

LESSON 10

THE SEVENTH SEAL AND THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS

In chapter 6, the first six seals were opened in rapid succession. Then the vision took a detour in chapter 7, as God's people were being sealed on earth and then rejoicing before the throne in heaven. Chapter 8 now returns to the original story line. The chapter begins with the opening of the seventh seal, which leads to the sounding of the seven trumpets.

1. What parallels exist between the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls?
2. What are the individual and collective themes of the seven seals, trumpets, and bowls?

THE SEVENTH SEAL IS BROKEN (8:1, 2)

The passage begins with the opening of seal number seven. As is often the case in Revelation, the narrative catches the reader by surprise. Ever since John entered into the throne room of heaven (4:1, 2), the reader has been bombarded with sound. Suddenly, however, there was complete and total silence.

3. What purpose does the phrase "for about half an hour" serve in the narrative?
4. What does this passage as a whole declare about God?

AN ANGEL WITH A GOLDEN CENSER (8:3–6)

Before the seven angels were allowed to sound the trumpets, another angel appeared on the scene.

5. What was the symbolism of the golden altar of verse 3?
6. From what traditional association did the symbolism of verse 4 come?

7. What specific kind of prayer was being offered in the first part of Revelation 8?
8. What role did the trumpet sound have in Jewish history?
9. What two special purposes did the trumpet in Revelation 8 through 11 serve?
10. In what ways does the text indicate that a primary purpose of the trumpets in Revelation was to warn?

THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS (8:7–12)

The first four trumpets are closely related, as were the first four seals. The first four trumpets touched men indirectly—in contrast with the last three trumpets, which affected men directly (see 9:3, 4). Each of the first four trumpets damaged some part of the natural world. In that day, men divided nature into four categories: land, sea, fresh waters, and heavenly bodies. When the first four trumpets sounded, all four categories suffered.

11. How are the descriptions of the devastating forces hurled at the earth during the first four trumpets reminiscent of the ten plagues that fell upon Egypt?
12. What differences can be seen between the seventh plague on Egypt and the first trumpet in Revelation 8:7?
13. What do various commentators believe about the imagery of the “great mountain burning with fire” (8:8)?
14. What role did the sea play in people’s lives during New Testament times?
15. What do commentators suggest about the “great star” (8:10), making more of the symbol than was intended?
16. What three facts could be shown to those who worry about the detail that this star fell from heaven, when 6:13 previously stated that all the stars fell to the earth?
17. What does the term “wormwood” in 8:11 mean?

18. What problem do those who take literally these scenes of global disaster have with verse 12?
19. What is actually the point of verse 12?

THE EAGLE'S WARNING (8:13)

After John witnessed the sounding of the first four trumpets, he saw and heard an eagle flying in midheaven.

20. What can the word translated "eagle" in 8:13 mean, and why was the symbol of this bird chosen?