

Revelation 08 - 7th Seal: Preparation for the Trumpets; Trumpets #1-#4: The Judgments of Thirds

IV. After These Things (Rev 4:1—22:21)

(2) During the Tribulation (Rev 6:1—19:21)

(C) 7th Seal & 1st Six Trumpet Judgments (Rev 8:1—9:21)

- (a) 7th Seal - Trumpet preparation (8:1-6)
- (b) 1st Trumpet - one-third of vegetation destroyed (8:7)
- (c) 2nd Trumpet - one-third of ocean destroyed (8:8-9)
- (d) 3rd Trumpet - one-third of water destroyed (8:10-11)
- (e) 4th Trumpet - one-third of luminaries darkened (8:12-13)

Revelation 8

(C) 7th Seal & 1st Six Trumpet Judgments (Rev 8:1—9:21)

(a) 7th Seal - Trumpet preparation (8:1-6)

1 When *the Lamb* broke the seventh seal, there was **silence** in heaven for about half an hour.

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

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

- After completing the intercalation (parentheses) of the "servants of God" in Rev 7, the numerical sequence of Seal judgments resumes, with the Lamb now opening the 7th Seal — The scene now shifts back to the throne room of heaven, where the Lamb opens the 7th Seal

- "...silence" - foreboding judgment to come; a dramatic pause to symbolize the awe and dread that the heavenly hosts await the events about to happen (Cf. Hab 2:20; 3:3; Zeph 1:7-8,15,17-18; Zech 2:13)

— The silence also serves as a "grace period": before God sends judgment, He often gives man a grace period to repent and a time of warning (Cf. Gen 6:3; Rev 2:21)

- The silence is in heaven, not on the earth; the heaven dwellers waited expectantly to see what God would do next and prepare for what is about to happen
- It is the "calm before the storm"
- This silence is similar to the Israelites silence before the fall of Jericho (Joshua 6:10)

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

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

2 Then I saw the seven angels who stand in God's presence, and seven trumpets were given to them.

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

- "And I saw" - *kai eidon*, marks a new phase of John's 7th Seal vision, following the half-hour of silence

- "...stand before God" - a special group of angels commissioned to sound the trumpets; their position before God indicates their readiness for service

- "...seven trumpets" - trumpets play a major role in God's dealings with His people (Cf. Ex 19:16; 20:18; Is 27:13; Jer 4:5; Joel 2:1; Zeph 1:16; Matt 24:31; 1 Cor 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:16)

— They were part of Israel's ceremonial processions (Cf. Joshua 6:4,13-16; 1 Kings 1:34,39; 1 Chr 15:24), and they assembled the Israelites for war, journeys, and special feasts (Num 10:9-10)

— They also warned of the coming day of the Lord (Joel 2:1), and they announced the new year in Israel (Num 29:1)

— They often announced God's intervention in history. Here they announce divine judgment(s) in the day of the Lord (Cf. Zeph 1:14-16). They declare war.

3 **Another angel** came and stood at the altar, holding a **golden censer**; and **much incense** was given to him, so that he might **add it to the prayers of all the saints** on the **golden altar** which was **before the throne**.

3 Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne.

3 Another angel came with a gold censer and stood at the altar. He was given a large quantity of incense to offer on the gold altar before the throne, along with the prayers of all the saints.

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.

- Before the seven angels sound the seven trumpets, an interlude sets the tone...

- "Another angel" - *allos*, means another of the same kind; this can't be Jesus Christ

- Two words for "another" in Greek: *allos*, another of the *same* kind; *heteros*, another of a *different* kind

- This angel is distinct from the seven angels who stand before God with the seven trumpets, but is of the same kind, thus cannot be Jesus. In addition, accurate interpretation cannot depart from the plain meaning of words because of an alleged doctrinal principle. To see this angel as Christ results from reading concepts from Hebrews into this context.

- In addition, careful observation of what the angel actually does with the prayers of the saints shows that he performs no mediatorial service; he only enforces the prayers. If this angel was Christ, He would have needed no incense.

- "...golden censer" - used in the Solomonic temple (Cf. 1 Kings 7:50; 2 Kings 25:15; 2 Chr 4:22; Jer 52:18-19)

- "...much incense" - the angel received much more incense to add to the prayers of all the saints

- Because of the ripeness of the season in the divine purpose and timeline, it refers to acceptability. Prayers of the saints, unanswered until now due to God's perfect timing, now become welcome and receive an immediate reply.

- Incense had a prominent place in OT worship (Cf. Ex 30:34-38). In the temple ritual, the priest poured the saucer of incense over the burning coals on the altar of incense. At the same time, the Israelites bowed in prayer as the fragrant cloud of smoke ascended heavenward

- "...was given" - *edothē*, not stated who gave the angel the incense, but the use of *edothē* throughout Revelation indicates that it was God (Cf. 6:2,4,8,11; 7:2; 9:1,3,5; 11:1,2; 13:5,7,14,15; 16:8; 19:8; 20:4)

- "...add it to the prayers of all the saints" - the offering of "much incense" is to help the prayers (make them more acceptable to God)

- What is the content of these prayers that God is valuing, represented by the fragrant smoke rising from the bowls full of incense on the golden altar in front of the throne? Likely the prayers of the martyred saints from the 5th Seal judgment (v4-5; Cf. 6:9-11; 9:13; 14:18).

- "...golden altar" - only the altar of incense was made of gold (Cf. 9:13; 14:18; 16:7)

- "...before the throne" - indicates how close the altar that contains the prayers of the saints is to God's throne

[OT reference: Ps 141:2]

4 And the **smoke of the incense** ascended from the angel's hand with the prayers of the saints before God.

4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

4 The smoke from the incense and the prayers of the saints went up from the angel's hand to God.

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.

- "...smoke of the incense" - indicating the value that God places on prayer

- This scene in heaven reminds us how valuable every believer's prayers are to God, and how prayer can move the hand of the Creator

- The smoke of the incense "ascended up before God" symbolizing Him receiving of the prayers of His people

- While the incense symbolizes prayers (5:8), it is distinct from prayer here

- The total impression is of "prayers" commingling while the angel pours more incense on the altar

- The prayers are from the martyrs who are in heaven, asking for vengeance (5th Seal, 6:9-11); could they be praying Ps 94?

[OT reference: Ps 141:2]

5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with **the fire of the altar**, and hurled it to the earth; **and there were peals of thunder and sounds, and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.**

5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

5 The angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it on the earth. Then there were peals of thunder, noises, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

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 thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

- Then the angel took the coals (fire) from the altar, placed them in (filled) his censer, and threw them down to the earth

- The cosmic disturbances listed here (thunder, sounds, lightning and an earthquake) happen in heaven; they are foreboding the judgment that is about to come upon the earth (Cf. 4:5; 11:19)

— With each successive set of judgments, the cosmic disturbances in anticipation of the start of those judgments become more severe; they increase in intensity and magnitude, mirroring the intensity and magnitude of the coming judgments

- "...the fire of the altar" - the seven spirits of God? (Cf. 4:5)

- "...and there were peals of thunder and sounds, and flashes of lightning and an earthquake" - this phrase is repeated 4x in Revelation

— These symbols of catastrophe are just a prelude to the Trumpets sounding...these judgments are going to be bad

— This is God answering the prayers of those saints, asking for His vengeance

[OT reference: Ezek 10:2; Ex 19:16]

6 And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.

6 And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.

6 The seven angels who had the seven trumpets got ready to blow them.

6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

- The angels arranging themselves in order and raising their trumpets in readiness to sound heightens the sense of expectancy of judgment

- The whole scene clearly symbolizes God sending judgment on the earth in response to His people's accumulated prayers (Cf. Ex 3:7-10; 19:16-19; Rev 4:5; 11:19; 16:18)

- The Trumpet and Bowl judgments are the ones that the angel from the east held back until the bondservants of God were sealed on their foreheads (7:3). Thus, they are more severe than the Seal judgments.

— The purpose of these judgments is to lead hostile unbelievers to repentance and to announce punitive judgments on hardened unbelievers—but few will repent (9:20-21)

[OT reference: Ex 19:16]

Following the same pattern as the Seal judgments, the first four judgments are different in kind from the last three. The voice of the eagle (v13) separates the Trumpets into two groups. The first four Trumpets set in motion the forces of nature to achieve their destructive effects on natural objects. Of the 15 objects of nature affected by the plagues of the first four Trumpets, one-third receives injury or destruction in 12 instances (8:7,10,11 being the exceptions). The last two (5th & 6th Trumpets) have mankind (the earth dwellers) as their focus.

- Trumpets 1-4: connected and interdependent
- Trumpets 5-6: separate and independent

(b) 1st Trumpet - one-third of vegetation destroyed (8:7)

7 The first sounded, and there was **hail and fire mixed with blood**, and it was hurled to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and **all the green grass was burned up**.

7 The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

7 When the first angel blew his trumpet, hail and fire were mixed with blood and thrown on the earth. One-third of the earth was burned up, one-third of the trees was burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

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 scene shifts again, from heaven to the earth...

- "...hail and fire mixed with blood" - resembles volcanic activity in Asia Minor that John may have witnessed

- However, since John consistently uses OT material, it argues for a background of the 7th Plague in Egypt (Ex 9:22-26), where God rained down hail on all the land of Egypt (except Goshen), in the midst of thunder and fire

- Here, God rains down hail with fire, in a shower of blood. The blood is an added element compared to the 7th Plague.

- Hail is often used of judgment (Is 28:2; Job 38:22-23); it will be used again later in the 7th Bowl judgment (100lb hailstones)

- The hurling of the hail and fire mixed with blood will have three results:

1. One-third of the earth are burned up
2. One-third of the trees are burned up
3. All the green grass is burned up

- The destruction of this judgment is in the fire that burns significant portions of the world's surface and vegetation

- "...all the green grass was burned up" - all the green grass is burned up by this judgment, but later (9:4) grass exists again

- Either the grass in 9:4 isn't green grass, or the grass has grown back again as some time elapses between these two references.

[OT reference: Ex 9:23-24; Ps 18:13; Is 28:2]

The OT prophets understood that the miracles of Egypt were to be repeated in the future (Is 10:22-25; 11:12-16; 30:30; Jer 16:14-15; 23:7-8; Ezek 38:22; Micah 7:15). At several points the prophet Amos uses God's miraculous work of deliverance from Egypt as a

reference point for the way He will deal with His people in the future (Cf. Amos 2:10; 4:10; 8:8-9; 9:5-7).

Trumpet Judgments Repeating Egyptian Plagues

- 1st Trumpet (vegetation destroyed, Rev 8:7) = 7th Plague (Ex 9:24)
- 2nd Trumpet (water turned to blood, Rev 8:8-9) = 1st Plague (Ex 7:19-20)
- 4th Trumpet (luminaries darkened, Rev 8:12-13) = 9th Plague (Ex 10:21)
- 5th Trumpet (locusts, Rev 9:1-12) = 8th Plague (Ex 10:12)

See note: **Ultimate Exodus** in Rev 11:15 on how the Bowl judgments compare to the 10 Plagues of Egypt.

(c) 2nd Trumpet - one-third of ocean destroyed (8:8-9)

8 The second angel sounded, and **something like** a great mountain burning with fire was hurled into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood,

8 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,

8 When the second angel blew his trumpet, something like a huge mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea. One-third of the sea turned into blood,

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;

- "...*something* like" - John had a very tough job...he had to document 21st century technology with a 1st century vocabulary (Cf. 1:11, "write in the book what you see")

— Over and over in Revelation, John is shown these judgments and has to correlate it with something that he is familiar with in his 1st century time period

- This is likely some type of meteor that lands in the ocean and emits radiation that reaches one-third of the world's oceans

— More than 75% of the earth's surface is covered by ocean; one-third of 75% would mean 25% of the entire earth's surface became blood (not *like* blood, but actual blood)

— This Trumpet judgment is similar to the 1st Plague in Egypt, where God turned the Nile River (and other rivers in Egypt, even in the vessels used to hold water) to blood (Ex 7:19-21)

— Pharaoh's soothsayer priests were able to replicate this same miracle, showing that even Satan (who is not omnipotent) also has power to do this (Ex 7:22)

- It has been stated that the only chemical difference between seawater and blood is that blood contains an iron molecule that is absent in seawater. Perhaps this mountain-like mass (a meteor?) will provide such a molecule, resulting in a change in the chemical composition of these seas from water to blood.

[OT reference: Ex 7:17-19]

9 and a third of the **creatures** which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

9 and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

9 one-third of the creatures that were living in the sea died, and one-third of the ships was destroyed.

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.

- "...creatures" - *ktisma*, something created (Cf. 1 Tim 4:4; James 1:18), which in this situation must be fish

- God has the right to judge and destroy the sea and the sea creatures that inhabit it because God is the Creator of both

— In the 2nd Trumpet judgment only one-third of the ocean is affected; the 2nd Bowl judgment will result in the death of every living creature in the sea (Cf. 16:3)

In the Trumpet judgments, as horrific as they are, God issues a partial judgment on the earth and the earth dwellers, allowing for them to repent. As time goes on and the earth dwellers dig in on their hardness of heart and hatred toward God, He will crank up the temperature of the judgments significantly.

We see in these judgments, just like the 10 plagues in Egypt, that God judges what people worship. Today, earth worship is prevalent and will continue to get worse as time goes on, thus God will judge the environment to show how powerless it is compared to Him. It shows man the foolishness of worshiping the created thing rather than the Creator (Rom 1:18-31).

(d) 3rd Trumpet - one-third of water destroyed (8:10-11)

10 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 waters.

10 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 waters.

10 When the third angel blew his trumpet, a huge star blazing like a torch fell from heaven. It fell on one-third of the rivers and on the springs of water.

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;

- God moves from judging the oceans to now judging the fresh water supply...

- "...star" - can refer to an angel (Cf. 1:16,20; 9:1; 12:4,9; Cf. Job 38:7; Is 14:12), but could also be a literal star (6:13)

— Angels are differentiated from "stars" in this chapter/scene in each verse prior (v2-9), thus it's likely that "star" here refers to an actual star, meteor, or other space object of some sort

- "...torch" - *lampas*, in John's day, and before, this Greek word was used to describe a meteor shooting through the sky

— This meteor struck (poisoned) one-third of the rivers and streams on the earth
[OT reference: Is 14:12]

11 The **star** is named **Wormwood**; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and **many people died** from the waters because they were made bitter.

11 The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.

11 The name of the star is Wormwood. One-third of the water turned into wormwood, and many people died from the water because it had turned bitter.

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 woody herb, growing in the land of Israel and has a strong and bitter (but not poisonous) taste, which caused the plant to be used as a symbol of bitterness and sorrow

— At Marah, a tree made the bitter water sweet (Ex 15:23-25; Cf. 2 Kings 2:19-21), but here the reverse occurs

— In the OT, "Wormwood" is a symbol for divine punishment (Jer 9:15; 23:15; Cf. Lam 3:15,19)

— This judgment will make one-third of the world's fresh water supply unfit for human consumption

— This judgment recalls the bitter water that God gave the rebellious Israelites to drink in the wilderness, which, when the tree was thrown in, turned sweet (Ex 15:23-25)

- "...many people died" - many, but not all, of the people who drank this bitter water died; they all suffered to one extent or another, by the suffering did not always result in death.

The death here is only incidental.

[OT reference: Jer 9:15; 23:15]

(e) 4th Trumpet - one-third of luminaries darkened (8:12-13)

12 The fourth angel sounded, and **a third** of the sun, **a third** of the moon, and **a third** of the stars **were struck**, so that **a third** of them would be **darkened** and the day would not shine for **a third** of it, and the night in the same way.

12 The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not

shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.

12 When the fourth angel blew his trumpet, one-third of the sun, one-third of the moon, and one-third of the stars were struck so that one-third of them turned dark. One-third of the day was kept from having light, as was the night.

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.

- This Trumpet judgment does not mention an instrument of judgment that struck the sun, moon, and stars, just the effects of the judgment itself

— The idea is perhaps that the instrument should not receive as much attention as the plague itself

- "...a third" - another one-third judgment; in the 5th Bowl judgment, *all* of the luminaries will be darkened (Cf. 16:10)

- "...were struck" - *eplēgē*, a verb form of the noun *plēgē*, meaning "plague." Same verb was used in Ex 9:31-32 [LXX] to describe the devastating effects of the hail on crops.

- "...darkened" - *skotisthē*, a symbol of judgment throughout the OT

— This judgment parallels the 9th Plague (Ex 10:21-22), when God struck Egypt with total darkness for three days; in fact the darkness was so dark, it could be physically "felt" by the Egyptians (but not by the Israelites, Ex 10:23)

— In Gen 1:3, darkness was the first thing that God brought under His control during Creation

— Amos called the Day of the Lord a day of darkness (Amos 5:18)

— From noon to 3pm, darkness fell upon all the Land of Israel while Jesus hung on the cross

— The earth dwellers love the darkness, so God gives them what they want (Cf. John 3:19)

- How the fractional darkening of the sun, moon, and star could produce a reduced duration of daylight, moonlight, and star light is not given

- It could just be a miracle produced by an omnipotent God
- It could mean that the length of the day is reduced by one-third due to some change in the speed of the earth's rotation
- It could be that the intensity and brightness of the sun will be reduced by one-third

- This verse mentions no direct effect on mankind, but clearly the impact will be great.

Almost every area of life are bound to feel the consequences of this judgment:

- Agriculture
- Navigation
- Human health
- Productivity
- Energy/electricity

- Weather/ecology
- Animal life

[OT reference: Is 13:10]

13 Then I looked, and I heard an **eagle** flying in **midheaven**, saying with a **loud voice**, "**Woe, woe, woe to those who live on the earth**, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying overhead say in a loud voice, "How terrible, how terrible, how terrible for those living on the earth, because of the blasts of the remaining trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!"

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!

- "Then I looked" - *kai eidon*, signals a new scene in John's vision

— John saw an eagle interrupting the angels by flying through the sky and warning the earth dwellers to beware of the last three Trumpet judgments. This interlude separates the first four Trumpet judgments (one-thirds) with the last three.

- "...eagle" - *aietos*, contrary to the KJV translation of "angel" which has much weaker manuscript support; the proper translation here is indeed "eagle"

— The eagle's ability to speak is not sufficient to conclude that it is symbolic. God has given animals the ability to communicate in the past (Cf. Gen 3:1-5; Num 22:28-30), and can do so in the future.

- "...midheaven...loud voice" - the eagle's position in "midheaven" (the location of the sun at noon) and "loud voice" guarantees that everyone on earth will both see and hear its message

— His broad message to the entire world is important because the next set of judgments (5th-7th Trumpets, including 7 Bowls) will effect every person on earth

— Another reason for this broad warning is that as bad as Trumpets 1-4 were, they primarily affected creation, not people. The following judgments will directly affect all of the earth dwellers.

- "...Woe, woe, woe" - double "woes" are for emphasis in Ezek 16:23; Rev 18:10,16,19, but the triple "woes" refer to the three remaining Trumpet judgments (Cf. 9:1,12; 11:14)

- Trumpet #5: attack of fallen angelic beings upon the earth dwellers (9:1-21)
- Trumpet #6: 1/3 of mankind is killed (9:18)

- Trumpet #7: 7 Bowl judgments (Rev 10 describes how bad the Bowl judgments will be; Bowl judgments are listed in 16:1-21)
- "...those who live on the earth" - "earth dwellers"; used 12x (Rev 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8,12,14; 14:6; 17:2,8); see [Earth Dwellers](#)
- This judgment is specifically directed toward the "earth dwellers," at least partially in response to the prayers of the Tribulation Saints (6:10)
- Contrasted with citizens of heaven (Phil 3:18-21)
- Earth-dwellers are not born again (3:10; 9:4,20; 13:8)