

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The First Four Trumpets (8.6-12)



Outline of Revelation 8.1-11.19

1. The seventh seal: Silence, introduction of seven angels and seven trumpets, God responds to prayer with justice (Rev 8.1-5)
2. The First Four Trumpets (8.6-13)
3. The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets (9.1-21)
4. Interlude: John's Commission to Prophetic Preaching (10.1-11)
5. Interlude: The Temple and the Two Witnesses (11.1-14)
6. The Seventh Trumpet (11.15-19)

Review From Last Week (Revelation 8.1-5)

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.² Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.³ And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne,⁴ and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.⁵ Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. (cf. Ezekiel 10.1-7, which follows sealing of the righteous in Ezek 9)

1. **Silence:** "When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour" (8.1)
 - a. Silence is the response to God's judgment (Ps 31.17; 115.17; Is 47.5; Hab 2.20; Zech 2.13; Zeph 1.7; Rev 18.21-24)

2. **Parenthesis:** “Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.” (8.2)
 - a. Rev 8.1-5 is transitional; Rev 8.2 links the preceding visions with the subsequent visions (seals and trumpets); Angels are ministers of justice (Ex 12.23; Ps 78.42-54)

3. **Incense, Offering, and the Prayer of the Saints:** “And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, ⁴and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.” (8.3-4)
 - a. incense mixed with prayer = acceptable prayer
 - b. incense and sacrificial offering (incense mixed with an offering = an acceptable offering; thus, God receives the faithful witness of the saints as an acceptable sacrificial offering; cf. Lev 16.11-14; Rev 5.6-10; 6.9-11; 8.3-5)

4. **God Answers Prayer with Justice:** “Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.” (8.5; cf. Rev 11.14-19; 14.14-20; 16.17-21; 18.9-24; 19.19-21; 20.11-15)
 - a. Signs of judgment: thunder, rumblings, lightening, and an earthquake – at conclusion of seven seals (8.5), trumpets seven trumpets (11.19), and seven bowls (16.17-19)
 - b. Answer to prayer of Rev 6.9-11
 - c. Judgment and Sinai (Ex 19.16-20)

Revelation 8.6-13

Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them. ⁷ The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up. ⁸ The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. ⁹ A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. ¹⁰ The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. ¹¹ The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter. ¹² The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night. ¹³ Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!”

1. Trumpets and Plagues:

- a. This is a symbolic apocalyptic account of judgment, not a literal description of successive historical events (note: Rev 1.1 and the use of “like” in 8.8, 10; 9.2, 3, 5, 7-10, 17, 19; also, it is difficult to imagine a literal/universal fulfillment of these prophecies)
- b. Trumpets signify God’s presence, sovereignty, and judgment (cf. Ex 19; Jer 4, 6; Matt 24.30-31; 1 Cor 15.52; 1 Thess 4.16)

Exodus 19.13b: When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.

- c. Military conflict (i.e., the mission of the church militant; cf. Rev 7.3-8 and Rev 10)
 - i. Note that seven priests blow trumpets in Joshua 6, which announces and precedes the judgment and destruction of Jericho on the seventh day (cf. the seven angels in Revelation 8-9 and 15.5-6, and the final judgment in 11.15-19)
- d. God's initiative and action: "seven trumpets were given to them ..." (8.2)
- e. The plagues in Exodus (cf. Rev 8.7 and Exodus 9.22-25; Rev 8.8-11 and Exodus 7.20-22; Rev 8.12 and Exodus 10.21-23)
- f. Purpose of the plagues:

Exodus 7.1-5: And the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. ² You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land. ³ But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, ⁴ Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. ⁵ The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them."

Exodus 10.1-2: Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, ² and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD."

2. Significance of the Trumpets in Revelation (in the light of Egypt and Jericho)

- a. The trumpets announce God's judgment on unbelief and idolatry and are a response to the cry of the saints for justice

Revelation 9.20-21: The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, ²¹ nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Revelation 6.10 They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

Revelation 8.13: Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!" (note, "those who dwell on the earth")

- b. They signify preliminary judgments (they do not simply threaten or warn), which precede and point to the Last Judgment, of which Jericho is typical

3. The First Trumpet: The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

- a. The Seventh Plague in Egypt:

Exodus 9.22-25: Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, so that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man and beast and every plant of the field, in the land of Egypt.”²³ Then Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.²⁴ There was hail and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very heavy hail, such as had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.²⁵ The hail struck down everything that was in the field in all the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And the hail struck down every plant of the field and broke every tree of the field.

- b. judgment in thirds in Ezekiel 5

Ezekiel 5.1-2, 9-11: “And you, O son of man, take a sharp sword. Use it as a barber’s razor and pass it over your head and your beard. Then take balances for weighing and divide the hair.² A third part you shall burn in the fire in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are completed. And a third part you shall take and strike with the sword all around the city. And a third part you shall scatter to the wind, and I will unsheathe the sword after them ... And because of all your abominations I will do with you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again.¹⁰ Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers. And I will execute judgments on you, and any of you who survive I will scatter to all the winds.¹¹ Therefore, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will withdraw. My eye will not spare, and I will have no pity.

- c. the symbolism of the first trumpet points to judgment by famine
- d. $1/3$ = limitation and reservation, hence judgments happening throughout the church age as a preliminary to the Last Judgment

4. **The Second Trumpet:** The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.⁹ A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed (8.8-9)

- a. mountains signify kingdoms that opposes God and his saints (cf. Isaiah 41.15; 42.15; Ezek 35.2-7; Zech 4.7; note the parallels between Rev 8-9 and Jeremiah 51.24ff)

Jeremiah 51.24-30: “I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea before your very eyes for all the evil that they have done in Zion, declares the LORD.²⁵ “Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, declares the LORD, which destroys the whole earth; I will stretch out my hand against you, and roll you down from the crags, and make you a burnt mountain.²⁶ No stone shall be taken from you for a corner and no stone for a foundation, but you shall be a perpetual waste, declares the LORD.²⁷ “Set up a standard on the earth; blow the trumpet among the nations; prepare the nations for war against her; summon against her the kingdoms, Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz; appoint a marshal against her; bring up horses like bristling locusts.²⁸ Prepare the nations for war against her, the kings of the Medes, with their governors and deputies, and every land under their dominion.²⁹ The land trembles and writhes in pain, for the LORD’s purposes against Babylon stand, to make the land of Babylon a desolation, without inhabitant.³⁰ The warriors of Babylon have ceased fighting; they remain in their

strongholds; their strength has failed; they have become women; her dwellings are on fire; her bars are broken.

Jeremiah 51.63-64: When you finish reading this book, tie a stone to it and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates, ⁶⁴ and say, “Thus shall Babylon sink, to rise no more, because of the disaster that I am bringing upon her, and they shall become exhausted.” Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

Revelation 18.21: Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more ...”

- b. water to blood (maritime plague signifies economic judgment; second trumpet anticipates Rev 18.11-19)

Exodus 7.15-25: Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water. Stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent. ¹⁶ And you shall say to him, “The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, “Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness.” But so far, you have not obeyed. ¹⁷ Thus says the LORD, “By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. ¹⁸ The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile.”” ¹⁹ And the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, “Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.”” ²⁰ Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. ²¹ And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. ²² But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh’s heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. ²³ Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart. ²⁴ And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the Nile. ²⁵ Seven full days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

Psalm 78:44 He turned their rivers to blood, so that they could not drink of their streams.

5. **The Third Trumpet:** The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. ¹¹ The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter. (cf. Exodus 7.15-25)

- a. burning mountain = wicked kingdom; great star = angelic power who represents that kingdom

Deuteronomy 32.8: When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God. [LXX]

Isaiah 14.12-15: “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! ¹³ You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly

in the far reaches of the north; ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ ¹⁵ But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.

b. Wormwood = affliction from God’s wrath; the fruit of wickedness (Deut 29.17-18; Prov 5.4)

Jeremiah 9.13-16: And the LORD says: “Because they have forsaken my law that I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice or walked in accord with it, ¹⁴ but have stubbornly followed their own hearts and have gone after the Baals, as their fathers taught them. ¹⁵ Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will feed this people with bitter food, and give them poisonous water to drink. ¹⁶ I will scatter them among the nations whom neither they nor their fathers have known, and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them.” (cf. Jer 8.15; 23.15)

Lamentations 3.15-26: He has filled me with bitterness; he has sated me with wormwood. ¹⁶ He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes; ¹⁷ my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; ¹⁸ so I say, “My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD.” ¹⁹ Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! ²⁰ My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. ²¹ But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: ²² The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴ “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.” ²⁵ The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. ²⁶ It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

6. The Fourth Trumpet: The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.

a. The Ninth Plague in Egypt:

Exodus 10:21 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt.” ²² So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. ²³ They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the people of Israel had light where they lived.

b. Note: Israel is protected from the plagues (cf. **Revelation 7.3:** “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”)

c. Symbolic language of judgment (note 1/3)

Revelation 6:12-13 When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, ¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. (cf. cataclysmic imagery in prophetic judgements: Isaiah 13.9-13; 24.1-6, 19-23; Ezekiel 32.6-8; Joel 2.10, 30-32a; Joel 3.15-16; Habakkuk 3.6-11; 2 Samuel 22.8-16)

d. Darkness sets the stage for the fifth and sixth trumpets