



The Seven Seal Scroll

The 7th Seal and the 7 Trumpets of Revelation 8

Revelation 8:1

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

Silence for half an hour?

1. A silence of solemnity for past events or ones about to be reported.
2. Brief period following the destruction of Jerusalem during which no complaints from the saints were presented (6:9-10; cf. 8:3-5).
3. A silence of expectation as the church and angels stood silent to see what God was doing.
4. Period of time normally required for the priest in the temple to offer the daily incense (cf. Rev 8:5).

#2. For a moment, their prayers for vengeance cease as God's judgment comes upon Jerusalem.

#3. Could be the silence in the courtroom as everyone awaits the judges decision.

#4. The angel in this case is the priest offering up the prayers of the saints. Luke 1:10, "And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense."

The Seven Trumpets

Revelation 8:2 - 11:19



What do the 7 trumpets represent?

1. Historicists: The trumpets speak of a series of invasions against the Roman Empire (Vandals, Huns, Saracens, and Turks).
2. Preterists: The trumpets correspond to the destruction inflicted by the Romans on the Jews in the Jewish War (66-70AD).
3. Futurists: The trumpets represent calamities suffered by the unrepentant inhabitants of the earth during the future seven-year Tribulation.
4. Idealists: Catastrophes befalling sinful humanity, demonstrating God's displeasure. Yet they refuse to repent.

Revelation 8:2-5

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.

We have seven angels with seven trumpets who will blow those trumpets that carry with them God's judgment.

We have another angel (v. 3) that comes to the altar with a golden censer (used to burn incense, bowl with lid hanging on chains).

The angel comes to the throne to offer the incense before the altar.

The angel then lights the incense then threw it on the earth in judgment.

Many view the 7 angels and 7 trumpets as God's agent for judgment.

Many also view the angel acting as priest to bring the incense before the throne is a picture of Christ, the great high priest. He is bringing, as mediator, the prayers of his saints to the father and its response to these prayers, the judgment comes.

Revelation 6:9-11, **"9** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. **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?" **11** Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been."

Transition: Are there any parallels with this in Scripture or any indication on whether these trumpets are judgments against Rome (historicist), Jerusalem (preterist), the future earth (futurists)?

Deuteronomy 13:12-16

¹² If you hear in one of your cities, which the Lord your God is giving you to dwell there, ¹³ that certain worthless fellows have gone out among you and have drawn away the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which you have not known, ¹⁴ then you shall inquire and make search and ask diligently. And behold, if it be true and certain that such an abomination has been done among you, ¹⁵ you shall surely put the inhabitants of that city to the sword, devoting it to destruction, all who are in it and its cattle, with the edge of the sword. ¹⁶ You shall gather all its spoil into the midst of its open square and burn the city and all its spoil with fire, as a whole burnt offering to the Lord your God.

Notice the commonalities with the introduction of the trumpets in Revelation 8:

1. The altar, from which comes to fire to sacrifice the burnt offering.
2. The witnesses needed before a city is devoted to destruction. This is what the prayers of the saints represent in Revelation 6 and 8.
3. The description in Deuteronomy is a description of a city within Israel (your cities). Jerusalem, the capital city, had become a place of serving others gods (we have no King but Caesar).

This matches the judgment that befell on Jerusalem as it was devoted to complete destruction.

It could be that John uses figurative language to describe the fire from the altar coming from heaven to destroy Jerusalem as a burnt offering before the Lord.

This is supported by other texts in Revelation such as Revelation 11:8, "and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified."

So this city that is destroyed by seven trumpets, like Jericho fell, from fire from the altar, is Jerusalem, where the Lord was crucified.

Therefore, rather than the destruction of the Roman Empire or a future tribulation on the earth, I will set forth the interpretation of God's judgment against Jerusalem, where the Lord was crucified and where the early church faced its fiercest persecution.

Revelation 8:6-7 (1st Trumpet)

⁶ 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.

Like the seals, the first four trumpets are set apart from the final three. These trumpets affect the land, the sea, the rivers, and finally the sun and the moon.

The last three trumpets are called “woes” Revelation 9:12 The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.

Walvoord, a futurist says, “The tendency on the part of the expositors has been to read into this judgment a symbol of divine chastening rather than literal hail and fire. The obvious parallel, however, is found in the tenth plague in Exodus 9:18–26. Inasmuch as in the account of Exodus there was literal hail and fire, and the result of the judgment here is the burning up of the third part of trees and all the green grass, there is no solid reason for not taking this judgment in its literal sense.”

However, given the symbolic nature of the book, it is best to understand these as symbols interpreted in the same manner as the other symbols.

Hail and fire mixed with blood does allude to Egypt and to God’s judgment upon this city, Jerusalem. This judgment affects the land and the green vegetation, the new life visible.

Josephus on the land...

“And now the Romans, although they were greatly distressed in getting together their materials, raised their banks in one-and-twenty days, after they had cut down all the trees that were in the country that adjoined to the city, and that for ninety furlongs round about, as I have already related. And, truly, the very view itself of the country was a melancholy thing; for those places which were before adorned with trees and pleasant gardens were now become a desolate country every way, and its trees were all cut down: nor could any foreigner that had formerly seen Judea and the most beautiful suburbs of the city, and now saw it as a desert, but lament and mourn sadly at so great a change; for the war had laid all signs of beauty quite waste” (Wars VI: 1:1).

Revelation 8:8-9 (2nd Trumpet)

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

Here we again have language of $\frac{1}{3}$ being used. The first four trumpets share this in common.

It could be a reference to:

- The greatness of the destruction.
- The limited nature of God's judgment. These could be referring to the initial warnings that they did not heed or lead them to repentance.

Revelation 9:20 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.

Futurists at this point sometimes use symbolism where others opt for a meteor or other explanation.

Regardless, if this is describing judgment against Jerusalem then the symbols here of a great mountain (can refer to Jerusalem) and the sea can refer to the Gentiles or nations or be the battles in the Jewish Wars that took place on the Sea of Galilee.

Josephus on the sea...

“And for such as were drowning in the sea, if they lifted their heads up above the water they were either killed by darts [arrows], or caught by the vessels; but if, in the desperate case they were in, they attempted to swim to their enemies, the Romans cut off either their heads or their hands; and indeed they were destroyed after various manners everywhere, till the rest, being put to flight, were forced to get upon the land, while the vessels encompassed them about (on the sea): but as many of these were repulsed when they were getting ashore, they were killed by the darts upon the lake; and the Romans leaped out of their vessels, and destroyed a great many more upon the land...

Josephus on the sea... (cont.)

... one might then see the lake all bloody, and full of dead bodies, for not one of them escaped. And a terrible stink, and a very sad sight there was on the following days over that country; for as for the shores, they were full of shipwrecks, and of dead bodies all swelled; and as the dead bodies were inflamed by the sun, and putrefied, they corrupted the air, insomuch that the misery was not only the object of commiseration to the Jews, but to those that hated them, and had been the authors of that misery” (Wars III: 10:9).

So whether on the land or sea, the people of Jerusalem were judged and great calamity befell them.

The symbolism could also depict the words of Jesus in Matthew 21.

Matthew 21:18-22

¹⁸In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. ¹⁹And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.

²⁰When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" ²¹And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. ²²And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

This passage takes place after the triumphal entry and then the cleansing of the temple.

The cursing of the fig tree is a reference to Jerusalem. It appears to bear fruit but it has no fruit, leaving the people hungry. So Jesus cursed the fig tree and it withered just as he will curse Jerusalem and it will wither.

It could be that Jesus, in speaking of the mountain, is also speaking about Jerusalem and that it will be thrown into the sea in judgment.

You also see the parallel with the prayers of the saints and this judgment of God.

Jeremiah 51:25, 42

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.... The sea has come up on Babylon; she is covered with its tumultuous waves.

Jeremiah 51:24 says that is God's judgment against Babylon.

The kingdom of Babylon is called a mountain.

This gives credence to this being a judgment of a kingdom or empire rather than a meteor or tsunami.

Revelation 8:10-11 (3rd Trumpet)

¹⁰The 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. ¹¹The 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.

Futurists typically interpret this literally in referring to a meteor that falls to earth and poisons the waters.

It could have a literal-ish fulfillment if it refers to the decaying corpses that lay in the Sea of Galilee and flowed down the Jordan River.

More probable, there are also allusions to the bitter water the people had to drink at Mara because they grumbled and complained against the Lord.

The great star and burning touch refer to divine judgment coming from above.

Transition: God gave Jerusalem many warnings that match the language used here...

Deuteronomy 28:58-60

⁵⁸ If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the Lord your God, ⁵⁹ then the Lord will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting. ⁶⁰ And he will bring upon you again all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you.

Jeremiah 9:15-16

¹⁵ Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will feed this people with bitter food [*lit. wormwood*], 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.

Jeremiah 23:15

Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets:
“Behold, I will feed them with bitter food [*lit. wormwood*] and give them poisoned water to drink, for from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has gone out into all the land.

(cf. Deut 29:18; Lam 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7)

It seems best that John is using language that described the judgment against Jerusalem in 586BC to describe the judgment against Jerusalem in 66-70AD.

Just like God judged Egypt and Babylon, he will judge his people if they do not repent of their ways and rejection of Him and his Christ.

Revelation 8:12 (4th Trumpet)

¹²The 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.

We've seen already in our study how the Bible uses decreation language or cosmic language to describe the fall of empires, kingdoms, or nations.

(cf. Isa. 13:9–11, 19; 24:19–23; 34:4–5; Ezek. 32:7–8, 11–12; Joel 2:10, 28–32; Acts 2:16–21).

The fact that one third is mentioned demonstrates that this is not the final or total destruction (like we see in the bowl judgments).

Some preterists believe that the different stars and lights refer to political rulers.

One commentator writes, "Ruler after ruler, chieftain after chieftain of the Roman Empire and the Jewish nation was assassinated and ruined. Gaius, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, all died by murder or suicide; Herod the Great, Herod Antipas, Herod Agrippa, and most of the Herodian Princes, together with not a few of the leading High Priests of Jerusalem, perished in disgrace, or in exile, or by violent hands. All these were quenched suns and darkened stars."

It could also refer to the fact that the Roman army came from the north and conquered other Judean cities, including Galilee which preceded the final

overthrow of the capital city of Jerusalem.

(Futurists read this as a eclipse or even a shortening of the 24-hour cycle to 16-hour cycle. Whereas others believe it is caused by air pollution caused by nuclear explosions.)

In all, it is partial, the trumpets not sounding doom, but a warning. Revelation 9:**20** 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 8:13 (Three “Woes” Announced)

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!”

The last three trumpet blasts are called the three “woes” speaking of great lamentation rather than blessing.

What’s the significance of the eagle (some translations have “angel” but eagle is more probable)?

Deut 28:**49** The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand, **50** a hard-faced nation who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young. **51** It shall eat the offspring of your cattle and the fruit of your ground, until you are destroyed; it also shall not leave you grain, wine, or oil, the increase of your herds or the young of your flock, until they have caused you to perish.

Lam 4:**19**

Our pursuers were swifter

than the eagles in the heavens;
they chased us on the mountains;
they lay in wait for us in the wilderness.

Significance of Revelation 8

1. God's judgment comes with much warning.
2. God's judgment is measured, inviting repentance.
3. God's judgment, like in Egypt, can harden and destroy.
4. God's judgment is the response to the prayers of his saints.
5. Christ, our great high priest, carries out God's judgment.

#1. The trumpet blasts function like an army blowing its trumpet to call its forces to war. This serves as a signal to the victor (in this case the praying saints) that their redemption is nigh. It also serves as a warning to the enemy that war will soon be upon them.

#2. The fact that the trumpets after $\frac{1}{3}$ teaches us that God's judgments are measured. They are increasing in intensity and such increase allows time for repentance and that his enemies might find mercy. Even if $\frac{1}{3}$ are conquered, the majority can see their sin and its consequence and turn to God for mercy.

The obstinacy of those under God's judgment to repent only serves to increase their condemnation and make their judgment just.

#3. The metaphors here overlap with God's judgment against Egypt. The judgments there escalated and each time Moses asked Pharaoh to let the people go but Pharaoh hardened his heart. God hardened his heart such that Egypt would be plundered and God's power might be made known on the earth. Those facing God's judgment in Revelation 8 are hardened as a display of God's power in their destruction.

#4. The trumpet judgments are answered prayers of the saints asking God for vindication. As God shows mercy to his own, the wicked suffer.

When we pray, "Come, Lord Jesus" we are praying for his judgment. When we long for the fullness of his kingdom, we are longing for the destruction of his enemies. When we look forward to his return, we are looking forward to judgment.

#5. The role of Christ in Revelation is manifold. Here, Christ is bringing God's kingdom to earth through judgment and he is directly carrying out that judgment upon Jerusalem. He is the sovereign one who has authority in heaven and on earth. He uses that authority to the good of his people and for the terror of the evildoer.