

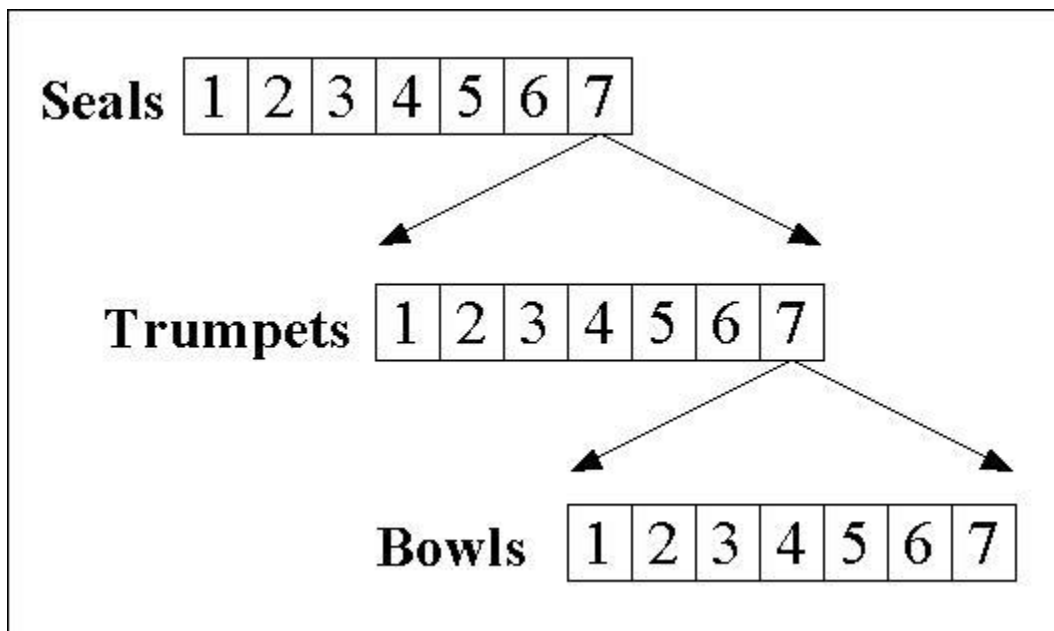
WEEK 9: CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 8

- As we come now to chapter 8, there are two very distinct ways that this chapter (and subsequent judgements have been interpreted throughout Revelation).
- I did talk about this briefly before, but now it's important to understand. There are those who believe that the series of judgments; seals, trumpets, and bowls, are really just the same judgements but from differing angles of observation.
- This view is called the *recapitulation view*...
 - This simply means they believe that the 7 trumpet judgments are restating, reviewing or giving more clarity to the seal judgments. Then, they would also believe that the 7 bowl judgments are just giving more information or restating some other information about the trumpet judgments.
 - “Recapitulation is the act or instance of summarizing and restating a narrative to give a different emphasis or perspective. One biblical book that employs recapitulation with stunning effect is Revelation. Revelation isn't meant to be read merely as a chronology of fantastic events. It should be seen as one set of events repeated seven times, each with increasing intensity.”¹
 - This is the overwhelming popular view of Revelation. I would argue that it only exists because most people have never read the book and those who have, stop reading because they think it's too hard to understand.
- Instead of reading Revelation through the recapitulation view, it is better read through the *sequential view*.
 - “The sequential view understands the general flow of the book and especially the series of seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments as following a chronological sequence. Similarities between different chronological judgments are understood as part of God's design, but not necessitating identity because differences in the text make plain that identity is not involved. In the most widely-held sequential view, the events attending the seven bowls are subsumed within the seventh trumpet and the events of the seven trumpets are subsumed within the seventh seal.”²
 - **Subsumed** = the trumpet judgment is *included* in the 7th seal and likewise the 7 bowl judgments are called forth by the 7th trumpet judgment.

¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/recapitulation-revelation/#:~:text=One%20biblical%20book%20that%20employs,helps%20us%20answer%20these%20Questions.>

² https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book_of_Revelation/commentary/htm/intro/structure.html (both the definition and chart following)



- It is best to take Revelation and the judgments as sequential; not as simply stating the same judgments over and over from different vantage points.
- This means that the trumpet judgments in chapters 8-9 are not just restating or explaining in further detail the seal judgments, but there are also more judgments which accompany the Day of the Lord.
- Some believe that this is the midpoint of the tribulation with the opening of the 7th seal and the final judgments coming upon the earth.

CHAPTER 8:1 ~ SILENCE IN HEAVEN

Revelation 8:1 “When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”

- When we finished chapter 7, the tribulation saints were before the throne of God, serving Him day and night in His temple. God was covering them, protecting them and comforting them.
- He is there to wipe away their tears and as the Lamb will be their shepherd and guide them to the springs of the water of life.
- Now, John sees Jesus break the final seal on the scroll and there is silence for about 30 minutes.
- “In fitting recognition of the important character of this seal, the Scriptures record that there is silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. Though thirty minutes is not ordinarily considered a long time, when it is a time of absolute silence [signifying] such ominous developments ahead it is an indication that something tremendous is about to take place. It may be compared to the silence before the foreman of a jury reports a verdict; for a moment there is perfect silence and everyone awaits that which will follow.
“(Walvoord)

- In the Old Testament, silence is often times associated with God’s judgment.
- **Psalm 76:8-9** “You caused judgment to be heard from heaven; The earth feared and was still {9} When God arose to judgment, To save all the humble of the earth. Selah.”
- **Zephaniah 1:7** “Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near, For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice, He has consecrated His guests.”
- **Zechariah 2:13** “Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD; for He is aroused from His holy habitation.”
- We should take this 30 minutes as **literally** 30 minutes.
- “Each minute of that half hour of silence must have increased the sense of agonizing suspense for John. Heaven, which had resounded with loud praises from the vast crowd of redeemed people and angels, became deathly still...The greatest event since the Fall is about to take place and all heaven is seeing waiting in suspenseful expectancy.”³
- In other words, one can feel the tension as millions upon millions of people are praising the Lord and then come to an abrupt stop...waiting for the God’s next commands.

CHAPTER 8:2-6 ~ PREPARATION FOR JUDGMENT

Revelation 8:2-6 “And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. {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. {4} And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. {5} 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. {6} And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.”

- The first movement that John sees is 7 angels standing before God as they are given 7 trumpets which contain the judgments of God.
- While we don’t know for sure, we do know that at least Gabriel stands in the presence of the Lord.
- **Luke 1:19** “The angel answered and said to him, ‘I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.’”
- God’s use of angels are seen all throughout the book of Revelation, especially regarding judgment.
- Regarding the use of trumpets, Walvoord states, “The use of trumpets by the angels has considerable background in the Scriptures. Trumpets were used in various phases of Israel’s economy. They were sounded at times of public assembly, used to direct soldiers in war and to signal important events on the

³ John MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11*, 238.

calendar. Trumpets were used on the occasion of the giving of the law, were sounded on the first of the month, and served to announce almost every important occasion (cf. Exodus 19:19; Lev. 23:24; 25:9; Num. 10:2-10; Joel 2:1).”

- Not only did John see the 7 angels, but in **verse 3**, another angel comes onto the scene.
- This other angel is not Jesus (the term Angel of the Lord is never used of Jesus in the New Testament) but is another of the same type of the 7 angels.
- He is distinct from them and is sometimes referred to as the “priestly” angel because of his function.
- He is seen holding a golden censer, which is a heavy pan used by the Old Testament priests, he would carry the coals from outside the tabernacle to light the incense inside.
- The smoke would then fill the temple and ascend to heaven.
- This was happening in Jesus’ day as well:
 - **Luke 1:8-10** “Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, {9} according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. {10} And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.”
- It would appear that these prayers are from **Revelation 6:10** “...and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’”
 - The saints were suffering and now it would seem that God is answering those prayers.
- The prayers (incense) reach God the Father and in **verses 5-6** the judgment begins upon the earth.
- The priestly angel throws the coal from the censer down to earth...a fireball coming from heaven with thunder, lightning, and a subsequent earthquake.
- It seems that this angel breaks the silence and gives the signal to bring on the judgments.
- As MacArthur says regarding the prayers of the saints, “The cumulative effect of the prayers of innumerable righteous men will be very powerful.”⁴

⁴ MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11*, 241.

CHAPTER 8:7 ~ THE FIRST TRUMPET

Revelation 8:7 “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.”

- The 7 trumpet judgments are more devastating than the seal judgments, but they are not as devastating as the bowls of God’s wrath which are going to come.
- The first 4 trumpet judgments are focused on the earth. As MacArthur says, “The first four trumpets are described in a brief and straightforward manner; far more detail is given about the last three. The first four trumpets all deal directly with the earth. They do not symbolize political, social, or economic judgments; those types of judgment come later in Revelation. Nor do they describe any judgment that has ever happened in history in some locale or region. The trumpet judgments are actual, literal, physical events that will affect the whole earth. God will use nature to punish sinners in that day. The partial destruction described by the repeated use of the word ‘third’ in each of the first four trumpet judgments indicates that these are not the final judgments.”⁵
- As the first trumpet sounds, utter and complete devastation starts up again for the people of the earth.
- After the brief pause on earth to show John the 144,000 sealed Jews and the multitude of Gentiles who are saved, the brief pause is broken.
- “In response to the sounding of the trumpet held by the first angel, a scene of desolation is spread abroad upon the earth caused by hail and fire mingled with blood. The judgment seems to be directed to vegetation, and a third part of the trees and all the green grass are burned. 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.”
- 1/3 of the earth: this is about 19.1 million square miles. This is more than the entire continent of Asia (which is 17.2 million square miles)
 - It would be all of Africa and most of North America to make us 1/3 of the earth.
- Remember the ancillary effects of this judgment:
 - Crops destroyed, animals die because of lack of food, no wood for construction, etc.
 - There will be a large loss of land vegetation which can compromise oxygen levels which can have an effect on people and animals.

⁵ MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11*, 245.

CHAPTER 8:8-9 ~ THE SECOND TRUMPET

Revelation 8:8-9 “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, {9} and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.”

- “At the sound of the trumpet held by the second angel, another great judgment falls on the earth, this time dealing with the sea. John, in his vision, sees a large object compared to a great mountain burning with fire which is cast into the sea. A third part of the sea becomes blood, a third part of the creatures of the sea die, and a third part of the ships are destroyed.” (Walvoord)
- This affects 1/3 of the sea, or about 46.6 million square miles of water. This is larger than the entire Atlantic Ocean (which is about 41.1 million square miles). This judgment would take out about 75% of the Pacific Ocean, which is the largest ocean covering about 65.1 million square miles.
- This “great mountain burning with fire” could be a meteor or some sort of asteroid that slams into the sea with great velocity that creates a massive tidal wave.
- Whatever it is, it causes 1/3 of the sea to turn to blood. Perhaps these are the dead animal’s blood.
- With all the sea life dying, again, there are other effects that will also be happening.
- Many people and animals rely on the sea for food and water. This is not going to be possible (or at least very limited) during this time.
- There will also be 1/3 of the ships destroyed. This is going to affect travel and commerce.
 - Good will not be able to be distributed around the world. Oil, food, textiles, etc. will no longer be able to travel from coast to coast.
 - There is going to be a complete and total disruption of all “normal” processes on earth.
- “The interpreter of these and later judgments is constantly faced with the problems of how far to take the literal and the symbolic. The point of view here being expressed is that these judgments should be interpreted literally insofar as this can be reasonably followed. To make the mountain a form of human government, the sea the Roman Empire, and the ships that are destroyed the church or organized religion, is to read into the passage far more than is justified. Though all questions cannot be answered, the unmistakable implication of these judgments is that God is dealing in righteous wrath with the wicked earth.” (Walvoord)
- Some have said that the Lord is specifically targeting the water since part of unsaved man’s idea of life comes from viewing water as a source of life.
 - They do not see God as creator, but life evolving out of the water.

- “God created the sea to be a blessing to mankind, to provide food, oxygen (much of Earth’s oxygen comes from the phytoplankton and algae in the world’s oceans), and water from the rainstorms on the land that is originally gathered up by evaporation from the oceans. But people have repaid God’s gracious provision with ingratitude and idolatry, revering the sea as the supposed source of their remotest evolutionary ancestors. As He had devastated the land environment, the true God judges the sea.”⁶

CHAPTER 8:10-11 ~ THE THIRD TRUMPET

Revelation 8:10-11 “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. {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.”

- This “great star...burning like a torch” is probably a comet that breaks up when it comes into the Earth’s atmosphere. When all the pieces fall, it causes 1/3 of the rivers and springs of water (otherwise known as fresh water) to be bitter.
- Fresh water makes up about 2.5% - 3% of all water on earth.
- When this happens, the amount of water that is equivalent to 5 countries the size of the U.S. is going to be poisoned.
- By way of observation, the language of these judgments, namely 1/3, speaks of the precision of the judgment. They are not just random numbers nor are they chaotic events.
 - This speaks to a literal fulfillment of these prophecies.
- **Verse 11** has had some thought-provoking interpretations; one in particular is quite interesting.
- This **Wormwood** which falls from heaven is a plant which grows in Israel and it has a strong and bitter taste. It became a symbol of bitterness and calamity.
- It is mentioned 7 times in the Old Testament (Deut 29:18; Prov 5:4; Jer 9:15; 23:15; Lam 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7). Revelation is the not the first time this is mentioned; it would have been something common to John and to his readers.
- There are going to be many deaths because this Wormwood has caused most of the fresh water on the earth to become poisonous.
 - It is interesting how these particular judgments in this chapter mirror the plagues of Egypt. This one, in particular, is similar to **Exodus 7:21, 24** “The fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the

⁶ MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11*, Rev. 8:8.

land of Egypt. ... {24} So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink of the water of the Nile.”

- Remember, in Egypt the plagues were localized but in Revelation they are on a global scale.
- What about Wormwood? There is some association between “Chernobyl” and Wormwood. Chernobyl is the Ukrainian word for mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), a plant closely related to wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*). In many Slavic translations of the Bible, the "Wormwood" star in Revelation 8:11 is translated as “Chernobyl”.
- This Wormwood *is not* the nuclear disaster which took place in 1986, while it was disastrous, it did not poison 1/3 of all fresh water on earth. While this is not the fulfillment, it certainly gives us a very small scale of what is going to take place.

CHAPTER 8:12-13 ~ THE FOURTH TRUMPET

Revelation 8:12-13 “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. {13} Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, ‘Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!’”

- The first three trumpets took out the earth’s land, sea, rivers, and fountains of water. Now, the focus turns to the heavens.
- With a 1/3 of the sun, moon, and stars struck, it could mean that the days (or 24-hour cycle) is shortened to be 16 hours. It can also mean that their respective output is down 1/3.
- Either way, with the reduction of light and all other “natural” outputs, there is going to be damage to the earth’s biological and botanical cycles. The climate is going to cool without the sun’s output and plants are not going to grow as they should. Weather patterns and crop cycles will change, resulting in more death.
- Both the Old Testament and Jesus predicted this was going to happen:
- **Isaiah 13:9-11** “Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. {10} For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light. {11} Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.”
- **Amos 8:9** “‘It will come about in that day,’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘That I will make the sun go down at noon And make the earth dark in broad daylight.’”

- **Luke 21:25** “There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves...”
- I don’t believe that there are any *symbolic interpretations* that are needed for these verses. Some have tried to say that these are representations of human governments and/or society uprising.
- There is nothing in these verses which points to anything other than a literal reading of the text.
- I believe these judgments are very pointed.
- “The first four trumpets deal with aspects of the physical world which are taken more or less for granted. The beauty and benefit of the trees, the luxury and growth of green grass are seldom occasions for thanksgiving to the living God. In a similar way, men are prone to take for granted the blessings of water, whether it be the beauty of the sea, the majestic flow of great rivers, or the pure fountains and springs which abound in the natural world. These too are gifts from a loving God to an undeserving world, and they come under the blight and judgment described in the second and third trumpets.” (Walvoord)
- Through the Bible we are told that creation declares God’s glory.
- **Psalms 19:1** “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.”
- **Romans 1:20** “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”
- **Jeremiah 31:35** “Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name...”
- “These very tokens of blessing and revelation of the glory of God are affected by the fourth trumpet. So dramatic are the judgments and so unmistakably an evidence of the power and sovereignty of God that blaspheming men on earth can no longer ignore the fact that God is dealing with them. Fearful as these judgments are, they are only the beginning of God’s dealing with the earth; and as indicated in a special announcement, three great woes are still to fall. Though it is difficult in this day of grace to imagine such catastrophic judgments, the Word of God is plain, and men are called everywhere to avail themselves of grace before it is too late.” (Walvoord)
- **Verse 13** points to the impending trumpet judgments are going to be far worse than the four we just read about.