

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION 8

This chapter contains the opening of the seventh seal, and the things that followed on it, and particularly the sounding of the first four trumpets. Upon the opening of the seventh seal there was silence in heaven for half an hour, ([Revelation 8:1](#)); then follows a vision of seven angels, who stood before God, and had seven trumpets given to them, ([Revelation 8:2](#)); then of another angel, described by his position, standing at the altar; by his having a golden censer, and by much incense being given him, the end of which was to offer up the prayers of all saints, which with it went up to God, and were acceptable to him; and by filling his censer with the fire of the altar, and casting it to the earth; the effects of which were voices, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake, ([Revelation 8:3-5](#)), after which the seven angels prepare to sound their trumpets, ([Revelation 8:6](#)); the first blows his, which brings hail and fire, mingled with blood, upon the earth, which burns up the third part of trees and all green grass, ([Revelation 8:7](#)); the second blows, upon which a burning mountain is cast into the sea, and a third part of it becomes blood, a third part of the creatures in it die, and a third part of the ships upon it are destroyed, ([Revelation 8:8,9](#)); the third angel blows; upon which a star, like a burning lamp, falls upon the third part of rivers and fountains, whose name is Wormwood, and embitters them, so that many men die of them, ([Revelation 8:10,11](#)); the fourth angel blows, and the third part of the sun, moon, and stars, is smitten, and becomes dark, so that there is no light for a third part of the day and night, ([Revelation 8:12](#)); and the chapter is concluded with the vision of another angel flying through the midst of heaven, proclaiming three times woe to the inhabitants of the earth, on account of what would be uttered by the three following angels, who were yet to blow their trumpets, ([Revelation 8:13](#)).

Ver. 1. *And when he had opened the seventh seal*, etc.] That is, when the Lamb had opened the seventh and last seal of the scaled book:

there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour; not in the third heaven, the seat of the divine Being, of angels and glorified saints,

where are hallelujahs without intermission; but in the church, which is oftentimes signified by heaven in this book, and where now the throne of God was placed, in that form as described in (~~600~~ Revelation 4:4-8), or rather in the Roman empire: nor is this silence the sum of this seal, or the only thing in it; for it includes the preparation of the seven angels to take their trumpets, though none of them were sounded during this period. This space of time some think refers to the time which elapsed, while the angel, who had incense given him to offer it with the prayers of saints, did so, and took fire off the altar with his censer, and cast it on the earth: and while the seven angels had their trumpets given them, and they were preparing to sound. Others are of opinion that this was only a pause, a breathing time for John between the former visions and seals, and the following; nothing being said or done, or anything exhibited to him during this interval; but he was at leisure to reflect on what he had seen, and to prepare for what was to come. Others understand it of the amazement of the saints at the judgments of God, which were coming upon the Christian empire, and of their quiet and silent preparations for these troubles and combats, both within and without, they were to be exercised with; (see ~~303~~ Zechariah 2:13). Others have thought that this refers to the state of the saints after the day of judgment, when there will be an entire cessation from persecution and trouble, and when the souls under the altar will have done crying for vengeance; but this will be not for half an hour only, but to all eternity; nor will angels and saints be then silent. Rather this is to be understood of that peace and rest which the church enjoyed upon Constantine's having defeated all his enemies, when he brought the church into a state of profound tranquillity and ease; and this lasted but for a little while, which is here expressed by about, or almost half an hour, as the Syriac version renders it; for in a short time the Arian heresy broke out, which introduced great troubles in the church, and at last violent persecutions. The allusion is, as in the whole of the following vision of the angel at the altar, to the offering of incense; at which time the people were removed from the temple, from between the porch and altar ^{f227}, to some more distant place; and the priest was alone while he offered incense, and then prayed a short prayer, that the people might not be affrighted lest he should be dead ^{f228}: and who in the mean while were praying in a silent, manner without; (see ~~400~~ Luke 1:9,10); hence the Jews say ^{f229}, that the offering of incense atones for an ill tongue, for it is a thing that is introduced **yaçj b**, “silently”, and it atones for what is done silently, such

as whisperings, backbitings, etc. and they call ^{f230} silence the best of spices, even of those of which the sweet incense was made.

Ver. 2. *And I saw the seven angels*, etc.] Not the seven spirits of God, (^{<6604>}Revelation 1:4 5:5); their names, as well as their office, differ; nor the ministers of the word, though these are often called angels in this book, and blow the trumpet of the Gospel, and lift up their voice like a trumpet; but the angelic spirits, and these either evil ones, since they are the executioners of wrath and vengeance, and bring judgments on the earth; and who, are sometimes said to stand before God, (^{<1221>}1 Kings 22:21,22 ^{<8006>}Job 1:6); or rather good angels, who are sometimes ministers of divine wrath; (see ^{<1046>}2 Samuel 24:16,17 ^{<1295>}2 Kings 19:35); “seven” of them are mentioned, as being a proper number for the blowing of the seven trumpets, which would complete all the woes that were to come upon the world, and in allusion to the seven princes the eastern monarchs used to have continually about them, (^{<7014>}Esther 1:14), as it follows:

which stood before God; and denotes their nearness to him, and familiarity with him, they always behold his face; and their service and ministrations, and their readiness to execute his will: the allusion is to the two priests standing at the table of fat, with two silver trumpets in their hands, with which they blew, and another struck the cymbal, and the Levites sung, which was always done at the time of the daily sacrifice ^{f231}:

and to them were given seven trumpets: everyone had one; and which were an emblem of those wars, and desolations, and calamities, which would come upon the empire, and upon the world, at the blowing of each of them; the trumpet being an alarm, preparing for, proclaiming, and introducing these things; (^{<2049>}Jeremiah 4:19 ^{<2088>}Hosea 5:8); these are said to be given them; either by him that sat upon the throne, about which they were; or by the Lamb that opened the seal; and shows that they did nothing but what they had a commission and order to do. Here is manifestly an allusion to the priests and Levites blowing their trumpets at the close of the daily sacrifice, and at the offering of incense ^{f232} as before observed.

Ver. 3. *And another angel came*, etc.] The Ethiopic version adds, “from the east”, as in (^{<6602>}Revelation 7:2); pointing to the same angel, and who is intended: for not a created angel, as Gabriel, or any other, is meant; nor any mere man, at least not Pope Damasus, who lived in Constantine's time, as Lyra thought; nor Constantine himself, which is the opinion of Brightman, who thinks that his, and the desires of other good men to make

peace, and compose the differences occasioned by the Arian heresy, are designed by the incense and prayers; and this being brought about at the counsel of Nice, when the Arian blasphemy was condemned, and truth confirmed, is intended by the ascent of the smoke of the incense with the prayers, out of the angels hands; when there followed upon this great contentions, heart burnings, and persecutions, signified by fire, voices, thunderings, etc. and others, have been of opinion that the Emperor Theodosius is designed, and that respect is had to his prayer both in the church, and at the head of his army, before the battle with Eugenius, the saints in the mean while putting up united prayers to God for success, and which was obtained; and this victory was attended with a miraculous tempest, and gave a deadly blow to the Pagan religion. Yet neither of those, but Christ himself, the Angel of the covenant, and of God's presence, is here intended, who appeared in an angelic form; so the high priest in the day of atonement was called *j yl ç*^{f233}, “an angel”, or messenger, to which the allusion is;

and stood at the altar; either of burnt offerings, and may be rendered “stood upon it”; and so may represent his sacrifice, which had been lately offered up for the sins of his people, he being both altar, sacrifice, and priest; or rather the altar of incense, since mention is made of a censer and of incense, and the smoke of it; and seeing this altar is a golden one, as that was, and is before the throne, as that was before the vail by the ark of the testimony; (^{f231}Exodus 30:1,3,6); and so Christ is here introduced as the high priest, advocate, and intercessor for his people, though both altars may be respected in this verse: “the altar” may design the altar of burnt offering from whence the coals were taken in the censer; and the “golden altar” the altar of incense where the coals being brought the incense was put upon them, and offered; and here he “stood” as everyone concerned in the service of the sanctuary did^{f234}:

having a golden censer; the Ethiopic version adds, “of fire”: for this was a vessel in which were put burning coals of fire taken from off the altar before the Lord (^{f232}Leviticus 16:12), and which may denote the sufferings of Christ, he pains he endured in his body the sorrows of his soul, and the wrath of God which was poured like fire upon him; the altar from which they were taken off was typical of Christ: in his divine nature which is the altar that sanctifies the gift, and gave virtue to his blood and sacrifice; and all this being before the Lord may show that Christ's sufferings were according to the will of God, were grateful to him, and always before him;

for these burning coals in the censer were also carried within the vail, representing heaven, where Christ entered by his own blood and where he is as a Lamb that had been slain, the efficacy of whose death always continues; and this being a golden censer shows the excellency and perpetuity of Christ's sacrifice and intercession. In the daily service the priest used a silver censer, but on the day of atonement a golden one ^{f235}; though at the daily sacrifice there was a vessel used, called Pkh, like to a large golden bushel, in which was a smaller vessel full of incense ^{f236}, and may be what is here designed:

and there was given unto him much incense; the intercession of Christ is meant by “the incense”, which, like that, is sweet and fragrant, very grateful and acceptable to God and also pure and holy; for though it is made for transgressors, yet in a way of righteousness, and consistent with the holiness and justice of God; nor is there any like it, nor should there be any besides it; the intercession of angels, and saints departed, ought to be rejected: and it is perpetual, or will be for ever; (see ^{<OR10>}Exodus 30:7,8,34-38); and whereas it is said to be “much”, this is an allusion either to the many spices used in the composition of the incense, (see ^{<OR34>}Exodus 30:34); the Jews say ^{f237}, that eleven sorts of spices were ordered to Moses, and the wise men have added three more, in all fourteen; or to the priest's handfuls of incense, which he took and brought within the vail on the day of atonement, (^{<OR12>}Leviticus 16:12); and which were added to, and were over and above the quantity used every day ^{f238}; and even in the daily service the pot of incense was not only filled, but **çwdg**, “heaped up” ^{f239}; now this may denote the fulness of Christ's intercession, which is for all his elect, called and uncalled, greater or lesser believers, and for all things for them, as their cases be; for conversion, discoveries of pardon, preservation, perseverance, and glorification; and to support this, he has a fulness of merit, which makes his intercession efficacious; for incense was put upon the burning coals in the censer, or upon the fire before the Lord, (^{<OR13>}Leviticus 16:13), signifying that Christ's intercession proceeds upon his sufferings and death: his blood and sacrifice, from whence all his pleas and arguments are taken in favour of his people, and which always prevail: and this is said to be given him, as his whole work and office as Mediator, and every branch of it is; he is appointed to this work, is allowed to do it, and is accepted in it, by him that sits upon the throne: in the daily offering of the incense, one took the incense and gave it into the hand of his friend, or the priest that was next him; and if he wanted instruction how to offer it, he

taught him, nor might anyone offer incense until the president bid him ^{f240}; to which there seems to be an allusion here: now the end of this was,

that he should offer [it] with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne; the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions add, “of God”; the prayers of the saints, rightly performed, are themselves compared to incense, being very grateful and acceptable to God, (^{<BEB>}Psalm 141:2); and the Arabic version here renders it in connection with the preceding clause, and explanative of that, “and there was given unto him much incense and much spice, which are the prayers of the saints”, as in (^{<BEB>}Revelation 5:8); and at the time of incense the people prayed; (see ^{<BEB>}Luke 1:10); and these are spiritual sacrifices, which Christ the high priest presents for the saints, perfumes with the incense of his mediation, and makes acceptable to God, being offered upon, and coming up from that altar which is before him, and which gives value to everything that is put upon it: and they are the prayers of saints, who are set apart by God the Father, whose sins are expiated by the blood of Christ, and who are sanctified by the Spirit of God; who draw nigh to God with a true heart, and call upon him out of a pure heart, and in sincerity and truth; the prayers of such righteous ones, through faith in Christ, avail much with God; and the prayers of all saints are regarded by Christ, and presented by him, whether they be rich or poor, high or low, greater or lesser believers. The Jews often speak of an angel, whose name is Sandalphon, who is appointed over the prayers of the righteous, and takes them and presents them to God ^{f241}: so Raphael in the Apocrypha:

“I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One.” (Tobit 12:15)

says he was one of the seven holy angels that carry up the prayers of the saints; and the heretic Elxai, who was originally a Jew, talked of the holy angels of prayer ^{f242}: so the Jews say, that God “by”, or “through his Word”, receives the prayers of Israel, and has mercy on them ^{f243}. In the Greek text it is, “that he should give”, etc. that is, the “incense”, agreeably to the Hebrew phrase in (^{<BEB>}Numbers 16:47), and elsewhere.

Ver. 4. *And the smoke of the incense*, etc.] For the incense being put, as it was used to be, upon burning coals of fire, caused a smoke to arise like a cloud, (^{<BEB>}Leviticus 16:13 ^{<BEB>}Ezekiel 8:11); so that the whole house, or temple, was filled with it ^{f244}:

[which came] with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God out of the angel's hand; alluding to the incense the priest took in his hand, and cast upon the burning coals; and shows how that by the smoke of the incense, or the virtue of Christ's mediation, the imperfections of the prayers of the saints are covered; and how they are it perfumed and made acceptable to God; and so are said to ascend up before him, and to be regarded by him, as the prayers of Cornelius were, (~~400~~ Acts 10:4); now all this is expressive of the wonderful affection of Christ for his church and people, and care of them; that before the angels sound their trumpets, and bring on wars and desolations into the empire, Christ is represented as interceding for them, and presenting their prayers both for deliverance for themselves, and vengeance on their enemies.

Ver. 5. *And the angel took the censer*, etc.] The golden one before mentioned, the use of which was to take and carry in it burning coals of fire:

and filled it with fire of the altar; of burnt offering, for upon that, and not upon the altar of incense, fire was; the allusion is to the priest

“that was worthy to use a censer ^{f245}; who took a silver censer, and went to the top of the altar (of burnt offering), and having removed the coals there, and there took them in his censer, and went down and emptied them into a golden one, and there was scattered from it about a kab of coals;”

for the golden one held a kab less than the silver one ^{f246};

and cast [it] into the earth: the Roman empire: by “fire” some understand the Spirit of God, and his gifts and graces, which sat upon the apostles as cloven tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost; and which they suppose were now plentifully bestowed on the ministers of the word, to enlighten them, inspire them with zeal, and abundantly fit them for the work of the ministry, in consequence of Christ's mediation and intercession: and others think the Gospel is intended, which is sometimes compared to fire, (~~200~~ Jeremiah 20:9 23:29), or else those contentions and quarrels which, through the corruptions of men, arise on account of the Gospel, (~~200~~ Luke 12:49); though rather by fire here are meant the judgments of God, and his wrath and fury poured forth like fire upon the Roman empire, now become Christian; and so was an emblem of those calamities coming upon it at the sounding of the trumpets; and shows that as Christ prays and intercedes for

his, own people, for their comfort and safety, so he will bring down, his judgments upon his and their enemies; (see ^{<2301E>}Ezekiel 10:2); and the Targum on it:

and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake; which may be understood either of the nature, use, and effects of the Gospel, speaking to the hearts of men by the sons of thunder, enlightening their minds, and shaking their consciences; the like were at the giving of the law, (^{<2916>}Exodus 19:16); or rather of those terrors, distresses, and commotions in the world, because of God's righteous judgments, and which particularly will be at the sound of the seventh trumpet, and the pouring out of the seventh vial, (^{<6115>}Revelation 11:15 16:17,18); the allusion is to the sounds that were heard at the time of the daily sacrifice; for besides the blowing of the trumpets by the priests, and the singing of the Levites, of which (see Gill on "^{<668D>}Revelation 8:2"); there was a musical instrument called *hprgm*, "magrephah" ^{f247}, which being sounded, a man could not hear another speak in Jerusalem: yea, they say it was heard as far as Jericho.

Ver. 6. *And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets*, etc.] Given them, (^{<668D>}Revelation 8:2);

prepared themselves to sound; they stood up, took their trumpets in their hands, and put them to their mouths; this was giving notice of what was coming upon the earth, and a kind of warning to men, and a call upon them to repentance, and to prepare to meet God in the way of his judgments. The time when these trumpets began to blow was after the opening of the seventh seal, and so after the destruction of the empire as Pagan, which was under the sixth seal; and after that peace and rest from persecution in Constantine's time, signified by the half hour's silence in heaven; and after the prayers of the saints for vengeance, because of their blood shed in the time of Rome Pagan, were offered up, heard, taken notice of, and accepted; and therefore cannot regard, nor have any concern with the state of the church before Constantine's time, as some have thought the three first trumpets had; the first introducing the contradictions and blasphemies of the Jews, and their persecutions of the Christians, and the effusion of their blood by them; the second the ten persecutions under the Heathen emperors; and the third, the errors and heresies which pestered the churches of those times: nor indeed do they concern the state of the church at all; though it seems much more likely that the first four trumpets should

bring in; as others have thought, the several heresies of Arius, Macedonius, Pelagius, and Eutyches, which sprung up before the rise of Mahomet, who appears under the fifth trumpet. But all the six trumpets have to do with the empire as Christian; for as the six seals are so many steps towards the destruction of the empire as Pagan, and the vials bring on the ruin of Rome Papal; so the six trumpets are so many gradual advances to the ruin of the empire, now Christian: and it must be observed, that the Emperor Theodosius, at his death, left the empire divided between his two sons, Arcadius and Honorius, the eastern part of it, which had Constantinople for its seat, to the former, and the western part of it, which had Rome for its seat, to the latter; now the first four trumpets bring in a barbarous people out of the north, the Goths, Huns, and Vandals, into the western part, who, by various incursions and wars, at last utterly destroy it; and the fifth and sixth trumpets bring in the Saracens under Mahomet, and the Turks into the eastern part, who took possession of that, and have kept it unto this day. (This was published in 1747, Ed.) A preparation being made, the angels begin to sound their trumpets.

Ver. 7. *The first angel sounded*, etc.] Or blew his trumpet:

and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood; somewhat like one of the plagues of Egypt, (¹⁸²³Exodus 9:23-25); in which was hail mingled with fire, only no blood, but what was caused by its fall on man and beast. Some have thought the Arian heresy is here intended, which may well enough agree with the time; and which may be compared to “hail”, for the mischief it did to the vines, the churches; and because of the violence with which it came, and the chillness of affection to Christ and his people, which it brought on professors of religion; and the barrenness which followed upon it, it making men barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ Jesus; and to “fire”, because of the wrath, contentions, animosities, and divisions it occasioned among those who were called Christians: and “blood” may be brought into the account, since the like persecutions under Constantius and Valens were raised against the orthodox on account of it as were against the Christians under the Heathen emperors: and this storm fell upon “the earth”; the whole Roman empire; for even all the world was once said to be Arian, except one Athanasius; and particularly upon the carnal and earthly part of the church, who were seeking places and preferments under the Arian emperors: “and burnt up the third part of trees”; the trees of righteousness, the saints, particularly the doctors of the church, the tall cedars in Lebanon; who either seemed to be such, and were infected with

this heresy, and destroyed by it, as many were; or were truly such, and were greatly oppressed, afflicted, and persecuted for not embracing it: and also “all green grass”; the common people, private Christians, weak believers, who had the truth of grace in them, and suffered much for not giving into this heresy; or who seemed to have it, but had it not, but withered away, being scorched up and destroyed with this pernicious notion: but rather this trumpet regards not the church, but the empire; and this storm of hail, fire, and blood, designs the irruption of the Goths into it, from the year 395, in which Theodosius died, to the year 408, under Radagaisus their general; with two hundred thousand of them, some say four hundred thousand, he entered and overrun all Italy, but was stopped and defeated by Stilicho; also Alaricus, king of the Goths, penetrated into Italy, came to Ravenna, and pitched his camp not far from Polentia, to whom the Emperor Honorius gave up France and Spain to make him easy, and that he might cease from his ravages and depredations ^{f248}; and these irruptions and devastations may be fitly expressed by hail, fire, and blood, just as the coming of the Assyrian monarch into the land of Israel is signified by a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, (^{238D}Isaiah 28:2); and it is remarkable, as Mr. Daubuz observes, that Claudian the poet ^{f249}, who lived at the time of Alarick's war, compares it to hail:

and they were cast upon the earth; the Roman empire, the continent more especially, as Germany, France, Spain, and Italy, which were particularly affected and distressed with these barbarous people:

and the third part of trees were burnt up; by which seem to be meant people of the higher rank, the richer sort of people, who suffered much in these calamities; (see ^{238B}Isaiah 2:13 ^{238D}Zechariah 11:2); yea, princes, nobles, and rulers, both civil and ecclesiastical, who suffered much at this time, as Jerom ^{f250}, who was then living, testifies; and so “trees” are interpreted of kings, rulers, and governors, by the Targum on (^{238B}Isaiah 2:13 ^{238D}Zechariah 11:1,2); “the trees of the field”, in (^{238D}Isaiah 55:12); are interpreted of kingdoms ^{f251}: the Alexandrian copy, the Complutensian edition, the Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions, read before this clause, “and the third part of the earth was burnt”; that is, of the Roman empire:

and all green grass was burnt up; the common people, who may be compared to spires of “grass” for their multitude, being as it were innumerable; and to “green” grass, for their delightful, comfortable, and

flourishing condition before these calamities came upon them; and for their weakness and impotency to withstand such powerful enemies; (see ^{<8185>}Job 5:25 ^{<19216>}Psalm 72:16 ^{<23416>}Isaiah 40:6,7 37:27 ^{<10214>}Numbers 22:4); and these commonly suffer most when a country is overrun and plundered by an enemy.

Ver. 8. *And the second angel sounded,* etc.] His trumpet:

and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; by which is meant not the devil, as some think; called a “mountain” from his height of pride, a great one from his might and power, and a “burning” one from his great wrath and malice against Christ, his Gospel, and his people; and who may be said to be “cast into the sea” of this world, and the men of it, whom he instigates against the saints, and who are like a troubled sea that cannot rest: but rather some heresy, and, as some have thought, the Macedonian heresy, which was levelled against the deity of the Holy Spirit, as was the Arian heresy against the deity of the Son; the abettors of which looked big, and were supported by power, and showed great zeal for religion, and pretended to great light and knowledge; and which heresy much affected the sea of pure doctrine, particularly the third part of doctrine, in which the third Person, the Spirit of God, is more especially concerned; and was of so pernicious a nature, as to kill many that professed the Gospel, and had a name to live, and destroy many particular churches, comparable to ships; but, as before, it is best to understand this of another incursion of the Goths into the Roman empire, and of the effects of it; and it seems to have respect to the taking and sacking of Rome by Alaricus, king of the West Goths, in the year 410, or 412 ^{f252}. Rome is very fitly represented by a great mountain, as kingdoms and cities sometimes are; (see ^{<30417>}Zechariah 4:7 ^{<23117>}Isaiah 13:2); seeing it was built on seven mountains; and its being taken and burnt by Alaricus is aptly expressed by a burning mountain, as the destruction of Babylon, which is another name for Rome, is by a burnt mountain in (^{<25125>}Jeremiah 51:25); the “sea” into which this was cast may signify the great number of people and nations within its jurisdiction which suffered, and were thrown into confusion at this time; so distresses and calamities in nations are expressed by a like figure in (^{<19412>}Psalm 46:2);

and the third part of the sea became blood; that is, a third part of the jurisdiction of Rome, signified by the sea, (see ^{<25136>}Jeremiah 51:36); was afflicted with wars and bloodshed by this same sort of people; for while

these things were done in Italy, a like calamity fell on France and Spain; the Alans, Vandals, and Sueves, having depopulated France, passed over the Pyraenean mountains, and seized on Spain; the Vandals and Sueves on Gallaecia; the Alans on Portugal; and the Silingi, which was another sort of Vandals, invaded Andalusia^{f253}; the Goths under Ataulphus entered France, and the Burgundians seized that part of it next the Rhine^{f254}: (see ~~1171~~ Exodus 7:20,21).

Ver. 9. *And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea*, etc.] The fishes; by whom men are meant, the inhabitants of the Roman empire; (see ~~3294~~ Ezekiel 29:4,5), where by fish the Targum understands mighty princes and governors:

and had life, died; were put to death by these savage and barbarous people, who killed all they met with, men, women, and children, young and old, rich and poor, high and low:

and the third part of the ships were destroyed; by which may be designed either the cities and towns within such a part of the Roman jurisdiction, which were burnt or plundered by them; or their goods and effects, which they pillaged, and carried off the wealth and riches of the people, even all their substance, as Austin^{f255} and Jerom^{f256}, who lived in those times, affirm.

Ver. 10. *And the third angel sounded*, etc.] His trumpet:

and there fell a great star from heaven; not Mahomet, as some think, for this time is too soon for him, who rose up under the fifth trumpet; nor Arius, for whom it is too late, who lived in the times of Constantine; and still less Origen, who lived before his time; but rather Pelagius, who was a man of great eminence in the church, of much learning, and made great pretensions to religion and holiness, and, like a star and lamp, shone forth awhile, with great lustre and splendour, but fell into very great errors; denying original sin, and asserting the purity of human nature, crying up the power of man's free will, and asserting that human nature, without the grace of God, was able to keep the whole law, even to perfection; and his name, according to his doctrine, was wormwood and gall, which embittered the sweet doctrines of the free grace of God, and affected the fountains and rivers, the sacred Scriptures, from whence these doctrines flow; so that instead of being pleasant and wholesome to men, through his false glosses and perverse interpretations of them, they became bitter and

poisonous; and many souls, that received and imbibed his sense of them, died spiritually, and were lost and perished, as all must inevitably, who depend on the strength and works of nature, and deny and despise the grace of God: but it is best, as the other trumpets, so to understand this of the invasions of the above barbarous people, particularly the Vandals under Genseric, who being turned out of Spain by the Goths, went into Africa, where peace was made, and part of Africa given them to dwell in; after which Genseric, through treachery, seized upon Carthage, and greatly afflicted Sicily: Theodosius made war against them to no purpose, and peace being made between Valentinian and Genseric, Africa was divided between them; and some time after Rome was spoiled by Genseric of all its riches ^{f257}. Mr. Daubuz thinks Attila, king of the Huns, called the dread of the world, and the scourge of God, is meant by this star; who was a rebel against the Romans, and made sad ravages in the empire; at the beginning of which troubles a great comet appeared; and, according to Cassiodorus ^{f258}, the Huns were auxiliaries to the Romans against the Goths; but Litorius the Roman general was taken; and after this the Huns rebelled, and depopulated Thrace and Illyricum; and Attila, their king, having slain his brother Bleda, and partner, became sole monarch; and though the Romans under Actius, by the help of the Goths, beat him in the fields of Catalaun, and obliged him to depart, yet afterwards, having got a reinforcement, he entered with great force into Aquileia, with whom Pope Leo made peace:

burning as it were a lamp; this star resembled that which is called Lampadias, which Pliny says ^{f259} imitates, or bears a likeness to burning torches; and he speaks of a spark which fell out of a star, which had such an appearance ^{f260}: this is expressive of war, and great destruction in the empire:

and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of water; that is, upon the large provinces and chief cities belonging to the Roman empire, and the governors of them, who suffered very bitterly and severely in these times; compare with this (~~32:2,6~~ Ezekiel 32:2,6). The last clause, “and upon the fountains of waters”, is left out in the Alexandrian copy.

Ver. 11. *And the name of the star is called Wormwood*, etc.] Because of the bitter afflictions, sorrows, and distresses which it was the instrument of; just as Naomi called herself Mara, because the Almighty had dealt bitterly with her, (~~1:20~~ Ruth 1:20);

and the third part of the waters became wormwood; that is, the inhabitants of the provinces and cities belonging to the Roman empire were afflicted with grievous and bitter afflictions and calamities; so great distresses are called wormwood, and waters of gall given to drink, (⁽²⁴⁹⁵⁾Jeremiah 9:15 ⁽²⁵⁸⁹⁾Lamentations 3:19);

and many men died of the waters, because they were bitter; through the barbarities and cruelties of these savage people, who afflicted the empire: there seems to be an allusion to (⁽²¹⁵³⁾Exodus 15:23).

Ver. 12. *And the fourth angel sounded*, etc.] His trumpet. Some think this refers to the Eutychian heresy, which confounded the two natures of Christ, and of two made one mixed nature, neither human nor divine; and brought great darkness upon the doctrine of Christ's person, the sun of righteousness and into the church, signified by the moon, and among the ministers of the word, the stars. Others are of opinion that that darkness which preceded the rise of the Papacy, and introduced it, is here intended:

and the third part of the sun was smitten and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars, so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise; when the doctrine concerning the person and offices of Christ, who is the sun and light of the world, was obscured by heresies; and the discipline of the church, which, like the moon, has all its light, beauty, and order from Christ, was sadly defaced by the introduction of Jewish and Paganish rites and ceremonies; and the ministers, the stars, were drawn by the tail of the drag on, and cast to the earth, became corrupt in their principles, and carnal and sensual in their lives; so that it was a time of great darkness and gloominess, night and day: but rather this trumpet has respect to that darkness and ignorance which the above barbarous nations, the Goths, Huns, Vandals, and Heruli, spread, and left throughout the empire; for from this time there was a visible decline, as of evangelical light and knowledge, so of all kind of useful knowledge, and nothing but ignorance, stupidity, and barbarity, took place everywhere; and which were very assisting to the man of sin, antichrist, to fix and settle his dominion over the kingdoms which rose up out of the empire at this time; and it also refers to the entire destruction of the western Roman empire, which is expressed by much the same figures as the ruin of the Roman Pagan empire, in (⁽⁴⁶¹²⁾Revelation 6:12,13); and which the various irruptions of these savage people issued in; compare with this (⁽²⁵⁹⁷⁾Ezekiel 32:7,8), where the

destruction of the Egyptian monarchy is signified in like terms: Jerom, who lived about the time of the first inundation of these nations, in very mournful language expresses the inhumanity and impiety of them, and the ruin they threatened the empire with; and, says ^{f261}, “[Romanus] orbis ruit”, “the [Roman] empire is falling”. About the year 455, when Rome was taken by Genseric the Vandal, the empire was divided into ten kingdoms; and in the year 476, Augustulus, the last of the Roman emperors, was obliged to quit his imperial dignity: the Heruli, a people of the same kind with the Goths, and originally Scythians, as they, under their king and leader Odoacer seized on Italy, took Rome, killed Orestes and his brother Paul, and deposed Augustulus, the last of the Roman emperors, and banished him into Campania; and so the western empire ceased, Odoacer taking upon him the title of king of Italy, and translated the seat of the empire from Rome to Ravenna ^{f262}; and then might the sun be truly said to be smitten: but still, though Odoacer the Herulian reigned in Italy, the Roman form of government was not altered, the consulship and senate still continued, as they did also under Theodoric the Goth, his successor; but when Italy was recovered by Narses, the Emperor Justinian's general, these, with other magistrates, ceased, and Rome became a dukedom, and was subject to an exarch of Ravenna; and then the moon and stars were smitten also. The phrase of smiting the sun, moon, and stars, is Jewish; for the Jews express the eclipses of the luminaries in this way, and say ^{f263} that when the luminaries $\hat{y}qwl$, “are smitten”, it is an ill omen; when $hqwl$ hmj h , “the sun is smitten”, it is an ill sign to the nations of the world; and when $hqwl$ $hnbl$, “the moon is smitten”, it is a bad omen to the nations of Israel ^{f64} and so the phrase, “the day shone not”, is also Jewish; it is said ^{f65} of some Rabbins, that they sat and studied in the law $amwy$ $ryhnd$ $d[$, “until the day shone”; and when “the day shone”, they rose up and went on their way.

Ver. 13. *And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven*, etc.] The Alexandrian copy, the Complutensian edition, the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, instead of “an angel”, read “an eagle”; and to “fly” agrees with either of them, and the sense is the same let it be read either way; and this angel may design either Christ, or a created angel, or a minister of the Gospel, as in (^{f64b} Revelation 14:6); did the next trumpet introduce Popery, as some have supposed, Gregory bishop of Rome might be thought, as he is by some, to be the angel here intended, since he gave notice and warning of antichrist being at hand:

saying with a loud voice; that all might hear, and as having something of importance to say, and delivering it with great fervour and affection:

woe, woe, woe; three times, answerable to the three trumpets yet to be blown; and which are therefore called the woe trumpets: and these woes are denounced

to the inhabitants of the earth; the Roman empire, particularly the eastern part of it, which the fifth and sixth trumpets relate unto; and even the whole world, with which the seventh trumpet is concerned:

by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound! the design of this loud cry of the angel is to show, that though the distresses and ruin which the barbarous nations had brought upon the western empire were very great; yet those which would come upon the eastern empire by the Saracens and Turks, under the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets, would be much more grievous; and especially the judgments which the seventh trumpet would bring upon the whole world, when all the nations of the earth will be judged. From the sounding of the fourth trumpet, to the sounding of the fifth, was a space of a hundred and thirty five years, that is, from the deposition of Augustulus, A. D. 476, to the public preaching of Mahomet, A. D. 612.