



## **REVELATION 8 STUDY GUIDE & STUDY QUESTIONS**

After the interruption in chapter 7, we encounter Revelation 8:1-5, where John describes the seventh seal judgment. Following the intense events of the sixth seal, it may seem somewhat underwhelming when John mentions "silence" in heaven with the seventh seal.

So, what does this silence mean?

Some scholars argue that the seventh seal is empty, pointing to the reference to "silence" in Rev. 8:1. They propose that the content of the seventh seal might be the seven trumpets and, possibly, the seven bowls. However, before accepting this idea, we must understand the meaning of the "silence."

Several interpretations are available:

1. Some view the "silence" as a brief pause in divine revelation (though the purpose isn't certain).
2. The silence might represent humanity's humble reverence in the face of God's wrath and the impending end (Rev. 6:12-17!).
3. It could be the silence of heavenly hosts—the angels—witnessing God's sovereign plan and purpose unfolding.
4. Others see it as a hint to the silence before creation and now before the new creation.
5. Perhaps, some say, the silence indicates God's rest from the judgments initiated by the first six seals—but this is a guess at best!
6. Some consider it merely a dramatic, heavenly pause before introducing the seven trumpets of Rev. 8-10.

7. A more accurate interpretation connects the silence to the Old Testament (OT), where it often precedes divine signs.

Many—including myself—see that the silence's meaning lies in the OT, where it often signifies divine judgment (see: Psa. 31:17; 115:17; Isa. 47:5; Lam. 2:10-11; Amos 8:2-3; Hab. 2:20). Specifically, the silence *might* indicate that God has heard the prayers of the martyrs for vengeance (Rev. 6:10) and is ready to respond. This links the seventh seal to Rev. 8:3-5, where the silence relates to God's heavenly temple and sacrificial altar, from which judgment emerges.

The imagery of incense smoke rising before God (8:4) suggests a positive response to the martyrs' request (Rev. 6:9-11). Rev. 8:5 could represent the actual historical finishing of God's verdict on behalf of his people. Some propose that the silence occurs while the angel burns incense on the altar to accompany the prayers of the saints. Thus, at the climax of history, heaven is "silent" figuratively, allowing the prayers of the saints to be heard, leading to the final judgment (v. 5).

However, it's a mistake to conclude that "the prayers of all the saints" exclusively refers to the martyrs. While inclusive of their request, it likely encompasses all of God's people throughout the present church age (Rev. 8:3-4). This underscores that our prayers are taken seriously by God and play a crucial role in fulfilling his purposes in history, including judgments on an unbelieving world.

As incense rises to God, the fire of the altar is directed toward the earth, symbolizing the impending trumpet judgments in John's vision. Revelation 8:5 doesn't elaborate on the heart or extent of that judgment, as subsequent texts provide detailed accounts. Thunder, sounds, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake in Rev. 8:5 are found in texts describing the final judgment of the unbelieving world (11:18; 16:18). John might envision the trumpets and bowls as part of God's response to the prayers of the martyrs.

The reason for the silence lasting "about half an hour" (8:1) is unclear. The use of "about" suggests it doesn't need time to pass, possibly indicating a swift crisis in the judgment of the unrepentant or ungodly, as seen in other time references in Revelation. A literal 30 minutes is not necessarily implied.

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As we move into looking at the trumpet judgments of Revelation 8 themselves, I (Darin) have had to ask myself:

**“Why do people find the book of Revelation hard to get?”**

I'm not talking about differing opinions on what happens when Christ returns or who the Beast and False Prophet are. Or literalism vs. symbolism. Yes, those are all worthwhile issues to look at and have their place!

The real struggle, it seems, is with the intense scenes of God's anger and judgment on non-believers and idol worshippers. It's not about decoding symbols or understanding historical views or the number 666.

***The main issue, it seems, is dealing with the heavy and severe punishments that unbelievers and idol worshippers face.***

**Here's a test to see if you understand God's viewpoint:** When you read about the harsh judgments in Revelation—the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls—do you think God is going overboard? Do you say, "These punishments are too much, too extreme, and go beyond what's fair"?

***If your reaction is leaning towards thinking the judgments are too severe, it might mean you need to rethink not just how you see God but also how seriously you take human sin.***

Here's a simpler way to ask it: "When you read about the tough judgments in Revelation, do you think God is being too harsh? If that bothers you, it might be because you think too highly of people and too lowly of God."

***Once you get a glimpse of how amazing and majestic God is, the severe judgments in Revelation start making sense.***

So, let me ask it another way: "How big of a deal is it that humans, made by God to know and honor him, instead misuse his gifts and rebel against him? Is it really bad that people disrespect the only honorable Being and ignore the only beautiful and praiseworthy Being in the universe? And do you think human sin deserves the kind of punishment we read about in Revelation?"

***If the judgments in Revelation trouble you more and more, maybe spend some time rethinking how you see God. Once you get how amazing he is, you'll get how serious human sin is, and Revelation won't be so confusing or offensive.***

With that in mind, let's look at the first five of the seven trumpet judgments. There are four things to notice.

1. **Remember: Revelation is like watching a football game from different camera angles.** It's about the ongoing clash between Christ's kingdom and Satan's kingdom from Jesus' first coming to his second. Each section talks about everyday events in church history, leading up to Christ's return. The book has three sets of seven judgments (seals, trumpets, bowls), and it tells the same story over and over with increasing intensity.
2. **Trumpets have always been a big deal in God's plans (announcements on earth).** In the Bible, they were blown for holy war and important events (Ex. 19:13; Joel 2:1; Eze. 33:1-6, etc.). In Revelation, seven trumpets mean God stepping in to defeat his enemies.
3. **The trumpet judgments only mess up part of the world.** It's always "a third" of something, not everything. This is a warning, not the final punishment. Most people get to see God's anger and have a chance to change.
4. **Don't take these trumpet judgments too literally.** Revelation uses symbols to describe what's real. When John says something is "like" or "resembles," he's saying it's similar to something familiar. So, when he talks about locusts, he doesn't mean actual bugs but something more mysterious. Like Jeremiah, their rejection is proven by their refusal to repent.

### ***The First Trumpet (Rev. 8:6-7)***

In Exodus 9:22-25, during the seventh plague, God sent down a mix of "hail and fire" on Egypt, affecting the land, trees, and plants. Revelation 8:7 echoes this with an impact on "trees" and "grass." The mention of "blood" might link back to the first Egyptian plague where the Nile turned to blood.

Are the "hail and fire mixed with blood" literal (8:7)? The hail and fire in the Exodus plague were literal, suggesting a similar phenomenon here wouldn't be inconsistent with divine activity.

The term "blood" could indicate the color of the hail or its impact on the earth. In Revelation, "fire" is often symbolic, leading some to see this as a metaphor for judgment by famine (as seen in the third seal judgment—Rev. 6:5-6). The reference to only 1/3 being destroyed suggests a partial judgment, with a final one yet to come. (Although 1/3 is still a major impact – huge!)

Some see a difference with Revelation 9:4, stating that neither grass nor any green thing is harmed. This apparent contradiction is better understood when considering that these judgments vary in scope, sometimes being partial and at other times more widespread.

### ***The Second Trumpet (8:8-9)***

A colossal, burning mountain is symbolically thrown into the sea (volcano, perhaps?). This might be prophetic exaggeration, symbolizing seasons of historical turmoil. In Revelation, a "mountain" often represents an earthly "kingdom," possibly indicating the judgment of evil kingdoms opposing Christ's kingdom.

Jeremiah 51:25 associates Babylon with a mountain, linking it with the judgment of evil kingdoms. The mention of 1/3 of the sea turning to blood takes us back to the plague against the Nile River in Exodus 7:20.

### ***The Third Trumpet (8:10-11)***

Famine seems present in the third trumpet, similar to the first two. The waters turn bitter and fatal, echoing Psalm 78:44. The polluted waters are caused by a "great star," possibly symbolizing an angel serving as an instrument of divine judgment.

The star's name—"Wormwood"—connects with OT passages predicting bitter judgment. The question arises: Is this literal or a metaphor for severe judgment, possibly affecting drinking water and causing famine?

### ***The Fourth Trumpet (8:12-13)***

Similar to the sixth seal in Revelation 6:12-13, this partial judgment reflects the ninth plague on Egypt. Is this literal or symbolic, and if symbolic, what does it represent? Darkening celestial bodies in biblical texts often symbolize chaos and divine judgment against nations (Ex. 10:22-23).

Elements affected by the trumpet judgments include light, air, vegetation, celestial bodies, sea creatures, and humans. Some suggest this "de-creation" mirrors the systematic undoing of creation itself.

The image of an "eagle" often symbolizes judgment in the OT (Deut. 28:49; Hosea 8:1; Hab. 1:8). The impending judgments fall on "those who dwell on the earth," a phrase in Revelation consistently referring to unbelievers and idolaters. The significance of the eagle remains uncertain.

## **REV. 8 STUDY QUESTIONS**

### **READ REV. 8:1**

1. What is the location and the action?
  2. How does the action link with the preceding chapters (Rev. 6–7)?
  3. What is the significance of silence? Hint: look at Hab. 2:20; Zeph. 1:7; see also Isa. 41:1; 47:5; Zech. 2:13.
  4. What is next, logically, after the events of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12–17)?
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### **READ REV. 8:2–13**

5. Who are the principal actors in this section?



