



FAITH PRINCETON SUNDAY SCHOOL

REVELATION 8 Seventh Seal

SUNDAY, MAY 17, 2026

REVELATION 8 Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _____

The Seventh Seal – The Trumpets

1 When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2 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.

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.

8 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.

10 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.

12 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!”

Enduring Word Commentary: Revelation 8

The First Four Trumpets

A. The seventh seal is loosed.

1. (Revelation 8:1) Silence in heaven.

When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

a. **When He opened the seventh seal:** The sealed scroll was introduced in [Revelation 5](#), and the seals were opened one by one up to the sixth seal in [Revelation 6](#). We waited for the last seal to be opened and the contents of the scroll to be revealed — but then were given a pause with [Revelation 7](#), the revealing of the 144,000 and the great multitude out of the great tribulation. Now the idea of a pause between the sixth and **the seventh seal** is emphasized by this **silence in heaven for about half an hour**.

i. This **silence** is striking; some have seen it as “breathing space,” or, that the angels are silent so the prayers of the saints can be heard, perhaps even the cry of the martyrs of [Revelation 6:9-11](#).

ii. More likely, this **silence in heaven** demonstrates a sober, awestruck silence at the judgments to come, now that the seals are off and the scroll can be opened.

b. **Silence in heaven for about half an hour:** A half-hour silence is not long, but things seem long or short in their context. If a preacher were to stop his sermon and remain silent for ten minutes, it would seem like an eternity. Since heaven is a place of constant praise and worship to God

([Revelation 4:8-11](#)), **silence for about half an hour** is a long time.

2. (Revelation 8:2) Seven angels with seven trumpets.

And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

a. **The seven angels who stand before God:** According to Jewish tradition, there are seven angels who stand in God’s presence. Apparently, based on this verse, that traditional idea was accurate.

b. **And to them were given seven trumpets:** In the Old Testament, **trumpets** sounded the alarm for war and threw the enemy into a panic, or they called an assembly of God’s people. These **seven trumpets** will sound as God’s battle-alarm during the great tribulation.

3. (Revelation 8:3-6) The other angel with the golden censer.

Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer *it with* the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw *it* to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

a. **Then another angel:** Some see this **angel** as Jesus, functioning as a mediator and because of

Old Testament references to Jesus as “the Angel of the LORD.” Others say it could only be a mere angelic being because the specific ancient Greek word for **another** means “another of the same kind.”

b. A golden censer... the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God:

Prayer and incense are often associated in the Bible. The idea is that just as incense is precious, pleasant, and drifts to heaven, so do our prayers. So here, before anything *happens* at the opening of the seventh seal, the prayers of God’s people come before the Lord God.

i. Significantly, the prayers of God’s people set in motion the coming consummation of history. “More potent, more powerful than all the dark and mighty powers let loose in the world, more powerful than anything else, is the power of prayer set ablaze by the fire of God and cast upon the earth.” (L. Morris quoting Torrance)

ii. [2 Peter 3:10-12](#) indicates that there is a sense in which we can *hasten* the Lord’s coming by our holy conduct and godly lives. But here we see that we can also hasten the Lord’s coming through prayer, even as Daniel asked for a speedy fulfillment of prophecy regarding captive Israel ([Daniel 9](#)), we can and should also pray *Even so, come, Lord Jesus!* ([Revelation 22:20](#))

iii. “It is not said that the angel presents these prayers. He presents the incense, and the *prayers ascend with it*. The *ascending of the incense* shows that the prayers and offering were accepted.” (Clarke)

c. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth: As God’s people pray for the resolution of all things, their prayers were touched by the **fire from the**

altar in heaven, and then “thrown” back down to earth. All things will not be resolved on this earth until judgment comes, and when the prayers of God’s people “come back” to earth, they bring the groundswell of judgment (**noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake**).

d. So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound: We waited for the seven seals to be opened and saw them loosed one by one. But when the seventh seal was finally loosed, the end did not immediately come. It set in motion **seven trumpets** that would **sound** upon the earth.

i. In considering how the seals and the trumpets relate to each other, some believe they are *poetic and repetitive*, and John describes the same events with different words and details in both the seal and trumpet judgments. “This is typical of John’s method. He goes over the ground again and again, each time teaching us something new. There is more to the End than we can readily take in. Every series of visions brings out new facets of it.” (L. Morris)

ii. In considering how the seals and the trumpets relate to each other, some believe they are *sequential*, and that the seventh seal contains the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet contains the seven bowls of judgment. Yet there are problems with a sequential approach. For example, are the people of [Revelation 6:15-17](#) mistaken about Jesus’ return? They don’t seem to be. But if the trumpets simply follow in sequence to the seals, then it is a striking display of God’s mercy in stretching out the end and allowing repentance.

iii. Since John brings a report from eternity, it is difficult to assign a chronological and sequential

element to these judgments. It is most important to emphasize that they are *real*, even if their sequence is hard to pin down with certainty.

B. The first four trumpets.

1. ([Revelation 8:7](#)) The first trumpet brings a plague on vegetation.

The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

a. **Hail and fire followed, mingled with blood:** **Blood** may indicate the *color* or the *result* of the phenomenon described here. We don't know if the **hail and fire** was red in color or if it brought forth red blood, but one way or another this should be understood straightforwardly, without escaping into a creative symbolism.

i. "Many eminent men suppose that the irruption of the barbarous nations of the Roman empire is here intended. It is easy to find coincidences when fancy runs riot." (Clarke)

ii. "The truth is, if *earth, trees, and grass* do not mean earth, trees, and grass, no man can tell what they mean. Letting go the literal signification of the record, we launch out upon an endless sea of sheer conjecture." (Seiss)

b. **A third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up:** Because of this **hail and fire, trees and grass** are destroyed — one-third of the vegetation of the planet is **burned up** during the great tribulation.

i. *How* will this happen? Many wonder if it will happen through phenomenon we know today, like nuclear war, fallout, pollution, meteors, and so

forth. These ideas are interesting and possible, but they should never obscure the essential truth: *God* brings judgment. He isn't a passive bystander. This is not "nature" taking its course.

ii. God may use whatever *method* He desires to bring judgment, but people on earth *know* these events are from God, and do not think them to be merely natural disasters ([Revelation 16:9](#), and [16:11](#), [Revelation 19:19](#)).

2. ([Revelation 8:8-9](#)) The second trumpet brings a plague on the sea.

Then 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. And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

a. **Something like a great mountain:** John carefully said that this is not an actual mountain (note the use of **like**), but it was a blazing mass as large as a **mountain**.

b. **A third of the sea became blood:** This disaster is a cataclysm, perhaps a meteor that crashes into the sea and results in great oceanic upheaval with residual pollution. Researchers today say that this sort of phenomenon has happened before in the history of the earth, sometimes resulting in great ecological upheaval and disaster. Here, the result is that **a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed**. The **blood** may be either the *cause* or the *effect* of the widespread death in the oceans of the world.

i. **The sea** may be a specific reference to the Mediterranean and not a reference to all oceans. In the world of the Apostle John, the

Mediterranean Sea was the sea and they really had little knowledge of other oceans.

c. **Like a great mountain:** It is common to take this **great mountain** as a symbol for a nation that will be judged. It is true that mountains are sometimes used as figures of governments or nations ([Jeremiah 51:25](#), [51:27](#), [51:30](#)). But in this context, the symbol doesn't make sense. What does it mean that the **great mountain** is burning with fire? What does it mean that it **was thrown into the sea**? What does the **sea** symbolize? Who are the **living creatures in the sea**? What are the **ships** on the sea? What is their destruction a symbol of? All these questions make us say that the best solution is to see this as some literal mass of land with probably something like a meteor or asteroid falling into the sea and bringing ecological disaster.

3. ([Revelation 8:10-11](#)) The third trumpet brings a plague on fresh waters.

Then 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 water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.

a. **A great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch:** We may easily associate this with a comet or meteor crashing into the earth and bringing ecological disaster. But God may have something else in mind also.

i. "Some say the star means *Attila* and his Huns; others, Genseric with his Vandals falling on the city of Rome; others, Eleazer, the son of Annus, spurning the emperor's victims, and exciting the fury of the Zealots; others, Arius, infecting the

pure Christian doctrine with his heresy, [and so on and so on]. It certainly cannot mean *all these*; and probably *none* of them. Let the reader judge." (Clarke)

b. **The name of the star is**

Wormwood: **Wormwood** is a very bitter substance, and proverbial for bitterness and sadness.

c. **A third of the rivers... a third of the waters:** The *proportion* of ecological disaster stays the same. In each one of the trumpets, **a third** of an ecological system is destroyed in judgment.

4. ([Revelation 8:12-13](#)) The fourth trumpet brings a plague on the heavens, and darkness on the earth.

Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night. And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

a. **A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night:** This does not describe a one-third lessening of light, but one-third of the day and night are plunged into absolute darkness. As Jesus said: *the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light* ([Matthew 24:29](#)).

b. **Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet:** The angel's woes are well founded, because one-third of the earth's population will die in the next three trumpets.

i. The ancient Greek words for *angel* and *eagle* are very close in spelling. Some ancient versions say that it is an *eagle flying through the midst of heaven*, making this cry.

5. Observations on the first four trumpets.

a. These first four trumpets reveal the severity of God's judgment. He attacks all the ordinary means of subsistence, such as food and water; and He attacks all the ordinary means of comfort, and knowledge, such as light and the regular rhythm of days.

i. Man has come to see these aspects of the created order as impersonal, perpetual forces. During the great tribulation, God proclaims His Lordship through their agonizing disruption.

ii. We know the great humility that comes upon men in the midst of something like an earthquake, because they know that "nature" is not as reliable as they had thought. With these four trumpets, that effect will be multiplied greatly.

b. The first four trumpets also reveal the *mercy* of God's judgment; these are partial judgments striking only one-third, and are meant to warn and lead a rebellious world to repentance before the final curtain. For now, God *saves* more than He *smites*.

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