

# The Trumpets Continue to Sound

## Revelation 9

John's descriptions of the first four trumpets in chapter 8 are quite brief—just one or two verses each. In chapter 9, he describes the fifth and sixth trumpets, and his descriptions of these two are much longer and contain more details. The first four trumpets take us on a journey through the centuries. They illustrate the divine truth of Galatians 6:7, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows that will he also reap.” When nations or individuals reject God's divine appeals, the truths of His Word, and His prophetic revelations, the logical result is chaos and calamity. For “righteous exalts a nation.” (Proverbs 14:34) The fifth and sixth trumpets are also trumpets of judgment. The previous four trumpets reveal judgments on Jerusalem, the Roman Empire and apostate Christianity. They were largely centered in Western Europe. These judgments are focused upon the Eastern portion of the Roman Empire.

### **The Fifth Trumpet—Judgment on the Eastern Roman Empire**

Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit (Revelation 9:1, 2).

We saw a star fall from heaven in chapter 8 when the third angel sounded his trumpet. We discovered that this represented Satan bringing his rebellious activity against God to earth in a powerful way. Whenever we see a star falling from heaven, we know Satan is active. The text says that he was given the key to the bottomless pit. In Revelation 20, we will find Satan himself is bound and thrown into the bottomless pit where he will remain for a thousand years. But for now, he has the key to the pit. He can unlock it and let loose a great cloud of smoke that darkens the air.

We saw in the fourth trumpet that darkness symbolizes spiritual darkness and turning away from God. Jesus is the light of the world. (John 8:12) He invites us to “walk in the light” and shun the darkness. (John 12:35) For His “ Word is a light unto our path and a lamp unto our feet.” (Psalm 119:105) Satan is using every available means to bring spiritual darkness on the earth and blind the minds of men and women to God’s truth.

John continues:

Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (verses 3, 4).

Every time we encounter locusts in the Old Testament one of two things are happening. Either enemy armies are coming like a swarm of locusts to destroy and kill or literal locusts are coming to destroy crops and all vegetation in their path. We read about locusts especially in the books of Jeremiah and Joel. (Exodus 10:4, Jeremiah 51:14, Nahum 3:15-17, Joel 2:25)) The coming of locust in the Old Testament is never good news; it is always bad news.

The first four trumpets deal with judgments of God on Israel, the pagan Western Roman Empire, and apostate Christianity. But what about the Eastern Roman Empire? After the time of Constantine, the Roman Empire gradually separated into western and eastern spheres of influence, with two capitals—Rome in the west, and Constantinople in the east. Christianity in the two areas developed somewhat differently. That is why today we have the Roman Catholic Church which developed in the west, and the Orthodox Church, which developed in the east. The Orthodox church has its varied branches with the Greek Orthodox, the Russian Orthodox and now the Ukrainian Orthodox with their own Patriarchs.

What occurred in the eastern part of the empire after the western part was destroyed by barbarian tribes and broke up into what would become the nations of Europe? The eastern part of the empire was connected geographically to the part of the world where Islam originated. Out of that part of the world, Islam swept across the eastern empire and into Europe like locusts bringing destruction as they attempted to conquer and spread the

Muslim faith. That is what is brought to view here in the fifth trumpet. The Muslim invasion, like a judgment of God, shook Europe tremendously. Like smoke, it swept from the east across Eastern Europe and then into Western Europe. To the Christians in Europe, it was like being attacked by scorpions with poison in their tails. But these scorpions were commanded not to harm anyone who had the seal of God on his or her forehead. These faithful followers of God are symbolized by the grass and green, living things that the scorpion invasion was not to harm. Even in the midst of apostasy, God would still have faithful people who would hold the banner of truth high during all these years of spiritual darkness and judgments from God that swept across Europe.

They were not given authority to kill them [those on whom God's judgments were falling], but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them. The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. . . . Their power was to hurt men for five months" (verses 5-10).

What are these five months during which the judgments of God would fall upon the Eastern Roman Empire? Again, let's look at the math. In Bible times, months were 30 days. So five prophetic months are 150 prophetic days. And since a day in Bible prophecy symbolizes a year of literal time, these five months (150 days) represent 150 literal years. (Ezekiel 4:6, Numbers 14:34) The Muslim invaders were to have power to "hurt men" for 150 years. Do we find anything in history that corresponds to this 150-year period of judgment?

The Muslim Turks attacked the Byzantine Empire (another name for the Eastern Roman Empire) at the Battle of Bapheus on July 27, 1299. Exactly 150 years later, on July 27, 1449, the Byzantine Empire collapsed! At that point the Byzantine emperor had to get the permission of the Muslim sultan to occupy the throne! Again, we see Bible prophecy fulfilled precisely. The Bible predicts a judgment that would come from the

east like an invasion of locusts. It predicts they would bring destruction for 150 years. And history records that this is exactly what happened!

### **The Sixth Trumpet—Judgment on the Eastern Roman Empire Intensifies**

Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind (verses 13-15).

It is fascinating that the prophecy in verses 5 and 9 accurately predicted 150 years of judgment due to the Muslim invasion of the eastern Roman Empire and Europe. But it becomes even more fascinating and exciting to see the fulfillment of this prophecy in the sixth trumpet. John says that four angels had been prepared for an hour, day, month, and year, and now they were released to kill a third of mankind.

What does this time prophecy mean? How long is an hour, day, month, and year of prophetic time? We will have to do some calculation. Remember that in Bible times a month was made up of 30 days and a year was 360 days. So we can add up this time prophecy as follows:

1 prophetic year = 360 prophetic days = **360 literal years**

1 prophetic month = 30 prophetic days = **30 literal years**

1 prophetic day = **1 literal year**

1 prophetic hour = 1/24 of a prophetic day [1 literal year or 360 days] = **15 literal days**

Adding these together, we find that a prophetic hour, day, month, and year equal 391 years and 15 days of literal time. This prophecy says that under the sixth trumpet the Muslim invaders would have 391 years and 15 days to bring judgment by invading the

Eastern Roman Empire. If we take July 27, 1449 (the date the Muslim invaders established the zenith of their power under the fifth trumpet) as the starting point, and extend that by 391 years and 15 days, we arrive at the date August 11, 1840. Here is something amazing.

Josiah Litch was a preacher of the Advent Movement that began with William Miller's studies in Daniel. In the 1800s Litch began to predict that the Ottoman Empire (the Muslim's Turkish Empire) would fall on August 11, 1849. He based this on Revelation 9 and the time prophecy in the sixth trumpet. Litch's precise prediction was popularized in many newspapers across the United States. Many people thought he was crazy. They didn't believe him. Litch went over the prophecy again and again. He believed the biblical year/day principle applied to this prophecy. Despite the ridicule, he kept preaching his belief that the Ottoman Empire would end on August 11, 1840.

On August 11, 1840 the Treaty of London was signed by Britain, Prussia, Austria, and Russia, taking away the power of the Ottoman Empire! It happened exactly as predicted in Scripture. Now Josiah Litch didn't look so foolish. His interpretation and its fulfillment were widely reported in the press of the day. The fulfillment of that prophecy awakened the interest of thousands in the Scriptures and the Advent Movement. It led to the great Second Advent revival that swept the United States and other countries in the 1840s. People saw that Christianity is based on solid biblical evidence...

The sixth trumpet goes on to describe a variety of judgments from God that will fall as a result of a rejection of God and his truth during the time of this trumpet. It concludes on an extremely negative note.

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts (verses 20, 21).

## **Summary of the First Six Trumpets**

As we have seen, the trumpets herald God's judgments on those who persist in rejecting Him and His truth. The first trumpet announced His judgments on Jerusalem and the nation of Israel. Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. The second trumpet announced judgments upon the pagan Western Roman Empire for its rejection of Christianity and its persecution of Christians. The third trumpet announced judgments upon apostate Christianity. Under the fourth trumpet those judgments intensify as the Christian church slips deeper into apostasy and spiritual darkness, The fifth trumpet announced God's judgments on the Eastern Roman Empire as Muslim invaders swept in to conquer and convert. Those judgments intensify under the sixth trumpet until the prophecy is fulfilled in the 1840s. The trumpets have taken us all the way from A.D. 70 to the 1840s when the Ottoman Empire fell apart.

What is next on the horizon? There is an interlude here in Revelation before the seventh angel sounds his trumpet. But the sixth trumpet ends with a picture of continued rebellion against God. They "did not repent of the works of their hands" (verse 20). What are those works? Murders, sorceries, sexual immorality, theft. Verse 20 and 21 describe our 21<sup>st</sup>-century, end-time generation that continues in rebellion against God. It's a materialistic, secular, godless society that worship anything and everything except God and righteousness. It's a generation filled with crime and unrestrained sexuality. And Revelation 9 makes it plain that just as every generation in the past down through centuries has experienced God's judgments because of its sins and its rejection of His grace, so too will this society at the end of time.

In Revelation 9 God is appealing to our hearts to be among His faithful people who are ready to meet Jesus when He comes.