

Revelation 8: The Trumpet Judgments – Part 1

Where We Are in the Story

As we move through the Book of Revelation, three things keep coming into focus. This book is meant to **wake up unbelievers**, confronting them with the reality of coming judgment. It is meant to **shake up the nation of Israel**, stirring her toward the recognition of her Messiah. And it is meant to **make up the Kingdom of God**, moving history toward the day when Christ's reign is fully and visibly established.

We have followed the breaking of the seals, and now we arrive at the last one. The seventh seal does not simply close out that series – it opens the door to something worse. Out of it come seven trumpets, each blast bringing a judgment more severe than the one before. And beyond the trumpets, after a pause, will come the bowls – the final and most intense outpouring of God's wrath. Seals give way to trumpets, trumpets will give way to bowls, each series nested inside the one before it, each one turning up the intensity. **Through it all, the picture is consistent: prayer going up, judgment coming down.**

The Seventh Seal: Introduction to the Seven Trumpets of Judgment

Revelation 8:1–2

“When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.”

Notice first that the seventh seal is not really a judgment of its own – it functions as a doorway. This door swings open into the next great cycle of judgment. What follows immediately is silence – silence in heaven, for about half an

hour. That's a strange and heavy detail. In a book so full of noise, of thunder and voices and the roar of living creatures, this sudden stillness stands out. It may be reflecting the sheer weight of what's about to happen – heaven itself falling quiet in solemn anticipation, almost holding its breath before the storm breaks.

Then the silence is broken by preparation: seven angels step forward, each given a trumpet. This is the moment the stage is set for the next major wave of judgment described in chapters 8 and 9 – one that will intensify further in both scope and severity compared to what came before. It's worth holding onto the pattern here, because it shapes how we read the rest of the book: the seventh seal contains the trumpets, and later, the seventh trumpet will contain the bowls. We now step out of the seal judgments and into the trumpet judgments.

The First Trumpet: Fire Falls on the Earth

Revelation 8:7

When the first angel sounds his trumpet, fire mixed with blood is hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth is burned up. A third of the trees are burned up. And all the green grass is burned up. That detail about blood being mixed in with the fire is telling – it probably points to widespread loss of life alongside the environmental devastation. This isn't a symbolic flourish; people are dying.

If this scene feels familiar, it should. It closely echoes one of the plagues God brought against Egypt – the plague of hail mixed with fire, described in Exodus 9:13–26. God has judged a nation this way before. Revelation shows Him doing it again, only now on a global scale.

The Second Trumpet: The Sea Turns to Blood

Revelation 8:8–9

The second trumpet sounds, and something like a huge mountain,

all ablaze, is thrown into the sea. A third of the sea becomes blood. A third of the living creatures in the sea die. And a third of the ships on the water are destroyed. Many interpreters see in that “huge mountain ablaze” a picture of a massive comet or asteroid strike – something falling from the sky with enough force to devastate an entire third of the world’s oceans.

The Third Trumpet: Wormwood and the Waters

Revelation 8:10–11

At the sound of the third trumpet, a great star, blazing like a torch, falls from the sky onto a third of the rivers and springs of water. Just as with the second trumpet, this description again suggests an asteroid or comet – something burning as it enters the atmosphere and crashing down into the earth’s fresh water supply. The result is that a third of all fresh water becomes bitter, undrinkable, deadly.

The star has a name: Wormwood. That word carries weight throughout Scripture. In the King James Version, it shows up in Lamentations 3:15, Amos 5:7, and Jeremiah 23:15 – passages that usually get translated “bitterness” in modern versions like the NIV. Wormwood was a real, bitter plant, used medicinally in the ancient world, but the Old Testament prophets also used it figuratively, as a picture of the bitter judgment God brings on those who refuse to obey Him.

There’s a striking modern footnote here. In Ukrainian, the word for “wormwood” is “chornobyl.” The 1986 Chernobyl disaster released roughly eight tons of radioactive material into the atmosphere, contributing to around 8,000 deaths along with many more illnesses in the years that followed. To be clear, Chernobyl was not the fulfillment of this prophecy – it’s simply a small, sobering preview of the kind of catastrophe Revelation describes on a much larger scale.

The Fourth Trumpet: Darkness Falls

Revelation 8:12

The fourth trumpet brings judgment to the sky itself. A third of the sun, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars are struck, so that a third of them are darkened. A third of the day is without light, and likewise a third of the night.

Jesus pointed toward exactly this kind of disruption when He described the last days: “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish...” (Luke 21:25, NIV). What John sees unfolding in Revelation is the very thing Jesus warned His disciples to watch for – cosmic disturbance that leaves the nations of the earth in genuine anguish and confusion.

The Angel's Warning: Three Woes to Come

Revelation 8:13

“As I watched, I heard an angel 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!’”

Before the fifth trumpet ever sounds, John sees an angel flying overhead, crying out a warning. Some translations render this as an eagle rather than an angel, but either way the point is the same: this is a messenger crossing the sky, visible to all, announcing what's coming next. The threefold cry of “woe” is deliberate – it's not decoration, it's a structural marker. It tells us that the remaining three trumpets, the fifth, sixth, and seventh, belong together as their own distinct and even more terrible unit within the judgment. Where the first four trumpets struck creation itself – the earth, the sea, the fresh water, the sky – this warning signals a shift. What follows will strike people directly.

This verse functions as a hinge in the narrative, much like

the seventh seal did earlier. It closes out this first wave of trumpet judgments and turns our attention forward, bracing us for the first woe, the second woe, and the third woe still to come. The inhabitants of the earth have already suffered greatly under the first four trumpets. The angel's cry makes clear that they have not yet seen the worst of it.

A Word Before You Move On: Remember the Mercy

Revelation 7:15–17

“Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They will hunger no more, neither thirst anymore... for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

As you sit with the weight of this chapter – fire, blood, poisoned water, darkened skies – it's worth going back to what we saw just before it. Revelation 7:15–17 gives us the other side of the story: a great multitude before the throne, sheltered by God's own presence, no longer hungry, no longer thirsting, shepherded by the Lamb to springs of living water, every tear wiped away. That scene isn't unrelated to this one. It's placed right before the trumpets begin for a reason.

Judgment is real, and this chapter doesn't let us look away from that. But mercy is real too, and it comes first in the text for a reason: mercy overtakes judgment the moment a decision is made. The multitude in chapter 7 didn't escape judgment because they were spared the notice of it – they escaped it because, at some point, they made a decision. They turned to the Lamb. That decision is what stands between the fire of chapter 8 and the comfort of chapter 7. It's the same offer held out to us now, while there's still time to decide.

Read the passage prayerfully a few times over and then answer

the questions: [Revelation 8](#)

Questions:

1. When the Lamb opens the seventh seal, what sequence of events unfolds in heaven? [Rev 8:1-6](#) cf. [Habakkuk 2:20](#); [Revelation 5:8](#); [Exodus 30:1-8](#)
 - As the seven angels sound their trumpets, each trumpet strikes a third of its target – deliberately echoing the Exodus plagues, but as a partial warning rather than total judgment, what judgment falls with each of the first four and what Old Testament passages does each one echo? [Rev. 8:7-12](#)
 - **First trumpet:** [Rev 8:7](#) cf. [Exodus 9:22-25](#); [Ezekiel 38:22](#)
 - **Second trumpet:** [Rev 8:8-9](#) cf. [Jeremiah 51:25](#); [Exodus 7:20-21](#)
 - **Third trumpet:** [Rev 8:10-11](#) cf. [Jeremiah 9:15](#); [Jeremiah 23:15](#)
 - **Fourth trumpet:** [Rev 8: 12](#) cf. [Isaiah 13:10](#); [Joel 2:10, 2:31](#); [Exodus 10:21-23](#)
 - What does the angel (or “eagle,” in some manuscripts) flying overhead cry out three times in Revelation 8:13 – echoing the seraphim’s threefold cry in Isaiah 6:3, where such repetition emphasizes the highest possible degree or intensity – and what does it announce is coming? [Rev 8:13](#) cf. [Isaiah 6:3](#)

Application:

1. [Revelation 8:3-4](#) shows the prayers of the saints rising

before God's throne right before judgment is unleashed on the earth – how might this shape the way you think about the power and purpose of your own prayers today?