

lesson seven

FEBRUARY 9–15

The Seven Trumpets

*“But in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel,
when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would
be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets”
(Revelation 10:7, NKJV).*



Rocks are huge, heavy objects. Yet water can move, carve, or dissolve them over time. So God's people are to remember that God sees all things and in His time will make His presence known.

Joshua 6;
Revelation 8–10

Introduction

The Echo of a Trumpet

The inhabitants of Jericho peeked out of the city fearfully. Every day there had been this strange procession. Every day there had been a threatening trumpet blast. The earth quivered under the ominous pounding of thousands of feet on the Canaanite soil. The sound of trumpets echoed off the surrounding mountainside.

The children of Israel were obviously giving them a warning of some kind, but they could not understand what it was. Oddly, today was different—the strange procession did not stop with just one march around the city. There was a second, a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, and a seventh. Suddenly, trumpets sounded powerfully, and a thousand voices roared like thunder.

God fights for His people.

In Revelation, John paints a similar picture of warning trumpets. It almost echoes the Jericho story with the seven trumpet blasts. Mingled with the trumpet blasts are plagues of hail, blood, darkness, and locusts. This passage of Scripture reminds us of plagues unleashed on the proud Egyptian pharaoh who oppressed God's people and defied God's command to free them.

If we continue reading Revelation, we see an eagle that flies by, predicting three horrors, or woes. Locusts with scorpion tails crawl out of a smoky abyss. Two hundred million ferocious lion-headed, horselike beasts are unleashed with their riders to kill a third of the human race with fire, smoke, and sulfur. An angel with a small, bittersweet scroll descends on the land. The sea roars to the seven thunders, and they roar back. Two witnesses, represented by two olive trees and two candlesticks, are given the authority to destroy those who seek to destroy them.

This succession of events may be as puzzling to us as the seven rounds tramped around the great wall of Jericho on the seventh day were to its inhabitants. Like the inhabitants of Jericho, we might have a sense that surely these events hold great significance. Yet what could that meaning be?

Then the seventh angel blows his trumpet. Similar to the shout of the children of Israel in conquest of Jericho, we also hear loud voices in heaven: “The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15, MEV).

Like Jericho crumbled, the kingdoms of this world are crumbling. As we explore these passages this week, we will come to a fuller understanding of the prophetic meaning of the seven trumpets and discover a message of hope. Distinct themes will emerge: God fights for His people, and He will bring the excruciating problem of sin to an end.

Logos *The Seven Trumpets*

Genesis 40, 41;
Eph. 5:2;
Revelation 8–11

In the Bible we encounter symbolic dreams as early as the story of Joseph in Genesis 40. You might remember how the butler dreamed of grapes and the baker of bread. Then later, Pharaoh fetched Joseph out of prison to explain his two dreams of cows and corn.

In each case the symbols used in the dream pointed the interpreter to the true subject; for example, a dream about a baker featured bread, and one about a famine featured skinny cows.

We pray too little.

Daniel and Revelation follow that pattern. A vision about the sanctuary (Daniel 8) is presented in sanctuary symbols (ram, goat, horns, “daily”), while one about the history of God’s church (Revelation 2; 3) features churches from Asia Minor. A prophecy climaxing with the seal of God and the resulting silence in heaven (Rev. 4:1–8:1) uses “seals” on a book as its leading metaphor.

The “seven trumpets” of Revelation 8–11 is the largest of the prophecies. Here the history of the fall of the Roman Empire is illustrated by warning blasts from the brass instrument. And why illustrate the fall of the Roman Empire? In Daniel we find the familiar four empires, (Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome) followed by Christ’s kingdom. When Revelation is written, three of those empires are gone, and the last one is already in decline. So the book of Revelation begins logically with God’s judgments on the one remaining empire.

Accordingly, the first four trumpet messages (in chapter 8) foretell the punishment of western Rome by barbarian tribes such as the infamous Vandals. The next two trumpets (Revelation 9) introduce powers that God used to execute judgment on apostate Christianity. The rise of gun powder, artillery, and also of the religious influence of the Muslim fighters are each described.

Our own day is pictured by the final trumpet, the seventh. Here the scope is broadened, and we see that God will punish the world for its opposition to the law of God.¹

In our short study today we will look at two key points. First, from the introduction (Rev. 8:2–5) we will observe Christ’s work in the heavenly sanctuary. Then, in the final section of the prophecy (Rev. 11:15–19), we will look at how our choices today will affect our standing when consequences come.

Christ’s Ministry (Rev. 8:2–5)

Another angel comes and is given “much incense.” These sweet smells, offered with “the prayers of all saints,” remind us that we may not come into God’s presence unbidden. This angel is no other than Christ meditating in prayer. It is grace, the sweet smell of Christ’s perfect righteousness, that makes our

prayers acceptable to God (Eph. 5:2). If Jesus Himself handles our prayers personally, how is it that we pray so little? If we are bidden to come “boldly” before the throne, why do we do so only casually and occasionally?

In our passage we see the future end of Christ’s work as Mediator. The censer being cast to the earth full of hot coals calls our attention to the reality that someday Jesus will step out of the sanctuary.

By comparing Revelation 8:2–5 and Revelation 11:19 one can see that the history of God’s judgments on earth occurs at the same time as Christ’s ministration in heaven. In other words, while Christ aids His faithful persons here, He simultaneously punishes daring rebellion in the empires that oppress them. These are the two aspects of His work, as Mediator and Judge, highlighted in Revelation 8–11.

The Seventh Trumpet (Rev. 11:15–19)

When the seventh trumpet sounds, Jesus in heaven is given the kingdoms of this world. As He accepts this honor, heaven rejoices that He is about to return to earth to finally take it back.²

When Jesus returns, He will destroy those who by pollution or moral corruption have defaced the planet (cf. Rev. 11:18).

The passage on the seven trumpets concludes with pictures of both the heavenly sanctuary (with the Ten Commandments in the ark) and of God’s punishments on earth in the seven last plagues (compare Rev. 11:19 and Rev. 16:18–21). These are His two works. Soon both will be done.

Conclusion

While Jesus yet urges our prayers before the throne as if He were the one making the request, why would we pray little? While His enemies are being judged, why would we neglect to become His friend?

And if the small book of Revelation devotes a whole chapter to Islam, ought we not to be more purposeful in sharing the teachings of the prophets with our Muslim peers? Perhaps your friends would be more interested than you might guess in knowing that God used the forces of Islam to punish the idolatry and sexual sins that characterized the Holy Roman Empire. And if you can pivot from there to showing how the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation have accurately foretold two millennia of history, you just might have a conversation that settles you in the faith even as it invites others to share your faith.

We pray too little. We bury our light under a bushel too naturally. The light and power of Jesus are available through His ministration and through His revelation. These are facts worth pondering.

1. For a verse-by-verse commentary on all seven symbolic messages in this large section of the Bible, see the following sources: Uriah Smith, “The Seven Trumpets,” <http://www.e-hope4all.info/media-eng/SevenTrumpets-UriahSmith.pdf>; Kenneth Mathews Jr., *Revelation Reveals Jesus*, vol. 1, pp. 465–496; Eugene Prewitt, “Revelation 8 to 11 and the Seven Trumpets,” BibleDoc.org, <http://www.bibledoc.org/revelation-class/revelation-8-to-11-and-the-seven-trumpets/>; James White, *An Exposition of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation VIII & IX*, 3rd ed., rev. and enlarged (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1875), https://www.whitehorsemedia.com/docs/an_exposition_of_the_seven_trumpets.pdf.

2. For Ellen White’s comments on this section, see “To Those Who Are Receiving the Seal of the Living God,” January 31, 1849, EGW Writings, <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/509.1>.

Testimony

Prayers of the Saints

Rev. 8:1-4

“Consider this: No one humble, sincere prayer of faith [is] overlooked; every prayer is heard.

“The psalmist prayed: ‘Lord, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me: give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. Let my prayer be set before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep the door of my lips.’

“Every prayer is heard.”

“We have every evidence that the humble contrite prayer offered to God is regarded as precious in His sight. Not one is lost. The promise is: ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? or if he ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?’

“This invitation is for all. The Saviour seeks to impress the truth by an illustration. Will the father whose child asks for bread, give him a stone? If he asks a fish, will he give him a serpent? If he asks for an egg, will he give him a scorpion? This is presented as an impossibility. Drawing the contrast between the heavenly and earthly parent, Christ adds, ‘If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?’”¹

“The simple prayers indited by the Holy Spirit will ascend through the gates ajar, the open door which Christ has declared: I have opened, and no man can shut. These prayers, mingled with the incense of the perfection of Christ, will ascend as fragrance to the Father, and answers will come.”²

“If you will find voice and time to pray, God will find time and voice to answer.”

REACT

1. What does incense represent in the Bible, according to these passages?
2. What are God’s promises regarding prayer?
3. What role do we have in receiving answers to our prayers? (Hint: it’s very simple!)

1. Ellen G. White, Letter 65, 1898, August 23, 1898.

2. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 467.

3. Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, p. 16

Num. 10:1–10;
Rev. 8:2–5

Evidence

Trumpets in the Jewish Daily Sacrifice

The prelude to the seven trumpets in Revelation 8:2–5 evokes specific imagery from the *tamid* (Jewish daily sacrifice). Each morning, a priest would fill a censer with incense and coals from the altar of sacrifice. He then would carry this censer to the golden altar of incense inside the sanctuary. At the end of the service, accompanying priests would blow trumpets.

He remembers His people.

In the Old Testament, trumpets were important components in Israel's day-to-day life. They accompanied the corporate prayers of God's people and rallied Israel together against their oppressors. In Numbers 10, there are various purposes for which the trumpets were sounded. Sometimes they were used for the calling of assemblies, while on other occasions for traveling. Different groups were summoned by different calls. For example, one trumpet was for the princes, while an alarm call was for the entire camp of Israelites. The trumpets also had different players for different times. Sometimes these instruments were played by the priests. Other times, the trumpets were used for war.

In Numbers 10:8–10, God says that when trumpets are blown, He remembers His people. Throughout the Old Testament, God uses the imagery of trumpets mixed with prayer as a precursor of His people's deliverance from oppression. Two examples are Judah's deliverance from Israel (2 Chron. 13:13–15) and Israel's victory against Jericho (Josh. 6:20).

God also uses trumpets to sound warning. In Revelation, there is a warning, or alarm, of approaching judgment, just as the daily, or Holy Place, service is about to end. After the trumpets, the yearly, or the Most Holy Place, service of judgment is about to begin. These trumpets are not sounds of victory but call people to examine themselves, to repent, and to pray that God would save them! Joel 2:1 states, "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand."

Just as trumpets and prayers led to God remembering Israel's oppression, this scene in Revelation leads to God's vengeance on the persecutors of the Christian church. The imagery in chapters 8–11 signifies literal historical events starting with the time of John and continuing up to Christ's second coming. We can see God's mighty hand working in history to show His hatred of evil and His remembrance of His people.

How-to Trust God Through His-Story

Amos 3:7;
John 16:33;
Rom. 8:28

The seven trumpets detail some of the darkest days in earth's history. Yet in these end times, God is still working. The King is on the throne. Soon the seventh trumpet will sound, and God will take us home to live with Him forever. In the time before that heavenly reunion, how can we learn to trust God—especially with all the terror of the seven trumpets?

Make God the most important person in your life. To live through the time of the seven trumpets, we must make God our number one. It starts when we wake up in the morning. Thank God for keeping you safe, ask Him for guidance, and go through your day with His Word in your heart. This is why personal Bible study and prayer are important.

Soon the seventh trumpet will sound, and God will take us home to live with Him forever.

Follow world events through God's eyes. All around us headlines are blaring the latest crisis. Whether it's another war in the Middle East, a school shooting, or a political leader in trouble, our world is fixated on the bad news. Yet to understand what God is doing, we need to look at history and the story of the seven trumpets in light of the great controversy. The next time you read a negative headline, ask yourself, "What is God doing?" The seventh trumpet is about to sound, and it is our job to keep the big picture in mind.

Recognize that suffering is temporary. One of the greatest theological controversies is over *theodicy*, a word created to describe the process of trying to understand the existence of both a good God and an evil world. God's character is one of only love, and love requires risk. God took the risk of creating humans, knowing that we could and even would fall into temptation. Yet because of His sacrifice on the cross, a day will come when suffering will cease (1 Cor. 15:54, 55). The story of the seven trumpets is not the end but a continuation of God's love being worked out throughout history.

Share His-story with those around you. Do you have friends who are worried as they see bad things happening around them? Take a moment to share with them what God has done in your life personally, what He is doing in theirs, and what He is doing in history. Encourage your friends to trust God that in the end the seventh trumpet will sound, and He will make all right.

REACT

1. What are some practical ways to see world events through God's eyes?
2. How would you share with a friend your answer to why God allows suffering?

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Exod. 20:18, 19;
25:10–22;
Rev. 11:15–19

Opinion

Christ's Revelation: The Seventh Trumpet

While the topic of the seven trumpets is one that evokes debates about interpretation, we often neglect to see the main picture of the trumpets: Christ! Yes, it may sound cliché, and perhaps you may be tempted to say, “Everything in the Bible is about Christ.” However, Revelation 11:15–19 paints an image of thanksgiving, fulfillment, and revelation of the greatest event, the Second Coming. The seventh trumpet differs from the rest in that it focuses solely on revealing Christ and His ultimate purpose for us: “that I may dwell among them” (Exod. 25:8).

Are we ready to experience the seventh trumpet . . . ?

Oftentimes as we study Revelation and prophecies overall, we miss seeing Christ in the picture when in reality none of it makes sense without Him. The seventh trumpet clearly reveals the temple of God opened to us—sinful, weak, lowly human beings. The imagery utilized in verse 19 reminds us of the time when God spoke the law on Mount Sinai.

Fast-forward centuries later; Christ once again is trying to abide and dwell with His children; however, this time for eternity! Once the temple was open, the apostle John writes, “the ark of His covenant was seen,” meaning His presence, in the Most Holy Place, was seen (Rev. 11:19, NKJV). Can you imagine this? The Israelites told Moses to deal with God because they were scared, even after God had instructed Moses to tell Israel to prepare and cleanse themselves for three days. After “preparing” they could not stand in the presence of God Almighty. Are we ready to experience the seventh trumpet: the revealing of Christ Himself to humanity?

The ark of the covenant in Exodus contained the law of God, His covenant, His character. Similarly, in the New Testament God wants spiritual Israel to “keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). History will repeat itself as God will have to cleanse the earth from the pollution of sin just like Moses and the Levites had to “cleanse” Israel from the idolatry and spiritual fornication committed with the golden calf. The beautiful thing about our Maker is that He provides hope for all who desire cleansing and a renewal of the covenant with Him. Christ is coming soon; the seventh trumpet is at the door! Are you ready for the encounter?

REACT

1. Why is understanding that Christ is being revealed in the seven trumpets an important aspect of understanding the book of Revelation?
2. How can you prepare for the encounter with Christ?

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Exploration

Egyptian Plagues . . . Round Two?

Revelation 8–11

CONCLUDE

History records a loving Savior entreating, warning individuals and nations to turn from their wicked ways. Egypt, once a proud/powerful empire, bows to God's command to "let my people go." The story is similarly repeated in Revelation 8–11.

Fire and hail, blood and smoke, falling stars and destroying armies, fall upon a rebellious world. Mercy slighted folds her wings "to step down from the golden throne to give place to justice and swift-coming judgment."¹ Finding yourself fighting against God? Surrender to Him and Christ will "receive you unto [Himself] that where [He is] there ye may be also" (John 14:3).

CONSIDER

- Listening to the song "Mercy Said No," by CeCe Winans.
- Reflecting on how you daily respond to the grace and mercy of God.
- Interceding in prayer for your community and nation; for the salvation of souls while the voice of mercy is still pleading.
- Sharing thoughts or lessons learned during a prayer meeting or Sabbath School.
- Studying the prophecies of the third angel's message of Revelation 14:9 and prayerfully sharing it with someone who has not heard it before.
- Memorizing Revelation 10.
- Baking cakes or cookies in the shape of the "little book" of Revelation 10:8–11 with the icing inscription "Sweet to the mouth, bitter to the belly." Ask friends and family to share bittersweet life experiences and how God delivered them through it.

CONNECT

Exodus 5–12; Revelation 8–11.

Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, chap. 63, "Thy King Cometh," and chap. 64, "A Doomed People."

1. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 578.