

The Book of Revelation Study Notes 6

Revelation 8:2-6: Preparing for the Sounding of the Trumpets

And 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, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to 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, went up before God out of the angel's hand.* ⁵ *And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.* ⁶ *And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.*

Preterist

The passage employs Levitical sacrificial language (coals of fire from the altar, v.5, censer, v.3), but ironically against Jerusalem.

The text depicts the destruction of Jerusalem as under the ban, to be wholly consumed by fire, thus offering the city up as a holocaust to God (Deut. 13:12-18).

Historicist

The slain saints are martyrs under roman oppression and the angel (v.3) is none other than Christ who conjoins the prayers of the saints with incense, rendering them acceptable before God.

With the prayers of the saints ascending to God they will finally be answered in the trumpet judgments.

The first four trumpets represent four waves of barbarian attacks against the western empire. The fifth trumpet symbolizes the attack of the Muslims against the southern and eastern roman empire.

Futurist

In v.3, the angel is seen as Christ, since he is acting in a priestly role. However, others believe it may be an angel, other than Christ.

Fire is cast to the earth from the censer, affirms the trumpet judgments are finally God's answer to the prayers of saints martyred during the tribulation period (gentiles, not Jews).

Ironsides notes, "The prayers went up to the Father and judgment came down."

Idealist

The trumpet judgments do not continue chronologically after the seal judgments.

The trumpets cover the same theme of divine judgment seen in the seal judgments, but with a different focus.

Concerning incense added to the prayers of the saints, Lenski sees this representing the intercession of Christ, "adding power and efficacy to the prayers of the church."

Revelation 8:7-12: Four Trumpet Judgments

And the first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and

*all the green grass was burned up. And the **second angel sounded**, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood; ⁹ and a third of the creatures, which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed. And **the third angel sounded**, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters; ¹¹ and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter. 12 And the **fourth angel sounded**, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were smitten, so that a third of them might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.*

Preterist

The first four trumpets (like the four horseman seal judgments) represent God's judgment against Jerusalem for her rejection of Jesus and treatment of his believers. Reminiscent of the plagues of Egypt, resulting in Egypt's demise, and the birth of Israel, here they signal Jerusalem's demise, and the birth of a new nation, the church. Destruction of vegetation, literal, or symbolic of the righteous dying during the war. A star as "Wormwood" describes Israel's punishment for apostasy (Deut 29:18, et al).

Historicist

The first four trumpets represent successive invasions (Goths, Vandals) of western Rome experienced from AD 400-476. the Vandals were exceptionally brutal. Hail, fire, trees, grass, symbolize the slashing and burning of everything in their path. Matthew Henry, applies the four trumpets as signaling calamities against the church manifested in the invasion of heresy like Arianism in the fifth century.

Futurist

Futurists are divided as to whether the references to hail, fire great mountain are to be taken as literal, or symbolic. Many see hail, fire, and destruction of vegetation as literal. Some see the "great mountain burning with fire" as a giant meteor. However, others see it all as figurative of divine wrath against ungodly power structures. *Wormwood* signals bitterness, corruption of apostate religion during the tribulation. The "third part" mentioned repeatedly refers to judgment against a revived Roman Empire, a western confederation of nations, which will come under judgment.

Idealist

The four trumpet judgments (synchronous with the first four seals) affect a third of the world, thus should not be seen as sounding the final outcome of world history. The first four trumpets blast against the sources of life, which mankind often takes for granted. In antiquity these were "land", "sea", "fresh water" and "heavenly bodies". The first trumpet, judgment against the habitat, second trumpet, against sea, shipping, thus commerce. Interestingly "Chernobyl" means "wormwood," "Sun, moon, planets," encompasses all evils due to the abnormal function and effects of heavenly bodies.

8:13–11:19: Three Trumpets, "Woes," Overview

8:13, the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets are further described as three successive "woes," forecasting an intensification of judgment.

9:1–12, the 5th trumpet, 1st “woe,” signal the release of demonic torment.

9:13–11:14a, the 6th trumpet, 2nd “woe,” describes several developments:

9:13–21, describe a military battle, probably Armageddon

10:1–7, reveal the Little Book and the Seven Peels of Thunder

10:8–11, John told to swallow the Little Book

11:1–6, the measuring of the Temple and the Two Witnesses

11:7–13, the Death and Resurrection of the Two Witnesses

11:14a, the second “woe” is identified as such, *The second woe is past...*

11:14b–19, the 7th trumpet, 3rd “woe,” signals the end of the Tribulation, and the establishment of God’s eternal Kingdom.

Revelation 8:13: Three “Woe” Calamities to Follow

And I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe, to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

Preterist

The three “woes” plow back through developments described in the seal judgments leading to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Specifically they are: the first woe, seditions among the Jews themselves; the second woe, the besieging of Jerusalem by the Roman army; the third woe, the burning of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple.

Historicist

The historicist does not see this as parallel with the first four trumpet judgments, which focused on the fall of western Roman Empire to Christianity.

The remaining three “woe” trumpets focus on the ruin of the eastern Roman Empire.

1st woe, the Saracen (Muslim Arabs) conquest of the south-eastern empire; 2nd woe, the Ottoman conquest of the eastern empire; 3rd woe, encompasses the seven bowl judgments against the papacy, by means of the French revolution.

Futurist

The angel depicted as an eagle signals great judgment to come. While the first four judgments are essentially of a physical nature, the last three are demonically enhanced judgments.

The remaining trumpets described as “woes,” suggest an intensification of judgment, possibly referring to the Great Tribulation period.

Roberts Mounce, “the transition from divine warnings to demonic woes previews the ultimate excommunication of unrepentant man to the punishment prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt 25:41)”.

Idealist

The signaling of these last three trumpets as “woes” suggests that calamities and disasters that happen throughout human history will become more intense, as the end time approaches.

Revelation 9:1–12: The 5th Trumpet Woe: Unleashing Demonic Torment

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the

key of the bottomless pit was given to him. ² And he opened the bottomless pit; and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. ³ And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. ⁴ And they were told that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵ And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. ⁶ And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; and they will long to die and death flees from them. And the appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads, as it were, crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. ⁸ And they had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions. ⁹ And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. ¹⁰ And they have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. ¹¹ They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon. ¹² The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.

Preterist

A fallen star, refers to a fallen priest or school of religious teachers who influenced the Jews into moral and spiritual error, spreading heresies, and causing Jewish society to lose its sanity, civility all together. Like men, women point to rampant transvestitism.

Many point to the Jews being demonized, with demonic delusion resulting in their inability to reason rationally. Chilton states, "Satan and the host of hell simply swarmed through the land of Israel and consumed the apostates" fulfilling Matthew 12:43-45.

Adams sees Jews wanting to die and not being able as a fulfillment of Luke 23:27-30.

Historicist

In the Bible, locust (*arbeh*) often came in from Arabia, so *a fallen star*, refers to Saracen Arab Muslims, and their campaign against the eastern roman empire from 612-763 AD.

While they did torment the eastern empire, they were not able to destroy it.

Five months are 150 years (612-763 AD) when Muslims stopped forced conversions.

Futurist

Literally depicts release of demons against unrepentant humanity (see 2 Peter 2:4).

The torment, demonic oppression leading to attempted suicide on a massive scale.

Some see the locust as as a military force capable of inflicting pain, but not killing and identifying it with Gog (Ezekiel 38).

Ironsides, locust symbolize New Age religion, "the spiritual plague of the last days."

Idealist

Locust, demons who delight in afflicting people, living in spiritual moral darkness.

Sun and air darkened, signify the clouding of men's mind, demons robbing people of all light, wisdom, and understanding.

Moffat, "The withholding of death, instead of being an alleviation, is a refinement of torture; so infernal is the pain, that the sufferers crave, but crave in vain for death."

Revelation 9:13-21: The 6th Trumpet Woe: A Great Battle and Refusal to Repent

And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, ¹⁴ one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." ¹⁵ And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they might kill a third of mankind. And the number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. ¹⁷ And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone. ¹⁸ A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths. ¹⁹ For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads; and with them they do harm. And the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; ²¹ and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

Preterist

Historically, both Assyria and Babylon came across the river Euphrates to conquer Israel. Rome, likewise, used the 10th legion stationed at the Euphrates (Josephus, Wars 7:1:3) to execute her destruction of Israel.

Preterists affirm this event fulfills Jesus' time designation (Luke 21). Preterists do not find it surprising that God would speak of the roman invasion as fulfilling Luke 21:22, when, "all things which are written (OT prophecy) may be fulfilled."

Historicist

Trumpet refers to the fall of the Byzantine empire and Constantinople in AD 1453. Hour, day, month, year, calculated from 1062-1453, when Turks crossed the Euphrates and culminated when Constantinople fell to the Ottomans.

In spite of Constantinople's destruction at the hands of Muslim hordes, the apostate papal church did not repent as she continued her idolatrous practices.

Revelation 9:13-21: The 6th Trumpet Woe: A Great Battle and Refusal to Repent

Futurist

The four angels are demonic angels, presently bound until released and used to inspire an attack from an army amassed east of the Euphrates (see also Rev 16:2).

This future attack will be aimed at conquering the land of Palestine and also Europe.

Hour, day, month, year, do not refer to a specific time, but affirms that God's judgment through invasion is sure, leading to death of half the world's population.

Fire, smoke, brimstone, symbolize artillery, perhaps gas warfare as well.

However, despite such atrocities people will not repent, for they are dedicated to the worship of demons (1 Timothy 4:1)

Idealist

The Euphrates was the eastern boundary of Promised Land, and the Roman Empire.

The river symbolizes the restraint of the forces of evil, which God releases in answer to the prayers of the saints.

Revelation 10:1-7: The 6th Trumpet Woe: The Little Book and the Seven Peels of Thunder

And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire; ² and he had in his hand a little book which was open. And he placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land; ³ and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices. ⁴ And when the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken, and do not write them. And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, ⁶ and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there shall be delay no longer, ⁷ but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.

Preterist

Strong angel, Jesus, with feet on sea, land, revealing his sovereignty over the nations. The *little book* represents the unfolding revelation—the Book of Revelation—of which little remains before all is fulfilled.

The seven peals of thunder, are divine pronouncement so terrible they are meant for John's ears alone, or they may speak of future events beyond Jerusalem's fate.

The mystery of God finished, the gospel is for all, not exclusively Jews

Historicist

The sixth trumpet turns from fall of Byzantium in 1453AD to the Prot. Reformation in 1517AD.

The *strong angel*, is Christ; *little book* the Bible open, accessible to people by and large.

The loud voice, is the denouncement of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church by 16th century reformers (Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Zwingli, etc.).

The seven thunders, the crusades, reformation wars, or papal anathemas against the reformers, but unworthy to be recorded for posterity.

Futurist

Parenthetical; the *strong angel* is Christ, or perhaps a strong angel announcing the time is near.

The *little book*, is the angel's authority to execute God's plan. Some believe the book contains OT prophecies as they relate to Israel and its future state.

The *seven peals of thunder*, represent Christ's sacrifice, which the saved need never know, or experience.

Idealist

An interlude. The strong angel is Christ, or another angel announcing the time is near. *The little book*, feet on land and sea, suggest the angel has a message of import to the world, however to be kept secret from the world.

Echoing Psalm 29, the seven thunders represent the voice of God and show the whole counsel of God has not been revealed in the Book of Revelation (cf. 2 Cor 12:4)

Revelation 10:8 – 11: The 6th Trumpet Woe: Swallowing the Little Book

And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land." ⁹ And I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, "Take it, and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." ¹⁰ And I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. ¹¹ And they said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

Preterist

The eating of the book (see Ezek 3:1-3) is in keeping with John's prophetic role. John will prophecy, shifting from Israel's judgment to Rome's eventual downfall.

Historicist

The little Book *sweet* is the protestant focus on preaching over RCC ritual, ceremony. The little Book as *bitter*, refers to the persecution of protestants by the RCC.

Futurist

The *little book*, is God's word, which John has received, commissioned to proclaim. The book is sweet in its promises, bitter in its judgments, which will soon be seen.

Idealist

The *open book*, God's Word, sweet in its promise, bitter in the persecution it evokes. John must prophecy to *people, nations, tongues, kings*, encompassing the world.

Summary of Revelation 8:2-10:11

Preterist

These deal with the Jewish War of AD 66-70, culminating in the fall of Jerusalem. The fifth trumpet depicts demonically induced torment of rebellious Israel, rendering the besieged Jews of Jerusalem irrational and self-destructive. The sixth trumpet refers to Rome, destroying Jerusalem, killing, deporting Jews.

Historicist

These chapters represent the various invasions against the Eastern Roman Empire up to the Turks and the fall of Constantinople in AD 1453. The Little Book, is the Bible, which becomes available to the masses in Europe after the invention of the printing press and the Protestant Reformation.

Futurist

These chapters refer to a future seven-year tribulation meant for lost humanity. Whether literal, or supernatural, the trumpet judgments reveal fallen humanity's improper stewardship of the earth and its resources, and its abuse of technology (e.g. nuclear, biological weapons) resulting in catastrophe on a global scale.

Idealist

The trumpet judgments echo plagues of Egypt, but warning of worse things to come. The trumpets represent recurring ways in which God judges sinful humanity through environmental calamities and natural disasters. All trumpet judgments are meant as warnings inducing people to repent, but unfortunately, the unrepentant react to these judgments in defiance, remaining committed to their rebellion.

Revelation 11:1-6: the 6th Trumpet Woe: Measuring the Temple and the Two Witnesses

And there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it." ² "And leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. "And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." ⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. ⁵ And if anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone would desire to harm them, in this manner he must be killed. ⁶ These have the power to shut up the sky, in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

Preterist

The 42 months, 1260 days stand for the duration of the Jewish War, Nero's persecution of believers, or both.

The measuring of the temple is more correctly the *naos*, the holy of holies. Thus, John is to "measure", which means to divide between the holy and the profane.

Two witnesses are not known today, but may refer to faithful prophets at the time, who witnessed against Israel's civil and religious corrupt authorities.

Historicist

"Measuring" the temple, the *naos*, means identifying the true spiritual from the visible institution of the church, which was at the time the Roman Catholic Church.

The 1260 days are years, determining the duration of papal determination to persecute the true church.

Two witnesses are possibly the Waldenses and Albigenses, who resisted the papacy before the Reformation and were persecuted for it.

Futurist

Most futurists believe an actual temple will be built by Israel during the tribulation period. Measuring it signifies God's intent to preserve and protect a faithful remnant of Jews during the time of the Great Tribulation.

The 1260 days refers to a 3 ½ year future period, which is the second half of the tribulation when the temple will be desecrated, the Great Tribulation period.

The two witnesses are future prophets, possibly Moses and Elijah, or Enoch and Elijah.

Idealist

The measuring of the temple, the *naos*, shows that God preserves his church throughout history. Thus, while the world tramples upon the outside court, nominal Christendom, the genuine church remains secure.

The 1260 days symbolize the entire church age.

The two witnesses represent the church throughout the ages, which witnesses to the world.

Revelation 11:7-14a: The 6th Trumpet Woe: Death and Resurrection of the Two Witnesses

*And when they have finished their testimony, **the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.*** ⁸ *And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.* ⁹ *And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at **their dead bodies for three and a half days,*** and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. ¹⁰ *And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. **And after the three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them.*** ¹² *And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "**Come up here.**" And they went up into heaven in the cloud, **and their enemies beheld them.*** ¹³ *And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.* ¹⁴ ***The second woe is past...***

Preterist

The beast that comes from the abyss is Rome (Nero) persecuting the church.
The two witnesses represent OT prophets, who ended with John the Baptist.

Historicist

The beast is symbolic of aspects of the Roman Catholic papacy.
The beast *makes war*, establishing the Inquisition against true believers, which the papacy, the RCC considered to be heretics. This began with Pope Innocent III in the 12th century at the Lateran Council (1179 AD).
Christian burial was denied by papal decree to anyone considered to be a heretic.

Futurist

The beast out of the abyss is Satan, or perhaps the revived Roman Empire.
The beast is allowed to kill the two witnesses only after their work is completed.
This mirrors Jesus who finishes his atoning work and then surrenders his life for three days.

Idealist

The beast from the abyss signifies political power, which persecutes the church at any time.
God allows the church to experience apparent defeat at the hands of the wicked, but only for a short duration; the church will come to life, astounding the world.

Revelation 11:14b – 19: The 7th Trumpet Woe: The Establishment of the Heavenly Kingdom

^{14b} *...Behold, **the third woe is coming quickly.*** ¹⁵ ***And the seventh angel sounded;** and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "**The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.**"* ¹⁶ *And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God,* ¹⁷ *saying, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast, because Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign.* ¹⁸ *"And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."* ¹⁹ ***And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened;***

and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

Preterist

This is not to be confused with Christ's eventual rule at the final consummation. With the destruction of Jerusalem, the first great opposer of Christ is swept away and Christianity now becomes a true world religion, breaking from its Jewish roots. *And the time came for the dead to be judged*, is not a reference to the final judgment, but to the historical vindication of martyred saints in 70AD when Israel was destroyed.

Historicist

Rev 11:14 goes to 1699, the Treaty of Carlowitz, which marks the end of the Ottoman control of central Europe, thus evoking great rejoicing and worship in heaven. As a result, Christ now reigns. The 7th trumpet thus, includes the seven bowls of wrath which take the reader to the final consummation. The temple in heaven, refers to the church, thunder, earthquakes, foreshadow the tribulations depicted in the seven bowl judgments.

Futurist

The 7th trumpet heralds Christ's second, establishing His millennial reign. This is possible because like the seven trumpets are within the seventh seal, even so, the seven bowl judgments are within the seventh trumpet. *And he will reign forever and ever*, includes Christ's millennial reign, for there will never be a time again when the world will be under the control of man or Satan, the prince and ruler of the air. Concerning, v.18, *and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints...* futurists posit three resurrections: 1st, the resurrection of the church at the rapture, 2nd, the resurrection of OT saints and those who become believers during the tribulation, 3rd, the resurrection of the wicked dead at the Great White Throne judgment.

Idealist

This trumpet pictures a scene in heaven after the final judgment. V.17, notes Christ, *who art and who wast*, omitting "who is to come" because he has already come for good!