

# REVELATION

## The Trumpets – Part 1

Revelation 8:2

April 13, 2024

**Revelation 8:2 begins a new vision that includes an introductory Sanctuary Scene.**

**The vision beginning in the Sanctuary, sets the theological context for what is to come.**

**John sees 7 angels with 7 Trumpets.**

**As in the other visions, the symbolism of the 7 Trumpets is rooted in the Old Testament.**

**Life for the Children of Israel was ordered by trumpet blasts – which were often accompanied by times of prayer.**

**There were 2 types of trumpets:**

- **Chatsotserah** – was a straight trumpet made of hammered silver. It was blown by priests to signal that the camp was to move, to summon the people, to sound the alarm in times of war, to announce religious festivals and temple services (Numbers 10:1-10).
- **Shofar** – was made from a ram's horn and was used to draw the people together, announce the new moon and the jubilee year, to signify the start of battle and in times of national repentance (Exodus 19:16; 20:18; Joshua 6:4-16; Joel 2:15-17).

**The angels are ready, but before the trumpets are blown, another angel, carrying a golden censer of incense appears, standing on the altar of sacrifice (same location as seal 5 – Rev. 6:9-10). He was given incense to offer along with the prayers of the saints. He then went and stood before the golden altar that is before the throne. The smoke of the incense, along with the prayers of the saints go up before God.**

**After this, the angel filled the censer with fire from the golden altar and hurled it to earth. This act produced “peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.”**

**This was the signal for the 7 angels to begin to blow their trumpets.**

**This scene would have reminded John's readers of the daily service that had once occurred in the earthly Temple:**

After the lamb had been placed on the Altar of Burnt Offering, the blood was poured out at the base of the altar (Lev. 4:27-30).

Next, the appointed priest would take a golden censer, fill it with coals (from the Altar of Burnt Offering) and incense, and offer them on the Golden Altar in the Holy Place (Ex. 30:1-8).

Later, according to the Jewish Mishna, the priest would come out of the Temple and throw the censer on the pavement between the Altar of Burnt Offering and the entrance to the Temple, producing a loud noise.

At that moment, 7 priests blew their trumpets, indicating the end of the daily service.

**The throwing down of the censer also mirrors a judgment scene found in Ezekiel 10:2, where a man clothed in linen takes coals of fire from between the Cherubim and throws them down on rebellious Jerusalem (see 2 Kings 17:13-20; 2 Chronicles 24:18-19).**

**2 Chronicles 36:15-16** – The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

**Ezekiel's vision shows that the hurling of fire on earth symbolizes judgment on rebellious humanity. The 7 trumpets are God's judgments on the rebellious and oppressive powers who have harmed and persecuted His people.**

One of the things that concerns people when they read Revelation is, "When are all these things going to happen?"

Turning, once again, to the earthly Temple service, we get a clue. The trumpets did not sound until after the sacrifice had been offered on the Altar of Burnt Offering and the incense had been taken into the Temple.

Since the sacrifice represented Jesus' death, we can conclude that the Trumpets in heaven are not blown until after His death, resurrection and ascension.

The 7 Trumpets, then, cover the same span of history as the 7 Seals - from the Cross to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming.

Structurally, the Seals and the Trumpets are similar. The difference is in their focus. While the Seals are primarily concerned with the professed people of God (however unfaithful they may be), the Trumpets exclusively concern those who do not belong to God. Yet God's concern for both groups is the same – repentance before it is too late.

The 7 Seals – concern the professed people of God	The 7 Trumpets – concern the enemies of God
The Four Horsemen (6:1-8)	The 1 <sup>st</sup> Four Trumpets (8:7-12)
The 5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> Seals (6:9-17)	The 5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> Trumpets (9)
Interlude (7) - Description of the 144,000	Interlude (10:1-11:14) - Experience of the 144,000
The 7 <sup>th</sup> Seal (8:1)	The 7 <sup>th</sup> Trumpet (11:15-19)

## The Trumpets

- **1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet** (8:7)

The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

In the Old Testament, hail mixed with fire and bloodshed was a judgment against the enemies of Israel:

- **Exodus 9:23-25** – When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So, the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. Throughout Egypt hail struck everything in the fields -- both men and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree.
- **Isaiah 30:30** – The LORD will cause men to hear his majestic voice and will make them see his arm coming down with raging anger and consuming fire, with cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail.
- **Ezekiel 38:22-23** – I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. And so, I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

Trees and grass were used as symbols of God's people:

- **Psalms 1:1-3** – Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.
- **Isaiah 44:2-4** – This is what the LORD says -- he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams.
- **Jeremiah 17:7-8** – "But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

For centuries God had been perusing His people – yet they continued to rebel against Him. So, in the New Testament, John the Baptist stated:

- **Matthew 3:10** – The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire (also see 7:17-19).

As long as God's people remained connected to Him, they remained green and fruitful (see John 15:1-6), but once they rejected Him, they withered and dried out – ready for the burn pile:

- **Matthew 23:29-38** – Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' So, you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers! You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore, I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate.
- **Luke 19:41-44** – As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace -- but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." (Matt. 24:1-2)
- **John 5:39-40** – You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

While many Jews accepted Jesus, many, including most of the leadership, did not. Not only did they persecute and kill Jesus, but they became fierce opponents of the Gospel and were very active in the persecution of the early church. By rejecting Jesus, they placed themselves outside His covenant protection.

- Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet represents God's judgment on His own people who had rejected the covenant and are now the first to experience the consequences of that rejection (see 1 Peter 4:17):

- **Luke 21:20-24** – When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
- **John 19:12-15** – From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar." .....<sup>14</sup> It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.

**Based on the above evidence, what conclusion can we draw? The 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet appears to portray the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD. This event remains one of the most bitter moments in Jewish history.**

## • 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet (8:8-9)

The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

In the Old Testament, "mountains" were sometimes used to represent kingdoms:

- **Psalm 48:1-2** – Great is the LORD, and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God, his holy mountain. It is beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth. Like the utmost heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King.

- **Psalm 68:16** – Why gaze in envy, O rugged mountains, at the mountain where God chooses to reign, where the LORD himself will dwell forever?
- **Daniel 2:35** – Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.
- **Ezekiel 35:1-4** – The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir; prophesy against it and say: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Mount Seir, and I will stretch out my hand against you and make you a desolate waste. I will turn your towns into ruins and you will be desolate. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’”

The mountain, here, is described as “*great*” – indicating a great/vast/powerful empire. This scene calls our attention to Jeremiah 51 and God’s judgment on Babylon:

- **24-25, 60-64** – Before your eyes I will repay Babylon and all who live in Babylonia for all the wrong they have done in Zion,” declares the LORD. “I am against you, O destroying mountain, you who destroy the whole earth,” declares the LORD. “I will stretch out my hand against you, roll you off the cliffs, and make you a burned-out mountain.....<sup>60</sup> Jeremiah had written on a scroll about all the disasters that would come upon Babylon -- all that had been recorded concerning Babylon. He said to Seraiah, “When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud. Then say, ‘O LORD, you have said you will destroy this place, so that neither man nor animal will live in it; it will be desolate forever.’ When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates. Then say, ‘So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring upon her. And her people will fall.’” The words of Jeremiah end here.

In John’s day, many Christians viewed Rome as the “*New Babylon*” because, like Babylon, Rome had destroyed both Jerusalem and the Temple.

Even Peter used “*Babylon*” as a cryptic name for Rome:

- **1 Peter 5:13-14** – She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

After the great mountain was thrown into the sea, a third of the sea turned to blood, killing a third of the sea life, and destroying a third of the ships.

The term, “*Sea*” in the Old Testament, frequently refers to people groups who oppose God:

- **Isaiah 17:12-13** – Oh, the raging of many nations -- they rage like the raging sea! Oh, the uproar of the peoples-- they roar like the roaring of great waters! Although the peoples roar like the roar of surging waters, when he rebukes them they flee far away, driven before the wind like chaff on the hills, like tumbleweed before a gale.
- **Isaiah 57:20** – But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.
- **Jeremiah 51:42** – The sea will rise over Babylon; its roaring waves will cover her.

The sea being turned to blood and killing a third of the sea creatures echoes the first plague against Egypt:

- **Exodus 7:17-21** – This is what the LORD says: By this you will know that I am the LORD: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water.” The LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt -- over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs’ -- and they will turn to blood. Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in the wooden buckets and stone jars.” Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt.

And the destruction of ships echoes God’s Judgment against Tyre for her pride:

- **Ezekiel 27:1-4, 27, 33-34** – The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, take up a lament concerning Tyre. Say to Tyre, situated at the gateway to the sea, merchant of peoples on many coasts, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “You say, O Tyre, “I am perfect in beauty.” Your domain was on the high seas; your builders brought your beauty to perfection.....<sup>27</sup> Your wealth, merchandise and wares, your mariners, seamen and shipwrights, your merchants and all your soldiers, and

everyone else on board will sink into the heart of the sea on the day of your shipwreck.....<sup>33</sup> When your merchandise went out on the seas, you satisfied many nations; with your great wealth and your wares you enriched the kings of the earth. Now you are shattered by the sea in the depths of the waters; your wares and all your company have gone down with you.

**It would have been no problem for the readers of John's letter to identify this burning mountain as a symbol of the eventual downfall of Rome. The Western Roman Empire came to its end in 476 AD.**

**The scenes of the first two trumpets announce God's judgments on two powers – the Jewish nation and the Roman Empire.**

**These 2 nations – the bitterest of enemies – were united in their opposition to God, the persecution of the early church and the spread of the Gospel.**