

The Seven Trumpets

by W.J. Erdman

The seven trumpets symbolize the judgments of God and the destruction of the earth and its inhabitants, leading to the establishment of the kingdom of God and the reign of Christ.

Scripture: Revelation 8:2-10

Topics: "Eschatology", "Prayer And Judgment"

Description

W.J. Erdman preaches on the powerful visions in the Book of Revelation, starting with the Angel and the Incense, depicting the prayers of the saints and the judgments at the sounding of the seven Trumpets, encouraging continuous prayer for deliverance and the triumph of righteousness. The progression through the Six Trumpets reveals symbolic interpretations of destruction, apostasy, and the rise of evil powers, leading to the ultimate overthrow of wrong. The Episode of the Angel with the Little Book and the Two Witnesses provides comfort to the faithful, emphasizing the call to testify even unto death and the assurance of a better resurrection. The Consummation under the Seventh Trumpet signifies the establishment of the everlasting Kingdom of God, with the removal of the Church before the pouring out of the Vials of wrath.

Transcript

Introductory Vision

THE ANGEL AND THE INCENSE. Chapter. 8:2-5.

2 And I saw the seven angels that stand before God; and there were given unto them seven trumpets. 3 And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 And the angel taketh the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth: and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

This vision depicts the prayers of the saints, as they are crying out to God to vindicate his cause. The answer to their prayers is found in the judgments depicted at the sounding of the seven Trumpets. The vision is an encouragement to the people of God to pray continually for deliverance from evil and from evils. It is to assure them of the ultimate overthrow of wrong and the triumph of right.

Progression

THE SIX TRUMPETS. Chapters. 8:6-9:21.

6 And the seven angels that had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. 7 And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth; and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. 8 And 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; 9 and there died the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, even they that had life; and the third part of the ships was destroyed. 10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; 11 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. 12 And 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; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner. 13 And I saw, and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound.

1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven fallen unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss. 2 And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. 3 And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 And it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 And it was given them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion,

when it striketh a man. 6 And in those days men shall seek death, and shall in no wise find it; and they shall desire to die, and death fleeth from them. 7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for war; and upon their heads as it were crowns like unto gold, and their faces were as men's faces. 8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. 9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to war. 10 And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months. 11 They have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue he hath the name

Apollyon. 13 The first Woe is past: behold, there come yet two Woes hereafter. 13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God, 14 one saying to the sixth angel that had the trumpet, Loose the four angels that are bound at the great river Euphrates. 15 And the four angels were loosed, that had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill the third part of men. 16 And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand: I heard the number of them. 17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates as of fire and of hyacinth and of brim stone: and the heads of the horses are as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceedeth

fire and smoke and brimstone. 18 By these three plagues was the third part of men killed, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths. 19 For the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails are like unto serpents, and have heads; and with them they hurt. 20 And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: 21 and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

As to the plagues which are depicted in connection with the sounding of the first four Trumpets the following interpretation is suggested. The first may signify the destruction of what was identified with the common people who are, in the figurative language of psalmist and prophet "grass" "trees" "earth." The second may correspond to the great Empire of the "beast," a mountain in the "sea" of nations; the "beast" as the predicted "little horn" controlling the "ten horns" which before he appeared were "kingdoms" created by and for the people, seeing it is said of them later when all are upholding apostate "Babylon the Great," "they receive authority" as kings, with the beast their imperial head, "for one hour." The third trumpet suggests that the "great star" fallen from heaven is the "false prophet" who, poisoning the "waters" with antichristian doctrine, upholds the blasphemous claims of the "little horn."

The fourth trumpet would then signify the dense apostasy and obscuration of heavenly "lights"; men are now judicially blinded to believe "the lie." II Th. 2:11-12.

In regard to the fifth Trumpet there' is suggested an intimate association between the Beast and the Dragon, in that all have to do with the Abyss or the particular compartment peculiar to them; for the "star" is the angel of the Abyss, and the Beast which kills the Two Witnesses comes up out of the Abyss. 9:1; 11:7; 20:1-3.

In regard to the latter, or sixth Trumpet, it is plainly said that the once fettered four angels, supernatural beings themselves, kill the third part of men; and that in spite of all the plagues, "The rest of mankind repented not of the works of their hands that they should not worship demons."

As to the great Tribulation, the fifth Trumpet is sounded at its beginning, the Beast has his own way through its "times," and the Devil gives his authority to the Beast to make war with the saints. And as Satan is "the prince of the demons," the unnatural locusts of the fifth Trumpet may symbolize the demons who un seen are permitted to inflict plagues on men who "have not the seal of God on their foreheads."

All this suggests, since angels are representative beings, and the unseen agents good or evil, behind human rulers good or evil, that "the man of sin," "the lawless one," who is called "the beast out of the abyss," has for his support "the star fallen from heaven" "the angel of the abyss." The one is human, the other angelic, but what the one does the other does. "The world rulers of this darkness" control the Neros, the Cæsars, the "Beasts" of flesh and blood, but both are under Satan, of whom it is said in a later Vision, "his tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth." II Th. 2:1-10; Eph. 6:11-12; 2:2; 12:4; Dan. 10:13.

On the other hand, in such symbolic phrase and identifying names like Abaddon or Apollyon, this "star fallen from heaven to earth," may be the Devil himself who for a time holds the key of the Abyss until a mightier than he takes it and casts him into the Abyss for the Thou sand Years. 20:1.

These two Trumpets belong to the period of the Tribulation, after the conflict with Michael and his angels, when the devil and his angels are cast out from heaven into the earth and instigate the "beasts" and their adherents to persecute the saints. The demonic powers of the Abyss are then at work for "the time, times and half a time."

Episode

THE ANGEL WITH THE LITTLE BOOK; THE TWO WITNESSES. Chapters. 10:1-11:14.

1 And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; 2 and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth; 3 and he cried with a great voice, as a lion roareth: and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices. 4 And when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. 5 And the angel that I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, 6 and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be delay no longer: 7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets. 8 And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard it again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel that standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. 9 And I went unto the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the little book. And he saith unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey. 10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter. 11 And they say unto me, Thou must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 2 And the court which is without the temple leave with out, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. 3 And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sack cloth. 4 These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of the earth. 5 And if any man desireth to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies; and if any man shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed. 6 These have the power to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of their prophecy: and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire. 7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. 9 And from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations do men look upon their dead bodies three days and a half, and suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb, 10 And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry; and they shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth. 11 And after the three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them that beheld them. 12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they went up into heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld them. 13 And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand

persons: and the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. 11 The second Woe is past: behold, the third Woe cometh quickly.

The progress of the events which follow the opening of the six Trumpets is here interrupted, as between the sixth and seventh Seals, by two visions, one of the Little Book (Ch. 10), and the other of the Two Witnesses (Ch. 11:1-13).

Like the previous Episode of chapter seven, these parenthetic visions are intended to comfort the people of God. They speak of their great and final suffering but also of their deliverance. The vision of the cloud-clad, iris-crowned Angel descending from heaven with the little "opened" book in his hand is but the repetition of the Vision of Daniel centuries before (Dan. 12:5-7). (See also Ezekiel 2:9-3:14.) The book' or roll "sealed" by Daniel is given "opened" to John. This is very significant. Where Daniel ends John begins. It was to be sealed "until the time of the end," until the "time times and a half" foretold to Daniel. It indicates that the events pictured by these visions belong to the period of the Great Tribulation under the Beast.

The measuring of the Temple (as Zech. 2:1, 2; Ezek. 40:2-5) expresses the thought of preservation. In the midst of great persecution, "Israel/" or the true people of God, would be secure (Ch. 11:1-2). So too the two witnesses, representing the people of God, finally ascend up to heaven, even though first suffering death at the hands of the Beast. The mission of these Two Witnesses like that of all prophets sent to Israel in days of apostasy is to call the people to repent and to turn to Jehovah their God. Thus the faithful are encouraged by this Episode to testify even unto death, being assured of a better resurrection.

While these two visions are parenthetic, like those of chapter seven, they are more directly related to the dramatic movement of the book; they close with the words "the second woe is past." The "first" and "second" "woes," however, were coincident with the first and second "trumpets." Therefore the Episode (10:1-11:14) corresponds with the second trumpet and its events be long to the time of that trumpet (9:13-21), namely the second "Woe-Trumpet." These words "the second woe is past" also connect these events with those which immediately follow, i.e., with those of the seventh Trumpet, which is identified with the Third Woe. So the additional words, "behold the third woe cometh quickly," mark the transition from the Episode (10:1-11:14) to the Consummation, under the Seventh Trumpet (11:15-19), when "the mystery of God is finished."

Consummation

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET. Chapter. 11:15-19.

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever. 16 And the four and twenty elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, 17 saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Al mighty, who art and who wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign. 18 And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth. 19 And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.

The Seventh Trumpet sounds, and great respondent voices in heaven proclaim at once' (passing over all intermediate events of resurrection and wrath for which the Elders render thanks), that the once far off goal of all the great movements in heaven and on earth has been attained, the universal and everlasting Kingdom of Jehovah and his Anointed; "the mystery of God is finished." But all this involves the removal of the Church, before the Vials of wrath are emptied. While this announcement of the Sovereignty is here at the close of the Tribulation, in the recurrent Vision of "the rest of her seed" it is heard at the beginning of the Tribulation, and again finally, just before the "Word of God" goes forth to war and the final Wrath is poured out. 10:7; 11:15; 12:10-12; 19:6-7.

The Seventh Trumpet sounds, therefore, through all the Vial time or Third Woe and beyond to the Inauguration of the Kingdom.

On the other hand, in such symbolic phrase and identifying names like Abaddon or Apollyon, this "star fallen from heaven to earth" may be the Devil himself who for a time holds the key of the Abyss until a Mightier than he takes it and casts him into the Abyss for the Thousand Years. 20:1.

These two Trumpets belong to the period of the Tribulation, after the conflict with Michael and his angels, when the devil and his angels are cast out from heaven into the earth and instigate the "beasts" and their adherents to persecute the saints. The demonic powers of the Abyss ' are then at work for the "time, times and half a time."

Thus the Seventh Trumpet, or "Third Woe," closes the array of appalling plagues when the wrath falls upon beasts and their armies and kings and cities and nations.

It had been before said of this trumpet that when it would begin to sound "then is finished the mystery of God" and "the kingdom of the world becomes the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever." 10:7; 11:15; 19:1-21.

It is also made known that when the Seventh Trumpet sounds the saints have been raised from the dead and the Lord has come for them. From this again it is inferred that it sounds after the great tribulation in which these saints were, and that it is equivalent to or includes the seven vials of wrath; and likewise its events come under the Seventh Seal. Of it is said "And when he opened the seventh seal there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." 8:1.

This too would correspond to the other and latest statement before the Seven Vials are poured out, that then "none was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished." 15:5-8.

It should be observed that the Seventh Seal does not contain the Trumpets which follow; its equivalent is in the Seventh Trumpet and the Seven Vials.

It should be noted further that there are Seven Final events leading to the establishment of the Kingdom of the Messiah; viz.: 1, Peace; 2, War; 3, Famine; 4, Pestilence; 5, Tribulation; 6, Signs; 7, Wrath.

This order is a clue to and the test of every interpretation of the Visions of the Apocalypse. It is the order of the Seals opened by the Lamb once slain; but while the contents of the Six Seals are revealed, all that is said of the Seventh Seal is, "And when he opened seventh seal there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." 8:1. The query at once arises as to its contents. Adhering to the order mentioned, the Seventh Seal should be the time of the Wrath, and as inciding with the wrath of the

Seventh Trumpet; and so it is declared. A number of particulars are announced as to this Trumpet; viz. the vindication and rewards of the resurrected saints and servants of God; which implies that the Return of the Lord has taken place and this Return as after the Tribulation of the Fifth Seal and during the Signs of the Sixth. Matt. 24:29-31. And all these lead on to the Seventh Trumpet at which the Messianic Kingdom is announced. 11:15-18.

The very "silence in heaven" of the Seventh Seal is in contrast with the "great voices in heaven" of the Seventh Trumpet announcing that the Kingdom had come and that the Wrath had come.

But in further confirmation of the view that the last of the Seals corresponds to the last of the Trumpets as the time of the Wrath, note that "the silence in heaven" always in ancient prophecy is ominous of impending judgments of Jehovah. Before the great theophany described by Habakkuk, it is said, "But the Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him. 1:20. And the prophet Zechariah exclaims in view of all Jehovah will yet do for Israel and Jerusalem, "Be silent all flesh before the Lord, for he is waked up out of his holy habitation." 2:13.

The account of the Seventh Seal closes with the mention of certain great portents "lightnings, thunderings, and an earthquake and great hail." Such portents occur in the Revelation when great crises are predicted.

The first mention of them is in the Vision of the Great Throne (4:5) as indicating that from the throne of God all the judgments proceed.

At the next mention, when the Seven Trumpets are given to the seven angels at the altar of intercession, an "earthquake" is added to the other portents, and this appears at the ascension of the Two Witnesses. 8:5; 11:13.

At this third time both an earthquake and great hail are mentioned (11:19). These portents mark the close of the prophecies recorded in what, may be regarded as the first half of the Book. Similar portents under the seventh Vial may indicate its relation to this seventh Trumpet.

It may be added by way of anticipation that in the first half of the Revelation (Chs. 1-11), the Kingdom is announced in association with the resurrection of the saints and servants of God, and this is followed by the Wrath on the ungodly; 11:15-18; and in the Second Part (Chs. 12-22) it is announced in association with the marriage of the Lamb and the going forth of the King of Kings to tread the winepress of the Wrath of. Armageddon. 19:6-21.

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