

*All Things New: The Seven Trumpets*  
*By Jason Huff*  
*Psalm 47; Matthew 11:16-24; Revelation 8:6-9:21*

“Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them. The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water – the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter. The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, 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 turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night. As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!" The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them. The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon. The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come. The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number. The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury. The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood – idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.”

A week or so ago, we watched a movie about the destruction of huge swaths of the world, otherwise known as *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*. We happily sat back to watch Mothra, Rodan, and other creatures from the fifty years of the series trample on major cities, as has been the case since at least 1954 and the original *Godzilla* movie. We're used to this sort of thing; it's all in good fun. We have been watching disaster movies pretty much since the dawn of film. *Fire!*, a silent film from 1901, was about fireman rescuing people from a burning building. Disaster movies have been most popular in eras of major upheaval and uncertainty – it's no wonder that disaster films saw their heyday in the 1930s and 1970s. And as movies have gotten bigger and more spectacular with special effects, the more destruction they show us.

Going to the movies is often a stress release. We watch a disaster movie and think, "Hey, our lives aren't as bad as *that*." But when we think about what the end of the world would really mean for us, it gets a little scarier. We've now reached the part in Revelation where things get weird and strange, and the details start to sound like a disaster movie mixed with a horror movie. Things get uncomfortable. But there is so much here for us if we're willing to dig deep and understand what's going on, and we'll see why it's so important we take Revelation seriously, and why understanding the kind of book we're reading plays so big a part in interpreting it and receiving hope from it.

There's a reason we read such a big passage from Revelation today, and it's because it's all one unit. We don't have time to get into all the particulars of every trumpet blast, nor do I think we need to do so. Instead, there are some keys we need to understand. The first is this: *the trumpets judgments are following the pattern of the Exodus*.

If we look carefully, we can see the parallels. (Don't feel bad if you didn't think of them at first; I didn't either.) If we remember together, when God rescued the Hebrews out of captivity in Egypt, God sent ten plagues on Egypt to show His power and glory before Pharaoh and all the people. The plagues God sent showed the powerlessness and worthlessness of the Egyptian gods; each plague showed that a specific Egyptian deity had no power, only the God of the Hebrews. And while the first few plagues affected everyone, the most devastating plagues only affected the Egyptians, not the Hebrews that God protected.

So look with me now. The first trumpet comes with hail and fire. That was the seventh plague on Egypt. The second trumpet turns a sea into blood and the third trumpet poisons the waters...echoes of Egypt's first plague. The fourth trumpet brings darkness on the land. That's the ninth plague on Egypt. The fifth trumpet releases a swarm of these vile locusts. What's that? The eighth plague. And the sixth trumpet is the trumpet releasing physical and spiritual death on mankind. That's the final plague on Egypt.

So what's the point? Why is God bringing these catastrophes this way? Listen to what God tells Moses in Exodus 7 – "You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst."

God brought about His judgment on Egypt for their brutal and unrelenting treatment of His people. But His judgment is also multiplying His signs and wonders so that the Egyptians would know that God is in fact the Lord, the creator, the God over all. In one sense, these are punishments on wickedness; yet they also display the glory and power of God. When God brings about the plagues on Egypt, when God brings about the trumpets of judgment in the end times, He receives the glory because everyone is utterly powerless to stop Him. His judgments occur in ways that no one can ignore.

Why will God use the same patterns of judgment in the end as He did on Egypt? As we mentioned very early on in our study of Revelation, God's judgment comes in cycles. We see those cycles over and over again in history. It is as if God is saying, "Maybe you didn't understand last time. Will you see this time?" You hear a song in worship or on the radio often enough, you get to know the tune. You practice a math equation a few times, you start to understand how to do it. God shows us over and over again, often in very similar ways, what He is doing. We just have to be paying attention to what happened in the past so we can recognize it again in the future.

But the thing to remember is, after the judgment on Egypt, God's people were saved. They were rescued from their backbreaking slavery and brought into a promised land full of good things. Every Passover, the Jews celebrate their freedom from captivity through the judgment God brought on their oppressors. And so this judgment we read about in Revelation 8-9, just like the judgment in Exodus, should be read in light of hope for God's people. Yes, these events are catastrophic. Yes, they are terrible for those who suffer the consequences of their rebellion against God. But ultimately, these events are good. God is purifying the world of unrighteousness and setting the stage to bring about His eternal Kingdom.

Now are these events just Exodus told from a different perspective? I don't think so. I think the events of the last days are similar, but God has a habit of repeating cycles until they are completely fulfilled. We may have seen some form of these trumpets in the past. But here's my second point, one that may unnerve us, but we have to take at face value: *there's solid evidence from current events that we are in the last days, if we understand what that means properly.*

I do not believe the seven trumpet judgments, or the judgments associates with the seals we've already studied, happen in rapid succession. I think there are years, decades, even generations between them. I don't think they come in chronological order; the judgments of the first trumpet might come after the fourth. John was given a vision of things to come, not a timeline. But we must study the signs carefully and say, "Have we experienced a trumpet judgment in recent history?" As we said when we studied the seals, they followed a pattern seen from 100-400AD. That's a long time period, but not long to God. We may only see one biblical judgment in a lifetime. What have we seen that might say we are in the end times?

I cannot identify a lot of the specifics in many of the trumpet judgments to modern times. Some are a real stretch. Some have tried to identify the locusts as modern machines of warfare like helicopters. That I don't see. I can see certain possibilities with pollution and the darkening of the skies in places like China, but nothing specific. But what I do see listed is an earth-shattering, well-documented disaster that happened with the lifetimes of most of us here.

April 26, 1986, 1:23am. Reactor 4 of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant explodes. A disastrous test leads to an uncontrolled nuclear chain reaction. Nearby workers are immediately killed. Dozens of firefighters are dead within months after containing the blaze. The Western world learns about the incident when Swedish scientists discover a radiation cloud that eventually contaminates not only parts of the Eastern Bloc countries but virtually all of Europe. The radiation released was 400 times that of the atomic bomb dropped over Hiroshima. At least five million people in Eastern Europe were directly exposed to radiation.

According to Mikhail Gorbachev, the leader of the USSR at the time, the Chernobyl explosion was “perhaps the real cause of the collapse of the Soviet Union.”<sup>1</sup> The empire that for seventy years denied Christianity, denied personal freedom, and constantly threatened the free world collapsed.

Here’s where this connects with the Bible. Listen to this from *The New York Times*, certainly no friend of Christianity, dated July 26, 1986. “A prominent Russian writer recently produced a tattered old Bible and with a practiced hand turned to Revelations [sic]. “Listen,” he said, “this is incredible.” [He reads today’s passage.] In a dictionary, he showed the Ukrainian word for wormwood, a bitter wild herb used as a tonic in rural Russia: Chernobyl. The writer, an atheist, was hardly alone in pointing out the apocalyptic reference to the star called Chernobyl.”

What do we make of this? We all know that John can’t be literal about a star during the third trumpet of Revelation. A real star would destroy earth. Some interpreters have suggested a meteor might hit the earth. Yet there is absolutely nothing on earth more like a star than a nuclear reactor. The only difference between the energy they produce is that a sun fuses atoms together, whereas nuclear energy plants split atoms apart. Both produce unfathomable amounts of energy and incredible amounts of radiation. To the layman, they’re virtually identical.

A first century Jew couldn’t have any clue about nuclear radiation, but the contamination of the land and water was real. The same *New York Times* article talks about “countless vacation plans” being “thrown askew...by fears of swimming in contaminated waters.” Over 1,000 square miles had to be decontaminated. Pravda and Taft, the Soviet news sources of the era, reported all the work they had to do in order to stop the spread of contaminated rain water and ground water. The disaster cost, in modern money, \$68 billion dollars.

Now of course, *The New York Times*’ article still gets a jab in, saying, “Among many Russians, that passage from Revelations...has touched a strong penchant for superstition in the national character, giving Chernobyl the quality of an almost supernatural disaster.” Of course it’s not a real thing, right? Yet listen to this from an article in *The Guardian*, a liberal paper from Great Britain that’s just as opposed to Christianity as *The New York Times*. This article was written March 25, 2006, twenty years after the accident. Citing more than 50 published scientific studies, researchers from a coalition of medical foundations argued that over 500,000 of the 2 million people classified as victims of Chernobyl had already died.

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<sup>1</sup>*Slate.com*, 23 Jan 2015, <https://slate.com/technology/2013/01/chernobyl-and-the-fall-of-the-soviet-union-gorbachevs-glasnost-allowed-the-nuclear-catastrophe-to-undermine-the-ussr.html>. Accessed 7 Feb 2020.

This is where things get spooky. Listen to these statistics in light of Scripture. *The Guardian* article never mentions Revelation, yet it says, “Infant mortality increased 20% to 30% because of chronic exposure to radiation after the accident.” A third. In an area 310 miles west of Chernobyl, doctors report, “Up to 30% of people who were in highly radiated areas have physical disorders.” One third. The same doctors report, “Nearly one in three of all the newborn babies have deformities.” One third. No link to Scripture, reported on by people who don’t care about Scripture, who wouldn’t want to support it, verifying exactly what Scripture says.

My friends, we can set all this aside and say, “Coincidence.” We can say, “John couldn’t have meant this when he wrote this.” We can say, “Those Russians were just superstitious.” Yet the fall of the Soviet Union, built on godlessness, which lasted for 70 years – the same time period as the Jews in exile in Babylon – falling because of an event that has detailed parallels to the book of Revelation? You be the judge.

Does this mean the world is ending tomorrow? No. This is 34-year-old news. But God’s timing is not our timing. We are living in a time of God’s judgment proven by prophecy. It has been going on for some time, and it will continue. Only in hindsight will we understand all the prophecies, but we’re living in catastrophic times. The bloodiest wars in history were in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. More people were martyred for the faith in the 20<sup>th</sup> century than the last 19 centuries combined. Europe, China, India, even here we are beginning to see the signs of society closing itself off to religion. We must prepare ourselves for what is to come.

And that leads to our final thought: *Will we repent, or will we be like those who don’t get the point?* God seems to have spaced out His judgments on us just enough, and hidden Himself in the shadows just enough, that we can still ignore Him if we want. And that’s the amazing thing about all the trumpet judgments. As John says, “The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands.” All these judgments, and nothing. No “I’m sorry,” no change of ways, no thought of reform. Everybody doing exactly what they did before – living in evil and sin and earning more judgment.

How many catastrophes are now a blip on our radar? How many Chernobyls, 9-11s, Fukushimas, tsunamis? A few weeks ago, Iran was the top news story. Friday I searched for stories on the web, and the only American news service still covering Iran at all was NPR. Now it’s all about the Coronavirus. The news makes us nervous but rarely affects us. We stop paying attention. And in the meantime, our lives go on. Most people go about their business, committing the same sins, living with the same angers, the same lusts, the same rebellions. Is God going to get our attention, or are we going to live in ignorance until it’s too late?

You all here are dear friends. My prayer for all of us is that we would reject the ways of the world and live lives of purity, of holiness, of loving our neighbors as ourselves and loving our enemies, lives that run counter to our culture. We who are the sealed ones, the ones God has spiritually protected, we must live lives of continual repentance, modeling it for the world. God has spared us from many, many judgments. But sooner or later, we will appear before the throne of God. May we not be those who looked at the judgments of God on this world and shrugged. May we be the ones who turn our hearts to the Lord and find salvation through Jesus our Redeemer.