REVELATION 8

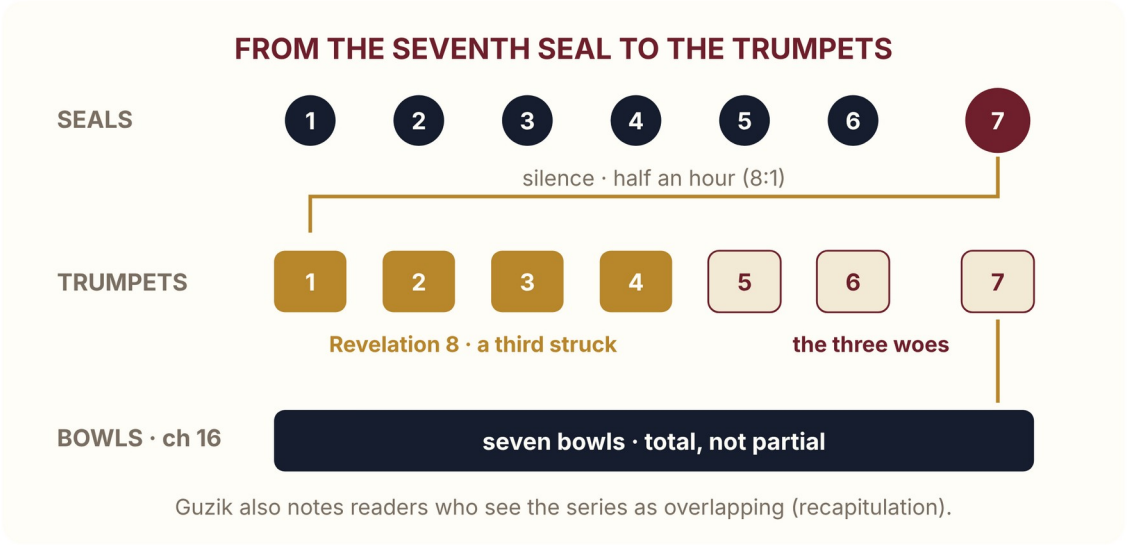
The Seventh Seal: Silence, Prayer and Trumpets

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

Where John has brought us

1. Chapter 7 held back the four winds until God's servants were sealed, and showed a multitude no one could count standing before the throne.

2. How do the trumpets relate to the seals?



Silence in Heaven

The seventh seal opens, and heaven holds its breath

REVELATION 8:2

And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik weighs several reasons for the silence — a breathing space, or a hush so the prayers of the saints can be heard — but he favors an awestruck silence before the storm of judgment.

WHAT IT MEANS

This is the most startling verse in the chapter. For four chapters heaven has been loud with worship, and now — nothing.

σιγή

SIGĒ · "SILENCE"

Silence, stillness. After the thunder, the elders' songs and the angels' sevenfold Amen of chapters 4–7, the whole court of heaven goes quiet.

Prayers Up, Fire Down

The saints' prayers rise from the golden altar, and God answers

REVELATION 8:4

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

DAVID GUZIK

Who is this angel? Some see Jesus, our High Priest, interceding. Guzik reports the answer that the Greek for another means another of the same kind — an angel like the seven — which leans against that view.

WHAT IT MEANS

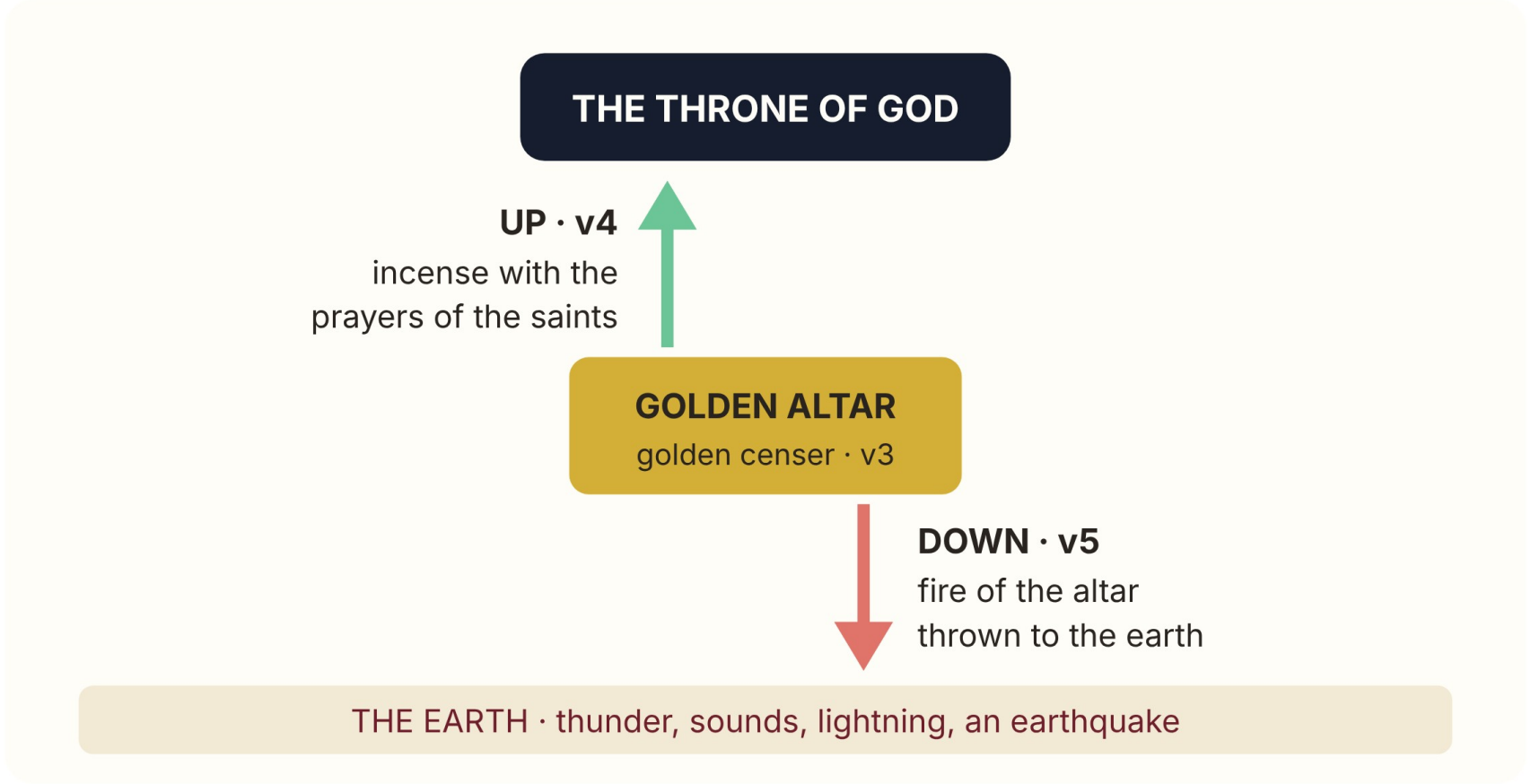
Prayers go up in verse 4; fire comes down in verse 5. The same altar, the same censer.

θυμίαμα

THYMIAMA · "INCENSE"

Incense, a fragrant offering burned before God. In verse 3 it is given to the angel so he can add it to the prayers of all the saints.

One altar, two directions (8:3–5)



The censer that carries the saints' prayers up to God is filled with fire from the same altar and thrown down to the earth.

Four Trumpets: A Third Is Struck

Land, sea, fresh water and light — real judgment, measured judgment

REVELATION 8:7

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.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik, as a futurist, reads the trumpets as literal catastrophes in the tribulation, and quotes Seiss: 'if earth, trees, and grass do not mean earth, trees, and grass, no man can tell what they mean.'

WHAT IT MEANS

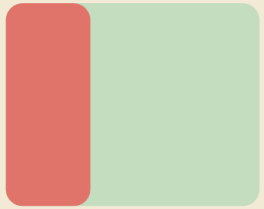
Hail and fire, water turned to blood, darkness — this is Egypt all over again (Exod 7:20–21; 9:23–25; 10:21–23). The God who judged Pharaoh to set His people free will do it again on a world scale.

ἄψινθος

APSINTHOS · "WORMWOOD"

Wormwood, a bitter plant — and so, bitterness itself. It is the name of the great star of the third trumpet: "The name of the star is called Wormwood" (v11).

The first four trumpets (8:7–12)

TRUMPET 1	TRUMPET 2	TRUMPET 3	TRUMPET 4
LAND	**SEA**	**WATERS**	**LIGHTS**
hail and fire mixed with blood	a burning mountain	the star Wormwood	sun, moon and stars struck
			
a third of trees burned · v7	sea life, ships destroyed · vv8–9	rivers, springs bitter · vv10–11	day and night darkened · v12

shaded block = the third struck · the rest is spared

Each trumpet strikes one realm of life — and in each, only a third.

Woe, Woe, Woe

An eagle in midheaven warns that the worst is still ahead

REVELATION 8:13

Then 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!"

DAVID GUZIK

The KJV reads angel here; the NASB reads eagle. Guzik explains that the two Greek words look very much alike, and some ancient copies read eagle — the reading the NASB follows.

WHAT IT MEANS

Four trumpets have sounded; three woes are still to come. The eagle flies in midheaven where everyone can see and hear — God does not hide His warnings.

οὐαί

OUAI · "WOE"

An exclamation of grief and doom — less a word than a cry. The eagle — aetos (G105) — says it three times, one woe for each of the three trumpets still to sound.

What to carry from this chapter

1

Heaven falls silent.

After four chapters of worship, about half an hour of silence comes before the trumpets.

2

An awestruck hush.

The silence is best read as heaven's awe before the storm of judgment breaks.

3

Incense joins prayer.

Thymiama is added to the saints' prayers — it goes with them; it does not replace them.

4

Prayer moves history.

The martyrs' How long? and every Your kingdom come help set the end in motion.

More to carry

5

Egypt again.

Hail and fire, water to blood and darkness echo the plagues God sent on Pharaoh.

6

Real events.

The trumpets are literal catastrophes in the tribulation, with God — not mere nature — acting.

7

A third, twelve times.

Judgment is measured; two-thirds is spared, so the trumpets are warnings as well as wrath.

8

Woe is a cry.

Ouai is the sound of grief and doom — three of them for the three trumpets left.

Talk it through

1. Why do you think heaven falls silent before the trumpets, after so much worship in chapters 4–7?

2. What happens to the prayers of the saints, and what comes back down from the same altar?

3. Which plagues on Egypt do the first four trumpets echo, and what does that tell you about God's purpose?

4. Why does God strike only a third, and how should a man respond to a partial judgment in his own life?

5. Who is the eagle's woe aimed at, and what does that phrase reveal about where their hearts live?

CLOSING

Heaven went silent, the prayers of the saints rose, and God answered with fire. The trumpets are warnings, measured and merciful, and the eagle still cries that worse is coming. Be still before Him, keep praying, and turn while there is still time.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

O·I·A study, slides, reflection journal and film: see the Revelation study page.