

# The 7 Trumpets

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hello everyone and greetings to everyone at home watching us. So if you've got your Bibles, just keep them there in Revelation. And so, you know, most stories end with a happy ending.

Or we love stories with a happy ending. Nearly all the movies end that way. Very rarely we go watch a movie that doesn't end with a happy ending and just leaves you feeling unfulfilled.

But all stories have to go through this tension and release. Some sort of problem. Something has to be solved before we can overcome, before we can get to the happy ending.

And here in Revelation 8 and 9, we're in the middle of the maelstrom, of the storm, as it were. A friend of mine told me, you know, behind every silver lining there's a lot of dark clouds.

And we're kind of in the middle of the dark clouds here in the middle of Revelation. Revelation.

Although, you know, if we look back to where we started, Revelation starts with this lovely picture of God on His throne and the Lamb and He's in heaven and everyone is praising Him.

[ 1 : 06 ] You're just kind of, and that's, you know, Revelation 4 and 5. But here in chapter 9, we're plunged into these cycles of seals and trumpets and bowls, which are going to get to them later.

Later on in chapter 16, this whole cycle spreads out from 6, 7, 8, all the way to chapter 16. And full of crazy chosmen and locusts and who knows what else.

And if we zoom out a little bit, we see that what happened when Jesus came into the world and died on the cross and rose again, instead of being a catalyst for peace and love and harmony, it seems to have been this massive explosion, this outburst of every kind of bad thing and demonic force in the world.

Not that that comes from Christ, but He's done something, His death and resurrection has done something in the world and the world is not happy. You know when you throw patashim into a pool? Kaboosh! It's a little bit like that with Jesus. He's coming to the world and the whole world is going, whoa, hang on, no, no, no, what's going on over here? It's the equivalent of a spiritual atom bomb.

[ 2 : 21 ] And what Christ has done, although He's a lamb in Revelation, there's various other pictures of Him as well, He's unleashed all kinds of forces and unresolved tensions in the world and that's why we get these recurring cycles of warnings and seals and trumpets.

And as we look at the seven trumpets which we'll be doing today, we'll be looking at six of them.

There's a seventh one. We can't quite get to that today. And we see the problems that began with the opening of the seals is only going to get worse.

But it also gives us deeper insight into some very important realities, the problems of the world and what God is doing about it. And so the seven trumpets help us to understand what on earth is going on now, now that Christ has come into the world.

And if we read this section in Revelation properly, they will help us see through kind of what I call apocalyptic glasses. I don't quite know how they would look, kind of crazy, I suppose.

But it's not a rosy shade of pink that they give us because Revelation 8 and 9 drops us in the middle of a cosmic war zone and earth is the battlefield. And so let's do a quick flyover of the battlefield to see what's going on down there and we'll pick out a few main themes as we go along.

[ 3 : 40 ] We'll see that God judges in response to the prayers of his saints, that God uses spiritual forces to overthrow the world and the wicked. These forces are under God's control.

The saints can't be harmed without God's say-so and judgments, as heavy as they are, surprisingly don't bring about repentance.

And so as we start in Revelation chapter 8, we're ending the last seal. Now remember the seals started back in chapter 6, end of chapter 5. Christ is the Lamb, He's in heaven, and there's a seal.

And then John is so upset that no one can read the seal, but Christ is able to read the seal. And the seal is apocalyptic language for stuff that God is going to do on earth. So the rule of heaven is going to come down to earth and it's in the form of a seal, a writ, an order.

And then there's seven seals on it. In the olden days they had to seal these very important documents with wax seals and Christ is taking them off one by one. And there's apocalyptic horsemen, right?

[ 4 : 49 ] From a few weeks ago. And we actually come to the last seal now, but it opens up into this vision of trumpets. So, first few verses in chapter 8, when He opened the seventh seal, that's the Lamb, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

So the seventh seal is opened and there's this cosmic hush that falls over heaven. That's sort of calm before the storm. You'd expect the scroll to be read at this point.

The seals are off, we can open the scroll, but instead we get these angels that are handed trumpets. It's like, clearly, something is about to kick off. And the reason for that is the prayer of the saints and the response to God of their prayers.

And that's what all this imagery in the first few verses of, chapter 8, verse 1 to 5, is all about. The imagery of the censers and the incense going up together to God, to heaven.

We've come across this imagery in Revelation chapter 5. And so there's the saints on earth are busy praying to God. So Adrian mentioned that a bit earlier.

[ 5 : 53 ] And we've been saying this quite often now, but it's so vivid in Revelation that our prayers go straight up to heaven. And then God responds to that. So what he does is he takes our prayers, he looks at them, he takes them from that censure, from that altar, and he just throws it back down on earth.

The angel took the censure, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it to the earth. And there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. Okay, that's all from Mount Sinai.

That's when God arrives on earth and says, yes, I'm here now. So the smackdown, this cosmic WWE smackdown is about to begin. What prayers are God answering here in Revelation chapter 8?

Well, the last time we came across the prayers of the saints was in chapter 6 with the fifth seal. Chapter 6 verse 9 says, When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.

They called out in a loud voice, How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?

[ 7 : 06 ] Not your normal Sunday or Wednesday church prayer meeting kind of prayer. Yes, Jesus has conquered, but all is not well in paradise or on earth.

Instead of laying down arms, the world and the devil and whatever is still left over in the world is kicking off and fighting back to God and God is just not going to have it.

So he's going to do something in the trumpets in response to the prayers of the church. You got that? First few verses there. Then we come across the first four trumpets and like the seals, the seven seals are divided into four and three and you go along with four and then we'll get there just now but there's five and six and then similar like the first earlier seals, there's this interlude.

Something happens and then only later in chapter 11, the seventh seal is, the seventh trumpet is blown and so we're going to look at the first six trumpets today.

The fourth trumpets signify the undoing of the natural and political world. So God is going to move in response to the prayers of his people but he's going to shake the world like this because there's some bad things going on there that needs to be sorted out.

[ 8 : 20 ] So first of all, he shakes the natural world. So the first thing you notice is there's an intensification of the troubles the world is going through compared to the seals. So if you remember in the seals, it's got very similar language, similar things are happening but in the seals, one quarter of the earth is affected.

Here, one third of the earth, that third occurs again and again. In other words, more of the earth is getting affected by what God is doing. A third of the earth is burned, the sea turns to blood, waters become poisoned and then people start dying.

Now but to understand this imagery, you need to know your Old Testament. And the predominant image is from the plagues of Exodus, which is why we read the Old Testament. The hail and fire of

verse 7, the sea turning to blood of verse 8, living creatures in the sea dying, verse 9, and the darkness in daytime, verse 12, all come from the plagues of the Exodus story.

So you've got to have that in your mind. The pattern that sets up this kind of language for the rest of the Bible. And the Exodus story is important because it's all about the total victory of God over the largest enemy that his people could face.

Egypt was the political and the military and the economic superpower of the ancient world. It would take the power of a God to get a slave people out of their clutches.

[ 9 : 49 ] We don't... We like to think in the modern world, we watch all these movies about slaves kicking off against the rulers, empire strikes back, you know, kind of thing. And we think they win and they don't because slaves can't organize, can't communicate, they don't have any weapons and they've got this army, these chariots of Egypt that everyone knows about.

They just walk in and they start killing you and then you're done. So you need a God to rescue your people from this evil force, this Egypt. And that's exactly what happened.

But it's also about the spiritual forces that were never going to give up their prey without a fight. And the strongest force at play in Egypt wasn't the idols and the demons and the magicians.

They were beaten off fairly easily. Moses throws down his snake, oh, we can also throw our snakes down. Jing, jing, little game of snakey snakes. Sticking snakes. And then Moses, I mean, it's actually embarrassing.

But the strongest spiritual force that remained in adamant and continued opposition to God was the hardness of Pharaoh's heart.

[ 11 : 04 ] Okay, now that's going to, we're going to pick up on that a little bit later. Right. So the natural world is overthrown in the first four trumpets. This is chapter 8 from verse 6 till the end of the chapter.

But the political world is also overthrown. And this imagery in verse 8 of the huge fiery mountain and then in verse 12 of the sun and the moon and the stars, these are all Old Testament language images for the overthrow of kings and political powers.

I know it doesn't sound like that to us but remember we're 2,000 years away and a number of cultures removed from the ancient Near East where this was written. In that kind of language everyone knew what this meant.

Okay, and we're going to, just to show you some where that comes from in the Old Testament. So for example, Jeremiah 51 talks about the fall of the king of Babylon as a great mountain that gets hurled into the sea.

So Jeremiah 51, before your eyes, so God is telling Jeremiah and he's telling the people, before your eyes I will repay Babylon for all the wrong they have done in Zion, declares the Lord.

[ 12 : 11 ] I am against you, you destroying mountain, you who destroy the whole earth, declares the Lord. I will stretch out my hand against you, roll you off the cliffs and make you a burned out mountain.

No rock will be taken from you for a cornerstone for you will be desolate forever. Can you see that imagery that God is talking about? Babylon that gets picked up in the second trumpet. Isaiah 13 similarly talks of stars and things being shut out and also talking about the fall of Babylon.

So Isaiah chapter 13, the cataclysmic event as the fall of stars from the sky. Isaiah 13, see the day of the Lord is coming. So note that, there's a day of the Lord, a cruel day with wrath and fierce anger.

This could have been written in Revelation but this is now Isaiah. to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light and the moon will not give its light.

I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. And so when you come across this kind of imagery of darkness and stars going out and sun becoming dark, everyone knew that this means that there's going to be political upheaval.

[ 13 : 26 ] That's what apocalyptic, that's what this language does. So when we come across this imagery in the New Testament we already know what it's talking about. And as we saw last week, this language is picked up by Jesus to talk about the overthrow of Jerusalem in AD 70.

And so this language is a design pattern of how God operates in human history to overthrow any political power that stands in opposition to Him and to His people.

You happy about that? You've got this language occurring different times in history, Old Testament, overthrow of Babylon. I'm trying to think of the date. But Babylon as a power just off overnight. In fact, Daniel, Daniel tells you about that. Remember the writing on the wall? Yeah, you're going to fall tonight. You thought you knew it. First of all, there's Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel tells him you need to humble yourself.

Nebuchadnezzar goes mad but he does humble himself and the next king can't be bothered and then Daniel says, okay, you're going down. Okay. So that's the background to the imagery here but that's not the only imagery and we didn't have time to read it in chapter 9 but at the end of the four trumpets there's this eagle that pitches up, verse 13, an eagle that was flying in midair in a loud voice, whoa, whoa, whoa, to the inhabitants of the earth because the trumpet blast is about to be sounded by another three angels and so basically saying, well, you ain't seen nothing yet.

[15:02] There's still more to come and that more to come is just even more kind of bizarre to us. Literally, the gates of hell are opened. Chapter 9, first few verses, the fifth angel sounded his trumpet and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth.

The star was given the key to the shaft out of the abyss. When he opened the abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the abyss and out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions on the earth.

And this horrible, scary, kind of demonic horde of locusts comes out of the deep, charging over the land. But scary as they are, their power and influence is limited.

They are only allowed to hurt but not to kill and they're only allowed to do for five months. So in verse 5 of chapter 9, they were not given power to kill them, that's the people on the earth, but only to torture them for five months.

And not only that, but the key of the abyss doesn't belong to the star or the angel of the abyss or the king as he's known later on in verse 11. They had his king over them, the angel of the abyss whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek Apollyon.

[16:28] But he gets given the key. He doesn't have the key. This angel gives it to him and the angel, of course, gets it from God and from Christ. So he's being shown who exactly is in charge.

And most importantly, this locust army is not able to touch believers. Verse 4, they were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

Isn't that interesting? They are marked with a seal and only allowed to harm and hurt those who are not sealed. This again is imagery from the Exodus.

Remember what God did to keep these people safe? What they had to do? Put a mark or a seal on the doorposts to Passover so that the angel of death wouldn't harm them. It's the kind of ring of that. Now things get really scary in the sixth trumpet where these demonic horses are let loose and bring about plagues and the death of a third of the earth. But again, they are only given permission to do so by the sixth angel who is acting on orders from God.

[17:38] What are these horses? Well, we've already come across them and the text actually tells us there are plagues sent into the world. So that's from verse 13.

From verse 17. The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this. Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and sulfur.

A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire and smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails for their tails were like snake having heads with which they could inflict injuries.

And in verse 20 the rest of mankind were not killed by these plagues. Now many people go into detail about what these are. If you've read anything or heard anything you'll have recalled Hal Lindsey.

I think it's the late great planet Earth. And he goes into minute detail about what these things are. And he forgets of course, I don't know if he does forget but this imagery comes from Joel, the book of Joel where he promises or prophesies a terrible locust army that's going to take out Israel and it's an ambivalent image from the book of Joel because it's are they locusts or are they actually is it actually an army?

[19:00] Is it a little bit of both? And somehow there's demonic features being linked in there. Okay, so that's what you've got here in the sixth trumpet. More death, more woe, more problems.

But what does all this mayhem produce in the world? Well, nothing. Not a zip. Lots of dead people but the rest simply can't be bothered about what's happening around them.

It's just astounding that all of this scary stuff happening does nothing to change people's hearts either about God or about their situation. Verse 20 and 21.

The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues or by the upheavals of the earlier trumpets did not repent of the work of their hands. They did not stop worshipping demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone wood.

Idols they couldn't see, hear or walk. Idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

[ 20 : 08 ] Imagine you survive all this and you just go on with your ordinary old way of life. Alright, so that's just a quick overview. God judges the world in response to the prayers of the saints.

God uses spiritual forces to overthrow both the world and the wicked people in it. The forces that are unleashed and the chaos that erupts are nonetheless under God's control. Even though the saints are caught up by this maelstrom, they can't be harmed without God's say-so and perhaps most surprising of all is that all of this judgment doesn't add an ounce of repentance to the people that are left.

What are some of the takeaways from all of this? Well, let's let the text tell us what's important.

Firstly, we learn that the church is incredibly influential.

What sets the scene and gets the ball rolling is the prayers of the saints from earth that are received in heaven. You know, our prayers have serious power.

Not because they're our prayers, but because we are God's people and God has promised to hear us and then does hear us and then takes action on that. We've seen that over that kind of, that's been a theme of the recent months, I think.

[ 21 : 26 ] Our prayers have power, they have an effect. They move the God of the universe to take action on our behalf. We are the reason God takes action on earth.

He simply cannot stand to see us get hurt and bullied by the evil forces of the world. Just like in the Exodus. That's why he wanted to get them out of there because they were essentially being bullied and that's what all these demonic forces and the broken world and the people in it do.

They hurt and break and maim and because God is a God of love and justice he's got to take action. So, there's a psalm that vividly encapsulates this idea that God is moved to save the world or to save his people when they are threatened by evil and it uses very similar language to what we, to what God is doing here in Revelation and we kind of saw that in our psalm as we started our worship.

Was it Psalm 29, Adrian? Hmm. So, I've got another one, Psalm 18. Just listen to the language of it and you'll see it matches very closely to what's happening in Revelation.

So, Psalm 18, for the director of music of David, the servant of the Lord, he sang to the Lord the words of this song when the Lord delivered him from the hand of his enemies. He said, I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer.

[ 22 : 42 ] My God is my rock in whom I take refuge. The cords of the grave coiled around me. The snares of death confronted me. In my distress, I called to the Lord. I cried to God for help. From his temple, he heard my voice, just like what we're hearing in Revelation.

My cry came before him into his ears. Then God takes action. The earth trembled and quaked and foundations of the mountains shook. They trembled because he was angry.

Smoke rose from his nostrils, consuming fire from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it. He parted the heavens and came down. Dark clouds were on his feet. He mounted the cherubim and he flew.

He soared on the wings of the wind. He made darkness cover in his canopy around him. The dark rains of the clouds of the sky. Out of the brightness of his presence, clouds advanced, hailstorms and bolts of lightning. The Lord thundered from the heavens.

Hoo! Hoo! Imagine you stood there seeing that coming at you. He reached down from on high. God took hold of me.

[ 23 : 46 ] Drew me out of the deep waters. Rescued me from my powerful enemy. From my foes who were too strong for me. That's David. He can kill Goliath with a sling.

They confronted me in the day of my disaster. But the Lord was my support. He brought me out into a spacious place. Why? He rescued me because he delighted in me.

And it's a lovely picture of God seeing something that he loves that's getting hurt and he's just ripping things away to go and save the thing that he loves. Imagine you saw your child playing and you saw some danger approaching.

Someone messing with your small little child. Little girl. Your mama bear kicking in there. And it's like that with God. Alright, so what about us? If you want to hear some Marks.

If we want to change things on earth we need to be spending time sending up those prayers to God. He obviously likes it when we do it. Incense and sacrifices smell nice.

[ 24 : 49 ] It's like when you brew. Mmm. Mmm. God takes a deep breath. Oh. Anton is praying again. Mmm. Smells so nice.

Mmm. You getting that sweet savor of the prayers of Lorraine? Imagine. God actually likes it when we pray. The easiest thing to do to please God is just send some prayers up.

But our prayers must be more than just for my daily needs and my own spiritual growth. They must be for that. But here in Revelation it's for God to bring His kingdom to earth.

To change the kingdoms of this world into the kingdoms of His Christ as the seventh trumpet will tell us about later. Our prayers need to be in line with this cosmic timeline.

We need to realize that we're in deep enemy territory but that through our prayers God will sort out the political and spiritual forces that are both hurting us and hindering the spread of His kingdom.

So if you want to see change in the world and boy do we need to see change in South Africa we could do a lot worse by spending time on our knees praying for our political and economic situation.

[ 26 : 07 ] Secondly both God's justice and love are behind His judgments of the world. Because God is the Lord of creation He is in a sense under obligation to right the wrongs of the world.

He can't just leave it. He has to rid the world of evil. Not just of evil but of evil people and that's where we all go now that's not the image of God most people have but that's because we don't know our Bibles.

Yes God is a God of love but because He is He just cannot stand to see the objects of His love continue to be corrupted by evil meaning the actual physical world as well as the whole world of mankind.

He must take a stand and in that sense His judgments are more of a protection than a punishment. God is just and loving He must take action. It's His world His responsibility to fix it and in Revelation 8 and 9 He's just cutting away the bad bits but because He's God it looks kind of cataclysmic.

But think about it if you build something special for your kids a beautiful jungle gym made of wood and it takes you hours to make it and they love it they're playing on it but there's some wood that begins to go fraught or rotten if you want to save it if you want to save the whole structure which you want to do you've got to cut away that wood and not just covering the just covering the fraught but you've got to take out a big chunk to fix it properly and that's what part of what God is doing in Revelation 8 and 9 whole of Revelation.

[ 27 : 45 ] But what if some gang of kids from down the road comes and messes with your gym and chase off your kids and you warn them away but they come back and they intend to hurt you and your kids steal the gym and attack you well then the time for talking has come to an end now you must take action if you love your kids you need to make a judgment call on those who are hurting them well here in Revelation 8 and 9 God is at the action stage and it's quite a show but just notice that God is acting out of love for the people that he wants to save you got that not just in judgment for the people that it's in judgment on the people that's hurting his people but it's so that he can save them the people that belong to him and the third point it's far better to experience God's love than his justice I mean you don't even need to make this point but we clearly need to make this point because you would think that with these kinds of warnings people would get that picture people are messing up

God's world would listen I mean these are pretty catastrophic events not like your average everyday garden variety cataclysm over here this is big stuff and yet they seem to be held under some deep dark spell they just can't see their way to it just like Pharaoh who continually hardened his heart even though he witnessed first hand in the most dramatic way the absolute and undeniable truth that the God of the Bible the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob is the one true God and you must listen to him and he still refused to acknowledge or any responsibility for his actions whatsoever now the thing is that all too often the only thing that judgments do is to scare you for a short while and then inevitably unless there's something else you just go on like before we've all been there having said that if you find yourself outside of his covenant people outside of God's realm of

protection if you find yourself drawn to your own idols worshipping things in the world more than you should particularly here of sexual immorality but maybe you're guilty of the other sins of stealing actual murder or just good old bitterness and hatred and you want to save yourself turn to God and plead for his forgiveness but does that mean that God is content with ending here with creation and rebellion against him and continual warfare between himself and the world no because by the time we get to the seventh trumpet something dramatic has happened in chapter 11 we find that in response to

God's judgment the survivors in chapter 11 unlike the survivors of chapter 9 have turned to God in repentance but to understand why that is and how that happens we'll need to come back next week as we look at those chapters to see how God's kingdom comes into the world but let's pray now to God and ask him to save us and to heal the world but to do his work of judgment heavenly father these are scary scary scary words and we find it difficult to take to heart to understand that you do these things we've been taught so much about your love and we don't we find it difficult to understand your justice but Lord clearly you are the judge of the world and rightly so the world belongs to you and there are forces in the world that are doing damage to it and you cannot sit by and see this happen father we want to belong to your people and to be saved and safe in your arms help us to continually trust in you and to continually repent of our sins and make sure above all else that we belong to your people and that you know us and we are marked by your seal so that we can enjoy your blessings for all eternity for Christ's sake amen our life so even fondo you'll