

The Seven Trumpets of Repentance

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 January 2015

Preacher: Philip Wells

[0 : 00] Please turn in your Bible, if you can, to Revelation chapter 8.! We're going to look at chapter 8 and 9 this morning.

We're looking at the seven trumpets in the book of Revelation.

And my introduction is to ask this question. Why is the world like it is? Why do bad things happen? Because bad things do happen. If you are in the habit of listening to the radio, almost everything on the radio, on the news, is bad. They don't really tell you good news.

They select the worst things that they can think of to tell us, because that's how news works. And there's loads of bad stuff. You think of the shootings in Paris.

[1 : 12] You think of the massacre in Nigeria, just on the news recently, or perhaps not on the news recently. Why do these things happen? Massacres, tidal waves, disasters.

Jesus was asked a very similar question, or commented on a very similar situation, although perhaps on a smaller scale. In the Gospel of Luke, I'll read it to you.

In chapter 13, he said, those 18 who died when the Tower of Siloam fell on them, Jesus said, do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?

I tell you no. But unless you repent, you too will all perish. And Jesus used a word there, which we'll come to in a moment, but he said, there is a meaning to this disaster.

So, Jesus himself tackled that issue. Now, coming to Revelation, what have we been looking at so far? We've seen seven churches, and there they are.

[2 : 29] And you might notice that, well, you might know that when when you look at the seven sections of this one letter to the seven churches, five out of seven of them are told that they, as churches, should do something R, something P, something N, something T.

Interesting that they're told this word. We'll come to that word in a moment. Two of the seven aren't told that, but all the others are told, you Christian people, you need to do whatever this word is. And the, ah, that went wrong, did it? Yeah, the seven churches have got enemies. And we looked at the enemy, the prostitute, who allures and tempts the churches with wealth and glamour and power and ease.

The false prophet who deceives the churches could be outside the church, come and worship, worship the different, come and worship the emperor, come and worship Jupiter, come and worship Diana.

Or within the churches, worship God and you can go and worship Diana as well, that's okay, that would be false teaching. And we have the beast.

[3 : 53] Book of Revelation says that there are forces against us like monsters. members. We have the, part of that, part of that array of enemies, part of the way the beast operates is the intimidation of the state and the, the threat that Christians must worship the emperor otherwise they'll be killed.

And there's a beast associated with that and behind it all the dragon, the evil one, the serpent from of old. And the book of Revelation says this is what's really happening, this is what's going on in your world.

These are the enemies that you have to fight. And here is a map of the whole book. I'm not going to go into it but it sort of explains why we've jumped so many chapters this morning.

There are seven churches. The book of Revelation is arranged in sevens. We have seven churches to begin with and then we had seven seals of world history which we've just jumped over for the purposes of today.

The seven seals of world history undone one at a time as history progresses and comes to its conclusion. And then the writer of the book presses the rewind button and goes right back to the beginning again and tells us the whole thing from the point of view of seven trumpets.

[5 : 29] There's a little break in the middle there towards the end which we're not going to deal with today. Then there's a section on war and at the end there's a section on seven bold of wrath and there's some visions and then the final end.

So the sevens are quite important. Now what we would look at today is look at the seven trumpets. And the seven trumpets call people to something.

We'll see what that is in a moment but let's look at the text. So in chapter 8 verse 2 I saw seven angels who stand before God and to them were given seven trumpets.

and this all takes place in God's headquarters in heaven and part of the ingredients in what goes on at headquarters is the prayer of God's people.

Another angel who had a golden censer came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints. Saints doesn't mean special Christians it just means Christians.

[6 : 40] And the prayers go up before God went up before God from the angel's hand and the angel took the censer censer is a thing that contains this smelly incense stuff and it's linked symbolically with prayer and he throws this down on the earth and it's a hugely what shall I say well it says there are thunderings and rumblings and flashes of lightning and an earthquake so it's a very tumultuous effect as this gets hurled back on the earth.

So this comes from heaven it starts off in heaven the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them and here are the first four first angel sounded his trumpet there came hail and fire mixed with blood 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 so this trumpet the effect of this trumpet is to damage the vegetable world the world of trees and grass and growing things then the second angel sounds his trumpet and the effect of this is to turn the sea into blood a third of living creatures in the sea died and a third of the ships were destroyed so this trumpet affects the sea and shipping and it's sea turned into blood those of you who know your bibles do you know where there's another example of water being turned into blood plagues on the

Egyptians yes Moses plagues so he's actually using language borrowed from other parts of the bible in particular the plagues on Egypt but they're sort of multiplied and made more bizarre and the third angel sounds his trumpet and a great star blazing like a torch fell from the sky sounds like something heavenly falling down onto the earth in a nasty sort of way and this affects a third of the rivers and the springs of water a third of the waters turned bitter many people died from the waters that had become bitter does anybody know a place in the bible where you put wood into bitter water and it turns sweet yes it was marrow was it there was a spring that was bitter and who was it who put the wood in there Moses yeah so we go back to Moses but this is reversed isn't it this is wood which turns sweet water bitter so he's sort of subverting that motif from the bible turning it upside down fresh water gets damaged and the fourth one the fourth angel sounded his trumpet a third of the sun was struck a third of the moon a third of the stars a third of them turned dark a third of the day was out without light and also a third of the night which is an interesting thought isn't it so a third of the day was out without light and apparently a third of the night was without light so he must be speaking in a very symbolic sort of way but this trumpet strikes the heavens so if you think of it you've added it all up that's just about every bit of the creation that we experience and live in isn't it it's a vegetable world sea and shipping trade fishing the waters that we depend on for drinking and the sky above us the sky and the heavens so it's all hit as these trumpets are sounded and it's a very unpleasant and nasty thing so these are plagues like

Egypt like Exodus but more so and these first four trumpets he's thinking of the effect on what we would nowadays call the ecosystem and we're not surprised are we we hear that and it sounds very very contemporary because our ecosystem is being hammered you think of pollution you think of things like the Chernobyl nuclear reactor exploded contaminating water and vegetation and putting clouds up into the sky you think things like that and you think of global warming and how people take more or less notice of that but if you take more notice of it you get really really worried that our ecosystem is being pushed and damaged and if it goes on like this you might say certain parts of the world will become uninhabitable life will change very dramatically in the foreseeable future so it has a contemporary ring to it and these seven trumpets affect the ecosystem and they are all calling people to something which we'll come to in a moment let's look at so why and that's the point we're going to come to why let's look at trumpet number five and this is really something isn't it we're warned that this is going to be pretty awful there's an eagle flying in midair calling out in a loud voice

woe woe woe to the inhabitants of the earth because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels so something really bad coming and this fifth trumpet involves all three layers of the universe in the book of revelation it's not trying to give us a map or cosmology it's just saying this is the way the world is there's heaven there's earth and there's an abyss under the earth heaven and earth and under the earth and so now we come to chapter nine the fifth angel sounded his trumpet and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth well that's quite similar to what happened in trumpet number three isn't it a star falling down something that has moved from the sky from heaven to earth and this star is given the key to the shaft of the abyss that's the bit underneath he opened the abyss and smoke rose from it like smoke from a gigantic furnace the sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the abyss and out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth so there's a movement which goes from heaven to earth into the abyss and then back up into our bit so whatever's going to come has sort of its origins in heaven but also has its origins in the world of the enemy and pops up into our world and it's going to be nasty and this takes the form of locusts there we are I've done the locusts but as you will see you then run out of possibilities as to how to draw it any further because they're such unusual locusts they're given power like that of scorpions and it says that they looked like horses and they had crowns of gold and their faces resembled human faces and their hair was like women's hair and their teeth were like lion's teeth so it becomes impossible to draw but anyway locusts is there another place in the bible where a large number of locusts cause huge problems to a particular nation plague of locusts again going back to exodus that was what hit egypt and john is taking the same idea locusts and sort of multiplying it a million times in enormity in intimidation in nastiness so here are these locusts they're given power like that of scorpions verse 3 told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree but only those people who did not have the seal of god on their foreheads they were not given power to kill them but only to torture them for five months and the agony they suffered was like the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man during those days men will seek death but will not find it they will long to die but death will elude them so that's a strange situation isn't it these locusts they're under control they're not allowed to do anything that they want they're limited so they're not allowed to hurt the vegetation so this particular that's correct isn't it verse 4 they were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree and they only allowed to hurt people who are not

[16:23] Christians in verse 4 John talks about people who have or do not have the seal of God on their foreheads and in the book of revelation people are marked into two categories those who are marked with the seal of God so some sort of stamp on their forehead to show they belong to God and those who are marked with a different mark the mark of the beast so they're either marked in one of two ways and these locusts are not allowed to hurt people who have the seal of God on their forehead so they so Christians can sort of breathe a sigh of relief say all right these they don't particularly hurt us and they do not actually kill people it says in verse five they were not given power to kill them but really to make life pretty much unbearable but only for a limited time to torture them for five months and it really is unpleasant the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man people would want to die but it's not a lethal condition makes life unbearable only for a period and just moving down past the bit where it describes them in this very bizarre way their thunderings their faces their hair and teeth their tails and stings their tails have power this is verse 10 to torment people for five months and they had as king over them the angel of the abyss whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek

Apollyon so an angel a leader that is to do with the realm of the enemy so here it is here's this fifth trumpet and this trumpet is not striking the ecosystem but it's striking in the way described there and you might say well what is this trumpet being sounded at the moment are there things like this in the world and I have a suggestion and it's I think it's a good suggestion but I don't think it's much more than a suggestion what sort of thing could this be what sort of things tend not to be problems for Christians and Christians have their problems problems but what sort of things tend not to be problems for Christians but problems that do affect other people so I've got some suggestions so I put here drug abuse sexually transmitted diseases alcohol issues and I'm saying in terms of tendency a Christian's lifestyle will tend to protect them in that a committed Christian will not be in a lifestyle of sustained drug abuse so they'll be spared the agonies and problems that come from that and a committed Christian won't be in a lifestyle of promiscuity and therefore will tend to be spared from the issues of sexually transmitted plagues things I'm talking in

terms of tendencies I know there's exceptional cases perhaps somebody who's converted from such a background but I'm talking about a committed Christian in their lifestyle will tend to be protected from these things and a committed Christian living a Christian lifestyle will tend to be protected from the ravages of sustained alcohol abuse so that's a suggestion and if you look out into the wide world I would say that you see this trumpet being sounded all over the place that you see people's lives being tormented troubled hurt all over the place by these locusts by these issues that are not lethal necessarily and can be only for a period people can sort of be in a situation of drug abuse but deal with it and move on but during that time they might say my life is just unbearable and the book of

Revelation gives us this insight that it's not just a medical thing it's not just an ecological thing there's something satanic at work in these forces fifth trumpet sixth trumpet even more baffling a bad trumpet is going to be sounded the first woe is passed it says in verse 12 two other woes are yet to come the six angels sounded his trumpet and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God notice heaven is involved in this it isn't sort of satan having his own way it's heaven involved and well this I find baffling but here it is release the four angels who are bound at the great river euphrates and the four angels who have been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind the number of mounted troops was 200 million I heard their number so a vast number of well I put cavalry horses

I just thought I'd just try and draw the horses that was about enough so this is a sort of military campaign of huge dimensions it's from the river euphrates and I sort of wonder whether in the Roman Empire this is you know like the home like we would think here in the west of the Taliban and the what happens way over there and all the military things that we fear coming from away yonder whether the readers of this would have thought oh the Euphrates that's way over there like that and here's a military force coming from there the number of mounted troops was 200 million I heard their number and then there's another vision which is undrawable and almost unimaginable horses and riders I saw in my vision look like this their breast plates were fiery red dark blue yellow as sulfur the heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions out of their mouths came fire smoke and sulfur and a third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths the power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails so it's not dissimilar to the locusts their tails were like snakes having heads with which they inflict injury so similar but not with the provisos that the locust had anybody can get smashed by these and I don't know let's just see what we've got so they're from the euphrates so it smacks of foreign invasion it's planned and prepared so it's not haphazard they were kept ready for this very hour and day and month their effect is partial they don't wipe everything out it's one third and they're extremely bizarre and dangerous and deadly which is sort of saying the same thing twice and there they are and I'm not sure that I have got any more understanding to convey but here is something nasty which affects the world in this awful way and is he referring to the prospects or the effects of great wars something like the second world war or something like the first world war is he talking about the effects of terrorism thousands and thousands of people being just blown up for just going around their ordinary daily business is he talking about the effects of disease would

[25 : 09] Ebola be something like this I don't know it's quite a military sort of picture isn't it but why are there such things in the world why does God initiate problems with the ecosystem why does God as it were send things that make life miserable for people why do we live in a world where there are awful things happening on a large scale why well I believe that the next two verses answer the question please look at them the rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands they did not stop worshipping demons and idols of gold silver bronze stone and wood idols that cannot see or hear or walk and incidentally if you're thinking well actually that's a bit old fashioned because people nowadays don't worship things made of gold or silver or bronze metal images but I'll tell you people have all sorts of mental images

I like to think of God as this what I'm trusting in is that what I'm looking to is that the thing that is biggest in my life is that the world is full of idols but they're just not necessarily gold silver bronze stone and wood but if you make an idol out of gold you're making it out of the best material you've got and people are still using their best efforts their best brain power their best artistic ability their best philosophy to make up a God that is not God idols that cannot see or hear or walk they didn't turn away from that nor did they repent of their murders their magic arts their sexual immorality or their thefts the trumpets are sounding the trumpets sound in the book of revelation and I think those

trumpets are still to be heard loud and clear in our world this very day and what are they saying what is the call of the trumpets what are we meant to take away what are we meant to hear I think there is a word here and it's there in verse 20 because people heard the trumpets but they still did not repent and these awesome awful trumpets sound and they say repent repent they say turn from these things to God turn from your God to the real God turn from the thing that looms so large in your life that's the be all and end all but it isn't God it might be something very very good it might be something made out of gold and silver it might be your family you think that's the biggest thing in the world is my family God says repent because the biggest thing in the world is me it might be money and you don't have to have a lot of money to be preoccupied with money please bear that in mind you don't have to have a lot of money to be preoccupied with money that can be your God when you're living on benefits you don't have to be a millionaire please don't think that God says if that is your God I demand that you turn and repent and put me first I can't help but think about in a few years time how retirement is calling and I can I can see how easily that would become an idol beautiful house always sunny you know grand designs escape to the country you can see it and God says I will not have that to be the idol that you live for it needs to be me turn from the work of your hands turn from worshipping idols of gold silver stone bronze and wood idols that cannot see or hear or walk because these idols always promise I will make your life worthwhile I will give you meaning I will fill you with joy but they never deliver it they can't do it they say they'll do stuff but they can't actually see or hear or walk you pray to them they don't actually hear you try and walk with them and they're stuck repent and he says neither they repent of their murders their magic arts their sexual immorality and their thefts it is a tough word do you remember this word was addressed to the churches too wasn't it to five out of seven you need to repent Jesus gave a very beautiful promise to the repenting Christian he says I stand at the door and knock Jesus could be at that door there knocking and he says I'm not that far away really

[31 : 45] I'm just standing at the door knocking if you open the door simple as that I will come in and we will be in fellowship together we'll eat together I'll eat with you you'll eat with me repent open the door I'm just waiting to come in repent is the word so why is the world like it is because God is telling the world to repent like I was talking about with the pain thing in with the children we live in a painful world we do awful things happen but why do we live in a painful world because God is giving a message which says repent and what do you think would be the kindest thing do you think it would be kinder of

God not to send painful things do you think it would be kinder of God just to let the world go on beautifully all the way to hell what would you prefer in your life would you prefer that God got through to you no matter what it takes or would you prefer actually say to God if it's painful I don't really want to know just leave me alone God it's a very good question isn't it God is telling the world to repent repent means to turn from idols which control you which dominate your life which you worship which you look to for meaning I say you I include myself to repent and turn to God C.S. Lewis put it very very well he said we can ignore even pleasure so when God blesses us with good things we can ignore it God can give us good things we never stop to say thank you we never turn to him don't open our Bibles don't pray think oh what a wonderful world what a wonderful beach I'm living on you know palm trees blue sky this is great we don't actually think of God under those circumstances but pain says C.S.

Lewis insists on being attended to God whispers to us in our pleasures speaks in our conscience but he shouts to us in our pain and he rightly said it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world and we must be pretty deaf if we need such a loud megaphone but we are they still did not repent he says so I ask the question what about us do we hear God's voice do we heed the call to turn to him and you might be saying well I'm actually one of the two out of seven that doesn't need to repent on those two church doesn't need to repent and I would say well statistically you're probably on the wrong side of that so

I think the safest thing would be to repent anyway and you could say although the book of revelation doesn't put it this way but you could say that the Christian life is a life of repentance that a Christian is always turning to God from sin we always need to be turning to God from sin my dear pastor Les who sort of mentored me in my early days when I said something about repentance being to do with sin and he said actually repentance is a preoccupation with God it's not a preoccupation with sin it's a turning to God what about us what about you have you turned from idols and sin to God are you going to are you doing it Jesus is at the door this moment would you

open the door to him will you repent when will you repent now would be a good time will you ever repent and in the book of revelation they're given those six trumpets to call to repentance because the seventh trumpet is too late that's the end let's sing together