

Seven Angels & Seven Trumpets

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[0 : 00] Well, if I could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, the book of Revelation, chapter 8.

Revelation chapter 8, and if we read again at verse 6. Revelation chapter 8 and verse 6. Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

The seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them. As you know, throughout our study of the book of Revelation, we've seen lots of interesting images and illustrations.

We've seen scrolls, seals, and songs. There have been creatures, crowns, and crowds. There have been horses, heaven, and holiness.

More than that, we've seen lots of sevens, which as you know, seven is the number of perfection.

There have been seven lampstands, seven stars, seven churches, seven spirits, seven torches, seven horns, seven eyes, seven seals.

[1 : 22] And tonight, as we read there in verse 6, seven angels and seven trumpets. As we continue our study, the images and the illustrations, they're going to get even more and more interesting.

Because as we said before, the book of Revelation, it's one long revelation. It's a revelation from Jesus Christ, about Jesus Christ, for the church of Jesus Christ.

And the revelation, this revelation, it's important to the church of Jesus because it gradually and gloriously reveals Jesus to us as our risen, ruling, reigning king who is going to return.

But as we've seen in the earlier chapters, as each of the seven seals on the sovereign scroll, as they were opened, they were more and more singers.

More and more singers were joining this choir in heaven. Heaven's choir was getting bigger and bigger. We saw the 24 elders singing, the four living creatures singing, the myriads and myriads of angels singing, the whole of creation singing.

[2 : 30] We saw the multitude which no man can number, from every nation, tribe, people and language, and they were all singing. And as each seal upon the sovereign scroll, as it was being opened, that heavenly choir was getting bigger and bigger.

The singing was getting louder and louder and the volume was rising higher and higher. Until we came to chapter 8 and the seventh seal was opened.

And as we read there in verse 1, when the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for half an hour. And so Revelation 8, it starts with a scene of silence.

But the silence in heaven, as we said before, it was a stunned silence. It was a solemn silence because it revealed God's divine and definite judgment.

And with that revelation, we're told there even in verse 2, these seven angels and seven trumpets, that's when they first appear. And we're told that they are going to announce God's divine and definite judgment.

[3 : 37] But before the seven angels and the seven trumpets sound, we're told that during this half an hour of silence in heaven, our Jesus, our angel, he carries the golden censer from off the altar of incense.

And that golden censer, it contains the prayers of all the saints. And he mixes and he mingles them with his intercessory incense so that they are made acceptable before the throne of God the Father as a sweet-smelling fragrance.

It's a beautiful image. Those opening verses are a beautiful image of the preciousness of our prayers to God the Father. But as Revelation chapter 7 continues, we're told that there's another interesting image and illustration.

And it's an image and illustration of an instrument. In fact, the image and illustration is of seven instruments, the same instrument. We see that Revelation now reveals seven angels and seven trumpets.

Seven angels and seven trumpets. And so as we consider the rest of this chapter this evening, I want us to think about it under two headings. Very simple headings. The illustration of the instrument and the implication of the instrument.

[5 : 00] The illustration of the instrument and the implication of the instrument. So first of all, the illustration of the instrument. The illustration, it says there are now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

Throughout both the Old and the New Testaments, the trumpet is used in various ways for a variety of reasons. In fact, the first time the trumpet is mentioned in the Bible is when the children of Israel arrive at Mount Sinai.

As you know, the Israelites, they were redeemed. They were rescued from slavery and bondage in Egypt. And they were led by Moses, their leader. He led them through the Red Sea towards Mount Sinai, the mountain of God.

And it was there at the mountain of God that Moses would receive the law of God, the Ten Commandments. And when we read in Exodus chapter 20, which is when they're around Mount Sinai, we're told there in Exodus 20 that when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled.

They stood far off and said to Moses, You speak to us and we will listen. But do not let God speak to us, lest we die.

[6 : 27] And yet the sound of the trumpet in that scene, it wasn't the sound of a human trumpet. It was the sound of a heavenly trumpet, a holy trumpet. Because the trumpet was being sounded to alert and to alarm the Israelites that they were standing in the presence of a holy God.

That's what the sound of the trumpet was. It was to alert and alarm the Israelites that they were standing in the presence of a holy God. And, you know, sometimes I think we should often be reminded of that and remember that, that as we gather together for worship, we gather together in the presence of a holy God.

But, you know, the first time a human trumpet is sounded in the Bible, it was to mark, as we mentioned earlier, it was to mark the Jewish new year. Rosh Hashanah.

Rosh Hashanah. So you can practice saying that later on. Rosh Hashanah literally means the head of the year, the new year, the beginning of the year. In fact, Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year, it began last Friday.

So Friday the 15th of September, for the Jews, was Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year. And on the first day of the Jewish new year, Rosh Hashanah, a trumpet would sound.

[7 : 43] And it would sound all day, from sunrise to sunset. And we were singing about that there in Psalm 81, the sounding of the trumpet.

But, you know, what's fascinating is that the first day of the Jewish new year, Rosh Hashanah, that first day of the new year, it would mark the beginning of a 10-day Jewish feast, known as the Feast of Trumpets.

Where the Feast of Trumpets would begin with that first day of the Jewish new year, Rosh Hashanah, it would begin with the trumpet sounding. And then those 10 days, this 10-day Jewish feast of trumpets, it would end with the sounding of the trumpet.

And on the 10th day of the new year was Yom Kippur, the day of atonement. That's amazing when you look at the Jewish calendar, how it all fits together.

And so if Rosh Hashanah was last Friday, the 15th of September, you work out your calendar. Yom Kippur for the Jews is this coming Lord's Day.

[8 : 47] It's Saturday or Sunday, the 24th of September. And as you know, Yom Kippur, that was that one day in the year when the high priest, he would enter within the veil into the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the people.

And so the Feast of Trumpets was this 10-day feast at the beginning of the new year, the Jewish new year, which was known to the Jews as the 10 days of repentance.

And it was bookended by the blowing of the trumpet, which again ought to emphasize to us the holiness of God. The trumpet was always a symbol of the holiness of God.

But what we need to remember is that the trumpet, which was sounded during the Feast of Trumpets, it wasn't a brass trumpet, as we often see in these big gatherings of instruments. It wasn't a brass trumpet as we know them to be. It was a particular trumpet called a shofar. A shofar. It was made from a ram's horn. And the shofar was blown to mark Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year, and also Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

[9 : 58] But there's also another type of trumpet that was used by the Israelites. And unlike the shofar, which was made from a ram's horn, from the horn of an animal, this particular trumpet was made of silver.

The Lord said to the Israelites in Numbers chapter 10, Make two silver trumpets. Of hammered work you shall make them, and you shall use them for summoning the congregation.

And these two silver trumpets, they have an interesting name, I've been practicing all week trying to pronounce it, the Chazozra. So that's what they were called, the Chazozra.

You can try and pronounce that one when you go home. And so in comparison to the shofar, which was the ram's horn, it was blown at specific festivals and feasts throughout the calendar year, the Chazozra, it was blown by the priest when a sacrifice was being offered to the Lord on the altar. The Chazozra would be sounded as part of this sacrificial ceremony. Whether the ceremony was a sin offering, or a peace offering, or a thanksgiving offering, or the ceremony was part of anointing a king to his office, or even a ceremony of dedication to the Lord, the Chazozra would always be sounded.

[11 : 18] This silver trumpet, the Chazozra, will be sounded as part of that sacrificial ceremony. And I suppose you could say the Chazozra was the first musical instrument used in worship.

But as we read in the Psalms, as time went on, other musical instruments that added to the sacrificial ceremony and the worship of the Lord, because along with the voices of singing or chanting, as it was in the Old Testament, it was Hebrew chant.

Along with those voices, there were harps, there were lyres, there were flutes, there were cornets, they were all used in worship to the Lord. We sang about that in our opening item of praise, Psalm 98.

We sang there in verses 5 and 6, with harp, with harp, and voice of psalms, and to Jehovah sing, with trumpets, cornets gladly sound, before the Lord, the King.

But of course, we look at those verses and we have to see that the use of musical instruments in worship during the sacrificial ceremony of offering a sacrifice to the Lord, it all came to an end.

[12 : 32] It all came to its climax and culmination and its conclusion when our Jesus, the Lamb of God, offered himself on the altar at Calvary as the ultimate sacrifice to satisfy the divine justice of God.

That's why the New Testament, you look at the New Testament and it's silent. It's silent on the use of musical instruments in worship. But you know, the trumpet wasn't just used as part of worship or as a call to worship.

The trumpet was also used as a call to war. So it's not just a call to worship, it was also used as a call to war because you remember that the shofar, this ram's horn, so maybe if you have sheep, maybe you'll want to keep a ram's horn and try it out one time.

But this trumpet, the shofar, it was used as a call to war. It was blown. You remember in the time of Joshua when they were going to capture the city of Jericho.

There were seven priests with seven trumpets and they walked around the city of Jericho for seven days with Israel's army and they were blowing the trumpets continually.

[13 : 44] But on the seventh day we're told that they walked around the city of Jericho seven times, sounding the trumpets continually. And when the army shouted, you'll remember, the walls of Jericho fell flat.

Another occasion where the shofar was used is in the book of Judges. When Gideon's 300 soldiers, they went into the camp of the Midians with two things in their hands.

They had a torch in one hand and a trumpet in the other. There was no sword. They had a torch in one hand and a trumpet in the other. And when the soldiers, the 300 soldiers, blew the 300 trumpets, they all cried out the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

And you'll remember that as soon as the trumpet was sounded, the Midianites turned on each other. The Lord set every man's sword against the Midianites. But you know, when it comes to the trumpet, you know, it's fascinating looking at the history of the trumpet.

The trumpet wasn't just used as a call for worship and a call for war. But as time progresses through the Old Testament, the trumpet is also used as a call to warn.

[14:54] So it's a call to worship, a call to war, and a call to warn. We see that in Ezekiel 33. Very solemn chapter.

When the Lord sets apart Ezekiel as the watchman, he's the watchman over the people of Israel. And his role and responsibility as a watchman is, of course, to keep watch.

He was to watch and wait for the attack of an enemy. Because as soon as the watchman sees the attack of the enemy coming, he was to sound the trumpet. He was to blow his horn.

He was to sound his shofar and warn the people. And the Lord said to Ezekiel, If anyone hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, his blood shall be upon his own head.

But if the watchman doesn't warn the people by sounding the trumpet, I will require the blood of the watchman. It's a solemn warning to the watchman, which became a warning not only to the prophet Ezekiel, but to all of the Lord's prophets and ultimately to all of the Lord's preachers.

[16:07] because they and we are to faithfully and fearfully watch and wait and warn the people of the judgment to come.

And you see that as you progress through the history of the Old Testament. You come to the prophet Joel who's told by the Lord below the trumpet in Zion, Sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand. It's a call to warn. Also the prophet Zephaniah, the same warning, he proclaimed the great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast.

The sound of the day of the Lord is bitter. It's a day of wrath, a day of distress, a day of anguish, a day of ruin. It's a day of devastation, a day of darkness, a day of gloom. It's a day of clouds and it's a day of the trumpet blast.

And you know, it's that image, that illustration of the trumpet being used as an instrument to warn God's people of the imminent and the impending judgment to come.

[17:15] That's the image and illustration that's carried on into the New Testament. Because, you remember, Paul, to the Corinthians, he wrote, behold, behold, I tell you a mystery.

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed.

And then, in a similar vein to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote those comforting words. He says, the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the sound of the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so, we will ever be with the Lord.

And you remember how Paul ended that chapter. He says, therefore, comfort one another with these words. It's a comfort to the Lord's people, but it's a warning.

[18:24] A warning of God's imminent and impending judgment. And it's that picture that the book of Revelation reveals with these seven angels and these seven trumpets.

It's this imminent and impending judgment. It's this definite judgment and divine judgment of God. And that's what we see as we go into chapter 9.

I think when you go into chapter 9, it just becomes more and more solemn. And we'll see that God willing next week. And so, as we consider the trumpet, we not only see the illustration of the trumpet and how it progresses throughout the Bible.

I think that's very important to see. But we also see, secondly, the implication of this instrument. So, the illustration of the instrument and then the implication of the instrument.

The implication of the instrument. Look at verse 6. Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them. The first angel blew his trumpet and there followed hail and fire mixed with blood.

[19:26] And these were thrown up on the earth and a third of the earth was burned up and a third of the trees were burned up and all green grass was burned up. The second angel blew his trumpet and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea and a third of the sea became blood.

A third of the living creatures in the sea died and a third of the ships were destroyed. The third angel blew his trumpet and a great star fell from heaven blazing like a torch and it fell on a third of the

rivers on the springs of water.

The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became Wormwood and many people died from the water because it had been made bitter. The fourth angel blew his trumpet and a third of the sun was struck and a third of the moon and a third of the stars so that a third of their light might be darkened and a third of the day might be kept from shining and likewise a third of the night.

You know when considering the seven angels and the seven trumpets what we ought to notice is that the first four of these seven angels and seven trumpets they are all grouped together. the first four are grouped together just like it was earlier in the revelation. You go back a few chapters to chapter 6 and you'll see there the seven seals and it's the first of the four of the seven seals of the sovereign scroll they're all grouped together and when the first four seals you remember when the first four seals were opened those four seals on the sovereign scroll when they were opened they revealed the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

[21 : 10] But when it came to the four horsemen of the apocalypse if you remember we said that the four horsemen of the apocalypse they were not a scene of terror but a scene of triumph.

They were the means by which the gospel will continue to gallop and spread and sinners will come to faith and Christ will build his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

the four horsemen of the apocalypse in chapter 6 are not a scene of terror. They are not a scene of terror but a scene of triumph. When you come to this chapter the opposite is true.

The opposite can be said of the first four angels with four trumpets because these four angels of the apocalypse are not a scene of triumph they are a scene of terror.

these four angels of the apocalypse are not a scene of triumph they are a scene of terror because each when each angel blows their trumpet they create as we read there they create and they cause a scene of terror upon the earth.

[22 : 22] But as we read their scene of terror only affects a third. The third is emphasized all the way through a third of the sea a third of living creatures a third of the seas and all these things a third of the sun was struck a third of the moon a third of the stars a third of its light a third of its darkness a third is emphasized all the way through which means ultimately if you're good at maths I'm not very good at maths but if you've got a third if you're taking up one third you have two thirds left.

So two thirds are unaffected but the two thirds are only unaffected until we come to chapter 9 and in chapter 9 we're told that another third are killed there's more chaos there's more scenes of terror which means that a third moves over so there's two thirds on one side and one third left the four angels were told in the following chapter they were released to kill a third of mankind and at that point there are two thirds destroyed and one third remains two thirds destroyed one third remains and you know reading this first century Christian reading this this would have been an encouragement to them amazingly this would have been the greatest encouragement to the church for them to stop looking inward and start looking upward you remember that the Lord promised his people through the prophet

Zechariah and everything they're reading here it's all based upon the Bible it's all based upon what they've seen in scripture in the prophet the prophecy of Zechariah the Lord says two thirds shall be cut off and perish but one third shall be left alive and the Lord says I will put this third into the fire and I will refine them as one refines silver and I will test them as gold is tested they will call upon my name and I will answer them I will say they are my people and they will say the Lord is my God I know the amazing thing is the early church reading this chapter a chapter which is not a scene of triumph but a scene of terror and yet they would have read it and thought the Lord is in control the Lord is still with us even though he's refining us as one refines silver even though he's testing us as one tests gold we will call upon him and he will say about us they are my people and we will say the Lord is my

God my friend despite the terror of the angels with trumpets there is this promise of triumph for the Lord's people such an encouragement to them John is reminding them here stop looking inwards start looking upwards keep your eyes heavenward keep your eyes heavenward stop looking inwards start looking upwards I want us to conclude this evening I want us to mention the star that fell from heaven we're told there in verses 10 and 11 the star that fell from heaven like a burning and blazing torch we're told that the name of the star there in verse 11 the name of the star is wormwood the name of the star is wormwood and if you've ever read the screw tape letters by C.S.

Lewis you'll know that wormwood was the name of the younger and more inexperienced demon in the book as you know C.S. Lewis he was a Christian writer he was a Christian apologist who's probably best known for his works on the chronicles of Narnia but he wrote the screw tape letters and a book you can read you can get it online as a PDF you can buy it he wrote the book during the second world war in 1941 and he wrote the book in a form of letters from a senior demon called screw tape that's why they call it screw tape letters and he's writing to his nephew and his nephew is this apprentice demon called wormwood and of course the book it's in many ways fiction but it's very cleverly written and it's written in a way that warns us and a way that should make us wary of a very important theological truth that Satan is powerful something we often forget in fact

[27 : 15] C.S. Lewis he reminds his readers at the outside of his book he says readers are advised to remember that the devil is a liar he says that in the introduction readers are advised to remember that the devil is a liar and in those 31 letters of the Screwtape letters Uncle Screwtape he writes to his dear nephew wormwood and Screwtape's desire is to teach his young wormwood how to guide what is described as his patient his focus he is somebody that's actually become a Christian and wormwood is to try and turn him away from Christianity he's to try and turn him away from God towards Satan and you know one of the quotes from the book it always sticks with me it's when Screwtape says to little wormwood as we'll call him it's a quote that it's really solemn it says the safest road to hell is the gradual one the gentle slope soft under foot without sudden turnings without milestones without signposts the safest road to hell as the gradual one the gentle slope soft under foot without sudden turnings without milestones without signposts and you know in many ways as we read from Revelation chapter 9

Revelation chapter 8 into chapter 9 that's what we're seeing here we're seeing this picture of hell gradually getting worse and worse because what's to come in chapter 9 we're told there in verse 13 then I looked and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead woe woe woe to those who dwell on the earth at the blasts of the other trumpets that the other that the three angels are about to blow and then the picture follows as we go into chapter 9 which God willing we'll look at next week well may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us let us pray O Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee for thy word we thank thee O Lord that we're able to study it together and to see that it is the unsearchable riches of Christ help us

Lord we pray to to enjoy it to enjoy God's word because that is our chief end to glorify God and to enjoy him and that we might enjoy studying thy word seeing how it all fits together seeing how thou art the author of this great and wonderful story a story that points sinners to Jesus a story that encourages sinners to keep looking to him and to know him and to love him and to follow him as the author and the finisher of our faith Lord bless us together we pray help us we ask to keep watching and to keep waiting help us Lord we pray to be ready for that day when the trumpet sounds and the dead in Christ rise and when we go to meet the Lord in the air O Lord we plead that that thou would give to us that urgency that we would see that the day of judgment is coming that there are many still strangers to grace and to

God and that we have a great responsibility but Lord we do it knowing that except the Lord to build the house the builders lose their pain except the Lord the city keep the watchman watch in vain Lord keep us we pray then we ask go before us we plead and cleanse us for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake Amen we're going to bring our time to a conclusion this evening we're going to sing in Psalm 47 Psalm 47 it's in the Sing Psalms version Psalm 47 page 62 Sing Psalm Sing Psalms version we're going to sing the whole Psalm Psalm 47 from the beginning it's a psalm that calls all of us to sing and worship the Lord and included in that worship as you'll see in verse 5 is the sounding of trumpets it says there in verse 5

God has gone up with shouts of joy the Lord amid the trumpet sound sing praise sing praise to God most high to God our King let praise abound so we'll sing the whole psalm of Psalm 47 to God's praise all nations all nations father and shall let joy for Christ to God bring out I was him He has a dew beneath our feet, the nations who have been our foes.

[33 : 16] In blessing Jacob, whom he loved, a heritage for us he chose.

God has gone up with shouts of joy, the Lord amid the trumpet sound.

Sing praise, sing praise to God most high, to God our King, let praise not plow.

For God is King of all the earth, sing sounds of praise to Him alone.

God rules the nations from on high, He sits upon His holy throne.

[34 : 51] The leaders of the nations come to yield themselves to Abram's God.

To Him belong the shields of air, exalted greatly is the Lord.
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.