

## Let the Trumpets Sound

**Text:** Revelation 8.1–13

**Theme:** God's steadfast mercy protects His children from His glorious judgments upon those unrepentant unbelievers.

### Introduction — Most of us know the “joy” of this sound when traveling:

- are we there yet? How much longer?
- we know it's coming, yet somehow we dread it
- but what if God were, sadly, like us? Dreading our “how longs?”

### Here are some of our “How long” questions:

- how long will the wicked dishonor the Messiah and love what is worthless and seek lies?
- how long until we're healed and no longer do things that provoke God's wrath?
- how long will it seem like God has forgotten us and is hiding His face while the enemy exalts over us?
- how long will the Lord look on before He delivers?
- how long will the righteous be attacked?
- how long will the enemies of God scoff and revile His name?
- how long will God's anger against His people who have sinned continue?
- how long will God refuse to answer the prayers of His people?
- how long before the Lord returns and has pity on His servants?
- how long will God allow the wicked to exult and gloat?
- how long must God's servants endure persecution?
- how long until God begins to avenge the blood of the martyrs?

### All these are from the Psalms, excepting the last

- we ask these kinds of questions outside the Scriptures as well, don't we
- how long must I suffer this painful disease, illness or recovery?
- how long before God remakes the world and babies in the womb are no longer murdered?
- how long must I struggle with temptation to...?
- how long until final redemption comes?
- how long until there is an end to suffering?

### What do you think it will be like when God finally decides it is time?

- we've heard the martyrs under the altar in 6.11 told “rest a little longer”
- we saw the terrors of God's judgment being unleashed in ch. 6
- when the “how long?” finally gets answered, many will wish they had longer

### So, what do we need when we look at this text in Revelation 8?

- we need encouragement to keep on praying, even for Christ's return
- we need to see that the earth the birth pangs prior to God's final judgment upon sin
- we need to comprehend that these judgments declare the glory of God's righteousness
- and we need to know that our “How Longs?” are being answered even now

Ultimately, Revelation 8 tells us that God's steadfast mercy protects His children from His glorious judgments upon unrepentant unbelievers

*We'll see this first as we examine...*

#### I. OUR PRAYERS & THE END OF THE WORLD (VV. 1–5)

- ch 7 was an interlude from the first six seals being opened by the Lamb

- now, as seal #7 is opened, there is a great silence
- this is needful in view of what is coming

### 1. The great silence

- we don't like silences for very long
- we especially don't like them in church services
- you go quiet during a prayer for too long and we're all looking at our watches first
- then we start peeking around to see who forgot whatever is coming next
- but this silence in heaven must be deafening
- so far, what we've seen in heaven is nothing close to silent
- there is praising and shouting and the thundering of voices and instruments
- now there is silence
- Habakkuk 2.20 says, **“But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.”**
- **“Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the LORD is near...”** Zephaniah 1.7
- Zechariah 2.13 says, **“Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.”**
- John gets a glimpse into heaven once again as the scene is set for the trumpets to begin

### 2. Prepare for the judgment of God

- v. 2 gets us ready for the trumpets of judgment
- authority comes from God to these angels who will each blow one of the seven trumpets
- God gave these angels the trumpets, thus initiating the outworking of His plan for the end

### 3. But look what's going on first

- vv. 3–5 remind us of 6.9–11 and the martyrs under the altar; this may be the same altar
- there, the martyrs cried out “How long?”
- these prayers now rise, like incense, before God
- these are prayers for God to bring His plan of salvation history to an end

### 4. Will your prayers be among these?

- if you trust Christ, and if you are praying, then the answer is yes, they will be
- let's not forget what we've seen so far, what Christ has revealed
- Christ, the Lamb slain, has opened the seals, fulfilling God's eternal decrees
- that scroll contains God's absolute, sovereign and free will for the ages
- and your prayers need be a part of this

### 5. If God has decreed all this, why pray?

- that question is answered right here in Revelation 8.1–5
- God has not only decreed from all eternity what will happen...
- He has also decreed that our prayers should be a means by which these things happen
- it is not just the end that He has sovereignly ordained
- it is the means that will get us all to that end; and our prayers are a part of this
- this involves praying for the lost—that they will come to saving faith in Jesus
- this involves praying for those taking the gospel around the world to those lost souls
- this involves praying for the preaching of His Word to you here who are not saved
- and it means praying for your own soul, you who are redeemed, that you are strengthened
- prayer is one of the means by which we will persevere to the end in patient endurance
- it is one of the means by which Christ's church will stand firm to the end

- God uses the prayers of His saints to carry out His eternal decrees
- just notice here how the seven angels are given the seven trumpets
- but they cannot blow them until the incense—our prayers—are offered up to God

### 6. In line with God's will

- this is what prayer does; it does not change God's mind
- God's mind, His good, acceptable, and perfect will are decreed and set
- but our minds and hearts are changed thru prayer to be in line with God's will
- if you're not praying, you cannot know God's will, nor are you following God's will
- you will not hinder God's will, but you will not be ready for it when it comes
- whether that's tomorrow at work or when the end of the age finally comes
- prayer is not just a way to beautify your spiritual life
- it definitely is not self-help therapy to make you feel better about yourself
- prayer is a powerful means that God uses to carry out His eternal decrees
- God uses the prayers of ALL the saints
- Satan tries to tempt you to think that your prayers can't possibly matter
- but Satan is a liar; has been since the beginning of the world
- God listens to our prayers, for they are a part of His plan
- what God is doing here, He does now as well: He hallows His name
- Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed—made holy—be Thy name
- He does this to prepare the way for His final judgment upon the earth
- and it is the trumpet blasts that herald His great name

*So, let's see, along with John...*

## II. GOD'S WRATH POURED OUT (VV. 6–12)

- when John moves from seven seals to seven trumpets, can't help but see a pattern
- there were four seals before we saw the martyrs under the altar
- here, we'll hear four trumpet blasts that also go together
- but now, here as well, we see the saints secured in God in heaven
- now we'll see the terrible state of those who do not know Christ on earth
- and as if that weren't enough warning, we hear the ominous words in 8.13
- **“Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!”**
- this is like saying, “The worst is yet to come!”

### 1. What happens when these trumpets sound

- trumpets are often associated with the end of the world
- Matthew 24.31 says, **“And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”**
- Paul does the same in 1 Corinthians 15.52: **“...we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the last trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”**
- but these first trumpets do not herald the immediate return of Christ
- they warn of disasters in the world
- three things happen when these trumpets sound

### 2. First, world security ends

- this is like an echo of how God used Moses to bring plagues upon Egypt

- this was to teach Pharaoh & Egypt they could not depend upon their own strength or resources
- in Moses' day, Egypt had almost unlimited resources, an amazingly wealthy nation
- yet, under the mighty hand of God and a humble servant of God, it all crumbled
- none of the riches in this life are secure

### 1) Everywhere in Revelation

- this is apparent right here
- first angel blows trumpet & one third of earth is burned up, one third of trees & grass
- with the second trumpet, we see further devastation
- “something like a great mountain” — whatever this is it is huge
- burning & thrown into the sea: 1/3 of water into blood, 1/3 of sea creatures & ships also
- then comes the third trumpet, bringing a great star falling from heaven
- 1/3 of rivers & springs turned bitter
- and then the fourth, 1/3 of light from sun, moon, stars is extinguished
- darkness during 1/3 of day, and even more pitch dark at night
- any bit of security mankind once trusted in is stripped away with these judgments
- anything unbelieving earth-dwellers leaned on other than God is gone
- warning is clear: do not trust in your own strength, attainments, riches; trust in God

### 2) Yet comfort comes to the believer

- we stand in awe when God shakes communities, nations, or even the world order
- we learn once again that we have nothing in ourselves
- instead, we have an unshakable hope in Jesus Christ
- God has sealed us, protecting us from His wrath, since that all fell on Christ at the cross
- the Holy Spirit is our guarantee of eternity in Christ's presence
- this is our hope: God is our refuge
- when the kings, presidents, prime ministers of this world abuse God's people
- when nations and governments mock the Lord & His rule
- we are comforted that all that will be overthrown
- their security is utterly unreliable
- kingdoms rise and fall, empires fade away always, nothing of this world lasts forever

### 3) Your own security

- maybe you're feeling the lack of security with your job & workplace
- perhaps things at home are not as stable as you'd like
- it could even be your own physical well-being is proving far too vacillating
- our conversion thru faith in Jesus does not guarantee freedom from such things
- it does, however, give us the security that God is always our refuge, our strength
- He keeps us and protects us, even when His powerful wrath will come upon this world

### 3. When Judgment comes

- second thing that takes place when these trumpets sound is this: judgment is imminent
- in the Old Testament, trumpets were used to sound an alarm
- that's what's also happening here: Wake up! Alert! Judgment comes!
- Psalm 105.7 — **“He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth.”**
- these judgments are very similar to those that came upon Egypt
- we have hail & fire in both Rev 8 and Exodus 9
- in both passages horrible things happen to the unbelievers, but God's people are secure

- the second angel sounds forth & the great mountain is hurled down
- this is similar to Exodus with all the fish of the Nile dying as judgment from God
- trumpets 3 & 4 do much the same: echo forth what God did to Egypt
- these judgments are economic, ecological, industrial, and physical disasters
- these are given so that people would wake up, be warned, be given one final chance to repent
- and yet, sadly, we see how this turns out
- Rev 9.21: **“...nor did they repent of their [many sins]”**

#### 4. God is patient

- and this is the third thing we learn from these trumpets
- these judgments are not the final judgment, even though they are horrific & devastating
- the world is not yet destroyed; here, only one-third is affected
- but that should be enough to awaken and warn those who dwell on the earth
- remember that phrase: it's the code phrase for unbelievers, the unrepentant sinner
- these trumpets call out: God is patient, but only for a time
- God asks, thru His servant Paul, in Romans 2.4:
- **“Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kings is meant to lead you to repentance?”**
- judgments have come in past history, calling out for unbelievers to repent
- may our prayers be effective as the rising incense unto God that many would still repent
- God's heart longs for people to come to repentance
- sadly, too many view this was a mystery
- they're too busy trying to understand, “Why did God allow this disaster, this disease?”
- and that's the tragedy: sin persists despite God's warnings

*So, God gives a brash, loud warning...*

#### III. EARTH-DWELLERS: BEWARE! (v. 13)

- when Isaiah saw the Lord, in Isaiah 6, the angelic beings cried “Holy, holy, holy!”
- this is to emphasize something no one should miss at all
- same thing happening here: “Woe, woe, woe!”
- those who dwell in the earth — sinners unrepentant, unbelievers living as if there was no God
- they are to pay attention
- and we must pray for them; that's what we see in vv. 3–5
- God will use our prayers for the salvation of many
- but will you pray? Are you praying even now for one unrepentant person here today?
- God's steadfast mercy cries out “Woe, woe, woe; repent, repent, repent!”
- do so today, before it is too late

#### Conclusion – D.A. Carson, teacher at Trinity Seminary, theologian, gift to church

- wrote of his father
- D.A. Carson writes of his father:

Dad's practice in private prayer was to kneel before the big chair that he used and pray loudly enough to vocalize, so as to keep his mind from wandering. Outside the door we could hear him praying, even if we could not hear what he was saying. I can remember countless days when he prayed for forty-five minutes or more; strange to tell, at this juncture I cannot recall days when he didn't. Jim [D.A. Carson's brother] recalls barging in on dad's study unannounced, finding him on his knees praying, and then quietly backing out. [Jim wrote] “but the image has always remained with me, especially during my later, rebellious teen years. While walking away from God, I

could not get away from the image of my father on his knees, praying for me. It is one of the things that eventually brought me back.”

- God will answer the prayers of his people.
- Let's be sure that we praise Jesus taught us to pray
- that way, our prayers will be among those that God answers.