

Revelation - Week 7 (The 7 Trumpets)

January 27, 2021

Revelation 8-9

Recap from Last Week

- I think it would be good to do a quick recap from last week - if you watched the audio was quite glitchy and cutting in and out - so thank you for sticking with me, hopefully the audio is better tonight.
- But since the audio was so bad, let me give a bit of a recap of chapter 7
- So chapter 7 is a parentheses, a breather in the midst of the breaking of the 7 seals on the scroll - it is a 2 part vision: verses 1-8 is a vision of 144,000 and verses 9-17 is a vision of a great innumerable multitude
- I believe that is the same group of people - verses 1-8 before the breaking of the seals and verses 9-17 is after
- The “heard” and “saw” pattern is used again - John heard 144,000 and then he sees a great multitude
- Meaning, there is 1 people of God, made up of Jew and Gentile and God has sealed his people so that they can endure through tribulation.
- Verses 9-17 is a picture of afterwards - those who endured and rewarded and in God’s presence
- So really its a very comforting vision - if you are a follower of Jesus you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit - not so that you never experience pain or suffering (the seals in chapter 6 clearly show the church caught in the crunch) but the seal protects believers spiritually and enables faith so that they can endure to the end.

So now in the book of Revelation we are moving into the blowing of the seven trumpets. And really we are moving into a big scene in the book - chapter 8:1 - until 11:18 is one big scene that John sees - the sounding of the 7 trumpets.

- As we work our way through the book of Revelation I found this quote from Eugene Peterson really interesting. Because again, the most popular way in years past to read and interpret Revelation is the Left Behind, Rapture, literal 7 year tribulation kind of view. Where everything is chronological and this happens, and then this happens and then this happens.

- And with that view, the book of Revelation can quickly become - let me interpret the signs of our day and age to try and pin point where we are - pin the tail on the anti-christ one scholar I read called it.

- Here's what Eugene Peterson said:

“Everything in the Revelation can be found in the previous 65 books of the Bible. The Revelation adds nothing of substance to what we already know. The truth of the gospel is already complete, revealed in Jesus Christ. There is nothing new to say on the subject. But there is a new way to say it.”

- So isn't that good? The book of Revelation is not us trying to decipher some hidden meaning or crystal ball gazing or trying to decipher when and where and how it all goes down

- The book of Revelation is a book on discipleship - be faithful until the end. It is a book meant to encourage the church, not confuse us.

So that being said, we want to read Revelation chapters 8-9 for sure and we will see how far we get, but I want to remind you of my approach to reading this book.

- most people tend to read the book of Revelation chronologically - so we read seals 1-2-3-4-5-6-7, and now trumpets are separate and after the seals - so trumpets 1-2-3-4-5-6-7, and once we finish with that then a real person 1 person anti-christ emerges and then the 7 bowls 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 and we kind of map it out like that

- The problem with reading the book of Revelation like that is its not meant to be read like that. The book of Revelation has procession in it, we are moving towards the return of Jesus in the book, but it uses recapitulation in it - meaning John sees a vision describing something, and then the book doubles back and sees perhaps even the same vision from a different point of view

- Now here's what fascinating - the 7 seals and the 7 trumpets and the 7 bowls have the exact same pattern to them - 1,2,3,4 followed by a break and then 5,6 followed by a break and the 7.

- So I believe we should read the seals, trumpets, and bowls as occurring simultaneously, and John is describing what has been and is going on between the first and second coming of Jesus.

	1st Coming							2nd Coming
Seals -	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Trumpets -	1	3	3	4	5	6	7	
Bowls -	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Now even that picture doesn't do it justice because again, I don't think its "seal number 3 can't place until seal number 2 happens." All 3 series of 7 judgments and things happening portray events and phenomena that occur repeatedly throughout history between the 1st and 2nd coming of Jesus.

- it's only at the 7th in each of these series that we know we are for sure at the close of history

So what we are going to see in this next section of the 7 trumpets:

- the first 4 trumpets are sounded in rapid order
- The 5th trumpet introduces a larger sub-section
- The 6th trumpet does the same
- Then after the 6th and before the 7th we have a lengthy interlude (much like how chapter 7 was an interlude between the 6th and 7th seal)

Read Revelation 8-9

- so obviously there is heavy stuff in here, and imagery that can be confusing and even scary and terrifying
- So here's overall what the vision of the 7 trumpets is seeking to show us: the judgment of God - that's the truth of this scene that John is seeing
- We are being shown judgment against evil and sin and some of the imagery is meant to show us that judgment is real and it is terrifying.

Couple of Observations:

- I believe that the 7 trumpets are meant to take place before Jesus returns - and I believe that the trumpets are being sounded even now and have been since Jesus ascended into heaven (we will get into that more)
- I think the 7 seals and the 7 trumpets are showing us the same thing from 2 different perspectives
- The 7 Seals = the perspective of the church

- The 7 Trumpets = the perspective of the world
- Here's why - in the seals I believe we were seeing the kingdom of Jesus coming and evil and wickedness resisting it and the church being caught in the middle - feeling the pressure of 2 kingdoms colliding (thlpsis - literally the word for tribulation = pressure)
- In the 7 trumpets vision, the judgments are for a particular slice of people: in chapter 8:13 it says - "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth..."
- Same phrase used in 6:10 - "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"
- The phrase "those who dwell on the earth" is a technical term used in Revelation referring to those who stand in the way of the coming of God's kingdom. It means those who are in rebellion against God.
- Another way to put it is "those who are at home in the present world order."
- Because notice even in chapter 9:4 - those who have the seal of God are not harmed - only those who dwell on the earth
- So the martyrs in chapter 6 ask God "How long O Lord, until you judge?" And the 7 trumpets are God judging - answering the martyrs prayer

- These judgments, these 7 trumpets are not complete and total - you'll notice that when we walk through the passage - the trumpets are not representing total and final judgment:
 - 9:10 - demons allowed to torment for 5 months
 - 8:7 - 1/3 of the earth
 - 8:8 - 1/3 of the sea
 - 8:10 - 1/3 of the rivers
 - 8:11 - 1/3 of the waters
 - 8:12 - 1/3 of the sun and moon and stars
 - 9:15 - 1/3 of humanity affected

Remember, I believe numbers are symbolic and are meant to mean things - so in the case of the 7 trumpets, you see judgment happening, but it's not total.

- this represents mercy!! - not mathematical literalness
- These trumpets are sounded to warn the world, those who dwell on the earth, those opposed to God, to warn them of the pending total judgment coming.

Similar OT Passage:

Joel 2:1 - "Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming; it is near."

Ezekiel 33:3-6 - "...and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head."

- So what we are seeing in this vision of the 7 trumpets is God warning the world through acts of judgment that have worked out on the stage of history
- The 7 seals - taking place between the 1st and 2nd coming, show the kingdom of Jesus being resisted by evil and wickedness
- The 7 trumpets - taking place between the 1st and 2nd coming, show the judgment of God to warn people about full complete judgment coming.

"John has taken some of his contemporaries worst experiences and worst fears or war and natural disasters, blown them up to apocalyptic proportions, and cast them in biblically allusive terms. The point is not to predict a sequence of events. The point is to evoke and to explain the meaning of the divine judgment which is impending on the sinful world." - Richard Bauckham

Chapter 8 - Verses 1-5

Verse 1 - the last seal - silence in heaven (I think perhaps a picture of God listening to the prayers of the saints.)

Verse 2 - we are introduced to 7 angels who stand before God, and then they are given 7 trumpets.

- here's what interesting - 7 angels would have been know to John's audience
- In other Jewish writings, not scripture, these 7 angels are talked about
- The book of Tobit - "I am Raphael, one of the 7 angels who stands ready and enters the glory of God."

- The book of Enoch - Raphael, Uriel, Raquel, Michael, Sariel, Gabriel, Remiel
- The names aren't important I just found it interesting that 7 angels that stand before God was not a new concept for these early Christians

Verse 3 - an angel comes and stands at the altar with a golden censer

- given incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne (these are the prayers prayed in chapter 6 verse 10-11 - how long O lord?)
- So these prayers rise to God and then the angel hurls them to earth - and there is peals of thunder and lightning and an earthquake
- Here's what this means - God, in the 7 trumpets is going to answer the prayers of his saints - "How Long o Lord until you judge?" - the angel hurling the contents of this censer is representative of God working out his answer to our prayers

Verse 6 - the angels prepare to blow the trumpets!

- the first 5 trumpets are patterned after 5 of the plagues in Exodus. So as we walk through you'll notice similarities
- And the blowing of trumpets would remind listeners of the story of Jericho as well - in Joshua 6 7 trumpets are blown by 7 priests

First Trumpet

- hail, fire, mixed with blood, thrown upon the earth
 - 1/3 of the earth burned up
 - 1/3 of the trees burned up
 - All green grass burned up
- this would remind listeners of the plague of hail and fire in Exodus 9:22-24 - "Then the Lord said to Moses 'Stretch out your hand toward heaven, so that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man and beast and every plant of the field, in the land of Egypt.' Then Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. There was hail and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very heavy hail, such as had never been in all the land Egypt since it became a nation."

Second Trumpet

- great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and 1/3 of the sea becomes blood
- 1/3 living creatures in the sea die
- 1/3 of the ships are destroyed

Mountain on fire thrown into the sea

Jeremiah 51:25 - "Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, declares the Lord, which destroys the whole earth; I will stretch out my hand against you, and roll you down from the crags and make you a burnt mountain." (Speaking to Babylon)

Jeremiah 51:63-64 - "When you finish reading this book, tie a stone to it and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates, and say, 'Thus shall Babylon sink, to rise no more, because of the disaster that I am bringing upon her, and they shall become exhausted.'"

Third Trumpet

- a great star falls from heaven, blazing like a torch
- Fell on a third of the rivers and springs of water
- Name of the star is wormwood
- Many people died from the eater because it was bitter

Bitter food and drink is mentioned in the old testament to refer to the bitterness of suffering resulting from divine judgment:

Jeremiah 9:15 - "Therefore thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, 'Behold I will feed this people with bitter food and give them poisonous water to drink.'"

Jeremiah 23:15 - "Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets: Behold I will feed them with bitter food and give them poisoned water to drink..."

-Trumpets 2-3 are meant to remind of the plague of the Nile in Exodus 7:20-25 - "...he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile."

Fourth Trumpet

- 1/3 of the sun, moon and stars is struck
- 1/3 of the light is darkened

Meant to parallel the plague of darkness in Exodus 10:21-23

- So what you have in trumpets 1-4 is nature going berserk, just like in the plague of Egypt. You have the earth affected, food supplies, the seas and commerce, drinking water, light.

Verse 13

- John looks and hears an eagle flying overhead
- Crying out woe, to those who dwell on the earth
- The last 3 angels are going to blast their trumpets

- so essentially trumpets 5-7 are going to get worse

Eagle imagery used to signal destruction:

Deuteronomy 28:49 - "The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like an eagle..."

Lamentations 4:19 - "Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles in the heavens; they chased us on the mountains; they lay in wait for us in the wilderness."

Jeremiah 4:13 - "Behold, he comes up like clouds; his chariots like the whirlwind; his horses are swifter than eagle..."

Jeremiah 48:40 - "For thus says the Lord, Behold one shall fly swiftly like an eagle and spread his wings against Moab."

Ezekiel 17:3 - "A great eagle with great wings and long pinions rich in plumage of many colours came to Lebanon and took the top of the cedar."

Trumpet 5

- John sees a star fall from heaven and he is given the keys to the shaft of the bottomless pit
- Most scholars think this is referring to Satan:
Isaiah 14:12 - "How you are fallen from heaven, O day star, son of Dawn!
How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low."
- Satan is given the keys to the bottomless pit. Well, who gave him the keys? Jesus did.
- Revelation 1:18 - "I have the keys to death and Hades."
- Again, in part of the mystery of God's sovereignty he gives a certain amount of authority to Satan.
- Satan cannot take authority, he is given it - he only operates within the parameters set by Jesus
- so it is opened and here's what happen:
 - Smoke darkens the sun
 - Locusts come out, given power like scorpions (cannot harm those who have the seal of God)
 - Allowed to torment for 5 months, but not kill
 - In those days people will seek death and will not find it - but death will flee from them
 - I believe we are seeing death kept at bay is more repentance can happen. This again is sheer grace. There are worse things than death.

Appearance of these demonic forces:

- locusts, like horses prepared for battle
- On their heads were crowns of gold
- Faces like human faces
- Hair like women's hair
- Teeth like lion's teeth
- Breastplates of iron
- Noise of their wings like horses rushing into battle
- Tails and stings like scorpions
- Power to hurt people for 5 months

And then we are told in verse 11 that they have a king:

Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek = means destruction or destroyed

- probably Satan himself or one of his most powerful representatives.

Job 26:6 - "Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering."

Psalm 88:11 - "Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon."

- so the name Abaddon is closely linked to Sheol or the place of death

So what John is seeing in the fifth trumpet is demonic forces being unleashed.

- I don't think John is saying these demons literally look like locusts, and horses with human faces and scorpion tails and women's hair

- NOR do I think we should try and say ohhh these mean Blackhawk helicopters or tanks or military things Russia has.

- What trumpet 5 is describing is meant to terrify and shock us. Basically God in his judgment is saying to those who dwell on the earth - those in rebellion against his kingdom - basically he is saying, you want the way of destruction and sin and evil? Then I am opening up the pit.

Trumpet 6

- heard a voice from the 4 horns of the altar saying to the 6th angel: release the 4 angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates

- These 4 bound angels are probably fallen angels, demons

- The river Euphrates was the extreme eastern horizon of the empire and there was always this looming threat of an invasion from beyond the Euphrates

- So the 4 angels, who were prepared for the hour, day, month, and year are released (again points to God's sovereignty)

- John sees an army essentially - twice 10,000x10,000 = 200 million

- Now not a literal number - but a number meant to convey an army that is inconceivable, horrifying and revolting

Description

- Horses
- Things were breastplates the color of fire and sapphire and sulfur
- Heads of horses were lions heads
- Fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths
- By these plagues a third of mankind was killed, by smoke and sulfur (so these are plagues that wipe out humans)
- Tails are like serpents with heads

So these trumpets are judgments against those who are in rebellion against God.

- and they are designed to bring people to repentance
- It is not complete judgment (5 months, 1/3 , 1/3, 1/3)
- The trumpets are warnings, calling mankind to repent: "Something is wrong! Something is off! You are ignoring God and his ways! You are headed for destruction."

I believe that these trumpets have been blasting since Jesus ascended into heaven and will continue to get more and more intense until Jesus returns:

- Famine
- Plagues
- War
- Natural disasters (tornados, hurricanes, etc.)
- These are God's judgments made to wake people up to repentance (and often times we see just that!)

Verses 20-21 says

- those who weren't killed hardened their hearts
- Didn't repent of idol worship and murder and sorcery and sexual immorality or theft
- God gives time for humanity to repent and we see a hardening of heart

- Now we will get into chapter 10 and 11 next time
 - Chapter 10 gives us the churches response and call in the midst of this
 - But here is what God's judgment reveals to us:
 - Our choices matter to God
 - God takes evil and sin seriously
 - God is not indifferent or tolerant of evil
 - God moves against evil and sin