

Look! Listen! - And Overcome!

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

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Look! Listen! – And Overcome!

"The Warning Trumpets Answer the Prayers of the Saints"

Lord's Day Morning

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Sermon Text: Revelation 8

Introduction

The Lord knows His own. He has set His name upon us and marked us with His seal so that not a single sheep of His flock can ever be lost to the enemy. As God's pre- Day of the Lord judgments come upon this world, Christ's people are kept secure. Eternally and finally secure.

One of the assaults on this world by the devil might be called his "lying wonders." This is something we will come to in The Revelation, but it is also the thing Paul wrote of in 2 Thessalonians 2 –

NKJ 2 Thessalonians 2:1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our

Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 9 The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they

did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

If Christ did not sustain us by His Spirit of Truth, we would all be deceived by the evil one. But as we saw last time in chapter 7, Jesus marks His own. And thus John could say –

NKJ 1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. 20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. 21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. 23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. 24 Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If

what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise that He has promised us -- eternal life. 26 These things I have written to you concerning those who *try to* deceive you. 27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

The spirit of the antichrist is very much at work in the world today. We are surrounded by subtle, deceiving, crafty lies – which so often come from *within* the visible church, that is, from professing Christian teachers. Let me give you an example of one that I came across recently –

In response to a well-known Christian radio program that featured a famous author on their show because she had recently professed Christianity, a listener wrote in and asked why the program had endorsed this lady, pointing out that the so-called Christian system she has embraced denies the gospel. The listener, in her inquiry, had cited doctrinal position statements from this very system that demonstrate its denial of the gospel. Here is the response she received [the bracketed material is mine] –

"Your quotations [of doctrine] though perfectly legitimate as regards the theological aspects of this issue, fail to take account of the fact that, from a strictly evangelical perspective, a saving relationship with Jesus Christ is an intensely personal and individual matter. In the final analysis, it is not a question of church membership or doctrinal orientation...It is arguable that many individual [adherents of this false Christian system] have a very real and lively faith in the Lord Jesus...[the response then accuses this inquirer of being uncharitable and un-Christlike, having an attitude that actually is harmful to the inquirer's own faith]."

Are you confused? Just what is this very large, well-known professedly Christian organization saying? Well, my take on it is this – *that Christianity is whatever the individual makes it to be. The Church, the Bible, truth – all these things are secondary. Anyone who maintains that this is truth and that is false is being unloving.*

NOTE: What is very interesting is that the professing Christian system to which this guest on the program has embraced is that it is anything but individual in its view of salvation!

We are surrounded then by these deceptions. The father of lies is very

active. Many antichrists have gone out into the world, says John. And today we are seeing many people who profess Christ succumbing to these denials of Christ's truth. But Jesus promises to keep His people from deception. The Spirit of Truth in the believer guides him into all truth and enables him to recognize the lies of the enemy. Here is the very same thing again from our Lord –

NKJ John 10:1 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 "But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 "And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 "Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

Hear that? Christ's true sheep *will by no means follow a false shepherd...they do not know the voice of strangers...but they know the voice of Christ.* Isn't that a tremendous thing to know? The corollary is true as well – *false sheep do not hear the*

voice of the true Shepherd; they will indeed listen to a false one.

“This is why Christ said that He came not to bring peace, but a sword. Members of the very same earthly family will be set at odds with one another as the gospel comes. We can expect local churches to divide at times, to experience a departure of some from its their midst. At least, this is to be expected when the Word of Christ is proclaimed.”

NOTE: This is a wonderful thing to know when we are involved with people in the ministry. Consider counseling, for instance. The Christian counselor can be assured, if he is faithfully speaking God’s truth to someone, that the counselee will indeed recognize and hear that truth *if the person is one of Christ’s own*. If not, then do not be surprised if the very best work of counseling fails to convince the counselee.

NKJ 1 Thessalonians 2:13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

Review

Alright then, let’s review the ground we have covered in the past few weeks. Because of His victory in His perfect life, His death, and His resurrection, the Lion-Lamb King as received the Father’s 7-sealed decreed program for finalizing His Kingdom and bringing about final and full redemption to the entire cosmos. Christ has already opened the seals, the results of which are characteristic of this entire church age, as we have visually depicted in chapter 6 –

- The four horsemen ride out, effecting conquest, war, murder, famine, pestilence, the very creatures themselves killing people.
- The age is characterized by the persecution and martyrdom of the saints, who must patiently await that Day in which Christ will avenge their blood upon the wicked.
- Earthquakes and other cataclysms of nature – darkening of the sun, the moon like blood, stars falling
- The age ends in the final coming of Christ, in which day the wicked still are unrepentant and attempt to hide in their terror from the Lamb’s wrath.

NOTE: Do you see then that The Revelation is a philosophy of history

book? It provides God's inspired commentary upon the events of this present age. It largely answers the question – why is all this evil happening? Why do the good suffer and the wicked prosper? It explains to us that when a devastating earthquake occurs, for example – there is in fact a message for the world in it.

Then in a kind of tape-rewinding view, chapter 7 takes us back to the time just prior to the breaking of the first 6 seals, showing us that Christ' marks His own and preserves them safe through all these judgments and persecutions. We concluded that the 144,000 marked from the 12 tribes of Israel is a symbol for the entire Church. And we saw further that the suffering of the saints depicted in the 5th seal (chapter 6) only results in them becoming a great multitude in heaven, victorious forever over the enemy and enjoying peace and bliss with Christ forever. These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation, says John, and that tells us then that we are in the great tribulation – that it extends from the cross to the second coming of Christ.

The White Horse

Before we press on into chapter 8 where the 7th seal is broken and turns out to be the 7 trumpet judgments, let me provide you with some additional

commentary on the ground we have covered so far. This is not only review, but in some cases a bit of a different perspective as well. Let's begin with Simon Kistemaker's comments concerning the identity of the white horseman in chapter 6. After noting a number of other interpretations (ie, the white horseman is the Antichrist or the Parthian invaders of the Roman Empire or Christ Himself coming in parallel with the vision of chapter 19), Kistemaker explains his conclusion –

“Christ is sending forth His gospel that in the history of the church has always proved to be unstoppable. The Word of God cannot be bound, for God is sending forth his Word to achieve His purpose. This Word is set on conquering in the world...in Jesus; eschatological discourse, which serves as a parallel, the Lord speaks definitively about the gospel of the kingdom that must be preached to all nations (Matt 24:14; Mark 13:10). In his discourse Jesus speaks also of war, famine, and death; all these have their counterpart in John's description of the four horsemen. The proclamation of god's Word creates reaction that results in clashes, strife, and hostility.

This interpretation has its roots in the early church...The Word of God goes forth conquering and to conquer, as is evident from the Book of Acts and

church history. Indeed, the gospel is victorious from beginning to end....Wherever the gospel is introduced in areas where it has not yet been preached, this conflict is real and often leads to bloodshed. Jesus Himself said, 'Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword' (Matthew 10:34-36; Luke 12:49-53).

[New Testament Commentary, Revelation , Baker]

“But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 14 “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Additional Observations –

- There is an Old Testament parallel to the marking of the saints as recorded in Revelation 7. It is found in Ezekiel –

NKJ Matthew 24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. 6 “And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 “All these *are* the beginning of sorrows. 9 “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. 10 “And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. 11 “Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. 12 “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. 13

NKJ Ezekiel 9:1 Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, "Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each *with* a deadly weapon in his hand." 2 And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them *was* clothed with linen and had a writer's inkhorn at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar. 3 Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who *had* the writer's inkhorn at his side; 4 and the LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it." 5 To the others He said in my hearing, "Go after him through the

city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. 6 "Utterly slay old *and* young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom *is* the mark; and begin at My sanctuary." So they began with the elders who *were* before the temple.

Thus once more we find that the Old Testament experience of the physical nation of Israel points to the experience of the true Israel, the Church. Christ's true sheep cannot be lost in the great tribulation, the church age. The Revelation is Christ's letter to His own, comforting and assuring them as they persevere to the end in this era.

I. The Seventh Seal – the Trumpets **8:1ff**

The trumpet judgments are recorded in chapters 8-11. They are presented in a very similar pattern as the seal judgments – there is an interlude between the 6th and 7th trumpets in which, it appears, God's people are marked – this time, marked off with a measuring imagery.

Let's begin by reading through chapter 8 –

NKJ Revelation 8:1 When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in

heaven for about half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. 3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw *it* to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. 6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. 7 The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up. 8 Then the second angel sounded: And *something* like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. 9 And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. 10 Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. 11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter. 12 Then

the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night. 13 And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

How do we begin in coming to a biblical understanding of these trumpets? As always, we interpret Scripture with Scripture. That is to say, we ask – *how do trumpets function in the Bible?* Let's consider some examples –

NKJ Exodus 19:16 Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai *was* completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. 19 And when the blast

of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice.

NKJ Leviticus 25:9 'Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth *day* of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land.

NKJ Numbers 10:2 "Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps. 3 "When they blow both of them, all the congregation shall gather before you at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

NKJ Numbers 10:8 "The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; and these shall be to you as an ordinance forever throughout your generations. 9 "When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the LORD your God, and you will be saved from your enemies. 10 "Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall

be a memorial for you before your God: I *am* the LORD your God."

NKJ Joshua 6:4 "And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. 5 "It shall come to pass, when they make a long *blast* with the ram's horn, *and* when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him."

NKJ Psalm 47:5 God has gone up with a shout, The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

NKJ Jeremiah 4:19 O my soul, my soul! I am pained in my very heart! My heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, Because you have heard, O my soul, The sound of the trumpet, The alarm of war.

NKJ Matthew 24:31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 14:8 For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

NKJ 1 Corinthians 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

NKJ 1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

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Let's see if we can put all of this together –

“Trumpets in Scripture serve as a call to attention. The sound of the trumpet is a call for God’s people to gather – for war. It is also a call for the enemies of God to gather as He comes to effect His judgment upon them. The trumpet announces judgment, particularly the coming of the Lord Himself to effect that judgment upon the wicked. It is also an encouragement to God’s people that He is coming to deal with Christ’s enemies.”

From the priests going ahead of the ark of the covenant to the terrible trumpet

sounds at Mt. Sinai, trumpets announce the coming of the Lord in judgment. And this is precisely what we find here beginning in verse 6 –

- Trumpet #1 – Hail and fire, mixed with blood. 1/3 of the earth is burned.
- Trumpet #2 – Burning mountain into the sea, turning 1/3 to blood, killing 1/3 of the sea creatures and destroying 1/3 of the ships
- Trumpet #3 – a great star called Wormwood poisons 1/3 of the fresh water supply, many die.
- Trumpet #4 – 1/3 of the light of the sun, moon and stars darkened

The first 4 trumpets are judgments of nature. But now, as the eagle pronounces in his triple woes, the last 3 are particularly woeful – and they deal with spiritual forces coming against the wicked. Notice that Christ’s people are not harmed by them -

- Trumpet #5 – Locusts unleashed from the bottomless pit. They are only permitted to harm those who do not have God’s seal on them.
- Trumpet #6 - Four angels released to kill 1/3 of mankind
- Trumpet #7 – the final coming of the Lord in the fullness of His kingdom, effecting final judgment upon the wicked.

Now, consider –

“Because we maintain that these trumpet judgments are a recapitulation of the church age, describing judgments which characterize the time from the cross to the second coming of Christ, then the trumpets of the Lord have been sounding all through this age, warning all earth-dwellers that the Lord is coming, that He is bringing judgment for all who rebel against Him, and also serving to encourage and rally the people of Christ, reminding them that He is coming.”

We will plan next time to move in for a closer look at these specific trumpet judgments, but as we close today we dare not miss the primary source of encouragement for the saints that is given here in chapter 8.

The Prayers of the Saints Rise Up

Given in Old Testament priesthood and tabernacle imagery (the altar, the golden censer, the incense), The Revelation shows God’s people *that the Lord has heard and is answering their prayers*. The imagery of this vision shows those prayers coming up before God (having been mixed with incense – could this be the intercession of Christ and the Spirit of God praying for us because we know not how we

ought to pray?) – and then, to depict the answer to those prayers, the angel throwing the censer on the earth. *The result is the sounding of the trumpets and the effecting of the judgments they announce.*

What is the message here? It is this –

“That God hears the prayers of His people, and that as a result of those prayers He is even now effecting His judgment upon the wicked – in His mercy giving even them time to repent – until one Day the finality of His wrath will come.”

Christian, do you pray and think that there is no answer? We see the evil that seems to grow more and more every day and we pray that the Lord would judge His enemies and deliver His people. But the evil seems to just keep on growing. And yet, trumpets are blaring right now!

“Each time, down through the history of this church age, a plague has smitten millions, a war has killed masses of people, earthquakes and hurricanes and famines strike – a trumpet is sounding, declaring to the world the Lord’s judgment, calling the wicked to repent, warning of that Day that is imminent when the fullness of His holy justice will be carried out. All is not well in this world. Man is in rebellion against

His Creator and the whole creation groans and travails together, declaring that things are not as they should be. That sin has brought man under the wrath of his Creator.”

Do you see then how The Revelation interprets the world for us? Think of the Tillamook burn, or the massive fires in Australia, or those sweeping through Southern California. What would it have been like to live in Europe in the days of the plague, the black death? You have the influenza epidemic early in the 20th century that killed so many millions. The wars of the centuries – the Civil War, WWI, WWII. Wars in our day – men killing one another. Then there is the current economic collapse and all the great collapses of nations’ economies that have occurred down through history. Why, when God’s original intent was that men should *buy without money*?

What is happening? Where is the Lord in all this? And The Revelation tells us that – yes, we must say it –

“Christ the Lion-Lamb King is effecting it all. His trumpets are blasting the warning to all the world that the King is coming to deal with His enemies and that indeed He is dealing with them in part even now.”

And this 8th chapter is announcing to Christ’s suffering, persecuted church

in this world that the trumpets are sounding because of and in answer to *the prayers of Christ's people*. This world is a fallen world, a world defying its Creator, and thus a world experiencing the trumpet blasts announcing God's judgment.

Notice His mercy in all this. The judgments stretch out over hundreds of years. Christ Himself stays the hand of the plagues, limiting them time and again to a fraction of the earth instead of all of it. He calls men to repent.

And there is something else happening in these trumpets – even while they are sounding. There is *the preaching and testimony of the gospel, of the Word of God by Christ's Church gone out as a light into all the world all through the centuries even until now*.

Men, the *earth-dwellers* as The Revelation calls all those who are of Satan's kingdom, these men simply will not listen. They refuse to heed the warning of the trumpets, and if you doubt that – *consider what happens when the Church announces that wars, plagues, famine, storms – are the warning trumpets of God calling upon all to repent before the final storm of His judgment falls and there will be no more time to repent and be saved. What happens? The same thing that happened to righteous Noah. The world mocks. The world claims that it,*

through its own power of science and intellect, can overcome any of these things that come its way. The notion that God is in any of these things is the most foolish notion the world can imagine.

And yet this is the plain message of The Revelation.

In it all, in these trumpet blasts, Christ does reach the ears of those He is calling to Himself. How many people through the centuries have come to Christ as a result of His trumpet blast sounded in their life? Some cataclysm. Some disease. Or perhaps just the final realization in someone's opening eyes that this world is not right – that perhaps God is trying to tell the world something.

Therefore, Christian, pray –

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name,
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven...*

And consider also – *how does heaven respond to the sounding of the trumpets and the resulting judgments?*

NKJ Revelation 11:17 saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You

have taken Your great power and reigned. 18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth."