



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Revelation

Chapter 8

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Introduction

Chapter six presented the first six seals which revealed some events that will take place up to the second coming of Christ

Following the “pause” of Chapter 7, in which reassuring and comforting scenes concerning the saints were seen, **the seventh seal** and the last one is now opened in Chapter 8

In this chapter four of the seven trumpets will be announced



Introduction

This Chapter can be divided into:

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Seventh Seal: Silence in Heaven 8:1



- The seven seal was opened by the Lamb
- In contrast to all that happened before, the silence must have been striking!
- This must be a mere metaphor, silence being put here for the deep and solemn expectation of the astonishing things about to take place, which the opening of this seal had produced
- When any extraordinary remarkable and enormous thing is expected, all is silence

Seventh Seal: Silence in Heaven 8:1



- It may signifies a time of sadness and grief on those who lost their eternity
- Possibly it signifies awe in heaven for what has already been revealed, or for what is about to be revealed
- When God acts, those on earth should be in awe Habakkuk 2:20; Zechariah 2:13
- Should we not expect a similar reaction from His creatures in heaven Zephaniah 1:7?
- *about half an hour*, According to the Church Fathers indicates a short time

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- The series of visions which is now introduced by the sounding of seven trumpets extend to the close of chapter 11
- The seven angels are the seven archangels that Raphael said he was one of, Tobit 12:15
- Or they might be seven angels that were assigned for this service
- Ibn-el-Assal thinks that the trumpets indicate here the commands given by God, and the blowing indicates their implementation

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- The trumpet was used to call the people together, whether for worship, or festival, or war, Numbers 10:4-8
- The use of these trumpets we shall hereafter read, was to proclaim the will and counsels of God, as to things to come

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- *Another angel*, As if this angel wants to offer much prayers and intercessions before the blowing of the trumpets
- Ibn-El-Assal thinks that he is a real angel from the order of the Cherubim, as they take care of the sacrifices that we offer to God, Judges 6:21, Genesis 22:11
- At the end of the liturgy of the Eucharist, the priest says, *“May the angel of the sacrifice who is ascending up with this praise, remember us before God...”*
- This angel may also indicates the Church who does not cease offering incense, either by her victorious members in Paradise, or the militants on earth wishing the return of the sinners to Him

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- However, most scholars think that it is the Lord Jesus Christ
- He was called an angel many times, Revelation 10:1, 18:1
- He was called the Angel of the Covenant in Malachi 3:1-2
- It is He, the Redemptive Interceder, "*He always lives to make intercession for them.*" Hebrews 7:25
- He is the Bishop of our souls and the most High Priest who stands at the altar, which is His cross, where He offers Himself as a sacrifice for us

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- As the Mediator, offering up His people's prayers, rendered acceptable before God through the incense of His merit
- *a golden censor*, This was a vessel in which were put burning coals of fire taken from off the altar before the Lord, Leviticus 16:12
- In the daily service the priest used a silver censor, but on the day of atonement a golden one
- It may mean a spiritual censor which is His redemptive intercession, that "*He was given much incense*" He defends and pleads for His children

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- It may denote the sufferings of Christ, the pains He endured in His body the sorrows of His soul
- It may also point to and show the excellency and perpetuity of Christ's sacrifice and intercession
- *and stood at the altar*; Either the altar of burnt offerings and so may represent His sacrifice, which had been lately offered up for the sins of His people

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- Or rather the altar of incense, and so Christ is here introduced as the high priest, advocate, and intercessor for His people
- *given much incense*, It is symbolic of the prayers of the saints (Revelation 5:8; Psalm 141:2; Luke 1:10); it is given to the angel so that "*he might add to*" the prayers of God's holy people
- *the saints*, The prayers both of the saints in the heavenly rest, and of those militant on earth
- In His love He accepts, "*the prayers of the saints,*"

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- *The prayers* that were to be offered in Him, to the Father, as a pure, appealing, and accepted sacrifice
- As in earthly liturgy when the incense combines with our prayers and ascends before God, the priest offers up the petitions of his congregation
- And all this being before the Lord may show that Christ's sufferings were according to the will of God
- The symbol of the rising smoke, in which incense and prayer now mingled, is the token that the prayers of the saints, now rendered acceptable and are about to be answered

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- It is a testimony of God's gracious acceptance, both of the intercession of the great High-Priest, and of the prayers of His believing people, proceeding from devout hearts
- These prayers of God's people, weak and imperfect as they are, are yet invincible weapons in the hands of Christ's soldiers, and will be found mightier than any carnal weapons
- Our prayers are worth nothing, unless the true and sweet aroma of that only sacrifice be, especially and before all things, with them

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- The prayers have gone up, *and threw it to the earth* is the symbol of the answer descending from heaven
- This *fire* is the divine justice
- *Filled* is an indication that God's anger is complete, "*For behold, the LORD will come with fire And with His chariots, like a whirlwind, To render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword The LORD will judge all flesh; And the slain of the LORD shall be many*"
Isaiah 66:15-16

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- *noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake, is the symbol of God's warnings, "The sound of noise from the city! A voice from the temple! The voice of the LORD, Who fully repays His enemies!" (Isaiah 66:6)*
- *"Then the earth shook and trembled; The foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken, Because He was angry" (2 Samuel 22:8)*
- *"You will be punished by the LORD of hosts With thunder and earthquake and great noise, With storm and tempest And the flame of devouring fire." (Isaiah 29:6)*

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- This *fire* symbolize God's fiery judgments about to descend on the Church's enemy in answer to the saints' incense-perfumed prayers which have just ascended before God
- We can also say that if the altar is the cross, so the fire of the altar is the Holy Spirit, that rebukes, and makes one repent
- He gives communion with the Holy Trinity, in the merit of the blood of Jesus, shed for us on the cross
- The Son sent us the Holy Spirit as He said *“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”* (John 15:26)

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”*
(John 16:7-11)

And this is the work of the Holy Spirit:

- *noises* were heard, it is the voices of the apostles and the preachers

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- *thunderings*, The preachers thunder by the Holy Spirit, as roaring lions with divine authority as we read in Acts 24:25 how the governor Felix was afraid hearing about God and His judgment
- *lightnings*; for the Lord's Spirit always shines with glorious and wonderful deeds before the people
- *earthquake*, It is the purpose of the Holy Spirit to rebuke the believer
- It is the use and effects of the Gospel, speaking to the hearts of men by the sons of thunder, enlightening their minds, and shaking their consciences

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- The half-hour silence in heaven is now at an end; after the fire has been cast upon the earth, the seven angels, Revelation 8:2 prepare to sound their trumpets
- Trumpets are for warning only and not for complete destruction
- The purpose of these warnings is to rebuke which leads to repentance
- The angels are God's ministers, by which He brings His counsels to pass in the world

Preparation for the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:2-6



- Upon hearing *the noises and thunderings*, they knew the time has come to begin the execution of God's judgments upon the earth
- They are therefore set out (though they are always ready) preparing themselves to execute what God had entrusted them with the execution of
- We find that, in His warning, God is so gentle and kind, yet with firmness
- He does not haste to warning, but He lets the angels get ready for the blowing, to give those who accept the tender loving Lord, a chance

First Trumpet: Vegetation Struck 8:7



- There are two directions of interpreting the trumpets
- They are not opposed, but are adherent to each other:
 - 1- St. Irenaeus believes that the following warnings happened in the world before the coming of the Antichrist, and during his presence, so as to terrify the believers, that they do not accept him. And to discipline those who have accepted him, in order to repent
 - 2- The second direction is that the four trumpets point to God's warnings to man in any age in a metaphoric and imagery language

First Trumpet: Vegetation Struck 8:7



- *The first angel*, The first in order, and indicating the first in the series of events that were to follow
- Hail points to the might of punishment (Isaiah 28:2,17), as fire points to God's great anger (Deuteronomy 32:22; Malachi 4:1)
- God uses the opposites together, as an indication of the strength of His warnings, as the psalmist says, *"Then the earth shook and trembled; The foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken, Because He was angry... hailstones and coals of fire."* (Psalm 18:7-12)

First Trumpet: Vegetation Struck 8:7



- The passage and *mingled with blood* may describe the ruin created by war; the consequences of fire and sword
- The reference to the Egyptian plagues is obvious, Exodus 9:23-25
- This resemblance to the history of Israel in Egypt gives us the hint of the true meaning
- It carries us back to the past, and asks us to remember the mighty works of God in old times

First Trumpet: Vegetation Struck 8:7



- It reminds us that He who gave Joshua Jericho into his hands and who delivered His people from the oppression of Pharaoh, is the same God, mighty to save His people, to break the shackles and chains of ignorance, and to cast down the high walls of pride and sin
- *a third of*, Which means the judgment is neither total nor final so this cannot refer to the end of the physical world
- The burning of a third of the trees and all green grass indicates that by this punishment God humiliates some arrogant and haughty persons (Isaiah 28:2, 30:30; Psalm 18:7-13), (trees as in Isaiah 2:12-13), and fades the brightness of the earthly life

First Trumpet: Vegetation Struck 8:7



- Thus, when people see how dictators and oppressors have fallen, and how the world was full of problems, troubles, and pains, they would come back to God with a repentant and humble heart
- It is worth noticing that in the first four trumpets that they introduce plagues, on the powers of nature only, not on men, and that on these the plague stops short of entire destruction

Second Trumpet: The Seas Struck 8:8-9



- Upon the sound of the second trumpet, follows a sign which exercises its injurious effects upon the sea, together with creatures living therein and on ships
- The sea becoming blood reminds us again of the plagues in Egypt, "*And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the LORD commanded. So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. The fish that were in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river. So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.*" (Exodus 7:20-21)

Second Trumpet: The Seas Struck 8:8-9



- *great mountain burning with fire*, actually symbolizes God's judgment on a great system that will soon be burnt and cast down
- A mountain is a natural symbol of strength, and hence becomes a symbol of a strong and powerful kingdom or a great king or a ruler
- *third of the sea became blood*, This happened as a result of casting into the sea a huge mass, as it were *a great mountain, burning with fire*

Second Trumpet: The Seas Struck 8:8-9



- Great disorders, especially when kingdoms are moved by hostile invasions, are represented by mountains being cast into the midst of the sea, Psalm 46:2
- Seas and collections of waters mean peoples, as is shown in this book, Revelation 17:15
- Therefore, great commotions in kingdoms and among their inhabitants may be here intended
- The force of the vision is that certain gigantic forms of evil will be overthrown

Second Trumpet: The Seas Struck 8:8-9



- The reference to the sea becoming blood is more-so a metaphor for the large amount of death and blood loss because of it
- This could also be a possible reference back to Exodus of the Red Sea which Moses crossed escaping Egypt
- This text can be taken literally if the story of Moses and the Nile becoming blood is taken literally as well
- As the Nile became blood for Moses, one-third of sea will do that for this event

Second Trumpet: The Seas Struck 8:8-9



- The destruction is focused solely on one-third of the sea
- This naturally results in death for those creatures needing oxygen
- *a third of the ships were destroyed*, It is a natural disaster resulting from the destruction of the sea and it may denote ways of transportations

Third Trumpet: The Waters Struck 8:10-11



- As this great star burning like a torch had fallen from heaven, this indicates a third kind of bitter punishment
- The flaming star seems to symbolize the fall of a ruler or a royal leader; the trumpet-blast proclaims that the mighty who have been, as star, will fall
- Some have thought that this falling star signified some false teacher, of great religious and spiritual position and whose evil influence poisoned the pure currents of the gospel, and perverted the minds of men of original intellect, who are represented here as fountains or *spring of water*

Third Trumpet: The Waters Struck 8:10-11



- *The spring water and rivers* are smitten, the sources of health and joy, the streams of prosperity, are injured
- History recorded to us that great stars fell and embittered the life of God's children blemishing the spiritual teachings and caused many to perish and die spiritually
- Some of them are, Arius, Nestorius, Macedonius, Pelagius and many others
- But all such false lights shall fall before Him who is the true Light and Morning Star, and who will heal all embittered waters of life, Exodus 15:23-25 and 2 Kings 2:19-21

Third Trumpet: The Waters Struck 8:10-11



- The bitter, nauseous plant known as wormwood (apsinthos) is used to represent troubles and calamities
- *many men died*, This effect would naturally follow if any considerable portion of the fountains and streams of a land were changed by an infusion of wormwood
- It is not necessary to suppose that this is intended to be literally true
- His doctrine was as bitter as wormwood; and he was the ruin of many souls

Third Trumpet: The Waters Struck 8:10-11



- *the waters became wormwood*, This is a term used in the Law and the Prophets to warn Israel of its destruction as a punishment for apostasy
- In Deuteronomy 29:17-18 it is used in reference to one who spreads idolatry
- In Amos 6:12 the prophet warns of turning "*the fruit of righteousness into wormwood*,"
- In Jeremiah 9:14-15 God says that He will feed His idolatrous people "*with wormwood, give them water of gall to drink*"

Third Trumpet: The Waters Struck 8:10-11



- And the same punishment is promised for false prophets in Jeremiah 23:15 *“Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, And make them drink the water of gall; For from the prophets of Jerusalem Profaneness has gone out into all the land.”*
- This poisoning of pure water is the reverse of a miracle that God gave the children of Israel
- It is the bitter waters of Marah in Exodus 15:22-26 when God *“showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.”*

Third Trumpet: The Waters Struck 8:1



- There is also an interesting warning that God gives Israel in this passage,
- *“If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you.”*

Fourth Trumpet: The Heavens Struck 8:12



- Still the created universe is the direct object of these visitations
- The darkness which thus falls on the lights of heaven carries us back to the plague of darkness, Exodus 10:21-23
- When darkness is opposed to light, as light is a symbol of joy and safety, so darkness is a symbol of misery and adversity; according to the style of Jeremiah 13:16
- *“Give glory to the LORD your God Before He causes darkness, And before your feet stumble On the dark mountains, And while you are looking for light, He turns it into the shadow of death And makes it dense darkness.”*

Fourth Trumpet: The Heavens Struck 8:12



- The darkness of the sun, moon, and stars, is likewise observed to denote a general deficiency as the prophets describe a day of severe judgment, Isaiah 13:10-11; Ezekiel 32:7-8
- Calamity would come as if darkness should spread over the sun, the moon, and the stars, leaving the world in gloom
- It is not to be total
- It is not as if the sun, the moon, and the stars were entirely blotted out, for there was still some remaining light
- There was a continuance of the existing state of things

Fourth Trumpet: The Heavens Struck 8:12



- Also, our sun is Christ
- The moon is the church that reflects Christ's light and enlighten the hearts
- The stars are God's men and the church teachers and guides who are illuminating like stars in His church
- With the increase of the heresies *a third of the sun was struck* meaning that many will deny Christ and His divinity
- They will reject Him and therefore, their life will become dark and they will not enjoy His amazing light
- Their rejection of Him will result in living in sin

Fourth Trumpet: The Heavens Struck 8:12



- They will not see Him in the churches because *a third of the moon* became dark which means many of the church leaders will become false teachers
- Therefore, many will reject the church authority
- *the day* symbolizes life of faith and the night the increase of evil and sin
- As the apostle says, “*You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.*” 1 Thessalonians 5:5
- Any church loss will be gain to evil

Fourth Trumpet: The Heavens Struck 8:12



- Those who were looking for the truth will not find it in these churches and among those false teachers and heretics
- Sinners will lose any chance of repentance because of the fall of the churches and its leaders
- These trumpet-visions, if read by the side of the story of Genesis, seem like the undoing of creation: the vegetation is smitten, the earth and sea are intermingled, the lights of the heavens are darkened, the living things in seas and streams are destroyed

Three-Fold Woe Announced 8:13



- This verse is an introduction to the last three, or woe, trumpets
- It is an eagle that utters the threefold woe
- The judgments signified by the four trumpets which have already sounded are very great and dreadful, yet greater judgments still remain to be inflicted on the earth, in the events that are to follow upon sounding the three remaining trumpets
- These three are grouped together as if they pertained to a similar series of events, as the first four had been

Three-Fold Woe Announced 8:13



- The two classes are separated from each other by this interval and by this proclamation - implying that the first series had been completed, and that there would be some interval, either of space or time, before the other series would come upon the world
- Bishop Victorianus thinks that the flying eagle symbolizes the Holy Spirit who carries the testimony of the two prophets, that strong rage and tribulations are eminent. If any man wishes, even if it is at the end of ages, to repent, he will be saved
- In conclusion the last four trumpets are God's warnings in all ways to humankind, before the period of the Antichrist
- No matter how hard and severe these warnings may appear, they are easy and slight in comparison to the tribulations at the time of the Antichrist, who will come to reign and appoint himself as God

Discussion



- Why is there *“silence in heaven for about half an hour”*?
- What is so significant about *“trumpets”*?
- Look at 8:3-5 and consider Revelation 6:9-11 and Psalm 141:2. For what are the saints praying in chapter 6? What is the relationship between those prayers in chapter 6 and the events of chapter 8? Look also at Ezekiel 10:1-7 and Luke 12:49.
- What are the common elements in the destruction that follows the blowing of each of the four trumpets?



Discussion

- Why does God judge? Do you long for God's judgment? Should you long for God's judgment? What impact does the prospect of judgment (for you and for others) have on your life. Consider Matthew 6:10.
- Are we living in an easy time for Christians, or a time of difficult challenges to our very faith? Give examples.
- These 4 trumpets may encourage us to give up all hope in worldly powers for a better world. Do you agree? Explain.