

THE UNVEILING

Session 7

The Trumpets

Revelation 8:2–11:18

A Fourteen-Session Inductive Study for Young Adults

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. (Revelation 11:15,
RSV2CE)

Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers that the trumpet judgments are built from the plagues of Egypt (a new Exodus pattern), that they are partial and purposive (warnings aimed at repentance, rising after, and the sequence suggests from, the prayers of the saints), and that at the center of the section God's answer to a hard world is not an army but a testimony: a prophet who eats the scroll, and two witnesses who die and rise.

Catholic Touchstone. The incense of 8:3–4 shows what the Church believes about prayer: the prayers of all the saints rise before God and move history. The silence of the seventh seal made room for them; the trumpets that follow are launched, in the vision's own sequence, from the same altar where those prayers were offered.

What You Need to Know

This is the study's longest reading, so know the map: the incense and the first four trumpets (8:2–13), the fifth and sixth trumpets (9:1–21), the little scroll (10:1–11), the two witnesses (11:1–13), and the seventh trumpet (11:15–18). Read in class the passages marked in the Discussion Guide; the rest was assigned reading, and the Reference Card lists everything.

Begin at the altar. Before a single trumpet sounds, an angel offers incense with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar, and then fills the censer with fire from the altar and throws it on the earth: thunder, lightning, earthquake (8:3–5). The sequence is deliberate and easy to miss: the judgments that follow come from the altar of prayer. This is the fifth seal's how long? being taken up. In this book, the saints' prayers are not commentary on history; the sequence presses a strong conclusion: they are causes within it, taken up into God's governance. Psalm 141:2 (let my prayer be counted as incense) stands behind the image, and the Church has prayed that psalm at evening prayer for centuries.

The first four trumpets strike land, sea, fresh water, and sky, and their materials are unmistakably Egyptian: hail and fire (the seventh plague), water turned to blood (the first), darkness (the ninth), and then, in the fifth trumpet, locusts (the eighth). Your group will build the comparison themselves tonight. The point of the allusion is enormous: God is doing Exodus again. The plagues of Egypt were aimed at liberation (let my people go) and at unmasking false gods; so here. And note the fractions: a third of the earth, a third of the sea, a third of the waters, a third of the light. A third devastates; a third also spares two thirds. These are warning blasts (trumpets, not bowls; the bowls of chapter 16 will be full), bounded judgments whose evident aim surfaces in the section's saddest verses: the rest of mankind... did not repent (9:20–21). The lament in those verses strongly implies what the trumpets were for.

The fifth and sixth trumpets darken: the locust horde from the abyss with its parody-king Apollyon (Destroyer), and the cavalry from the Euphrates. Handle the nightmare imagery honestly: it is commonly read as apocalyptic idiom for demonic oppression and military scourge (the details are deliberately surreal; first-century hearers would hear Rome's dreaded eastern frontier in the Euphrates), not a bestiary to identify with modern hardware. Keep the leash doctrine from Session 5 in view: even the abyss opens with a key that is given.

Chapter 10 pivots from plagues to prophecy. John is told to take the little scroll and eat it: sweet in the mouth, bitter in the stomach, exactly Ezekiel's commissioning (Ezekiel 2:8–3:3, a discovery passage tonight). God's word must be interiorized before it is spoken, and it tastes of both honey and grief. Then chapter 11: the temple measured, the outer court trampled forty-two months, and the two witnesses who prophesy 1,260 days in sackcloth. The two witnesses are one of the book's honest open questions. Their dossier mixes Moses (plagues, water to blood) and Elijah (fire, shut sky), and their emblem comes from Zechariah 4 (two olive trees, lampstands: a discovery passage). An ancient reading, found in St.

Hippolytus (who names Enoch and Elijah; others proposed Moses), expected the prophets' return before the end; a broad reading, ancient and modern, hears the Church's prophetic testimony personified (two is the number of valid legal witness, Deuteronomy 19:15, and lampstands are churches in this book, 1:20). The readings are not enemies; present both. What is not optional is the shape of their story: they testify, they are killed by the beast (his first appearance, unannounced: he will get a whole session shortly), the world celebrates over their bodies, and God raises and vindicates them. It is the shape of the Lord's own story, stamped onto his witnesses; the Greek word for witness, *martyrs*, was in the process of becoming our word martyr precisely because of stories like this.

The numbers 1,260 days, forty-two months, and (in the next chapter) a time, and times, and half a time are all the same span: three and a half years, half of seven, borrowed from Daniel (7:25; 12:7). It is the book's recurring measure of divinely limited persecution: real, painful, and cut short by God, traditionally heard as a broken seven (Catholic readings differ on whether it spans the whole age or its final crisis, or both) that cannot run to completeness. Establish this tonight; it saves confusion for the rest of the study.

The seventh trumpet (11:15–18) is not another plague but a proclamation: loud voices in heaven announce that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. The elders' hymn gives the full agenda of everything still to come in the book: wrath, judgment of the dead, reward for prophets and saints, destruction of the destroyers of the earth. Stop your reading at 11:18. Verse 19 opens next session, and it deserves its own curtain.

Pastoral note. Chapter 9 is the study's darkest imagery so far, and 9:20–21's list of unrepented sins may sting someone personally. Keep God's stated desire audible: the trumpets blow so that people will turn. If anyone hears their own story in the impenitence list, the right next step is not shame but the confessional, where the trumpet's purpose is fulfilled gently.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- Exodus 7:20–21; 9:23–25; 10:12–15; 10:21–23: the plagues of blood, hail and fire, locusts, and darkness; the trumpets' raw materials. Discovery comparison tonight.
- Psalm 141:2: let my prayer be counted as incense before thee; the theology of 8:3–4 in one verse.
- Ezekiel 2:8–3:3: eat this scroll; sweetness in the mouth, and a hard commission. Revelation 10:8–11 repeats it, adding the bitterness in the stomach. Discovery passage tonight.
- Zechariah 4:2–6, 11–14: the lampstand and the two olive trees, the two anointed who stand by the Lord of the whole earth; adapted at Revelation 11:4, whose final clause echoes Zechariah 4:14 nearly verbatim. Discovery passage tonight.
- Daniel 7:25 and 12:7: a time, two times, and half a time; the source of the book's three-and-a-half-year idiom for bounded persecution.
- Deuteronomy 19:15: only on the evidence of two witnesses shall a charge be sustained; why the witnesses are two.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Thomas Aquinas · *Summa Theologiae* (summary)

St. Thomas teaches, in substance, that we do not pray in order to change God's plan, but because God has arranged that some things be granted through our prayers: prayer is a true cause within providence, dignified by God with real effect. Revelation 8:3–5 is that doctrine in a single picture: the saints' prayers rise as incense, and what happens next in history is launched from that altar.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyprian of Carthage · *To Demetrianus (summary)*

When plague and disaster struck the third-century world and pagans blamed the Christians, St. Cyprian answered, in substance: these scourges are not the anger of your gods but a summons from the true God, calling an aging world to turn to him while there is time; and Christians suffer the same evils, but not with the same despair. It is the trumpets' logic, preached in a real catastrophe: judgment as invitation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Hippolytus of Rome · *On Christ and the Antichrist (summary)*

St. Hippolytus, writing around the year 200, identifies the two witnesses, in substance, as Enoch and Elijah returning before the end, grounding the expectation in the prophets (others in the tradition proposed Moses as the companion). His reading of Revelation 11 stands beside the equally venerable reading of the two witnesses as the Church's own prophetic testimony; the Church has defined neither, and this study holds both honestly.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 2635–2636: intercession, prayer on behalf of others, as the hallmark of a heart attuned to God's mercy; with CCC 334–335 on the angels' help to the Church and the liturgy's union with their worship (an angel carries the saints' prayers in 8:3–4).
- CCC 1037: God predestines no one to hell; a willful turning away from God, persisted in to the end, is required. The grief of 9:20–21 (they did not repent) is the vision-form of this teaching: the trumpets aim at conversion, and the refusal is human.
- CCC 2816–2818: Thy kingdom come: the Kingdom present since the Last Supper and in the Eucharist, and still prayed for until Christ hands all to his Father. The seventh trumpet (11:15) is that petition answered in full view.

THREAD WATCH (LEADER ONLY)

How long? develops tonight, visibly: the incense of 8:3–5 gathers the prayers of all the saints and the censer's fire falls to earth. Connect it aloud to the fifth seal when the group finds it; the explicit avenged declarations still wait for Sessions 11–12.

Exodus thread develops into full view: plagues, and soon a sea of glass and the song of Moses (Session 11). Let tonight's discovery establish the pattern; do not preview the song.

The beast appears without introduction (11:7). If the group asks who that is, smile and say: two sessions from now. Plant, do not explain.

Three-and-a-half idiom (1,260 days, forty-two months) established tonight; it recurs immediately next session (12:6, 14). Make sure it lands.

Next session opens with 11:19 and the sealed guesses. Bring the sealed sheets (or remind everyone to bring theirs), and say nothing else about it tonight.

Furniture of Heaven, entries tonight (silent): the golden censer and the incense rising with the prayers of the saints (8:3–4), the little scroll taken and eaten (10:9–10), and the temple, the altar, and those who worship there (11:1). Next session the list receives its greatest entry; you know which.

Session Goals

1. The group builds the trumpets-to-Exodus-plagues comparison from the passages themselves.
2. The group discovers the altar sequence of 8:3–5: the saints' prayers launch what follows.
3. The group can state the warning logic: partial thirds, aimed at repentance, grieved when refused (9:20–21).
4. The group meets the two witnesses through Zechariah 4 and can state both traditional readings honestly.
5. The group hears the seventh trumpet as the Our Father's second petition answered.

Timed Plan (75–90 minutes)

- Opening prayer: 5 min
- Win questions: 10 min
- Build (selected readings across 8:2–11:18, with discovery passages): 50–55 min
- Send questions: 8 min
- Live It This Week, memory verse, closing prayer, distribute Take-Home 7: 7–10 min

Pre-chosen cuts if time runs short: drop the Dig Deeper box, and summarize the fifth and sixth trumpets (Question 4) as leader input in two minutes rather than reading chapter 9 aloud.

Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Let our prayer be counted as incense before you, O Lord, and the lifting up of our hands as an evening sacrifice. Gather the prayers of all your saints, and ours with them, at the golden altar; and when your trumpets sound in our lives, give us ears that turn to you. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win

1. Has an alarm, a warning light, or a close call ever actually changed how you live? What made you take it seriously (or ignore it)?
2. Do you honestly believe your prayers change anything? What makes that hard or easy to believe?

Build

Read Revelation 8:2–5 aloud.

3. Watch the sequence at the altar closely: what rises, and then what falls? What is this passage claiming about the prayers of the saints, and whose prayers from earlier in the study are surely among them?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Incense rises with the prayers of all the saints from the golden altar; then the same censer is filled with fire from the same altar and thrown to the earth, and the trumpets begin. What rises is prayer; what falls is answer. The martyrs' how long? from the fifth seal is being taken up: the silence of 8:1 made room for the prayers, and history's next movement launches from the altar where they were offered. This is the Church's whole confidence about intercession in one image (and St. Thomas's doctrine that God has woven our prayers into his governance as true causes). Nobody in this room prays into the void.

Read Revelation 8:6–12 and 9:1–6 aloud.

4. These plagues have a family tree. Discovery: split up Exodus 7:20–21; 9:23–25; 10:12–15; and 10:21–23, one passage per pair, and match each to a trumpet. What pattern emerges, and what did the original plagues aim at?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Hail and fire (Exodus 9; trumpet one), water to blood (Exodus 7; trumpet two), waters struck again and embittered by Wormwood (trumpet three, a cousin of the water plagues rather than a repeat), darkness (Exodus 10; trumpet four), locusts (Exodus 10; trumpet five). The trumpets are the plagues of Egypt replayed on a world scale: God is doing Exodus again. And the Exodus plagues had purposes: let my people go (liberation of God's enslaved people) and the unmasking of Egypt's false gods. So the trumpets are not tantrums; they are the ancient pattern of a God who dismantles idols to free people. Note also the arithmetic of mercy: a third, a third, a third. Trumpets warn; they do not annihilate. The full cups wait, and heaven still hopes.

5. Now read 9:20–21. After all of it, what do the survivors not do? What does the lament of these verses imply the trumpets were for, and what does the Church teach about who chooses hell?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

They did not repent of the works of their hands, their idols, their murders, sorceries, immorality,

thefts. The verse reads like a lament, and it is: the evident aim of the warnings was repentance, and the refusal is the tragedy. The Church's teaching matches the vision exactly: God predestines no one to hell; only a willful turning away, persisted in to the end, gets there (CCC 1037). Judgment in this book is never God running out of patience arbitrarily; it is patience warning, warning, warning, and human freedom answering no. Leader: keep the pastoral door open here. If anyone hears themselves in that sin list, the trumpet worked; the confessional is where its purpose lands gently.

Read Revelation 10:8–11 aloud.

6. John must eat the scroll before he prophesies. Discovery: open Ezekiel 2:8–3:3. Where does this scene come from, and why sweet in the mouth but bitter in the stomach? What would eating the word, not just reading it, look like for us?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

It is Ezekiel's commissioning replayed: the prophet must take God's word into himself before he can speak it. Sweet, because God's words are sweeter than honey (Psalm 119:103) and because salvation is its music; bitter, because the same word contains judgment, and because carrying it costs the carrier (John is about to be shown witnesses who die for their testimony). For us: Scripture is not merely studied but interiorized, chewed slowly, prayed, memorized, until it is in the stomach and not just the eyes. This study's memory verses are a small discipline of exactly that. Fair warning from the text: really swallowed, the word will sometimes sit bitter, asking things of us. That is not malfunction; that is prophecy forming.

Read Revelation 11:3–13 aloud.

7. The two witnesses: gather their dossier. Discovery: open Zechariah 4:2–6 and 11–14 for their emblem; then list what the witnesses can do (11:5–6) and whom those powers remind you of. Who are they? And trace the shape of their whole story: what happens to them, and does the shape look familiar?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

The emblem is Zechariah's: two olive trees and lampstands, the anointed who stand by the Lord of the whole earth (and lampstands, this book has told us, are churches, 1:20). Their powers are Elijah's (fire, the shut sky) and Moses's (water to blood, plagues): traits many hear as the Law and the Prophets testifying to Christ. Who are they? Be honest: the Church has not defined it. An ancient reading (St. Hippolytus, naming Enoch and Elijah; others proposed Moses) expected returning prophets before the end; another longstanding reading, ancient in the Tyconian and Augustinian line and common today, hears the Church's own prophetic witness personified (two, the number of valid testimony, Deuteronomy 19:15). Both may be truer than either alone; this book's symbols are roomy.

But the shape of the story is the point, and it is not open: they testify; the beast (an unexplained newcomer; hold your questions two sessions) kills them; the world throws a party over their bodies; and God raises them and calls them up while their enemies watch. Testimony, death, resurrection, vindication: the witnesses' story is their Lord's story stamped onto them. The Greek for witness is *martyr*; stories like this are why that word became martyr. The Church conquers in this book the way her Lord did, and never any other way.

Read Revelation 11:15–18 aloud, and stop at verse 18.

8. The seventh trumpet is not a plague. What is announced, in what tense, and where have you prayed this sentence before? (Do not read verse 19 tonight.)

ANSWER · share after the discussion

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. Announced as accomplished: the second petition of the Our Father (thy kingdom come) proclaimed from heaven's side as certain and already underway, even while the earth still smokes and the Church still prays for its full arrival (CCC 2816–2818). The elders' hymn then lays out the agenda for everything left in the book: wrath answered, the dead judged, prophets and saints rewarded, the destroyers of the earth destroyed. Every time you pray the Our Father, you are asking for 11:15: thy kingdom come already has heaven's proclamation standing over it, spoken as certain as accomplished. And verse 19 is next week's curtain; end the reading exactly here, and bring your sealed guesses.

BUILD, THEN PRESS: IS THE GOD OF THE TRUMPETS THE GOD OF JESUS?

Present this at full strength before answering. A thoughtful skeptic, or a wounded believer, might say: Jesus blessed peacemakers and forgave his executioners; this section burns a third of the earth, poisons seas, and unleashes horrors from an abyss. These do not sound like the same God. Either Revelation slanders the Father of Jesus, or Christians quietly keep two gods: a gentle one for Sundays and a violent one for the end. The honest move is to admit the contradiction.

9. What in that objection deserves respect? And what have we found tonight, in the text itself, that answers it?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

What deserves respect: the objector has actually felt the imagery, which is more than some readers manage, and refuses a cheap harmony. The Church also refuses one: she rejects every picture of a cruel god, and the early Church condemned precisely the teacher (Marcion) who solved this by splitting God in two.

But tonight's findings answer from inside the text. The trumpets come from the altar of the saints' prayers: they are heaven's response to the cry of the murdered, not caprice. They follow the Exodus pattern: judgment aimed at liberation and the unmasking of idols. They are thirds: bounded warnings, not annihilation, and their stated goal is repentance, over which heaven grieves when refused (9:20–21). At the section's center God's chosen weapon is a testimony that dies and rises, not a legion. And the whole scroll is opened only by the Lamb who was slain: the judge of this book has the wounds of its judged. The God of the trumpets is the God of the cross applying the cross's verdict to a world that crucifies; the alternative on offer (a god who watches the martyrs' blood forever and does nothing) is not gentler. It is only more indifferent. The tension the objector feels is real, and the book resolves it not by softening judgment but by nailing it to the character of the Lamb.

DIG DEEPER

Incense and the evening psalm. Psalm 141:2 (let my prayer be counted as incense) is Israel's ancient evening prayer, and Revelation 8:3–4 shows it answered from heaven's side: the smoke over the altar is the prayers of the saints, gathered, weighed, and rising. Prayer, this chapter insists, has substance: it ascends, it is kept, and it comes back to earth with fire (8:5). Nothing you pray evaporates.

Send

10. Where in your life is God sounding a trumpet right now: a warning you have been treating as background noise? What would repentance, concretely, look like this month?

11. The witnesses' power was testimony, not force. Where are you tempted to want the Church to win by force or status, and what would witness look like there instead?

Live It This Week

- Pray Psalm 141:2 each evening this week (let my prayer be counted as incense), and mean one specific intercession by it each night.
- If a trumpet has been sounding in your own conscience, answer it: get to confession before our next session if you can.
- Read Revelation 11:19–12:17 for next session, and bring your sealed My Guess sheet from Session 1.
- Memorize the memory verse below.

Memory Verse

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 11:15, RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

Leader: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come... (pray the whole Our Father together, slowly, and pause after thy kingdom come). Lord, what we have just asked, your trumpet has already announced. Make us witnesses of that kingdom until it is seen. Amen.

Distribute Take-Home 7 as people leave, and remind everyone: sealed sheets next week.

Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 7, in order:

- Revelation 8:2–5 (read aloud)
- Revelation 8:6–12 and 9:1–6 (read aloud)
- Exodus 7:20–21; 9:23–25; 10:12–15; 10:21–23 (discovery, in pairs)
- Revelation 9:20–21 (read aloud)
- Revelation 10:8–11 (read aloud)
- Ezekiel 2:8–3:3 (discovery)
- Revelation 11:3–13 (read aloud)
- Zechariah 4:2–6, 11–14 (discovery)
- Deuteronomy 19:15 (leader background, two witnesses)
- Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 (leader background, three and a half)
- Revelation 11:15–18 (read aloud; stop at v. 18)
- Psalm 141:2 (Live It This Week)
- Memory verse: Revelation 11:15