



# The Seventh Trumpet

*Sermon - Aiden Sib.*

*28 Nov 2021 – Rev 11:1-15*

Thanks for being willing to delve into this interesting section of Revelation, from chap. 4-11, characterised by what we've called 'the sevens.' Why not take a moment to reflect - how have you gone with Revelation? This is the last week, here we are, at the end of the Sevens' series - how have you found it?

I know that at the beginning of the series, there were people who were apprehensive about heading into Revelation...and understandably so. We've covered a section characterised by that number of completion in Revelation - the number 7. And so we've heard about the Seven Spirits of God, the Lamb in the midst of the Seven Lamps, the 7 Seals of Judgement, the 7 Angels with their 7 Trumpets, and the voice of the one who speaks like 7 Thunders...

And finally, today, the Seventh Trumpet is sounded... But what's it been like for you?

Has it been heavy? Confusing? Intimidating? It's certainly been those things for me as a preacher. Few things will humble you before God's Word like the book of Revelation. And I do believe more and more that if you ever meet someone who tells you they've mastered it, they may mean well, but they are not telling the truth. It is a very complicated book.

And yet there's beauty in the chaos...because it isn't truly chaotic. One thing we see over and over again is that God is in control. He has saved a people: the 'vast multitude' of chapter 7. They are safe through what is described in these chapters, sealed with the mark of God's saving power.

And, ultimately, though it is heavy and it's never comfortable to read about biblical notions of judgement, what is the outcome?

Here we are, at the end of the *Sevens'* series - what is the outcome?

Well, look at chapter 11, verse 15:

*The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.'*

That's the comfort in the chaos. In the midst of the judgements and plagues, signs in the sky and the land and the sea, the cosmic unravelling of the phenomenal revealing the stark truth of the noumenal<sup>1</sup> - the outcome of it all is that the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our God. And all of the great biblical promises attached to that coming kingdom will be actualised in history - fulfilled in the culmination of God's plan for the ages, the revelation of Christ as King in all the world.

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<sup>1</sup> This language comes from Immanuel Kant. **Phenomena** refers to what we observe. It is what is true *for us, in our observation*. But it may not be universally true. Whereas the **Noumenal** is the thing-in-itself; that which is truly true, universally, at all times and in all places. Many philosophers hold that only God can know the *noumenal*, because to know what is truly true, you have to know the truth of a thing in all states, places, times, and under all effects. In short, you must be omniscient.

Oh, glorious day!

And how does heaven react? If you read on, look what happens... Verse 16...

*...the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, <sup>17</sup> saying: 'We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. <sup>18</sup> The nations were angry, and your wrath has come.*

You see, there was war and rebellion. Evil and conflict, hate and exploitation. But God's rule brings deliverance. His wrath burns brighter, truer, and consumes more fully than man in his impotent, prejudiced anger. Where we almost blaspheme when we elevate our own notions of justice, as if we could even know what that *is*, God brings perfect justice.

This is described as the 'third woe' in verse 14. But it's only a woe to those who are opposed to God; for those who are in Christ, it's good news.

Verse 18 continues:

*The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small—*

Those who died, having got away with their crimes, don't get away...not the man in the bunker in Berlin in 1945 and not the Ripper of London with his surgeon's knife; no, God knows their name and will raise them to face judgement. As he will *all* who have outstanding debts.

And what about those who died before their time? Or took God at his promise of life and faced death? This is a day when they are vindicated, too.

And it's a day when God is vindicated. We mustn't miss that. People will say, *why do bad things happen to good people?* And the quick-witted Christian will quip, *well, why do good things happen to sinners?* But either way, there's injustice, right? They call death "the great leveller" but it's not, is it? Because people die who *shouldn't*. And people who should, sometimes live to a ripe old age. There's no justice in death. It's a horror. And rightly it's called, "the last enemy."<sup>2</sup> But for God who can reach into Sheol, into the grave, and for God who can raise the dead - he can enact justice. He will set all things to rights.

The last part of the hymn, this reaction to God's reign concludes, verse 18 – the time has come *for destroying those who destroy the earth.*'

Isn't that interesting! Now, there's a verse for an environmentalist!

You know, people will say that Christianity enables the worst kind of environmental neglect or destruction...that the mentality of 'dominion' makes us treat the world like it's a machine made to serve us and we can just engineer replacement parts when one fails... Or people will say that if the world's going to be destroyed, then it doesn't matter how we treat it. But Revelation 11:18 sounds a stark warning. God

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:26.

has used the language of cosmic destruction in speaking about judgement *but*, that judgement is directed at mankind. When it comes to 'the destruction of the earth' well God says he will "destroy those who destroy the earth!" So we mustn't laugh at young Greta Thunberg or people who tie themselves to trees, or who camp out, occupying fracking sites...because they've actually captured *something* of God's heart for the world that he has made. Regardless of what he intends to do with it or how God might restore and renew - he will destroy those who destroy the earth.

*"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small – and for destroying those who destroy the earth." Revelation 11:16-18.*

Is that a hymn you'll one day sing? Well I hope we'll sing the whole thing together! Because that's the outcome: at the blowing of the 7th Trumpet, verse 15...

*the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.*

[...]

But how do we move from here to there? How do we move from the **Kingdom of this World** to the **Kingdom of our God**?

Naturally—it's Christ and the Revelation of Christ as King!  
He's the saviour...and those who trust in him and who do the Father's will are saved.

In John 6:28, Jesus' disciples asked,

*'What must we do to do the works God requires?'*

And Jesus answered (John 6:29)

*'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent!'*

You see, when we trust in Jesus, we are saved...by grace, through faith.

John 3:16, Jesus said that

*God so loved the world that he sent his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

By grace, through faith.

So, 1 John 5:12,

*Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

We receive the grace of God - the benefits of Jesus' death and resurrection, through trusting in him.

He is the Saviour, the living one, the one who was, and is, and is to come. (Revelation 1:8 and 18)

This book is about revealing him. That's why it's called 'Revelation,' you see. Sometimes people call it the 'Book of Revelations' because it reveals lots of things, but look at the title on the page in your Bible; what does it say? *Revelation*.

Because at the end of the day, this is a book about the One, the Saviour, the Christ.

Yes, there are sad moments, awful moments; we read about those unnamed prophets in the start of chapter 11 who prophesied in Jerusalem, *“the city where their Lord was crucified,”* verse 8. And even though they had the power of Moses and Elijah, to turn waters into blood and to shut the sky; and the voice of God - consuming fire that would overcome their enemies...they were put to death...but even they are raised to life, taken into heaven and told to wait but a moment, until Jesus is revealed.

Because, verse 15, the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever. You could write a chorus about that. It makes you wanna say hallelujah... You could even call it, *The Hallelujah Chorus*—in fact, someone has, hasn't they? I'm just trying to get a Handel on the name...

So...what do we do with all this? What's the big message of the Sevens in Revelation; the seven seals and seven trumpets?

Well if you're reading and you're not a Christian, you need to know that there's a day of justice. God might've seemed unjust to you, even implausible.

Ancient Epicurus famously said, *if God **can't** prevent evil, he's not all-powerful. If God can, but **won't** prevent evil, he's not all-good. And if God **can** and **wills** to prevent evil, then why is there evil?*

But this is God's answer. He doesn't 'allow' evil; it exists for only a moment in the scale of eternity. But there will be a day of justice and recompense. If evil was allowed to be 'got away with,' and to make its mark indelibly, then you would *rightly* question God's justice. But if there is a day of justice and recompense—and *that is Revelation's message*—then it raises the question, *where will you be on that day?*

Will you be in Christ, forgiven, or will you stand alone, to answer for the things you did and shouldn't have, and the things you didn't do, but should have? I know where I want to be!

And if you're reading and you *are* a Christian, I hope you know God more deeply and understand Revelation a little better.

It is a book that keeps us humble. God is a *God* who keeps us humble. And in the moment where we think we're masters of it all, we've failed the most.

But where we wait, in humility and faith, we wait *knowing* that the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our God; that he cares *deeply* about this world and about the people of this world, and that there will be a day of justice and recompense, when all is set to right.

And so, with Handel's famous chorus, together we say, *Hallelujah!*