

# Ministry of Grace

## Revelation Chapter 8

<sup>1</sup>When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. <sup>2</sup>Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. <sup>3</sup>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, <sup>4</sup>and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. <sup>5</sup>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.

<sup>6</sup>Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>The 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. <sup>9</sup>A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. <sup>10</sup>The 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. <sup>11</sup>The 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. <sup>12</sup>The 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. <sup>13</sup>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!" [ESV]

## Notes

This chapter deals with the first four of the seven trumpet judgments. Chapter nine will deal with the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments and the seventh trumpet judgment will be described in the middle of chapter eleven. Then later, in chapter sixteen, we will see a description of the seven bowl (vial) judgments. Notice the similarity of the focus of the trumpet and bowl judgments:

Judgment Focus	Trumpet		Bowl	
The Earth	First Trumpet	<b>Revelation 8:1-7</b>	First Bowl	<b>Revelation 16:1, 2</b>
The Sea	Second Trumpet	<b>Revelation 8:8, 9</b>	Second Bowl	<b>Revelation 16:3</b>
The Rivers	Third Trumpet	<b>Revelation 8:10, 11</b>	Third Bowl	<b>Revelation 16:4-7</b>
The Heavens	Fourth Trumpet	<b>Revelation 8:12, 13</b>	Fourth Bowl	<b>Revelation 16:8, 9</b>
Torment of Mankind	Fifth Trumpet	<b>Revelation 9:1, 2</b>	Fifth Bowl	<b>Revelation 16:10, 11</b>
An Army	Sixth Trumpet	<b>Revelation 9:13-21</b>	Sixth Bowl	<b>Revelation 16:12-16</b>
Angry Nations	Seventh Trumpet	<b>Revelation 11:15-19</b>	Seventh Bowl	<b>Revelation 16:17-21</b>

This similarity in the focus of these judgments has caused some commentators to conflate the trumpet and bowl judgments, supposing that the trumpet and bowl judgments occur together. However, detailed analysis will show that the first six trumpet judgments occur before any of the bowl judgments and the seventh trumpet judgment appears to contain all of the bowl judgments.

### **Revelation 8:1 – The 7<sup>th</sup> Seal Judgment**

**<sup>1</sup>When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.**

It appears that the seventh seal contains all of the remaining judgments. As the seventh seal is opened, the angels with the seven trumpets appear and begin to sound their judgments. The seventh trumpet represents the third woe, which is probably a reference to the remaining bowl judgments taken as a single entity.

“**silence in heaven**” Up to this point there have been tremendous sounds in the heavenly scene:

- Sounds and peals of thunder coming from the throne in heaven – **Revelation 4:5**
- Praise from the elders when the four living ones proclaim the threefold holiness of God – **Revelation 4:8-11**
- Singing of the elders of the worthiness of the Lamb to open the scroll – **Revelation 5:9, 10**
- The loud voices of the elders, the 4 living ones, and many angels praising the worthiness of the Lamb with a loud voice – **Revelation 5:11, 12**
- Thunderous voice of the first living one at the opening of the first seal – **Revelation 6:1**
- Martyrs under the altar crying out with a loud voice – **Revelation 6:9, 10**
- The sealing angel arising from the East who cried out with a loud voice – **Revelation 7:2, 3**
- A great multitude crying out with a loud voice proclaiming salvation to our God and to the Lamb – **Revelation 7:9, 10**

Suddenly, with the opening of the seventh seal there is silence in heaven. What a dramatic change! It is reminiscent of the Jewish Temple service where there is singing and praising until the time of the incense offering. The incense offering occurs in silence while the people pray. The breaking of this seventh seal now enables the entire scroll to be opened up, unleashing the remaining judgments on the inhabitants of the earth. In light of the vociferous praises about the throne for the person and work of the One who sits on the throne and the Lamb, the coming judgments on the earth may bring about a silence of abhorrence over what is about to happen to the inhabitants of the earth and a silence of awe at the power and righteous judgment of the Lamb.

This silence appears to coincide with, or at least quickly follow, the stillness on the earth due to the winds being held back, as we saw in the previous chapter:

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.

**(Revelation 7:1)** [ESV]

“**half an hour**” – This is translated from *hēmiōrion* which literally translates to “one-half hour.” Whether this is a literal one-half hour or figurative is unclear, as time in the heavenly realm is not necessarily directly correlated with time on earth.

In reading the first prophecy of Zephaniah (See the end of these notes), it is easy to see a description of this silence and the trumpet judgments that follow.

## **Revelation 8:2**

**<sup>2</sup>Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.**

“**seven angels who stand before God**” – These seven are sometimes referred to as “the presence angels” The word translated “stand” is *estēchasin*, the root of which means “to stand, to continue, or to remain.” It is given here in the perfect tense which signifies a past completed action with an on-going effect where the emphasis is upon the on-going effect.

The word translated “before” is *enōpion*, which literally translates to “in the face of.” The word means “before” or “in the presence of.” Hence these are seven angels who at some point in time in the past stood before God and as a result are now continually standing in His presence.

These seven “presence” angels stand before God and appear to be ready to do His bidding in regard to mankind. The angel who appeared to Zacharias, the father of John the baptist, announced himself as Gabriel, one of these “presence” angels:

And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. **(Luke 1:19)** [ESV]

## **Revelation 8:3, 4**

**<sup>3</sup>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, <sup>4</sup>and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.**

“**another angel**” – Some have identified this angel with Christ, the Angel of the Lord; however, there are several reasons why this does not ring true. This angel appears to be separate from the Lamb who is already present in this scene (He is the one who just opened the seventh seal). Also, the

word translated “another” is the Greek word *allos*, signifying “another of the same kind” as opposed to “another of a different kind,” which would be the Greek word *heteros*. Hence, this angel is an angel in the same way as the seven presence angels. Finally, every time that Jesus is introduced in the book of Revelation He is specifically identified:

- **Revelation 1:5** – the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth
- **Revelation 1:13** – the son of man
- **Revelation 1:17** – the first and the last
- **Revelation 1:18** – the living One
- **Revelation 2:18** – the Son of God
- **Revelation 3:7** – He who is holy, who is true
- **Revelation 3:14** – the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God
- **Revelation 5:5** – the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David
- **Revelation 6:1, 16; 7:17; 8:1** – the Lamb
- **Revelation 19:11** – Faithful and True
- **Revelation 19:3** – the Word of God
- **Revelation 19:16** – King of Kings, and Lord of Lords

In this verse, the angel is simply introduced as “another angel,” demonstrating that this is not Jesus Christ.

“with a golden censer” – “censer” is a translation of the Greek word *libanōtos*. This is a form of the noun *libanōn*, which is the word for “frankincense.” Hence, this literally means “a frankincenser,” or a device for carrying frankincense. This was a golden pan suspended by golden chains into which coals of fire were placed and onto which frankincense was added.

“came and stood at the altar” – This altar is described in **Revelation 9:13** as being a golden altar. In **Revelation 14:18**, the angel who has power over fire is said to come “out of” this altar. We also know from verse five of the current chapter that this altar contains fire. In the Old Testament description of the temple, there were two altars: the bronze altar, on which the sacrifices were burned, and the golden incense altar inside the Holy place. In this heavenly scene there is no bronze altar because there is no more need for sacrifice, since Jesus Christ has offered Himself once for all (**Romans 6:10; Hebrews 7:27, 9:12, 10:10**). In the Old Testament, the golden incense altar stood before the veil of the temple which separated the Holy place from the Holy of Holies:

"You shall make an altar on which to burn incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. A cubit shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth. It shall be square, and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top and around its sides and its horns. And you shall make a molding of gold around it. And you shall make two golden rings for it. Under its molding on two opposite sides of it you shall make them, and they shall be holders for poles with which to carry it. You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. And you shall put it in front of the veil that is above the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is above the testimony, where I will meet with you. And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations. (**Exodus 30:1-8**) [ESV]

As described in the Old Testament, the priests would take the hot coals from the bronze altar, carry them into the Holy place using a censer, and combine them with incense on the golden altar of

incense. Note also, that this was precisely the service that Zacharias was performing when Gabriel, the presence angel, appeared to him:

Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. (**Luke 1:8-11**) [ESV]

While the people stood outside praying, Zacharias burned the incense on the altar of incense, the smoke of which represented the prayers of the people. In the current verse we see that the incense that is given to the angel is offered with the coals from the heavenly altar along with the prayers of all saints.

## **Revelation 8:5, 6**

**<sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.**

**“Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth”** – This angel, after placing the incense on the golden altar of incense, took coals from this altar and cast them unto the earth. With this action the ½ hour of silence in heaven is shattered as there are **“peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.”** This is a representation of God’s answer to the prayers of all the saints for vengeance against the foes of the godly throughout all ages as described in the fifth seal judgment (**Revelation 6:9-11**). This may also be the point in time when the four mighty angels release the four winds.

**“and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.”** – By virtue of the fact that an earthquake is listed along with the thunder and lightning, these must be earthly occurrences rather than heavenly ones.

Apparently, after the stillness of having no wind blowing for some time, the inhabitants of the earth now experience thunder and lightning out of the calm, clear blue sky, accompanied by another earthquake.

## **Revelation 8:7 – The 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet Judgment**

**<sup>7</sup>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.**

**“and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood.”** This appears to be the earthly perspective of what was just described in the heavenly scene. In the heavenly scene, the angel cast the coals from the golden altar of incense to the earth. Now, the earth dwellers experience the effect of this fire, which results in one third of all the trees of the earth being burned up and all the green grass of the earth being burned up.

Is this, perhaps, the result of the earth traveling through the tail of a comet or a comet getting too close to the earth and being broken-up by the gravitational effect of the earth? It has been recently discovered that comets are often made up of clusters of frozen methane, water, nickel and iron. Huge ice balls of methane could very well break up upon entering the earth’s atmosphere and fall to earth as flaming hail. The presence of iron and ice could form a red liquid appearing like blood.

It is also possible, and quite likely, that this is a divine judgment that has no natural earthly explanation. Quite possibly God will cause actual hail and fire to fall from the sky mixed with actual blood in a manner that has no natural explanation. This will certainly confound the unbelieving earth dwellers who will have to expend great effort to explain away these phenomena in order to maintain their stance that there is no God.

“**all green grass was burned up**” – The word translated “green” is *chloros*, which is the word used to describe the color of fresh, new grass, but it is also used to describe the pale color of grass that is dried up. This is the same word that was used to describe the “pale horse” of the 4<sup>th</sup> seal judgment back in **Revelation 6:8**. So, it is very likely that it is not the “green” grass that is burned up, but the yellowish, dry grass.

### **Revelation 8:8, 9 – The 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet Judgment**

**<sup>8</sup>The 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. <sup>9</sup>A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.**

“**something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea.**” This resulted in one-third of the sea becoming blood, killing one-third of the animal life in the sea, and destroying one-third of the ships.

This could also be the effect of a collision with a comet or other heavenly body which would burn as it passed through the earth’s atmosphere. The resultant shock wave from impact with the ocean could very easily kill sea animals for hundreds or even thousands of miles and the resulting tsunami would likely destroy most of the ships throughout the coastlands of the ocean into which this heavenly body fell. The sea becoming blood could be a result of the dead sea animals or, more likely, the sea could turn blood red as a result of the composition of the heavenly body landing there.

Or, again, as we mentioned concerning the first trumpet judgment, this could be a supernatural phenomenon arranged by God to clearly demonstrate to the inhabitants of the earth that He is God and is dwelling on high.

### **Revelation 8:10, 11 – The 3<sup>rd</sup> Trumpet Judgment**

**<sup>10</sup>The 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. <sup>11</sup>The 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.**

“**a great star fell from heaven blazing like a torch.**” This resulted in one-third of the fresh water becoming deadly to mankind with many people dying as a result of drinking this water.

“**star**” – This is translated from *aster*, which refers to “any luminous body in the sky resembling a star.” Hence, this could be an asteroid, a comet, or any other form of meteorite that burns its way through the atmosphere and strikes the earth.

“**torch**” – This is the Greek word *lampas*, which refers to a shining light. It is used primarily to refer to “a lamp or torch” used outdoors and used in war. There is a different Greek word *luchnos*, which refers to “a candle or lamp” used to provide light indoors. The use of this particular term here could have reference to the fact that the flaming object breaks up as it passes through the earth’s atmosphere causing multiple flames much as the flame of a torch breaks up and separates as it burns, whereas a candle or indoor lamp is a steady single flame.

This would also explain how this particular heavenly body fell upon the rivers and springs. Instead of a single meteorite falling and impacting a single location, this heavenly body apparently falls in many pieces affecting one-third of the rivers and water sources on earth.

“**springs**” – This is from *pēgas*, meaning “a fountain or spring” in the sense of being the source of water. This could also refer to snow pack and glaciers as the source of rivers and springs.

“**wormwood**” – This is a translation of the Greek word *apsinthos* from which we get our English word “absinthe.” Wormwood is a shrub whose leaves are used in the manufacture of absinthe, a green liqueur with a bitter anise or licorice flavor and a high alcohol content, which if consumed in excess is so toxic that it causes death. This flaming heavenly body is the only one named in the book of Revelation.

### **Revelation 8:12 – The 4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet Judgment**

**<sup>12</sup>The 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.**

In this judgment one-third of the sun and one-third of the moon and one-third of the stars are struck. This results in one-third of them being darkened and one-third of the day not shining and one-third of the night not appearing.

“**struck**” – This is from the Greek word *plēssō*, from which we get our English word “plague.” It means “to inflict or to strike.”

“**darkened**” – From the Greek *skotidzō*, which means “to darken or to obscure.” This verse says two different things. First it says that one-third of the sun, the moon, and the stars are to be darkened. This implies that they will only shine two-thirds as bright as they do currently. The text does not tell us whether this is permanent or temporary. The end of the verse, however, tells us that the day and the night are shortened so that they only last two-thirds as long as they currently do. This implies that the solar day will be shortened from 24 hours to 16 hours. This is quite possibly what our Lord meant in His Olivet discourse in Matthew 24 when He said:

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. (**Matthew 24:21, 22**) [ESV]

If this is what happens, then the first part of the current verse could simply be saying that one-third of the sun, moon, and stars are obscured because they only appear for two-thirds of the time that they currently shine. However, it could also mean that there is so much smoke and particulate in the atmosphere that it partially obscures the amount of light coming from the sun and other heavenly bodies.

Consider, if the first three trumpet judgments were the result of a close fly-by or impact of a huge comet, it could also cause the speed with which the earth rotates around its axis to be increased, resulting in the normal twenty-four hour day being decreased from 24 to 16 hours.

### **Revelation 8:13**

**<sup>13</sup>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!"**

“**eagle**” – Some translations say “**angel**” instead of “**eagle**.” This is because the texts from which these translations are taken disagree on this word. Some have *angelou*, meaning “angel” while others have *aetou*, which means “an eagle or vulture, a species of rapacious birds represented as preying on dead bodies.” It may be, perhaps, that this is one of the four living ones, the one which looks “**like a flying eagle**” (**Revelation 4:7**) in which case John could have described it as either an angel or an eagle.

“**woe, woe, woe**” – Apparently indicates the severity of the three remaining trumpet blasts. The original text reads, “**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!**” This clearly implies that the woes come upon those who are not saved (permanent earth dwellers) and those woes come directly from the sounding of the three remaining trumpets. The last trumpet judgment (**Revelation 11:15-19**) produces praise in heaven as if the judgments of the earth are complete. This, coupled with the woes proclaimed in the current verse, lends credence to the notion that the seventh trumpet actually contains the seven bowl judgments.

“**those who dwell on the earth**” – This is translated from the Greek words *katoikousin epi tē gēs*. The word *katoikousin* (a form of *katoikeō*) means “to dwell permanently” or “to dwell completely.” It is distinguished from the word *paroikeō*, which refers to “dwelling in a place temporarily.” The word *epi* literally means “upon” and *tēs gēs* means “the earth” or “the ground.” Thus, these inhabitants of the earth are “earth dwellers” as opposed to “heaven dwellers.”

“**blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow**” – There are three more angels yet to sound their trumpet blasts. Two of these are described in Revelation chapter nine and the seventh trumpet blast is briefly described in chapter eleven.

## Zephaniah's prophecy

The following is Zephaniah's prophecy regarding the coming Day of the Lord's wrath (the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Daniel's seventieth week), including the silence that occurs before it begins and the trumpets that herald its judgment.

The word of the LORD that came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. "I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth," declares the LORD. "I will sweep away man and beast; I will sweep away the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, and the rubble with the wicked. I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth," declares the LORD. "I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests, those who bow down on the roofs to the host of the heavens, those who bow down and swear to the LORD and yet swear by Milcom, those who have turned back from following the LORD, who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him."

**Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near;** the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests. And on the day of the LORD's sacrifice-- "I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire. On that day I will punish everyone who leaps over the threshold, and those who fill their master's house with violence and fraud. "On that day," declares the LORD, "a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate, a wail from the Second Quarter, a loud crash from the hills.

Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar! For all the traders are no more; all who weigh out silver are cut off. At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.' Their goods shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them."

**The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry** against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.

**I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung.** Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth. (**Zephaniah 1:1-18**) [ESV]

*Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.*