

Revelation 8 – The Beginning of The Trumpets

I. The Seventh Seal is Opened (1-2)

A. Silence in Heaven (1)

1. Up to now there has been a great deal of noise described
 - a. The Heavenly Court has worshipped in Song (4:11; 5:9-14; 7:10-12)
 - b. God's Presence itself has been tumultuous
 - i. Flashes of Lightning
 - ii. Peals of Thunder (4:5)
2. The Silence is the calm before the storm is unleashed
3. The Silence is so that the prayers of the martyrs are heard
4. The Silence is Associated With God Bringing Judgment from His Temple
 - a. Habakuk 2:20
 - b. Zechariah 2:13
5. The Silence is associated with the Temple liturgy of the incense offering (See Luke 1:10 – the people prayed while the incense was offered by Zechariah) (see below for the incense offering liturgy)

B. Seven Angels are Given Seven Trumpets (2)

1. The OT Temple Liturgy used 7 trumpets – 1 Chron. 15:24; Neh. 12:41
2. Trumpets were used to call the people to war, to call the people to worship, and to call the people to set out from the camp
3. Seven Trumpets Reference Joshua at Jericho?
 - a. In Joshua 6 God commanded His people to march around Jericho and blow their trumpets once for six days
 - b. On the seventh day they were to blow the trumpets seven times announcing the destruction of the city and the walls fell
 - c. Seven trumpet blasts will now sound for the destruction of another city that stands in the way of God's people
4. The First Five Trumpets Parallel Five Egyptian Plagues
 - a. 1st Trumpet - Hail and Fire – Exodus 9:22-25
 - b. 2nd and 3rd Trumpet - Waters Become Blood and undrinkable– Exodus 7:20-25
 - c. 4th Trumpet – Darkness – Exodus 10:21-23
 - d. 5th Trumpet – Locusts – Exodus 10:12-13
5. To Whom did God promise the Plagues of Egypt if They did not keep covenant with Him? Deut. 28:60
6. Revelation 11:8 says Jerusalem is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt – the judgments are laid against the New Egypt and there is a New Exodus from her

II. The Martyr's Prayers are Answered (3-6)

A. The Prayers of The Saints Are Heard (3-4)

1. Just like Exodus, God's judgments come because he has heard the cry of his people
2. An Angel At the Heavenly Altar (3a)
 - a. We have seen the altar before in Rev. 6:9-11 – the souls of the martyrs are underneath crying for Justice – these are the prayers that are mixed with incense
3. An Angel Given Incense to Offer with the Saint's Prayers (3b)
 - a. Picture of the OT priest offering incense on the altar
 - b. The Incense symbolized the prayers of the saints (Ps. 141:1-2)
 - c. On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest offered the Incense with the burnt offering
Leviticus 16:12-13 - "He shall take a firepan full of coals of fire from upon the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground sweet incense, and bring *it* inside the veil." "He shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the ^amercy seat that is on *the ark of the testimony*, otherwise he will die.
4. The Prayers are Accepted by God (4)
 - a. The incense is given by God both here and in the OT
 - i. God gave them the mixture and forbade them from using it for any other purpose
 - ii. It is God himself that makes the prayers of his people effective
 - b. God hears the prayers for Justice and will respond in judgment

B. The Judgment Is Determined (5-6)

1. The Fire from the Altar (5a)
 - a. Old Testament Worship
 - i. In OT Tabernacle worship, the fire on the altar came from God Himself – Lev. 9:24; 2 Chron. 7:1
 - ii. It was the priest's job to keep the fire burning perpetually after God ignited it.
 - iii. The fire was carried from place to place to start other holy fires (Leviticus 16:12-13)
 - b. Cities Devoted to Destruction ("Under the Ban")
 - i. When Joshua was taking possession of the Holy Land, the people were often called upon to destroy entire cities and place them under the ban (devote them to destruction to the Lord)
 - ii. The only acceptable way to burn a city as a whole burnt sacrifice was with God's fire from the Altar (see Deut. 13:12-18)

- iii. This fire from the altar will be cast to the earth for the destruction of another city “under the ban”

2. The Coals Are Cast Upon the Land (5a)

- a. The fire from the censer is thrown upon “the land”
- b. Jerusalem is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt and just like Sodom, the city is devoted for destruction because it has broken the covenant and stands in the way of God’s people
- c. Jesus mentioned this in Luke 12:49 – “I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!”
- d. Ezekiel 10:1-2 Then I looked, and behold, in the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim something like a sapphire stone, in appearance resembling a throne, appeared above them. And He spoke to the man clothed in linen and said, “Enter between the whirling wheels under the cherubim and fill your hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter them over the city.” And he entered in my sight.
 - i. Notice that in Ezekiel 9 the remnant of God are sealed and then the coals of fire poured on the city of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 10 – same as Revelation 7 and 8
 - ii. In Ezekiel 10, the coals of fire are thrown on Jerusalem showing that Babylon will destroy the city for the judgment of God – same context here

3. The Judgment of God is at Hand (5b)

- a. Earthquakes, thunder, lightning – we have seen these before as showing the presence of God when He gave the covenant stipulations at Mount Sinai – Exodus 19:16-19
- b. We will see a progression of these descriptions throughout Revelation
 - i. 4:5 “lightnings, sounds, and thunders”
 - ii. 8:5 “thunders, sounds, lightnings, and quaking”
 - iii. 11:19 “lightnings, sounds, thunders, quaking and great hail”
 - iv. 16:18-21 “lightnings, sounds, thunders, and quaking ... great ... and great hail.” (See Greg Beale commentary)

4. The Seven Angels Prepare to Blow the Trumpets (6)

III. The First Four Trumpets (7-12)

A. The First Trumpet (7)

1. Hail, Blood, and Fire Upon the Land

- a. Exodus 9:24-25 - So there was hail, and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very severe, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. The hail struck all that was in the field through all the land of Egypt, both man and beast; the hail also struck every plant of the field and shattered every tree of the field.
 - b. Jerusalem
- 2. The Effect Upon the Land
 - a. A third of the land, trees, grass burnt up
 - i. Notice that the judgments have intensified from one fourth to one third
 - ii. The vegetation and trees of the land are destroyed
 - b. Josephus, Wars of the Jews 3:4:1 - ...nor did the Romans, out of the anger they bore at this attempt, leave off either by night or by day, burning the places in the plain, or stealing away the cattle that were in the country, and killing whatsoever appeared capable of fighting perpetually, and leading the weaker people as slaves into captivity: (63) so that Galilee was all over filled with fire and blood; nor was it exempted from any kind of misery or calamity....
 - c. Josephus, Wars of the Jews 6:1:1 - 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 the signs of beauty quite waste....

B. The Second Trumpet (8-9)

- 1. A Burning Mountain Thrown Into the Sea (8)
 - a. The Burning Mountain is a Reference to Babylon
 - i. Jer. 51:25 "Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, Who destroys the whole earth," declares the LORD, And I will stretch out My hand against you, And roll you down from the crags, And I will make you a burnt out mountain.

- ii. This identification is confirmed in Jeremiah 51:63-64 where Jeremiah speaks of a scroll of judgment written against Babylon, tied to a stone and thrown into the water saying, "Babylon will sink down and never rise again." – This is the same thing John sees in Revelation 18:21 - Then a strong 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 not be found any longer.
 - b. Babylon is Identified as "The Great City"
 - i. Every time Babylon is referenced in Revelation, it is accompanied by the phrase "The great city" (or sometimes just "the Great") See – Rev. 18:2, 10, 21
 - ii. But in Chapter 11 we are given the identification of this Babylon – Revelation 11:8 And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.
 - c. Jerusalem is no characterized as Babylon, the destroying mountain that will be thrown down
 - i. Jesus himself made reference to this
 - ii. In Matthew 21, Jesus had just turned over the tables in the Temple and was on his way out of the city of Jerusalem, He stopped and cursed a fig tree. When the disciples remarked about it Jesus said: *And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen. And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."* – Matthew 21:21-22
 - iii. Notice the word "THIS" in Jesus' statement. What mountain was he standing on, and from where was he coming? From Jerusalem
 - iv. Have you ever wondered about this saying? Have you ever prayed that a mountain would be thrown into the sea? Probably not. But here Jesus says that they will pray for it and it will happen. The trumpets in Revelation 8 did not begin blowing until what happened? The prayers of the martyrs beneath the altar went up before God.
2. The Effect Upon the Sea (8b-9)
- a. A third of the sea becomes blood

- b. A third of sea creatures die
- c. A third of the ships destroyed
 - i. ...because the adjoining region had been laid waste in the war, and was not capable of supporting them, they determined to go off to sea. (416) They also built themselves a great many piratical ships, and turned pirates upon the sea near to Syria, and Phoenicia, and Egypt, and made those seas unnavigable to all men.
 - ii. Now as those people of Joppa were floating about in the sea [in their boats], in the morning there fell a violent wind upon them; it is called by those that sail there "the black north wind," (423) and there dashed their ships one against another, and dashed some of them against the rocks, and carried many of them by force, while they strove against the opposite waves, into the main sea; for the shore was so rocky, and had so many of the enemy upon it, that they were afraid to come to land; nay, the waves rose so very high, that they drowned them; (424) nor was there any place whither they could fly, nor any way to save themselves; while they were thrust out of the sea, by the violence of the wind, if they staid where they were, and out of the city by the violence of the Romans; and much lamentation there was when the ships were dashed against one another, and a terrible noise when they were broken to pieces; (425) and some of the multitude that were in them were covered with the waves, and so perished, and a great many were embarrassed with shipwrecks; but some of them thought, that to die by their own swords was lighter than by the sea, and so they killed themselves before they were drowned; (426) although the greatest part of them were carried by the waves, and dashed to pieces against the abrupt parts of the rocks, insomuch that the sea was bloody a long way, and the maritime parts were full of dead bodies; for the Romans came upon those that were carried to the shore, and destroyed them.... Wars of the Jews 3:9:2-3
 - iii. Later Josephus says: 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; (528) 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]: (529) 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: one might then see the lake all bloody, and full of dead bodies, for not one of them escaped. (530) 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 of the Jews 3:10:9 (starting at 528)

C. The Third Trumpet (10-11)

1. A Star Falls on The Rivers and Springs (10-11a)

- a. Some see the star as another picture of the kingdom of Jerusalem (Babylon) being destroyed
 - i. The star burns like the mountain itself burns
 - ii. Isa. 14:12 – speaking of the evil power behind Babylon falling from heaven
- b. The Burning Star is a divine agent of Judgment (Perhaps Satan himself)
 - i. In Revelation 9:1 this “star” is personal
 - It is called “him”
 - The key to the bottomless pit is given to him
 - ii. In Isa. 14:12-13, we see that the star falling from heaven does so because of his pride in trying to ascend to the throne of God

c. The Star is named Wormwood

- i. Wormwood is used many times in Scripture to denote bitterness, wickedness, or suffering (see. Prov. 5:4; Lam. 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7, 6:12)
- ii. Jeremiah prophesies that God will Judge Jerusalem for its idolatry using this term – Jeremiah 9:13-16 *The Lord said, “Because they*

have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice nor walked according to it, 14 but have walked after the stubbornness of their heart and after the Baals, as their fathers taught them, 15 therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I will feed them, this people, with wormwood and give them poisoned 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 annihilated them.”

- iii. Also in Jeremiah 23:15 - *“Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets, ‘Behold, I am going to feed them wormwood And make them drink poisonous water, For from the prophets of Jerusalem Pollution has gone forth into all the land.’ ”*
- iv. Moses uses the term to pronounce the judgments to come upon Israel if they break the covenant – Deut. 29:17-18 - *moreover, you have seen their abominations and their idols of wood, stone, silver, and gold, which they had with them); so that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; that there will not be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood.*
- v. These are judgments prophesied to be upon Jerusalem for their idolatry

2. The Effect Upon the Waters (11b)

- a. The waters become Wormwood
 - i. This is an allusion to Exodus 7:15-24 when the waters were turned to blood and made undrinkable
 - ii. Exodus 7:19 references the rivers and the streams being struck
 - iii. Also this is summarized in Psalm 78:44 which recounts the deliverance from Egypt – “ And turned their rivers to blood, And their streams, they could not drink.”
- b. The waters become bitter
 - i. This is a reversal of Moses turning bitter water into sweet water at Mara in Exodus 15:22-25
 - ii. The covenant has been broken and therefore annulled.
- c. Many people die from the waters

- i. It isn't easy to fathom that invading armies tainted the water supply of the surrounding areas to speed the process of starvation of those in the city.

D. The Fourth Trumpet (12)

1. The Heavenly Lights Are Struck

- a. We have seen the same cosmological judgments in chapter 6:12-13
- b. The darkness here is a reference to the plague of darkness in Egypt in Exodus 10:21-29)

2. The Effect Upon the Heavens

- a. A third of the day was kept from shining
- b. A third of the night was kept from shining
- c. These are covenant judgments pronounced of God's unfaithful people
 - i. See Jer. 33:20-21
 - ii. See Amos 8:9-10

IV. The Warning of Remaining Judgments (13)

- A. An Eagle Cries a threefold Woe
- B. The Cry warns of the final three trumpets