

Revelation 8: The first four trumpets – earth’s ultimate destruction by nature. KV 5
The judgments by natural forces will inflict unprecedented damages to the environment.

1. The preparation for the blowing of the trumpets. 1-5

The first preparative step **is** to distribute the trumpets to the angels **(1-2)**. Before this there **is** half an hour of silence. This could be a liturgical silence **after** a round of worship. More likely, it is the awesome anticipation for the severe judgment unleashed by the trumpets, for never before has the world seen such utter destruction of nature. **Jesus alluded to it in Matt. 24:21**. The seven angels are most likely the seven archangels recorded in the Jewish literature. We assume their validity because two of their names are in the NT, namely Gabriel (Luke 1:19) and Michael (12:7). Why are the trumpets executed by angels rather than by Christ? Probably, it is now the direct execution of God’s judgment, while the seals are only man’s ultimate evil when redemption is still an option that is readily offered by Christ. It also ties in with the prayers of the saints in **v3-5**. These must be the prayers for God’s retribution from 6:10-11 and He is ready now to response in judgment. The thunder, lightning and earthquake in v6 are just harbingers of the coming judgment. As trumpets are blown, the forces unleash is beyond all that mankind has experienced.

2. The blowing of the first four trumpets. 6-13

The target of the first four trumpets is mainly the environment and all harm to man is merely incidental. With the first comes hail that is unseen before **(6-7)**. The blood could be just the red color but the fire is real for a third of all the trees with the grasses around are burnt. Damages must be grave but the second is even more severe **(8-9)**. Something like a great mountain is thrown into the sea. This could *not* be a comet for it is the third trumpet. It is probably an extensive earthquake splitting a major fault, resulting in a large chunk of landmass falling with fire into the sea. This is certainly possible with the San Andreas Fault in which the entire San Francisco Bay could fall into the ocean. In fact a major earthquake is predicted for this area within the next 30 years. Imagine the devastation that will occur, such that a third of the sea life and ships will be destroyed. No wonder a third of the sea will become blood. The third trumpet is obviously a comet, described as a great star falling from heaven **(10-11)**. This is not science fiction but reality and like all comets, it even has a name. It is Wormwood, the name of a very bitter plant in Palestine. Note that the previous trumpet only affects the sea water but now the spring water is affected. It is drinking water and for the first time, many humans are predicted to die. Nevertheless as stated above, human deaths under the first four trumpets are still indirect and incidental. The earthquake of the geological fault and the comet probably occurs close to one another resulting in the outcome of the fourth trumpet **(12)**. Volcanic fumes and dust generated by the comet will sweep the earth, producing the partial darkness. Indeed the unimaginable has occurred but the worst is still to come as loudly announced by the eagle flying in mid-heaven. As the four living creatures or cherubim’s could be like an eagle (4:7), such an angel could be the announcing agent. The last three trumpets or woes will now inflict harm directly on mankind

Lesson to Ponder: Why the flying eagle? If taken literally, it must be heard by all, a warning before any direct harm on mankind. The motive for God’s warning is always our repentance. His love is such that even at this late stage, God still allows some to repent.

Revelation 9: The two trumpets of extensive demonic harm to mankind. KV 4

The target of the judgments will now be on mankind rather than the environment.

1. The Fifth Trumpet, scourge of the demonic locusts. 1-12

In the execution of the fifth trumpet, the bottomless pit must first be opened (1-3). The Greek for pit is “phrear”, the same word for well or a shaft. It is apparently the opening that leads to a deep underworld or Abyss, where demons or fallen angels are locked up until their day of judgment (2Peter 2:4). A literal rendering of scriptures obligate the existence of this place and in v1 a fallen star is given the key to open the pit. The Greek for “fallen” is in the perfect tense meaning “completely fallen”. It is the usual designation for fallen angels and the star is thus probably such a being. It seems that God now allows the underworld to have their way to hurt mankind. John calls the creatures emerging from the pit “locusts” (3) but from their destructive power and appearance they are obviously more than that. The torment of their sting is such that a person would seek death and so it must be excruciating (4-6). Yet v6 stated that it is not possible. Most likely an extreme state of painful paralysis would result making suicide impossible. Note that v4 limits the injury to humans, sparing now the environment and as declared in 7:4, sealed individuals will also be protected. The existence of grass in v4 shows that in 8:7, the destruction of “all” is referring only to the grass around the trees. Their horrifying appearance in v7-9 denotes that they are far from ordinary locusts but really a horde of flying demons. The faces of men suggest an associated human intelligence. They have ferocious teeth but it is the sting that hurts. They march like an army, even with the associated intimidating sounds (9). The afflictions will last for five months and probably all men will experience their sting (10-12). They even have a leader and both “Abaddon” and “Apollyon” mean a destroyer. It is unlikely that this is Satan for he will only go to the Abyss in 20:1-3.

2. The Sixth Trumpet, the peril of the destructive army. 13-21

The next trumpet is similarly driven by demons that must be released and a third of the surviving population will be killed (13-15). The four demons are specially prepared for this devastation but in v16-17 it is clear that the final agent of destruction is armies of horsemen suggesting that they are humans (16-17). It could well be that the four demons have extreme powers of persuasion such that large armies are mobilized in a short time. In v17, breastplates are described but in the Greek it is not clear whether this refers to the horses or the riders. As v17 focus is on the horses, the breastplates on these horses will be a more natural rendering. The killing power is in the horses’ mouths and tails, with fire, smoke and brimstone (18-19). It sounds like cannons and guns. Putting it together, John is likely describing armies of tanks. In a modern tank, there is a canon with a shorter accompanying machine gun. They rotate 360 degrees and thus could appear as a mouth and tail. In v16 John heard the number to be 200 million and it should be noted that Chairman Mao once boasted to Russia that China is able to mobilize an army of this size. A lament is made in v20-21 on the lack of repentance. It shows that this is God’s main desire for the tribulation. The idols here could be that of the Antichrist who demanded worship from the world. Note that idolatry comes with all kinds of moral sins (21).

Lesson to Ponder: The hope for repentance is central to all of God’s judgments. The best response when we are suffering the consequences of our sins is to sincerely repent.

第八章：頭四枝號筒—地球遭自然界的徹底破壞

鑰節：5 節

自然界審判的力量會對環境做成前所未有的破壞。

1. 吹號前的準備—1-5 節

準備功夫的第一項是把號筒分派給天使（**1-2 節**）。而在這之前天上寂靜了約半小時，這可以是在一輪敬拜之後的安靜時間，但更可能是因為有可怕的預感，就是號筒將會帶來極其凌厲的懲罰，事實上這將是前所未有，來自自然界對地球的覆滅性破壞。耶穌在馬太福音 24:21 曾提及這事。這七位天使大抵是猶太文獻中的七位天使長，之所以認為他們是真實的，因為其中兩位的名字被記錄在新約裏，加百列（路加福音 1:19）和米迦勒（12:7）。為甚麼吹號是由天使執行而非基督？很可能如今是神直接審判的開始。那些印章只是人終極的惡行，在當其時人仍有機會接受基督即時提供的救贖。另外，這也是和 **3-5 節** 眾聖徒的祈禱有關，那應該就是他們在 6:10-11 求神施行報復的禱告，如今神以審判來回應。第 5 節的雷轟、閃電和地震應該只是審判要來的前奏。當號筒吹響的時候，那些被釋出的力量是人類從未經歷過的。

2. 頭四枝號筒被吹響—6-13 節

頭四枝號筒主要是針對環境的，人受到傷害也只是碰巧的事。隨第一枝號筒而來的是從未見過的冰雹（**6-7 節**）。血可能是指顏色，但火卻是真的，因為三分之一的樹木及樹周圍的青草都給火燒了。破壞認真厲害，但第二枝號筒就更是驚人（**8-9 節**）。有一座好像大山的東西被扔進海裏，那**不可能**是彗星，因為第三枝號筒的才是彗星。有可能是因為大面積的地震把一條主要斷層分裂，導致大陸塊大片燃燒著的掉進海裏。這非常有可能，因為聖德里亞斷層就可以讓整個三藩市灣區剝離掉進大海，事實是該地區預計在未來的三十年間將會發生一場重大的地震。試想像那破壞的程度，三分之一的海洋生態和船隻被毀，無怪乎三份之一的海水會變成血。第三枝號筒那顆顯然是彗星，這大星星從天空墜落（**10-11 節**）。這可不是科幻小說而是現實，像所有彗星一樣它也有名字：苦艾（或譯茵陳）。這是巴勒斯坦地區一種非常苦的植物。請留意，受先前號筒影響的只是海水，如今連溪水也受到影響。因為那是飲用水，故在這第一次預言到有許多人會死亡。不過正如前面所說，人類在首四枝號筒當中的死亡都是非直接和偶然的。由地質斷層引起的地震以及彗星隕落的時距並不長，其結果是第四枝號筒（**12 節**）。彗星所產生的火山氣體和火山灰將橫掃全球，釀成部份地域變黑暗。難以想像的事畢竟發生了，但最壞的事還會接踵而來，那隻在半空中飛翔的老鷹大聲宣告。因為四活物或者基路伯都可能像飛鷹（4:7），那麼這位天使可能只是負責宣告而已。最後三枝號筒或者災難如今會直接給人帶來傷害。

思想心得：飛翔的老鷹為甚麼會出現？按字面理解，就是人人都能聽到警告，然後傷害才會直接降在人身上。神的警告往往都是要我們作出悔改。在最後的時刻神的愛依然如此，祂仍然容許人悔改。

第九章：兩枝對人類帶來廣泛和可憎的傷害的號筒

鑰節：4 節

如今審判的對象將是人而非環境。

1. 第五枝號筒，惡魔樣蝗蟲的災難—1-12 節

當第五枝號筒吹響時，無底坑必得先被打開（**1-3 節**）。坑的希臘文是“phrear”，與水井和坑道是同一個字。顯然這是通向地下深淵的入口，那魔鬼和墮落天使被鎖起來等待審判日子的地方（彼得後書 2:4）。就聖經字面理解，相信這地方應是真實存在的。第 1 節那顆掉到地上的星星接受了打開這坑的鑰匙。“墜落”在希臘原文是過去完成式的，意思是“完全掉了下來”。這理解也常用於墮落天使的身上，所以這星星有可能是位墮落的天使。看來神如今允許從幽暗世界來的為所欲為地去傷害人類。約翰稱那從無底坑出來的生物為“蝗蟲”（3 節），但從牠們的破壞能力和外形來看，牠們不止蝗蟲那麼簡單。被牠們螫過的人都痛苦得想尋死，想那痛苦必定極其厲害（**4-6 節**）。不過第 6 節又說人雖求死卻是不能，有可能這極端的痛苦甚至令人癱瘓，連自殺也無法做到。留意第 4 節的傷害是被限制在人的身上，環境如今並不會受到影響；另外正如 7:4 的宣告，那些蓋了神印記的人也會受到保護。第 4 節提到草的存在，那麼 8:7 “一切”的青草應只是指在樹周圍的草被毀而已。根據 **7-9 節** 牠們那可怕的外形來看，牠們並非普通的蝗蟲而是群會飛的惡魔。人臉代表牠們有著人的智慧；牠們的牙齒雖然鋒利，但傷人的可是牠們的刺。牠們像軍隊上陣，還發生隆隆令人生畏的聲音（9 節）。這樣的痛苦會維持五個月，相信所有人都曾經歷牠們的刺螫（**10-12 節**）。牠們還有一名領袖叫“亞巴頓”或是“亞波倫”，意即毀滅者。這不可能是撒但，因為牠在 20:1-3 那時才會掉進無底坑去。

2. 第六枝號筒，來自殺傷性軍隊的危難—13-21 節

接著的號筒同樣為惡魔所驅動，牠們得事先被釋放，倖存的人有三分之一將會被殺（**13-15 節**）。那四名惡魔特別是為這場浩劫準備的，但在 16-17 節很明顯那終極的毀滅者卻是騎兵隊，表明他們大抵是人類（**16-17 節**）。很有可能那四名惡魔具有非凡的說服能力，能夠在很短時間內調動那麼龐大的軍隊。17 節所提到的護胸甲，在希臘原文究竟是指馬匹還是騎士身上的並不清楚。因為 17 節的重點是那些馬匹，所以解釋那些是馬匹的護甲會來得比較合理。馬的殺人能力是在牠們的嘴裏和尾巴上面，從那些地方有火、煙和硫磺出來（**18-19 節**），這聽起來就像大炮和槍枝。按理推斷，約翰形容的似乎像是坦克車隊。現代的坦克有大炮，還有短程的機關槍。它們可以 360 度旋轉，看起來就像嘴和尾巴。在 16 節約翰聽到的數目是兩億，毛澤東不是曾對前蘇聯揚言中國有能力調動這麼龐大的一支軍隊麼。**20-21 節** 是為人的不肯悔改而哀傷。看來神降大災難的主要目的還是希望人能夠認罪悔改。在這裏的偶像可能是指敵基督，他要求全世界的人來敬拜他。留意與拜偶像同來的是各式各樣不道德的罪（21 節）。

思想心得：神願意人悔改，這是神施行所有審判的原因。當我們為罪受苦的時候，最合適的回應還是誠心的悔改。