

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF PRAYER ATLANTA
THE BOOK OF REVELATION
CHAPTER 8, THE SEVENTH SEAL – BILLY HUMPHREY

I. Overview of Chapter 8

A. Chapter 8 can be divided into two main sections.

1. The seventh seal (8:1-5)
2. The first four trumpets (8:6-13)
 - a. First trumpet (8:7)
 - b. Second trumpet (8:8 - 9)
 - c. Third trumpet (8:10 – 11)
 - d. Fourth trumpet (8:12-13)

B. Chapter 8 begins the second chronological section in the Book of Revelation. At first glance, the break between the 6th and 7th seals may seem to be in an odd place. However, the 6th seal marks a dramatic shift in the book, and therefore needs explanation. Chapter 7 is a parenthetical section that provides the necessary explanation to understand who is able to stand through the incredible judgments of the first six seals. Chapter 8 once again picks up with the chronological sequence of the book.

C. Chapter 8 opens with the 7th seal. The 7th seal is a “telescoping” judgment event. This means that as a part of its judgment it releases the next judgment series. In other words, the 7th seal releases the seven trumpets.

D. The intensity of God’s judgment shifts dramatically at the 6th seal. In the first four seals, God lifted His restraints in order to allow men to give themselves to their own wicked devices as a judgment unto themselves. From the 6th seal through the 7th bowl, God begins to target humankind with judgments that destroy natural resources, bring torment on men and ultimately release retribution on those who have persecuted the redeemed and rejected the Son of God (2 Thes 1:6-8). While the beast kingdom appears to be on the offensive through the first five seals, the sixth seal marks a turning point in the posture of antichrist’s empire. All of the commanders and military men as well as the rulers of nations go into hiding during the sixth seal. They all recognize that God and His Son, Jesus, have released the catastrophic judgment of the sixth seal. From the sixth seal forward, we see the beast kingdom taking more of a defensive posture, realizing that the wrath of God is being released against them.

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E. The 7th seal is similar to the 5th seal in that it depicts the prayer movement as the initiator of the judgment events that are to follow. The first four trumpet judgments specifically affect natural resources, air, water, heat and light, which men need in order to survive. The events of the 7th seal portray a massive escalation in the heavenly and earthly prayer movement and the dramatic results of the prayers from all the ages being answered in a very short period of time.

F. Whereas it seems likely the seal judgments take place over a 2.5-year period of time, it is possible that the trumpet judgments take place over a one-year period of time. This would be plausible if the first four trumpets each took place over the period of a month. Rev 9:10 makes it clear that the fifth trumpet is five months in duration. This would leave 3 months for the horrific events of the 6th trumpet to take place, leading up to the 7th trumpet, the return of Christ and the final septet judgment series, the bowls of wrath.

II. The Seventh Seal Releases the Trumpet Judgments

Rev 8:1-6 When He opened 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 to them were given seven trumpets. 3 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. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. 5 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. 6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

A. *“There was silence in heaven for about half an hour”* – There is a dramatic thirty-minute timeframe where heaven goes silent. John is able to measure the timeframe as lasting “about half an hour.”

1. Thirty minutes was the approximate time that it took the priests to offer incense in the Holy Place of the temple. Here we see the angel who attends the heavenly altar of incense offering incense with the prayers of the saints.

a. Under the old covenant, the priest would take the incense and put it on the altar of incense to burn incense at the time of the morning and evening offering (Ex 30:7-8).

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b. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement the High Priest would take coals from the altar of incense and put them in a censer (a container for burning incense) and add two handfuls of incense (much incense) to the burning coals. He would then enter the Holy of Holies to make the necessary sacrifice for the people (Lev. 16:13-14; Lk 1:10, 21). The incense would cover the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant as protection for the High Priest.

c. In chapter 5 we are told that the “incense” is the “prayers of the saints” (Rev 5:8). Now in chapter 8 the angel is adding incense (prayers) to the “prayers of all the saints”. The incense that the angel adds is the prayers of the saints in heaven. This illustrates the escalation of the prayer movement as the prayers of the saints on the earth are joined with the prayers of the saints in heaven and from all time. When these prayers are joined together the cry for justice moves God to avenge His people (Luke 18:8, Isa 42:10-16).

2. This supernatural silence is a “calm before the storm.” It creates an anticipation of the events to come and the escalation of the judgment of God upon the planet. It is a prelude to the events of judgment that, when set into motion, will culminate with the great and terrible Day of the Lord in which God will come in unrestrained might when His power and glory are released upon the earth. Habakkuk 2:20 and Zechariah 2:13 speak of this heavenly silence as a prelude to the events of the Great Day of the Lord.

Zec 2:13 "Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for He is aroused from His holy habitation!"

Hab 2:20 But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him."

B. *“I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets”* – Here we see the seven angels being given the trumpets to sound as a part of the 7th seal. It is important to note that the trumpet judgments happen as a result of the opening of the 7th seal. This points to the chronological nature of the judgment events.

1. These seven angels are described as *“the seven angels who stand before the throne of God.”* This speaks of their uniqueness within the angelic ranks. There are different angelic beings who stand in the counsel of the Lord (Jer. 23:18), including four cherubim, four seraphim and these seven angels who stand before God. Gabriel is described as one who stands in God’s presence (Lk. 1:19).

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2. The fall of Jericho (Josh 6) was a prophetic picture of the judgment God is going to release through the seven trumpet judgments. In Jericho, God commissioned seven priests with seven trumpets to play before the Ark (1 Chr. 15:24) unto the crumbling of the city walls and the people of God taking possession of the city. In the seven trumpets, God commissions seven angels to blow seven trumpets unto the crumbling of Antichrist's empire and Jesus taking possession of the kingdoms of this world (11:15).

3. It is also likely that the trumpet judgments speak of the prophetic messenger ministry that will simultaneously take place during these judgment events. Isaiah describes messengers who will cry aloud like a trumpet (Isa 58:1). God will release prophetic messengers who will cry out like a trumpet blast, calling Israel and the nations of the earth to repentance during the seal and trumpet judgments (Jer 50:28, Hab 2, Rev 11:3-11, 14:1-11).

C. *“Another angel having a golden censer came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense...”* – This angel is an eighth angel who is officiating at the altar of incense in the heavenly Holy of Holies (i.e. throne room of God). Some see this angel as Jesus officiating as the High Priest before the throne of God; however, there is nothing in the text to warrant this supposition. The priestly function of angels is well established throughout the book of Revelation (4:8-11, 5:8-14, 7:11-12). “Much incense” refers to heavenly prayers that are offered to God with the prayer of the saints on the earth. The heavenly prayers are made by the saints of all the ages, the Holy Spirit and Jesus, Himself (Rev 6:10, Rom 8:26-27). If the Spirit of God leads the earthly prayer movement, the earthly prayer movement will pray the same prayers as the heavenly prayer movement.

D. *“That he should offer it with the prayer of the saints”* – The angel combines the heavenly incense with the prayers of the saints from all the ages. This creates a dramatic crescendo in the release of the power of the kingdom of God on the earth. The golden bowls before the altar have held the prayers of the saints from every age.

1. Many prayers have been answered and yet many have been stored in the golden bowls. It is at this moment in the seventh seal when the prayers of the saints from all time will now be answered!!

2. God will use the prayers of believers from all the ages to release the end time judgment events. Every prayer that asked for God's kingdom to be manifest in the earth from all time will be released at once during the 7th seal. These prayers will be supercharged as they are combined with the prayers of the saints in heaven. The result is the release of the trumpet judgments, which culminate in the return of Christ!

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E. *“Upon the golden altar which was before the throne”* – There are differing opinions regarding the altars that are mentioned in the book of Revelation.

1. Some commentators see two different altars mentioned, an altar of incense and an altar of burnt offering. Other commentators only see one altar mentioned, the altar of incense.
2. We prefer the latter, seeing the altar that is mentioned throughout the book of Revelation as the heavenly altar of incense. In the heavenly throne room, the altar of incense is directly before the throne.
 - a. The earthly altar of incense in the temple was positioned just outside the Holy of Holies (Ex 30:6). Every morning and evening the high priest offered incense on this altar in worship to the Lord.
 - b. In heaven, the prayers of the saints ascend directly to the throne room of God and are offered on the heavenly altar. The altar of incense is mentioned throughout the book in relationship to the heavenly liturgy and the release of the judgments of God (6:9, 9:13, 14:18, 16:7).

F. *“The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints ascended before God from the angel’s hand”* - The smoke from the mixture of the earthly and heavenly prayers ascends to the throne of God and comes before the Father. The smoke from the incense in the earthly holy of holies protected the priests from the unveiled presence of God (Lev 16:3). This is a prophetic picture of the way the Lord will protect the saints throughout the trumpet judgments.

G. *“Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth.”* - The release of fire upon the earth indicates heaven’s answer to the prayers offered upon the altar. Heaven’s answer to the prayers of the saints from all ages, the cries of the martyrs, the cries of the Spirit and the Son of God releases the trumpet and ultimately the bowl judgments.

H. It is essential for every student of end time prophesy to understand that the end time praying church is directly involved in the release of each judgment series (5:8, 8:1-5, 15:3-8).

1. The prayers of the saints in unity with God are perhaps the most powerful force in all human history. The result is that fire from the altar is thrown to the earth bringing about the full release of God’s justice in the earth (Luke 18:7-8). Just as the answers to these prayers are “thrown” to the earth in the form of fire from the altar, the first two trumpets release judgments that are “thrown” to the earth.

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2. Ezekiel 9 and 10 are a prophetic parallel to Revelation 7 and 8. In Ezekiel's generation he saw the sealing of the servants of God (Ezek 9:4), a group of intercessors praying over the conditions of sin on the earth and the subsequent release of fiery coals from the altar in heaven (Ezek 10:2). This is the same sequence seen in Revelation 7 and 8. The servants of God are sealed, the prayers of the saints are offered before the throne and then the fiery coals from the altar are released on the earth.

3. The coals from the altar also speak of the purification method that the Lord will use to cleanse the earth. In Isaiah 6:6, the angel touched Isaiah's lips and it purged him of his iniquity. Similarly, the purpose of the trumpet judgments is to help purify the earth for the return of the King.

I. *“And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.”* – The noises, thunderings and lightnings that proceed from the throne are answers to prayer and the release of God's judgments.

1. In the book of Job, the young man Elihu tells us that God thunders with His majestic voice and He commands lightning to strike the earth (Job 36:29 – 37:5). These actions depict God moving in power and judgment upon nature (Job 36:31).

2. When we see thunderings and lightnings proceeding from the throne, we can be assured these are not simply amazing displays of light and sound. They are heavenly decrees of answered prayer proceeding from the Father that release supernatural activity upon the earth.

3. After the release of the thunder and lightning an earthquake culminates the sequence of events. The release of these events is not simply confined to the heavenly realm, but is also physically released upon the earth, similar to when God descended on Mt. Sinai with thunder, lightning, smoke, fire and an earthquake (Ex 19:16-18).

4. An obvious clue that these events take place in the earthly realm is the presence of an earthquake. Where else does an earthquake manifest but upon the earth? Imagine the supernatural thunderings, lightnings and earthquakes that rip across the planet as the silence in heaven ceases and the trumpet judgments are initiated!

J. *“So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.”* – The heavenly decrees that are manifest in lightnings, thunderings and voices, sets the stage for the next series of judgment events. The seven angels, who are before the Lord, stand at attention and prepare to sound. Another proof that the seals and trumpets happen in consecutive order without overlap is the seven angels only “prepare” or “get ready to” sound *after* the seventh seal is opened.