

Revelation 8 - The First Four Trumpets

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COURSE COMMENTARY



8:1 - the seventh seal

- **He opened the seventh seal**
It is the **Lamb** who continues opening the seals ([Rev. 6:1](#)). Now that the 144,000 of [Chapter 7](#) have been sealed, the final seal is opened. The seventh seal contains the seven trumpets and the seventh trumpet contains the seven bowls. See the lesson where we discussed the [Literary Structure](#) of the book.
- **silence in heaven**
The silence is associated with the offering of incense and reflects the anticipation of the grim reality of the judgments about to pour forth. It is the *calm before the storm*.

8:2 - seven angels

- **seven angels who stand before God**
These are specific angels who "stand in God's presence." Gabriel told Zecharias that he "stands in the presence of God" ([Luke 1:19](#)). Some see these as angels as those which are mentioned in the pseudepigraphal book of *Enoch* or the apocryphal book of *Tobit*, but inspired Scripture only identifies three mighty angels by name: Lucifer ([Isa. 14:12](#)), Gabriel ([Dan. 8:16](#); [Dan. 9:21](#); [Luke 1:19](#)), and Michael ([Dan. 10:13](#); [12:1](#); [Jude 9](#); [Rev. 12:7](#)).
- **to them were given seven trumpets**
The judgments, as always, are subject to divine permission. The judgments grow in severity as they progress. At the second trumpet, *one-third* of the seas are affected. At the second bowl, all the seas are affected. The first four trumpet judgments affect the **natural systems**. The last three target **men**.

8:3 - prayers as incense

- **another angel**
Because of the intercessory service of the angel, some see him as Jesus Christ. This seems unlikely since He is presently holding the scroll and has just opened the seventh seal.
- **offer it with the prayers of the saints**
Previously, the twenty-four elders held "golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" ([Rev. 5:8](#)). The prayers are intercessory and include petitions for justice ([Rev. 6:10](#)). They are offered on the altar of incense before the throne in heaven.

8:4 - prayers ascend to God

- **prayers of the saints ascended**
The psalm writer recognized that the prayers of the saints were like incense before God ([Ps. 141:2](#)). Prayer comes "up to His holy dwelling place to heaven" ([2Chr. 30:27](#)).

8:5 - fire from the altar

- **threw it to the earth**

The fire speaks of judgment, just as when the man in Ezekiel's vision of the marked servants scattered coals over Jerusalem ([Eze. 10:2](#)). This act prefigures the angels with the seven bowls of wrath. Here, the judgments are connected to the petitions of the saints. The resulting noises and flashing indicate impending judgment.

8:6 - prepared to sound

- **sounding trumpets**

Sounding a trumpet denotes:

- 1) An alarm.
- 2) A fanfare to announce royalty.
- 3) A summons to battle.

The first or third purposes are probably in view here.

8:7 - first trumpet

- **hail and fire mingled with blood**

The description here is to be understood *literally*, like the plagues of Egypt ([Ex. 9:22-23](#)). Joel predicted "wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke."

- **thrown to the earth**

The earth dwellers worship the **creature** rather than the **Creator** so God begins to judge their idol. The 144,000 were sealed for protection from these natural judgments ([Rev. 7:1-3](#)). Fruit and grain production is destroyed intensifying the famine conditions from the third seal ([Rev. 6:5](#)).

8:8 - second trumpet

- **something like a great mountain**

Not a mountain, but *something like* one. Possibly a meteor or other astronomical body burning on entry to the earth's atmosphere. Or something entirely supernatural.

- **a third of the sea became blood**

As in the plagues of Egypt, the water becomes blood ([Ex. 7:19](#); [Ps. 78:44](#)). In the judgment of the second bowl, all the sea will become blood "as a dead man" ([Rev. 16:3](#)). This will cause a tremendous disruption to the food chain supporting life on earth.

- **living creatures in the sea died**

Literally, one-third of *the creatures in the sea, the ones having life* are destroyed. The mass of dead creatures will further pollute the ocean, similarly to red tide.

- **a third of the ships were destroyed**

The impact will generate huge tsunamis (tidal waves) which will destroy one-third of the world's ships. Isaiah prophesied that ships would be among the prideful things of man that were to be taken down by God ([Isa. 2:16](#)).

- **a great star... burning like a torch**

"Star" is *aste'r* -- the same root as the "stars of heaven" which fell to earth in the opening of the sixth seal ([Rev. 6:13](#)). "Torch" is *lampa's* which was used in ancient times to describe meteors and comets.

- **springs of waters**
"Springs" is *pega's* which is elsewhere translated as *fountain* or *well*. The emphasis is on water as a life-giving source. God is systematically crippling the natural systems upon which life depends to cause men to recognize their dependence upon Him.
- **the name of the star is Wormwood**
"Wormwood" is *a'psinthos*, derived from *absinthe*, a bitter, dark green oil made from strong-smelling plants. God describes idolatry as "a root bearing bitterness of wormwood" ([Deu. 29:17-18](#)) so here he gives the earth dwellers *wormwood* to drink! Many men die from poisoning, but many more will die due to the loss of water supplies.

8:12 - fourth trumpet

- **a third of the sun... moon... stars were struck**
Isaiah prophesied of the darkening of the stars, sun, and moon during the day of the Lord ([Isa. 13:9-10](#)). Joel also foresaw the darkening of these bodies in association with the advance of God's army ([Joel 2:10-11](#)). During the plagues of Egypt, God brought complete darkness during the day ([Ex. 10:21-23](#)).
- **a third of the day did not shine**
Here, the phrase implies that the light from the stars, sun, and moon will be completely unavailable for one third of the *time*. If so, we have no real clue how this might happen (just like the sea becoming blood).

8:13 - woe, woe, woe

- **I heard an angel**
The majority text and critical text have "eagle" rather than angel. One of the "living creatures" was said to resemble "a flying eagle" ([Rev. 4:7](#)). Later, it is an *angel* (all texts) which files through the midst of heaven having the everlasting gospel to preach ([Rev. 14:6](#)).
- **woe, woe, woe**
The remaining three trumpet judgments are especially severe and target **men** rather than natural systems.
 - 5) Release of demonic locusts ([Rev. 9:1](#)).
 - 6) Release of demonic army ([Rev. 9:13-21](#)).
 - 7) Seven bowls of God's wrath, the completion of all judgments.
- **to the inhabitants of the earth**
Katoikou'ntas, "the ones presently dwelling on the earth." These are the *earth dwellers* who steadfastly refuse God's mercy during the "hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth" ([Rev. 3:10](#)).

For additional information on this topic, see the [commentary](#).