

FREE GRACE BIBLE STUDY

Revelation 8

The Seven Trumpets



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Revelation 8

The silence is over. Seven angels step forward, and seven trumpets are placed in their hands. An angel fills a golden censer with fire from the altar and hurls it to the earth. Thunder. Lightning. An earthquake. Then the trumpets begin: hail and fire mixed with blood, a burning mountain thrown into the sea, a star called Wormwood poisoning the rivers, and a sky gone partly dark. Then a voice from mid-heaven cries out over the earth: woe, woe, woe. What are the trumpets announcing? Step into Revelation 8.

Introduction

1998 was a huge year for life-ending meteor strikes to the earth, at least according to Hollywood. I was a freshman in high school when two major movies with the same premise came out only a few months from each other: *Armageddon*, starring Bruce Willis, and *Deep Impact*, starring Elijah Wood and Morgan Freeman. These two movies depicted extinction-level events where something from space came to Earth with cataclysmic effects. The fear of space rock impacts was not just in the movies.

The late 90s were already flooded with existential dread. As Y2K (Year 2000) was approaching, there was talk of the end of the world as we knew it. In '94, astronomers watched in awe as pieces of a giant comet, Shoemaker-Levy 9, smashed into Jupiter. In early '98, just months before these two movies debuted, the discovery of a mile-wide asteroid, hypothetically on a collision course with Earth, was announced to the public. It splashed across newspapers and outlets worldwide and terrified everyone. The same year that the public panic was peaking, and the movies were released, the US government announced a NASA program called the Spaceguard Survey, a kind of planetary defense that was supposed to chart near-Earth objects that pose a threat. These were my high school years, years we lived in the notion that the end of the world was possibly at hand.

It was in that time that my youth group took up the study of Revelation. As we worked our way through the verses on Sunday nights, I was astonished. Especially in chapter eight, where the content, specifically Wormwood, sounded a lot like the two movies I had

just seen in the theater. I was both amazed and not a little scared. As the years have passed, the meteor hysteria has decreased, but one day, it will return with a fiery resolve. That's one thing we will discover in this chapter.

Revelation's Purpose

*Jesus is coming,
so faithfully live
to get the reward
that He will give.*

Passage

¹When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ²And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. ³Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. ⁵Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

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

⁷The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

⁸Then 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. ⁹And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

¹⁰Then 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 water. ¹¹The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.

¹²Then the fourth angel sounded: And 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.

¹³And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

(NKJV)

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS OF JUDGMENT – REVELATION 8 & 9



1ST TRUMPET:
HAIL, FIRE, & BLOOD
CAST TO EARTH
(1/3 TREES BURNED)



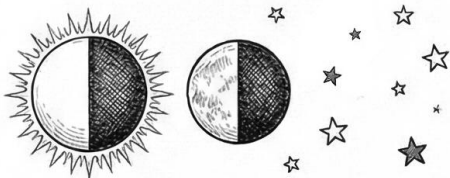
2ND TRUMPET:
BURNING MOUNTAIN
CAST INTO SEA
(1/3 SEA BECOMES BLOOD)



3RD TRUMPET:
THE STAR WORMWOOD
BITTERS THE WATERS



4TH TRUMPET:
1/3 SUN, MOON, &
STARS DARKENED



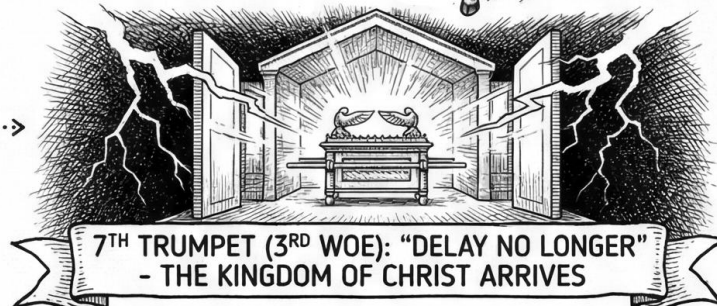
5TH TRUMPET
(1ST WOE):
LOCUSTS FROM THE
BOTTOMLESS PIT



6TH TRUMPET
(2ND WOE):
THE 200 MILLION ARMY
(1/3 MANKIND KILLED)



7TH TRUMPET (3RD WOE): "DELAY NO LONGER"
- THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST ARRIVES



Bible Study

As we saw in the last study, verse one of chapter eight marked the end of the seal judgments with the seventh seal. Now we are moving into the trumpets, which are another set of judgments. As Revelation progresses, the judgments intensify. The seven trumpets will include the little scroll, the two witnesses, and the three woes.

1

And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. (Revelation 8:2)

Trumpets were used in the ancient world to announce something important. They signified that something significant was about to happen, or that a royal procession was approaching. With these trumpets, the seriousness of the judgments increases.

2

The trumpets announce that something significant is about to happen, and with them the seriousness of the judgments increases. Why do you think God lets His judgments intensify step by step instead of all at once, and what does that say about His patience?

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. (Revelation 8:3)

There is an altar with incense rising from it. This imagery reflects the Old Testament tabernacle and temple, which had the altar of incense in front of the veil that led to the Holy of Holies. We discover that the tabernacle and earthly temple actually represented heaven. The altar is before the throne, and the incense symbolizes the prayers of the saints.

4 The incense rising from the golden altar represents the prayers of the saints, rising before the throne of God. How does knowing that your prayers are present before God's throne change the way you pray this week?

5 *And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. 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. (Revelation 8:4–5)*

Earlier in Revelation, the martyrs asked how long they would have to wait for God to judge the evil of the world (Revelation 6:9-10). That request is connected to these prayers, represented by the incense. Now, the angel takes fire from the altar, places it into the censer, and throws it to the earth. This dramatic act represents God answering these prayers for judgment and vindication. The result is thunder, lightning, and an earthquake—a powerful response to the cries of the saints.

6 The fire thrown from the altar to the earth is God's answer to the martyrs who asked how long they would have to wait for justice (Revelation 6:9-10). When you are waiting on God to make something right, how can you keep trusting His timing?

7

And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them. 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. (Revelation 8:6-7)

The first few trumpet judgments focus on the ecology of the earth rather than its inhabitants. These judgments impact the land, sea, and environment. Later trumpets will shift their focus to directly affecting people. Verse eight introduces the second trumpet:

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, (Revelation 8:8)

This event seems to describe something massive, possibly from space, falling into the ocean. Given that much of the earth is covered by water, it makes sense for such an object to land in the sea. Scientists estimate that millions of small meteoroids enter the earth's atmosphere every day and are burned up. Those that reach the surface of the earth earn the name meteorite. Even more impressive, scientists also estimate that, about once a year, Earth experiences an explosion with the energy of a small atomic bomb (roughly 5,000 tons of TNT) due to asteroids or meteoroids hitting the atmosphere. Most happen away from population centers, often over the ocean. However, this event involves a massive object and will not leave the earth so untouched.

Whether the sea turning to blood is a literal or metaphorical description of a geological phenomenon, the impact on the ocean is catastrophic. It seems to be a result of the burning mountain-sized chunk of rock hurled into the earth's waters.

9

and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed. (Revelation 8:9)

A massive object crashing into the ocean at high speed would cause enormous waves, capsizing ships and drowning many people. The destruction of the ships is likely caused by a tsunami unlike any ever recorded. The devastation extends to marine life and likely affects coastal cities as well, since so many of the world's major metropolitan areas are located along shorelines. Right now, approximately three billion people rely on seafood for a significant share of their animal protein. This devastation will be catastrophic.

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. (Revelation 8:10)*

This event is similar to the previous one, but instead of affecting the oceans, it impacts the rivers and springs. When meteorites fall to the earth, they often break apart. This could describe a fragment trailing behind the earlier object, or it could be an entirely separate event. Either way, this judgment shifts its focus to the freshwater sources of the earth.

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. (Revelation 8:11)*

The word *wormwood* means *bitter*. The name of the star, Wormwood, reflects this bitterness, and a third of the waters become bitter as a result. In this context, it doesn't just mean that the water is bitter to the sense of taste, but that it is actually poisoned. Many people die because of the water, either from dehydration as they are forced to avoid it or because they unknowingly consume the poisoned water. Whatever the exact cause, this event results in the loss of many lives.

12 **The star called Wormwood makes a third of the waters bitter, and many die from drinking them. What things in our culture look refreshing but leave people spiritually poisoned, and how can you point others to living water instead?**

13 *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. (Revelation 8:12)*

This could mean that part of the day and night is obscured, or it could mean that the sun, moon, and stars are dimmed. This phenomenon sometimes occurs after massive meteorite strikes or volcanic eruptions. These events fill the atmosphere with particulates—small particles that block light—causing darkness.

Alternatively, it could mean that God supernaturally dims the heavenly bodies. If the sun is dimmed, the moon would naturally be dimmed as well, since it reflects the sun's light. This darkening is likely connected to the events described earlier, including the massive meteorite or star that falls.

14

The first four trumpets strike the land, the sea, the rivers and springs, and the light of the sun, moon, and stars. What do these judgments teach us about God's authority over all of creation?

15

And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" (Revelation 8:13)

When we see the word *heaven* here, it doesn't refer to the throne room of God. In the ancient understanding, there were three heavens: the highest heaven, which is the throne of God; the region above the sky; and the sky itself. The term *mid-heaven* here refers to the sky, a high place but not the throne room of God. The angel (some translations say eagle) is flying in this mid-heaven, announcing what is to come.

The angel declares that the last three trumpets will be far worse than the ones that have already occurred. These three trumpets are referred to as the three woes.

The three woes correspond to the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets. These judgments will specifically focus on the people of the earth. Up until this point, people have already suffered and died as a result of ecological disasters—the meteorite, the bitter water—but now the judgments will directly target the inhabitants of the earth.

The term *woe* in the ancient mindset is a pronouncement of judgment and danger. Jesus Himself pronounced woes on cities that rejected Him. It's a warning of impending disaster, not just a call to slow down or reconsider, but a declaration of judgment. These three woes signal the intensifying focus of God's wrath on humanity.

16

Before the last three trumpets sound, a loud voice from mid-heaven pronounces “Woe, woe, woe” as a warning. How does God's habit of warning before judgment shape the way you share the gospel with people around you?

17

Revelation's purpose is: Jesus is coming, so faithfully live to get the reward that He will give. In light of how serious the coming judgments are, what is one specific way you can live more faithfully for Christ right now?

Notes

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