John says that *"there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp"*.



Again we find ourselves asking the question as to whether or not John is speaking literally or symbolically, or rather both. Since John could be seeing things that were foreign to him, the literal explanations might seem odd to us. For example, if the great star was a rocket, falling to earth, how could John describe the event other than with terms he knew? Like burning as a lamp, and great star. On the other hand the event might be quite symbolic. In the earlier chapters of The Book of Revelation, John referred to the leaders of the church as stars. Servants of God are often referred to as stars. The term great star would indicate this servants importance or stature. The term *great star* is cross referenced in the scriptures to the familiar verse in Isaiah which reads, *"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations (Isaiah 14:12)"*. The word "lamp" is used to symbolize spiritual beings, spirituality, and spiritual guidance. The fact that it was burning might indicate it's destruction or in this case a fall from glory. The great star, Lucifer, fell from the presence of God for his rebellion (Moses 4:1-3). *"He became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not harken unto my voice (Moses 4:4)"*. Interesting that the Lord has, to this point, in John's vision given men many voices of warning, and now we see that because men will not harken unto those warnings, the great star will

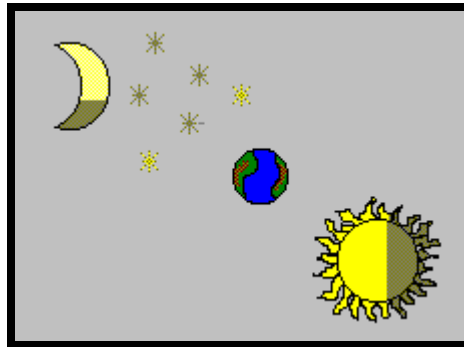
lead them captive at his will. The accounting of John says that the star "***fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of water***". Water can symbolize purification, renewal, and salvation of men. What more fitting description for the adversary, but than to describe him as falling upon the salvation of men. Is he not the one that leads us away from salvation? John calls this great star "Wormwood". This has little meaning to us today; however, the people in Euro-Asia would have had a good understanding of what John was saying. Wormwood is a type of plant native to the warmer regions of Euro-Asia. Dictionaries define the plant more precisely as *Artemisia vulgaris*, a variety of Mugwort. It grows to a height of one meter and is generally used as a spice or medicine. It has a very bitter taste and has come to symbolize bitterness and sorrow. There isn't a better word for the adversary than bitterness and sorrow, because those that choose to follow him will only find bitterness and sorrow. John says that a "*third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they became bitter*". Though it is an extrapolation on the possible symbolic meaning behind John's account, I believe that the third trump will issue its warning and the adversary will begin to draw many men away from salvation, more so than ever before. One-third of the men of the earth will fall. They will partake of the bitter waters instead of the water of life. They will die spiritually. We read in other sections of scriptures that one of the signs of the times will be mans' love for sin (2 Nephi 27:1). Let us hope and pray that we might not be deceived and drink of the bitter waters. The last days will be days of great deception, we can only find comfort in knowing that the Lord will never lead us astray if we but follow his voice. And "***Woe unto them that will call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter (Isaiah 5:20)***".

Verses 12-13: The 4th  Trump is sounded and one of the best known of the signs of the times is issued. One-third of the Sun is darkened. One-third of the Moon is darkened. One-third of the stars in the sky are darkened. One-third of the day and night refuse to shine. Whether this occurrence has any symbolic meaning is questionable; however, the sources of light are often used to symbolize gifts and power from our Heavenly Father. Since the earth will be in an extremely wicked state, this would not be at all surprising. The fact that literal darkness will occur is not surprising either. Prior to the visitation of Christ to the Nephites after his death, the sun, moon and stars refused to give light (Helamen 14:20). The fact that this sign is so well known probably has to do with the number of times it has been prophesied. The following references prophesy of the darkening of the sun, moon and stars prior to the second coming of Christ;

Isaiah 13:10
Luke 21:25
D & C 34:9
Joel 3:15

Matthew 24:29
2 Nephi 23:10
D & C 45:42
Revelation 8:12

Mark 13:24
D & C 29:14
Joel 2:10
Isaiah 24:23



John says that after the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars an angel of the Lord warns the earth that three more trumps are left to sound. In studying the second coming it is becoming increasingly apparent that by the time the second coming actually occurs, no one can say that they were not given the chance to repent or that they were not given any warning. Though we are told that the coming of the Lord will be as a thief in the night, the warning and chastening of the Lord will be obvious and ample.