



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).

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

Chapter 10 begins with the descent of a mighty angel, who I believe not to be Jesus, but an angel who reflects his character and carries out his will. He holds in his hand the scroll that had seven seals but is now open. What the people of God were anticipating at the opening of the seventh seal will be fulfilled at the sound of the seventh trumpet.

The narrative of the interlude in Chapters 10-11 moves the reader to that glorious day.

The Seven Thunders: We do not know all the details of God's plans. That is ok. (vv. 10:1-4)

This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. (Psalm 18:30 ESV)

We are limited in our knowledge and perspective. God is not. **Are you trusting God in your limitations?**

What We Do Know: God will not delay the fulfilment of his promises unnecessarily. There is gracious purpose in the waiting. (vv. 10:5-7)

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:9 ESV)

¹³ *I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!* ¹⁴ *Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!* (Psalm 27:13-14 ESV)

In the waiting...

1. Look for ways to reveal God's saving grace to others.
2. Develop an eternal mindset grounded in hope.
3. Let your heart take courage in the purposes of the Lord—not a desired outcome.

Our Message: Proclaim the bittersweet message of Christ's return. (vv. 10:8-11)

"Like the prophets of old, John will preach a message that is sweet for those who heed God's Word but carries bitter judgment for those who refuse it." — G.K. Beale

¹⁶ *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* ¹⁷ *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.* ¹⁸ *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.* ¹⁹ *And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.* (John 3:16-19 ESV)

The Seventh Trumpet = The Hope of the Redeemed = The Final Woe for the Unbelieving World

The message of the gospel contains the most glorious news ever told, but it is not a feel-good message for everyone. The good news of the gospel is preceded by the horrifying news that God's condemnation rests upon us from birth. Some will respond to the gospel with surrendered faith and receive eternal life. Others will choose the world over Christ and receive eternal condemnation. This brings about both great joy and sorrow for the messenger.

We cannot alleviate the bitterness by trying to water down our message. A watered-down gospel saves no one.

Our Security: God is present with his people and preserves them through the attacks of the enemy. (vv. 11:1-2)

There is much diversity of opinion regarding the meaning of vv. 11:1-2. I believe John's primary focus in this passage is on marking off the worshippers of God in contrast to the unbelieving earth dwellers—not a building. This understanding does not preclude a literal tribulation temple; I simply believe that dimensions of a literal building are not what John is trying to communicate in this section. I believe what John is trying to communicate is much better.

Temple: The true people of God—primarily in this final period, secondarily, the church throughout history (Osborne).

Altar: The persecuted and martyred saints, cf. Rev. 6:9-11.

Outer Courts: The unbelieving world—Gentiles in the negative, unbelieving sense, not the ethnic sense, cf. Matt. 18:17.

The holy city: Another reference to the people of God. The antichrist's war on God's people will likely begin in Jerusalem, but be global in its effect, cf. Rev. 11:8.

The idea that God is present with and preserves his people in the trial repeatedly comes up throughout the book of Revelation. God wants us to understand this truth. It is the secure position from which the entire Christian life flows.

Our Call: Maintain a faithful witness in uncertain times. (vv. 11:3-4)

¹² *And a second time I answered and said to him, "What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?"* ¹³ *He said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord."* ¹⁴ *Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth."* (Zechariah 4:12-14 ESV)

I believe the best understanding of the two witnesses to be two literal people who play an important leadership role during this final period in God's plan. As leaders so often do, they also stand as representatives for the people they lead in this final period—which spoke to the churches when John wrote his letter and continues to do so to this day.

Four Individuals Stand Behind the Two Witnesses:

Joshua, The High Priest – Zerubbabel, The King/Governor – The Prophets: Moses and Elijah

Next week we will discuss the identity of these two witnesses, but for now it will suffice that these two witnesses will reflect the threefold office of the Christ—prophet, priest, and king—just as the church is called to do so today.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9 ESV)

"The *munus triplex* [the prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices of the Messiah]... [has] been fulfilled in Christ and conveyed to the whole people of God through union with him." – Timothy Paul Jones

How do we maintain a faithful witness in uncertain times?

1. *Be grounded in the authority of Christ.*
2. *Be a prophet: Speak the words of God as you live a life set apart for God.*
3. *Be a priest: Commune with God and bear the burdens of his people. (Also, speak the words of God).*
4. *Be a royal emissary for the King: Bring about Christ's just and righteous rule on earth.*
5. *Be content with the sackcloth clothing.*

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