

Revelation Chapter 8

Verses 1-2: Chapter 8 begins where chapter 6 ended. The “seventh seal” probably contains the “seven trumpets”. The “silence” indicates the beginning of a further series of judgments.

Revelation 8:1 "And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour."

“The Seventh Seal”: This seal includes not only an earthquake, but the 7 trumpet judgments (8:1-9, 21; 11:15), and the 7 vial judgments (16:1-21), with the vial judgments flowing out of the seventh trumpet and coming in rapid succession just before Christ’s return (see note on 6:1).

“Silence in heaven”: The silence of awe and anticipation at the grim reality of the judgments, God is about to unleash.

The significance of this silence is twofold:

- (1) It is entirely opposite the usual sound pattern of heaven, and
- (2) It is the result of the revelation by Jesus Christ to the angelic hosts concerning what is about to fall on the earth.

The opening of the seventh seal introduces the 7 trumpet judgments, which are all judgments of God sent on the earth. In these judgments, God is exclusively the sender and people are exclusively receivers. These judgments are so terrible that the angels stand breathless in wonder.

Do you think those who reject Jesus Christ so easily today would remain "silent" if they knew the horrible doom of judgment that is coming upon this earth and upon them because they are rejecting God's Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ?

In the prior verses of Revelation, heaven is seen to be a joyous and worshipful place, with choruses singing, Trumpets blaring, celestial beings crying out, but suddenly there comes this ominous silence.

As horrible as the seal judgments were, the trumpet judgments will be worse.

Revelation 8:2 "And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets."

“Seven trumpets”: The trumpets are of greater intensity than the seals, but not as destructive as the final vial or bowl judgments will be (compare 16:1-21). They occur during the final 3-1/2 years, but the time of each is indefinite, except the effects of the fifth trumpet judgment, which will last 5 months (9:10). The first 4 announce the divine destruction of earth’s ecology (verses 6-12), while the final 3 involve demonic devastation of earth’s inhabitants (9:1-21; 11:15).

Whether this seven is literal, or not, doesn't matter (in this instance I believe they are literal). These "angels" are prepared to carry out God's orders. These "seven trumpets" were to sound the

alarm. Trumpets are loud and send out a clear note. There will be no question of the message. The trumpet throughout the Bible is used for two specific purposes:

- 1: To assemble the people for worship.
- 2: To assemble the people for war. At any rate, this is to alarm and prepare.

This encourages the Christians and means judgment to the apostate and worldly. The Wrath of God is here.

As the seventh seal is broken, the seven angels receive trumpets. Tim LaHaye, (a Baptist preacher with over 40 years experience and the author of the Left Behind Series of Books), thinks the 7 seals take place in the first quarter (21 months), and the seventh seal begins the 7 trumpet judgments which begin the next 21 months or second quarter of the Tribulation.

It is this author's belief that the 4 horsemen and the Seal judgments are in the first 42 months (Tribulation), and the Trumpet and Vial (Bowl), judgments containing God's wrath, will be in the last 42 months (the Great Tribulation).

The opening of the seventh seal does not cause the seven angels to stand before God. Apparently, they are always there, awaiting a special assignment from their Creator. The opening of the seals results in each one being given a trumpet that will be blown in proper sequence, introducing a future form of judgment.

In the first period of the Tribulation the earth has known the wrath of the Antichrist; now it will begin to feel the wrath of God Almighty.

Verses 3-6: "Incense" is often an illustration of prayer (compare 5:8). The trumpet judgments may be God's response to the "prayers of the saints" (in 6:10), a cry for revenge against the enemies of Christ (compare Psalm 94:1; Rom. 12:19). The throwing of the "censer" to the "earth" represents the coming judgment of the earth. Christ will use "angels" to administer the "trumpets". The blast of each "trumpet" symbolizes the execution of God's judgment.

Revelation 8:3 "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer [it] with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne."

"Golden censer": A golden pan, suspended on a rope or chain, that was used to transport fiery coals from the brazen altar to the altar of incense, in order to ignite the incense, symbolizing the prayers of the people (5:8; Exodus 27:3; Luke 1:8-9). This occurred twice daily at the time of the morning and evening sacrifices.

Verse 3 tells us this mighty angel stands before the heavenly golden altar of incense, which is before the Throne of the Almighty God. The prayers of all the believers are mingled with heavenly incense and offered up to God. These prayers contain the martyrs' and the suffering

saints' cries for relief and justice. The answer to these prayers is the Seven Trumpets and Seven Golden Vials.

We must realize that the tabernacle in the wilderness (with its Holy place and most Holy Place), was a miniature of the arrangement in heaven. The altar constructed by Moses for Israel's Tabernacle was copied from this one.

When Jesus died on the cross, His blood had to be carried to the mercy seat in heaven, just as the lamb in the temple had its blood sprinkled on the mercy seat in the most Holy place.

The very throne of God is the most holy place in heaven. Jesus is our High Priest forever, who intercedes for us at the throne of God.

This vessel had to be made of gold to be in the close proximity of God. Just as everything in the most Holy place in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness had to be pure gold, or pure gold overlay.

Some of the writers believe the word "censer" here should be frankincense. That is not a terribly important point. The "incense" (in verse 3), probably does indicate frankincense.

Notice that the prayers of the saints with their offering is upon the golden altar at the throne of God. Sometimes we feel our prayers go nowhere, but here we see them at the throne of God.

The golden altar as well, was in the very presence of God and thus had to be made of gold.

We were not praying to the angel. The angel's only job was to transport them and keep them safe until they were received. We must never pray to an angel.

The important thing, to see here, is that our prayers go to the throne of God, to the most Holy place.

We were not praying to the angel. The angel's only job was to transport them and keep them safe until they were received. We must never pray to an angel. We pray to the Father in the name of Jesus. The important thing, to see here, is that our prayers go to the throne of God, to the most Holy place.

Revelation 8:4 "And the smoke of the incense, [which came] with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."

The Bible speaks of this as a sweet smelling savor (Ezra 6:10). The "angel" was the messenger who carried the prayers.

Revelation 8:5 "And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast [it] into the earth: and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake."

“Thunderings ... lightnings”: The thunderclaps, lightnings, and earthquake are the result of the fire from the altar, indicating that the action of heaven initiates a responsive action on earth. As the prayers for the saints for vengeance are taken from the altar, there are frightening sounds, flashes of light, and an earthquake on the earth, introducing the fact that the seven angels are about to sound their trumpets.

Fire from the altar of burnt offering means that God accepted the prayers of the saints. This "fire taken from the altar and cast to the earth", is the fury of God. Our God is a consuming fire. God is angered, and He has decided it is time to punish those on the earth who have rejected Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Just as God finally destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah when they would not repent, there is a time when the fire of God will descend upon this earth in punishment.

“An earthquake”: Surely of equal or greater intensity than the one described in the sixth seal (see note on 6:12).

Throughout the Bible, all of these natural disasters mentioned (here in verse 5): "thunderings, lightnings, earthquake", are God dealing with mankind. This is no different, and I believe these are literal. A terrible storm takes place above ground and a terrible shaking beneath takes place, as well. The Wrath of God has begun as the world enters into the Great Tribulation.

Are the Trumpet Judgments Literal Judgments? The best way to decide if the trumpet judgments are literal or symbolic is to study them in connection with the plagues of Egypt (as found in Exodus 7-11). Five of the plagues of Egypt are repeated in the book of Revelation. No one suggests that what happened in Egypt was not literal in its form of judgment on the rebellious Egyptians. Thus, we can conclude that the same thing applies during the Tribulation period and that the trumpet judgments introduce physical judgment on the earth. The only exceptions are those trumpets that introduce events beyond human understanding, and even they affect human beings physically.

Revelation 8:6 "And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound."

We read here (as in verse 2), of the seven angels that had been waiting orders to move.

Evidently in succession, perhaps by arranging themselves in the order in which they were to sound. The way is now prepared for the sounding of the trumpets, and for the fearful commotions and changes which would be indicated by that. The last seal is opened; heaven stands in suspense to know what is to be disclosed. The saints, filled with solicitude, have offered their prayers. The censer of coals has been cast to the earth, as if these judgments could be no longer stayed by prayer. And the angels prepare to sound the trumpets indicative of what is to occur.

Revelation 8:7 "The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up."

The "first" trumpet brings literal fire and hail, and causes the destruction of most of the vegetation on the earth. Famine and a lack of oxygen production will result.

This may describe volcanic eruptions that could certainly result from the earthquake (in verse 5). The steam and water thrown into the sky by such eruptions could easily condense into hail and fall to earth along with the fiery lava (compare Exodus 9:13-25). Dust and gases may so contaminate falling liquid water that it appears blood red.

The First Trumpet: Hail, Fire and Blood. Ice and fire rain from the sky, burning up a third of all the earth's trees and all of its grass. This is an ecological disaster without parallel to this point in the history of mankind; its results are incalculable. The lava storm will create a blazing fire that devastates one-third of the earth's forests.

To make matters even worse, John also adds that "blood" arrives with the hail and fire, as the prophet Joel had predicted:

Joel 2:30 "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke". And this is only the first trumpet!

They now are released and told to do these things. Some religions will tell you that God never punishes, but this is not true. This is punishment from God. The devil is not doing this. It is done on orders from God. Another place where this strange phenomenon of fire and hail mixed together falling is in Exodus.

Exodus 9:24 "So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation."

Both were punishments from God. The difference is that this one in Exodus was localized. The one in Revelation is wide spread. One thing very important to remember is that the wrath of God falls on them of unbelief.

Ezekiel 38:22 "And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that [are] with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone."

It is the same God in Ezekiel that we see in Revelation.

We see in all of this, and the next few trumpets probably, the revealing of God's judgment which may be of nature in the form of catastrophic forms of nature; or may be in the form of His allowing humans to unleash atomic or nuclear weapons of war. The first trumpet is so bad that it kills one third of all vegetation.

Verses 8-9: The “second” trumpet turns a “third” of the “sea” into “blood”, and a third of the sea “creatures” and “ships” are “destroyed”. This will produce a reduction of evaporation and thus a shortage of rain and fresh water on land. International commerce and distribution of food and resources will be severely hampered.

Revelation 8:8 "And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;"

“As it were a great mountain”: Probably a huge meteor or asteroid surrounded by gases that will ignite as it enters earth’s atmosphere. Its impact will create a tidal wave, destroying one-third of the world’s ships.

“Sea became blood”: This may refer to an event known as red tides, caused by billions of dead micro-organisms poisoning the water, in this case the result of the meteor’s collision. Or it may be actual blood, a clear act of eschatological judgment.

Two Author's views will be given for explanations as to the Trumpet Judgments. Read both then you decide which you believe.

The Second Trumpet: A Mountain of Fire. As in Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19). Tim LaHaye sees this as literally happening.

When the Second trumpet is blown, John sees something like “a great mountain burning with fire”. Tim LaHaye thinks it is likely an enormous meteorite crashing through the atmosphere, "thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood." As a result, a third of everything living in the sea dies, and a third of the ships on the sea are destroyed.

Already the WHO (World Health Organization), states "nearly half of the world's people are affected by diseases related to insufficient and contaminated water," which is why they are trying to improve the water supplies of the world. Think of the plagues that will be spread when the water supply turns bitter, then to blood in the "great and terrible Day of the Lord."

According to Hal Lindsey (The author of the book "The Late Great Planet Earth"), he thinks this will be a nuclear holocaust. He states that in a nuclear detonation, humidity in the air is instantly compressed into water and driven straight up into the freezing temperatures of the upper stratosphere. It then is instantly frozen and falls back to earth as giant chunks of ice. This he states would account for the fire, blood and ice, and that with enough of the various third world countries who now have nuclear capabilities makes this certainly a possibility.

Consider the super polluted air with radiation and now with a third of all vegetation gone, the lack of oxygen they provide will be gone. An even greater tragedy is all the green grains are burned up. With famine already raging in many parts of the world and scarcity of food everywhere else, this will seal the doom of millions. Perhaps the lucky ones will be those who die in the explosions.

Revelation 8:9 "And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed."

The effect was as if one-third of all the fish in the sea were cut off. Of course, this is not to be taken literally. It is designed to describe an effect, pertaining to the maritime portion of the world, as if a third portion of all that was in the sea should perish. The natural interpretation would be to apply it to some invasion or calamity pertaining to the sea, to the islands, to the maritime regions, or to commerce. If the whole description pertains to the Roman empire, then this might be supposed to have particular reference to something that would have a bearing on the maritime parts of that empire.

“And the third part of the ships were destroyed”: This also pertains to the same general calamity, affecting the commerce of the empire. The destruction of the "ships" was produced, in some way, by casting the mountain into the sea, either by their being consumed by the contact with the burning mass, or by being sunk by the agitation of the waters. The essential idea is, that the calamity would be of such a nature as would produce the destruction of vessels at sea, either naval armaments, or ships of commerce.

Verses 10-11: The “third” trumpet makes a “third” of all fresh “water bitter”, resulting in widespread thirst and death. “Wormwood (Greek *apsinthos*, literally “undrinkable”), was a bitter herb (compare Deut. 29:18; Prov. 5:4), that would make the water of the earth unfit for human consumption.

Revelation 8:10 "And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;"

The Third Trumpet: A Star Called Wormwood. Tim Lahaye states that when the third angel blows his trumpet, another meteorite crashes to earth, "burning like a torch." It does not fall on the sea but on a third of the earth's rivers and springs, turning them "bitter" and poisonous. As a result of this plague, "many men" die.

"Now this will be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth." (Zech. 14:12).

This to Hal Lindsey means nuclear explosions. Hal states that perhaps the most terrifying revelation is that mankind and his own inventions cause most of the global holocaust.

His view on this is a bit different. Most of Revelation judgments he sees as being created by man and is nuclear. In the second Trumpet the verse specifies "something like a great mountain burning with fire." He sees this to be either an enormous meteor or, more likely, a number of H-bombs. A hydrogen or thermonuclear bomb exploded under the ocean looks like a huge flaming mountain erupting out of the sea. In addition to destroying one third of all marine vessels, the

"flaming mountain" will wipe out one third of all marine life, turning the sea crimson with the blood of the dead.

Why would such a weapon be fired into the ocean? Simple he says. Today, naval power, especially super nuclear submarines with ICBM launch capability, is seen as the future of warfare. Russia and the US both have over 100 nuclear powered submarines each capable of firing ICBM missiles with multiple thermonuclear warheads. The Russian Typhoon class nuclear subs are the largest, fastest, stealthiest, deepest diving and deadliest in the world. Each one carries as standard ordinance 20 ICBMs with 10 warheads each. That's 200 warheads that can turn 200 large cities into vast devastated cemeteries. These can be launched from under water and hit 95% of our major population centers in less than 8 minutes from launch.

God has endowed man with great inventive capability, but instead of using it for good; he often uses it to destroy his planet and himself.

Man's most basic problem has never been a lack of intelligence or education, but a nature that is fallen and morally corrupted. Unless man experiences a new birth, in which he receives a miraculous birth of a new spiritual nature through which God communicates with him, he is doomed to the destructive influence of his fallen nature. The Third Trumpet is again nuclear. He makes reference to Chernobyl as to how water can be polluted by a single nuclear incident.

All of this is speaking of terrible things associated with such an upheaval in the earth that it is beyond our comprehension.

Revelation 8:11 "And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter."

“Wormwood”: A bitter, poisonous substance, derived from a root, that causes drunkenness and eventually death (Deut. 29:18; Prov. 5:4; Jer. 9:15; Lam. 3:15).

One interesting thing from the physical standpoint: Chernobyl means wormwood.

This accident that occurred in Russia affected mostly communist countries (those who deny God). This had a terrible immediate effect of fallout in many of the neighboring countries. Meat was not edible and milk from animals could not be drunk. Literally thousands of people were filled with cancer causing fallout.

Many years from now they will still be seeing the results from this terrible accident. In some places the radiation was 1000's of times the normal amount. "Wormwood" means bad water, and I guess if you checked the water now on this planet, you probably would find that a large percentage of it is bad.

Revelation 8:12 "And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise."

“The “fourth” trumpet takes away a “third” of the light from the heavens during both “day” and “night”. The light arriving from the “sun, stars”, and “moon” is reduced, leading probably to fear, lack of crop production, and a much lower quality of life (compare Matt. 24:29; Luke 21:25).

“A third part of the sun ... smitten”: God will supernaturally reduce the intensity of the celestial bodies by one-third. The loss of solar heat will cause a radical drop in temperature, producing severe changes in meteorological, botanical and biological cycles (Luke 21:25; compare Exodus 10:21-23). But this is temporary (compare 16:8-9).

The Fourth Trumpet: Darkness Descends. All life on this earth depends on the sun: If it were to explode, the earth would incinerate; if it were to go cold, the earth would freeze solid. Neither of those extremes is in view with the 4th trumpet judgment, but in some way God does reduce by a third the amount of radiant energy reaching earth from the sun and all other celestial bodies. John writes, "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."

Tim LaHaye states that God who created light in the first place is able to diminish it to one third. Actually, day and night will seem to be reversed, for there will be sixteen hours of darkness and eight hours of daylight. This naturally reminds us of the plague sent on Pharaoh as described in Exodus.

Exodus 10:21. "Darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness which may even be felt."

And it gives detail to our Lord's prediction:

Luke 21:25-26 "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;" "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken".

Revelation 8:13 "And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!"

The last three trumpets will be especially severe, as announced by the threefold repetition of Woe, woe, woe. They will be directed toward the inhibitors of the earth, that is, the unbelievers still alive on earth. Both the oldest and the majority of Greek manuscripts read "eagle" instead of angel in the first part of the verse.

“Woe, woe, woe”: One for each remaining trumpet blast. Although the first 4 trumpets are unimaginable, they will be nothing like the three to come (9:1-21; 11:15ff).

Thank God Christians will be spared the Wrath.

From the "woes", the wrath is about to come.

Even the problems we have already heard about are terrible, but they get even worse. Here again, notice the mid-time separation of this, four angels have sounded, and three more are about to sound.

Revelation Chapter 8 Questions

1. What happened when the seventh seal was opened?
2. What were the seven angels given?
3. What were they to do with what they were given?
4. What two things are trumpets used for throughout the Bible?
5. In verse 3, the other angel had what?
6. Where was the golden altar?
7. What in heaven reminds us of the tabernacle in the wilderness?
8. Who is our High Priest forever?
9. Where are the prayers of the saints?
10. How must we pray? To whom?
11. What went up out of the angel's hand?
12. What do thunderings, earthquakes, and lightnings mean?
13. What is the fire cast to the earth?
14. Who prepared to sound in verse 6?
15. What was the hail and fire mixed with?
16. What happened when they were thrown to earth?
17. Name two other books in the Bible where fire and hail fell.
18. How many ships were destroyed?
19. What Russian name means wormwood?
20. What does wormwood mean?
21. What was 1000's of times worse than normal?

22. When the fourth angel sounded, what happened?
23. The angel that was flying through the heaven said what?
24. The separation of the first four trumpets and the last three show us what?
25. Do you believe that Chernobyl is the "wormwood" here?