



## Session 10 ■ Special Interest Topic 1

### Understanding the Judgments of the Seven Trumpets

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#### The beginning:

The scene in Revelation 8:1-5 is written in the language of the end of the daily service in the temple. When the lamb was offered, the people were outside the temple praying in silence, waiting for the priest to come to them. Once he did, seven trumpets were sounded. Thus we can see how this scene comes after and as a result of Christ's crucifixion: the trumpets commence to be sounded after the death of Jesus.

#### The ending:

The seventh trumpet's sounding is linked with finishing the mystery of God (see Revelation 10:6, 7). Paul continually identifies the gospel as the mystery of God (see, for example, Ephesians 6:19). In Revelation 11:15, the seventh trumpet is sounded and God takes up His kingdom.

#### The Purpose:

They come as judgments upon "the inhabitants of the earth" in answer to the prayers of God's people (see Revelation 6:9, 10; 8:13).

During the fifth seal, we read their prayers—along with the prayers of all the saints of the ages—crying out to God to step in and do something about the evil in this world. We see these prayers again in Revelation 8:1-5. These prayers for judgment upon the inhabitants of the world are the springboard for the sounding of the trumpets. The angel casts the fires of judgment upon the earth from the golden censer. The sounding of the trumpets show that God has been acting in history, even though God's people have not always recognized it.

Trumpet judgments come upon those who have been persecuting the saints:

In the sounding of these trumpets, we have some scary stuff. The judgments of God are falling, giving the world a final chance to repent. But in Revelation 9:20, 21, we see they did not repent. When people take a direction in their lives, it can be hard to turn around. Hearts become hardened.

#### Their fulfilment in history:

The trumpet soundings are successive historical periods or acts which come about as a consequence of divine intervention or permission. The statements made in 8:13 and 9:12 would seem to indicate that they are successive. The fact that they stretch from the daily service in the Sanctuary (see 8:2-6) that is from the time of the commencement of the Christian era when Jesus died and conclude with the close of probation (see 11:15) would mean that they stretch through history for some 2000 years.

We would then be looking for their fulfillment to be readily discernable to those with a basic understanding of history.

### First trumpet–Revelation 8:7

The fall of Jerusalem due to the rejection of Christ by its leaders and those who followed them. Jesus prophesied against the city of Jerusalem (see Matthew 23:37, 38; 24:1, 2). In Luke 23:28-31 He refers to this judgment upon Jerusalem in language similar to the language of the first trumpet. After the fall of Jerusalem and the failure of the Bar Kochba revolt that followed in 135 AD, Jewish influence in the Empire and its ability to harm Christians was limited.

### Second trumpet–Revelation 8:8

It is fitting that the object of the second trumpet is Rome. Thus the first two trumpets God has dealt with the two powers, **one religious and the other secular**, who crucified Jesus. Although they were bitter enemies; only a temporary union of Rome and the Jewish nation could succeed in crucifying Jesus. The fall of Rome is given in the language of the fall of ancient Babylon (see Jeremiah 51:24, 25). Both Rome and Babylon had destroyed the Jerusalem temple. Both Peter and John used the word “Babylon” to refer to Rome (see 1 Peter 5:13; Revelation chapters 17 and 18).

### Third trumpet–Revelation 8:10, 11

The third trumpet exudes an overwhelming flavour of apostasy which perverts the truth of God as expressed in the good news about Jesus. The larger segment of Christendom compromises with paganism which leads to the rise of the Medieval Church era often associated with the Dark Ages. The waters become bitter is a symbol used to describe apostasy and false doctrine. In the Old Testament God’s people are referred to as a tree planted by streams of water (see Psalms 1:3).

### Fourth trumpet–Revelation 8:12

Jesus is the light of the world. Darkness comes in the absence of Jesus and the true gospel.

Darkness is the main feature of this trumpet. John refers to Jesus in his gospel as being the light of the world (see John 1:1-9). As a reaction (in part) against oppressive religious powers we find many embrace secularism which sprouts out of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. It blossomed into becoming a powerful force within the French Revolution and continues to develop. This darkness continues to deepen and embraces all continents today. **Secularism, rationalism and humanism** produce meaninglessness and hopelessness.

### The Fifth Trumpet–Revelation 9:1-11

In His famous sermon on the end of the world, Jesus warned that there would be difficult times ahead for His people. He warned that while false Christs and prophets will abound, you should not be led astray by them. As we approach the end-time, we see these signs and false prophets—but the gospel is still being preached.

In the fifth trumpet, the powers of darkness are unleashed and it is all downhill from there. A star from heaven receives a key to the abyss—the same star as the one in the third trumpet.

The fifth trumpet shows the consequences of the spiritual decline and darkness featured in the third and fourth trumpets. The failure of the professed followers of Jesus to faithfully represent and proclaim the good news about Jesus led to a reaction against God. When **secular-minded** people begin to try and live a life apart from God. This leads to the agony of hopelessness, meaninglessness and emptiness.

It also makes possible the unleashing of demonic forces in a way not possible before as people who experience this sense of hopelessness are still looking for something to fill the void in their lives. We are spiritual beings made in the image of God and made for fellowship with our Creator.

The smoke from the demonic abyss can take many forms as it appeals to the spiritual nature of mankind. **It can be found in a religion** which appeals more to the emotions while laying aside the mind. It can have all the appeal of Eastern Mysticism while professing to also uphold many aspects of Christianity.

The fifth trumpet warns of the dangers of **any form of religion or absence of religion** which darkens our understanding of the good news about Jesus.

Since God's people are sealed by God's protection they will not be harmed (see 9:4). Using the same language as the first trumpet, God's people are once again called grass, plants and trees.

## The Sixth Trumpet—Revelation 9:12-21

This trumpet is the unleashing of demonic forces which up until now were kept in abeyance. It is a demonic plague. We see the world as it could have been if God had not been restraining them.

The sixth trumpet lines up with the sixth plague which parallels the rise of the end-time Babylon (false religion) controlling the Kings of the earth and political powers. The reference found in both the sixth plague and the sixth trumpet to the river Euphrates, demonic activity and military language seems to indicate a connection (see 9:14; 16:12).

The sixth trumpet portrays the gathering of Satan's end-time army for the battle of Armageddon. They are portrayed as mounted troops numbering 200 million (see 9:16).

Then four angels holding back the winds of strife let go and there is no restraint upon demonic forces. Things are now as they would have been if satanic forces not been held back by God. This is how this world would have been if Jesus had not come and defeated the powers of evil.

As the inhabitants of the earth see all this happen, for the most part, they do not turn to God. They find it hard to turn off from their chosen path.

The door to salvation has not yet closed. As the earth slides into the final stages of self-destruction, it is still possible to hear the voice of Jesus and to repent.

It is while this trumpet is sounding, God's last call to the earth to accept Jesus is proclaimed just as Jesus predicted in Matthew 24:14 and as found in Revelation 10:7

The sixth trumpet reflects the final events of earth's history - God's final call to the inhabitants.

### Summary:

The third and fourth trumpets depict the rise of two of the enemies of God's people: one **religious and the other secular**. The fifth and the sixth trumpets portray the activities of these two powers as the end time approaches. As with the **Jewish nation and Rome** who combined together to crucify Jesus (depicted in the first two trumpets so we now have two replacement powers that will oppress the people of God particularly towards the end: **one religious and the other secular**. We will see at the very end that the religious powers will eventually control the secular political powers. Locusts were used in judgment on Egypt (see Exodus 10:1-22) and Babylon (see Jeremiah 51:14, 27). The context in both was religious liberty for God's people. The torments of the plague are spiritual not physical, life has lost its meaning. The agent of despair is the scorpion's tail, as symbol of lying prophets (see Isaiah 9:15). It is false doctrine that takes away the light of the gospel and brings anguish. The blotting out of the sun is an excellent symbol of the attempt of Satan to obscure God in the minds of people. Things become so bad many lose the will to live.

## The Seventh Trumpet–Revelation 11:15

Revelation is all about the finishing of the gospel message on earth.

This end-time book tells us there will be a great final proclamation of the gospel taking place just before the blowing of the last trumpet. Jesus said when that happens the end will come.

When the seventh trumpet sounds, it signals the close of the door of probation. Now the battle is over: God reclaims the world He created and takes it over as His kingdom for ever.

### Where do we live in this sequence?

Probably hovering around the fifth and sixth trumpet eras where religion and secularism are competing. All these images point to modern-day secularism. Beliefs such as humanism, rationalism and secularism control most of the media, leaving many in this generation with no morality, no God, no hope or meaning.

The issues are made even more complex by the **confusion found in the religious world**. False religion which departs from the teachings of the Bible can also take away the light of the gospel and lead to despair as does an absence of religion.

Revelation would seem to indicate that just before the end, false religion will triumph over secularism to bring about end time events.

Ours is an age unique in human history in that large numbers of people do not acknowledge the existence of God. Like Pharaoh, they say, “Who is this God? I don’t know him.”

Ours is an age of spiritual confusion. Most people claim to be spiritual in our society and believe a god; but with only a vague concept of who the one true God is. Meanwhile, they follow all sorts of mystical ideas and hopes about the future. Jesus warned this would happen in His sermon about the end of the world: “For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible” (Matthew 24:24).

In our confused world, the test of true religion is always going to be seen through the light of the gospel. There is a lot of religion around but Jesus is the light of the world. Without Him, we are in darkness.