

Wednesday Night Adult Bible Study

Revelation 8:2-9:21: The Seven Trumpets, Part One



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CHURCH

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31 ESV)

The Vision of the Seven Trumpets beginning in 8:2 introduces a new section that primarily focuses on the second half of the Tribulation, The Great Tribulation, that ends in Chapter 11 with Christ coming into his Kingdom at sound of the final trumpet. The Trumpets are God's military response on behalf of his people as he leads them out of "Egypt" (this world) in the final battle against "Jericho" (The antichrist's kingdom, Babylon).

During this time...

- The antichrist has revealed himself and is reigning on earth, waging war against the people of God.
- The fifth seal is opened indicating that the most significant period of martyrdom in human history is occurring at the direction of the antichrist.
- I believe the two witnesses are leading the people of God, helping shield the sealed of God from the plagues of the trumpets they are announcing to the world—as Moses did with the Israelites in Egypt.

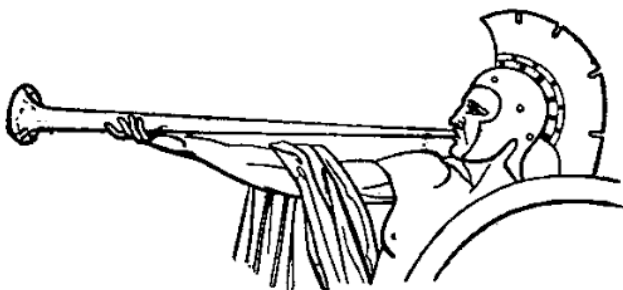
Its function in the letter John is writing to the seven churches is twofold:

1. John desires to encourage those who are suffering persecution with the truth that God hears their prayers and is fighting on their behalf.
2. John desires to shake out of their spiritual stupor those who are in Pergamum, Laodicea, and Thyatira who have embraced the idolatrous teaching of the Nicolaitans. At the most basic level of this false teaching was the idea that you could both serve Jesus and the idols of this world.

"Saying "yes" to Jesus without saying "no" to the world is faith fallacy." — Randy Gunter

God hears your prayers and will fight on your behalf. (vv. 8:2-5)

Trumpet = *salpinx* (σάλπιγξ)



"Aristides Quintilianus described the necessity of the salpinx and salpingtis (a player of the salpinx) in battle in his treatise, *On Music*. He explains that each command to troops was given using specific tones or "melodies" played on the salpinx. This action allowed for an entire army to receive a command at once as well as provide a level of secrecy as these salpinx calls were specific to a group and would be unknown to an opponent... The salpinx was primarily used before battle to summon men to prepare for battle and to sound the charge."¹

If God is for us, who can be against us?

Are you living by faith in this reality?

Are you praying as one who has God's ear?

What is your plan for prayer this week? Who with? What for? When? How?

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salpinx>

Sources: Aristides Quintilianus, *On Music*'

Peter Krentz, "The Salpinx in Greek Warfare," from *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience*, edited by Victor Davis Hanson, 1991, pp. 110-120.

Trusting in the idols of this world proves to be short-sighted foolishness that ends in death.

1. The First Four Trumpets: The idols of this world let you down. (vv. 8:6-12)

Result of the Four Trumpets: Famine and food shortage, commerce failure, water shortage, and darkness.

“The four [trumpets] together prove that those who live only for this world have chosen foolishly, for only in God is there true life. Earthly things turn on us, and we dare not depend on them.” – Grant Osborne

Many have tried to read into these next two trumpets visions of modern warfare such as helicopters or nuclear bombs. As tempting as that might be, it does not do proper justice to the text nor the author’s intent. John was writing to a first century audience and making use of symbols to describe these demonic hordes that they would have understood. These demons may or may not be visible to humans on earth, but whether they are visible or invisible to the naked eye, these demons, like all other demons, are real and stand behind the idols and false religions of this world. They will cause great destruction on those who reject Jesus Christ and trust in idols.

¹⁹ *What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?* ²⁰ *No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.* ²¹ *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.* (1 Corinthians 10:19-21 ESV)

2. The Fifth Trumpet: The idols of this world torment your soul. (vv. 8:13-9:12)

Star fallen from Heaven to Earth (v. 9:1): I believe to be the good angel who executes God’s sovereign will over the abyss and all that is in it, including Satan himself, cf. Rev. 20:1-3. Main Point: God is sovereign over Satan & his horde.

Abaddon/Apollyon, “The Destroyer”: Either Satan (leader of the demons) or one of his chief lieutenants.

The torment in view in this passage, while certainly having a physical element, seems to be primarily focused on the psychological and emotional distress brought about by these demons. It is literally a foretaste of hell and yet another gracious opportunity for these earth-dwellers to repent and receive eternal life.

While the physical descriptions may indeed be how they literally look, the primary thrust—as in the descriptions of Christ’s appearance—is to describe aspects of their character and nature.

Horses: Powerful and swift, ready to wage war

Crowns: Authority

Human faces: Intelligent

Women’s hair: Seductive Nature of the idols they stand behind (ancient cultural reference to uncovered hair)

Lion’s teeth: Ferocious

Breastplates of Iron: Indestructible (at least by humans)

3. The Sixth Trumpet: The idols of this world kill you. (vv. 9:13-19)

Fire, Sulphur, and Smoke: Summation of Trumpets thus far as well as full expression of hell on earth brought about by the sixth trumpet. Imagery of Ancient Roman siege warfare (Osborne) pictures Satan waging war on his own followers.

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. (Revelation 9:20-21 ESV)

How foolish do these people seem? Yet, how often do we, who are in Christ, play around with the idols of this world as if they are harmless? How often do we think we can trust in this world and trust in God, or live for this world and live for the kingdom of God, or be a friend of this world and a friend of God?

It’s simply not possible and foolish to think it is. Set your heart on Jesus Christ.

Idol Inventory

“By definition, idolatry is turning an earthly thing into a god and worshipping it rather than the God of creation. Whatever we place ahead of God in our lives is our idol. Therefore, the modern world is replete with idols: money, possessions, power, pleasure, sex, success, fame, drugs [self, politics, football, youth sports, kids...].” – Grant Osborne

These questions might help you discern areas in your life where idolatry has set in:

What drives the pursuits of your life? Is it the kingdom of God and his righteousness?

Where do you struggle most to exhibit self-control?

What often causes you to get upset, frustrated, or flustered?

Where do you spend your time?

What do you do with your money?

Is there anything that regularly keeps you from worshipping God with his church?

What or who brings you the most satisfaction, joy, peace, and comfort?

Now, look back through your answers. *Are there any common trends that might potentially highlight an idol in your life that needs to be discarded?*