

A Survey of Revelation
Week 7: The “Trumpet” Judgments
Revelation 8:1-11:19

A Brief Overview of the Book of Revelation

A. Introduction to the Book (Revelation 1)

B. Letters to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)

C. The End of the World As We Know It: God’s Judgment Upon the World and Satan (Revelation 4-19:5)

1. The Vision of Heaven and the “Beginning of the End” (4:1-5:14)
2. The “Seal” Judgments and the Rapture (6:1-8:1)
3. The “Trumpet” Judgments (8:1-11:19) } *This week, we are here!*
4. The Conflict with the False Trinity (12:1-14:20)
5. The “Bowl” Judgments (15:1-16:21)
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D. A Whole New World: The Return of Christ and the New Heavens and the New Earth (Revelation 19:6-22:21)

1. The Return of Christ and the Millennium Kingdom (19:6-20:15)
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Summary of Revelation 8:1-11:19

[1] After the seventh seal is opened, John sees seven angels who blow seven trumpets. Each trumpet blow brings with it a devastating event on this earth; this is the beginning of the “Great and Terrible Day of the Lord.” [2] But before the blowing of the seventh trumpet, there is a “pause” in the action. John sees an angel who gives him a “little scroll” to digest. The content of this “little scroll” sets the stage for the next scene in Revelation: the appearance of two mysterious witnesses and their ministry on this earth.

[1] The First Six Trumpets (Revelation 8:1-9:21)

[2] The “Little Scroll” and the Two Witnesses (Revelation 10:1-11:19)

[1] The Seven Trumpets (Rev. 8:1-9:21)

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Introduction

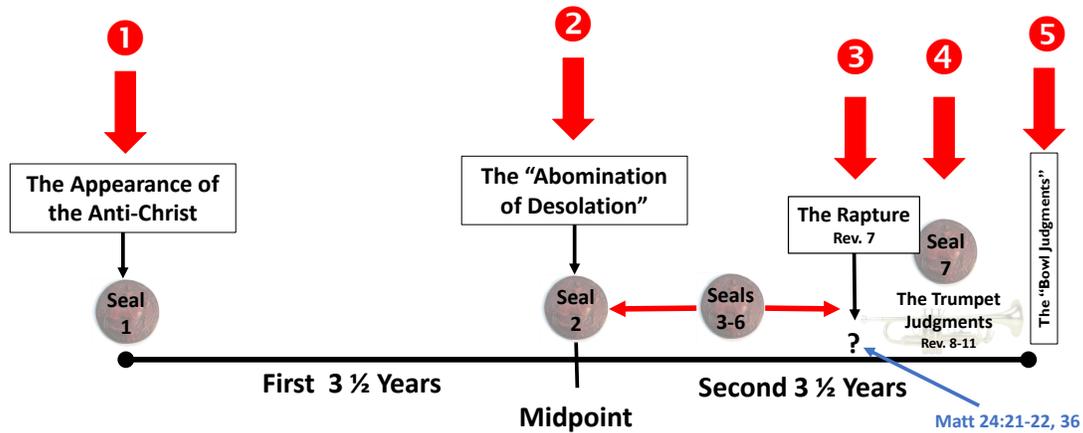
- Following the rapture of the church and the sealing of the 144,000 (the remnant of Israel), John then sees the seventh—and final—seal of the scroll of Revelation 5 open (Rev. 8:1).
- This is followed by a period of silence in heaven for 30 minutes (Rev. 8:1), and then John sees seven angels blow seven trumpets.
- Which the blowing of each trumpet, a major and destructive calamity is experienced on this earth. (The blowing of “trumpets” in the Old Testament often preceded the Israelite army as they were about ready to overtake—and overtake—a foreign enemy. Thus the “trumpets” here represent the impending doom and judgment that will come upon the inhabitants of the earth.)

A Few Facts about the “Trumpet Judgments” (Rev. 8-11)

1. The “Trumpet Judgments” occur *once the scroll of Revelation 5 has been opened*. They occur *after* the seals have been broken and the contents of the scroll exposed.
2. The “Trumpet Judgments” are clearly different from the “Seal Judgments.” This is because they represent the difficulties of this earth not caused by man, but explicitly by God—this is His wrath on this earth. Thus they start the “Great and terrible Day of the Lord.”
 - Notice the “silence” of 30 minutes at the start of them. This shows that something very serious—and sobering—is about read to happen.
 - They are preceded by God taking the “prayers of the saints” and throwing them down to earth in judgment (Rev. 8:3-5).
 - The “Trumpet Judgments” have much in common with the plagues of Egypt—themselves the judgment of God on an unbelieving people.
3. Repentance is still possible during the “Trumpet Judgments,” though few will repent (Rev. 9:20-21). Repentance is not possible once the “Trumpet Judgments” are over and the “Bowl Judgments” begin (see Revelation 15:8).

The Timing of the “Trumpet Judgments”

- The “Trumpet Judgments” will take place *during* the final 3 ½ years of this earth. Here is a possible way that this all fits into the last seven years:



1. The Anti-Christ will appear on the scene. This starts the final 7 years.
2. At the midpoint of the final 7 years, the “abomination of desolation” will occur and Christians will be persecuted—this is the beginning of the “Great Tribulation.”
3. At some point during that Great Tribulation—during the final 3 ½ years of this earth—the church will be raptured. Christians will not have to endure 3 ½ full years of tribulation. Jesus Himself makes this clear:

For then there will be great tribulation, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now-- and never to be equaled again.²² "If those days [the “Great Tribulation”] had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those [the “Great Tribulation”] days will be shortened..."³⁶ But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (Matt. 24:21-22, 36 NIV)

The 144,000 (the remnant of Israel), however, will be left on this earth. They will have to stay right up until the end of the seven years.

4. Then trumpet judgments will begin right after the rapture. They will last at least 5 months (Revelation 9:5).

[The Locusts] were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes. (Rev. 9:5 NIV)

5. When the trumpet judgments are finished, we will get right to the end of the 7-year period. Then the bowl judgments of Revelation 16 will begin. This will mark the final part of the “Great and Terrible Day of the Lord,” followed by the return of Christ.

The Seven Trumpets

Much like the seven seals, the seven trumpets are broken up into two parts: the first four trumpets go together, and the final three trumpets go together. The first four trumpets will be dealt with first.

① **Trumpet 1: Hail and fire Mixed with Blood (Rev. 8:7)**

The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. (Rev. 8:7 NIV)

- This is reminiscent of the seventh plague on Egypt (Exodus 9:18).
- It is also a picture of what is described in Joel 2:30-31.
- Notice the devastation: 1/3 of the earth is burned up, 1/3 of the trees are burned up, and *all* the grass is destroyed (but see Rev. 9:4).
- This 1/3 is in contrast to the 1/4 of Seal 4.

② **Trumpet 2: Contamination of the Ocean (Rev. 8:8-9)**

The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood,⁹ a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. (Rev. 8:8-9 NIV)

- This is reminiscent of the first plague on Egypt (Exodus 7:14-21).
- The “mountain cast into the sea” could represent a huge volcanic eruption. It is also an echo of Jeremiah 51:25.
- Note the devastation: 1/3 of the oceanic waters turned to “blood.” This could be a symbol of general contamination caused by a huge volcanic eruption.

③ **Trumpet 3: A Falling Star (Rev. 8:10-11)**

The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water--¹¹ the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter. (Rev. 8:10-11 NIV)

- This is also reminiscent of the first plague on Egypt (Exodus 7:14-21).
- The “great star” could refer to a meteor hitting this earth.
- The “waters” contaminated this time are not the oceans of the earth, but drinking water.
- “Wormwood” was a bitter tasting shrub that was symbolic of sorrow (Prov. 5:4) and judgment and death (Jer. 9:5).
- “Poisonous” waters is a frequent symbol of judgment on sin.
- Again, note the devastation: 1/3 of the population die because they cannot have clean drinking water.

④ **Trumpet 4: Celestial Disturbances (Rev. 8:12)**

The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night. (Rev. 8:12 NIV)

- This is reminiscent of the ninth plague on Egypt (Exodus 10:21-23). Indeed, the Greek word translated “struck” in v. 12 is the Greek word “plague”: “God *plagued* the heavens.”
- 1/3 of the day is without light and a 1/3 of the night. This plunges the world into darkness, often a symbol of evil in the Bible (Job 12:22; Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).

Trumpets 5-7 are preceded by three “woes” (Revelation 8:13). These trumpet blasts signal an intensification of God’s judgment. They seem to picture God unleashing evil forces against mankind; the beings that people worshiped are turning against them.

⑤ **Trumpet 5: The First Woe - Demonic Locusts (Rev. 9:1-11)**

- Out of hell itself, an angel releases “locusts” on the earth. This is reminiscent of the eighth plague on Egypt (Exodus 10:12-15).
- These locusts could be interpreted literally (there was a literal plague of locusts unleashed on Egypt) or could be an indication of demonically-inspired army (Satan seems to be their leader – 9:11) that begins to wage war on the inhabitants of the earth (see Joel 1:4-6 for a connection between the image of “locusts” and an “army.”). Note that these locusts do not attack vegetation; they attack people (9:4).
- The odd description of the locusts (9:7-10) is meant to symbolize immense power. Note that they torment the people of this earth for five months (9:5). People will want to die during this time—but they cannot (9:6).
- Note also that the 144,000—the remnant of Israel—are spared during this time (9:4).

⑥ **Trumpet 6: The Second Woe – A Devastating Army (Rev. 9:13-19).**

- This trumpet/woe sees the release of angels who had been “bound”—likely a reference to demonic angels (9:15).
- Their release leads to the release of an enormous—likely demonic—army: 200,000,000 troops. This was 1,000x’s the size of the Roman army.
- Their purpose is clear: they are given power to kill 1/3 of mankind—billions of people.
- But they also have a redemptive purpose: part of their goal is to get mankind to repent. Unfortunately, however, most do not (9:20-21).

⑦ **Trumpet 7: The Third Woe – The Bowl Judgments (Rev. 11:15-19; Rev. 16)**

- The seventh trumpet doesn’t appear until two chapters later—in Rev. 11:15-19.
- Though Trumpet 7 is referred to as the third “woe,” it has no content apart from the appearance of Jesus (Rev. 11:15-19).
- This probably means that the 7th trumpet leads to the release of the 7 bowls of God’s wrath (much like the 7th seal led to the 7 trumpets). These will be discussed in Rev. 16.

[2] The “Little Scroll” and the Two Witnesses (Rev. 10:1-11:19)

But before the seventh trumpet can be sounded, there is a “pause” in the action. John sees an angel who gives him a “little scroll” to digest. The content of this “little scroll” sets the stage for the next scene in Revelation: the appearance of two mysterious witnesses and their ministry on this earth.

The Mysterious “Little Scroll” (Rev. 10)

- After the conclusion of the sixth trumpet, there is a “pause” in the action.
- This angel says that the “mystery of God” is about ready to be fulfilled (Rev. 10:7), and gives John a “little scroll” to eat (Rev. 10:8-9). This scroll is “sweet as honey” in his mouth but turns John’s stomach “sour” (Rev. 10:10)—a clear allusion to Ezekiel 2-3, and the scroll that Ezekiel ate. That scroll contained the prophecy of the book of Ezekiel, which contained both judgment and hope for God’s people. This scroll will contain the same thing.
- I also believe this scroll is a reference the scroll of Daniel 12.
 - In Daniel 12, Daniel is given a scroll about the end of time. But he is told the following:

But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. (Daniel 12:4).
 - Daniel wants to know more, but a “man clothed in linen” (Jesus? an angel?) tells Daniel that he cannot know:

He replied, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end.” (Dan. 12:9 NIV)
 - In other words, Daniel is told that the world cannot know what happens until the appointed time.
- I believe John reveals this scroll in Revelation 10. The appointed time has now come. The contents of the scroll of Daniel 12 can be disclosed. This means we’re going to get more information on how the end of time is going to be played out.
- This leads directly to the measuring of the temple and the appearance of the two witnesses in Revelation 11.

The Temple is Measured (Rev. 11:1-2)

- After John ingests the scroll, he is given some more detail about the last 3 ½ years of the earth. (Note that Revelation 11 takes us “back in time” a bit in the book of Revelation. The events it describes begins before the trumpet judgments, likely at the opening of the second seal / the abomination of desolation.)
- First, John is told to measure a temple (Rev. 11:1-2). This temple and its measurement could be interpreted either **symbolically** or **literally**.
 - If it is to be interpreted **symbolically**, it is meant to represent God’s continued protection of his church in the midst of persecution. God knows who are His and they will be protected (spiritually) during persecution.
 - If it is to be interpreted **literally**, it is a reference to a literal end-time temple that will be rebuilt in Jerusalem. This is the temple that the anti-Christ will commit the “abomination of desolation” in. The “worshippers” of 11:1 then could refer to the 144,000—the remnant who initially worship in this rebuilt temple, but whom God will save at the end of time.
- I believe that this temple is best interpreted literally; this is a reference to a literal “third temple” that will be built in Jerusalem and serve as the backdrop for some of the events surrounding the end of the world.

The Appearance of the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:3-13)

- After John measures the temple, he is given a picture of “two witnesses” who prophesy. There are some very interesting details given about them:
 1. We are told they will prophesy for 1,260 days. $1260/360 = 3.5 \text{ years}^1$ (Rev. 11:3).
 2. We are told that they will prophesy in Jerusalem (“the great city...where also their Lord was crucified” [Rev. 11:8]).
 3. They seem to replicate the ministry of Elijah and Moses, particularly the power of these men. Elijah’s prayers shut up heaven (11:6), and Moses brought plagues upon Egypt turned water into blood (also 11:6). There was a belief among Jewish people at this time that before the Messiah came to this earth, Moses and Elijah would return to prophesy; this seems to refer to that belief (these are also the men who appeared with Jesus at His transfiguration) .
 4. Eventually they are killed by the anti-Christ (the “beast” in 11:7).

¹ Using 360 days in a year was a common feature of ancient calculations.

5. Following their death, they lay dead and unburied in Jerusalem for 3 ½ days (Rev. 11:9)—an extremely disrespectful and insulting action in this day. The entire world gloats at their death (Rev. 11:10).
 6. But then they are raised from the dead and ascend to heaven (Rev. 11:12), striking great fear into people.
 7. This is followed by a great earthquake which kills thousands of people.
- So who are these two witnesses? Like the “temple” of Rev. 11:1-2, they can be interpreted either **symbolically** or **literally**.
 - If interpreted **symbolically**, they represent the witnessing church, perhaps stretching all of the way back to the beginning of time. Their prophesying represents the message that the church has proclaimed since the beginning of time, their miracles represent the power that the church has had, and their death represents the ongoing persecution of the church. Their resurrection and ascension, however, are meant to symbolically indicate that the church will ultimately be victorious—and will judge the rest of the world.
 - If interpreted **literally**, they represent two end-time witnesses that God will give a unique and special power. They minister during the second half of the last seven years, and their death, resurrection and ascension serves as both the **catalyst** for the final judgment against mankind, and the final **warning** that God gives the inhabitants of this earth to repent.
 - I believe it is best to interpret them **literally**: I believe we will see at the end of time two literal witnesses (perhaps Moses and Elijah returned to this earth?), prophesying in Jerusalem.
 - They may specifically be prophets sent to the 144,000, preaching that Jewish people must put their faith in Christ (note their presence in Jerusalem and their connection to the prophets of old). They will not be believed by the 144,000, however, until the church is raptured.
 - They will be able to perform great miracles², but will ultimately be killed at the hands of the anti-Christ (11:8).
 - They will lie dead for 3 ½ days, and then will come back to life after which they, themselves, will be “raptured” (Rev. 11:12).
 - This will lead to the repentance of some (11:13) from “every people, tribe, language and nation” (11:9)—possibly the last chance for people to repent.

² It is possible that they, themselves, are the source of some of the trumpet judgments; at least from a human point a view. The powers they have are similar to some of what happens during the trumpet judgments of Rev. 8-9. Maybe that is why the people are so pleased when they are killed.

- Their death will also, however, be the final “nail” in the coffin of those who do not repent, as their ascension into heaven is connected to the sounding of the final trumpet, and the final pouring out of God’s wrath on this earth, during which repentance is not possible (see Rev. 15:8).
- Their ministry, death, resurrection and ascension are then followed by Rev. 11:15-19, which is probably a “preview” of what we see in greater detail Revelation 16 and 19.
- Their purpose—both in Revelation and at the end of time—is to show us once again the wickedness of Satan (who is responsible for their death—11:7), the evilness of mankind (the nations’ gloating over their death and refusing them burial—11:9-10) and the hard-heartedness of mankind and its commitment to sin in the fact that they refuse to believe even when they see someone raised from the dead (cf. Luke 16:31).

Application: God Will Do What He Will Do!

- There are a lot of confusing things in the book of Revelation. We don’t always know what is going on and how to interpret certain things.
- This leads to a lot of disagreement on the various aspects of Revelation.
- But one thing we need to remember is this: **regardless of what we believe, God is going to do what He will do: how the end of time unfolds is *not* dependent on what we believe!**
- This should give us comfort .
 - I don’t know for certain whether we will go through the tribulation or not. Whether there are two literal witnesses or not. Whether there will be a rebuilt temple or not.
 - But what I do know is this:
 - Jesus is with me wherever I go.
 - I can have peace wherever Jesus is.
 - Since God is for me, I know that nothing ultimately can be against me!
- And through the study of God’s word—no matter what conclusions we come to, we draw closer to God!

Question: How has this study drawn you closer to God so far? Praise God for that!

Don’t forget to email questions!
questions@friends.church

Homework for next week: Read Revelation 12-14 at least twice this week.