

REVELATION

*Seeing, Knowing and Serving Jesus Christ
Today at the Edge of History*

Chapters 8-11

Text: Revelation 8-11 - 7 Trumpets & The Grace the World Ignores

The Seventh Seal and the Golden Censer

8 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

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

³ Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. ⁴ The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. ⁵ Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

The Trumpets

⁶ Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.

⁷ The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

⁸ The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, ⁹ a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

¹⁰ The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water— ¹¹ the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.

¹² The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.

¹³ As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!"

9 The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. ² When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the

Abyss. ³ And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. ⁴ They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵ They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. ⁶ During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

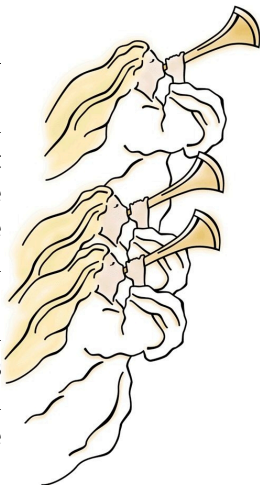
⁷ The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. ⁸ Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. ⁹ They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. ¹⁰ They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. ¹¹ They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.

¹² The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.

¹³ The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. ¹⁴ It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." ¹⁵ And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. ¹⁶ The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.

¹⁷ The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. ¹⁸ A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. ¹⁹ The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.

²⁰ The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. ²¹ Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.



The Angel and the Little Scroll

10 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. 2 He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, 3 and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. 4 And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

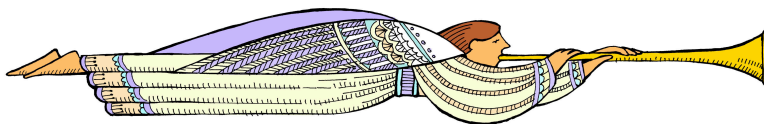
5 Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. 6 And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay! 7 But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."

9 So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." 10 I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. 11 Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

The Two Witnesses

11 I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. 2 But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. 3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. 5 If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. 6 These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into



blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

7 Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. 8 Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. 9 For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. 10 The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

11 But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. 12 Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

13 At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.

The Seventh Trumpet

15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

16 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying:

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.

18 The nations were angry; and your wrath has come.

The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

Read & Reflect - 8:1-11:19

First Reading/First Impression: As you read this lengthy section, what are your reactions? Disbelief? Fear? Hope?...

STUDY GUIDE FOR SEEKERS AND FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST

Second Reading/The Big Idea: What purpose might God have for all this calamity? (First clue: What are trumpets used for?... Second clue: What is the noteworthy result articulated in 9:20-21?)

Search

8:1-6 - What activity was found in between the two references to the seven angels with the seven trumpets? Why?

8:7-12 - What happens when each of the first four trumpets are sounded?

Trumpet one:

Trumpet two:

Trumpet three:

Trumpet four:

What is the significance of the 1/3 mentioned four times? (Compare to the 1/4 accompanying the opening of the fourth seal in 6:8)...?

9:1-21 - Against whom are the "Woes" of trumpet blasts #5 and #6 directed? Why? (Note verses 20-21 and the twice repeated phrase "*did not repent*"). How are the forces involved now different than with #1-#4?

11:15-18 - What happens when trumpet #7 is sounded (third "Woe")? Against whom is God's wrath directed (11:18)?

Apply

1. When was a time when someone (a parent, a teacher?...) used negative events to get your attention and direct you away from self-destructive paths (because they cared about you)? How did you feel about them then? And now?

2. What message is God communicating to you through these chapters in Revelation?



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S u m m a r y . . .
With the opening of the 7th seal a series of cataclysmic events follow, each signaled by the sounding of a

trumpet. Like the seals before (and the bowls of God's wrath to follow), the trumpets are seven in number, and like the seals they are presented as a group of 4 (devastating forces of nature called forth) and then a group of 3 (called "Woes" - demonic powers summoned). An additional parallel is found in the fact that the sounding of the 5th and 6th trumpets is described in greater detail (as it was with the opening of the 5th and 6th seals).

There is some similarity between the presentation of the series of God's judgments here and the ten plagues against Egypt (Exodus 7-10). What is happening to God's people under the yoke of the Roman empire (and all similar regimes in history) is like the people of Israel's slavery in Egypt. Once again, God's judgment, ultimately, is against His enemies and the enemies of His people ("those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads" - 9:4 & see also 7:3).

The image of the trumpets gives us an important clue to the overarching message of this section and the purpose of the devastating events. What do trumpets do? They summon people to attention, and they warn. "Dire though the imagery is, the overall intention of the sounding of the seven trumpets is not to inflict vengeance but to summon people to repentance" (Metzger, p.66).

8:2 & 6 - "**seven angels**"... according to Jewish tradition (mentioned in the apocryphal books of Tobit and Enoch)

there were seven angels who formed a special inner group around God.
8:7 - "**hail and fire**"... John's images in this section seem to be taken from experiences of nature's fury in the 1st century (storms, earthquakes, eclipses, etc.)... "**a third**"... compare to the "**fourth**" of 6:7--things are getting worse!... "**earth... trees... grass**"... with each of the first 4 trumpet blasts 3 things are affected (12 in all)...

Finally, God's Wrath is Redemptive. It Rescues. Our world keeps trying hard to suppress the truth about us and God, so it looks at God's Wrath as something entirely Destructive. So we tend to rewrite what God has revealed and say it Condemns. But that is not so. Why does God send His wrath? Because He hates sin? Yes. Because He refuses to cooperate with our rebellion against Him? Yes. Because He will not allow His great name to be dishonored? Yes. But in addition, God's Wrath serves a Redemptive purpose. God will not be a co-dependent in our destructive idolatries. Paul says [in Romans 1:18-32] that God "gives us over," but He really doesn't. Not entirely. God will not sit idly by while we foolishly destroy ourselves with our bad trades. He will throw warning after warning at us in the form of His wrath. Why? Because God loves us and desires more than we know for us to turn back to Him. God's Wrath is good.

- Jay Hull, from Sermon entitled "*Wrath Revealed, Wrath Rewritten*"

8:8 - "**something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea**"... in AD 79 Mt. Vesuvius erupted, buried the city of Pompei in molten lava and obliterated ships in the bay of Naples. The horrifying reports of this disaster may be what this image called to mind for the first recipients of this prophetic, apocalyptic letter.

8:11 - "**Wormwood**"... means "bitterness" and signifies calamity, sorrow and death. The events here are the opposite of the miracle of Marah where bitter waters were made sweet (Exodus 15:25).

8:13 - "**Woe! Woe! Woe!**"... the eagle's cry distinguishes the last three trumpets from the first four and signals that things are about to get even worse.

9:1 - "**star**"... unlike the blazing star of 8:10, which was part of the natural world, this star is a demonic agent... "**Abyss**"... the legendary subterranean hiding place for demonic hordes (see

Luke 8:31 where the "Legion" of demons beg Jesus not to order them into "the Abyss")

9:3 - "**locusts**"... the devastation these insects brought was a well known calamity and also a well-used symbol of mass destruction. The prophet Joel (Joel 1:2-2:11) uses the locust plague as a foreshadowing of the dreadful "*Day of the Lord*" and then follows it with a section calling the people to

"rend your hearts and not your garments" (2:13) and promising that "*everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*"! (2:28-32)...

9:4 - "**seal of God**"... like the mark of the slaughtered lamb which marked God's people Israel for being saved in the Passover (Exodus 8:22ff)

9:5 - "**five months**"... the natural life cycle of a locust and the period of the dry season (when the danger of locusts is present)... The point: It is

a limited period of time, evil is on a leash.

9:11 - "**Abaddon/Apollyon**"... names in Hebrew & Greek, mean "destroyer"

9:14 - "**four angels**"... more demonic agents ready to lead a horde of destroyers... "**Euphrates**"... the river that marked the eastern edge of the Roman empire which habitually feared invasion from there by the Parthians...

9:15 - "**for this very hour and day and month and year**"... The horrific events are not beyond the Lord God's control or outside His will. His plan is on schedule.

9:20-21 - "**did not repent**"... key to understanding the intent of the plagues (repentance) and the amazing stubbornness of humanity

11:15 - "**seventh angel**"... this trumpet (completing the cycle) ushers in worship, the opening of God's heavenly temple, and eventually the 7 bowls of God's final wrath (Ch. 15).