

Look! Listen! - And Overcome!

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

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Look! Listen! – And Overcome!

“Not the Way it is Supposed to Be”

-or-

“Out of Order”

Lord's Day Morning

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One of the things we saw here in this 8th chapter of The Revelation last time was this –

NKJ Revelation 8:3 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.

God hears and answers our prayers, but He first mixes them with His own incense. Surely this is the thing Paul meant –

NKJ Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.

Sermon Text: Revelation 8

Introduction

Do you sometimes find yourself discouraged because of your sin and what seem to be your feeble attempts at serving Christ? We have been watching the Case For Kids series by Ted Tripp, teaching us the biblical model for training up our children in the Lord. As we watch, we look back and see how many times we blew it and how differently we would handle many situations if we had the chance to do it over again.

My life on this earth is always going to be tainted with the stench of sin, right? But we are told that our prayers, our service – the raising of our children – the seemingly weak words we shared with our neighbor about Christ – *that our entire lives are fragrancd with this heavenly incense and thereby made acceptable and effective in God's sight.* And it is vital for us to understand this. The thing relates directly to the fact the our Great High Priest is representing us right now before His Father. *That it is the blood and perfect life of Jesus Christ by which we are justified – not by some product of our own manufacture.*

“Jesus Christ is that heavenly incense which mingles with my life and makes a fragrant aroma to God.”

Alright then, you will remember from last time that the trumpets have sounded – or perhaps we should say that they have begun to sound. They sound in response to the prayers of the saints and effect judgments on the earth. Their effects are recorded for us in chapters 8-11 of The Revelation. Let's read, by way of review, 8:6-13 again –

NKJ Revelation 8:6 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!"

I. The Nature of the Trumpet Judgments

Before we examine the specifics of each of these judgments, let's step

back and make some general observations about them –

First, we must keep in mind the Exodus nature of the judgments. The plagues in Egypt at the time of the Exodus under Moses were –

Plague #1 – Water turned to blood, not only the Nile River, but other water sources as well. And, the fish in the Nile died.

Plague #2 – Frogs.

Plague #3 – Gnats.

Plague #4 – Flies.

Plague #5 – Death of Livestock

Plague #6 – Boils

Plague #7 – Hail ruins crops and trees.
(Only in Goshen there was no hail)

Plague #8 - Locusts eat plants and trees

Plague #9 – Darkness. (Except in Goshen)

Plague #10 - Final plague, the Passover – death of the firstborn – except for homes marked by the blood of a lamb.

Let me suggest to you then that what we have in the Old Testament account of the plagues in Egypt *is a picture of these great final plagues recorded for us in The Revelation which take place in the Church Age.* The nature of the judgments in The Revelation make the connection quite obvious. And therefore we can learn from the Exodus that it is a picture of a Greater and Final Exodus being effected by God right now –

“This world is Egypt and the devil is Pharaoh. The Egyptians are the earth-dwellers and the Israelites are the saints of God, the Church. By the blood of the Lamb of God, true Israel is being set free from the world. As this Exodus is being worked out, God is sending warning judgments/plagues upon the earth as part of this redemption.”

Secondly, though we will not go into detail concerning this point right now, please notice the great similarity in the nature of the 3 sets of 7 judgments in The Revelation –

- a. The seal judgments
- b. The Trumpet judgments
- c. The bowl judgments

The similarities are still another indicator that this book is structured around the repetition (recapitulation) of events occurring in the very same

age – from Christ’s first advent to His second coming.

The Trumpet Judgments

What are these judgments then? Oh, we know that, for instance, the first trumpet effects hail and fire, mixed with blood resulting in one third of the earth, the trees and all the green grass being burned up.

The second trumpet effects this great mountainlike object burning with fire that turns a third of the sea to blood so that one third of the creatures in it die and a third of the ships are destroyed.

The third trumpet sees this starlike object called Wormwood turning one third of the water into wormwood, killing many people by its bitterness.

And then the fourth trumpet sounds so that one third of the sun and the moon and the stars are darkened.

What is this? How are we to interpret these events? Are they literal – does, for instance, one third of the earth burn up and does one third of the sea turn to real blood? The Revelation, we must remember, is apocalyptic literature filled with all kinds of symbols representing real things but very often the symbol is not the thing itself.

Notice first then that these 4 judgments all concern *the creation*. The earth, the trees and grass, the sea and sea creatures, the stars and sun and moon and so on. Notice also that *each judgment represents a distortion of the creation that God pronounced very good*. The sun and moon and stars are supposed to shine, not be darkened. The sea and its creatures are to be a source of life and food. Water is meant to be sweet, not bitter and the meteorological systems are to provide life to man, not shatter the vegetation with hailstorms and burn up the forests and grass.

And then recall that *these are trumpets! Trumpets warn. Trumpets announce. Trumpets call together for battle*. And specifically, the trumpets of the Lord announce His imminent coming in judgment of His enemies and salvation for His people.

“The trumpets are blasting out their message to the whole world, declaring that man’s sin has brought the creation under God’s curse. They announce that He is coming in judgment for those who hate Him, and in salvation for those who love Him.”

Notice that these are partial judgments, limited by God in their scope to one-third of the creation. *Could it be that the trumpet judgments are of the same*

nature as the bowl judgments, but limited in scope by God's mercy, warning that full-judgment is impending? So that what we are going to see is an increasing severity and scope of these judgments, culminating in the bowl judgments? It seems to be so. Listen to the introduction of the bowl judgments in chapter 15 -

NKJ Revelation 15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, **for in them the wrath of God is complete.** 2 And I saw *something* like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark *and* over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. 3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous *are* Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true *are* Your ways, O King of the saints! 4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For *You* alone *are* holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested."

5 After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. 6 And out of the temple came the seven

angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. 7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. 8 The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

And I think it is profitable right now to read the account of the bowl judgments as found in chapter 16. Notice once more the similarity in their nature to the trumpet and even the seal judgments – *and yet the unmistakable finality and greatly increased scope and intensity of them -*

NKJ Revelation 16:1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." 2 So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

3 Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead *man*; and **every living creature in the sea died.**

4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." 7 And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* Your judgments."

8 Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. 11 They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

12 Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. 13 And I saw three unclean

spirits like frogs *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, *which* go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. 15 "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed *is* he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." 16 And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" 18 And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. 19 Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. 20 Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And great hail from heaven fell upon men, *each hailstone* about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

We see it then. These judgments are of the same character as preceding ones, but of increased intensity and scope as the full wrath of God is poured out on the earth-dwellers. It is the finality of the great Exodus of God's people from the world, that old Egypt of Satan's kingdom.

But Still, What Are These Things?

The early chapters of Genesis shed light upon these trumpet and bowl judgments – particularly those that touch the creation itself. Think back to Genesis 1. Follow as I read it and notice in particular that the very same things God set in order before the fall, those very things are what are seen going "wrong" in the judgments of The Revelation-

NKJ Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that *it was* good; and God divided the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day. 6 Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters,

and let it divide the waters from the waters." 7 Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament; and it was so. 8 And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day. 9 Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry *land* appear"; and it was so. 10 And God called the dry *land* Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that *it was* good. 11 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb *that* yields seed, and the fruit tree *that* yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed *is* in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, the herb *that* yields seed according to its kind, and the tree *that* yields fruit, whose seed *is* in itself according to its kind. And God saw that *it was* good. 13 So the evening and the morning were the third day. 14 Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; 15 "and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. 16 Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. *He made* the stars also. 17 God set them in the

firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that *it was* good. 19 So the evening and the morning were the fourth day. 20 Then God said, "Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens." 21 So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that *it was* good. 22 And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23 So the evening and the morning were the fifth day. 24 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, *each* according to its kind"; and it was so. 25 And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that *it was* good. 26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God

created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29 And God said, "See, I have given you every herb *that* yields seed which *is* on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. 30 "Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which *there is* life, *I have given* every green herb for food"; and it was so. 31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was* very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

It begins to be clear, does it not? The 3 series of 7 judgments of The Revelation are *the de-creation of the creation because of sin*. In these judgments, the trumpets of God are announcing to the world that something has gone horribly askew and that God has removed – for now in part – His sustaining hand in the creation. Right now His wrath, in part, is being revealed from heaven –

NKJ Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against

all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

But one day, as the trumpets are announcing right now, this partial, merciful judgment will change into the full and final measure of God's righteous wrath against those who will not acknowledge nor give Him thanks

NKJ Hebrews 12:25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven, 26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." 27 Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God *is* a consuming fire.

As to the present nature then of the trumpet judgments – let's just state it this way –

"The first 4 trumpet judgments are of the genre of natural cataclysm. They are distortions and upheavals of the natural order – the dry land, the seas, the trees and vegetation – even of the sun, moon, and stars. The Revelation is telling us that in such upheavals of nature in this age, God is sounding His trumpets, warning the world of that Day to come when He will come to judge the earth. We must never forget this as we witness these kinds of "common" events on this earth. The Creation is Out of Order, this is not the way it is supposed to be."

NKJ Romans 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

NOTE: You have probably already seen the common outcome of these series of judgments in respect to the wicked, as recorded in The Revelation

NKJ Revelation 6:15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

NKJ Revelation 9:20 But 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. 21 And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

NKJ Revelation 16:8 Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. 10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. 11 They blasphemed the God

of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

Christian, it is a miraculous work of power and grace when anyone is set free from their idols. At the end of every single one of these 3 sets of 7 judgments – seals, trumpets, and bowls – men still do not repent and throw away their idols.

Left to ourselves, our only response to someone threatening our idol-god, our precious – is that of the Ephesians –

NKJ Acts 19:26 "Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. 27 "So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship." 28 Now when they heard *this*, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians!" 29 So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions.

But Christ, in His mercy, comes to us and smashes our idols. He will not permit His people to hold onto them. He is going to wrest them from our hands, and it isn't going to happen without a battle. So don't be surprised if, as you follow Christ, your flesh still wells up at times – *great is Diana of the Ephesians!*

Further Insights as to the Nature of the Trumpets

Notice that the trumpet judgments place a greater emphasis upon things inflicted upon the enemies of Christ than do the seal judgments – which include the sufferings of the saints (chapter 6). Listen to G.K. Beale point this out –

“The trumpets recapitulate the seals. But whereas the first five seals focused on the trials through which believers must pass, now the focus in the first six trumpets is on judgments that unbelievers, both inside and outside the visible church, must endure. The trumpets resemble some of the trials pictured in the seals, but now the primary purpose of the trials is to punish.”

Beale concludes that the fire and hail of the first trumpet is an imagery of famine, arguing his case primarily from Ezekiel chapter 5. He goes on to conclude that the second trumpet's

great burning mountain thrown into the sea is a symbol expressing the judgment of an evil empire, that judgment disrupting sea commerce. Similarly, the third trumpet's fouling of the water supply is in accordance with the famine.

Whatever the symbols of these trumpet judgments represent, they are certainly literal events on the earth. Have the trumpets sounded in their entirety? Most likely, no. The seventh trumpet in particular seems to describe the final Day of the Lord. It seems to be correct to conclude that the trumpet judgments are sounding now, but that they will increase in intensity as the Day of Christ approaches.

Listen now to Dennis Johnson, The Triumph of the Lamb –

“The trumpet visions portray limited disasters and distresses in the midst of history, events that are bitter foretastes of the final, unrestrained destruction of all opposition to God's reign at the end of the present world order. The correspondence between the spheres afflicted in the sounding of the first four trumpets and those destroyed in the pouring of the first 4 bowls (earth, sea, rivers and streams, sky), shows that God's righteous wrath summons every aspect of our environment to indict human rebellion, both through the flow of history (trumpets) and at its

climax (bowls). Unlike the bowl judgments, which will be 'the last because in them the wrath of God is finished', when the trumpets are sounded the damage affects only one-third of each sphere. The demons released with the fifth trumpet are restrained in other ways: they cannot touch the earth's vegetation or God's sealed servants...in each of the first 6 trumpets, God draws the line, dictating that destruction go this far, and no farther.

The purposes of the trumpet cycle are to sound alarms, warning the complacent and calling them to repentance, and to summon the church to holy warfare....The plagues associated with the trumpets proclaim God's supremacy and prefigure coming judgment, but they also leave time to repent. Yet tragically, even after 6 trumpets, 'the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands.'

Yet the purpose of portraying these judgments as the descent of burning objects from the sky is not to equate them with missiles or meteors, atomic fallout, acid rain, or volcanic ash. Rather, it is to stress that the destruction that decimates the physical world through warfare, other human evil, or natural disaster is ultimately the outworking of God's sovereign

purpose, defending His people and warning His enemies."

See it? We go astray if we try to pin down the details of these visions, attempting to say "this is definitely that," when the primary message is the thing we must get hold of. It is not so much the particular identity of the burning mountain cast into the sea nor of the specific nature of one third of the sea turning to blood, but it is the fact that God is intervening in His creation through various calamities in varying degrees to trumpet His message to this world. And we must hear those trumpets. We, of all people, must know that when a hurricane wipes out a city, when an earthquake kills thousands, when famine and disease sweep across continents – these are God's trumpets. And we, as Christ's church, need to be transformed in our thinking about them. Our scientific age attempts to reduce all such events to mere "natural" occurrences, but the Word of God tells us otherwise.

The trumpets of Christ serve to remind every Christian –

NKJ 1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the

lust of the eyes, and the pride of life --
is not of the Father but is of the world.
17 And the world is passing away, and
the lust of it; but he who does the will
of God abides forever.