

The Fourth Trumpet: A Third of the Sun, Moon and Stars Were Struck and Turned Dark

8: 12-13

DIG: Why did God judge the earth with darkness? What ramifications would it have upon the inhabitants of the earth? What is His purpose?

REFLECT: When has your sin made you blind to the world? When have you been partially blinded? Why? What was the biggest woe you have ever had in your life? What did you learn from it? How can you help others to avoid the same trap?

As the fourth angel sounded his shofar, the focus of God's judgment shifted from the earth to the heavens. Still reeling from the effects of the first three trumpets, people will be desperately trying to find natural explanations for each crisis. There will be seminars, conferences, emergency sessions of the United Nations, and scientific studies - all frantically seeking to cope with the ecological disasters. Yet another angelic trumpet sounded, but this time the result would be so extraordinary that it would defy all scientific understanding. This judgment would be against **the heavenly bodies**.

Like the plagues of Egypt, these judgments will attack the gods of this world, and the pagan religions that worship these objects. **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.** The word **struck**, or the Greek word *plesso*, is the verb from which the noun *plague* comes from. The heavenly bodies will be struck with a *plague* from **the Lord**. Astrologers, fortunetellers, and witches who rely on **the stars** to predict the future will be speechless (see my commentary on **Genesis Lw - The Witness of the Stars**).

They were not destroyed, only their light will somehow be hindered from reaching **the earth**. The normal **light** of the sun in the daytime will be reduced by **one third**, as is **the light** of the **moon** and **stars** at night. Clouds or haze in the sky cannot explain this phenomenon because **John** specifically tells us that was caused by **the heavenly bodies** being **struck** in such a way as to reduce their light output. **The moon** shines by reflected **light**. So its **light** would be reduced if the sun's **light** output were reduced. It is difficult to say exactly how this will happen (It will, after all, be a miracle). But for a time, maybe a day, maybe several days, the sun's output will be reduced. **Stars** produce **their own light**, but somehow **their light** will also be reduced by **one third**. As a result, the day and night will be

only two-thirds as bright as normal, even though the skies may be completely clear of haze or anything else to obstruct **the light**.²⁵⁶ No one knows but **the Lord** may shift the visible color spectrum of the sun and stars more to the ultraviolet range, which we cannot see there by reducing our ability to see the same amount of light.

No matter how much they try to ignore the obvious, it will be impossible for the scientists of the earth to disregard the amazing **darkness**. It will also upset all the earth's meteorology and climatology. Unpredictable and violent atmospheric storms will probably follow as well as interruptions in botanical and biological cycles.²⁵⁷

Darkness runs through the TaNaKh as a symbol of judgment. The prophet **Amos** spoke of **the Day of ADONAI** as a day of darkness rather than light (**Amos 5:18**). For **Joel** it will be a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness (**Joel 2:2a**). **Jesus**, quoting **Isaiah 13:10**, says that in the Day of ADONAI **there will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken (Luke 21:25-26)**. These prophecies will find their fulfillment when **the fourth trumpet** sounds.

In the New Covenant, **darkness** is often associated with the demonic. Unbelievers will be cast into outer **darkness** where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (**Matthew 8:12**). In **Second Corinthians 6:14-15**, light and **Christ** are contrasted with **darkness** and Belial. According to **Colossians 1:13** **God's people** are those who have been delivered out of the power of **darkness** (also see **Colossians 2:13-15**). This **fourth trumpet**, then, is a godly warning to three **woes** that will follow.²⁵⁸

As I watched, I heard a vulture that was flying in midair calling out in a loud voice. The word **vulture** is the Greek word *aetos*. It can be translated either eagle or **vulture**. In this context a **vulture** is a bird of prey and symbolizes impending doom. It hovers in **midair** so as to be seen by all, and **calls out in a loud voice** so that none will fail to hear. **Habakkuk** described the invading Babylonians as a **vulture swooping to devour (Habakkuk 1:8)**. **ADONAI** is fair. **The inhabitants of the earth** will be warned. Repent!

The vulture announces: **Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the shofar blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels.** The last **three** judgments are separated from the previous four because they are **three woes**. With the fall of Babylon, or one world government, the **woe** against her is repeated twice for emphasis (**18:10, 16 and 19**). But here it will be repeated **three** times, corresponding to the last three **shofars**.²⁵⁹ As bad as the first four judgments were, the next **three** will be far worse. The first two woes will be demonic invasions, and the third will contain the seven bowl judgments.