8:1 When [the Lamb] opened the seventh seal, there was **silence in heaven for about half an hour**.

*v. 1 –* ***silence . . . for about a half an hour****.*

*v. 2 -* ***the seven angels who stand before God*** *and are probably the same seven angels of the seven churches in chapters 2 & 3 (Brighton), but it’s hard to tell whether they’re in the same order in these chapters that they were in 2-3.*

*v. 2 –****trumpets*** *– not melodic instruments of music (like harps and lyres), but for fanfares or military bugling*

*v. 3&4 -* ***the prayers of God’s people*** *– What starts off chapters 8 & 9 is PRAYER. Prayer is what we do while we STAND & WORSHIP (Chapters 6&7), not fight back with war or political action*

*v. 7 –* ***a third of the earth*** *– not all of it each time, just a part of it.*

*Note the sequence of destruction in verses 7-12: vegetation on land; sea and its creatures; fresh water sources; celestial bodies (along with night and day). Compare the sequence of creation in Genesis 1. See also Romans 8:18-22*

*v.8 -* ***something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea*** *- Mt. Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD, destroying the nearby cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. St. John was alive during that time and for some years after.* ***Do you suppose he witnessed and remembered this event as he wrote these verses?***

**2**And I saw **the seven angels who stand before God**, and seven **trumpets** were given to them.

**3**Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with **the prayers of all God’s people**, on the golden altar in front of the throne. **4**The smoke of the incense, together with **the prayers of God’s people**, went up before God from the angel’s hand. **5**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 [Exodus 19:16-19].

**6**Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.

**7**The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on 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.

**8**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, **9**a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

**10**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— **11**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.

*v. 11 –* ***Wormwood*** *– This is the only place this word appears in the New Testament. Outside of the Bible, the Greek word refers to the plant “Artemisia Absinthium”, a decorative plant in gardens in North America. It’s used for flavoring in the liqueur absinthe as well as in vermouth and bitters, but ingested in large amounts it can cause convulsions and kidney failure.*

*v. 13 –* ***an eagle*** *– not because he’s a majestic bird here, but because he’s a carrion-bird (so maybe “vulture” would be better). The three “****Woes****” he proclaims are pronounced fulfilled in 9:12, 11:14, and 18:10-16*

*The key to understanding the purpose of these plagues is at the end of Revelation 9 (verses 20-21: “The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues* ***still did not repent*** *of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.” See also Luke 13:1-5*

**12**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.

**13**As I watched, I heard **an eagle** that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: “**Woe! Woe! Woe** to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!”

**What does this chapter seem to be telling us about the relationship between -**

* God’s specific answers to our specific prayers?
* Our prayers in general and God’s wider plans?
* Our prayers, and the repentance of others?
* Our prayers, and the mission of the church?