

Revelation 8:6–11 — The Seven Trumpets

Notes on The Revelation with Practical Reflections

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At whatever period the seven trumpets begin to sound, the series is continued until the Lord takes His great power, and reigns. The first four trumpet-actions do not seem to bear directly on men, though the third trumpet-sound causes the waters to become bitter, and many men drink of the waters, and die. The last three trumpets are connected with terrible power and judgment directly upon men living on the earth, and are called the three woes. It is God punishing the inhabitants of the earth. The trumpets are severer in their character than the seals. We noticed, in considering the seventh chapter, that the angels were not to sound their trumpets until the elect remnant of Israel was set apart -- till the servants of our God are sealed in their foreheads. That being done, the first angel sounds a trumpet.

The First Trumpet The FIRST ANGEL sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up (Rev. 8:7).

We must never forget, in reading the Revelation, that after the Church has been caught up, the energy of Satan in the earth will be increasingly put forth, so as at last to deluge the world with infidelity; and God will send men strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. Like as in the days of Pharaoh, men will say, Who is the Lord, that we should obey Him? {see Ex. 5:2}

The Second Trumpet The SECOND ANGEL sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed (Rev. 8:8, 9).

In the first trumpet, we see hail, fire, and blood, cast upon the earth, and some trees and all green grass burnt up. In the second trumpet, a great mountain, as it were (that is, something similar to a great burning mountain), is cast into the sea, when the third part of the sea becomes blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea die, and a third of the ships are destroyed. In the first trumpet, the earth, trees, grass are affected; and in the second, the sea, its creatures, and its ships: both are fiery, burning judgments. The great burning mountain may be a symbol of power removed from its accustomed place, and thrown into that which brings terrible judgment upon the people.

The Third Trumpet The THIRD ANGEL sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter (Rev. 8:10, 11).

and the only Lord God, and only wise God, will be denied, and man exalted. Therefore, under such circumstances, we may expect that God would remarkably manifest Himself as the living God, by various actions in different parts of the universe, as He has hitherto done in the days of special darkness and unbelief. The hail, fire, turning water into blood, and other plagues of Egypt, bear testimony to this; and closing the heavens, that there might be no rain for three years and a half, and then again sending rain in Ahab's day, show us the same thing. Nor should we forget the darkness at the crucifixion of our Lord, and the signs that followed, in the rending of the rocks, the earthquake, the rending of the veil, the opening of the graves, and rising of the bodies of the saints, and appearing to many, as God's own witnesses to men that He is the living God.

This judgment is upon rivers, and fountains of water, turning them bitter, and producing death on many men who drink thereof. One would think that such mighty exhibitions of Divine power would soften men's hearts. But it is not so. Man's mind will, perhaps, then try to account for such changes, even as it does now for many of God's actings. Love, God's own love to man as a sinner, in the Cross of Christ, alone breaks and captivates the human heart. Mercy, sweet mercy, is the sound that the Holy Spirit uses to enter and take full possession of man's affections and desires. Some one has said truly, that

The third part of trees and green grass may be emblematic of prosperity. Thus, men are touched in their prosperous circumstances.

The star falling from heaven may be the symbol of a mighty ruler having fallen from his place of authority; burning as a lamp may show how brightly he had shone. "Waters" may be emblematic of people, and "fountains" and "rivers" their sources of refreshment.

"Law and terrors do but harden All the while they work alone But a sense of blood-bought pardon Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

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The Fourth Trumpet The FOURTH ANGEL sounded, 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 (Rev. 8:12).

Thus we see the soundings of the first four angels connected with signs and changes in almost every department of the universe. There are not only signs in the earth beneath,

but also wonders in heaven above {Acts 2:19}:

The earth, trees, grass, sea, fish, rivers, fountains, men, sun, moon, stars, day and night, each in turn exhibit marks of God's interference. All these judgments have doubtless symbolic signification. Under the action of the fourth trumpet, the highest authorities are smitten -- sun, moon, and stars. But all these things, together with the casting of hail and fire on the earth mingled with blood, are far less severe than the judgments that follow the sounding of the other three angels. These are specially marked by being prefaced with an announcement of an angel, saying,

sufficiently prove that they are not mere locusts, but devils let loose to grievously torment man. We are told, In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them {Rev. 9:6}.

What language can more touchingly convey the exquisite suffering of men in those days. It may be much nearer, too, than any of us think! Happy they who are now safely sheltered by the redeeming blood of the Lord Jesus Christ! This may be truly called a woe; but terrible woes are yet to come. Accordingly, we are told, One woe is past, and behold there come two woes more after these things {Rev. 9:12}.

The Sixth Trumpet The SIXTH ANGEL sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates {Rev. 9:13, 14}.

WOE, WOE, WOE to the inhabitants of the earth.

This is done, and they are prepared for a limited time, not to torment, but to slay the third part of men. Two hundred millions of wicked agents are employed in slaying men --

And I beheld, and heard (not an angel but) an eagle flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound! (Rev. 8:13).

It seems Satanic agency, because of the fire, smoke, and brimstone which issued from their mouths; and the region may be in the east.

This distinctly marks the last three trumpets as directly upon the inhabitants of the earth.

God now deals directly with men, and that at first by the power of Satan, and then by the personal coming of Christ Himself.

The Fifth Trumpet When the FIFTH ANGEL sounds, a mighty potentate is seen, likened to a star, once having had a place among the heavenly luminaries, but fallen from it: a star (not 'fall' but) fallen from heaven {Rev. 9:1},

to whom the key of the bottomless pit is given; i.e. the abyss where Satan will be imprisoned, not the lake of fire. He opened the abyss; a dense smoke and darkness arose from the pit, and out of the smoke came locusts upon earth, with the power of scorpions. This mission is one of judicial bearing on men, and, perhaps, especially, on the Jews; for they are commanded not to hurt the grass, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. They are not to kill, but to torment them five months. Infliction, and misery without death, characterize this judgment. That these locusts are figurative of Satanic power seems reasonable, from their issuing out of the bottomless pit, their being likened to horses prepared to battle, wearing crowns on their heads, having faces of men, hair of women, and teeth of lions, breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings like the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. They have tails also like scorpions, and have a king over them -- the angel of the bottomless pit. All these things mark them as mighty

instruments for inflicting torture on men, and

two hundred thousand thousand {Rev. 9:16}.

By these three,

that is, by the fire, smoke, and brimstone, was the third part of men killed {see Rev. 9:18}.

But, as we have seen before, all these judgments do not lead men to repentance. One might have thought that these solemn interventions of God might have caused those who were spared to turn to God. But we are told, And the rest of the men which were not killed by those plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts (Rev. 9:20, 21).

How sunken and incurable is the heart of man! How every part of his history -- past, present, and future, illustrates the Divine verdict, that the carnal mind is enmity against God, that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be {Rom. 8:7}.

Seeing that such terrible things are coming upon the earth, and we know not how soon, how prayerful and earnest should we be in seeking to win souls for Christ. May our gracious God most mercifully work, by the power of His Holy Spirit, through the gospel of His grace, to the salvation of multitudes of sinners now so zealously posting their way toward the wrath to come {1 Thess. 1:10}.

The Seventh Trumpet sounds, and our souls are at once drawn from earth and its miseries to heaven and its joys. Heaven rejoices that the earth is rescued from the hands of man and Satan, and that the Lord Jesus, the rightful heir, takes possession of it (Rev. 11:15-19). The seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever {Rev. 11:15}.

As usual, the elders who delight in the exaltation of the Lord, are in intelligent communion with God about the things of Christ; therefore we find that the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast; because thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned {Rev. 11:16, 17}.

Observe that the living creatures are not noticed here in company with the elders. The consequences and attendants upon Christ's taking the judgment and government of the earth into His own hands follow the sounding of this trumpet. Thy wrath is come {Rev. 11:18};

for He will come, in flaming fire taking vengeance, and must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The nations were angry {Rev. 11:18},

or, have been full of wrath; but now it is the time of the wrath of the Lamb. Every eye shall see Him . . . and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him {Rev. 1:7}.

We also see that God's servants the prophets, and the saints, are rewarded, and those that fear Him, both small and great; those that destroyed or corrupted the earth are destroyed; and the dead are judged. It is a brief sketch of the various acts of judgment during the reign of Christ, from the beginning of His taking the kingdom to the end. The chapter closes with the account of the temple of God being opened in heaven, the ark of the testament seen, with the lightnings, voices, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail. Happy for our hearts to find, that while judgment is poured out upon earth, the ark of the covenant is seen in heaven, witnessing to God's faithfulness, and the everlasting stability of His people's hope. The ark tells us of the mercy seat and the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel. This is rest. The precious blood, presented for us before God, always reminds us of entrance into the holiest and perfect peace, whatever may be the trouble and distress around. While looking thus by faith at our Lord Jesus at the right hand of God, presenting His own perfect sacrifice there on our behalf, we can not only cry, Come, Lord Jesus! but we realize that "Faith almost changes into sight, While, from afar, she spies Her fair inheritance in light Above created skies.

"Some rays of heaven break sweetly in At all the opening flaws; Visions of endless bliss are seen,
And native air she draws."

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