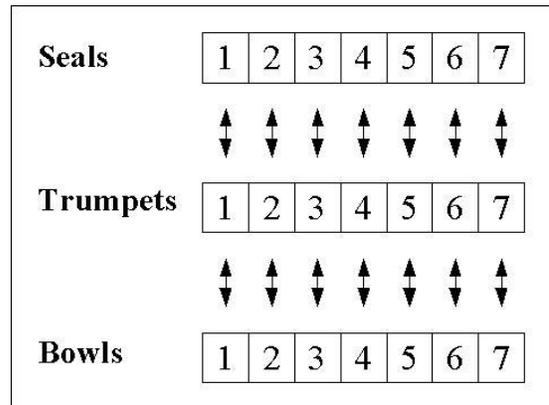


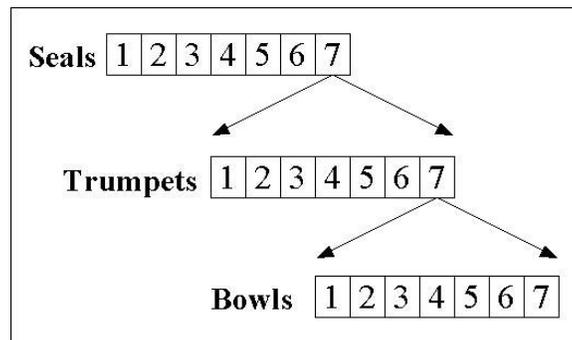
THE TRUMPET JUDGMENTS OF REVELATION 8-9 (PART 1)

INTRODUCTION

- There are two views about the structure of Revelation:
 1. **Recapitulation View** – This view emphasizes similarities between elements of the three series of symbols (seals, trumpets, bowls) and understands the similarities as an indication of identity. Although there are many variations on this scheme, the following diagram illustrates the general idea. The passages describing the trumpet judgments are seen as depicting additional details concerning the earlier seal judgments. Similarly, the passages describing the bowl judgments are understood as elaborating on the previous trumpet judgments.



2. **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.

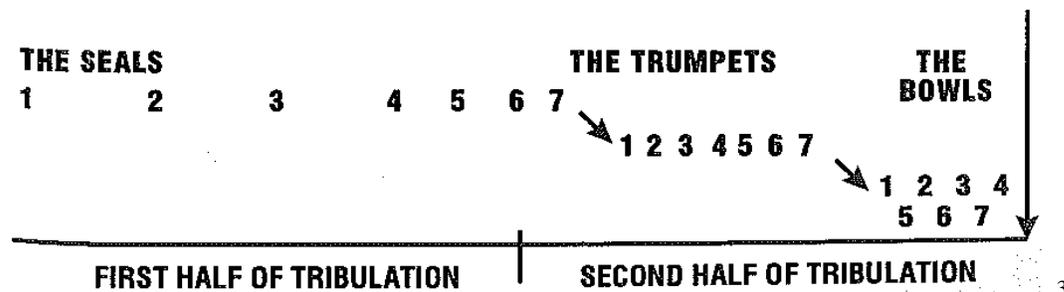


¹ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/revelation/introduction/recapitulation-of-events.html>

We can understand this development by a simple illustration. We have all seen firework displays in which giant rockets are shot into the air exploding into a great ball of fire. This, as it falls toward the earth, bursts into a great number of balls of fire of various colors which, as they fall further toward the earth, burst again into smaller balls of various colors. So it is with the judgments of God. At first we see nothing but a sealed scroll. As the seals are removed each one appears to be a judgment and we would expect that when we come to the last seal, it would be the last judgment. But, instead, the last seal discloses seven angels, each with trumpets. These, in turn, are various judgments, and the seventh trumpet, in turn, reveals not another single judgment, but seven vials of the wrath of God. In both instances there is a series of seven with the last disclosing seven more. In addition to this structure there is a parenthesis between the sixth and the seventh in all three series. The more literal one's interpretation, the more one will tend to follow the sequential view. The more one emphasizes literary genre and symbolism and moves further afield from the Golden Rule of Interpretation, the more likely the recapitulation structure or other literary structure will find appeal.²

- It is best to take the sequential view as it the most natural understanding of a simple reading of the text
- Thus, the trumpet judgments, described in chapters 8-9, are not simply another explanation of the seal judgments, but additional expressions of the “day of the Lord” spoken of in the OT
- The “day of the Lord” (cf. Zeph 1:7, 14-18) appears to begin with the opening of the sixth seal at the midpoint of the Tribulation
- The trumpet judgments, contained within the seventh seal (as well as the bowl judgments), likely occur in the latter half of the Tribulation in rapid succession just prior to the return of Christ

THE THREE SERIES OF JUDGMENTS IN REVELATION



- The final seal thus contains all of God's final wrath (in the trumpet and bowl judgments) from about the midpoint of the tribulation until the Second Coming of Christ

PREPARATION FOR THE TRUMPET JUDGMENTS

- Chapter seven moves, from the interlude of chapter seven, back to Christ and the scroll for the breaking of the seventh and final seal
- The execution of judgment on the earth, temporarily suspended in chapter seven, resumes in this chapter

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

² <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/revelation/introduction/sequential-events.html>

³ Chart taken from Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 315.

- Interestingly, judgment immediately followed the opening each of the first six seals, but the opening of the seventh is immediately followed by silence
- Up until this point, John has heard a great deal of noise in heaven (see 4:5, 8, 11; 5:2, 5-7, 9-10, 11-12, 13; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9-10, 12; 7:2-3, 9-13)
- But when the seventh seal is opened, he hears only silence
- The silence likely represents both the intense expectation of what is about to happen in the unsealing of the seventh seal as well as the sense of foreboding at the grim reality of the judgments about to be poured out
- It is the calm before the storm
- Silence is often associated in Scripture 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.

- The “half an hour” of silence should be taken literally
- “Though thirty minutes is not ordinarily considered a long time, when it is a time of absolute silence portending 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.”⁴
- “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.”⁵

Revelation 8:2 ~ And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

- John saw seven angels, likely distinct from the other angels mentioned previously because the definite article (“the”) is used to refer to them
- They have often been referred to as the “presence angels” as they are in the presence of God
- Perhaps Gabriel is one of these seven angels because he described himself as “Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God” (Luke 1:19)
- To each angel is given a trumpet to be used in announcing each successive judgment
- Angels will be involved in the seal judgments (6:1, 3, 5-7) and also the bowl judgments (16:2-4, 8, 10, 12, 17)
- This indicates that angels will play an important part in executing God's eschatological judgment (Matt 13:39-42, 49-50; 25:31; 2 Thess 1:7-8)
- “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 calendar. Trumpets were used on the occasion of the giving of

⁴ John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 151.

⁵ John MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11*, 238.

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; Num. 10:2-10; Joel 2:1).”⁶

Revelation 8:3-4 ~ 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.

- “another angel” – distinct from the 7 angels...often referred to as the “priest” angel
- His identity is unknown but it was been suggested that he is either an angel of high rank or an angelic representation of Christ in his role as High Priest, however Christ is never identified as the Angel of the Lord in the NT
- Furthermore, this is “another” (*allos*) angel...namely, another of the same kind as the seven angels
- He holds a “golden censer,” a heavy pan used by OT priests to carry coals from the brazen altar (where sacrifices were offered) outside the tabernacle to the altar of incense inside the tabernacle
- This was done to ignite the incense
- In the OT, priests would burn incense and the smoke would fill the tabernacle/temple and would then ascend to heaven
- Burning incense was symbolic of worship and prayers of the saints, offered up as sweet aromas to the Lord
- An illustration of this comes from Zacharias:

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.

- Such is the symbolism here...the angel was given incense (symbolizing the prayers of God’s people) to add to the “prayers of the saints” already rising from the altar (cf. Rev 5:8)
- The prayers by the Tribulation saints are for God to deliver them from their persecutors and from all who blaspheme God in that time
- These prayers rise to God in anticipation of the question “How long?” in Revelation 6:10

Revelation 8:5 ~ 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.

- As a result of the prayers that ascend to God’s throne, judgment begins again
- The half hour of silence is broken as a divine firestorm of judgment is unleashed once more
- The angel takes fire from the altar of judgment and throws it to the earth, sending a massive fireball which launches a series of catastrophic results in the trumpet judgments
- Thunder, lightning, and an earthquake all signal the impending judgment
- It is this action by the “priest” angel which gives the signal to the “presence” angels to blow their trumpets

Revelation 8:6 ~ And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.

- This is another evidence of the effectiveness of prayer...God’s judgment comes in direct response to the prayers of the Tribulation saints
- “The cumulative effect of the prayers of innumerable righteous men will be very powerful.”⁷
- God hears and responds to the prayers of His people (James 5:16)

⁶ Walvoord, *Revelation*, 152.

⁷ MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11*, 241.

ACTIVATION OF THE TRUMPET JUDGMENTS

- The seven trumpets are more destructive than the seal judgments but not as destructive as the bowl judgments
- Each one signals another wave of God’s judgment and wrath
- The length of their devastation is not stated except for the fifth trumpet which is said to last five months (Rev 9:10)
- The first four trumpets will destroy the earth’s ecology
- The next two trumpets will unleash demonic destruction on humanity
- The final trumpet will result in the seven bowl judgments

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS						
1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th
Green grass and 1/3 of the trees are burned up. <i>Rev. 8:7</i>	1/3 of sea becomes blood; 1/3 of ships and sea life destroyed. <i>Rev. 8:8-9</i>	1/3 of waters turn bitter. <i>Rev. 8:1-11</i>	1/3 of sun, moon, and stars do not shine. <i>Rev. 8:12</i>	"Locusts" wield the Beast's military power. <i>Rev. 9:1-12</i>	200-million-man army; a third of mankind killed. <i>Rev. 9:13-21</i>	The Kingdom of God is declared. <i>Rev. 11:15-19</i>

- “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.”⁸

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.

- Utter devastation is brought upon the earth at the sound of the first trumpet
- The specific cause of the hail and fire is not stated
- Perhaps the earthquake mentioned in verse five causes volcanic eruptions which will spew water into the air, resulting in the formation of hail
- Perhaps red hot lava particles thrown into the sky will fall alongside the hail, looking like fire
- Also, red dust particles may mix with water droplets to give the appearance of blood (or perhaps it is actual blood)

⁸ MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11*, 245.

- Hail is associated with divine judgment in Scripture: Ex 9:13-25; Ps 105:32; Isaiah 28:2
- Fire is associated with divine judgment in Scripture: Gen 19:24; Ps 11:6; Matt 13:30, 40-42
- The hail and fire falling from the heavens will result in the destruction of 1/3 of the earth, 1/3 of all trees, and all grass
- Crops will be destroyed...animals will die in the absence of vegetation for food...there will be a loss of wood for construction
- The oxygen necessary for life will be compromised with the great devastation of plants, trees, and grass
- “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 parts of the trees and all the green grass, there is no solid reason for not taking this judgment in its literal sense.”⁹

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.

- While the first trumpet brought devastation on the land, this one brings devastation on the sea
- Although God created the seas to be a source of food, oxygen, and water, unregenerate man has viewed it as the evolutionary source of life
- Thus, it should not be a surprise that God’s judgments on earth would include the sea
- The flaming mountain could possibly be a meteor or asteroid which slams into the sea, creating a massive tidal wave that will cause great devastation
- 1/3 of the sea turns to blood – possibly referring to red tides which are the result of billions of dead micro-organisms...or possibly it could refer to literal blood from millions of dead sea creatures
- This is reminiscent of the plague in which the waters of the Nile turned to blood

Exodus 7:20-21 ~ So Moses and Aaron did even as the LORD had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that was in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the water that was in the Nile was turned to blood. 21 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 land of Egypt.

- 1/3 of the sea creatures will die – the death of such a large amount of sea life will likely have a domino effect on other animals and people who depend upon sea life for their sustenance
- 1/3 of all ships at sea will be destroyed – this will greatly disrupt commerce and the distribution of material goods around the world and will result in economic chaos
- “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

⁹ Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 153.

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.”¹⁰

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.

- The star that is “burning like a torch” probably is a comet which will disintegrate when it reaches the Earth’s atmosphere
- It will hit the earth and its debris will poison 1/3 of the fresh water on the earth (i.e. waters other than the oceans)
- The repeated pattern of 1/3 (v. 7, vv. 8-9, v. 10, v. 12) demonstrates that these will not be random events, but divine judgments
- The celestial body is named “wormwood” (*aspinthos*) which is a plant that grows in Palestine that has a strong, bitter taste
- It is mentioned seven times in the OT (Deut 29:18; Prov 5:4; Jer 9:15; 23:15; Lam 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7)
- It became a symbol of bitterness and calamity
- Much of the world’s fresh water will become toxic and, as a result, many people will die from drinking the bitter, poisonous water
- This is also reminiscent of the polluting of the Egyptians’ drinking water

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 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.

Well-poisoning is the act of malicious manipulation of potable water resources in order to cause illness or death, or to deny an opponent access to fresh water resources. Well poisoning has been historically documented as a strategy during wartime since antiquity, and was used both offensively (as a terror tactic to disrupt and depopulate a target area) and defensively (as a scorched earth tactic to deny an invading army sources of clean water). Rotting corpses (both animal and human) thrown down wells were the most common implementation; in one of the earliest examples of biological warfare, corpses known to have died from common transmissible diseases of the Pre-Modern era such as bubonic plague or tuberculosis were especially favored for well-poisoning.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Well_poisoning

“Chernobyl” is the same as a Ukrainian name for *Artemisia vulgaris*, mugwort or common wormwood...which is related to but distinct from the lighter-stemmed wormwood *Artemisia absinthium*

The world’s worst ever nuclear meltdown occurred in 1986 at Chernobyl in Ukraine, at that time one of the states of the Soviet Union. Incredibly, Chernobyl is the Russian word for wormwood! It appears that the Chernobyl catastrophe was the fulfillment of the sounding of the third trumpet of Revelation 8!...The prophecy of the third trumpet emphasizes that the star called Wormwood made the waters bitter. As the nuclear cloud produced by Chernobyl drifted over the Soviet Union and over Europe, an extraordinary amount of rain fell. The rain brought the radiation from the nuclear cloud onto the soil, the animals, the crops, the trees, and into the rivers. The greater the rainfall, the greater was the amount of radioactivity. These heavy rains greatly increased the magnitude of this horrible disaster. Much of Europe was affected. When the prophecy said that many men died because of the waters, it explicitly described the effect of Chernobyl.

<https://www.endtime.com/articles-endtime-magazine/chernobyl-third-trumpet-revelation/>

¹⁰ Ibid., 155.

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!”

- While the first three trumpets will affect the earth, the fourth trumpet will relate to the heavens
- One third of the sun, moon, and stars will be destroyed
- This could mean that the 24-hour cycle is reduced to 16 hours (i.e. a shortened day)
- Or it could mean that the output of their power will be reduced by a third
- Either way, this reduction in light will result in great harm to earth’s biological and botanical cycles since there will be less sunshine resulting in a colder climate
- This will disrupt the earth’s weather patterns, the tides, and the normal cycle of crops, all resulting in further loss of animal and human life
- However, this will be temporary as the opposite will occur later:

Revelation 16:8-9 ~ The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. 9 Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

- The OT predicted this would happen

Isaiah 13:9-10 ~ 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.

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.

- Jesus predicted this would happen:

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,

- “The symbolic interpretation of verse 12 usually regards this prophecy as portending a disruption of human government and society extending to a third of the earth. Here again, however, it is probably preferable to interpret this literally as extending to a disruption of light from heaven as a solemn warning of other judgments which were yet to fall upon the earth.”¹¹
- Verse 13 indicates that, though the four trumpet judgments up to this point will be devastating, they will be nothing compared to the next three
- The devastation that results from the trumpets judgments demonstrates just how foolish and misdirected are the many efforts today to protect the environment, counter global warming, and save endangered species
- While believers must be good stewards of God’s creation (Gen 2:15), we must realize that the damage done by man to the world pales in comparison to the damage God will do one day

¹¹ Ibid., 156.