

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Revelation		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	35		Gary L.W. Johnson
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THE SEVEN TRUMPETS OF DIVINE JUDGMENT (Part III)

“Trumpets are not simply heralds of coming events, but are more distinctively alarms summoning the hosts of an army to battle, and are often intimately associated with the judgments of God: *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion and sound the alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the earth tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, and it is nigh at hand.* – Joel 2:1. The Judgments of God fall with peculiar force upon the world but to a certain extent affect the peace and serenity of the saints as well. The church is in the midst of the world, intimately associated with its welfare, engaged in the same occupations, discharging the same duties, exposed to the same trials and mingling in the same peaceful arts. Some of the plagues of Egypt affect Israel as well but not to the same extent. The difference begins to emerge in the immunity of Israel from the later plagues, reaching the climax in the salvation of Israel and the utter destruction of Egypt. The saints share, to a certain extent, the fortunes and misfortunes of their fellow men in wars, pestilences and other temporal judgments, but are unscathingly preserved, being *sealed* against the extreme penalty, thereby escaping the fearful destruction of the ungodly element of society. – Rev. 9:4.”¹ The *first* trumpet brought Hail, Fire, and Blood upon the land (8:7). The *second* trumpet saw something *like* a burning mountain fall into the sea (8:8, 9). The *third* trumpet has a burning star falling on rivers and springs (8:10, 11). The *fourth* trumpet has Sun, Moon and Stars darkened (8:12). Beale points out that a mountain in Revelation “is often a metaphorical description for an earthly *kingdom* (see 14:1; 17:9; cf. 21:10). Perhaps this trumpet is a reference to the judgment of evil kingdoms on the earth that oppose the kingdom of Christ. Those evil kingdoms in Revelation are symbolically identified with the name Babylon. Jeremiah 51:25 equates Babylon with a mountain and prophesies her judgment in similar language: *Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, declares the Lord, which destroys the whole earth; I will stretch out my hand against you, and roll you down from the crags, and make you a burnt mountain.* Could it be that since the mountain is a metaphor for the judgment of Babylon in Jeremiah 51, *mountains* function in the same way in Revelation 8? The description of a third of the sea becoming blood is a direct allusion to Exodus 7:20 and the plague against the Nile River. In both cases, the fish obviously die.”² “The purpose of the first four trumpet judgments is primarily to disprove the earthly gods and to show that Yahweh alone is on the throne. By recapitulating the Egyptian plagues, God wants to make his omnipotence known to the world and to show the futility of turning against him. Each of these judgments addresses a different aspect of life in the ancient world and in the modern world as well. The first shows that the material world is no answer, the second and third address the sea trade, including food supplies, and the fourth focuses on life itself in the heat and light of the celestial bodies. The four together prove that those who live only for this world have chosen foolishly, for only in God is there true life. Earthly things turn on us, and we dare not depend on them.”³

13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying directly overhead, proclaiming with a loud voice, “Woe! Woe! Woe to those who live on the earth because of the remaining sounds of the trumpets of the three

angels who are about to blow them!” The purpose of verse 13 is to highlight the greater harshness of the final three trumpets. This eagle/vulture may or may not be the eagle-like creature from 4:7. “In 19:17-18 the birds of prey (those *flying in midair*; cf. 8:13) are gathered to eat the flesh of kings and all people.”⁴ The Greek translated “Woe! Woe! Woe” is onomatopoeic, reflecting the sound made by the eagle.⁵ “In both the OT and the NT *woe!* Is an interjection, an exclamation of grief or a denouncement. The Greek is *ouai*. There are a number of short Hebrew exclamations that may be so translated. (*ôy*, *ôyâh*, *î*, *’allay*, *hây*, and *râzî*).⁶ Ladd adds: “An eagle announces the impending woes. An eagle is chosen because of its strength of wing (12:14), which gives it a wide perspective. The eagle flies at the meridian or zenith of the sky where the sun stands at midday where it can be seen by all. The threefold *woe, woe, woe* announce the last three trumpets and the plagues that will accompany them. *Those who dwell on the earth* is a repeated expression in the Revelation designating the pagan world in its hostility to God (3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:8; 17:2). Here, again, it is implied that the plagues of divine wrath fall upon the rebellious, evil society, but that the church, which has been sealed with the protective seal of God, is somehow spared from the sufferings of these plagues. This is explicitly stated after the fifth angel sounds his trumpet in 9:4.”⁷

CONCLUSION: Hebrews 10:19-25 reads: “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” The late R. C. Sproul, in citing this passage, declares, “This text includes an exhortation that follows the teaching of the perfect sacrifice of Christ. The exhortation is intensified in light of the reader’s vision of the approaching day. The nearness of Christ’s coming is reinforced in verse 37: *For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry* (Heb. 10:37). It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the author of Hebrews links the approaching day with the coming of Christ and says that both are close at hand.”⁸

ENDNOTES

¹ S. L. Morris, *The Drama of Christianity: An Interpretation of The Book of Revelation* (rpt. Baker, 1982), p. 65.

² G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1999). He writes, “All this enforces the conclusion in Rev. 8:8 that the burning mountain cast into the sea refers to the judgment of a wicked kingdom. This kingdom is to be identified as *Babylon, the great city* of Revelation 11-18, which holds sway over the evil world system. That the burning mountain is the object of God’s judgment and not the agent of judgment is clear from Jeremiah 51 and from the fact elsewhere in the OT that mountains representing nations are always portrayed as the objects of God’s judgment (e.g., Isa. 41:15 [the Targum has *Gentiles and kingdoms*] 42:15; Ezek. 35:2-7; Zech. 4:7). Therefore, the picture in Rev. 8:8 did not originate from an attempt to depict a literal volcanic eruption or some other natural phenomenon occurring in the first century or predicted for later. A literal reading is rendered unlikely here and throughout the visionary section by the simple observation that the catastrophes are inspired primarily by OT literary models that contain figures of speech. This does not mean that such models could not have been used to describe literal disasters, but the burden of proof is on those who hold to a literal understanding in addition to a figurative perspective,” p. 476.

³ G. Osborne, *Revelation: Baker Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament* (Baker, 2002), p. 357.

⁴ R. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation: The New International Commentary on The New Testament* (Eerdmans, 2010), p. 789.

⁵ I. Boxall, *Revelation of Saint John: Black’s New Testament Commentary* (Baker, 2009), p. 140.

⁶ G. L. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Zondervan, 1985), p. 631.

⁷ G. Ladd, *A Commentary on The Revelation of John* (Eerdmans, 1975), p. 128.

⁸ R. C. Sproul, *The Last Days According To Jesus* (Baker, 1998), p. 107.