

The Seven Trumpets

Revelation 8:1-9:21

REVELATION 8:1-6

Rev. 8:1 When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ² Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. ³ And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, ⁴ and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. ⁵ Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

Rev. 8:6 Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

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1. **Have you ever wondered what God is waiting for?**
2. I mean, with all the violence and perversion and corruption that characterize our world today, why doesn't he just get on with it already?
3. Why not put an end to it?
4. You know he can.
5. When I was younger I would hear old people pray, "Come, Lord Jesus," and I would say, "Not so fast there, Old Timer."
6. But I have a different perspective now.
7. I see how bad it is now, and I don't know if I want my boys to experience how much worse it's going to get.
8. Now they're the ones saying, "Hold up, hold up."
9. But surely you've wondered, right, why all the delay?
10. You know you're not the only one to ever asked that question.
11. God's people have been asking God, "**HOW LONG**," for a long time.
12. The psalmists continually wrestled with God . . .

How long?

Psa. 13:1 *How long*, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? *How long* will you hide your face from me?

² *How long* must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? *How long* shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Hab. 1:2 O LORD, *how long* shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save?

Matt. 17:17 “O faithless and twisted generation, *how long* am I to be with you? *How long* am I to bear with you?”

Rev. 6:10 “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, *how long* before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

13. And so did the prophets . . .
14. I think God himself even wonders sometimes . . .
15. And certainly the slaughtered saints under the alter cry out . . . **HOW LONG?**

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16. In Revelation 6, we got a partial answer to the question, “how long?”
 - a. *Until the number of the martyrs is complete.*
 - b. John saw the souls of the martyrs under the alter in heaven, and he heard their cry, “how long?”
 - c. They were told to rest and to wait.
 - d. They were told that things would get worse before they got better.
17. In Revelation 7, we got another partial answer to the question, “how long?”
 - a. *Until the number of the saints is sealed.*
 - b. John saw four angels restraining the four winds of judgment until all the servants of God could receive his possessive, protective mark.
 - c. This delay is a good thing, because it ensures that not one who belongs to God will fall through the cracks, or be forgotten, or be missed, or be overlooked.
 - d. God will get them every one, and . . . according to Revelation 8 . . .
- 18. NOT ONE OF THEIR PRAYERS . . . NOT ONE OF THEIR CRIES FOR JUSTICE . . . WILL GO UNHEARD.**
- 19. IN REVELATION 8, THE SEVENTH SEAL IS FINALLY BROKEN.**
20. The scroll of destiny is about to be unrolled, but . . .
21. Before it is . . . there is SILENCE . . . in heaven . . . for about half and hour.

22. And this silence is deafening.
23. It's as if all heaven is holding its breath as it waits to see will happen next.
24. And what happens next is that the seventh seal reveals another seven . . .
- 25. THE SEVEN ANGELS WHO STAND BEFORE GOD ARE GIVEN SEVEN TRUMPETS.**
26. Jewish tradition says that there are seven arch angels who serve God, and, no doubt, these are the ones John sees here.
27. But before they blow their trumpets, signaling another series of judgments, another angel appears.
28. He is serving at the heavenly alter of incense, and along with the incense he offers up to God all the prayers of all his people.
29. There is another Jewish tradition that says that the angels in heaven are silenced when God listens to the prayers of his people . . . maybe that's the reason for the silence here.
30. Listen to me, not only will none of God's people be missed, **NONE OF THEIR PRAYERS WILL BE MISSED.**
- a. I am indebted to Dr. Kevin Youngblood for the following . . .
 - b. No prayer . . . prayed in faith . . . prayed in the name of Jesus . . . is ever lost.
 - c. The prayers collect on the golden alter, and they are replayed before God over and over until the day he has decided to act (Rev. 9:15).
 - 1) God has never lost a prayer.
 - 2) Prayers you forgot you prayed are still being stored upon God's alter.
 - 3) Prayer is taken with great seriousness by God . . . PRAYERS are RECEIVED and they are PRESERVED.
 - 4) Many have not been answered yet, but not because God has missed them . . . or forgotten them . . . or doesn't care about them.
 - 5) Furthermore . . .
- 31. These prayers become the mechanism of divine intervention.**
32. This angel takes this censer . . . full of fire . . . full of incense . . . and full of prayer . . . and he HURLS IT DOWN UPON THE EARTH . . . full of the judgment of God.
- 33. Listen, church, this is the way the sanctified army of God wages war.**
34. Not with bows, and chariots, and spears, and swords.
35. Not with bombs and bullets.
36. But with prayer.
37. The 144,000 drafted for war have this as their weapon of choice . . . PRAYER.
38. Now, I know this is not a popular sentiment.
39. And I know that the last time I preached about non-violent resistance . . . I was almost resisted violently 😊
40. But listen, in the Old Testament the only way that military personnel were allowed to serve in the temple was if they hadn't shed blood.
41. David wasn't even allowed to build the temple, because he had shed blood.

- 42. And listen, this is a TEMPLE SCENE.
- 43. In chapter 8, we are standing at the heavenly alter in the heavenly temple.
- 44. We'll still be there when this cycle of seven ends in chapter 11, when John is told to measure this heavenly space and all who worship in it.
- 45. This is a scene of WORSHIP and WAR.
- 46. This is a vision of a MARTYR ARMY going into battle.
- 47. And the weapons of their warfare are the PRAYERS OF THESE SAINTS.
- 48. God hurls these prayers of the saints down at the rebellious, murderous, idolatrous earth-dwellers and there are devastating consequences.
- 49. And chapters 8 and 9 describe those consequences . . . those judgments . . . In great and terrifying detail.
- 50. In Revelation 8 and 9 the *images* intensify and so do the *judgments*.
- 51. As the seven trumpets are blown, FOUR PLAGUES and THREE WOES are summoned (just like the seven seals . . . 4+2+1).

52. The FOUR PLAGUES seem to be modeled after the plagues on Egypt.

- a. Egypt was the original oppressor of God's people . . . Pharaoh was the original murderous tyrant.
- b. God sent plagues on Egypt, devastating their land, not just to punish them, but to get their attention.
- c. You might remember how many – if not all – of the plagues described in Exodus were directed at particular Egyptian deities.
- d. YHWH was disclosing the deception . . . he was exposing the sham . . . He said, **“By this you shall know that I am the LORD . . . ”** [and] **“you [will] know that there is none like me in all the earth** (Exodus 7:17; 9:14-15).
- e. Now, John's audience needs to know.
 - a. They need to see the curtains pulled back, and the ruse revealed
 - b. Rome is the oppressor and Domitian is the murderous tyrant.
 - c. And just as God dealt with the Egyptians, he will deal with the Romans.
 - d. And . . . just as God dealt with the Egyptians and the Romans . . . he will deal with every nation and every tyrant that masquerades as supreme.

53. The THREE WOES of chapter 9 seem to be DEMONIC in nature.

- a. Bottomless pits are opened, and demonic kings and armies emerge.
- b. These don't just ruin the earth, they kill the people, too.
- c. It's very easy to get side-tracked in Revelation 9.
 - 1) Who is this Abaddon . . . Apollyon . . . The Destroyer?
 - 2) And what kinds of locusts are these . . .
 - a) Built like horses . . .
 - b) With stingers like scorpions . . .
 - c) And heads like lions . . .
 - d) And faces like humans . . .

- e) And hair like women . . .
 - f) Two hundred million strong . . .
 - g) Armored for battle . . .
 - h) Belching sulfur, fire, and smoke . . .
 - i) And killing a third of the earth-dwellers?
- 1) Like I say, it's easy to get side-tracked trying to track down all these images.
 - 2) But I'm not sure that's what John intends for us to do.
 - 3) John uses some images familiar to those of his day, to terrify them, and to get their attention . . . that's what trumpets do, don't you know?
 - a) "Don't fall for the Empire's lies."
 - b) "Don't play the Empire's games."
 - c) "They are not supreme . . . They are not secure."
 - d) "They are not to be trusted"
 - e) "Not only do they bring disaster upon you because of their rebellion against God, but ultimately they will turn and destroy you!"
 - i. All through the apocalyptic literature the kingdoms of men are imagined as wild predatory beasts, inspired by demonic forces, who leave blood, and carnage, and death in their wake.
 - ii. If you don't believe me, just go visit your nearest war memorial.
 - iii. On Monday night, Jimmy Fortune of Statler Brothers fame sang from the Benson stage, "My boy is more than just a name on a wall."
 - iv. Not to the Empire, he's not.

16. Do I have your attention now?

17. John finally gets to the point of all this in verse 20 of chapter 9 . . .

REVELATION 9:20-21

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

56. You see, this, too, is a partial answer to the question, *“how long?”*
57. This is a reason for delay.
58. This may be the primary reason for delay . . . **TO BRING PEOPLE TO REPENTANCE.**
59. This is still a merciful judgment even though some are lost.
60. Only a third of the earth is devastated . . . only a third of the people are killed.
61. It’s getting progressively worse, but it’s intended to terrify, to startle, to push people to their knees in PRAYER and REPENTANCE.
62. And this is nothing new.
63. The prophet Amos preached to the Northern Kingdom of Israel . . .

Amos 4:6-12

Amos 4:6 “I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities,
and lack of bread in all your places,
yet you did not return to me,”
declares the LORD.

Amos 4:6-12

Amos 4:7 “I also withheld the rain from you
when there were yet three months to the harvest;
I would send rain on one city,
and send no rain on another city;
one field would have rain,
and the field on which it did not rain would wither;
⁸ so two or three cities would wander to another city
to drink water, and would not be satisfied;
yet you did not return to me,”
declares the LORD.

Amos 4:6-12

Amos 4:9 “I struck you with blight and mildew;
your many gardens and your vineyards,
your fig trees and your olive trees the locust devoured;
yet you did not return to me,”
declares the LORD.

Amos 4:6-12

Amos 4:10 “I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt;
I killed your young men with the sword,
and carried away your horses,
and I made the stench of your camp
go up into your nostrils;
yet you did not return to me,”
declares the LORD.

Amos 4:6-12

Amos 4:11 “I overthrew some of you,
as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,
and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning;
yet you did not return to me,”
declares the LORD.

Amos 4:6-12

Amos 4:12 “Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel;
because I will do this to you,
prepare to meet your God, O Israel!”

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64. I don't know *all* the reasons why God has delayed as long as he has in bringing all this to an end.
65. I know that as long as he does Christian brothers and sisters will continue to suffer and die.
66. But, then again, so will all who live under the tyranny of evil empires and rulers possessed and prompted by the hordes of hell.
- 67. So until that final time comes, let us get what John intends, and let us learn the lessons from the judgments that we are experiencing even now.**
68. Let us give up our idols, and give up our sins, and take up our crosses, and follow the LAMB, lest a much worse fate attend us in the end.
69. Does God have your attention?
70. Don't misinterpret his delay.
71. While he delays SAINTS are being SEALED, and SINNERS are becoming SAINTS.
72. I don't know what you are waiting for, but I know that God is waiting for you.
73. The Apostle Peter assured us of this . . .

2 Peter 3:9

⁹ 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.

74. That's our lesson this morning, if you have a need, won't you come . . . before it's too late.

75. Let's stand and sing.