

Chapter Eight

This chapter covers the final seal, which brings about a very small thing—silence in heaven. Incense and prayers go up to God, which, in turn, are answered by a messenger casting fire and incense down to earth. On the heels of this begin the Seven Trumpets—warning blasts from heaven. Three trumpets cause fire to fall in differing forms upon the earth, while the fourth brings darkness.

The Seventh Seal & the First Four Trumpets

8:1 And when He broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

In this scene, the vast multitude of the saved, the 4 living creatures, the 24 elders, and the heavenly host have all left the stage. The only players now are God and certain messengers standing by to judge those who resist God's authority and plan of salvation. It seems odd that the previous six seals work up to a climactic pitch, only to end in a simple period of silence. As noted, Revelation tells a story from several angles. What has happened in chapters 4 – 7 will now be re-told, to a certain degree, in the following chapters. They present a different perspective and another side to the story of redemption found in Christ. Overlooking this has caused many to view the events in Revelation as sequential—one following the other, to the Climactic End. This is not really the case.

The number '7' denotes *completeness*, showing here the *finishing* of the opening of the scroll held by Christ. The scroll held judgments; they have been completed. The final seal brings a short period of silence.

Half an hour: Literally, *about* or *nearly* half an hour. An hour was the shortest period of time known to the ancient world. Minutes and seconds were not known until centuries later, when mankind started to fret about schedules and quotas. This is a very short interval of silence; a mere prelude of what was to come, namely, the offering up of the prayers of the saints.

Silence in heaven: Silence is a symbol of waiting or a period of expectation. No word is coming *from* the throne; neither are prayers going *to* the throne. It is the calm before the storm. The song of the 24 elders has ended. The praise offered up by angels has stopped. When the exiles from Egypt stood at the shore of the Red Sea, the silence of the people indicated a waiting on the Lord's power:

The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent. (Exo 14:14)

The same thing is to take place here. God begins His judgment. For the sake of completion,

there are other instances in scripture of how silence is used. These verses show that silence and the *expectation* of salvation from God are imminent:

Silence In Judgment:

He keeps the feet of His godly ones, *but the wicked ones are silenced in darkness*; for not by might shall a man prevail. (1 Sam 2:9)

Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord; for He is aroused from His holy habitation. (Zech 2:13)

Silencing Man Before a Holy and Just God:

It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance; a form was before my eyes; there was silence, then I heard a voice: “Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?” (Job 4:16-17)

Like heat in drought, Thou dost subdue the uproar of aliens; like heat by the shadow of a cloud, the song of the ruthless is silenced. (Isa 25:5)

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. (Psa 65:1-2)

Silence in the Hope of Resurrection:

My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation. (Psa 62:1)

8:2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God; and seven trumpets were given to them.

Seven angels who stand before God points to the seven *spirits*:

Grace and peace...from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from *the seven Spirits who are before His throne*. (Rev 1:4)

There were *seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God*. (Rev 4:5)

I saw...a Lamb...having seven horns and *seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God*, sent out into all the earth. (Rev 5:6)

Seven *messengers*, who have—according to the above verses—attributes of a complete *spirit*, complete *judgment*, and complete *discernment*. They are all symbols of the Holy Spirit.

Seven trumpets: A complete announcement. The trumpet was used to announce great events (1 Kgs 1:34; Matt 6:2) and calls to war. (Job 39:25; Jer 4:19; Zeph 1:16) It sounded the cry to assembly (Jer 4:5), and heralds the commencement of the resurrection. (1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16) It is the sound of warning. (Jer 6:17) The number ‘7’ denotes a *complete* warning of what is to come. The messengers are *given* these trumpets, the Greek word meaning *permitted, granted, or authorized*. The word appears 22

times in Revelation. There are other forms also in the book: *gave* (11 times), *give* (15), *will give* (7), *gave up* (2), where context must determine the meaning.

8:3 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.

This language is clearly Jewish, speaking of the High Priest's intercession for the people. Here, the intercession is for the saints, distilled into their prayers. The cry of the slain righteous was, "How long, O Lord, before you judge?" Those prayers were presented to God, who now begins to answer them. The intercession becomes a judgment upon the earth. God's power was manifested, and the human order of things was about to be shaken.

Altar: The altar denotes the place of sacrifice, but especially, the *promise* found in sacrifice. The first altar mentioned in the bible is when Noah set up an altar after the flood. (Gen 8:20) When God smelled the "soothing aroma," He promised to never again curse the ground or destroy every living thing with water. Abraham built his first altar after the Lord promised the land to him and his descendants. (Gen 12:7) The idea of promise is also seen when the people built an altar as a witness to serve the Lord. (Josh 22:26, 27) Adonijah grabbed the horns of the altar to let King Solomon swear (promise) not to kill him. (1 Kgs 1:51) The statement, "we have an altar," refers to the promise made by the sacrifice of Christ. (Heb 13:10)

Golden censer: This was a golden censer, signifying its precious value. It contains prayers that go up to God—precious cargo delivered in precious containers. Censers held the burning incense. (Num 16:17) Hot coals were first placed in the censer and incense was sprinkled over the coals. (Num 16:46) The portrayal of incense and the plagues which befell Israel are similar to the prayers offered and the disasters which come in this chapter of Revelation. The smoke of the incense rises like the prayers to God. (Ezek 8:11) According to Jewish history, the high priest normally took fire from the altar and put it into a silver censer. On the Day of Expiation however, this fire was put into a golden censer. When he offered this incense, the people *prayed in silence* (silence in heaven).

Much incense was given to him: In the OT, incense solely belonged to God. (Exo 30:37) God calls it "My incense." (Ezek 16:18; 23:41) Thus, these prayers of the saints are for God's ears; only He can answer them. "May my prayer be counted as incense before You." (Psa 141:2)

A large number of prayers are added to the existing prayers of the saints. Whose prayers are added to the saints' prayers? Those of the high priest, who normally made intercession to God in behalf of the people. The allusion is to Christ's prayers. These prayers are placed *on* the golden altar, yet the next verse says they go up to God from the angel's *hand*. It is a message (denoted by the angel) to God.

8:4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

Now the silence is broken. The prayers ascend to God, coming from the hand of the messenger. It seems that the holy messenger hands the requests to God. However, the language suggests that they both *ascend* to God and are *given* to Him. This rising before God denotes His acceptance. He *hears* the prayers, so to speak, and attends to them.

Smoke of the incense: Besides the 12 times it appears in Revelation, smoke appears only once in the NT (Acts 2:19), where Peter is quoting from the book of Joel. The smoke of burnt offerings rise up to heaven to please God. (Lev 1:9; Psa 66:15) When Cornelius (the first converted Gentile) saw the angel in a vision, the angel said to him, “Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God.” (Acts 10:1-4) Several things can be seen in this text:

1. Cornelius was an unsaved Gentile. (vs. 45)
2. He was “a devout man...gave many alms...prayed continually.” (vs. 2)
3. His prayers and alms “ascended as a memorial before God.” (vs. 4)

Despite all of Cornelius’ righteousness, he was still unsaved. Although God ignores the prayers of the unrighteous (1 Pet 3:12), He does attend to the prayers of anyone who seeks Him. (Luke 11:9-13; Acts 17:27) Before God will hear a person, he or she must first remove the idolatry from their heart. (2 Chr 19:3) In the NT, a person must repent—change direction—before coming to Christ. (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 26:20)

He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, *that they should seek God*, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. (Acts 17:26-27)

The humble have seen it and are glad; you who seek God, let your heart revive. For the Lord hears the needy, and does not despise His who are prisoners. (Ps 69:32-33)

8:5 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.

The censer was for burning incense. Here, it is a missile bearing prayers. The prayers (incense) were placed on the hot coals, where their smoke and fragrance ascend to God. The censer is now empty. The angel gathers fire (judgment) from the altar (promise and sacrifice) and places it in the censer. This fire is thrown into humanity’s midst. This language is heavily laden with Jewish symbolism and temple ceremony. The language and context suggests the *earth* to be the land of the Jews, not the planet.

Threw it: Each time *threw* or one of its derivatives appears in Revelation, it is in a negative or judgmental sense. The dragon’s (Satan’s) tail swept and *threw* a third of the stars to earth. (12:4) Those who dwelled on the earth were *thrown* into the winepress of God’s wrath. (14:19) The Jews tried to *throw* Jesus over a cliff. (Luke 4:28-29) People are *thrown* into prison. (Luke 4:29) Throwing stones was a common punishment. (John 8:7, 59)

Thunder, lightning, earthquake: Thunder and lightning symbolize God’s voice and presence. They come from the throne, the center of all Authority and Judgment (See notes on 4:5). The only place in the NT where earthquakes are mentioned is in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem. (Matt 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11) Jesus said that earthquakes were one of the “things (that were) merely the beginning of birth pangs.” (Luke 21:11) They are symbols of earthly powers and men’s authority

being shaken up and de-stabilized. This earthquake echoes the one occurring at the opening of the sixth seal. (6:12) True to our Savior's words, these earthquakes—shaking of human authority—are the beginning of trouble. In order for men to seek God, the Lord has to show that human institutions are weak and poorly constructed. The “shaking up” of earthly authority makes men lose confidence, causing them to hopefully turn to God.

8:6 And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.

Prepared themselves: According to Thayer, the Greek word for ‘prepare’ means

- Make necessary preparations; get everything ready.
- Drawn from the oriental custom of sending persons on their journeys ahead of kings to level the roads and make them more passable.
- To prepare the minds of men to give the Messiah a fit reception and secure His blessings.

This is always a *deliberate* preparation. Note the preparing and the reasons:

- The locusts' appearance was like horses **prepared** for battle. (9:7)
- Four angels are **prepared** for a specific time in order to kill a third of mankind. (9:15)
- The woman went to a place **prepared** by God in order to receive nourishment. (12:6)
- A way was **prepared** for eastern kings by cutting off the Euphrates river. (16:12)
- God patiently put up with evil doers who were **prepared** for destruction. (Rom 9:22)
- Christians are called vessels of glory, **prepared** beforehand. (Rom 9:23)
- John the Baptist **prepared** the way for Jesus' arrival and announcement. (Mark 1:2)
- Jesus promised that He would **prepare** a place for His disciples. (John 14:2-3)

Thus, preparation is always deliberate, having a purpose or end in mind.

Sound: Trumpets—symbols of warning and warfare—relate to *hearing*. Peoples of the earth are being warned of what is to come: *war*. But not a bogus war between antichrist and Christ's army; it's a war against the things in which men put their trust.

8:7 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.

Hail: The ninth judgment against Egypt (Exo 9), and a symbol of God's judgment against other nations. (Isa 28; 32:19; Ezek 38:22) God used hailstones against the five Amorite kings, the hail “killing more than those who were killed by the sword.” (Josh 10) Hailstones are called the voice of God. (Psa 18:12-13; Isa 30:30-31) They knock down city walls, in which men place their trust and hope. (Ezek 13:11-13)

Fire: The symbol of God's anger and judgment (See notes on 1:14). Fire from the sky means lightning, not flames. (Exo 9:23-24) It is a heavenly or *spiritual* fire that burns.

Mixed with blood: Hail (pummeling down) and lightning (anger) is mixed with blood, the symbol

of death.

“You will be fuel for the *fire*; your *blood* will be in the midst of the land. You will not be remembered, for I, the Lord, have spoken.” (Ezek 21:32)

Note similar symbolism in Ezekiel.:

“...all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence (EARTHQUAKES); the mountains also will be thrown down, the steep pathways will collapse, and every wall will fall to the ground (HAIL & EARTHQUAKE). And I shall call for a sword against him on all My mountains,” declares the Lord God. “Every man’s sword will be against his brother. And with pestilence and with blood I shall enter into judgment with him; and I shall rain on him, and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire, and brimstone. (Ezek 38:20-22)

Other similar prophecies are sprinkled throughout scripture. They are *spiritual* descriptions using *earthly* language. The indictments against Egypt, Edom, and other nations use similar poetic descriptions. They were not literal, but pictures describing the force and strength of God’s words in a language any person could understand. These nations were destroyed by conventional means, yet described in very picturesque language.

Thrown to the earth: God’s judgment goes down from heaven to the land of the Jews (earth). We need to keep before us that man has always been in rebellion against God. These judgments are not against mankind in general; it is a specific description of punishment of the Jews for rejecting the Messiah. The same fate awaits all who rebel against God. However, these verses, *in their context*, deal with His punishment of the Jews, not the end of all mankind.

Third of the earth, trees & green grass burned up: Dividing groups of people into thirds provided a protective perimeter for kings (2 Kgs 11:5-6), or for driving an offensive in war. (2 Sam 18:2) Ezekiel cut his beard and hair, burned one third, struck a third with the sword, and scattered the remaining third to the wind. (Ezek 5:1-2) This represented the three-fold judgment God was to bring upon Israel. The Levites were divided into thirds to be gatekeepers, house sitters, and watchers at the Gate of Foundation. (2 Chr 23:4-5) According to Jewish literature, ‘one-third’ implied ‘very many.’ The number ‘3’ has a significant spiritual meaning in scripture, based on the three-fold personality of God. By removing a third of something, the remaining two cannot stand. Therefore, burning up a third of the earth, trees and grass (various symbols for people) puts the remaining people in great jeopardy. There is no hope for spiritual survival. God has removed enough support to force the remainder to topple and fall.

Earth means ‘land’ or ‘people.’ Trees are also symbols of individuals (See notes on 7:3).

Green grass is used to symbolize common people, or the descendants of men. (Job 5:25) The short life of grass denotes the frailty of earthly life (Psa 102:4, 11), the temporal fate of mankind (Psa 37:2; 103:15; Isa 40:6; 51:12; 1 Pet 1:24), especially that of the wicked. (Psa 92:7; 129:4; Isa 5:24; James 1:10-11) “Surely the people are grass” (Isa 40:7) paints a picture of how temporary we are.

Sometimes, a third is saved and two-thirds are destroyed:

(David) defeated Moab, and measured them with the line, making them lie down on the ground; and he measured two lines to put to death and one full line (one-third) to keep alive. And the Moabites became servants to David, bringing tribute. (2 Sam 8:2)

In a prophecy concerning the establishment of God's people (the church), note:

"It will come about in all the land," declares the Lord, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; but the third will be left in it." (Zech 13:8)

8:8 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;

Great mountain burning with fire: Ezekiel's description of a burning mountain is that of a volcano. (Ezek 28:14) Mt Sinai was a mountain of fire because of the Lord's presence. (Exo 19:18) "You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom." (Deut 4:11) It was from this mountain that the Law was given to Moses. (Deut 9:10) The burning mountain, from which the Law was given, stands in contrast to Mount Zion, which is the church. (Heb 12:18ff)

Mountain and its derivatives is used seven times in Revelation. They are symbols for kings and their nations. (Rev 17:9-10) The word is derived from 'to rear up,' as a mountain *rears up* over the plain. King Nebuchadnezzar was portrayed as a "mountain that filled the earth." (Dan 2:35) Jerusalem was called "God's holy mountain." (Dan 9:16; Heb 12:20-22) The word not only implies the one who rules but also the kingdom over which he has authority. John was brought to a high mountain and shown the New Jerusalem. (Rev 21:10) Ezekiel was brought to a high mountain and shown a city. There, he was told, "...see with your eyes, hear with your ears, and give attention to all that I am going to show you; for *you have been brought here in order to show it to you*. Declare to the house of Israel all that you see." (Ezek 40:4) Thus, the word conveys a sense of being able to understand God's plan. One can stand on a mountain and see the world. It is being able to see God's entire plan from a vantage-point not normally accessible by humans. This is why Ezekiel and John were brought to these mountains—to see God's plan.

The devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. (Matt 4:8) There is no such literal mountain from where a person can see every earthly kingdom and its glory. The concept was that our Lord was shown a ruler-ship outside of God's will. As Ezekiel and John were elevated to a point where they could see things from God's perspective, so too was Jesus somehow brought to a point where He saw things from Satan's perspective. As an example, Jesus called Peter "Satan" because the disciple rebuked the Lord's testimony. (Matt 16:21-23) It was not that Peter was somehow Satan incarnate but that Peter was viewing things from a perspective opposed to the Father's will.

Thrown into the sea: Mountains are not normally moved or thrown down. They are considered very powerful, and therefore *immovable*. Thus, when a kingdom (mountain) is thrown down, it is done through great force, typically, as a result of war.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though

its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. (Psa 46:1-3)

The sea is symbolic of nations (See notes on 4:6). Since this mountain causes one-third of the nations to become blood, it means that this kingdom destroys a great part of mankind. Babylon is called a “destroying mountain, one who destroys the whole earth.” (Jer 51:25) In verse 42, the prophet writes, “The sea has come up over Babylon; she has been engulfed with its tumultuous waves.” Note the same event from a different perspective:

Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer.” (Rev 18:21)

These verses all describe the overthrow of a nation and its people. As we shall see later, Jerusalem is called Babylon. This is the fulfillment of Jesus prophecy as He told it in Matthew 24 (cf. Mark 13; Luke 21).

Sea became blood: Another Egyptian plague. (Exod 7:20-21) The sea is a symbol for all of mankind, specifically, *sinful* men and women.

The wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud.” (Isa 57:20)

These are the men who are...wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam.” (Jude 13)

Since Jerusalem is called Babylon in Revelation, we look at the Great Harlot, who “spilled the blood of the prophets.” (17:6) Revelation 18:24 refers to the blood of the prophets in the same way that Jesus spoke of Jerusalem shedding their blood. (Matt 23:30-35) He cried, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!” (Matt 23:37) The unbelieving Jews caused part of mankind to become blood; they caused them to die. The illustration is perhaps understood in light of Jesus’ words against the Jewish religious leaders:

“You shut the kingdom of heaven off from men; for you do not even enter yourselves, neither do you allow those trying to get in to enter...you travel sea and land to make one follower; and when he is converted, you make him twice the son of hell than yourselves.” (Matt 23:13; 15)

In other words, in their attempt to convert others to God, the Pharisees were actually destroying people spiritually. This second trumpet is very similar to the second bowl in chapter 16, which caused the sea (nations) to turn to blood, killing everyone in it. (Rev 16:3)

8:9 and a third of the creatures, which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

These creatures (literally, *creation*) were *alive*. They were in the sea, or in the nations, as the term implies. They *had* life. Yet they died when this destroying kingdom—a burning mountain—was thrown into their midst. Note the Jewish antagonism against the early church:

False Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order, if possible, to lead the elect astray. (Mark 13:22)

The Pharisees therefore answered them, “You have not also been led astray, have you? No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? But this multitude which does not know the Law is accursed” (turned to blood). (John 7:47-49)

(Paul) was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews (about Christ); but they were attempting to put him to death. (Acts 9:29)

Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. And when he saw that it pleased the Jews... (Acts 12:1-3)

The Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles, and embittered them against the brethren. (Acts 14:2)

The Book of Acts shows how the unbelieving Jews sought to persecute the apostles and crush the Christian movement. These are just a few examples of how the symbolism describes a mountain—an immovable and powerful entity—that destroys many and leads them from the truth so that they are denied spiritual life in Christ. They *had* a chance at life, but “died” as a result of Jewish influence in their midst.

Third of the ships destroyed: Ships were carriers of enormous wealth (Ezek 27), and were considered vital to trade. Solomon’s maritime trade took his ships down the coast of Africa and as far as India. This trade probably continued, although on a smaller scale, until the fleet was wrecked in fulfillment of Eliezer’s prophecy. (2 Chr 20:37) Ships are always connected to trade, but because they plied the open seas, they were at God’s mercy to save them from storms. (Psa 107:23) They are considered “the pride of man.” (Isa 2:16) The wealth they brought from distant lands was considered a stronghold. (Isa 23:14) In speaking of Tyre:

When your wares went out from the seas, you satisfied many peoples; with the abundance of your wealth and your merchandise you enriched the kings of earth. Now that you are broken by the seas in the depths of the waters, your merchandise and all your company have fallen in the midst of you. (Ezek 27:33-34)

How does this burning mountain (the Jews) destroy ships? Is it a direct destruction? Or perhaps as a consequence of the Jews’ own downfall? Note how these ship merchants return in chapter 18:

They (the ship merchants) threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, “Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!” (Rev 18:19)

Ships are symbols of man’s attempt at reaching and extending his influence throughout the world. They represent man’s way as opposed to God’s. For an extended interpretation, see notes on 18:19.

8:10 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;

Great star fell: Stars have already been shown to typify those in authority. This is a leader having enormous power, or authority (power and authority are used interchangeably throughout scripture). It is brought down from its heavenly place, or place of authority. In speaking of Jerusalem's destruction, Jesus said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days...the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." (Matt 24:29) Note that a burning *mountain* is first thrown down, followed by a burning *star*. Both are symbols of great, *permanent* entities being brought down. The prophecy concerning the king of Babylon is worth noting here:

How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you, they will ponder over you, saying, "Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a wilderness and overthrew its cities, who did not allow his prisoners to go home?" All the kings of the nations lie in glory, each in his own tomb. But you have been cast out of your tomb like a rejected branch, clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword, who go down to the stones of the pit, like a trampled corpse. (Isa 14:12-19)

When the fifth angel sounds, another star appears, having a new mission:

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. (Rev 9:1)

If the verse had said, "I saw *the* star..." it would have been referring *back* to this star. Since it says, however, "I saw *a* star..." it implies a distinct and separate entity, not the same one. This star is Satan. The depiction of his fall is also described in chapter 12, where Michael and his angels cast the dragon down to the earth.

Two things are thrown to the earth, a mountain and a star. One represents an immovable *earthly* kingdom, the other denotes an immovable *heavenly* body. Both end up on an earthly plain, where great spiritual destruction and death are the result of their fall. Wars were typically fought on plains.

Rivers: Rivers define borders (Gen 15:18; Deut 3:16; Jos 1:4); supply water (Gen 2:10; Num 24:6), nourish (Psa 105:41), bring prosperity (Isa 66:12), and peace. (Isa 48:18)

Springs of waters is used four times in Revelation. The Lamb shall guide those emerging from the great tribulation to springs of the water of life. (7:17) In the other three instances, calamity befalls springs of water. They are for the afflicted and thirsty. (Isa 49:10-13) Jesus said, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst...the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of *water springing up to eternal life*." (John 4:13-14) Water is a symbol for the word of God and the Holy Spirit. (Amos 8:11-13; John 7:38-39) Peter spoke of false teachers, who were "springs *without water*." (2 Pet 2:17) They only *promised* hope but could not deliver.

This burning star lands on sources of spiritual life. The next verse shows the result.

8:11 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.

The word *bitter* implies *poison*. An adulteress is “as bitter as deadly poison.” (Prov 4:4) Bitterness depicts disparity (Prov 27:7; 31:6), and the pain of being hopelessly trapped. (Ecc 7:26) Poisoned water is bitter. (James 3:11) Ezekiel was told to eat a scroll, and speak to the house of Israel. (Ezek 3:1) Verse 10 then says, “*take into your heart* all My words which I shall speak to you, and *listen closely*.” The eating was taking it into the prophet’s heart and soul in order to understand. The Spirit then lifted the prophet up to take him away. He then became “embittered in the rage of (his) spirit.” (Ezek 3:14)

Wormwood was a bitter-tasting, poisonous plant. (Deut 29:18) This star is a symbol for poison. By giving the nation Israel wormwood meant the bitter truth of being scattered among the nations:

I will feed them, this people, with wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink. And I will scatter them among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send the sword after them until I have annihilated them. (Jer 9:15-16)

Wormwood is also equated to idolatry. (Deut 29:18) The poisoned water Jeremiah wrote of was Jerusalem’s false prophets, who reassured their leaders that nothing bad would happen to them. (Jer 5:31; 27:9-10) As a result of believing these lies (drinking poisoned words/waters), Jerusalem was sent into captivity. Water symbolizes spiritual truth (leading to life), while poisoned water is false teachings and phony gospels that destroy the souls of men.

Thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets, “Behold, I am going to feed them wormwood and make them drink poisonous water, for *from the prophets of Jerusalem pollution has gone forth into all the land*.” Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; they speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the Lord.” (Jer 23:15-16)

False doctrines originate from the fallen star from heaven, an obvious reference to Satan, who is the Father of Lies. (John 8:44) It parallels what happens when men receive the mark of the beast and lose their souls (“many men died”) as a result of following the False Prophet. Although commentators have tried to say this star was Nero or Domitian, there is no way to prove it. It is a heavenly, and therefore, *spiritual* entity. The better view is to see it as false prophets spreading their poison throughout Israel.

8:12 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.

The fourth warning (‘4’ referring to the earth) causes all forms of light and guidance to be removed from Palestine. Not only are the Jews given over to falsehood (bitter waters), but the light of truth is now removed from their midst. The sun, moon and stars are all heavenly bodies, denoting a spiritual light. Since one-third is a symbol for “many,” the darkening is extensive. It is the result of paying attention to the doctrines of demons. (1 Tim 4:1)

The language is poetic and figurative; hence, we look not for specific historical events for their fulfillment. They describe the general decline of Israel's national glory and luster as she begins to approach her last end. Her rulers no longer able to effectively control or restrain the people, isolated incidents of anarchy and chaos broke out; lawlessness swept over the land. The corruption of the priesthood and Sanhedrin, the wars, famines, and pestilences that punctuated her last days, the swarms of robbers that ravished the land and despoiled the people, all ably describe the waning of Israel's light as the darkness of judgment and doom settled over her.¹

8:13 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!”

Eagle flying: The KJV pens the word as ‘angel,’ but ‘eagle’ is the correct translation of *aetou*. The eagle is most often portrayed as a symbol of swift justice. (Deut 28:49; Jer 48:40; 49:22; Hos 8:1; Hab 1:8) Since the eagle was the standard for the Roman army, we may loosely connect it to those who brought about Jerusalem's demise in 70 AD.

Midheaven: This term is only found in Revelation. The word is properly rendered “midst of heaven.” Thayer translates it to mean *the highest point in the heavens, which the sun occupies at noon, where what is done can be seen by all*. It appears three times, first with an eagle, second, with the angel preaching the Eternal Gospel (14:6), and third, where the birds gather to consume the flesh of men who oppose God. (19:17) It is essentially the spiritual realm.

Loud voice: A voice (words) heard throughout heaven and earth (See notes on 5:2).

Woe, woe, woe: Three laments, signifying spiritual completion. They coincide with the three remaining trumpets, which will complete God's warnings to mankind.

- The first woe (9:1) finds Satan dethroned and destroying many in his wake.
- The second woe (9:12) seems aimed at the Jews and their kingdom.
- The third woe (11:12) shows the establishment of Christ's kingdom.

Jesus pronounced seven woes upon Jerusalem's religious leadership. (Matt 23:13-39) It's not necessary to see these angels as heavenly beings. The apostles spoke by heavenly authority from God, and in this sense, were angels—messengers. They warned the Jews that if they didn't repent, they would face destruction. So too, Peter, quoting from Joel, gave similar warning, saying, “Save yourselves from this wicked generation.” (Acts 2:40) Stephen gave similar warning to the Jewish religious council. (Acts 6:14)

Those who dwell on the earth: In some translations: “those who dwell *upon* the earth.” (cf. 3:10 with 6:10) Christ told the church at Philadelphia, “Because you have kept the word of My patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation which will come upon *all the world*, to try those who dwell *upon the earth*.” (Rev 3:10) The fulfillment of this promise was about to take place.

The idea of *dwelling* means those who have secured themselves to this life, not the life to come. They have rejected God's kingdom and embraced Satan's, symbolized in the Beast.

¹ *The Consummation of the Ages*, p. 187