

The Sound of Silence

Silence and the Trumpets of Revelation 8

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

² Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

³ And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on **the golden altar before the throne,**

⁴ and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.

⁵ Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

⁶ Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

⁷ The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

⁸ The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.

⁹ A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

¹⁰ The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.

¹¹ The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.

¹² The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.

¹³ Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!"

(Revelation 8:1-13)

The Sound of Silence

Someone writes, “Oxymorons ... [are] loved by poets, [they consist] in the juxtaposition of two or more words that normally deny each other. But it can happen, at times, that this contrast exposes a perfectly sensible expression, an image that is difficult to evoke otherwise. ‘The sound of silence’ is one of them, and it’s safe to bet that someone who suffers from tinnitus would be ready to confirm it.”¹ (Tinnitus is when you hear an incessant ringing in your ears that no one else can hear.) “[The Sound of Silence](#)” was a song written by Paul Simon about sixty years ago. It became Simon and Garfunkel’s first breakout #1. It was remade in 2015 with a completely different spin by the metal group Disturbed. Kind of fits (highly recommended).

¹ [Edoardo Crasta](#), “The Sound of Silence: The Meaning of Simon and Garfunkel’s Masterpiece,” *Auralcrave* (Aug 27, 2020), <https://auralcrave.com/en/2020/08/27/the-sound-of-silence-the-meaning-of-simon-and-garfunkels-masterpiece/>.

Its lyrics are haunting. “Hello darkness my old friend, I’ve come to talk with you again...” The narrator finds himself caught up in a terrifying dream in a concrete jungle filled with ten thousand mindless people “talking without speaking” and “hearing without listening,” writing songs that voices never share, because no one dare disturb the sound of silence. The silence grows like a cancer. An anonymous blogger puts an interesting interpretation of the cancer this way. “The silence that is referred to is the silence of the people, afraid to say anything against the government for fear of death or worse ... as more are afraid to speak, the more control the government takes and the less anyone will stand up to the new government.” Back to the song. The narrator finds himself struggling to teach the masses the truth so that the silence might finally be broken. But his words fell to the ground like silent raindrops echoing in the wells of silence. It was no use. Nothing could overcome the sound of silence.

It’s a fascinating oxymoron, isn’t it? *Sounds of silence*. Sounds are the opposite of silence. What is silence, anyway? What does it mean? What does it do? Nothing? Or are there actually sounds to it, soundless words that speak volumes if a person is tuned to its frequency and is really trying to listen?

Our passage today **begins with silence**. It is silence in the strangest of all places: **the throne-room** of heaven. “**There was silence in heaven**” (**Rev 8:1**). This is all the more stunning when you realize as one commentator does, “**The Apocalypse is the New Testament’s noisiest book. Playing with the popular misnomer, we might rename it the Book of Reverberations. Its pages echo with the sounds of song and lament, cursing, and praise, blasphemy and testimony ... rolling thunder**”² and, as we will see just a couple of verses, **loud trumpet blasts** that could wake the dead.

The silence lasted **half an hour**. It is the **shortest time frame** in the book. No one is quite sure why, though I think a good guess is that it relates to the time of **lighting morning incense** in the temple. But maybe it’s as someone has related it to music (thinking perhaps of the song of the previous chapter), “**It is as though there is one bar’s rest for the whole orchestra and the choir of heaven before they launch on the second of John’s symphonic variations.**”³ Interesting way of putting it.

But have you ever sat in **a room full of people totally silent**? If so, I bet it didn’t last long. How about for half an

² **Harry O. Maier**, *Apocalypse Recalled: The Book of Revelation after Christendom* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002), 92.

³ **George B. Caird**, *The Revelation of St John the Divine*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: A & C Black, 1966), 106.

hour? Imagine if suddenly, right now, I stopped talking and didn't start again for thirty minutes. Especially, if I was supposed to be preaching! Would you wait there in silence for that long? So what does it mean? **What sound is the silence trying to teach us?**

Silence in Scripture

To answer this, I want us to think about “silence” in the **Scripture**. Generally speaking, silence expresses a wide range of emotions: **attentiveness** (**Deut 27:9; Job 33:31; Acts 19:33**), **restraint** (**1 Sam 10:27; Ps 50:12; Jer 4:19**), **respect and awe** (**Job 29:21; Hab 2:20**), **loyalty** (**Is 36:21**), **deep thought** (**Acts 15:12**), **acceptance of guilt** (**Job 13:19; Rom 3:19**), **rest after tumult or suffering** (**Ps 46:10; Mk 4:39**), **fear of saying something wrong** (**Ps 39:2**), **even wisdom** (**Job 13:5; Prov 17:28**); more negatively, it can express **faithlessness** (**Esther 4:14**), **fear** (**Job 31:34; Acts 18:9**), **deep pain** (**Job 2:13; Lam 2:10**), **rebellion** (**Ps 32:2; Mk 3:4**), **defeat or destruction** (**Ps 101:5; 143:12; Is 47:5**), and **supremely death** (**Ps 31:17–18; 94:17; 115:17**). “**Significantly, there is one Hebrew verb (used, e.g., in Ps 18:40, 101:5; Lam 3:53) that means both “to destroy” and “to keep silent.”**”⁴

⁴ **Leland Ryken** et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 790–791.

Curiously, Jewish tradition talks about a **primeval silence** that will come at the end of history when all the earth's inhabitants die just before the final judgment.⁵ This parallels the silence that they teach preceded the original creation—it will last for seven days.⁶ Beale gives us a list of three further things to think about, all of which revolve around the notion of judgment.⁷ These are in his order.

First, silence is sometimes used as an indication that **God has heard the saints' prayers**. **Psalm 65:1-2** may be a good explanation for this. “There will be silence before Thee, and praise in Zion, O God; And to Thee the vow will be performed. O Thou who dost *hear prayer*, To Thee all men come” (NAS).⁸ There are all kinds of Jewish traditions about the silence of heavenly beings so that our prayers can be

⁵ “Then the world shall be turned back to primeval silence for seven days, as it was at the first beginnings, so that no one shall be left. After seven days the world that is not yet awake shall be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish” (4 Ezra 7:30-31)

⁶ “Then the spirit was blowing, and darkness and silence embraced everything; the sound of human voices was not yet there” (4 Ezra 6:39). “Or will the universe return to its nature and the world go back to its original silence?” (2 Baruch 3:7).

⁷ **G. K. Beale**, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 451-54.

⁸ Many translations like the ESV and KJV leave “silent” out of the translation. Here is a representative comment as explanation for why. “MT reads ‘To you, silence (*dumiyyâ*) is praise.’ This is a possible reading, but unlikely in a hymn of praise where sound is the central act. Most follow LXX, which uses *prepō* (“it is fitting or proper”), as does Syr.” See **Nancy deClaisé-Walford**, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, ed. E. J. Young, R. K. Harrison, and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014).

heard⁹ but perhaps the most interesting is their tradition preserved in the introduction to the Song of Solomon Targum and its explanation of the famous story of Joshua telling God to make the sun “stand still” (Josh 10:12). “Stand still” is literally “be silent” (*dom*). They took this as a command to the sun and the moon to stop singing, so that Joshua’s song could be heard by God, hence, immediately after *Joshua spoke to the LORD* (vs. 12) and there was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD *heard the voice of a man* (14).

Second, silence is an indication that God is about to announce something. Ezekiel 1:24-25, “And when they went, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the sound of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army. When they stood still, they let down their wings. And *there came a voice* from above the expanse over their heads. When they stood still, they let down their wings.” The Targum of these verses give the explanation that they stood still and became silent because

⁹ Bauckham explains that this comes from a tradition of the seven heavens where in the fifth heaven there are “companies of Ministering Angels, who utter [divine] song by night, and are silent by day for the sake of Israel’s glory, for it is said: By day the Lord doth command his lovingkindness, and in the night his song [i.e. the song of the angels] is with me [Ps 42:9]’ (b. Hag. 12b). The meaning is that the angels in heaven praise God throughout the night, but, out of his gracious love for Israele, God silences them during the day so that the prayers of Israel on earth may be heard by him in heaven.” Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (New York: T&T Clark, 1993), 71.

they knew that God was about to send forth this word (*Dibbur*). What else could they do?¹⁰

Judgments from God's mouth especially necessitate silence. “*Listen to me in silence, O coastlands; let the peoples renew their strength; let them approach, then let them speak; let us together draw near for judgment*” (Isa 41:1). “*Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests*” (Zeph 1:7). Gentry makes a great point that even in the Exodus that, “*Although the Egyptians will erupt in a ‘great cry in all the land of Egypt’ (Ex 11:6), ‘against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel’ (Ex 11:7).*”¹¹ In this case, the judgment is against the Goyim (nations) and *for* his people!

Third, silence occurs in relation to the temple and its liturgy. I wonder how much people might need to hear this in our day of the Rock n’ Roll Worship Event in so many

¹⁰ “And I heard the sound of their wings, like the sound of many waters, like a sound from *before Shaddai*; as they went, *the sound of their words were as though they were thanking and blessing their Master, the everliving King of the worlds*; like the sound of the hosts of the angels on high; when they stood still, their wings became silent.¹⁷ 25. *And at such time when it was His will to make the Dibbur audible to His servants the prophets of Israel, there was a voice which was heard from above the firmament which was above their heads. When they stood still, their wings became silent before the Dibbur*” (Targ. Ezek 1:24-25).

¹¹ Gentry, 1:690.

churches? “But the LORD is in his holy *temple*; let all the earth *keep silence* before him” (Hab 2:20). “*Be silent*, all flesh, before the LORD, for he has roused himself from his *holy dwelling*” (Zech 2:13). Specifically, as it relates to the heavenly liturgy, there was a thirty-minute burning of incense each morning in the temple after the lamb had been sacrificed (Ex 30:7; Luke 1:9-10; Philo, *The Special Laws* 1.276). Someone explains what happened.

Slowly the incensing priest and his assistants ascended the steps to the Holy Place, preceded by the two priests who had formerly dressed the altar and the candlestick, and who now removed the vessels they had left behind, and, worshipping, withdrew. Next, one of the assistants reverently spread the coals on the golden altar; the other arranged the incense; and then the chief officiating priest was left alone within the Holy Place, to await the signal of the president before burning the incense. It was probably while thus expectant that the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias [Luke 1:8–11]. As the president gave the word of command, which marked that “the time of incense had come,” “the whole multitude of the people without” withdrew from the inner court, and fell down before the Lord, spreading their hands in silent prayer. It is this most solemn period, when throughout the vast Temple buildings deep silence rested on the

worshipping multitude, while within the sanctuary itself the priest laid the incense on the golden altar, and the cloud of “odours” [Rev 5:8] rose up before the Lord, which serves as the image of heavenly things in this description.¹²

How can we **choose** among these? Fortunately, **we don't have to**. They are compatible with one another. But we do need to understand why. This is where we need to think about the text and its structure.

Structure of Revelation 8

Revelation 8 begins **the third of the seven cycles** of Revelation (**Rev 8-11**). This one begins where the last one began: **heaven** (see **Rev 4:1**). Our silence is “**in heaven**” (**Rev 8:1**). As the beginning of a new cycle, we are getting prepared to see what we have just seen, but from a different, fuller, more terrifying vantagepoint. That's how the cycles work. They tell the same story in progressive parallelism with increasing intensity from different perspectives.

Some have made the argument that **the seven cycles begin at the First Coming** and end at either 70 AD and/or

¹² **Alfred Edersheim**, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services as They Were at the Time of Jesus Christ*. (London: James Clarke & Co., 1959), 156-57.

the Second Coming.¹³ When you look at our passage, not only does it begin in heaven, but it is preceded immediately by the comment that the Lamb will be their shepherd and will guide them to springs of living waters (Rev 7:16-17). While that kind of fits heaven, when did that begin? At his First Coming. That's why he is called the Lamb. This is the language of a sacrificial animal. That's why they hold palm branches in hand (7:9). This is a reference to Palm Sunday, just before Jesus dies as the lamb-sacrifice. Along these lines, some who hold to an A.D. 70 view of Revelation understand the silence to refer to the death of Christ, which ended the OT cult administered by the angels.¹⁴

This language of a sacrificial lamb fits the immediate setting of the heavenly temple. More to the point, just two verse from our silence in heaven we see an angel standing before the altar with a golden censer and incense (Rev 8:3). That's our third idea of the silence. In fact, this golden censer of incense follows in the book the trimming of the seven lamps (Rev 1-2), the slaying of the sacrificial lamb (5:6), and

¹³ For example, Anthony Hoekema, "Amillennialism," *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), p. 156-57.

¹⁴ Beale (p. 453) cites Corsini, *Apocalypse*, 163. Also, Leithart compares this to Jesus' coming "hour" on earth. It's the same idea. See Peter J. Leithart, *Revelation*, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, vol. 1, *The International Theological Commentary on the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments* (London; Oxford; New York; New Delhi; Sydney: Bloomsbury; Bloomsbury T&T Clark: An Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018), 346.

the pouring of blood on the altar (6:9). It is followed by the burnt offering and drink offering (Rev 16:1), the sounding of trumpets which announced the worship to the people (8:6) and the singing of psalms (19:1-8).¹⁵ John is literally laying out events of Revelation as a holy liturgy, but a new one that replaces the old covenant rituals of animal sacrifices in a local temple.

But this same verse also adds that the incense is “the prayers of the saints.” That’s our first idea of the silence. Between these two verses we see that there are seven angels who now have seven trumpets (8:2). Those are going to announce something, and this is our second idea of the silence. Specifically, they are going to announce judgment. Therefore, we are starting to get the idea of what this silence is actually all about. The heavenly liturgy is stopping. Because God is hearing the prayers of his saints. And when he hears, he acts and announces his plans, as the last verse of our chapter says, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth” (8:13).

But what is the sound of this silence? This is where the structure becomes interesting. Chapter 8 forms a chiasm. That chiasm centers on vs. 3, focusing in on the golden altar

¹⁵ Beale, 452.

before the throne. (It feels off balance with 13 verses only because the seven trumpets of vs. 2 take nearly half the chapter to unfold later on.) So again, the center of a chapter is on **the heavenly worship**. We've seen this over and over. This is the point and everything else is the explanation of why God is so adored. When this is not *our* main point, then *we* are not on point, no matter how fun or exciting or terrifying whatever we are thinking about might be. This is simply the objective truth embedded in the structure of the text. We do well to listen to this silent sound of the structure.

A. Silence in heaven (8:1)

B. **Seven Angels and Seven Trumpets** (8:2)

C. Another **Angel**/Stood at **Altar**/Golden **Censer** (8:3)

D. **Incense** to Offer of the **Prayers of All the Saints** (8:3b)

E. On the Golden Altar Before the Throne of God (8:3c)

D¹. Smoke of **Incense** of **Prayers of All the Saints** (8:4)

C¹. The **Angel** Took the **Censer** from the **Altar** (8:5)

B¹. Seven Angels and Seven Trumpets (8:6-12)

A¹. Crying with a Loud Voice (13)

But what I want to show you is that **8:1** and its “silence” is more than just a **dramatic pause** in action, or a **temporary cessation** of revelation, or an **expectant awe** of the heavenly hosts as they await God’s final judgment about to be

revealed, or an allusion to the **pre-creation silence** that may be repeated at the end, all ideas that have been put forth.¹⁶ Indeed, though Rev 8 begins a new cycle, I do not think it is wise or good to sharply separate it from what comes before. In fact, we have clues that **the silence stands at the center of the two chapters** where on either end you have *very*

The Chiastic Structures of Rev 7-8 Imagined as an Hourglass

Calling w/ a Loud Voice (7:1-2)

144,000 Sealed Servants of God (3-8)

A Great Multitude **Before the Throne** (9a)

Clothed in White Robes with Palm Branches (9b)

Crying with **a Loud Voice**: Salvation to God (10-12)

Who are These **Clothed in the White Robes?** (13-14)

Before the Throne Serving God in Temple (15)

144,000/No Thirst/Guided by Lamb (16-17)

Silence in heaven (8:1)

Seven Angels and Seven Trumpets (8:2)

Another **Angel**/Stood at **Altar**/Golden **Censer** (8:3)

Incense to Offer of the **Prayers of All the Saints** (8:3b)

On the Golden Altar Before the Throne of God (8:3c)

Smoke of **Incense** of **Prayers of All the Saints** (8:4)

The **Angel** Took the **Censer** from the **Altar** (8:5)

Seven Angels and Seven Trumpets (8:6-12)

Crying with a Loud Voice (13)¹⁷

loud cries going up. In this way, I imagine the structural parallels here to look like an **old hourglass** where all the sand has to be **funneled through the tiny center of silence**.¹⁷

And in this way, the silence in heaven speaks

volumes. All the roaring, all the wailing, all the calamity of the four horsemen and the sixth seal and the cries of the

¹⁶ These four are mentioned as being in the literature by **Bauckham** (p. 70).

¹⁷ This is my reworking of the few chiasms I've seen attempted on these two chapters. I've had to leave out some points to show the structure in the pattern of an hourglass. But the general idea is no stretch at all.

martyrs and what we will soon see of the blasting of the trumpets, they all must be funneled through this deafening sound of silence in heaven as time itself seems to stop.

Seven Trumpets Begin

Now is the time to begin unfolding the chapter and this will illuminate our silence so much more than we've already done. “When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour” (Rev 8:1). What we have not yet discussed is that the silence occurs as Christ opens the seventh seal. So far, five of the six seals have yielded terrifying images of judgment, causing kings and slaves alike to call for the rocks themselves to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. Chapter 7 gave us a different perspective on those seals, focusing in more on the fifth seal and the one that was the center of chapter 6: the cries of the saints. Jesus fights for his people. He is the Lord of Armies.

Some people think that the seventh seal is simply the silence. But this is incorrect. The next verse suddenly introduces us to the next batch of sevens in the book. This batch gives us the first of two “sounds” that this silence echoes off of: seven trumpets. Together, these are the seventh seal. “Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God,

and *seven trumpets were given to them*” (Rev 8:2). “The” (definite article) seems to indicate that we’ve seen these seven angels before, and indeed, we saw *seven angels with seven churches* and linked them to the seven “wandering stars.” Now, though men ascribe to them the quality of “wandering” and hence they become a metaphor of sin, God still created those. Here, they do Christ’s bidding.

Let’s pause for a moment and *think about what we’ve just seen*. The Lamb opens the seventh seal. There is silence in heaven. And suddenly seven angels have seven trumpets. This indicates that the seventh seal is turning into seven trumpets and therefore we are at a new cycle. It is a *telescoping effect* where the one short piece of, say a pirate, opens to form a longer one. That helps him see ships at a much farther distance. So here. The seven trumpets are going to help us see the same things the seven seals showed us, but from a different vantage point.

I’m going to focus more on *significance of trumpets in a later sermon*, because they will not all be blown here. But it is important to think about a couple of things about them now. First, trumpets throughout scripture *announce things*. This is just like the silence. They especially announce worship (there was an entire Feast of Trumpets!) and coming

judgment, just like the silence. Of course, the ultimate OT expression of the latter is when **Jericho** fell and indeed, that is the only other time in the Bible we see *seven* trumpets. Importantly, they were preceded by a set of sevens just as here. Whereas we had seven *seals* then seven trumpets, they marched for seven *days* and then blew seven trumpets. That's a signal to us that judgment is coming and that in fact, soon enough, we will see a great city fall. But not yet.

Let's look at the trumpets that are blown (**vs. 6ff**) in this chapter and see what they signal. “**The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up**” (7). Let's just let the images sit in our minds for a bit to work on us. This is terrifying, no matter how you read it. **A third** of the earth is pummeled with hail, fire, and blood. A third of the trees and all green grass is burned up.

The second angel blows his trumpet. “**And something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed**” (**Rev 8:8-9**). Again, this image is horrific. And,

of course, it has led to all kinds of speculation. An asteroid? A comet? More literally, a super volcano? As you think about the picture, also hear how we have been repeating the language of “a third.” This increases the disasters from “a fourth” that we saw in the previous seals (6:8). If the image itself didn’t make you think so, the number will: things are getting worse.

“The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing 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 people died from the water, because it had been made bitter” (8:10-11). A mountain burning with fire and now a star falling from heaven? Here I want you to note “Wormwood” (*apsinthos*). This is a popular name for any of several plants named after the Greek goddess Artemis (genus: *Artemisia*). It has an extremely bitter taste, and it is mostly eaten by goats and camels or drunk by Bedouins in the form of strong aromatic teas. Deut 28:18 warns against the fruit of idolatry which is gall and wormwood. Jeremiah tells Israel that because they have worshiped the gods, “Behold, I will feed this people with wormwood, and give them poisonous water to drink” (Jer 9:15). This referred, of

course, to their punishment in exile in Babylon. Stars, Artemis, idolatry, gods ... keep this context in mind.

Finally, the **fourth angel** blew his trumpet, “**And a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night**” (**Rev 8:12**). The **cosmic** scope of these disasters hits home with this fourth and last trumpet of the chapter. Clearly, these trumpets have upped the ante. God is unleashing holy hell through their blasts. But what do they mean? How should we interpret them?

Besides the obvious **speculation** that these all have provoked, there is a lot going on here. My purpose in preaching this book is not to enter into speculation, if I can help it. My purpose today is to define for you the sound of silence. This is one of its great sounds. So first, just imagine the tumult, the noise, the uproar, the cries and screams associated with what is already four terrifying blasts of the trumpets. Now you can better understand why all of heaven went silent. What was about to occur was unspeakable.

But we can be a lot more specific. **Whatever these disasters are or were**, they have vital **theological truth** behind them. First, we can see very clear parallels between

these seven trumpets and the seven seals (we will see the same thing with the seven bowls).

| 4 Living Creatures | Seals | Trumpets |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lion: Leo Judah Matthew | Lion 1st Seal The White Horse: Rev 6:1-2 | Lion Rider Comes with a bow and crowns are given to him. He goes forth conquering and to conquer. Hail and Fire mingled with blood, a third of the earth burned up, all green grass burned up 1st Trumpet Rev 8:6-7 |
| Ox: Taurus Ephraim Luke | Ox 2nd Seal The Red Horse : Rev 6:3-4 | Ox War- Take peace from the earth with a great sword A something like a great [altar-like] mountain burning with fire cast into the sea, a third of the sea becomes blood , a third of the living creatures of the sea die, a third of the ships are destroyed 2nd Trumpet Rev 8:8-9 |
| Man: Aquarius Reuben Mark | Man 3rd Seal The Black Horse: Rev 6:5-6 | Man Famine- Comes holding scales-A voice says - A days food will cost a day's wages and don't hurt the oil and wine. Wormwood, a great star from heaven, burning like a torch, falls upon a third of the rivers and springs of water . A third of the waters are made bitter and a third of the men die from the waters 3rd Trumpet Rev 8:10- 11 |
| Eagle: Scorpio Dan John ¹⁸ | Eagle 4th Seal The Pale Horse: Death Rev 6:7-8 | Eagle -One fourth of the earth is killed . Hell follows this horse. They kill with the sword, hunger, death and beasts. A third of the sun, moon and stars are struck and darkened so a third of the day and night wouldn't shine. Eagle cries out at the end (8:13). 4th Trumpet Rev 8:12 |
| | 5th Seal Rev 6:9-11 | Souls of those slain under the altar . They are given white robes Locusts like horses prepared for battle. A star from heaven was given the key to the bottomless pit and it was opened. Smoke and locusts came up, stung men that don't have the seal of the living God on their foreheads for five months 5th Trumpet First Woe! Rev 9:1-12 |
| | 6th Seal Rev 6:12- 17 | Great Earthquake, Sun Moon as blood and the stars of heaven fall like a tree shedding winter fruit in a storm. Sky rolls up like scroll. Mountains removed. Kings cry out . Four angels bound at the Euphrates River are released to kill a third of mankind . The rest did not repent . 6th Trumpet Second Woe! Rev 9:13- 21 |
| | 7th Seal Rev 8:1 | Silence in Heaven for half an hour The Kingdoms of this world and the Kingdoms of our Lord have become one. The 24 elders worship . The temple of God in heaven is opened and there are flashes of lightning, peals of thunder and a great hailstorm 7th Trumpet Third Woe! Rev 11:15- 11:19 |

¹⁸ We haven't really discussed the Four Gospels as the counterparts to the lion (Judah), ox (Ephraim), man (Reuben), and eagle/serpent (Dan), in part because there is no consensus. Nevertheless, this is ancient and goes back to the earliest church (Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine), though the Father's disagreed on which Gospel to associate with which animal. Here is Augustine's reasoning: Matthew is the lion, because he focuses on Christ's royal office. Luke is the ox, because he focuses on Christ's priestly office. Mark is the man, focusing on Jesus' humanity. John is the eagle because the Word "ascends" to heaven. For more see the "Tetramorph" Wikipedia entry.

In fact, the first four bowls were poured out in the order of the four living creatures (lion, ox, man, eagle) and these are paralleled in the trumpets where the first is the lion-royal trumpet, the second is the ox-priest trumpet, the third is the man-trumpet, the fourth is the eagle-trumpet where the eagle cries out “**woe, woe, woe**” immediately after it is blasted (8:13). This means that they are more than likely giving us the same story from a different perspective.¹⁹

Second, a case has been made that the seven trumpets parallel the seven days of creation. This is seen in comparing the two lists But, since this is disaster rather than design, this makes their announcement a **de-creation**.²⁰

| Seven Trumpets | | Seven Days of Creation | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1. First trumpet (8:7): | hail, fire, blood falls from heaven to earth, destroying one-third of earth, grass, trees. (smoke blurring light/dark) | Day 1 | Light. Light and darkness separated . |
| 2. Second trumpet (8:8–9): | a burning mountain is thrown into the sea , and the sea becomes blood, which kills one-third living things and ships. | Day 2 | Separation of the waters . |

¹⁹ See **Leithart**, 373. There are also associations with the 7 Trumpets and the 7 Bowls (SEE GENTRY, 706).

Seven Trumpets

1. Hail, fire, destruction of earth, trees, grass (8:7)
2. Sea life dies from blood (8:9)
3. Rivers and springs poisoned (8:10)
4. Stellar bodies afflicted (8:12)
5. Abyss opened; smoke darkens air (9:1–11)
6. Angels at Euphrates unleash large army upon men (9:13–19) assemble for Armageddon (16:12–16)
7. Kingdom of this world becomes Christ’s (11:15–18) their evil (16:17–21)

Seven Bowls

1. Loathsome sores (16:2)
2. Sea becomes blood; sea life dies (16:3)
3. Rivers and springs turn to blood (16:4)
4. Sun scorches men (16:8)
5. Beast’s kingdom darkened (16:10–11)
6. Euphrates dries up allowing kings to
7. Cities of the nations fall as God remembers

²⁰ **Leithart** (p. 357–58) discusses this, but doesn’t make the Day 1 connection.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3. Third trumpet (8:10–11): | The star Wormwood falls into fresh waters and turns one-third bitter. | Day 3 | Land divided from sea . Plants and trees created (in Gen 2, by ivers). |
| 4. Fourth trumpet (8:12): 1 st day of blessing. | Sun, moon, stars are smitten and darkened. | Day 4 (1 st trumpet of woe) | Sun, moon, and stars created |
| 5. Fifth trumpet (9:1–12): 2 nd day of blessing | A star from heaven opens the abyss and releases flying locust-scorpions. | Day 5 (2 nd trumpet of woe) | Sea creatures and birds |
| 6. Sixth trumpet (9:13–11:14): 3 rd day of blessing | An army comes from the Euphrates, an angel gives John a book to eat, the two witnesses . | Day 6 (3 rd trumpet of woe) | Man and woman created |
| 7. Seventh trumpet (11:15–19): | Opening of the heavenly Most Holy Place . Song : God has judged the earth | Day 7 | Temple finished / Sabbath / God sits as judge |

Third, the seven trumpets have a good deal in common with [the Ten Plagues](#) of Egypt, which is also a de-creation.²¹

| Judgment | Trumpets | Plagues |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Hail and fire | 1 st trumpet (8:7) | 7 th plague (Ex 9:22-25) |
| Bloody/undrinkable water | 2 nd and 3 rd trumpets (8:8-11) | 1 st plague (Ex 7:20-25) |
| Darkness | 4 th trumpet (8:12) | 9 th plague (Ex 10:21-23) |
| Locusts | 5 th trumpet (9:1-11) | 8 th plague (Ex 10:12-15) |

The judgment God gave to [one nation](#) will now be multiplied to [many](#). However, if you are a preterist, and quite frankly, when you understand something that will be made clear later, that there is a city under attack here and that this city though called Babylon ([Rev 14:8](#)), Sodom and Egypt ([11:8](#)), or Rome ([17:9](#)), is also Jerusalem ([11:1, 8](#)), this takes on even more meaning. As we start to think about possible [fulfillments of these trumpets](#), we must first look to Jerusalem in 70 AD (presupposing an early date is extremely

²¹ This chart reduplicates [Gentry's](#), p. 705.

helpful here, but “history is prophecy” as the typology of Joshua/John/Revelation show us makes this unnecessary).

It needs to be understood that like Jesus’ language in the [Olivet Discourse](#), which is often very apocalyptic, so also the language of the trumpets has been understood by some to have already taken place. Many people wonder how that could possibly be. Here are a few examples. [Josephus](#) tells us that in those days, “[Galilee was all over filled with fire and blood](#)” (*J.W.* 3.4.1.63) because Vespasian “[set fire, not only to the city itself, but to all the villas and small cities that were round about it](#)” (*J.W.* 3.7.1.134). Or, Titus, “[Gave his soldiers leave to set the suburbs on fire, and ordered that they should bring timber together, and raise banks against the city](#)” (*J.W.* 5.6.2.262). “[All the trees that were about the city had been already cut down for the making of the former banks](#)” (*J.W.* 5.12.4.523). We have already discussed how “earth” can also be translated as “land,” as in the Promised Land, so they do not see this as a universal judgment on the nations, but on Israel for rejecting Messiah who was the object of the silence in vs. 1.

The idea of a [mountain](#) being plucked up and thrown into the sea has OT parallels in the nations. Jeremiah told Babylon that she was a “[destroying mountain, who destroys](#)

the whole earth ... I will make you a burnt-out mountain” (Jer 51:25). How, “The sea has come up over Babylon; She has been engulfed with its tumultuous waves” (Jer 51:42). So also, Jerusalem is likened to a mountain: “The mountain of the house of the Lord” (Mic 4:1-2; cf. Ps 2:6; Joel 2:1; Isa 2:2-3; 8:18; etc.). Waters drying up and ships being destroyed is also prophetic language, sometimes for Israel, fulfilled in their first exile. “Behold, I dry up the sea with My rebuke, I make the rivers a wilderness; their fish stink for lack of water, and die of thirst” (Isa 50:1-2). In the days of the siege of Jerusalem, Josephus tells us about how “the Jews built themselves a great many piratical ships, and turned pirates upon the seas near to Syria, and Phoenicia, and Egypt” (*J.W.* 3.9.2.416). However, “A violent wind [blew upon them ... and dashed to pieces against the abrupt parts of the rocks, insomuch that the sea was bloody a long way, and the maritime parts were full of dead bodies” (*J.W.* 3.9.3.426).

What about Wormwood? In the OT, stars fall from heaven and they are supernatural beings. Remember the famous verse about Lucifer? “How you have fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn!” (Isa 14:12). What people sometimes miss is that this verse has as its primary context

the fall of *Babylon*! In my opinion, it makes a lot of sense that wormwood is as the very least a heavenly fallen being. Dr. Heiser has said,

Original readers of Revelation’s Wormwood description would therefore quite readily have been thinking of fallen angels. So, to read a description of Wormwood as a falling star come to Earth, to them, would have suggested a supernatural rebellion, or some kind of unleashing of supernatural, hostile powers of darkness. They would not have been thinking of comets or meteors or a rogue planet, for sure. The point is that Wormwood may be a spiritual event or concept, not a literal, astronomical one....

Now, [wormwood] is the name of a bitter herb. It’s interesting to note that in all of the texts and records of ancient Greco-Roman astronomy—I’m gonna say that again—all of the texts and records of ancient Greco-Roman astronomy that have survived to this day, and there are a lot of them, in all of that material, there isn’t a single instance where any actual star in the heavens was called absinthe [or wormwood, artemesia, etc.]. None of them. Now this suggests very strongly that the ancient writer was not thinking about an astronomical object when he used that particular term that we translate as “wormwood.”²²

²² Excerpt From: [Thomas Horn](#). *The Wormwood Prophecy* (2019), Apple Books. See [Michael Heiser](#), “FringePop321, “Wormwood and Planet X (Nibiru),” *Youtube* (Dec 10, 2018),

Heiser does not make the direct **Artemis** connection (Horn thinks it is shaky too), however, it seems appropriate to me given the fact that these seven angels correlate to the **seven stars** and that one of those is **the moon**. Artemis is in fact the **moon goddess**. So why wouldn't God give people over to worship their gods, which in the end turns to bitterness and gall, just like the prophets had foretold?²³ It is very much like he did with Israel when first they came upon the bitter waters of Marah and immediately were tested at the seventy palms of Elim (the place of the gods) and then in the wilderness.²⁴

Now, **will there be fulfillment of these things in our own future?** I have little reason not to think no. What might they look like? While it is possible that there could be terrible conflagrations of the heavens that are unleashed on the earth, it should always be kept in mind the OT

https://www.fringepop321.com/wormwood-and-planet-x-nibiru-video.htm#id-We_IU1KFd8. Textual emphasis was added in the moments Heiser applied vocal emphasis.
²³ **Anna Pharos**, "The Name of the Star is Called Wormwood," *The Sphinx Magazine* vol. 2, ed. Catharine H. Thompson (Boston: The Sphinx Publishing Company, 1900), 223-24. 221-24. Note: This magazine is NOT Christian in any sense. But she makes connections many Christian likely do not know about, hence I found it a valuable resource for this particular point. A closely related idea is that we are talking about Ishtar here, but Ishtar shares many common attributes with Artemis. See **E. P. Matrejek**, *The Apocalypse of Enoch and Bhušunda: A Chronology of the Primeval Gods and the Western Sunrise* (Minnetonka, MN: Apkallu Press, 2018), 66-68. Again, not a Christian source.

²⁴ On this connection, **Roger Phillip Drews**, "Revelation! What Did the First Audience Hear?" *A Bible Class Study and Commentary on The Revelation of Jesus Christ to St. John* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2012), 155.

context and how such things were fulfilled already *in the past*. If God has worse things in store than armies marching upon our cities (and never ever try to minimize the horror of war), to me, that is up to him to decide. What we must all do is hear the **deafening sounds** that make up the end of this chapter, which serve as a counterpart to the silence. “**Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!**” (**Rev 8:13**). This kind of language ought to make every person quake in their boots. And it ought to make you **repent** of your sins and **turn** to the loving Christ who will hide you from the wrath of the Lamb. Have you done so or are you obstinately clinging to your self-righteousness in days where any evil known to man seems capable of being carried out? A lot of people like to use the Great Tribulation idea and the Rapture as a means of getting people to take spiritual stock of their souls. But to me it is much simpler. You are not guaranteed tomorrow. Everyone will die and the horror awaiting those on the other side cannot compare to the horrors of the angelic trumpeters.

The Heavenly Worship of the Saints

And yet, I cannot leave it like that. In fact, we have **skipped over the center** section of the chapter. I did this on purpose. We've now talked about the deafening sound of the trumpets and how the silence is broken by them. However, before thinking about the trumpets of judgment, both in terms of order and importance, you must think of the trumpets in terms of their **call to worship**. This is the sound that first breaks our silence.

This idea both precedes the blasting of the trumpets as we read in the chapter and is at the heart of the chapters literary structure. In other words, the judgment that is coming is *secondary* to your hearing and internalizing the loud call to worship of the Lamb. God is summoning you like Israel of old to **assemble around his temple**. The trumpets of worship are announcing to you that **someone great** has come into your presence. And what it focuses on is how we will end our chapter today.

In **Numbers 10:2** we read, “**Mark two silver trumpets. Of hammered work you shall make them, and you shall use them for summoning the congregation and for breaking camp.**” Summoning the congregation meant Israel was being **summoned to worship the Living God** who had come

down in the cloud and was commanding them to rest in their wilderness wanderings.

Though our center does not have a trumpet directly attached to it, it is full of the worship of God. “And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth” (Rev 8:3-4). We have seen how the silence was related both to the beginning of worship in the temple each morning and how it was attached to God hearing the prayers of his people.

Notice how “incense” and “prayers of the saints” is repeated in vv. 3 and 4. Between them is the center of the chapter and the center of the heavenly temple: The golden altar before the throne. In the tabernacle parallel, this was the incense altar placed right near the door to the Most Holy Place, just outside the throne of the ark of the covenant where the LORD sat as King. The incense was placed so that the smoke would fill the room so that the priest ministering might get a sense otherworldliness of the place.

On the outsides of the incense and prayers we find the “angel” and the “altar” and the “golden censer” repeated (vv. 3 and 5). First, he goes and lights the incense. Then he takes the censer and fills it with fire from the altar. And then ... he throws it on the earth. “And there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.” These are the same things we find just prior to the LORD’s arrival on Mt. Sinai where he came to give his Law (Ex 19:19, 20:18; Heb 12:26). Oh, and there was the sound of a trumpet growing louder and louder (Ex 19:19).

There, God was telling his people what was righteous, true, and good to do on this earth. Now, he is telling his saints that those who have broken the eternal covenant (or the covenant with creation) will be shaken to the core. God is going to answer their prayers! How long must they wait? Not much longer now.

The end of chapter 8 comes to a climax in loud cries and terrible woes. This is the bottom of our hour-glass structure. Its top and equivalent is found in the worship of God in heaven in chapter 7 when everyone cries out in a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Rev 7:10). And all the beings of heaven “fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying,

‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen’” (11-12).

These are the two choices laid before you. So many come to these chapters and speculate about all the crazy events that might be in our (usually very near) future. That **speculation** often turns to fascination. That **fascination** often turns to fixation. That **fixation** often turns to **obsession**. It’s interesting how so many of the best sellers over the past 50 years in the Christian world have been about the Second Coming. Especially chapters like we are in here. But almost never is one about the First. Frankly, I think the First Coming bores people. They would much rather have all the excitement of planets like Nibiru buzzing by, atmosphere’s being ripped apart, continents torn asunder, asteroids pummeling the earth, nephilim returning, or figuring out if the Mark of the Beast is a microchip, a nanoprobe, or a vaccine (or all three!), and often for good reasons—to warn people about the danger of **hell**.

I’ll tell you how to not go to hell. **Worship the Lamb of God**. Fall on your face before him. Praise his name. Fear his judgments. And ... *be silent*. Curiously, Dr. Gage has not found any direct parallels in chapter 8 to John’s Gospel. At

least, he hasn't written about any. It is the only chapter where this occurs. It's like there's ... silence. He does, however, call the parallel chapters to the seven trumpets, which he labels “**Communion in Heaven**” for the worship we have seen here and will continue, he calls it **Communion on Earth (John 13-15)**.

In those chapters, Jesus washes his disciples feet, tells people that he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, promises them the Holy Spirit, assures them that He (and not the fallen nation) is the True Vine, promises to turn their sorrow into joy, and takes communion with them. Why? Because “**the hour**” was upon him (**John 16:25**). Don't let the words of the prophets sent out that they might teach you, don't let the arms of the Savior opened wide on the cross that they might reach you fall like silent raindrops that echo in wells of your silent, irresponsible heart. But hear God whispering to you now, as the one who has risen from the dead. I wonder if you can hear his calling to you in the sound of silence?

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