

Supplement to XVII, Cycle 3

Cycle 3 starts with the 7th seal being opened = silence. There are a number of ideas to interpret this, but none has widespread agreement. Most likely it looks at Zephaniah 1:7” Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is near; “ This was Zephaniah’s warning to Jerusalem of God’s impending judgment on their idolatry. Everything in heaven is silent out of awe and anticipation of God’s actions. Alternately, it could be to emphasize that God hears the prayers of the saints that rise up to him. In the face of judgment on the earth, the people of God are still heard and protected. There is a pattern coming of 4 judgments on the earth, 3 on men.

Seven trumpets: Mirror the plagues of Egypt and run parallel to the 7 bowls in Chapter 16. The trumpets affect only “a third” of the earth, bowls appear more complete. Both are intended to drive men to repent.

Revelation 9	Revelation 16	Exodus
1 st Trumpet: Hail, fire and blood	1 st Bowl: Painful sores	9:22-25,
2 nd Trumpet: Sea becomes blood	2 nd Bowl: Sea became blood	7:20-25,
3 rd Trumpet: Fresh water/rivers become bitter	3 rd Bowl: Rivers and springs become blood	7:20-25,
4 th Trumpet: Sun is stricken, heavenly signs	4 th Bowl: Sun scorches with fire and heat	10:21-23
5 th Trumpet: Star (angel) opens pit for demons. Pictures as a locust plague tormenting men with painful injuries (Joel 1)	5 th Bowl: People in Satan’s kingdom are stricken with painful sores	9:8-12 10:12-15
6 th Trumpet: Battle and war led by demonic horses loosed by 4 angels	6 th Bowl: Demonic spirits assemble kings for Battle	14, Red Sea
7 th Trumpet: (11:15) Kingdom of the world becomes Christ’s kingdom, temple is opened up with great earthquake, lightning, thunder (Joel 2:4-5)	7 th Bowl: Lightning, thunder, earthquake. Babylon is judged.	15 Deliverance and Moses Song

It is important to understand the point of the trumpets and bowls. God is showing his divine wrath to drive men to repent. Remember Egypt, God showed his power to Pharaoh to make him realize that Yahweh was the true God. Each plague was an assault on one of the gods of Egypt.

Ex 11: 10 Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.

Rev 9:20 “The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, 21 nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”

Rev 16:9 “They did not repent and give him glory,” 16:11 “They did not repent of their deeds.”

It is important to see the larger picture here. OT prophets warned of God’s judgment on Israel as well as the Gentiles for their disobedience and idol worship. John uses the message of the prophets to call Christians to remember God’s actions in the OT as hope that judgment will not be without righteousness and restoration. Israel’s hope in Egypt and Babylon, the Christians hope in Jerusalem and the world. Zephaniah affirms this:

Zeph 1: 14 The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. 15 A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. 17 I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the Lord; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the Lord. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

3:8 “Therefore wait for me,” declares the Lord, “for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed.

3:12 But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord, 13 those who are left in Israel; they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue. For they shall graze and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.” 14 Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! 15 The Lord has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.

The Angel and the little scroll

Between the 6th and 7th trumpets an angel appears with a scroll and takes a decisive stance on the earth. The symbolism here is profound and gives some indication who this angel is and what this event represents.

Characteristics of the Angel. This calls back to Daniel 12 and the vision of man in linen telling Daniel to seal up his words until the time of the end when the power of the holy people comes to an end. Numerous divine references are apparent in the description of the Angel:

- Rainbow – sign of God’s promise at the flood, mentioned in Ezek. 1 over God’s throne.
- Face like sun, legs like fire – similar to Jesus in chapter 1.
- Walking on land and sea – reference to Jesus life walking on the land and the miracle of walking on water
- Voice like a lion – Lion of the tribe of Judah, Joel 3:16 and Amos 1:20 reference Yahweh roaring.
- Held a scroll with the mystery of God – This is the Gospel, Paul referenced in Eph 1:9, 3:3, 5:32, Col 1:26-27. God coming to earth to unite Jew and Gentile into one kingdom

The scroll is sweet to taste but bitter in the stomach. The Gospel is good news to hear but we live it out in tribulation. That is the entire story of Revelation, the tribulation of the saints carrying the Gospel.

It could be that this Angel is Jesus or the Holy Spirit. At least it stands as a representative of God giving the Gospel to John with the command to preach it in 10:11.

Two Witnesses: Given 11:6, there is a clear reference to Elijah (prophesying and stopping rain) and Moses (blood, plagues). This likely is not two particular individuals but symbols of the law and the prophets testifying to the truth of Jesus being messiah. The Jews murdered the prophets and God judged Jerusalem in 70 AD for this.

Matt 23:31 Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. 33 You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? 34 Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, 35 so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. 36 Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Timing: 11:15 and 19 give some indication that the trumpets are not specifically future judgments.

15“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”... 19 Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

Compare this to what happened at the crucifixion:

Matt 26:63 ..And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” 64 Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Luke 23:44 It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 while the sun’s light failed.

Matt 27:50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. 51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. 54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

Matt 28:1 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.

I would propose that Revelation 8-11 is speaking of the events in Israel’s history leading to the crucifixion and resurrection of the deliver, the Messiah. John gets a vision in Cycle 3 of the plagues and tribulations that came to a conclusion when Jesus came the first time. It is also true that Christians can expect these tribulations and plagues to continue, and that man will refuse to repent, until Jesus comes the second time.

Remember, if the scroll opened by the Lamb beginning in Chapter 6 is the history of redemption that only Jesus can unroll, it is logical that the 7th seal would finish at the cross. Redemption was accomplished at the Cross. It is being applied to us from that point forward by the Holy Spirit.

The third cycle ends with heaven opened up. Man has full access to the throne room of God through Christ. The kingdom of earth is becoming the Kingdom of God. It will not reach final consummation until the second coming, but the events to bring the Kingdom to Earth began at the cross.