

16.02.2019 THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

“But in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets” Revelation 10:7

This week’s study is a lengthy study which not only encompasses the seven trumpets but also the interlude between the seven angels being given the seven trumpets and the interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpet.

And I saw the seven angels who stand before God and to them were given seven trumpets. Revelation 8:2

The Meaning of Trumpets and Trumpet blasts:

Trumpet blasts in the Old Testament designated the appearance of God in relation to the most important events in Israel's history. In the giving of the law at Sinai, the Israelites experienced thunder and lightning, a thick cloud on the mountain, and "a very loud trumpet sound" (Exod. 19:16; 20:18). The loud trumpet blast caused the destruction of Jericho (Josh. 6:4-16). This trumpet sound is an integral part of the Day of the Lord concept in the Old Testament.

"It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown" and it will summon the exiles scattered among the nations to worship God in Jerusalem (Isa. 27:13). Trumpet blowing will announce the approaching Day of the Lord (Joel 2:1; Zeph. 1:16). At that day, "the Lord God will blow the trumpet, and will march in the storm winds of the south" (Zech. 9:14). This concept continues in the New Testament. Apart from Revelation 8-11, trumpets are associated with the end-time appearance and intervention of God. In his Sermon on the Mount of Olives, Jesus spoke of the great trumpet sound when God's elect are gathered together (Matt. 24:31). Paul spoke of the day when at the last trumpet sound the corruptible will put on incorruption (1 Cor. 15:51-53). A very loud trumpet blast will accompany the second coming of Jesus (1 Thess. 4:16-17). In the book of Revelation, the trumpet sound is a signal of the appearance of God in the person of Christ (1:10; 4:1). *The Book of Revelation: R. Stefanovic.*

Before the trumpets are blown there is an interlude described in Revelation 8:3-6 and which gives us an insight into the symbolism of the blowing of the seven trumpets.

Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

The blowing of the seven trumpets is a series of interventions by God in response to the prayers of his people. In order to explain this, it is necessary to bear in mind the scene of the opening of the fifth seal, in which the slain saints underneath the altar plea to God for vengeance and judgment: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will you not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (6:10). Their prayers are not a longing for revenge but a plea for justice and deliverance. As Revelation 8:2-5 shows, the prayers of the saints are heard by God. *Ibid.*

The above scene in Revelation is reminiscent of the daily morning and evening services of the tabernacle. After the sacrifice of the lamb on the altar of sacrifice, and the blood of the sacrifice poured out at the base of the altar, the priest took the golden incense censer inside the temple and offered incense upon the golden altar in the holy place. Then he came out into the courtyard and threw the censer on the ground. At that moment, the seven priests blew their trumpets, marking the end of the daily sacrifice ceremony.

The Seven Trumpets

John observes the seven angels standing before God's throne to receive seven trumpets. Their mission is to announce a new series of woes being sent to earth. John sees afterwards another angel take the golden censer with the incense mingled with the prayers of the saints, and the angel fills it with fire from the altar. Then he throws it to the earth, and there followed "thunder and voices and flashes of lightning and an earthquake" (Rev. 8:5). Then, one after another, the

seven angels blow their trumpets. God remembers the saints. The seven trumpets are evidently God's response to the suffering of his people. God's wrath kindles judgments on those who have been oppressing them. Revelation 8:13 states clearly that the trumpets are for "those who dwell on the earth," which links the trumpet judgments to the prayers of the saints in Revelation 6:10. The objects of both texts are clearly "those who dwell on the earth."

As we have seen earlier, the events triggered by the successive opening of the seven seals affect those who profess to be God's people, but are faithless and disloyal. Regarding the seven trumpet woes, John makes it very clear that they are not directed against humanity in general but only against those "who do not have the seal of God upon their foreheads" (Rev. 9:4) and who are elsewhere in the book referred to as "those who dwell on the earth" (6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 17:2). These are the ones who have been hostile to the gospel and have persecuted and oppressed God's faithful people. Thus, the seven trumpet plagues are concerned exclusively with those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. Those who are on God's side are evidently not affected by these trumpet plagues. They may have some share in the suffering of the wicked, because God has promised to deliver through the trials rather than from them. They have a strong assurance of God's presence with them in the time of trial.

The scene of the blowing of the seven trumpets in Revelation 8-11 also has a redemptive aspect. The events of the opening of the seals are intended to wake up those who profess to follow Christ and bring them to repentance. We saw earlier that sealing in the New Testament referred to the work of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of people (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30). His work leads them into relationship with God, who accepted them and recognized them as his own possession (2 Tim. 2:19). That is what the sealing is all about. It is the process through which God helps his people become overcomers of sin. The sealing of Revelation 7 is clearly the final closing of the sealing on the earth, after which the preaching of the gospel will come to its completion and grace will no longer be available.

On the other hand, as we observed above, the seven trumpet woes portray judgments on those who have rejected the gospel and have failed to receive the seal of God on their foreheads. In other words, these people have rejected the transforming power of the Holy Spirit on their hearts and the opportunity to be recognized and accepted by God. They have chosen instead to be enemies of God and oppressors of his people.

The trumpet woes are not merely judgments. They have a twofold purpose. They are intended to bring people to repentance. At the same time, they are also intended to be a divine warning that time for repentance is rapidly running out. The wicked still have an opportunity to repent (cf. Rev. 11:13), for intercession still takes place and the door of grace is not yet closed. The sounding trumpets and the subsequent plagues are the preliminary judgments and have redemptive purposes. Each trumpet blast is designed to humble people and drive them to repentance, even though that purpose is not achieved (Rev. 9:20-21). It is the failure to repent which makes the pouring out of the last bowl of plagues inevitable and unavoidable. *Ibid.*

The Timing of the Seven Trumpets

From Revelation 8:2-5 we recognise that the seven trumpets blow after the angel who stands by the altar in the courtyard throws down his censer. The trumpets therefore begin after the sacrificial death of Christ. At the sound of the seventh trumpet, heavenly voices are heard saying: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and He will reign forever and ever" Revelation 11:15. The trumpets therefore, cover the period between the Cross and the Second Coming.

First Trumpet: Judgment on Jerusalem for rejecting the gospel

Second Trumpet: Judgement on the Roman Empire

Third Trumpet: The Medieval era characterised by spiritual apostasy and departure from the gospel.

Fourth Trumpet: Despite the Reformers, Protestantism also fell into darkness. During this time, the French Revolution occurred and mankind called it the Age of Reason and Enlightenment, but their human reasoning led them into great spiritual darkness.

Fifth Trumpet: Secularism and atheism have unleashed demonic forces. Resistance to the gospel allows Satan to fill the vacuum and torment them for without God and absolutes, they have no meaning to life and are without hope.

Sixth Trumpet: It portrays the preparation for the battle of Armageddon, which is described later in the book (Rev. 16:12-16). It points to the last crisis of the world which, as the end draws near, will be characterized by the intensification of demonic activities.

The seven seals and the seven trumpets cover the same time period:

The Seven Seals

The four horsemen
The fifth and sixth seals

The interlude (chapter 7): The sealing
God's people

The seventh seal: silence in heaven
before the final judgment

The Seven Trumpets

The first four trumpets
The first and second trumpet woes (5th and 6th trumpets)

The interlude (chapters 10-11): the little scroll, the measuring of the
temple, and the two witnesses

The third trumpet woe (the seventh trumpet):

The time has arrived for the judgment and reward to be given to
God's servants

Whereas the scene of the opening of the seals portrays the progress of the gospel in the world and its effect on those who profess to be God's people but are faithless and disloyal, the vision of the blowing of the seven trumpets portrays the judgment of God on those who reject the gospel, "who do not have the seal of God upon their foreheads" (Rev. 9:4), and who viciously oppress and persecute God's faithful people. *Ibid.*

The Interlude between the Sixth and the Seventh Trumpet (Revelation 10:1-11;14)

The Angel of Revelation 10:

I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices...The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, ⁷but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets. (10:1-7)

This mighty angel swore by God that 'there will be delay no longer'. The angel's swearing of the oath provides the church with a strong assurance that God is faithful to His promise. There is no more delay; the time of the end, prophesied by Daniel, is now irrevocably set into motion. God is about to deliver and vindicate his faithful saints and bring earth's history to its end. The 'mystery of God will be finished' i.e. the whole purpose of God in the gospel; His redemption of mankind and His solution to the sin problem will be revealed. *Ibid.*

Eating of the Scroll:

Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth." So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth." (10:8-10)

This describes the bittersweet experience of hearing and rejoicing in the gospel and the subsequent disappointment when the gospel proclaimed brings opposition. It also has specific reference to the Great Disappointment when many believed Jesus was coming back to earth on a specific date and were disappointed. But the message to the disappointed is, 'You must prophesy again...' (10:11). Before the end comes, there will be the final "prophesying," or proclamation, of the everlasting gospel message (cf. Rev. 14:6-12).

The Two Witnesses:

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there" (11:1)

This brings to mind the vision of Ezekiel watching the measuring of the Temple which preceded the restoration of the Temple (Ezekiel 39-43). God's people in the end-time are assured that God's character and governance as manifested in the heavenly sanctuary will be restored.

"...But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles." (11:2).

Inside the temple are the worshippers of God. Outside the temple are the 'nations of the earth' who have rejected the gospel.

"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." (11:3)

The two witnesses refer to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. The garments of mourning (sackcloth) for 1260 years refer to AD 538 -1798 when the truths of the Bible were hidden by a counterfeit gospel and human traditions.

When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. (11:7)

Historically this refers to the period of the French Revolution when France pronounced itself an atheist state which worshipped only one god – the god of Reason.

Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them (11:11)

This refers to the great awakening of interest in the Bible and Bible study after the French Revolution.

The Seventh Trumpet

The sounding of the seventh trumpet proclaims the end of earth's history. Christ returns in power and glory to reclaim planet earth. This earth that has been under the dominion and rule of the usurping power and in rebellion against God will finally come back under God's dominion and rule.

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" Revelation 11:15

"In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever". Daniel 2:44
