

CHAPTER 8





Understanding the Book of Revelation | Chapter 8

WITH PASTOR TOM

THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS

The seventh seal is loosed.

Revelation 8:1

When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

When He opened the seventh seal: The sealed scroll was introduced in Revelation 5, and the seals were opened one by one up to the sixth seal in Revelation 6.

This silence is striking; some have seen it as “breathing space,” or, can be heard, perhaps even the cry of the martyrs of Revelation 6:9-11.

More likely, this silence in heaven demonstrates a sober, awestruck silence at the judgments to come, now that the seals are off and the scroll can be opened.

Silence in heaven for about half an hour: A half-hour silence is not long, but things seem long or short in their context.

Silence for about half an hour is a long time.

Revelation 8:2 Seven angels with seven trumpets.

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

And to them were given seven trumpets: In the Old Testament, trumpets sounded the alarm for war and threw the enemy into a panic, or they called an assembly of God’s people. These seven trumpets will sound as God’s battle-alarm during the great tribulation.

Revelation 8:3-6 The other angel with the golden censer.

Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

Then another angel: Some see this angel as Jesus, functioning as a mediator and because of Old Testament references to Jesus as "the Angel of the LORD."

A golden censer... the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God: Prayer and incense are often associated in the Bible. The idea is that just as incense is precious, pleasant, and drifts to heaven, so do our prayers. The prayers of God's people come before the Lord God.

Significantly, the prayers of God's people set in motion the coming consummation of history.

Daniel 9: we can and should also pray Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

It is not said that the angel presents these prayers. He presents the incense, and the prayers ascend with it.

Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth: As God's people pray for the resolution of all things, their prayers were touched and then "thrown" back down to earth. All things will not be resolved on this earth until judgment comes.

It set in motion seven trumpets that would sound upon the earth.

Revelation 8:7 The first trumpet brings a plague on vegetation.

The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

We don't know if the hail and fire was red in colour or if it brought forth red blood.

How will this happen? Many wonder if it will happen through phenomenon we know today, like nuclear war, fallout, pollution, meteors, and so forth.

God brings judgment. He isn't a passive bystander. This is not "nature" taking its course.

God may use whatever method He desires to bring judgment, but people on earth know these events are from God, and do not think them to be merely natural disaster.

Revelation 8:8-9

Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Something like a great mountain: note the use of like.

A third of the sea became blood: perhaps a meteor that crashes into the sea. Here, the result is that a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. The blood may be either the cause or the effect of the widespread death in the oceans of the world.

The sea may be a specific reference to the Mediterranean.

Like a great mountain: It is common to take this great mountain as a symbol for a nation that will be judged. Probably something like a meteor or asteroid falling into the sea and bringing ecological disaster.

Revelation 8:10-11 The third trumpet brings a plague on fresh waters.

Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.

A great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch: We may easily associate this with a comet or meteor crashing into the earth and bringing ecological disaster.

The name of the star is Wormwood: Wormwood is a very bitter substance, and proverbial for bitterness and sadness.

A third of the rivers... a third of the waters: In each one of the trumpets, a third of an ecological system is destroyed in judgment.

Revelation 8:12-13 The fourth trumpet brings a plague on the heavens, and darkness on the earth.

Then the fourth angel sounded: 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 were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night. And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night: One-third of the day and night are plunged into absolute darkness. As Jesus said: the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light (Matthew 24:29).

Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet: The angel's woes are well founded, because one-third of the earth's population will die in the next three trumpets.

Observations on the first four trumpets.

These first four trumpets reveal the severity of God's judgment. He attacks all the ordinary means of subsistence, such as food and water; and He attacks all the ordinary means of comfort, and knowledge, such as light and the regular rhythm of days.

Man has come to see these aspects of the created order as impersonal, perpetual forces. During the great tribulation, God proclaims His Lordship through their agonizing disruption.

We know the great humility that comes upon men in the midst of something like an earthquake, because they know that "nature" is not as reliable as they had thought. With these four trumpets, that effect will be multiplied greatly.

The first four trumpets also reveal the mercy of God's judgment; these are partial judgments striking only one-third, and are meant to warn and lead a rebellious world to repentance before the final curtain. For now, God spares more than He smites.