

Revelation 8:6–12

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- [0 : 00] Let's stand for the reading of God's Word, Revelation 8, verses 6 to 12. 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, and these were thrown upon 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 and 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 they 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.
- [1 : 18] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. I've thought over many years about the privilege of proclaiming the word of God from this very building.
- It was over 11 years ago now that Holy Trinity Church was in the infancy stages in the minds of men and women who were preparing to plant a church, and from my earliest moments in Hyde Park, I saw this magnificent structure standing as the geographic center of the neighborhood and thought, wow, what a privilege it would be to proclaim God's holy word from this place.
- And now we're here on a weekly basis. What's ironic to me is the nature of the texts that God has seen fit to give me as we walk and enter into this space.
- We rented this space on two occasions before being here regularly. And some years ago, the first time I ever proclaimed God's word from here, it was a text that fell in sequence and concerned the issue in some part regarding human sexuality, a very controversial subject.
- The second time I preached from this pulpit, the text, again, falling naturally as they do in the way that we work our ways through, dealt with that matter in Timothy's, Paul's letter to Timothy concerning the women in the church and to what degree they were to speak or to teach.
- [3 : 25] I thought the humor of God, the two great overriding interests of our university context, that of gender and sexuality and my own desire to preach the gospel and to be faithful.
- And from this place, those are the two texts he said, well, young man, if you'd like to give it a go, give it a go. I don't count the sermon of a couple of weeks ago as exposition.
- It was really an entrance into here on sharing some things of my heart. And this is the third text, however, that has been given to me in this very place. And it makes the first two pale in significance.

The final judgment. I'm not blind to those realities and know that my responsibility is to preach faithfully.

But it does make me aware from your vantage point that God is vibrantly alive in the pulpit ministry of this church and has a word and is constraining the preacher concerning his material.

[4 : 37] We enter today into the seven trumpets of revelation. That said, there is an exciting story to tell as I open it.

It has all the advantages of being true. Sixty-one years ago now and only two years removed from the end of World War II, three Middle Eastern Bedouins made their way along the northwest shore of the Dead Sea near the settlement called Qumran.

And as the story is commonly told, one of these nomadic desert-dwelling goat herders threw a rock into a cave attempting to get perhaps an animal that it had been given care over to come out, having lost it.

The sound it made, though, surprised him. It was the sound of pottery shattering, not the sound that he expected of a rock echoing on cold, hard stone.

His curiosity was piqued. And so this Bedouin goat herder, Mohammed Ahmed El Hamed, made his way into the cave.

[5 : 58] And once inside, he waited for his eyes to adjust. And then and there, he made out along the wall several ancient jars, some of them with lids.

And inside, ancient scrolls wrapped in linen. True story. The simple sheep herder could not have possibly known then that as he reemerged from that perfectly dry and protected cave with newfound scrolls in his arms that he was, in that moment, bringing to light things that had been remained hidden for two millennia.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are perhaps the most important revelation or unveiling or manuscript discovery, certainly of our time. And over the next 37 years then, from 1947 until 1979, over a thousand manuscripts were recovered from 11 different caves in that narrow region near the settlement at Qumran.

And one of the original seven scrolls found in Cave 1 by the Bedouin on that famous day is named the War Scroll. 1QM.

It's also been called the War Rule or the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness. And in literary form and genre, it's a mixture of sorts but at times declaratively apocalyptic.

[7 : 49] It speaks in the scroll of seven end-time battles in which the Sons of Light defeat the forces of evil and it comes complete with seven priests all bearing trumpets blowing out continually or giving direction to the battle.

It's a great story. The apocalyptic War Scroll revelation uncovered 61 years ago in a cave remained hidden for two centuries before.

I was reminded of that this week as I began preparing to preach from our text. And as you heard it for the first time, you probably by now can see why.

The language of the seven trumpets in Revelation is of a similar kind. It is of a similar genre as that of the War Scroll. And in Revelation, we also find seven battles each wrapped in the metal of seven trumpets.

The blowing of which brings on the end of the world. The final victory of the Son of God over the dragon of darkness that will roll into chapter 12.

[9 : 14] And so as we approach this text today, we're aware that there are others like it. And we ask three questions to form the structure or shape of our message.

Where does this common imagery of trumpets come from? What do these trumpets mean? And how are we to respond?

So what can we say about this common imagery of trumpets in apocalyptic literature, whether it be Jewish apocalyptic literature or literature or biblical literature?

Where does it come from? It appears that the War Scrolls and Revelation 8 have a common dependence on the book of Joshua.

Do you remember the story of Joshua at the Battle of Jericho? It's the subject of that famous children's song. Joshua fought the battle at Jericho, Jericho, Jericho, and the walls came tumbling down.

[10 : 23] Right? Well, how did they come tumbling down? Well, in Joshua's day, there was a directive from God that seven priests would carry trumpets in procession with the Ark of the Covenant and the people behind and for seven consecutive days they would circle the city of Jericho and each day the trumpets would be there and blown continually.

Seven priests, seven trumpets, and the walls come tumbling down. In Joshua 6, the battle was staged in seven days.

In Revelation 8, it's displayed in seven distinct acts. In Joshua 6, the trumpets are blown by seven priests. Here, if you look at the preceding context, Revelation 8-2, they are held and blown by seven angels.

In Joshua 6, the seventh day is carried out in a manner unlike all the previous six days. And two, in Joshua 8 and following with the seven trumpets, the final seventh day doesn't occur until it is separated by this interim of activity just as we've found in the Hebrew Scriptures.

So knowing this, when you ask yourself if you're reading apocalyptic literature and you're wondering what are things and what do things signify, it seems to me that in apocalyptic literature these seven trumpets, these trumpets are linked to Joshua and in the understanding of that we understand their significance.

[12 : 12] What do the trumpets mean? They signify then that God is judging the earth and that that judgment is inevitable. inevitable. This is the message of the text today that God has come and He intends and is indeed carrying out judgment upon the earth with these seven trumpets and the walls are coming down.

Not only is the judgment inevitable because you remember in Joshua's day the trumpet blowing around the city was not a signal that there was time yet for others to repent or to get their act in order.

It was a symbol of the inevitable declarative act that God had entered the world to judge. To judge. Not only was it inevitable it was in Revelation 8 it becomes universal.

We're just now today entering into the section that will carry us through the next few chapters. And these seven trumpets will show us that the judgment of God is universal in scope.

That God intends to bring down the curtain on the entire world. And today as I have been reflecting on this text it makes us aware that the universe that He created in Genesis by the power of His Word comes to an end in Revelation by the sound of the trumpets.

[13 : 42] And it made me think of the illusions in our text even to the illusions of creation even to the illusions of the song which we sang at the opening. I sing the almighty power of God that made the mountains rise.

That spread the flowing seas abroad and built the lofty skies. I sing the wisdom that ordained sun to rule. The day the moon shines full at His command and all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of the Lord who filled the earth with food. He formed the creatures with His Word and then pronounced them good. All of the Genesis imagery where the world comes forth in bloom under the authority of His Word is in Revelation collapsing, imploding, ending.

To put it as simply as I can, the Bible espouses a view that this world is going to come to a crushing conclusion.

It is going to end and the meaning of the trumpets is clear. So let's take a look at these trumpets. The first trumpet references the earth and the trees and all the green grass.

[15 : 06] chapter 8 verses 6 and 7 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 and these were thrown down upon the earth and a third of the earth was burned up and a third of the trees were burned up and all the grass was burned up.

And in Genesis 1 we found God in the beginning creating the heavens and the earth and it was the activity of the third day in Genesis 1 where it's the activity of creating of filling the earth it was sprouting with vegetation and fruit trees and back then it was called good and now it is being cast away through hail and a great fire is going to be burned up it is going to melt just as Peter writes of elsewhere in his epistle.

The second trumpet brings devastation upon all the animal life in the waters. Look at Revelation 8 verses 8 and 9 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 and a third of the living creatures in the sea died and a third of the ships were destroyed.

A third of the sea creatures perished. In Genesis we found God calling all the exquisite creations of the deep into being by the power of his word on the fifth day wherein we read quote let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures and God bless them.

And listen to what God said about the creatures in the waters at his creative moment quote be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the sea. But now with the volcanic force he is wiping out a third with the sound of this very trumpet.

[17 : 01] The third trumpet wreaks havoc on the waters themselves not merely the animal life within. Verses 10 and 11 the third angel blew his trumpet and a great star fell from heaven blazing like a torch and it fell on the third of the rivers and on the springs of water and 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 rivers and springs are polluted by God and the people the world over are dying as a result and these are the waters in which God who placed in creation those four rivers Genesis 2 at this point the four rivers in the center of the garden from which he would water the garden and extend life to all the world.

The fourth trumpet calls down God's wrath on the greater lights to rule the day and the lesser lights that were to govern the night. Verse 12 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.

The meaning of the trumpets of Revelation 8 is that God who planted the world will uproot the world.

That the entire created order once declared very good in this chapter now rocks and rolls on its axis. The laws of nature itself are no longer strong enough to keep it in existence for the word of God which governs the laws of nature is overriding the continuation of his creation.

[18 : 52] nothing is strong enough to hold it it is shaken to a core it has been vandalized by its maker and the trumpets of one through four are already irretrievably careening toward a final crash this indeed is what John saw.

heaving imagine the earth that now spins on its axis is heaving irreversibly forward headlong at the sound of the trumpets it is falling from very good to almost gone and the whole understanding of a third of it I mean we'll come to here next week but not only is it this dire but in verse 13 you can see that there is going to be an escalation so he says then I looked and heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it threw directly overhead it's almost as if when you get to this point in the message and you're looking for relief the eagle comes and says woe woe woe to those who dwell on the earth at the blast of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow so let me again put it as simply as I can the bible declares and we cannot get around it a view that this world is going to come to a crushing conclusion it is going to end and we might as well get settled with its teaching on that right away now granted in its simplest form a view that the world is going to end is not exclusively a

Christian view Jewish apocalyptic literature holds that the world would end other writers of John's day held that the world would end scientists today hold that the world will end in our own time novelists write works like I think of Neville shoots on the beach that indicate an understanding that the world will end end it's not decidedly Christian what is uniquely Christian though about the scroll of revelation isn't that the world will end but what sets it apart from every other thing in apocalyptic literature are the reasons for it and the one who will oversee it and this is something that you and I need to understand the reasons for the trumpets being blown in the apocalypse of John are the rebellion of all humanity against God remember

God is the creator of the heavens and the earth therefore as its author he has dominion over its work and when we move outside the bounds as we all do and step away from his word and eclipse the glory of his name and build for ourselves a kingdom and an earth that would flourish and flower and rise and steal the glory of it for ourselves then we are under his divine wrath indeed the bible is clear throughout that all of creation is caught up in it all on account of the rebellion of us against God so the saints prayers go up how long oh lord before you'll vindicate your own on the earth how long oh lord until you bring to a conclusion those who would continue to work against your name in the world and as the prayers ascend the trumpets come down i'd like to say a word about its present reality some read revelation 8 and think well there's going to be some time in the future where god's wrath is going to begin to be unfolded against the world but that's not really the appropriate way to read revelation these series of seven sevens in revelation have this recapitulating idea so that the seven churches give way to the seven scrolls and the seven scrolls which unfold the judgments of

God against the world give way to the seven trumpets and as we look ahead further into our text the seven trumpets will give way to the seven bowls and the book of revelation is not to be read as if each of these is sequentially chronologically after the other one but rather it is a retelling a recasting wave upon wave upon wave rolling onto the shores of the world so that what is happening in revelation according to John from the moment of Christ ascension until his return the wrath of God or the rule of God in which he both saves and judges is already being dispensed from the heavens and so as Jesus sits at the right hand of the father the lamb of God who's been given the throne of God the lion from the tribe of Judah even now even now from the outset from the outset of his ascension he is displacing his wrath it's already unflouring it's already underway this is why

[24 : 44] Paul is able to say in Romans that the wrath of God is being revealed he doesn't indicate that the wrath of God will be revealed someday in the future but that it is already being revealed and that's the way to read revelation and all of a sudden then when you read of these judgments the activity of the world does make sense for who among us is not aware that the waters themselves from which much of the world drinks is unfit or polluted who is not aware that the food sources of our world that require the sustenance for our bodies is already endangered in many places who is not aware that the earth is itself already in the process of being burned the reasons for

God's judgment against the world according to the scriptures are clear for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God that's what's unique about biblical apocalyptic literature we read a text like this and we say how dare you God and God in the book of Revelation is revealing how dare you world think that you can rise above your creator and live without giving your life to his will not only is Christian apocalyptic unique for the reasons for it but also the one who will oversee it take a look back at chapter 8 verse 1 and look at the one who is overseeing this movement of the trumpets it says when the lamb opened the seventh seal there was silence in heaven for about half an hour then I saw the seven angels who stood before God and the seven trumpets were given to them and another angel came and stood at the altar and it moves on but it is the lamb of God in chapter 8 which is unfolding the will of God executing the will of God in the world has been given to the lamb of God that is the lamb of

God which we saw in chapter 7 and verse 9 after this I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation from all tribes and people and languages standing before the throne and before the lamb and it is the lamb of God in 8 1 and 7 9 that is connected to the one who was worthy to execute all the scrolls of God in chapter 5 where he was equated with the one who was slain and by whose blood a people in the world was being purchased protected and saved and the lamb in chapter 5 is connected to none other than Jesus Christ by name in chapter 1 for this is the revelation of Jesus Christ who is this one what makes our teaching unique is that God has given all authority all authority to Jesus all authority every bit over every area over every life over every corner over every lake over every stream over every heart everything has been given to him

Jesus presently reigns and is presently unfolding God's will in the world by saving and judging it's interesting that it's Jesus for just as the trumpets in the Old Testament were overseen by whom Joshua so to here Jesus so where do these come from these trumpets they come from a connection and understanding in Joshua what do they mean they mean that God will judge the world what is to be our response and let me say just a few things on this first recognize that this truth of Revelation 8 6-12 demands a complete reorientation of our mind this is a complete reorientation that's needed this is not rebooting your computer this is not recalibrating your mind this is not readjusting your understanding this is a complete total reorientation of the human mind that's what it requires

I remember the line by Churchill it's humorous and perhaps you could use a little humor now he said quote a baboon in the forest is a matter of legitimate speculation a baboon in a zoo is an object of public curiosity but a baboon in your wife's bed is a cause for gravest concern I thought of that this week in this regard for when we begin to think of the end time judgment or the fact that God has given Christ all authority and that he will do what he wishes with the world that he created and he will bring it down so that he would create a new heavens and a new earth that works completely under his reign as he intended these subjects are a matter for legitimate speculation that we derive greater pleasure in exploring biblical texts and other texts as if it's just unrelated to the real living content this is not idle speculation this is not a baboon in the forest nor is it a baboon in a zoo

[31 : 09] I think of the church in this regard of public curiosity which is what the church is in the west the fact that you are in a church at four o'clock on a beautiful Sunday afternoon is great measure for public curiosity but we in the church can begin to think that well we would rather talk about the hiddenness of God the absence of God the presence of God that he doesn't seem to show in my life rarely do we confront the reality of the judgment of God even within the church and so when you walk and you ask yourself what am I to do with this text recognize that this truth demands a complete reorientation of our minds it must reshape our mind it must grab your mind it must inform your mind about everything including the ever present notion that God if he exists would never be a

God of wrath the Bible is clear God is not some elderly impotent father who shows up at the end of each year to wish you a happy new year and usher in the new baby he's omnipotent God to complete reorientation of our understanding of God we've tamed him and even though he vandalizes his world we refuse to see his presence God I guess I would put it this way God is a creator God and as a creator he has the rights over all that he has given life to and therefore he alone has the exclusive right to execute judgment as he sees fit J.I.

Packer has written do you believe in divine judgment by which I mean do you believe in a God who acts as our judge many it seems do not speak to them of God as father as friend a helper one who loves us despite all our weaknesses and folly and sin and their faces lighten up you're on their wavelength at once but speak to them of God as judge and they frown and shake their heads their minds recoil from such an idea they find it repellent and unworthy in other words they are not yet ready to recognize that a complete reorientation of the mind is what is needed and rather than the continual notion in which we elevate ourselves to the future aspirations our minds ought to move toward the equality of humanity in this regard that we are all leveled before him and in need of unbelievable and immediate mercy even to receive our next breath a complete reorientation of mind

I would also say then a complete reorientation of our pursuit there ought to be an urgency in our heart as we hear these truths proclaimed we ought to come to a decided belief that we are not the center piece of activity in the world that God is the center piece of all activity that the Bible will not allow itself to be merely another scroll it is unlike one QM in every respect along these lines it won't allow itself to be relegated to one among!

many it brings to light the very real work of the very real God in a very fallen world of women and men and then finally we ought to run and I don't mean run to the hills look for the northwest side of the Dead Sea near the settlement of Qumran and hide in the cave no I mean we ought to run to God where else can we go he who would judge us is he who would save us he who pours out his wrath is he who redeems Jesus in fury is

[35 : 55] Jesus as savior and friend and the book of revelation is filled with this we ought to be driven to ask ourselves great you've shown me these things in revelation what else is there is there good news here is there gospel here is there hope for all people here and yes there is if we've been following through revelation as many of you have through the last months we've seen that God has intended in the midst of judgment he stood the four angels aside and said wait halt no judgment until my people are sealed and he seals the full number and the full number is a multitude that could not be counted so that as his judgment is rolling through the world like wave upon wave upon wave he is strong enough to save and he is intended to save he has declared that he would save and those are the verses that you ought to read over and over and over again to remind to remind yourself that

God is merciful and kind and good chapter 7 verse 1 take a look at revelation 6 verse 17 for the great day of their wrath has come who can stand and the answer is after this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds of the earth that no wind might blow or see against the tree then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun with the seal of the living God and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea saying do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God so we run to God we run to Christ we can escape what the scriptures will speak of in revelation as a second death we can be those of whom the seven churches were called overcomers we can be granted the tree of life in later revelation we can be gathering around the throne and the lamb as chapter seven has made clear a number that no one could number from every nation all tribes all peoples in this sense

I am a universalist! For as God's judgment is universally rolling across the world so he is universally saving from every people language tribe and nation and he is putting within them his spirit his seal protecting guarding guiding so that in this awful day we sing the almighty power of God Robert Louis Stevenson wrote a brief little poem when the stars are gone he says the stars shine over the mountains the stars shine over the seas the stars look up to the mighty God the stars look down on me the stars shall last for a million years a million years and a day but

God and I will live and love when the stars have passed away is it true for you as we walk our way through revelation are you recognizing that it requires a complete reorientation of your mind and are you willing to run to the Savior let's pray our heavenly father this this scroll this scroll which has been in plain view for 2000 years this unveiling this revelation of John has put forward to the church through the centuries the supremacy of Christ over all things and while it has given us a gravity of spirit it also empowers us with a gladness of heart for in it we see

Jesus we renounce this afternoon ourselves as the center of our lives and we seek him to be lord over us and to do with us what he will oh lord the time is short may you yet bring your good news to many in Jesus name amen I'm going to encourage you to stand