

The First Four Trumpets of Revelation

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Now that we have had a brief overview and justification for what God is about to do, we need to back up and examine the first four trumpets of Revelation in greater detail. During the [great tribulation](#), believers will be able to see the fulfillment of prophecy right before their eyes. People who are led by the Holy Spirit will be able to see a distinct correlation between current events and God's Word. Unfortunately, many of the survivors will refuse to understand God's actions because they have hearts like Pharaoh. (Remember the hardness of Pharaoh's heart? Even after God sent ten plagues upon Egypt, Pharaoh refused to submit to God's authority.)

The cause and purposes of the [great tribulation](#) can be understood by anyone who sincerely wants to know God's ways. If the books of Daniel and Revelation remained obscure and mysterious forever, the final generation would not have confidence in the Bible. Nothing is more powerful than a truth whose time has come. This fact will soon stand in direct opposition to the claims of the world's greatest skeptics. Indeed, you can be sure of this development: Many scientists will deny that the first four trumpet events are "Acts of God." Instead, they will say that these calamities are nature's random curse which *they* have been foretelling for years. On the other hand, leaders of the worldwide religious coalition (Babylon) will claim that these events are judgments sent by an angry God. What a debate! Who will win in the court of public opinion – science or religion? Revelation reveals that religion will once again overpower science and politics! The last time this happened, the age that followed was called "The Dark Ages."

A Great Earthquake

"And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given [seven trumpets](#). Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar [of Incense]. **He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. . . . Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the Earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.**" (Revelation 8:2,3,5, insertion mine)

These verses describe the end of Jesus' intercessory service on behalf of Earth. In other words, when God's patience with Earth as a *corporate body* reaches its limit because Earth's cup of iniquity is full, His wrath toward Earth begins. When the angel casts the censer down, four physical phenomena will occur on Earth: thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. Notice also that when God's patience with *individuals* on Earth reaches its limit at the end of the seventh trumpet (at that time every person will have received or rejected the gospel), these same phenomena occur again. Then again, when the seventh bowl is poured out on the wicked during the seven last plagues, these four phenomena occur a third time. These global events, described three times in Revelation (Revelation 8:5,7; 11:19; 16:17-21), are magnificent signs marking specific milestones in this sequence of 14 events.

The physical signs that mark the beginning of the [great tribulation](#) will be awesome and they are

carefully designed and implemented to arrest the attention of billions of people. They will be so powerful that everyone on Earth will shudder. The global earthquake that marks the beginning of the [great tribulation](#) will be distinguished from previous earthquakes on Earth in two ways:

1. This earthquake will be accompanied by manifestations in the Heavens and within the Earth. There will be rumblings or noises that come from deep within the Earth (sounding like groaning and voices), deafening peals of thunder and a scary display of lightning – these episodes will be simultaneously heard and observed around the world.
2. This earthquake will cause overwhelming damage throughout the world. Skyscrapers will topple. Vital bridges will vanish. Highways will be broken up. Power grids will be ripped apart. Water lines and septic systems will be broken. The oceans will churn violently. The Richter scale cannot measure the power of a global earthquake and analysts will not be able to calculate the resulting damage. This is too much for man to measure!

Meteors of Fire Fall

"Then the seven angels who had the [seven trumpets](#) prepared to sound them. The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up." (Revelation 8:6,7)

A few days after the global earthquake and a physical display of God's powers, Revelation predicts much of Earth will be set on fire by a giant firestorm of burning hail (small meteorites). The fiery hail will ignite unquenchable fires all over the world, burning up a third of the trees and all the green grass! The possibility of this happening is not as far fetched as it may sound. Our planet routinely experiences meteoric hailstorms every year. The Leonids, the Perseids, the Lyrids, and the Geminid meteoric showers are annual events that happen when Earth passes through fields of space debris. The gravity of Earth and the orbit of the debris gives the appearance of "shooting stars," but the shooting stars are white hot chunks of space debris. As the debris enters our atmosphere at speeds that may exceed 60,000 miles per hour, atmospheric friction causes the debris to become white hot. So far, these annual displays have not been a serious threat. The white hot debris usually does not reach Earth, but the story will be quite different when the first trumpet judgment occurs.

Think of the consequences when millions of white hot rocks rain down on Earth. We may have a good example of the consequences. Some scientists now believe that the [great Chicago fire](#) (October, 1871) was not caused by Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicking over a lantern, but by a shower of fiery meteors. Historical evidence indicates that a string of fires were ignited along a straight line stretching about 200 miles across the north central part of the United States that *same* night. In fact, the entire town of Peshtigo, Wisconsin, mysteriously caught fire and burned to the ground that night. Survivors of the Peshtigo fire reported seeing streaks of fire falling out of the sky. What caused all of these enormous fires to start during the same hour that evening? Scientists believe a shower of white hot hail falling to Earth resolves the question and satisfies the details.

Asteroid Impact #1

The judgment that follows the firestorm of burning meteors is an asteroid impact. John writes, **"The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed."** (Revelation 8:8,9)

This scene describes a large asteroid, the size of a mountain, hitting the sea. The term "mountain" is an accurate term for a large asteroid. If an asteroid, one mile in diameter, was sitting on the surface of the Earth, it would be called a *mountain* 5,280 feet high! Even more, John's description of an [asteroid impacting](#) the sea is identical to scientific models created at several universities during the past ten years. For example, the tidal wave caused by a great asteroid impact would destroy ships for hundreds of miles in every direction – even those docked in remote seaports. Think about the commotion of the ocean after such an impact! (See Luke 21:25.) According to studies conducted at the University of California, an asteroid of this magnitude would be so hot by the time it hit an ocean that it would make a large part of the ocean water anoxic (oxygen deficient) by simply boiling the oxygen out of a large area of the sea. Sea temperature would rise dramatically and the hot water would kill billions of sea creatures in a very large radius. The warmed, anoxic water resulting from the impact would also provide a perfect environment for the growth of red algae or what is known as red tide. When John said the sea turned to blood, he may have been describing the appearance of red algae, which thrives in oxygen deficient water!

Asteroid Impact #2

The next judgment is a great asteroid impact on a continent. John describes a great star that impacts the Earth. **"The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water – the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter."** (Revelation 8:10,11)

Many prophecy experts insist on a symbolic interpretation of these verses, maintaining that they do not believe these events could be literal. However, two compelling reasons eliminate the possibility of a symbolic interpretation. First, each event is physically consistent with the literal outcome John describes. Second, if these texts are symbolic, where is the explanation or interpretation of these symbols within the Bible? How can symbolic people drink symbolic water?

Suppose a large star (asteroid or comet), blazing like a torch, were to impact one of Earth's seven continents. What would be the consequences? Computer and seismic models created at the University of Southern California at Berkeley indicate that ground waves would shear water wells and sewer lines for hundreds of miles in all directions. Earthquakes and tremors would continue for many days as enormous tectonic forces beneath the surface of the Earth adjust to the impact. Of course, everything within two hundred miles of ground zero would be vaporized. Remember, a large asteroid impact would release the energy of thousands of nuclear bombs.

This energy would be dissipated in powerful earthquakes and one of the first casualties of such an impact would be drinking water. Broken septic systems and toxic waste buried in landfills would leach into underground rivers that flow into huge aquifers that provide drinking water for millions of people. The results will be devastating. Revelation 8:10,11 predicts that many people will die from drinking bitter water that has become unsafe; a direct consequence of a "star" hitting Earth! The title of this star is very meaningful. **"And the Lord saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them: Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall [poison] to drink."** (Jeremiah 9:13-15, KJV) If we compare the Lord's comments to Jeremiah with John's vision, it becomes clear why the asteroid is called "Wormwood." "Wormwood" means poisonous.

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Scientists Identify Asteroid Impact Craters

In the early 1980's, few geologists and geoscientists accepted the theory that giant asteroids, the size of mountains, had previously impacted our planet. Today, with the help of computers, satellites, and better equipment, scientists have discovered several enormous impact sites on planet Earth. Funny, isn't it, how scientific discovery can reverse long standing conclusions in a very short amount of time! The notion that Earth has been pummeled by giant asteroids was regarded as scientific lunacy in 1978 when geoscientist Dr. Luis Alvarez (University of California at Berkeley), advanced the idea that dinosaurs may have become extinct due to a giant asteroid impact millions of years ago. Dr. Alvarez and other scientists, such as the late Dr. Eugene Shoemaker (1928-1997) from the United States Geological Survey, were among the first geoscientists to conclude that Earth had been impacted by large asteroids. The idea, widely controversial in the late 70's, is widely accepted today due to overwhelming evidence. When the comet, Shoemaker-Levy 9, broke up and impacted Jupiter's surface in July 1994, all arguments ended. One impact site on Jupiter was wide enough to comfortably accommodate two planets the size of Earth side by side. Today, geoscientists are convinced that our planet has experienced horrific impacts from large asteroids and they are just as convinced that our planet will be impacted again. Because erosion constantly changes the face of the Earth, it was difficult to detect impact craters until the late 1970's. Even more, 75% of Earth's surface is covered with water, making it almost impossible to detect ocean impact sites. With the help of satellite photographs, it has become much easier to find these ancient impact sites.

In fact, scientists have identified more than 150 land-craters caused by asteroid or meteorite impacts. The three largest craters are found in Canada, South Africa and off the eastern coast of Mexico. Each of these craters has a diameter of about 120 - 150 miles. The largest known crater within the United States is about 18 miles wide and is located close to Manson, Iowa. Even though craters are sprinkled over various continents, few are as distinct in appearance as Meteor Crater in Arizona. According to Richard A. F. Grieve, Ph.D., a scientist with the Geological Survey of Canada (*Scientific American*, April 1990), the "tiny" iron meteorite which

caused Meteor Crater in Arizona was less than 200 feet in diameter and weighed approximately one million tons. It hit the Earth traveling about 35,000 miles per hour (mph) and released energy equivalent to the most powerful nuclear devices available today. Meteor Crater is about two-thirds of a mile wide and 640 feet deep.

The amount of damage caused by an impact is relative to the momentum and the direction of impact. Earth is traveling about 72,000 mph in its annual orbit around the Sun. If a meteor traveling at 40,000 mph hits "head on" with Earth, the energy released would be equivalent to a 112,000 mph collision! *National Geographic* featured an impressive article titled "Extinctions" in its June 1989 edition, which reported the findings of scientists studying the effects of ancient asteroid impacts. This article is still timely since the Bible and scientists agree that Earth will be impacted again.

The *National Geographic* article proposed the following scenario: "Giant meteorite strikes Earth, setting the planet afire. Volcanoes erupt, tsunamis crash into the continents. The sky grows dark for months, perhaps years. Unable to cope with the catastrophic changes in climate, countless species are wiped off the face of the planet." (page 686) The article goes on to suggest that great fires resulting from an asteroid would destroy crops, trees and vegetation. Even worse, wind storms created by the fires would destroy buildings hundreds of miles from the impact. Dust and smoke from the fires would find their way into the jet stream and block much of the Sun's light, thus altering the world's climate and the chances of human survival!

Will Asteroids Impact Earth Again?

"Sooner or later, it is inevitable," scientists say, "that Earth's gravitational field will attract one or several of these celestial bodies." "Civilization threatening" asteroids (rocks having a diameter of one to 10 miles) are so tiny in space that scientists rarely detect their presence until they are very close to Earth. Scientists calculate that Asteroid 1989 FC missed Earth by only six hours on March 23, 1989. They also maintain that it is highly probable that it will return at some point in the future and this time be even closer to Earth! What is shocking about Asteroid 1989 FC is that it was not detected until after it had passed by Earth. On January 7, 2002, a small asteroid (2001 YB5) about 1,000 feet in diameter missed Earth by twice the distance between the moon and Earth. Although this may sound like a safe distance, the asteroid was traveling *toward us* at 70,000 miles per hour. In other words, we missed an impact by only a handful of hours! This asteroid will revisit our place in space in about 3 years and 7 months since the writing of this book. A document on the NASA internet site currently states that Earth's closest miss with an asteroid has been only a matter of minutes! One asteroid whizzed within 62,000 miles of Earth!

"It is inevitable," scientists say, "Earth will once again be hit by an asteroid large enough to cause mass extinctions . . ." (*National Geographic*, January 1985, page 47) Scientists Clark Chapman and David Morrison startled 4,000 geoscientists at the American Geophysical Union in San Francisco in December 1989, saying, "In terms of risk, the significant danger [from asteroids] comes from impacts with global implications. Statistically, the greatest risk to each of us is [that] . . . the impact could cause a global disruption of crops and/or food distribution systems, leading to widespread starvation and perhaps the death of most of the Earth's human

population. We call this a civilization threatening impact." At the time of the meeting (1989), Dr. Chapman was a scientist at the Planetary Science Institute in Tucson, Arizona, and Dr. Morrison was chief of the Space Science Division at NASA's Ames Research Center in Mountain View, California.

Scientists have known for years that asteroids and meteorites strike the Earth and moon in predictable patterns. In fact, if Asteroid 1989 FC had hit Earth, Dr. Bevan French, an expert at NASA's Solar System Exploration Division, calculated it would have released energy equivalent to 20,000 hydrogen bombs. If it had hit a metropolitan area such as Tokyo, Los Angeles or New York, millions of people would have died instantly. Fortunately, most meteorites that have impacted the Earth in recent times have been small and have had no significant consequence. However, the media reports fireballs and meteorites regularly. As an example, on November 22, 1996, a "small" meteorite impacted Honduras, making a crater 150 feet in diameter.

Sun, Moon, and Stars Go Dark

"The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, 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 turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night." (Revelation 8:12)

The judgments of God do not end with two asteroid impacts. The fourth judgment follows the first three trumpets and the result is that the Sun, moon and stars go dark. It is conceivable that the darkness John saw is similar to what occurred in the northwestern part of the United States during the Mount St. Helens eruption in 1980. At midday, it looked like midnight. There was no light. Although Revelation does not say why the Sun, moon and stars turn dark, this worldwide phenomenon would be consistent with volcanic eruptions. The cumulative effects of a giant earthquake and two asteroid impacts could certainly disrupt the fragile balance of Earth's tectonic plates. As the tectonic plates strain to readjust, enormous energy would be released. Hundreds of volcanoes could erupt, belching magma and ash in a series of explosions that would dwarf the blasts of Mount St. Helens, Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines and Mount Popo in Mexico.

Consider the cumulative effect. The first three trumpets send megatons of dust, soot and debris into the atmosphere. Hundreds of volcanic eruptions (around the Ring of Fire) belch more dust in the form of volcanic ash, causing extended darkness around the world. Millions of burning acres and resulting windstorms insure that the jet stream is affected. One ounce of soot absorbs 25,000 times the amount of sunlight that one ounce of dust absorbs! Given this physical fact, it is not hard to see how a band of darkness captured by the jet stream could encircle the middle third of Earth where two-thirds of the world's population lives! The absence of sunlight for an extended period of time will produce famine. While you are pondering these powerful displays of God's wrath, keep in mind that God is righteous and He can justify His actions. What does the severity of God's actions say about man's rebellion?

John predicts, **"A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up."** It is very interesting to note that the quantity of "one-

third" is used 12 times throughout the description of the [seven trumpets](#):

- 1/3 of Earth will be burned up
- 1/3 of the trees will be burned up
- 1/3 of the sea will turn into blood
- 1/3 of the sea creatures will die
- 1/3 of the ships on the sea will sink
- 1/3 of the rivers and springs will become contaminated
- 1/3 of the light from the Sun will be taken away
- 1/3 of the light from the moon will be taken away
- 1/3 of the light from the stars will be taken away
- 1/3 of the day will be without light
- 1/3 of the night will be without light
- 1/3 of mankind will be killed in the sixth trumpet war

What is God trying to tell us about the repetitive use of "one-third?" Would you believe it has to do with God's generosity? God destroys one-third, but spares two-thirds. To appreciate the importance of God's generosity, notice how rebellion was addressed in Bible times.

When a tribal nation refused to pay tribute to a king who claimed higher authority over their territory, it was a common practice for the offended king to attack the defiant city and totally destroy it – men, women and children. (Deuteronomy 2:34; 3:6) However, if the king was in a generous mood, he might spare one-third of the nation from destruction (and thus maintain some of his tax base). Notice how this happened during the reign of King David. **"David also defeated the Moabites [who had refused to pay him tribute]. He made them lie down on the ground and measured them off with a length of cord. Every two lengths of them were put to death, and the third length was allowed to live. So the [surviving] Moabites became subject to David and brought tribute [tax]."** (2 Samuel 8:2, insertions mine)

God also dealt with Israel in a parallel pattern. God tolerated Israel's rebellion for many centuries, but when its cup reached full measure, God killed two-thirds of Israel when He sent His servant Nebuchadnezzar to destroy them. (Jeremiah 25:9) Because God is a generous King, He spared one-third (the survivors) by putting them in Babylonian exile. God told Ezekiel, **"A third of your people will die of the plague or perish by famine inside you; a third will fall by the sword outside your walls; and a third I will scatter to the winds and pursue with drawn sword."** (Ezekiel 5:12) Did you notice God's use of His deadly judgments: sword, famine and plague? Did you notice that two-thirds were killed?

Again, the balance of mercy can be observed in the days of Zechariah. God said, **" 'In the whole land,' declares the Lord, 'two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, "They are my people," and they will say, "The Lord is our God." ' "** (Zechariah 13:8,9)

The repetitive use of "one-third" within the [seven trumpets](#) declares God's generosity with a defiant and rebellious world. The trumpet judgments are redemptive in nature. If a generous

king spared one-third of a rebellious nation in ancient times, what can be said of the King of kings who spares two-thirds of the elements mentioned in the seven trumpets? In fact, if God justifiably destroyed two-thirds of the items described in the first four trumpets, life on this planet would perish within a couple months!

Scientists and Bible Prophecy Predict Impacts

What makes this interpretation of the first four trumpets so uncanny is that scientists and Bible students are not only arriving at the same conclusions – that asteroids and meteorites will impact Earth – but they are also surprised by the consistent harmony of results. Will Earth be pummeled by fiery rocks raining from Heaven? More and more scientists are convinced it is inevitable, and so are students of [Bible prophecy](#).

Go to the next segment titled [The Fear of God](#)