

Revelation

Notes #8B

Seal #7 - Trumpets #1-4

Chapter 8

The opening of the first six seals followed the scene of the throne in Revelation 4-5; thus, they signify God's judgments that fell upon the political system of the Roman Empire.

The first four seals signified the rise and fall of the **Pagan Roman Empire**. The fifth seal signified the persecution of the true, faithful Church that occurred during this period, especially as set in motion by Diocletian in 303 AD that lasted for 10 years until Constantine overturned it in 313 AD. The sixth seal signifies the division of the iron legged empire into the Eastern Roman Empire [ERE] centered in Constantinople and the Western Roman Empire [WRE] centered in Rome. Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, sent shock waves (earthquake) throughout the pagan world as he set the true Church free through the Edict of Toleration, thus, setting the stage for the rise to power of Christians.

The sounding of **trumpets signified the sounding of war (Numbers 10:9)** and began with the breaking open of the 7th seal. Trumpets number 5-7 are also designated as **woes**; and the sounding of the 7th trumpet brought forth the pouring out of 7 bowls of the wrath of God.

However, it needs to be pointed out that the judgments rendered with the sounding of the first six trumpets, which includes **two woes** (trumpets 5 and 6), are judgments of the political systems, just like those of the first six seals. Thus, the judgments depicted through the 6th trumpet of the 7th seal are all political in nature, whether they relate to power being exercised by pagans, Islamists, or Romanists.

As we study the trumpets, we need to keep in mind two things.

First, by the end of the sixth seal, the Roman Empire, in **395 AD**, was divided into two permanent regions, the **East and the West**, which were seen by Daniel nearly a thousand years earlier (600 BC–395 AD) as the two legs of the great statue seen in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2:33).

Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Constantinople on the Black Sea bordering Europe and Asia, making it more important than Rome itself. When **Emperor Theodosius** died in **395 AD**, the empire was divided between his two sons, Honorius and Arcadius, thus completing the judgment of the sixth seal.

Second, the Roman Empire actually consisted of three geographical areas that were judged separately by different intruders. 1) The **West**, with **Rome** as its center, fell to so-called "barbarians" from the north (**Europe**); 2) **North Africa** to Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, with **Alexandria** as its center, fell to Arabic-Mohammedan-Muslims from the east (**South & Middle East Mediterranean**); 3) The **East**, with **Constantinople** as its center, fell to the Turks (**Balkan Peninsula and Asia Minor (Turkey)**).

Gibbons the historian wrote: "From the age of Charlemagne to that of the Crusades, the world (for I overlook the remote monarchy of China) was occupied and disputed by *the three great empires*, or nations of the *Greeks*, the *Saracens*, and the *Franks*. *The three great nations* of the world, the *Greeks*, the *Saracens*, and the *Franks*, encountered each other on the plains of Italy. *Three classes* of men during the interval are conspicuous, the *Saracens*, or Arabians, the *Latins* or *Franks*, inhabitants of Western Europe, and the *Byzantine Greeks*. It is upon a *third part*, the Western third part, called the Latin or Frank part, that successive invasions from the Goths, Vandals, Huns, and Heruli bring it to its demise. It was the Western *third part*, the Old Roman Empire that is in view with the sounding of the next four trumpets."

Trumpet	Description
#1	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 . (Revelation 8:7 NASB)
Symbology	Meaning(s)
Earth	Land of the Western Roman Empire
Third	A third of the WRE or a third of the entire RE
Hail	Destructive force; one of God's weapon of war (Job 38:22, 23)
Fire	Destructive force by burning; God's means of judgment (Genesis 19:24)
Blood	Death caused by destructive forces
Trees	Men (Deuteronomy 20:19; Mark 8:24); men grouped together in centers of commerce and civilization (i.e., cities)
Green grass	Fleshly people (Isaiah 40:6); prosperity; vegetation of the land
Period	Interpretation
400-553 AD	Gothic Invasion. Begins the fall of the WRE as the Goths under Alaric invade the LAND from the north.

About A. D. 400, the "four winds" could be held back no longer as the Goths savagely descended upon Rome, leaving behind deeply scarred, scorched, and bloodied land. The beauty of the country was turned into desolation.

About 409-410, **Alaric the Goth** took the city of Rome and sacked it for six days, taking all the wealth of the city, and torturing anyone who hid wealth from them. Alaric and his band brought an awful catastrophe on Rome that left the empire in grief and terror. He sacked most of Italy as well. All the people (green grass) and their prosperity were affected as they lost everything. The Goths trampled their land like hail, destroying as they went along. They took and ate what they wanted and destroyed by fire and trampled down what they did not need or want. Massive starvation resulted. In their wake was left burning towns and cities stained with the blood of its defenders, scorched land denuded of their fruit trees, and grass trodden under foot by the march of armies.

Of the conflict, Gibbon wrote: "The tremendous sound of the Gothic *trumpet* stirred the host to invasion. At the first sound of the *trumpet* the Goths left their farms to rush on in invasion. The Gothic conflagration consumed the empire. Blood and conflagration and the burning of trees and herbage marked their path."

A third could refer to a third of the WRE being affected, or it could refer to the WRE as the third region of the entire Roman Empire. In either case, a third of the land and what grows on it and the people that live on it were affected by the Goths. Thus, judgment fell on the European region of the WRE.

Also, if the trees symbolize people and their centers of commerce, surely, Rome being sacked and taken down was the first of the three major cities (**Rome, Alexandria, and Constantinople**) to fall. This is a third. If grass symbolizes prosperity, then all the prosperity of the third vanished, which it did, with the Goths as well.

Trumpet Description

#2 (8) 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 [created things] which were in [on or about] the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.** (Revelation 8:8-9 NASB)

Symbology**Meaning(s)**

Sea	Sea [Mediterranean] region of the Western Roman Empire
Third	A third of the navy and control over the Sea
Ships	Roman Fleet that ruled the Mediterranean Sea
Blood	Death of sailors
Burning	Overthrow, judgment that included literal burning
Mountain	Kingdom (Isaiah 2:2, 3)
Creatures	Created things, meaning sailors on the sea, in ships

Period**Interpretation**

422-534 AD **Vandal Invasion. Under Genseric, the Vandals take North Africa, defeat the Roman navy, and conquer the SEA.**

This is about judgment of the WRE by way of the sea. More northern tribes swept south dominated by the **Vandals** (hence, *vandalism*). Sweeping through Gaul and Spain and leaping the Straits of Gibraltar, they made their way to North Africa and took it from the Romans, establishing a maritime kingdom in the western Mediterranean Sea area.

The Vandal king **Genseric** moved into Africa in 429 AD with no resistance on the part of the locals. Once established, the Vandals began to attack the Roman fleet. According to H.G. Wells, under Genseric, the Vandals "embarked en masse for North Africa (429), became masters of Carthage (439), secured mastery of the seas, raided, captured, and pillaged Rome (455), crossed into Sicily, and set up a kingdom in West Sicily, which endured there a hundred years (to 534)."

Mastering the Mediterranean Sea was vital if the Vandals were to conquer the Romans on land, so the Vandals conquered the Roman fleet, which in turn allowed them to carry their troops to Italy and the islands. The period of 600 years in which Rome held power of the sea was overturned.

What of the third? In this case, it must refer to a third of the region of the Mediterranean Sea, presumably the western portion from North Africa to Italy and its surroundings.

Two interpretations of the burning mountain are offered. First, the great kingdom of Rome was burning by its own fire of internal corruption fueled by its conquering foes. This great burning mountain was defeated on the sea as well as on the land. Second, the Vandals threw themselves like *a burning mountain upon the sea* and filled it with fire and blood. The creatures in the sea refer to the living sailors on or in the ships on the sea. The Greek word *en* can mean either *in* or *on*. Both the ships and the sailors suffered destruction and death. The sea was reddened with the blood of the slain, and the islands of the sea fell into the hands of the Vandals who later landed in Italy and savagely took Rome, removing all its wealth, and leaving behind a scorched city not even worthy of their occupation.

Trumpet #3	Description (10) 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) 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. (Revelation 8:10-11 NASB)
Symbology Star, torch Rivers, springs Wormwood	Meaning(s) A mighty leader; Attila the Hun Literal tributaries, rivers of WRE Judgment for the root of bitterness
Period 440-453 AD	Interpretation Hun Invasion. Attila the Hun, "the scourge of God," brought judgment on the Christian Roman Empire of Western Europe.

In type, ancient Israel had been warned that there not be among you a root bearing poisonous [bitter; the water of gall] **fruit and wormwood** (Deuteronomy 29:18). Breaking God's law would lead to judgment that fit the crime. In this case, they would be judged by wormwood. 'Behold, I am going to feed them **wormwood** and **make them drink poisonous water**' (Jeremiah 23:15). *Wormwood* signifies the bitter water of gall, which is the poppy plant from which opium is derived. In the natural realm, opium destroys lives; thus, in the political/national realm, opium figuratively destroys nations.

In like fashion, the WRE was corrupted by the root of bitterness as they sought to take the kingdom by violence against Jews, pagans, and supposed heretics, and the Lord sent judgment upon them that fit their crime. Wormwood (opium) for wormwood (opium)!

Thus, **Attila the Hun**, the blazing meteor called **Wormwood**, was raised up to feed them bitter drink as he appeared on the banks of the Danube River with 800,000 men. They had come from Central Asia, marched through Russia, and appeared at **the river boundary of the WRE**. The Franks and the Visigoths resisted, but ultimately the Hun's prevailed as they battled along the Rhine River to its mouth, turned south, descended the Alps, and fiercely marched along the Po River to seize Rome itself. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, Pope Leo I made peace with Attila by offering him rich bribes as well as the emperor's daughter to add to his many wives. It worked and the Hun left and made Buda, on the Danube River, his capital, and founded the Hungarian nation. When he died, his followers stopped the waters of the Danube and buried him in its bed. Thus, the bones of the star called **Wormwood**, which fell upon the rivers, lie in the bed of the Danube.

By one account, 150,000 to 300,000 men on both sides died in combat, which left their blood flowing in the rivers of the WRE. In his drive to Rome, Attila ferociously attacked the people, and developed the reputation as "the scourge of God," recognizing him as God's servant to judge the Christian Roman Empire that had polluted the land with their corruption and bitterness toward others. They were caused to drink the bitterness of Attila's burning rage.

In his conquest of the WRE, Attila the Hun ravaged the land and the people along a third of the rivers of the region. Thus, the rivers became bitter to the people as these same rivers were filled with the blood of the dead.

Trumpet**Description****#4**

The fourth angel sounded, and **a third of the sun** and **a third of the moon** and **a third of the stars** were struck, so that **a third of them** would be **darkened** and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way. (Revelation 8:12 NASB)

Symbology**Meaning(s)**

Sun	Primary rulers
Moon	Lesser rulers
Stars	Ruling families
Darkened	Destruction or removal of the Roman leadership and its aristocracy

Period**Interpretation****476 AD**

Heruli invasion. Odoacer conquered Romulus Augustus, the last emperor of the Ostrogothic Kingdom. Final demise of Rome. Dark Ages began.

The conquerors of Rome first made their moves on the WRE starting in the 5th century: the Goths upon the LAND about 409 AD; the Vandals on the SEA about 422 AD; and Attila the Hun upon the RIVERS about 440 AD. When Attila died in 453 AD, his empire fell, and the nations he had conquered regained their independence.

In 476, Romulus Augustus came to power of the **Ostrogothic Kingdom**, which included Italy. By this time, the WRE had been split into three kingdoms, including the **Visigothic Kingdom** in Spain and the **Vandal Kingdom** in Africa.

However, in the same year, **Odoacer, king of the Heruli**, a medley of Teutonic tribes, besieged and conquered Romulus and his kingdom, which had been greatly weakened by these tribal incursions. Rome fell, and Odoacer informed the emperor of the ERE in Constantinople that there was no longer an emperor in the WRE.

Thus, the sun, moon, and stars, signifying the emperor, princes, and great men of Rome, lost their seat of power and ceased giving light, so to speak. Augustus, the feeble emperor, was cast down, the Roman Senate that had met for 1,228 years was driven from its chamber, and the empire fell to dust with the great men never rising again.

Again, we see the reference to a third. It is possible that the Roman population had been reduced by a third due to wars, famines, and diseases. Later, in 553 AD, due to another war with the Goths, Italy was totally destroyed. Rome's population had been reduced from a million to 40,000. In another region, 50,000 died of starvation.

The fall of Rome introduced the period when it is said that day and night were darkened. It was the beginning of a dark age. Intellectually and spiritually the minds of men became blind and the visible church gradually fell into apostasy. And so, began what many have called the "**Dark Ages**."