

The Seven Trumpets

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

In introducing this subject let us first of all discuss the question, Do the trumpets have a secondary end time application? This view is held by an increasing number of Adventists today. The historic SDA position is that only the seventh trumpet has an end time application.

Do the other six trumpets also apply to the time of the end? The following statement is used as authority for this position,

“Trumpet after trumpet is to be sounded, vial after vial poured out one after the other upon the inhabitants of the earth.” 3 Selected Messages, page 426. See also “The Appendix,” pages 16-17. [1]

On the basis of this statement it is concluded that the trumpets are yet future. What is the answer to this view? There is no hint whatsoever in the above statement that it is an exposition of the prophecy of the 7 trumpets of Revelation. In fact it appears that the term “trumpet” is used in a general sense of a call to battle in the coming crisis of the church. The phrases used in the full Spirit of Prophecy statement certainly confirm this.

“In this last conflict the Captain of the Lord’s host is leading on the armies of heaven and mingling in the ranks and fighting our battles for us. We would lose faith and courage in the conflict, if we were not sustained by the power of God. Every form of evil is to spring into intense activity. Evil angels unite their powers with evil men—they will not yield the last great final contest without a desperate struggle and all the world will be on one side or the other of the question. The battle of Armageddon will be fought and that day not find none of us sleeping. The Captain of the Lord’s hosts will stand at the head of the angels of heaven to direct the battle. Trumpet after trumpet is to be sounded; vial after vial poured out one after another, on the inhabitants of the earth.” 3 Selected Messages, page 425-426. [2]

The term trumpet is employed as a call to battle, to stand up and be counted in the great conflict before us. Are the seven trumpets identical with or associated with the seven last plagues? The statement reads, “Trumpet after trumpet is to be sounded, vial after vial is to be poured out.” Some conclude that if this refers to the seven trumpets then the trumpets are associated with the plagues. This is not necessarily so. The word “vial” does represent a plague, but the expression could refer to other plagues that may fall upon mankind before the close of probation. Already there are evidences of a plague epidemic. The A.I.D.S. disease is even labeled “the wrath of God”! Undoubtedly we will see other epidemics which will be so devastating that the population of the earth could be lowered.

In connection with the 7 trumpets of Revelation, the term plagues is used.

“The rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues (or trumpets) yet repented not of the works of their hands.” Revelation 9:20.

The seven trumpets were certainly a type of plague upon the inhabitants in the areas where they applied, but they are not the seven LAST plagues. The seven plagues just prior to the second advent are the LAST plagues, indicating that there were other plagues beforehand. (See Appendix for another misuse of S.O.P. statement. page 16.)

The setting of the trumpets clearly indicates that the first six were fulfilled before 1844 AD. In the introduction to the trumpets an angel offers the prayers of the saints at the altar of incense in the heavenly temple. This ministry was performed in the first apartment of the sanctuary which continued from Christ's ascension until 1844 when it transferred to the second apartment of the heavenly temple. In the sixth trumpet also, it says,

"I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God." Revelation 9:13.

This is another first apartment scene indicating that the sixth trumpet was taking place during the time when the ministry of Christ was in the first apartment, i.e. before 1844 AD. But what of the similarities between the trumpets and the plagues?

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN TRUMPETS AND PLAGUES

On the surface it appears that the trumpets and plagues are identical, and many scholars have drawn this conclusion. However not only are there similarities but there are a greater number of differences between the plagues and trumpets, as the following diagram reveals.

SEVEN TRUMPETS

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|---|------------------|
| 1. Upon the earth | Revelation 8:7 |
| 2. Upon the sea | Revelation 8:8 |
| 3. Rivers & fountains of waters | Revelation 8:10 |
| 4. Sun smitten | Revelation 8:12 |
| 5. Air darkened | Revelation 9:2 |
| 6. Great River Euphrates | Revelation 9:4 |
| 7. Mystery of God finished | Revelation 10:7 |
| 8. Lightning, voices thundering, earthquake, great hail | Revelation 11:19 |

SEVEN PLAGUES

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Upon the earth | Revelation 16:2 |
| 2. Upon the sea | Revelation 16:3 |
| 3. Rivers & fountains of waters | Revelation 16:4 |
| 4. Upon the sun | Revelation 16:8 |
| 5. Darkness | Revelation 16:1 |
| 6. Great River Euphrates | Revelation 16:12 |
| 7. "It is done" | Revelation 16:17 |
| 8. Voices, thunders, lightning, great earthquake, hail | Revelation 16:18 |

THE DIFFERENCES SO THEY ARE NOT IDENTICAL**TRUMPETS**

Six symbolic.	One literal
First.	4 affect 33% of the Earth's surface
First.	'Hail, Fire & Blood.'
Second.	33% sea turned to blood. 33% sea creatures die
Third.	33% waters turned bitter
Fourth.	33% Sun, Moon, stars smitten, 33% day turned into darkness.
Fifth.	Smoke from pit - darkness. Locusts torment for 5 months
Sixth.	Angel (spirits) loosed from Euphrates. Myriads of horsemen kill 33% of men.
Seventh.	Gospel concluded. Events extend to End of Millennium.

PLAGUES

6 literal.	One symbolic
First	4 are worldwide
First	'Noisome & grievous sore.'
Second.	Sea as blood of dead man.
Third.	All drinking water becomes blood.
Fourth.	Sun more active - men smitten with fierce heat
Fifth.	Papal kingdom filled with darkness
Sixth.	Euphrates dried up and Evil spirits unite whole world against God.
Seventh.	Great earthquake. Cities of world fall. Ends at the Second Advent.

These differences (and there are many more) show that the trumpets and plagues are entirely separate and distinct. How then shall we interpret the seven trumpets of Revelation? The historic SDA view is that the first six trumpets apply to the downfall of the Roman Empire and the seventh trumpet refers to the downfall of the whole world when it becomes, as it were, a revived Roman Empire under the papacy. The positions currently taught by our leading S.D.A. academic institutions follow those of Dr. Edwin Thiele. Dr. M. Maxwell in "God Cares II" admits the same. [3]

The first trumpet, it is claimed, deals with the destruction of Jerusalem, The second deals with the fall of Western Rome, the third, with the pollution of the gospel by the papacy. The fourth trumpet deals with Christ's heavenly ministry being obscured by a false system of mediation. On the fifth trumpet, their position agrees with the historic SDA view, that it refers to the Arabs. Likewise with the sixth trumpet, that it refers to the Turks. This appears to be the current view concerning the seven trumpets. [4]

Will this modern Interpretation stand up under investigation? There are some serious questions concerning it. For example, the first trumpet is applied to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. This event occurred 25 years before John began to write Revelation, and when he wrote he was shown "things which must shortly come to pass" (Revelation 1:1). Therefore the destruction of Jerusalem would barely come into the picture, because it was already history. The destruction of Jerusalem was a fulfillment of other great predictions made many centuries before. Moses in Deut.28:49-68 gave a very detailed prediction concerning the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

Daniel, in Daniel 9:26-27 predicted the same and Jesus in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and particularly in Luke 21 also predicted that event. The second point where this interpretation is under question is that in the first trumpet "all green grass was burnt up." and this it is claimed, symbolized God's people flourishing in righteousness. (God Cares Volume 2, page 237). [5] But in the destruction of Jerusalem the Jews were not flourishing in righteousness - it was exactly the opposite. They had reached the height of rebellion against God, and they were no longer God's people. Their probation as God's people, had ended in 34 AD.

The third point under question is the third trumpet where it mentions a “star falling from heaven” and that it represents Satan. In scripture a star represents a leader. While Satan was the leader of the angels, it could refer to another leader. In Revelation 1:20 the leaders in God’s church are likened to stars. Daniel 8:10 indicates the same. In Jude 1:13 apostate leaders are referred to as “wandering stars”.

“The stars of heaven are under God’s control; he fills them with light; if he did not, they would become fallen stars, so with his ministers.” Gospel Workers, page 13-14. [6]

A falling star then may not only refer to Satan but to human leaders - even religious leaders. We will show that there is another interpretation of the third trumpet that is far more satisfactory. Another claim that must be questioned is that in the second trumpet a mountain is cast into the sea, and this represents the Gothic invasions that overthrew the Roman Empire. [7] But it is only one mountain that is cast into the sea, one kingdom, for a mountain in scripture represents a kingdom, whereas the Gothic barbarians that invaded the Roman Empire and brought it to its end involved at least six different peoples or tribes or kingdoms. Probably ten different peoples or more - such as the Visigoths, the Ostrogoths, the Huns, the Vandals, the Suevi, the Burgundians, the Heruli and others. The mountain is cast into the sea - it is connected with the sea, and history is quite clear that only one Gothic power had association with the sea. Again in the third trumpet the falling star, called wormwood, is claimed to represent the polluting of one third of the world by Rome’s apostasy of the middle ages. [8] But Rome’s apostasy affected almost the whole then known world, not just a third of it. According to Revelation 2:20 even some of God’s people were infected with the apostasy. In the fourth trumpet a third of the sun was darkened etc. which it is claimed represents Christ’s heavenly ministry being obscured by the papal priesthood, the counterfeit system of mediation. [9] But the papal counterfeit obscured not just a third of the world of the day but more like nine tenths of it. We believe that we should look for a more satisfactory interpretation of the first four trumpets.

Will the historic SDA view stand up under the microscope of scripture? When we re-examine the historic Adventist interpretation there are some things we need to consider. Is every item mentioned in the trumpets to be taken as symbolic? It is generally understood that the trumpets are symbolic, but how much is symbolic and how much is literal? In this area there is confusion. Can the symbolic and literal be employed in the one description? Scripture often combines the two. The symbolic and literal are employed together, and it is important to differentiate between the two. For example notice the following psalm.

“Thou has brought a vine out of Egypt and has cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou prepared room before it and did cause it to take deep root and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs to the sea and her branches to the river.” Psalm 80:8-11.

Here is a combination of symbolic and literal. “Thou has brought a vine out of Egypt”. “Egypt” is literal and “vine” is a symbol of Israel.

“You has cast out the heathen” (literal) “and planted it” (symbolic). “Though prepared room before it” (literal) “and did cause it to take deep root”, (symbolic) and, “it filled the land” (literally) “the hills were covered with the shadow of it” (symbolic) and “the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars” (symbolic) “She sent out her boughs” (symbolic) “to the sea” (literal sea - Mediterranean) “and her branches to the river.” (Literal Euphrates River). A similar pattern is found in Jeremiah 3:6; Ezekiel 27:26; Ezekiel 32:6-7 and Hosea 13:15. Therefore it is necessary to determine what is symbolic, and what is literal in the wording of the seven trumpets.

In examining the first six trumpets it appears that generally the initial terms used to describe the trumpet are in symbolic language, while the effects of the trumpet in the first three are expressed in literal terms but in the fourth trumpet they are expressed in symbolic terms. In the fifth and sixth trumpets the initial description again is in symbolic language with one or two exceptions but the explanation of the symbols is in literal language, except for a couple of points. The effects of the fifth and sixth trumpets are mostly in literal language.

The historic SDA position is not original with them. It has been held by many scholars of yesteryear, prior to 1844. [10] What does a trumpet represent in prophecy? In scripture the trumpet was employed for four different reasons.

1. To proclaim the various festivals of Israel such as the Sabbath, New Moons, New Year, Holy Convocations and Feasts.
2. To summon Israel to prayer and praise.
3. To proclaim the time of each advance of the camp of Israel in their wilderness journeyings toward the Promised Land. [11]
4. A call to arms, or a warning of an enemy invasion. The fourth reason appears to be one that applies to the seven trumpets.

A trumpet denotes an invasion of enemy forces. This is made very clear by Jeremiah, “Blow you the trumpet in the land, cry, gather together and say, Assemble yourselves and let us go into the defended cities.”

It denotes an invasion is imminent, enemy forces are at hand.

“I am pained at my very heart. My heart makes a noise in me, I cannot hold my peace because thou has heard oh my soul the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.” Jeremiah 4:4-5, 19.

The trumpet denotes an alarm of war. The historic Adventist position is that the -first six trumpets denote a military invasion against the mighty Roman Empire. [12] The seventh trumpet denotes an invasion against this rebel world by Christ and the armies of heaven, when “the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord.”

What evidence do we have that the Roman Empire could be the object of the first six trumpets? This undoubtedly is the crux of the matter. Have SDA’s been justified in applying the first six trumpets to the downfall of the Roman Empire? We offer the following reasons.

In John’s day, when Revelation was written, according to Edward Gibbon, the greatest authority on Rome, “The Roman Empire filled the world.” It was a Roman world. John was a prisoner on the isle of Patmos, a victim of Roman oppression. Secondly, the scene of the trumpets is described at least four times, as “the earth”, also “the sea”, vegetation and waters. What do these represent? Undoubtedly a part of this world. The world of New Testament times, until the fifth century, was the Roman world. In Luke 2:1 it mentions how a decree from Augustus Caesar went forth for “all the world to be taxed”. What world? The Roman world.

Secular authors in those years recognized that the world of that day was indeed the Roman world. (Ovid & Dionysius “Horae Apocalypse.” Elliott, Volume 1, page 359) [13] Sir Isaac Newton the famous scientist, who spent over 40 years in the study of prophecy in commenting on Revelation 8:5 and the fire being cast upon the earth, says,

“Such a fire was cast upon the earth, the Roman world, the territorial platform of prophecy.” [14]

There is a third reason why the trumpets refer to the Roman world. The first four trumpets are linked together. Likewise the last three. The terms used in the first four trumpets denote invading, destructive, military powers which are employed to punish apostate peoples. What historical drama in history back to the time of John the Revelator meets such a specification? There is only one and that is the downfall of the Roman Empire, by the barbarians who swept over Western Rome and ended that empire. The first four trumpets deal with Western Rome, the fifth and sixth deal with Eastern Rome. Notice the telling comment on this point by Dr. Albert Barnes, (the noted Presbyterian scholar of the 1850’s)

“There are four of these “trumpets”, and it would be a matter of inquiry whether there were four events of sufficient distinctness that would mark these invasions or that would constitute periods or epochs in the destruction of the Roman power. At this point in writing I looked upon a chart of history, composed with

no reference to this prophecy, and found a singular and unexpected prominence given to four such events extending from the first invasion of the Goths and Vandals at the beginning of the fifth century to the fall of the Western empire AD 476. The first was the invasion of Alaric king of the Goths, AD 410; the second was the invasion of Attila king of the Huns, AD 447; a third was the sack of Rome by Genseric king of the Vandals, and the fourth resulting in the final conquest of Rome, was that of Odoacer king of the Heruli.” ‘Notes on Revelation 8.’ [15]

The fourth point indicating that it was the Roman world, is that the trumpets are described as “divine judgments on God’s professed people in apostasy.” Revelation 9:20 confirms this. Where did apostasy develop in the early Christian church? In the Mediterranean world, the Roman world, in the Christian church in the Roman Empire, and finally it centered in the church at Rome itself.

What political powers and people supported and protected this apostasy? The Roman Empire after the Caesars became Christian. Were there any other powers or people at that time that could fit this specification? Not one. Therefore the first six trumpets must apply to the Roman Empire. Dr. M. Maxwell comments,

“It is noteworthy that the century of disasters (378-476 AD) we have been talking about, befell Rome after she had adopted Christianity. The Roman Empire had become in a sense an apostate people of God, ripe for experiencing the judgment of God, inflicted by her enemies.” God Cares, Volume 2, page 240. [16]

There is another point, as to why this prediction of the 7 trumpets must apply to the Roman Empire. Seven times in the five trumpets the “third part” is specified. The third part of what? The only satisfactory application of this point is that it was the third part of the Roman Empire. There were a number of divisions in the history of Rome, but there was one in particular that neatly fitted the prediction at this particular time. Three divisions were formed in the time of Constantine. The empire was divided between him, Licinius and Maximin, and these three divisions existed at the time of the barbarian invasions of the empire.

No other application of “the third part” satisfactorily fills the prediction.

“In the time of Constantine the Roman Empire was divided into three great sections: to Constantine was assigned Gaul, Spain, Britain, Italy, Africa; to Licinius the Illyricum prefecture; to Maximin, the Asiatic provinces and Egypt.” Dr. Cumming, ‘Apocalyptic Sketches,’ Volume 2, page 53. [17]

“Either Diocletian or after him Constantine, made Illyricum one of the four prefectures. This prefecture included Pannonia, Noricum, Crete and the entire Balkan peninsula except Thrace, which was attached by Constantine to the prefecture of the East. The whole peninsula except Thrace was still known as Illyricum.” Encyclopedia Britannica, 1911 Edition, Volume 14, page 326. [18]

“Each one included its third of the Mediterranean or Roman sea, as well as its third of the land: and each one also its characteristic stream of the three great frontier rivers, the Rhine, Danube and Euphrates.” ‘Horae Apocalypticae’ E. B. Elliott. Volume 1, page 342. [19]

This is a completely satisfactory explanation of “the third part,” that is involved in five of the six trumpets. It is significant to notice that other prophets predicted the fall of Rome. In the primary prophecy of Daniel, (after dealing with the first three universal kingdoms) it says of the fourth or iron kingdom, “it shall be divided”. Daniel 2:41. This fourth kingdom was pagan Rome. In the prophecy of the four beasts of Daniel 7 the four kingdoms are again presented and of the fourth or Roman kingdom it says “the ten horns out of this kingdom (Rome) are ten kings (or kingdoms) that shall arise.” Daniel 7:24. The first four trumpets reveal how the ten kingdoms were formed out of the Roman Empire. Maybe this is one of the purposes of the first four trumpets. Jesus Christ also predicted the end of the Roman Empire in connection with old Jerusalem.

“Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles (the Roman Gentiles) until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Luke 21:24. (i.e. The Roman Gentiles.) The sixth trumpet reveals how the Roman gentiles’ empire came to its end in the capture of Constantinople by the Turks. Before that the Arabs under the fifth trumpet, had broken the power of the Roman Gentiles over Jerusalem.

It is informative to recall that the early Christians believed that according to 2 Thessalonians 2 the Antichrist, or Man of sin, would not appear until after Pagan Rome was removed.

“Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day (the coming of Christ) shall not come, except there come a falling away (or apostasy) first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposes and exalts himself above all who is called God or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sits in the temple of God (the Christian church), showing himself, that he is God.” 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

The majority of Protestant scholars through the years have been quite clear that this prediction was fulfilled in the Bishop of Rome. The apostle continues,

“Now you know what withholds (or restrains) that he (the Man of sin) might be revealed in his time.”

“You know what restrains” i.e. restrains the Man of sin. “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work only he who now lets (or restrains) will let (or restrain) until he be taken out of the way.” Verses 5-7.

The one who restrained the ‘Man of sin,’ was understood to be Pagan Rome. Is it not true that the papacy, the man of sin, did not come to political power until pagan Rome, gave its power and seat, and great authority to the Papacy by removing its capital from Rome to Constantinople? (Revelation 13:2) The early Christians believed that the Roman Empire “which filled the world” must end before antichrist would reign. Such an event, being so world shaking, would be of importance to the people of God and therefore it is understandable that the first six trumpets should apply to the downfall of the Roman Empire.

Why the temple scene of Revelation 8 in the introduction to the trumpets?

“I saw seven angels which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censor, and there was given to him much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand. And the angel took the censor and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into (or upon) the earth: and there were voices and thunders and lightning and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.” Revelation 8:2-6.

It is indisputable that this temple scene is involved with the trumpets. Why much incense? Because there was much prayer from the saints. The prayers of the saints were being heard and as a result, “the censor is filled with fire and cast into the earth.” Verse 5. Some conclude that this represents the close of probation but this must be rejected. Why the fire? Fire does two things. It purifies or destroys, purifies or punishes. Here it purifies the prayers of God’s saints and punishes the saint’s oppressors. It punishes the apostates. “Fire is cast upon the earth.” It represents the judgments of God, the visitations of justice in the form of the trumpets. It is not the close of probation as such, unless it be the close of probation in a local sense of the Roman Empire.

The trumpets were God’s response to the prayers of the saints. When God answered the much praying of the saints - he sent the trumpets upon the earth. Matthew Henry, the elder statesman of Bible commentators wrote,

“These prayers that were thus accepted in heaven, produced great changes upon earth. The same angel with the same censor took the fire of the altar and cast it into the earth and this presently caused strange commotions, voices and lightning and thunders and an earthquake.” Commentary on Revelation 8. [20]

Jameson, Fawcett & Brown, noted Anglican scholars declare,

“The hot coals off the altar, cast on the earth, symbolized God’s fiery judgments about to descend on the church’s foes in answer to the saints’ incense-perfumed prayers, which have just ascended before God.” Commentary on Revelation 8. [21]

How marvelous is the power of the saints’ prayers! What would challenge the saints to much prayer that could result in the judgments of the trumpets upon the Roman Empire? We suggest it was the great apostasy. The “falling away” of 2 Thessalonians 2 had taken place, “the man of sin” had risen. Constantine had amalgamated church and state, and much of the Christian church had been brought to ruin. The true faith was in peril, the majority of Christians had gone astray. True believers knew that antichrist would

come, that apostasy would arise, and now, staring them in the face throughout the church of the day, was stark idolatry. Saint and martyr worship were flooding the church. We suggest that this is what led to much prayer. The cause of God looked hopeless and no doubt only one resort remained to the saints, and that was prayer and the result of their prayers ascending to the temple was the sending of divine judgments upon the apostasy, in the form of the trumpets.

There is a great lesson here for the saints today, because God's church is also in the midst of apostasy. We also are to send our prayers to the sanctuary making sure that they are purified with the merits of Christ. Maybe the way that God will answer our prayers will be to once again send judgments, but this time, judgments on the church. Maybe the Lord will have to be drastic in order to bring his church into line so that it may receive the latter rain.

"When the judgments of God are in the earth, then will the people learn righteousness." Isaiah 26:9.

This is the clear prediction of the Spirit of Prophecy in regard to the church of God in the last days. In this introduction to the study of the seven trumpet³, may the Lord help us to take care, that our interpretations will stand up under the microscope of scripture. Faithfulness to Jesus Christ, involves faithfulness to his word.

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VISIGOTHS - VANDALS - HUNS & HERULI

The First Four Trumpets of Revelation An Exposition of Revelation 8:2-13

The seven trumpets of Revelation are introduced by a scene in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. Why are they introduced in this manner? Let us examine the scriptural passage? [1]

“Another angel came and stood at the altar having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand. And the angel took the censer and filled it with fire of the altar and cast it into [upon] the earth: and there were voices, and thundering, and lightning, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.” Revelation 8:3-6.

It seems quite clear that the seven trumpets are sent by God in response to the prayers of his people - the saints. Much incense is offered, because of the many prayers of the saints. What was it that led to the special prayers of the saints? Without doubt it was the overwhelming apostasy that had come into the church, particularly the church situated within the Roman Empire. This apostasy was supported by the authority of Rome, and so in response to the prayers of the saints God visits Western Rome with the first four trumpet judgments, in an endeavor to bring his people back to truth - back to loyalty to Christ. The fifth and sixth trumpets we will show, fell on Eastern Rome, the seventh trumpet falls on the whole world when it becomes Roman again - Rome revived when “all the world wonders after the beast”. (Revelation 13:3)

THE FIRST TRUMPET

“The first angel sounded and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood. And they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up and all green grass was burnt up.” Revelation 8:7

The language suggests a violent hailstorm. What does a hailstorm represent in prophecy? The Old Testament, on which Revelation is based gives the clue. In describing the invasion of the Assyrians into the land of Israel, the prophet declares,

“Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and a strong one, which, as a tempest of hail and destroying storm, as a flood of mighty, waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.” Isaiah 28:2

The prophet in describing the Assyrian invasion likens it to a mighty hailstorm. Again, in describing the invasion of Gog and Magog, the prophet Ezekiel says,

“Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land. Thou and all thy bands and marry people with thee.” Ezekiel 38:9

We can safely conclude that a storm such as described in the first trumpet, denotes a military invasion. The description in the symbol indicates that it is an invasion from the North. Hailstorms that fell upon Roman territory always came from the North, so this suggests that this invasion would be from the Northerly regions. The symbolism also suggests the destruction of the countryside for “the third part of trees was burnt up and all green grass”. This indicates that forests, pastures and crops would be destroyed by the invasion. Thirdly it has “hail and fire mingled with blood” denoting carnage or the slaughter both of beast and people.

The prediction says “a third.” “One third of the trees, and all green grass.” The “third”, that is mentioned throughout the trumpets applies to a third part of the Roman Empire. [2] From the time of Constantine, there were three divisions of the Empire, the East, the West and the central section called Illyricum which comprised the Balkan Peninsular, except Thrace, right up to what we would now call Southern Austria.

Is there any evidence in history of a military invasion of one of the divisions of the Roman Empire that meets the specifications of this first trumpet? Yes there is. The man who fulfilled it, was Alaric the leader

of the Visigoths - a branch of the Gothic peoples from which most Europeans are descended. They came from the Northeast of Europe, around the Baltic, where they were pressed by other peoples migrating from the East. The Goths began to move towards the warmer climate of the Roman Empire. Thousands had settled in Illyricum (the third part of the Empire which now involves Yugoslavia) where they were employed as mercenaries by the Romans to help defend the frontiers. Alaric led the Goths into Greece and ravaged the countryside. The emperor of East Rome in order to pacify Alaric, made him

the military general of the whole of Illyricum. Alaric took advantage of this and spent the next four years in preparation for the invasion of Western Rome. This began about 395 AD and the records of historians show that Alaric and the Visigoths abundantly fulfilled the specifications of the first trumpet. Notice the description by Edward Gibbon (perhaps the greatest authority on the fall of the Roman Empire) in his famous history, "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." This man was not a Christian, he was a skeptic and he has been called, "The Unconscious Commentator of the Apocalypse", because when he penned the events that brought about the fall of Rome, he uses almost the identical language of the Revelator in his description of the trumpets of Revelation. In a remarkable manner he shows how these trumpets met their fulfillment. Of the invasion of Alaric and the Visigoths, he writes,

Valens [the Roman Emperor] "was informed that the North was agitated by a furious tempest." [3]

"A furious tempest was excited among the nations of Germany." [4]

"A formidable tempest of the barbarians of Germany seemed ready to burst over the provinces of Gaul." [5]

"The Gothic nation [395 A.D.] was in arms. Deserted their farms at the first sound of the trumpet. The barriers of the Danube were thrown open, the savage warriors of Saythia issued from their forests directed by the bold and artful genius of Alaric. The whole territory was blasted by his baleful presence; flaming villages. The deep and bloody traces of the march of the Goths." [6]

"A victorious leader, who united the daring spirit of a barbarian, with the art and discipline of a Roman general, was at the head of an hundred thousand fighting men; and Italy pronounced, with terror and respect the formidable name of Alaric." [7]

The prediction said that "the third part of trees and all green grass was burnt up". Gibbon relates how an old poet called Claudian of Verona bewailed the destruction of his trees, revealing how this prediction was fulfilled to the very letter. Gibbon says,

"His trees, his old contemporary trees must blaze in the conflagration of the whole country." [8]

Isn't that remarkable? This gives us a glimpse of the destruction of forest, crops and grass etc. Again,

"The dark cloud which was collected along the coast of the Baltic burst in thunder upon the banks of the upper Danube." [9] This scene of peace and plenty was suddenly changed into a desert and the prospect of the making ruins could alone distinguish the solitude of nature from the desolation of man. The consuming flames of war spread from the banks of the Rhine over the greatest part of the seventeen provinces of Gaul, that rich and extensive country, as far as the ocean, the Alps and Pyrenees, was delivered to the Barbarians." [10]

This was the description of the Gothic invasion by the unconscious commentator of the Apocalypse. Three times Alaric invaded Italy. One commentator says,

"Alaric's course was to Italy, as he told an Italian monk. He felt a secret and preternatural impulse which directed and even impelled his march to the gates of Rom. As his trumpet sounded and his march advanced, terrible omens and prognostications preceded him. 'The Christians' says Gibbon, "derived comfort from the powerful intercession of the saints and martyrs." [This reveals the apostasy of the Christians] Thrice, in fulfillment of his destiny, he descended from the Alps onto the Italian plains, marking his course at each step as the awe-struck historians of the times tell us, in country and in town with ravage, conflagration and

blood, till the gates of Rome itself were opened to the conqueror and the Gothic fires blazed around the capitol.” [11]

In fulfilling the first trumpet, it is significant to notice that Alaric possessed a powerful conviction, that he was divinely led to destroy Rome. This was recognized by the people of the day. When Alaric was intercepted by an Italian monk with a plea to spare the city of Rome, Alaric assured him that “he did not feel disposed to commence the siege, but found himself compelled by some hidden and irresistible impulse to accomplish the enterprise”. [12]

Gibbon’s remarks reveal that Alaric’s invasion and sack of Rome dealt a deadly blow to the Roman Empire.

“The king of the Goths advanced with unabated vigor; and he pitched his camp under the walls of Rome.” [13]

“During a period of six hundred and nineteen years, the seat of empire had never been violated by the presence of a foreign enemy.” [14]

“At the hour of midnight the inhabitants [of Rome] were awakened by the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet. Eleven hundred and sixty-three years after the foundation of Rome, the Imperial city, which had subdued and civilized so considerable a part of mankind, was delivered to the licentious fury of the tribes of the Germany and Scythia.” [15]

“This awful catastrophe of Rome, filled the astonished empire with grief and terror.” [16]

THE SECOND TRUMPET

“And the second angel sounded and as it were, a great mountain burning with fire, was cast into the sea. And the third part of the sea became blood; And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; And the third part of the ships were destroyed.” Revelation 8:8

This symbolism suggests a power connected with the sea - an invasion by a sea power likened to a burning mountain. What does a mountain represent in prophecy? Scripture is clear that a mountain represents a kingdom.

“I am against thee O destroying mountain, said the Lord, which destroys all the earth, I will make thee a burnt mountain.” Jeremiah 51:5.

This was alluding to the kingdom of Babylon that had conquered the world of that day and the prophet describes it as a “destroying mountain”. The kingdom of God is also likened to a mountain in Daniel 2:35-44. So we now ask: What kingdom invaded the Roman Empire - Western Rome - which was a sea power? History tells us that there was only one Gothic power involved in the downfall of Rome that was associated with the sea and that was the naval power of the Vandals. The Vandals were one of the Gothic tribes that migrated from Northwestern Europe at the same time as the Visigoths. In one invasion of Italy under a leader named Radagaisus, hundreds of thousands of Vandals, Burgundians and Suevi, besieged the city of Florence. When Radagaisus was killed, the Vandals, Burgundians and Suevi withdrew and passed on into Southern France. There the Burgundian division of these Goths settled and formed the kingdom of Burgundy. The rest of the Goths continued on into Spain - the Suevi then separated and settled in Northwestern Spain, forming the kingdom of the Suevi which is now Portugal. The remainder of the Goths - the Vandals - continued on to Gibraltar, crossed the straits, and entered Northern Africa.

There they established themselves with their capital at the site of ancient Carthage. Their leader was a man called Genseric. He was a Christian and under him, the Vandals also became Christians holding to the Arian faith. This faith was in conflict with the apostate Catholic church. The Vandals developed into a strong kingdom. They could not extend southwards because of the desert so they turned towards the sea.

They built a strong navy and began to ravage the coasts of the Mediterranean. Historians declare that, being anti catholic, the Vandals attacked the catholic centers, especially Western Rome.

“The Vandals were unique among the German nations by the fact that they maintained a fleet.” [17]

The second trumpet symbolism suggested an invasion associated with the sea. “The third part of the sea became blood and the third part of creatures in the sea died and the third part of ships were destroyed.” The Vandals fulfilled this prediction completely. Africa was lost to the Empire of Rome. As Semondie says,

“The loss of Africa was perhaps one of the greatest calamities which could have overtaken the Western Empire.” [18]

Africa was the granary of Rome so the loss of Africa meant the loss of a main source of Rome’s food supply. Gibbon in describing the attacks upon Western Rome by the Vandals declares,

“The loss or desolation of the provinces from the ocean to the Alps impaired the glory and greatness of Rome. Her internal prosperity was irretrievably destroyed by the separation of Africa... after an interval of six centuries the fleets that issued from the ports of Carthage again claimed the empire of the Mediterranean.” [19]

It was from Carthage, 600 years before, where the Phoenicians had settled that they attacked Imperial Rome under their leader Hannibal. Once again from Carthage, came the Vandals under Genseric, attacking Western Rome and particularly the centers of the catholic church, where apostasy flourished. Gibbon continues,

“The Vandals repeatedly visited the coasts of Spain, Liguria, Tuscany, Campania, Lucania, Bruttia, Apulia, Calabria, Venetia, Dacia, Epirus Greece and Sicily. They were tempted to subdue the island of Sardinia so advantageously placed in the centre of the Mediterranean and their arms spread desolation or terror from the Columns of Hercules to the mouth of the Nile.” [20]

It is a significant point that Genseric, like Alaric the Visigoth, believed himself to be an agent of divine wrath. Thomas Hogkin declares:

“The fleets became under Genseric’s guidance, the first naval power on the Mediterranean. At length the work [of ravaging the coast] became almost monotonous and the choice of a victim hard. Once, when the fleet had weighed anchor and was sailing forth from the broad harbor of Carthage the helmsman turned to the king and asked for what port he should steer. “For the men with whom God is angry”, answered the Vandal king and left the winds and the waters to settle the question who were the proper objects of the wrath of heaven.” [21]

Finally the emperor of Eastern Rome combined with Western Rome to build a gigantic fleet in order to destroy the Vandal power. This Roman fleet was twice destroyed by fire of the Vandals, and maybe this is the fulfillment of the prediction in the trumpet, “the third part of the creatures in the sea died and the third part of ships were destroyed”. The destruction by the Vandals was quite fantastic. [22]

Previously Genseric even sailed up the Tiber and sacked the city of Rome. Amongst the treasure that he took from that city were the golden candlestick and the golden table and other items that Titus had captured from the temple at Jerusalem. When the Vandal fleet was returning to Carthage there rose a great storm and one ship only, submerged beneath the ocean. It was the ship carrying the golden candle stick and the sacred vessels which originally had come from the temple of God in Jerusalem. [23]

Without doubt the Vandals fulfilled the second trumpet. The Vandals being of the Arian faith and in deadly opposition to the church of Rome, finally were confronted by the powerful Roman emperor, the catholic Justinian. Under Balisarius, he sent an effective army to Africa where the Vandals were destroyed.

“In 533 the Byzantine general, Belisarius, landed in Africa. The Vandals were several times defeated and Carthage was entered and the same year they were routed in the decisive battle of Tricameron. In the next

year Africa, Sardinia and Corsica were restored to the Roman Empire. As a nation, the Vandals soon ceased to exist.” [24]

“There are few instances in history of a nation disappearing so rapidly and so completely as the Vandals of Africa.” [25]

“It is reckoned that during the reign of Justinian [the emperor of Eastern Rome] Africa lost 5 millions of inhabitants; thus Arianism was extinguished in that region, not by any enforcement of conformity but by the extermination of the race which had introduced and professed it.” [26]

THE THIRD TRUMPET

We now come to the third trumpet that helped terminate the reign of Rome.

“The third angel sounded and there fell a great star from heaven burning as it were a leap and it fell on a third part of the rivers and the fountains of waters and the name of the star is called wormwood and the third part of the waters became wormwood and many men died of the waters because they were made bitter.” Revelation 8:10.

The great star from heaven is undoubtedly a meteor and it falls upon the third part of rivers and fountains of waters i.e. a third part of the Roman Empire, Western Rome. In scripture a star represents a leader, a falling star can represent an apostate leader (Jude 1:14). We look therefore for some powerful leader who invaded the Roman Empire and brought great bitterness to the peoples of a particular area.

The area is described as “a third part of the rivers and fountains of waters”. This would be the areas where the rivers commence - the alpine regions. Does history tell of an invasion that fulfills this specification? Yes! This was abundantly fulfilled by Attila with his multiplied thousands of Huns who invaded the Roman Empire in 450 A.D. In describing them the historian uses almost the identical language of the prophet.

“After a short space of time, as Orosius relates, the race of the Huns, fiercer than ferocity itself, flamed forth.” [27]

Notice the expression, “flamed forth”, reminding one of a blazing meteor.

“The rise of the great Hunnic power which threatened European civilization in the fifth century was as sudden and rapid as its fall.” [28]

“This invasion is the most celebrated in our people’s discourses, of all those which the barbarians have made upon us; and is the most talked of among the vulgar [or common people] and now all the countries which were within the Apennine mountains and the Alps, were full of flight, of depopulation, of slaughter, of slavery, of burning and despair.” [29]

Such a description perfectly fits the symbolism of the third trumpet. Attila called himself “the scourge of God, and the terror of men”. As Creasy declares,

“Not merely the degenerate Romans, but the bold and hardy warriors of Germany and Scandinavia, were appalled at the numbers, the ferocity, the ghastly appearance, and the lightning-like rapidity of the Huns. His own warriors believed Attila, to be the inspired favorite of their deities and followed him with fanatic zeal. His enemies looked on him as the pre appointed minister of Heaven’s wrath against themselves.”

“During the retreat from Orleans a Christian hermit is reported to have approached the Hunnish king and said to him, ‘You are the scourge of God for the chastisement of the Christians.’”

“Attila instantly assumed this new title of terror which henceforth became the appellation by which he was widely and most fearfully known.” [30]

In the reign of Attila, the Huns again became the terror of the world; That formidable Barbarian who alternately insulted and invaded the East and the West, and urged the rapid downfall off the Roman Empire.” [31]

One of the great battles that Creasy lists, was the battle of Challons in Northern France. Here 700,000 Huns under Attila met the Romans and Visigoths who had combined to meet Attila. On that battlefield Attila and his Huns were repulsed. It was a terrible battle with staggering slaughter. [32] Attila was not wholly defeated but he retreated to the mountain regions, to “the rivers and fountains of waters,” just as the prophecy had stated. There he reigned supreme. Later he returned to his capital and died of apoplexy.

The Huns had spread over all of Eastern Europe, where they were irresistible. They even invaded China and Media - north of Persia - giving an idea of the tremendous extent of their conquests. After the death of Attila they began to withdraw from Europe and return to the east, but a remnant remained in what we now call Hungary. Thus the third trumpet was faithfully fulfilled in the terrifying invasion of Attila and his Huns.

THE FOURTH TRUMPET

“And the fourth angel sounded and the third part of the sun was smitten and the third part of the moon and the third part of the stars so as a third part of them were darkened and the day shone not for a third part of it and the night likewise.” Revelation 8:12.

“The symbolism of this trumpet is the most difficult of the seven. “The third part of the sun.” This undoubtedly is symbolic. It could not be referring to the literal sun because a third part of that would have no significance. What would the sun, moon and stars represent in the Roman Empire? “The third part” would apply to Western Rome. Undoubtedly they refer to the leading lights or rulers of Western Rome.

How was Rome ruled? How many bodies comprised its government? There were three - exactly three - the emperor, the consuls and the senate. The Revelator likens them to the sun, moon and stars - The emperor - the sun. The consul - the moon, and the senate - the stars. Under this fourth trumpet these ruling powers are put out of action bringing civil darkness over the third part of the empire. There is no leading Roman light, no ruling Roman power.

This prediction was fulfilled by the invasion of a Gothic people called the Heruli under their leader named Odoacer. They had been associated with Attila and his Huns and were left behind when Attila retired to the East. The Heruli invaded Italy in 476 A.D. and Odoacer gave orders that the office of the emperor of Western Rome be abolished. In response the reigning emperor abdicated and Odoacer was made king of Italy.

“Odoacer was the first Barbarian who reigned in Italy, over a people who had once asserted their just superiority over the rest of mankind. The disgrace of the Romans still excites our respectful compassion.” [33]

But what of the moon and the stars? The consulship represented by the moon was abolished in 541 A.D. [34] and in 553 A.D. the Roman senate represented by the stars, resigned because it was so powerless. [35] Thus terminated the rule of the leading lights of Western Rome. Under the fourth trumpet it all ended. Western Rome had come to her end. As Saint Jerome declared when he saw that Rome was to fall,

“The world’s glorious Sun has been extinguished.”
As the English poet Byron, in describing the same event wrote,

“She saw her glories star by star expire.” [36]

This we believe meets the symbolism of the fourth trumpet. What was the reason for the fall of the Roman Empire? Historians give many reasons. Rome had ruled the world for 644 years. Undoubtedly the main cause of Rome’s downfall was internal corruption. She disintegrated from within. This is the inevitable

outcome of almost anything that is connected with the human race. Man is possessed of a fallen nature and most things connected with man ultimately disintegrate. This is one of the lessons of history - civilizations finally disintegrate. This is the significance of the second chapter of Daniel. The image commences with the gold, and the successive metals representing the various kingdoms are all of inferior quality - the silver, brass, iron and finally clay. This tells us that the kingdoms of men, being comprised of human nature - degenerate and disintegrate.

The iron kingdom of Rome as the prediction stated in Daniel two, "would be divided". Maybe one of the purposes of the trumpets is to show how Rome was divided, how the "ten toes" of the image - the kingdoms of Europe - were established. Europe was to play an important part in the conflict between good and evil throughout the Christian era and especially in the End Time.

If it were true that Rome's downfall was due to internal corruption, how is this explained in the light of the fact that the empire had become Christian? The moral influence of the Christian faith should have stemmed the tide of corruption.

The answer is that the Christian church in the empire, had itself become corrupt. The ninth chapter of Revelation reveals that in spite of the judgment of the first six trumpets upon the apostate people of the empire, they continued in their downward course.

"The rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues (or trumpets), repented not of the works of their hands that they should not worship devils and idols of gold, silver and brass and stone and of wood which cannot see, nor hear nor walk neither repented they of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their fornication or of their thefts." Revelation 9:20.

These sins were exactly the ones that were perpetrated by the apostate Christians of the Roman Empire. It is understandable why the trumpets were sent as visitations of divine judgment. It is recognized that when corruption is under the guise of religion, it is the worst kind of corruption and this is of significance to Christians today. Falsehood, hypocrisy and corruption always receive the frown of heaven - even though they may be under the guise of religion. In fact this makes sin all the more offensive to God and he does not pass it by. The following counsel is worthy of note.

"He would teach his people that disobedience and sin are exceedingly offensive to him and are not to be lightly regarded. His frown may rest upon them all, if the sins of the people are passed over by those in responsible positions. His frown will be upon them, and the people of God as a body will be held responsible for those sins. In his dealings with his people in the past, the Lord show the necessity of purifying the church from wrongs. One sinner may diffuse darkness that may exclude the light of God from the entire congregation."

"If wrongs are apparent among his people, and if the servants of God pass an indifferent to them, they virtually sustain and justify the sinner and are alike guilty, and will just as surely receive the displeasure of God, for they will be made responsible for the sins of the guilty."

"Those who have excused those wrongs wrought by the people are shown to be very amiable and lovely in disposition simply because they slum to discharge the very plain scriptural duty. The task was not very agreeable to their feelings will therefore they avoided it."

"The true people of God who have the spirit of the work of the Lord and the salvation of souls at heart, will ever view sin in its real sinful character. They will always be on the side of faithful and plain dealing with sin which easily beset the people of God, especially in the closing work of the church." 5 Testimonies, pages 365-366. [37]

When there is corruption and apostasy in His church, God will not pass it by but rather He will permit judgments to come upon the church in an endeavor to purify it and bring those in apostasy back to the faith. This we suggest was the fundamental purpose of the trumpets.

APPENDIX

Another S.O.P. statement which refers to Trumpets is found in a diary entry of 1895, in which a violent windstorm reminded God's servant of the judgment of God in the seven last plagues.

"Terrible are the judgments God revealed. The seven angels stood before God to receive their commission. To them were given seven trumpets. The Lord was going forth to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity and the earth was to disclose her blood and no more cover her slain." M.S. 59. (Diary)

Is the above statement an explanation or comment on the prophecy of the 7 trumpets of Revelation 8-9. There is no suggestion that it is. The prophet is borrowing the descriptive language of scripture and using it out of context to describe the 7 last plagues. This is termed the homiletic use of scripture, using it out of context to describe a given situation. Such a use is recognized as permissible in preaching and writing.

The wording of Revelation 8 which the S.O.P. borrows is very fitting in describing the plagues because there are also 7 angels involved and the plagues form a part of God's controversy with the unsaved and trumpets are symbolic of war or invasions etc.

To take a scriptural term from a diary entry, used homiletically, out of context, and employ it as authority for a new application of the 7 trumpets is most unfortunate. The evidence for the fulfillment of the 7 trumpets as espoused by godly scholars of the past and by S.D.A.'s is so overwhelming, that an undermining of that interpretation should not be taken lightly. Today uninformed statements are being widely published, that the historic interpretations of prophecy as promulgated by S.D.A.'s are deficient and inaccurate. This is misleading and causes confusion. This is confirmed by the S.O.P.

"The great way marks of truth showing us our bearings in prophetic history, are to be carefully guarded, lest they be torn down and replaced with theories that would bring confusion rather than genuine light... Some will take the truth applicable to their time, and place it in the future. Events in the train of prophecy that had their fulfillment away in the past, are made future and thus by these theories, the faith of some is undermined." Ellen G. White, 2 Selected Messages, pages 101-102.

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