

# *Revelation*

## *Lesson #8*

### *The Seven Trumpets, Part 1*

*(8: 3 – 9: 21)*

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM

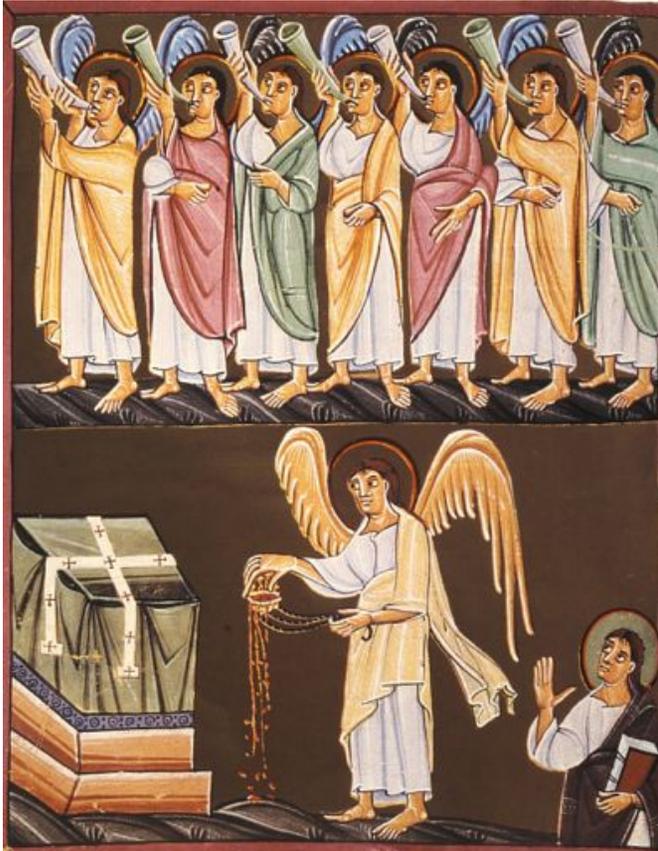
# Review

**As John stood before the throne of God the figure sitting on the throne morphed into “a Lamb that seemed to have been slain” (5: 6), and the Lamb was holding a scroll, sealed tightly with seven seals. As in a dream, John wept and wept, for he understood that no one was worthy to open the scroll. Then, one of the twenty-four elders seated around the throne of God comforted John, telling him that the Lamb—“the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David” (5: 5)—has triumphed, and he would open the scroll.**

**The twenty-four elders then cried out as one in praise: “Worthy are you to receive the scroll and to break open the seals” (5: 9).**

**Then the Lamb opened the scroll . . . and we witnessed the results in graphic detail!**

# Preview



*"Seven Trumpets," Bamberger Apocalypse*  
(illuminated manuscript, MS A. II, fol. 19v), c. 1000.  
Bamberg State Library, Bamberg, Germany.

If we thought things were bad when the seven seals were opened and unleashed the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, blowing the seven trumpets escalates the drama exponentially, raising it to a cosmic plane, with the very heavens raining down fire upon the earth!

As we end this lesson only six trumpets have sounded.

**There is still one more to go!**

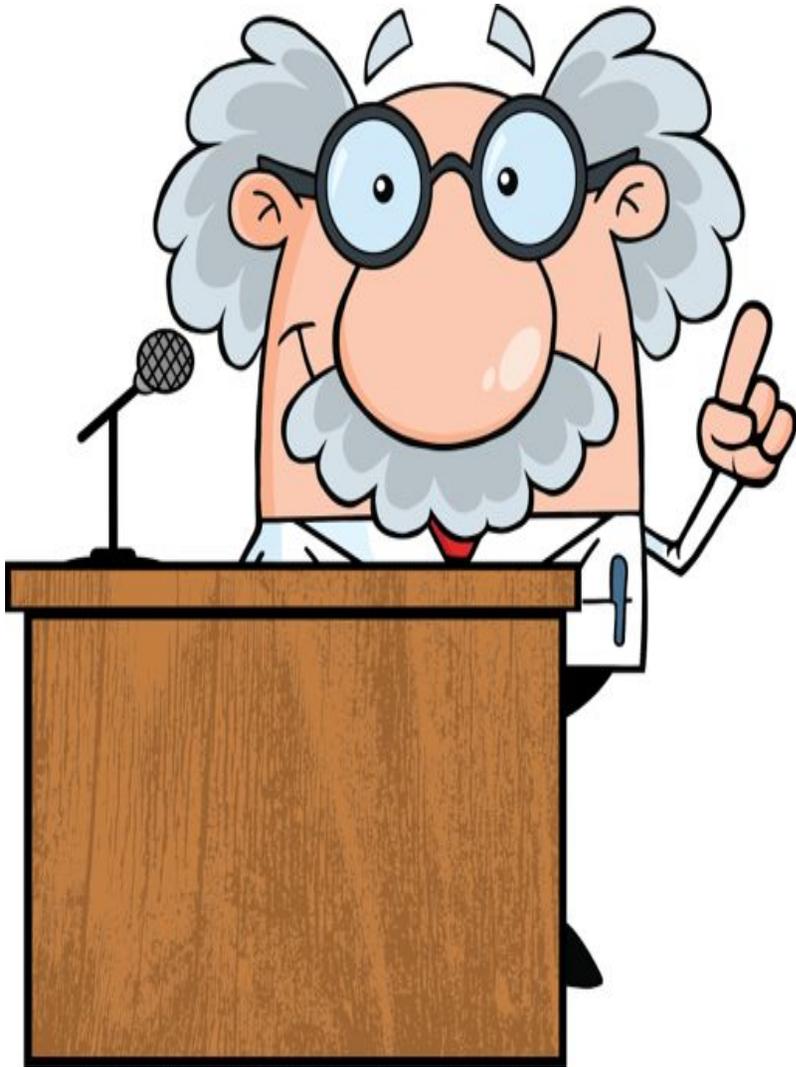
**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



We left Lesson #7 with dead silence for half an hour, the tension rising palpably as seven angels stand poised to sound seven shining trumpets.

The sequence of seven trumpets follows the same pattern as the sequence of seven seals:

- The first four trumpets form a unified whole, as the four horsemen formed a unified whole;
- The fifth and sixth trumpets are different in kind, as the fifth and sixth seals were different in kind; and
- A two-part interlude separates the sixth from the seventh trumpet, as a two-part interlude separated the sixth from the seventh seal.



**The actions of the four horsemen mirror the actions triggered by sinful men: 1) enforced peace; 2) all-out war; 3) famine; and 4) death.**

**In contrast, the first four trumpets mirror the cataclysmic actions of nature: 1) hail and fire, mixed with blood; 2) a large, burning mountain is hurled into the sea; 3) a star like a flaming torch falls to earth; and 4) the sun, moon and stars go dark.**

**Moving from the seven seals to the seven trumpets escalates the catastrophes from human-caused events on the earth's surface to divine-caused events pummeling the earth from above.**

**Notice again the cascading movement from seals to trumpets to bowls:**

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM

# The Preamble

## The Seven Seals

1. White horse
2. Red horse
3. Black horse
4. Pale horse
5. Souls of the slain
6. Earthquake
7. Silence

## The Seven Trumpets

1. Hail and fire, mixed with blood
2. Huge mountain ablaze
3. Blazing star
4. Sun, moon and stars turned dark
5. Star, fallen to earth
6. Four angels, released
7. Temple in heaven, opened

## The Seven Bowls

1. Ugly and painful sores
2. Blood like that of a dead man
3. Rivers and springs turned to blood
4. Sun, scorching people with fire
5. Satan's kingdom plunged into darkness
6. Euphrates River dried up
7. Massive earthquake

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



**An introductory scene, or “overture,” precedes the movement from dead silence to the blast of the first trumpet:**

“Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a gold censer. He was given a great quantity of incense to offer, along with the prayers of all the holy ones, on the gold altar that was before the throne. The smoke of the incense along with the prayers of the holy ones went up before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with burning coals from the altar, and hurled it down to the earth. There were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.”

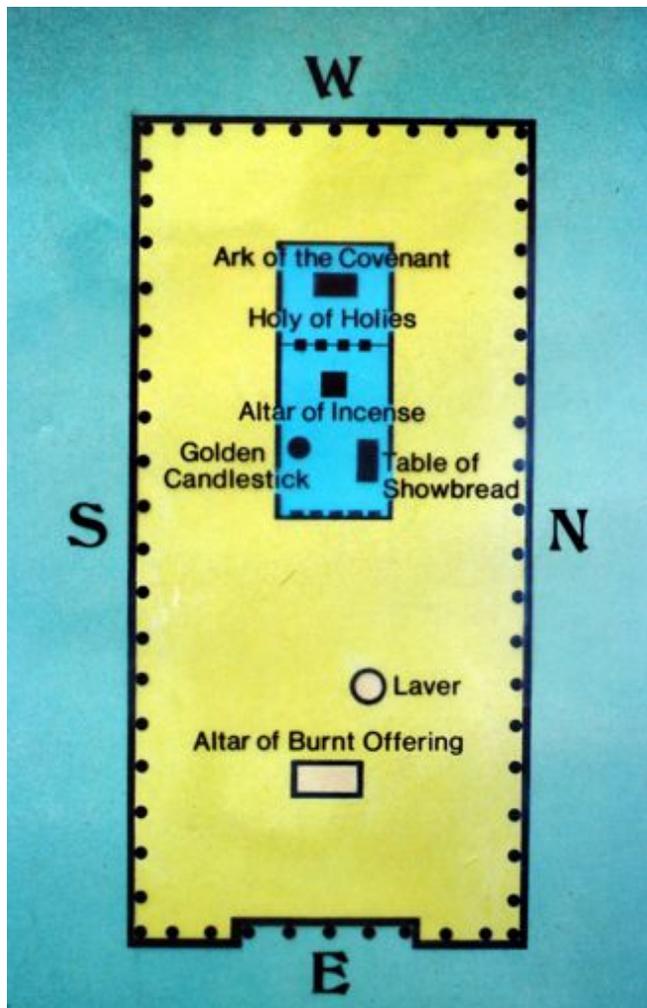
(8: 3-5)

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



**“Seven Trumpets and the Angel with Censer,” *Bamberger Apocalypse* (illuminated manuscript, MS A. II, fol. 19v), c. 1000. Bamberg State Library, Bamberg, Germany.**

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



As the “Altar of Incense” stood in the Holy Place of Israel’s tabernacle, flanked by the Menorah (the “golden candlestick,” with its seven branches and seven flames) to the left, and the Table of Showbread (with its bread and wine) to the right, all directly before the Ark of the Covenant and the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, so does a golden “Altar of Incense” sit before God in the genuine tabernacle, which is in heaven (Hebrews 8: 1-5).



**At the genuine “Altar of Incense” an angel approaches with a golden censer, filled with incense and the prayers of the faithful, and he offers it before God, much as Zechariah offered incense before the Lord at the Temple in Jerusalem at the opening of Luke’s gospel (1: 8-10).**

**Here, though, in a totally unexpected move, the angel hurls the censer filled with burning coals down upon the earth: lightning flashes, thunder booms . . . and a tremendous earthquake strikes the land!**



Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



**It also calls to mind a similar scene in Ezekiel:**

*“Then I looked and there above the firmament over the heads of the cherubim was something that looked like a sapphire, something that looked like a throne. And he said to the man dressed in linen: ‘Go within the wheelwork under the cherubim; fill both your hands with burning coals from the place among the cherubim, then scatter them over the city.’ As I watched, he entered.”*

**(10: 1-2)**

“The seven angels who were holding the seven trumpets prepared to blow them. When the first one blew his trumpet, there came hail and fire mixed with blood, which was hurled down to the earth. A third of the land was burned up, along with a third of the trees and all green grass.”

(8: 6-7)

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



**"First Trumpet," *Bamberger Apocalypse* (illuminated manuscript, MS A. II, fol. 20r), c. 1000. Bamberg State Library, Bamberg, Germany.**

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



In the great theophany at Mt. Sinai, God calls Israel to the mountain with a loud trumpet blast, which increases in intensity and volume as the Israelites gather, terrifying them (Exodus 19: 16-19). God instructs Moses to make two silver trumpets for *“summoning the community and in breaking camp”* (Numbers 10: 2), as well as for signaling in battle (Numbers 31: 6). And Joshua will bring down the walls of Jericho, accompanied by trumpet blasts (Joshua 6: 4-20).

Jesus says that at the end time, God *“will send his angels with a trumpet blast, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other”* (Matthew 24: 31).

So, the trumpets sounding now herald judgments on the *“inhabitants of the earth”* (8: 13).

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



At the sound of the first trumpet comes *“hail and fire mixed with blood”* (8: 7), an obvious allusion to the first and seventh plagues brought on Egypt, *“blood”* and *“hail mixed with fire”* (Exodus 7: 14-24; 9: 13-35).

Only this time it affects not just Egypt, but one third of the earth!

In Scripture *“the life of the flesh is in the blood”* (Leviticus 17: 11); the reverse, *“the blood of a dead man”* is a horror, one which Revelation invokes when an angel pours out the second bowl, and the sea *“turned to blood like that of a corpse”* (16: 3).

With the blast of the first trumpet, *“hail and fire mixed with blood”* is hurled upon the earth.



**John Martin. *The Seventh Plague* (oil on canvas), 1823.  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.**

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM

“When the second angel blew his trumpet, something like a large burning mountain was hurled into the sea. A third of the sea turned to blood, a third of the creatures living in the sea died, and a third of the ships were wrecked.”

(8: 8-9)

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



**“Second Trumpet,” *Beatus de Facundus* (illumination on parchment, MS Vit. 14.2, fol. 166r), c. 1047. Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.**

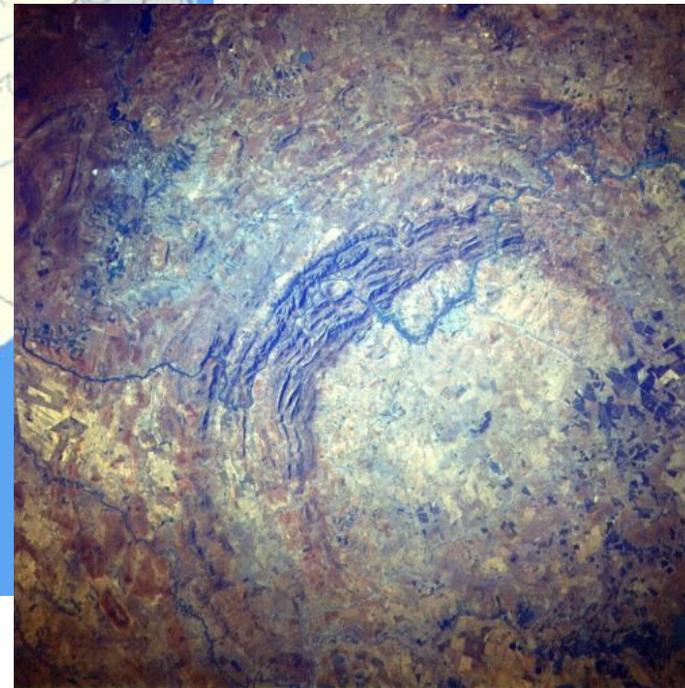
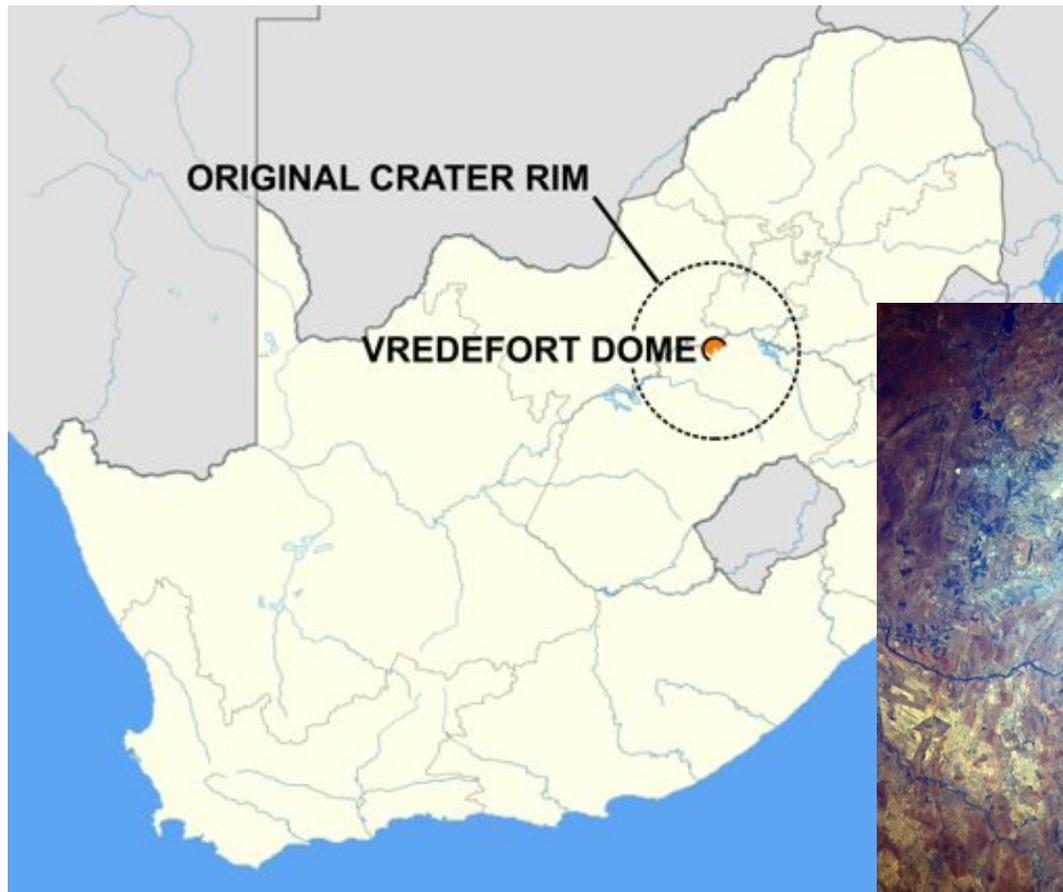
**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



With the second trumpet blast, *“something like a large burning mountain was hurled into the sea”* (8: 8). As a result, a third of the sea turned to blood, another overt allusion to the first plague of Exodus (the waters of the Nile River turned to blood and all the fish in the river died); in addition, with the second trumpet a third of all the ships in the Mediterranean are wrecked.

The only natural event that could parallel this disaster would be a huge meteorite smashing into the sea. Although small meteorite strikes are relatively common on earth, the largest impact is the Vredefort crater in South Africa, which measures 190 miles across, caused by an object measuring 9-12 miles in diameter, an asteroid, not a meteor!

It happened some 2 billion years ago.



## Vredefort Crater, South Africa.

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM

“When the third angel blew his trumpet, a large star burning like a torch fell from the sky. It fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The star was called ‘Wormwood,’ and a third of all the water turned to wormwood. Many people died from this water, because it was made bitter.”

(8: 10-11)

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



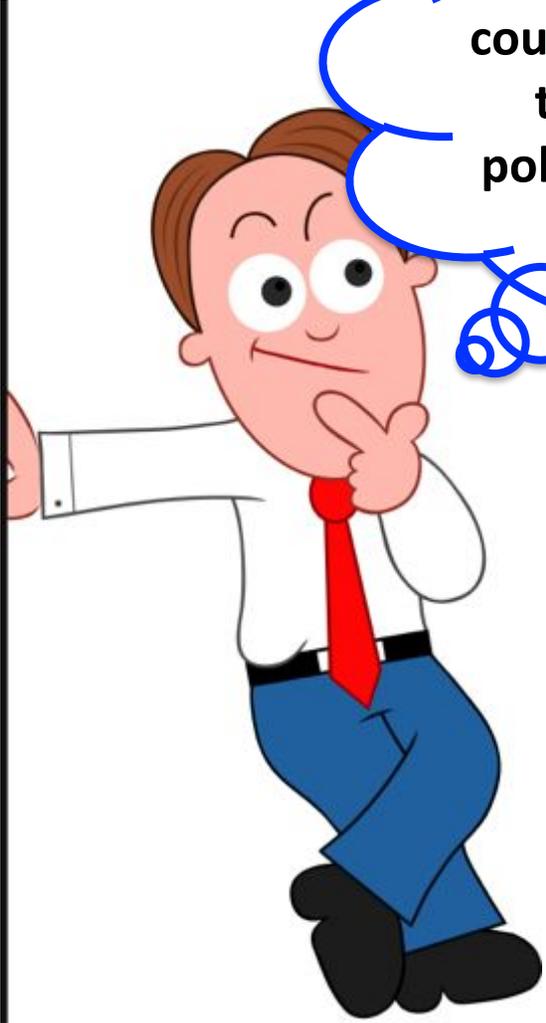
**“Third Trumpet,” *Beatus de Facundus* (illumination on parchment, MS Vit. 14.2, fol. 167r), c. 1047. Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.**

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM

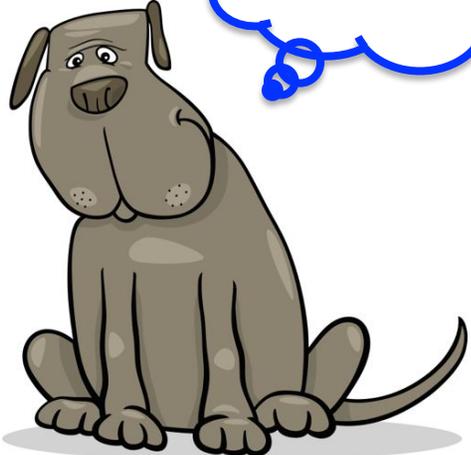


With the third trumpet blast, *“a large star burning like a torch”* shot through the heavens and struck the earth, affecting the rivers and springs. As the second trumpet blast turned a third of the sea to blood, so the third trumpet blast poisons a third of the drinking water, turning it to *“wormwood,”* bitter.

Similar to the second, the third natural disaster seems to be a meteorite, flaming through the sky. Some commentators take the falling star to be Babylon, drawing on Isaiah 14: 12 (*“How you have fallen from the heavens, O Morning Star”*), and others on Satan and the fallen angels of Revelation 12: 9 (*“The huge dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil or Satan, who deceived the whole world, was thrown down to earth, and its angels were thrown down with it”*).



Revelation 12 is a flashback, giving us the “back story” of Revelation, and Isaiah could be a possible allusion, but the four trumpets are natural disasters, not political or religious ones. I think Isaiah and Revelation are a stretch.



Good point!

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM

“When the fourth angel blew his trumpet, a third of the sun, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them became dark. The day lost its light for a third of the time, as did the night.”

(8: 12)

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



**“Fourth Trumpet,” *Beatus Escorial* (illumination on parchment, Ms II.5. fol. 94v), c. 950-955.  
Royal Library of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Madrid.**

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



Obviously, the day turning to night recalls the ninth plague on Egypt, the plague of darkness “so thick it could be felt” (Exodus 10: 21-29), as well as Jesus saying in the Olivet Discourse:

*“the sun will be darkened,  
and the moon will not give its light,  
and the stars will fall from the sky,  
and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”*

(Matthew 24: 29)

But what could cause such a phenomenon?

Recall our introduction to Revelation, when we examined its historical and cultural context: Mt. Vesuvius erupted in A.D. 79, blanketing a large portion of the Mediterranean with volcanic ash, doubtless blotting out the sky and turning the day into night.



In fact, Pliny the Younger, an eyewitness to the eruption from across the Bay of Naples, notes:

*“Though it was now morning, the light was exceedingly faint and doubtful; the buildings all around us tottered . . . we therefore resolved to quit the town. A panic-stricken crowd followed us . . . . Being at a convenient distance from the houses, we stood still, in the midst of a most dangerous and dreadful scene . . . On the other side [of the bay], a black and dreadful cloud, broken with rapid zigzag flashes, behind it variously shaped masses of flame; these were like sheet-lightning, but much larger . . . . Soon afterwards, the cloud began to descend, and cover the sea . . . a dense dark mist seemed to be following us, spreading itself over the country like a cloud.”*

(“Letter 66,” to Cornelius Tacitus)

This would have been a very recent event for John’s audience.

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM

“Then I looked again and heard an eagle flying high overhead cry out in a loud voice, ‘Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth from the rest of the trumpet blasts that the three angels are about to blow!’”

(8: 13)

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



**“The Eagle,” *Beatus de Facundus* (illumination on parchment, MS Vit. 14.2, fol. 168r), c. 1047. Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.**

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



This is a haunting, nightmarish vision, a bird of prey circling and crying out in a loud voice:

“οὐαί, οὐαί, οὐαί” [oo-eye, oo-eye, oo-eye]; “Woe! Woe! Woe!”

Remember, the seals and the trumpets are preludes to judgment, not judgments themselves; they function more as dire warnings, warnings that are completely ignored by humanity, who continues down the same worn, twisted path to perdition.

By the time the seven seals are opened and the seven trumpets blown, klaxons are blaring, sirens wailing, yet humanity remains deaf and defiant.

When the seven bowls are poured out, total destruction will follow.



We now face the final three trumpets—the three “Woes!”—“οὐαί, οὐαί, οὐαί”—uttered by the screeching bird of prey.

The bird is an ἄετός [eye-ee-toss’]. Most translations render the word “eagle,” but it might also be a “vulture.” Since eagles do not eat carrion, this is probably what it is.

When the dust settles after the climactic battle of Armageddon, with slaughtered corpses stacked high, we read that *“all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh”* (19: 21).

“Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. It was given the key for the passage to the abyss. It opened the passage to the abyss, and smoke came up out of the passage like smoke from a huge furnace. The sun and the air were darkened by the smoke from the passage. Locusts came out of the smoke onto the land, and they were given the same power as scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or any tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not allowed to kill them but only to torment them for five months; the torment they inflicted was like that of a scorpion when it stings a person. During that time these people will seek death but will not find it, and they will long to die but death will escape them.”

(9: 1-6)

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



**“Fifth Trumpet,” *Valladolid Beatus* (illumination on parchment, MS 433, fol. 120r), c. 970.  
Biblioteca de la Universidad, Valladolid, Spain.**



• **Blowing the fifth trumpet—the first οὐαί—launches the most terrifying imagery in all of Scripture, a nightmarish collage of grotesque, hideous monsters with wings whirring, teeth snapping, tails stinging. In the dark of night we feel the whisper of hot, rancid breath at the back of our necks. John’s vision snaps from Technicolor to Imax® 3d; from stereo to Dolby® Surroundsound; from fascination in the grotesque to all-out, heart-stopping terror. We struggle to breathe.**

• **A star falls from the sky (the image recalls Jesus saying, “*I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky*” in Luke 10: 18), and with a set of keys Satan opens the shaft to the ἄβυσσος [ah’-boo-sauce], the “abyss.” Rusty hinges screech and groan, and as the heavy lid opens, smoke, heat and a horrible stench belches forth, and locusts and scorpions by the millions swarm out.**

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



**The “Deathstalker” scorpion, only 2 inches long and nearly transparent, is one of the most deadly scorpions in the world. It’s sting inflicts excruciating pain, leading to tachycardia, skyrocketing blood pressure, convulsions, coma . . . and often death. Deathstalkers (*Leiurus quinquestriatus*) are common throughout Israel and the Middle East.**

**If you ‘re stung by one and survive, you will never forget the experience!**

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM

“The appearance of the locusts was like that of horses ready for battle. On their heads they wore what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, and they had hair like women’s hair. Their teeth were like lions’ teeth, and they had chests like iron breastplates. The sound of their wings was like the sound of many horse-drawn chariots racing into battle. They had tails like scorpions, with stingers; with their tails they had power to harm people for five months. They had as their king the angel of the abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek Apollyon. The first woe has passed, but there are two more.”

(9: 7-12)

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



• In the eighth plague, locusts attacked Egypt: *“They covered the surface of the whole land, so that it became black. They ate up all the vegetation in the land and all the fruit of the trees the hail had spared. Nothing green was left on any tree or plant in the fields throughout the land of Egypt”* (Exodus 10: 15).

• Locusts attack Israel, as well, in Joel:

*“Blow the horn in Zion,  
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!  
Let the inhabitants of the land tremble,  
for the day of the Lord is coming! . . .  
Nothing like it has ever happened in ages past,  
nor will the future hold anything like it,  
even to the most distant generation.”*

(2: 1-2)

A vast army of locusts swarms the land, stripping trees bare and devouring every blade of grass.



***AH-64D Apache Long Bow Attack Helicopter.***

- **But the locusts in Revelation are like locusts on steroids, massive creatures, genetically-engineered monsters, as large as horses, with human faces, women’s hair, lions’ teeth and iron breastplates; their tails have massive stingers and their wings whirl with thunderous sound.**

- **At the coming of these creatures John’s audience might react as we might to a fully-armed battalion of M1A2 Abrams Battle Tanks rumbling down the front street; a squadron of F-22 Raptors screeching overhead; or the sky blackened with AH-65 Apache Attack Helicopters, bristling with hellfire missiles and M230 automatic canons.**



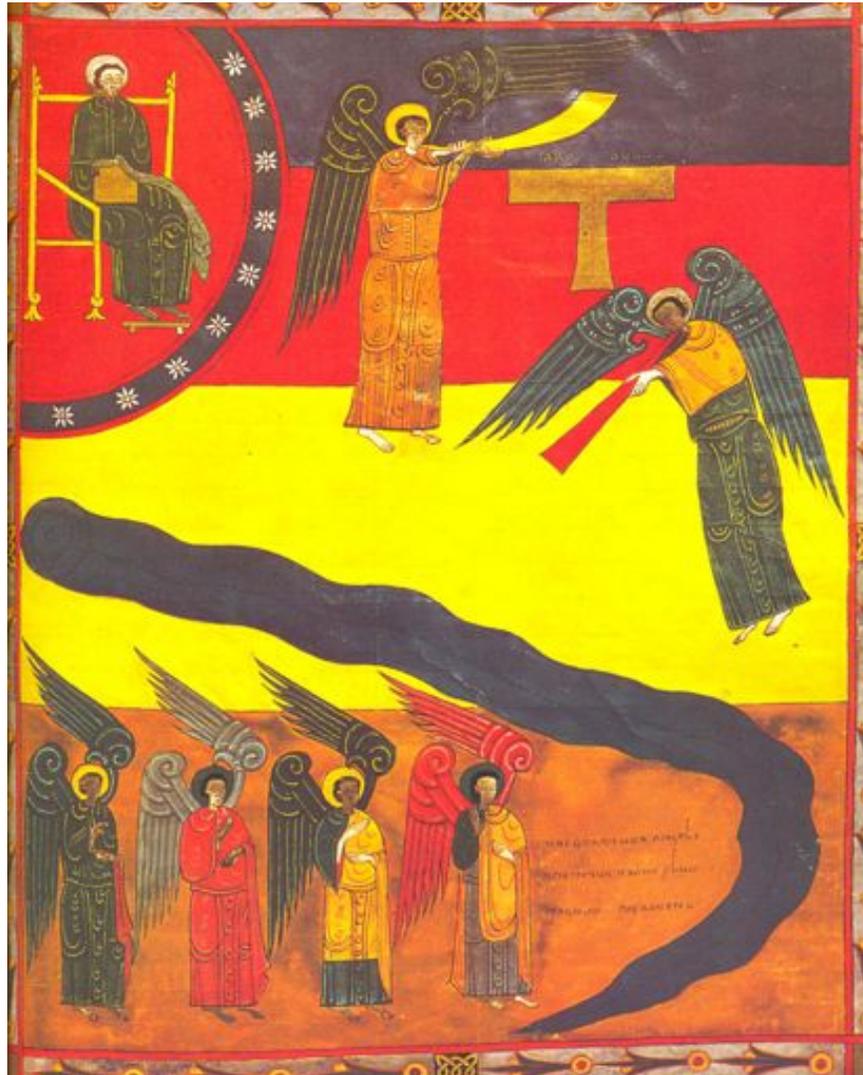
These creatures—the demonic scorpions and locusts, swarming like vermin out of the abyss—are commanded by *“the angel of the abyss, whose name in Hebrew [actually, Aramaic] is Abaddon [Ἀβαδδών, “Destruction”] and in Greek Apollyon [Ἀπολλύων, “Destroyer”].*

**The commander is Satan himself!**

“Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the [four] horns of the gold altar before God, telling the sixth angel who held the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the banks of the great river Euphrates. So the four angels were released, who were prepared for this hour, day, month, and year to kill a third of the human race. The number of cavalry troops was two hundred million: I heard their number.’”

(9: 13-16)

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



**“Sixth Trumpet,” *Beatus de Facundus* (illumination on parchment, MS Vit. 14.2, fol. 173r), c. 1047. Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.**

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



- The voice from the horns of the golden altar belongs to the angel who presented the prayers of the “holy ones” in 8: 3-5, and who then hurled the censer’s burning coals down upon the earth, accompanied by “peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake” (8: 5).
- The sixth trumpet unshackles four angels at the banks of the Euphrates River, who receive orders to “kill a third of the human race” (9: 15).
  - Perhaps the four are *fallen* angels, since they were “*bound* at the banks of the [river]” (9: 14).
  - To John’s audience, nothing good comes from the Euphrates River: Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian invaders all came from that direction, wreaking havoc, and the Euphrates is the far eastern boundary of the Roman Empire, beyond which lived the feared Parthians.

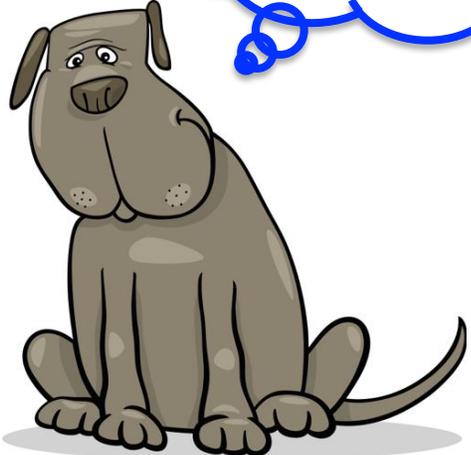


•The sixth trumpet marks the final warning in a series of escalating disasters: 1) the seven seals embody human actions, with each action escalating in severity; 2) the seven trumpets embody natural or supernatural actions, each escalating in severity. Now, four fallen angels (**REALLY** bad guys!), accompanied by **200 million** cavalry [ἵππικός, hippi-kos’], the shock troops of the ancient world, set out to kill one third of humanity!

•200 million troops is a **huge** number, hyperbole suggesting an enormous slaughter. The Greek word is δισμυριάς [dis-mu-ree-ahs’]; it is the largest number in the Greek language, μυρίος = 10,000, multiplied by itself, and then doubled!



It looks like God is unleashing  
overwhelming force in a last-  
ditch effort to bring sinful  
humanity to its senses. This is  
“severe mercy,” indeed!



I'm definitely going to  
hide under the bed  
now!



Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM

“Now in my vision this is how I saw the horses and their riders. They wore red, blue, and yellow breastplates, and the horses’ heads were like heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and sulfur. By these three plagues of fire, smoke, and sulfur that came out of their mouths a third of the human race was killed. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like snakes, with heads that inflict them.”

(9: 17-19)

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



*Chimaera of Arezzo* (bronze), c. 400 B.C.  
National Archaeological Museum, Florence.

These are indeed demonic creatures, breathing fire, smoke and sulfur, images forever associated with hell. These fire-breathing monsters with heads like lions and tails like snakes resemble the mythological Chimaera, first described by Homer in his *Iliad*.

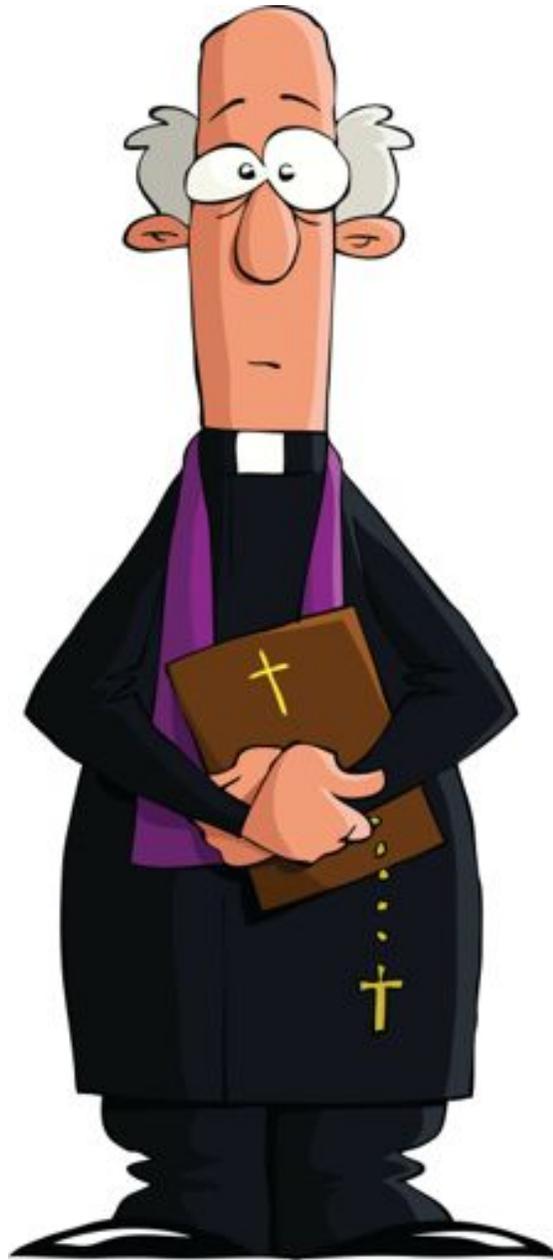
In the story, Proetus' wife Antea lusts after the young and handsome Bellerophon, and when Proetus finds out he sends Bellerophon to Lycia, with a "secret message" for the king of Lycia, sure to get him killed. After dining together, the king sends Bellerophon on a suicide mission to kill the Chimaera, a "*grim monster sprung of the gods, nothing human, all lion in front, all snake behind, all goat between, terrible, blasting lethal fire at every breath!*" (*Iliad* 6, 209-215).

Thankfully, Bellerophon succeeds, killing the beast . . . but they're back in Revelation!

**“The rest of the human race, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, to give up the worship of demons and idols made from gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic potions, their unchastity, or their robberies.”**

**(9: 20-21)**

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



**With a third of humanity killed, the survivors become even more intransigent. Like Pharaoh in Egypt, with each disaster, they harden their hearts even more.**

**And that's a very sad commentary on the human condition, resulting in consequences that are inevitable, as we'll see in the next lesson.**

# Questions for discussion and thought

1. How do the seven trumpets differ from the seven seals?
2. What literary function does the “overture” to the seven trumpets (8: 3-5) serve?
3. Why is the star that fell to earth with the third trumpet called “Wormwood”?
4. What in John’s day might serve as the antecedent for the sun, moon and stars being blotted out with the blast of the third trumpet?
5. How do the first four trumpets differ from the last three, the “Woes”?

## **Copyright © 2016 by Logos Educational Corporation**

**All rights reserved. No part of this course—audio, video, photography, maps, timelines or other media—may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage or retrieval devices without permission in writing or a licensing agreement from the copyright holder.**