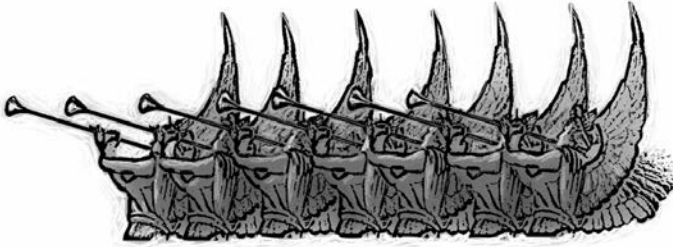


The Seven Trumpets



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Rev. 8:1–13; Num. 10:8–10; Ezek. 10:2; Rev. 10:1–11; Dan. 12:6, 7; Rev. 11:1–13; Leviticus 16.*

Memory Text: “But in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets” (*Revelation 10:7, NKJV*).

In the scene of the fifth seal, we saw that the cry of God's oppressed people reflects the cry of the faithful of all ages. These faithful ones were portrayed as souls under the altar, crying to God for justice and vindication, saying: “‘How long, O Lord?’” (*Rev. 6:10, NKJV*). The voice from heaven urged them to wait, because the day was coming when God would judge those who harmed them. Revelation 6:15–17 pictures Jesus returning to this earth and bringing judgment upon those who did evil to His faithful followers.

The scene of the fifth seal represents the experience of God's suffering people throughout history, from the time of Abel until the time when God will finally judge and avenge “‘the blood of His servants’” (*Rev. 19:2, NKJV*). God's suffering people must remain firm and believe that God hears the prayers of His people.

The vision of the seven trumpets shows that, throughout history, God already has intervened on behalf of His oppressed people and has judged those who harmed them. The purpose of the seven trumpets is to assure God's people that heaven is not indifferent to their suffering.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 16.

The Prayers of the Saints

Revelation 8 opens with a picture of seven angels standing before God, ready to blow their trumpets. Before the trumpets are blown, another scene is inserted. Its purpose is to explain the theological meaning of the trumpets.

Read Revelation 8:3, 4 along with the description of the daily services in the temple in Jerusalem given below: a Jewish commentary on the Bible explains that at the evening sacrifice the lamb was placed upon the altar of burnt offering, and the blood was poured out at the base of the altar. An appointed priest took the golden censer inside the temple and offered incense on the golden altar in the Holy Place. When the priest came out, he threw the censer down on the pavement, producing a loud noise. At that point, seven priests blew their trumpets, marking the end of the temple services for that day.

One can see how the language of the evening service is used in Revelation 8:3–5. It is significant that the angel receives incense at the “golden altar which was before the throne” (*Rev. 8:3, NKJV*). The incense represents the prayers of God’s people (*Rev. 5:8*). Their prayers are now being answered by God.

Revelation 8:3–5 provides important information regarding the trumpets in Revelation:

- a. The seven trumpets are God’s judgments on rebellious humanity in response to the prayers of His oppressed people.
- b. The trumpets follow the death of Jesus as the Lamb and run consecutively throughout history until the Second Coming (*see Rev. 11:15–18*).

Read Revelation 8:5 along with Ezekiel 10:2. How does Ezekiel’s vision of hurling fire upon apostate Jerusalem elucidate the nature of the trumpets in Revelation?

The angel fills the censer with fire from the altar and hurls it down to the earth. Significantly, this fire comes from the very altar on which the prayers of the saints were offered. The fact that the fire comes from that very altar shows that the seven trumpet judgments fall upon the inhabitants of the earth in answer to the prayers of God’s people and also that God will intervene in their behalf in His appointed time. The throwing down of the censer also may be a warning that Christ’s intercession will not last forever. There will be a close of probationary time (*see Rev. 22:11, 12*).

The Meaning of the Trumpets

In portraying God's interventions on behalf of His people, Revelation uses the imagery of trumpets in the Old Testament. Trumpets were an important part of the daily life of ancient Israel (*see Num. 10:8–10 and 2 Chron. 13:14, 15*). Their sound reminded people of the worship in the temple; trumpets also were blown in battle, at harvesttime, and during festivals.

Blowing trumpets went hand in hand with prayer. During worship in the temple or during the festivals, the trumpets "reminded" God of His covenant with His people. They also reminded people to be ready for the "day of the LORD" (*Joel 2:1*). During battle, the trumpet sound gave key instruction and warnings and called upon God to save His people. This concept is the backdrop for the trumpets in Revelation.

Read Revelation 8:13 and Revelation 9:4, 20, 21. Who are the objects of the judgments of the seven trumpets?

The events triggered by the trumpets in Revelation denote God's intervention in history in response to the prayers of His people. While the seals concern primarily those who profess to be God's people, the trumpets herald judgments against the inhabitants of the earth (*Rev. 8:13*). At the same time, they are warnings for those who dwell on the earth to bring them to repentance before it is too late.

The seven trumpets cover the course of events from John's time until the conclusion of this earth's history (*Rev. 11:15–18*). They are blown while intercession goes on in heaven (*Rev. 8:3–6*) and the gospel is being preached on earth (*Rev. 10:8–11:14*). The judgments of the trumpets are partial; they affect only one third of creation. The seventh trumpet announces that the time has arrived for God to assume His rightful rule. The seven trumpets apply approximately to the same periods covered by the seven churches and the seven seals:

(a) The first two trumpets herald judgments upon the nations that crucified Christ and persecuted the early church: rebellious Jerusalem and the Roman Empire.

(b) The third and fourth trumpets portray heaven's judgment against the apostasy of the Christian church in the medieval period.

(c) The fifth and sixth trumpets describe the warring factions in the religious world during the late medieval and post-Reformation periods. These periods are characterized by increasing demonic activity that ultimately draws the world into the battle of Armageddon.

No question, history is bloody and full of pain and sorrow. How should this sad reality help us realize just how wonderful what we have been promised through Jesus really is?

The Angel With an Open Book

The sixth trumpet brings us to the time of the end. What are God's people called to do during this time? Before the seventh trumpet sounds, an interlude is inserted, explaining the task and experience of God's people at the end time.

Read Revelation 10:1–4. What is happening here?

“The mighty angel who instructed John was no less a personage than Jesus Christ.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 971. He places His feet on the sea and the land, signifying His universal rule and that what He is about to proclaim has worldwide significance. He shouts with the roar of a lion. A lion's roar symbolizes God's voice (*see Hos. 11:10, Rev. 5:5*).

John is not allowed to write down what the thunders have said. There are things concerning the future that God has not revealed to us through John.

Read Revelation 10:5–7. Compare this passage with Daniel 12:6, 7. What words do they have in common?

When the Angel states that there will “be time no longer” (*Rev. 10:6*), the Greek word *chronos* shows that He refers to a period of time. This points back to Daniel 12:6, 7, where an angel states the persecution of the saints will last for a time, times, and half a time, or 1,260 years (A.D. 538–1798) during which the church was persecuted by the papacy (*compare Dan. 7:25*). Since in Daniel and Revelation a prophetic “day” symbolizes a year (*Num. 14:34, Ezek. 4:6*), 360 “days” equal 360 years, and three and a half times (or “years”) equals 1,260 “days” or years. Sometime after this prophetic period, the end would come.

The statement that time will be no longer refers to the time prophecies of Daniel, particularly the 2,300 prophetic days of Daniel 8:14 (457 B.C.–A.D. 1844). After this period, there no longer will be prophetic time periods. Ellen White states: “This time, which the angel declares with a solemn oath, is . . . prophetic time, which should precede the advent of our Lord. That is, the people will not have another message upon definite time. After this period of time, reaching from 1842 to 1844, there can be no definite tracing of the prophetic time. The longest reckoning reaches to the autumn of 1844.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 971.

What does this statement from Ellen White tell us about why we must avoid *all* future date setting?

Eating the Scroll

Read Revelation 10:8–11. Eating in the Bible is used to describe the acceptance of a message from God in order to proclaim it to the people (*see Ezek. 2:8–3:11, Jer. 15:16*). When received, the message is good news; but when it is proclaimed, it sometimes results in bitterness as it is resisted and rejected by many.

John's bittersweet experience in eating the scroll (representing the book of Daniel) is related to the unsealing of Daniel's end-time prophecies. John here represents God's end-time remnant church that is commissioned to proclaim the everlasting gospel (*see Rev. 14:6, 7*) at the close of Daniel's time prophecy (*Dan. 7:25*) or 1,260 days/years.

The context indicates that John's vision points to another bittersweet experience at the conclusion of the prophetic 2,300-year period. When, on the basis of Daniel's prophecies, the Millerites thought that Christ would return in 1844, that message was sweet to them. However, when Christ did not appear as expected, they experienced a bitter disappointment and searched the Scriptures for a clearer understanding.

John's commission to "prophesy again" to the world points to Sabbath-keeping Adventists, raised up to proclaim the message of the Second Coming in connection with the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

Read Revelation 11:1, 2. What is John ordered to do?

This passage continues the scene of Revelation 10. John was commanded to measure the temple, the altar, and the worshipers. The concept of measuring in the Bible refers figuratively to judgment (*see Matt. 7:2*). The temple that was to be measured is in heaven, where Jesus ministers for us. The reference to the temple, the altar, and the worshipers points to the Day of Atonement (*see Lev. 16:16–19*). This day was a day of "measuring," as God judged His people. Thus, Revelation 11:1 refers to the judgment that takes place prior to the Second Coming. This judgment concerns exclusively God's people—the worshipers in the temple.

Revelation 11:1 shows that the heavenly-sanctuary message lies at the heart of the final gospel proclamation, which includes the vindication of God's character. As such, it gives the full dimension of the gospel message regarding the atoning work of Christ and His righteousness as the only means of salvation for human beings.

Keeping in mind how central blood was to the Day of Atonement ritual (*see Leviticus 16*), how can we always keep before us the reality that the judgment is good news? Why is this truth so important?

The Two Witnesses

Read Revelation 11:3–6. In what ways do the two witnesses reflect Zerubbabel and Joshua in their royal and priestly roles? See *Zech. 4:2, 3, 11–14*.

The idea of two witnesses comes from the Jewish legal system, which requires at least two witnesses to establish something as true (*John 8:17*). The two witnesses represent the Bible—both Old and New Testaments. The two cannot be separated. God’s people are called to proclaim the full Bible message to the world—“the whole counsel of God” (*Acts 20:27, NKJV*).

The witnesses are pictured as prophesying in sackcloth during the prophetic period of 1,260 days/years (A.D. 538–1798). Sackcloth is the garment of mourning (*Gen. 37:34*); it points to the difficult time when the truths of the Bible were buried, and covered over, by human traditions.

Read Revelation 11:7–13. In your own words, describe what happened to the two witnesses at the end of the prophetic 1,260 days/years.

The beast that kills the two witnesses arises from the very abode of Satan. This killing of the witnesses applies historically to the atheistic attack on the Bible and the abolition of religion in connection with the events of the French Revolution. The antireligious system established in France possessed the moral degradation of Sodom, the atheistic arrogance of Egypt, and the rebelliousness of Jerusalem. What happened to Jesus in Jerusalem now happens to the Bible by this antireligious system.

The resurrection of the witnesses points to the great revival of interest in the Bible in the aftermath of the French Revolution, which resulted in the rise of the Second Advent movement with its restoration of Bible truth, the establishment of Bible societies, and the worldwide distribution of the Bible.

Right before the end, the world will witness one final global Bible proclamation (*Rev. 18:1–4*). This final message will provoke opposition empowered by the demonic entities, working miracles, to deceive the world and draw worshipers of the beast into a final battle against God’s faithful witnesses (*see Rev. 16:13–16; Rev. 14:12*).

Further Thought: The seventh trumpet (*Rev. 11:15–18*) signals the conclusion of this earth’s history. The time has come for God to reveal His power and to reign. This rebellious planet, which has been under the dominion of Satan for thousands of years, is about to come back under God’s dominion and rule. It was after Christ’s death on the cross and His ascension to heaven that Christ was proclaimed to be the legitimate ruler of the earth (*Rev. 12:10, 11*). Satan continues to wreak all the havoc he can, knowing that his time is short (*Rev. 12:12*). The seventh trumpet heralds that the usurping powers have been dealt with and that this world finally has come under Christ’s rightful rule.

The seventh trumpet outlines the content of the remainder of the book: (1) *The nations were angry*: Revelation 12–14 describes Satan as filled with anger (*Rev. 12:17*), who with his two allies—the sea beast and the earth beast—prepares the nations of the world to fight against God’s people. (2) *Your wrath has come*: God’s answer to the anger of the nations is the seven last plagues, which are referred to as God’s wrath (*see Rev. 15:1*). (3) *The time for the dead to be judged* is described in Revelation 20:11–15. (4) *And to reward God’s servants* is portrayed in Revelation 21 and 22. (5) *To destroy those who destroy the earth*: Revelation 19:2 states that end-time Babylon is judged because it destroyed the earth. The destruction of Satan, his hosts, and his two allies is the final act in the drama of the great controversy (*Rev. 19:11–20:15*).

Discussion Questions:

- 1 At times we find that preaching the gospel can be a bitter experience (*Rev. 10:10*); our words are rejected and mocked, and we ourselves can be rejected and mocked. Sometimes preaching can even stir up opposition. What Bible characters can you think of who faced such trials, and what can we learn from their experiences for ourselves?
- 2 Reflect on the following statement: “Again and again have I been warned in regard to time setting. There will never again be a message for the people of God that will be based on time. We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 188. What problems do you see with drafting overly detailed prophetic charts of the final events after 1844? How can one safeguard against the pitfalls that charts like these may bring?

Missionary Changed My “F”

By EUGENE FRANSCH

I was an average student in my theology classes at Solusi College in pre-independent Zimbabwe. My hardest subject was Greek, and the highest grade that I ever got in it was a “C.”

When I wrote my final Greek exam, I knew that I had failed.

“Doc, I failed again,” I said as I handed it to the professor, Dr. Leo Raunio. He smiled and said, “It’s OK.”

For the next week, I mourned the fact that I couldn’t graduate. I had planned to get married a month later, and the notion of spending another six months redoing Greek was unthinkable.

Then Dr. Raunio, a retirement-age missionary born in Finland, called me into his office, and I understood for the first time the meaning of God’s grace.

“I’ve been watching you for four years on this campus,” Dr. Raunio said. “I’ve seen you change from a radical fellow to a hardworking young man who loves the Lord. I noticed that even the music on your tape recorder changed from rock-and-roll music to Christian music.”

I was surprised that he had observed something that no one else seemed to have noticed.

“You have done well on your other subjects and passed,” Dr. Raunio said. “But you have battled with Greek. I know how much this graduation means to you in three weeks. I know you have done all you could to pass your Greek exam, but failed.

“Still, I want to give you grace,” he said. “I know the Lord has a plan for you in the work that you are going to do. By grace, I’m going to give you a passing grade so you can graduate.”

Then he prayed for God to guide my future work.

Little did I know how far God would take me. The Lord helped me to work for 18 years as youth ministries director for the Adventist Church in Zimbabwe. After that, I served as youth director at the church division for seven years. I also received a doctorate in leadership. Every day, I pray for God’s help to extend grace to others, just as it was given to me.

God sees potential in us even in our lowest state of sin. He sees what we can accomplish once we’re filled with His Spirit. We also should stop looking at the present and adopt God’s eyes to see the future potential in others.



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Part of a 2015 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering went to Solusi University to double the size of its crowded cafeteria from 500 seats to 1,000.