

## The Study of the Book of Revelation

### The Seven Trumpets

#### Chapter 8

#### Revelation 8:1      7<sup>th</sup> Seal

*“And when he had opened **the seventh seal**, there was **silence in heaven** about the space of **half an hour.**”*

As we saw in our study of the 7 seals from Revelation chapter 6, the silence in heaven refers to the time when heaven is empty while God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, along with all the angels of heaven come to gather all the saints from this earth and take them back to heaven. A half an hour in prophetic time is equal to one week or seven literal days. Ellen White describes this passage this way in the book *Spiritual Gifts*, v.2, p. 33, *“Then Jesus' silver trumpet sounded, as he descended on the cloud, wrapped in flames of fire. He gazed on the graves of the sleeping saints, then raised his eyes and hands to heaven and cried, Awake! Awake! Awake! ye that sleep in the dust, and arise. Then there was a mighty earthquake. The graves opened, and the dead came up clothed with immortality. The 144,000 shouted, Hallelujah! as they recognized their friends who had been torn from them by death, and in the same moment we were changed and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought along the crowns and with his own right hand placed them on our heads.”* Jesus is going to take His people on a special journey on their way to heaven. That also means that everyone will have kept at least one Sabbath before entering the holy city.

#### Introduction of The Seven Trumpets

#### Revelation 8:2-6

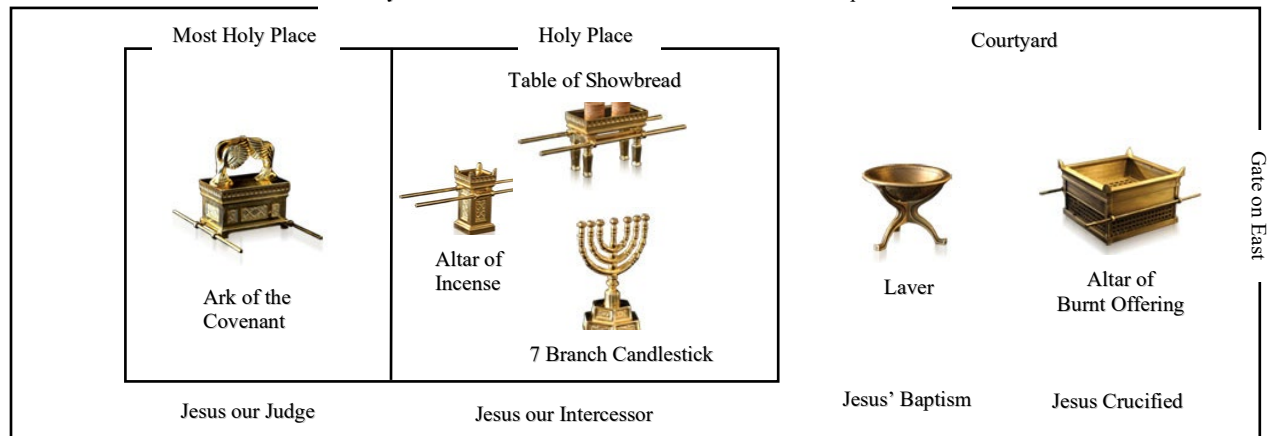
*“2 And I saw the **seven angels** which stood before God; and to them were given **seven trumpets**. 3 And another angel came and stood at the **altar**, having a **golden censer**; and there was given unto him much **incense**, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the **golden altar** which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. 6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.”*

Remember, we have looked at the Seven Churches from the Golden Candlesticks, the Seven Seals from the Table of Showbread, and now we see the Seven Trumpets from the Altar of Incense. Uriah Smith, in his book *Daniel and Revelation*, points out that verse 2 *“introduces a new and distinct series of events. In the Seals we had the history of the church during what is called the Christian Era. In the seven trumpets now introduced we have the principal political and warlike events that occur during the same time.”*

The golden altar, golden censer, and incense, point us to the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, where Jesus ministered as our intercessor up until 1844. (see sanctuary diagram on next page)

## Sanctuary Diagram

Courtyard was 150 ft. x 75 ft. with white curtains and brass poles



With the sanctuary now introduced, the center of attention is moved from the table of showbread (the Seals) to the Altar of Incense. Trumpets are used in feast and sanctuary imagery to sound the warning: Judgment is coming!

### Joel 2:1

*"Blow ye **the trumpet** in Zion, and **sound an alarm** in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for **the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand;**"*

Trumpets sound warnings and battle calls. The seven trumpets represent judgments that fall upon nations that reject the gospel given during each of the Christian time periods. As each trumpet is sounded in the heavenly sanctuary, it announces a chain of events that takes place on this earth. The seven trumpets of the Christian era come in answer to the prayers of the saints that ascend from the altar of incense to the throne of God.

### Revelation 8:7

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet

410 A.D.

*"The **first angel sounded**, and there followed **hail and fire mingled with blood**, and they were cast upon the earth: and **the third part of trees was burnt up**, and **all green grass was burnt up.**"*

This first trumpet was aimed at the nation that first shed the blood of God's apostolic church, pagan Rome and its paganized church. Loren Nelson says in his book, *Understanding the Mysteries of Daniel & Revelation*, "God bore long with the apostasy of the church. The perversion and paganization of the church prevented it from fulfilling its mission. The sinfulness of unbelievers is to be expected, but heaven will not overlook wickedness within the church of God. The judgments of God must be meted out."

*"hail and fire mingled with blood"* - Taylor Bunch in his book *The Revelation*, describes the divine judgment of the first trumpet in this way. "The first trumpet is prophetic of the first successful invasion of Rome by the Gothic barbarians from the north under the leadership of Alaric. The "hail" fitly represents the northern origin of the invaders who came from the shores of the Baltic, and "fire mingled with blood," indicates the awful slaughter and destruction inflicted by them. They overran Greece, Asia Minor, Italy, Spain, Southern France, and in A.D. 410 captured and sacked the city of Rome. Jerome declared that as the result of this invasion, "nothing was left except the sky and the earth." The "Hail and fire mingled with blood" point to the fact that the northern barbarians usually made their assaults during the dead of winter. In this way, they crossed into Roman territory over the

frozen ice. The barbarian Goths set Rome on fire and blood was shed over large sections of the city.

**“all green grass was burnt up”** – In the Bible, grass symbolizes people. Albert Treiyer in his book, *The Seals and the Trumpets*, makes this connection to history: *“After surrounding the Roman walls, Alaric required Rome to surrender. But the Senate tried to frighten him with the impressive number of people living within the city. The general of the Goths, however, was not intimidated. He answered them: ‘When the grass is denser, better is its harvest.’”* Alaric didn’t destroy any Christian churches as he stated that his war was against Rome and not the *“apostles of the Lord.”* Through the first trumpet, God punished pagan Rome for its persecution of His faithful people.

**Revelation 8:8-9                      2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet                      428-468 A.D.**

***“8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; 9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.”***

**“a great mountain burning with fire”** – A mountain in symbolic prophecy represents a kingdom. Jeremiah called Babylon *“O destroying mountain”* in Jeremiah 51:25, matching the name given Rome by God’s faithful people. The great mountain here represented is the great Roman Empire. This is the second significant attack on Rome.

Genseric, the Vandal general from northern Africa, made his terrible attack upon Rome, coming from the south across the Mediterranean Sea. His career reached its height between the years 428-468 A.D. The second trumpet deals with naval confrontations as seen in *“the third part of the ships were destroyed.”* Loren Nelson continues to describe this Vandal Genseric, *“This vandal general was a pirate of the first degree, feared by all in the Mediterranean. Genseric’s navy could not be matched even by the great Roman Empire. He looted both seacoasts and ships. Finally, the Roman Empire confronted this pirate with fleets from Rome and Constantinople, but Genseric defeated both fleets and set their ships on fire, a total loss for Rome. When attacking the seacoast, Genseric also took prisoners, sailed them out to sea, and beheaded them. In one of his attacks, he took 500 principal men of a city, turning the sea to the color of blood as he massacred them.”*

**Revelation 8:10-11                      3<sup>rd</sup> Trumpet                      441-442 A.D.**

***“10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; 11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.”***

The third trumpet refers to the third invasion of Rome by Attila the Hun. Taylor Bunch describes this great Hun warrior: *“Attila termed himself ‘The Scourge of God.’ He claimed that he was divinely directed to scourge the Roman Empire. The symbolic meteor representing the Huns ‘fell’ and was not ‘cast’ upon the empire, as were the Goths and Vandals. The Huns were not driven by another foe but came voluntarily except as they claimed supernatural guidance. The Huns were of Mongolian stock and were Asiatics rather than Europeans. They conquered China in 200 B.C. They began their movement westward from North China in the first century of the Christian Era. They were a shepherd people whose movements were controlled largely by the abundance or scarcity of pasture. In the beginning of the fourth century they occupied the vast plains north of the Caspian Sea and came into contact with outposts of the Ostrogoth’s. In the latter part of the fourth century they again marched westward driving the Teutonic tribes before them, literally*

*pushing or casting them upon the empire of the Romans. Early in the fifth century Attila established his seat of government on the plains east of the Danube, one of the boundary rivers of the empire, and forced the Goths across the river into Roman territory.”*

**“the third part of the rivers”** – This refers to the method of Attila’s attacks. Unlike the previous invasions, Attila’s attacks centered on the Danube, one of the three main rivers important to the commerce of the Roman Empire. Therefore, the star fell upon *“the third part of the rivers,”* or one of the three main rivers upon which the life of the Roman Empire depended.

**“Wormwood”** – The word *“Wormwood”* in the Greek means *“Bitterness.”* Attila used the rivers to become a bitter poison or curse to Roman Empire. It was the boast of Attila that the grass never grew on the spot which his horse had trod.

**Revelation 8:12-13                      4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet                      476 A.D.**

*“12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. 13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!”*

The Roman Empire came to its end in 476 A.D. The final blow came in the form of Odoacer of the Heruli, one of the northern Germanic tribes. Joined by many other Germanic tribes, Odoacer crushed all the last remnants of the once great Roman Empire. Not only did this lead to end of the Roman Empire, but led to rising of the period in history known as the Dark Ages. Loren Nelson describes this dark period in history this way:

*“This dark period of history was limited to what we know as Europe. The rest of the world prospered during this period of time. The strife and spiritual darkness of Western Europe were the result of its rejection of the pure gospel of Christ. Like pagan Rome, the church of Rome desired earthly power and authority rather than the humble life of Christ’s faithful followers. What a contrast between the meek and lowly Jesus and the pomp and wealth of the Roman Church. The fourth trumpet marked the start of a long era of spiritual darkness.”*

**“the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars”** –

In the political firmament of the ancient world, while under the reign of imperial Rome, the emperorship, the consulate, and the senate shone like the sun, the moon, and the stars. The history of their decline is brought down until we see the extinction of the Roman senate.

**“Woe, woe, woe”** – As fearful as these calamities, falling upon the Roman Empire were, in the first four trumpets, they are light compared to the three trumpets to follow. They were but as the preliminary drops of a rain before the storm which was about to fall of the Roman world. The three remaining trumpets are overshadowed with a cloud of woe.

**Conclusion:**

The first four trumpets were God’s judgments upon the Roman Empire. These four successive attacks led to the decline and fall of the pagan Roman Empire. Although Rome was a civil state, its religion was entwined around every fiber of Roman life. Rome’s religion was extensive,

including the worship of heavenly bodies and deities borrowed from all the conquered nations: Greece, Medo-Persia, Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt. Sun worship was important to Rome, thus in the fourth trumpet the sun, moon, and stars are smitten by God. Ultimately, Rome was punished for shedding the blood of the martyrs.