

The 7 Retributive Judgment Trumpets of Revelation, II

Preliminary Questions

1. What is the vision of the blowing of 7 trumpets all about? Do the events depicted in the blowing of the trumpets have any relationship with the events depicted in the preceding visions of the 7 churches and the 7 seals? What about links to the visions of Zechariah? And the Sanctuary service?

Interpretive Guidelines to Consider

2. The following interpretive guides must be considered in order to arrive at a correct interpretation of the vision of the blowing of the 7 trumpets:
 - a. **First, its connection with the prayer of the saints in Rev 6:9-11**--the 7 trumpets must be viewed primarily as retributive judgments on the powers that have inflicted great harm and damage to the church throughout the Christian era; these judgments are poured out in answer to the prayers of the martyred saints, portrayed as souls under the altar (**Rev 6:9-11**); trumpets are often used in the Old testament to warn of impending danger, announce important events, a call to war; on the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, the first 10 days consisted of blowing trumpets to call the congregation to engage in a work of preparing for the solemn events of the Day of Atonement; blowing the trumpets were calls for repentance and reformation;
 - b. **Second, its connection with the visions of the 7 churches and the 7 seals**--it must be understood that the vision of the 7 trumpets go over the same timeframe as the 7 churches and the 7 seals-- the apostolic times until the second coming of Jesus;
 - c. **Third, its connection with the visions of Zechariah**--the thematic link between the visions of Zechariah and Revelation must be brought into the picture—John’s vision of the blowing of 7 trumpets needs to be understood in the light of a corresponding vision in the book of Zechariah; as we have already discovered, Zechariah’s 8 visions serve as the thematic framework upon which the 8 visions of Revelation are built on;
 - **Vision of the rider among the myrtle trees (Zech 1:7-17)**—lines up with the vision of Jesus among the 7 golden candlesticks which introduces the messages to the 7 churches;
 - **Vision of the 4 horns and the 4 carpenters (Zech 1:18-21)**--line up with the vision of the 4 living creatures which introduces the vision of the 7 seals
 - **Vision of the man with the measuring line (Zech 2)**---lines up with the vision of the 7 trumpets

Restoration and Retribution Theme

3. **Restoration**--Remember that the theme of the visions of Zechariah revolves around the concept of **restoration** and **retribution**; the first 5 visions of Zechariah are restorative and the last 3 visions are retributive; the visions of Revelation are built around the same theme;
 - a. **Restoration**—three areas that have received damage from the hands of their enemies need restoring; they are: the **city**, the **people**, and the **sanctuary**;
 - **Dan 8:13**--The people and the sanctuary are pictured as being trodden underfoot by the “Daily” (pagan Rome) and by the “abomination of desolation” (papal Rome)
 - **Dan 7:25**—the saints worn out
 - **Dan 9:26-27**—the holy city trodden underfoot by the armies of Rome in 70 AD and then by papal Rome for 42 prophetic months (**Rev 11:2**)
 - **Dan 12:7**—the power of the holy people scattered
 - **Rev 13:5**—blasphemed the dwellers of heaven
 - **Rev 17:**--found with the blood of the martyrs
4. The work of **restoration** or **restitution** is outlined in the mandate from God given to Daniel in **Dan 9:24-26**:
 - a. Restoration of the **people**—“finish transgression, make an end of sin. . .”
 - b. Restoration of their **place of worship (cleansing of the sanctuary)**—“make atonement for iniquity;” “anoint the most holy”
 - c. Restoration of their **domain (city)**—“restore and rebuild Jerusalem;” “the streets shall be built again and the wall. . .”
5. **Retribution**--A work of retribution is called for because God is a God of justice and there is a need to avenge God’s people from the high-handed display of power on the part of the agencies once used by God to punish His wayward people:
 - b. I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease. . .(**Zech 1:14-15**)
 - c. He that toucheth you touchech the apple of his eye (**Zech 2:7**)
6. **The Four Oppressive horns in the Old Testament** --The heathen powers that are visited with retributive judgements up until the time of Zechariah for inflicting damage to God’s people are represented as “four horns” (**Zech 1:18-21**):
 1. Egypt, 2. Assyria, 3. Babylon, 4. Persia
7. **The Four oppressive horns in the New Testament**---These 4 oppressive powers of Zechariah have counterparts in the powers that have oppressed the church in the New Testament from the time of John until the second coming of Jesus:
 - a. The Jewish nation (unbelieving Jews, **Acts 8:1-4**; **Acts 14:1-2**)
 - b. Pagan Rome or Gentiles (**Luke 21:24**; **Luke 18:32**; **Acts 14:1-2**)

- c. Papal Rome for 1,260 years
 - d. Resurrected papal Rome in union with apostate Protestantism and spiritualism in the time of the end (**Rev 17:12-14**)
8. **Retribution in the blowing of the 7 trumpets**--The retributive judgments visited upon these powers are depicted in the symbolic, sequential blowing of the trumpets;
9. The restorative and retributive aspects of the first 3 visions of Revelation go along these lines:
- a. **The 7 churches**--portray restoration in the form of **promises** and retribution in terms of **threats**
 - I. **Promises**--
 - To Ephesus--"I will give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God"
 - To Smyrna--"shall not be hurt of the second death"
 - To Pergamos--"I will give to eat of the hidden manna. . ."
 - To Thyatira--I will give power over the nations"
 - II. **Threats**--
 - To Pergamos--"I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth;"
 - To Thyatira--"I will cast her into a bed and them that commit adultery;" with her into great tribulation. . .;"
 - To Sardis--"I will come unto you as a thief. . .;"
 - To Laodicea--"I will spew you out of my mouth;"
 - b. **The 7 seals**--portray restoration as covenant blessings and retributive judgments in terms of covenant curses
 - I. **Covenant blessing**--
 - the church conquering and conquer--outpouring of the Spirit
 - white robes given to them (Rev 6:9-11). . . ; the 144,000 sealed saints and the great multitude clothed in white robes before the 7th seal is broken (Rev 7)
 - II. **Covenant curses**--
 - Sword, famine, beasts, death
 - c. The 7 trumpets portray restoration as a work of building up and retribution as a work of tearing down
 - III. **Tearing down**--
 - kingdoms of this world brought down one after the other as the trumpets are blown;
 - IV. **Building up**--
 - measure the temple, the altar and them that worship therein

Uriah Smith's Interpretation

10. When these interpretive guidelines are taken into account, then Uriah Smith's interpretation of the 7 trumpets, begins to appear incongruous and out of touch:
- a. Uriah Smith's view of the 7 trumpets fails to highlight the cycle of restorative and retributive actions in the blowing of the trumpets because it does not consider the thematic link between the trumpets and the visions of Zechariah;
 - b. Also, Uriah Smith's view of the 7 trumpets does not line up with the timeline of the 7 churches and the 7 seals; by assuming that the first trumpet applies to the barbarian incursions into Roman territory during the latter part of the 4th century, it leaves out major events that took place during the first 3 centuries of Christian history, such as the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD;
 - c. Uriah Smith's view fails to honor the basic hermeneutical principle that the Bible is its own interpreter because he follows a literalistic interpretation of the various symbols used in the 7 trumpets; for example:
 - i. **1st trumpet**—the trees and grass interpreted literally as vegetation when they should be interpreted symbolically;
 - ii. **3rd trumpet**—wormwood is interpreted literally instead of symbolically;
 - iii. **4th trumpet**--sun, moon and stars—applied to the Roman political structure (kings, senators, consuls) which finds no support in the Bible;

Sanctuary Service Introduction

11. The vision of the blowing of the 7 trumpets is introduced by a sanctuary service scenario in **Rev 8:2-5**; the work of intercession going on the heavenly sanctuary is brought to view before the trumpets are blown to synchronize the events on earth associated with the blowing of the trumpets with the daily and yearly ministrations going on in the heavenly sanctuary;
- a. **Rev 8:2-5**—a work of intercession associated with the blowing of the first trumpet
 - b. **Rev 9:12-15**—the work on intercession in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary is still in progress at the time the 6th trumpet is blown
 - c. By this we understand that the blowing of at least the 6 trumpets occur during probationary time—i.e. while ministration is taking place in the heavenly sanctuary
 - d. This probationary time frame of the blowing of the first 6 trumpets is also evident when it is realized that the extent of punishments inflicted on the enemies of church is only partial ("*a third part. . .*")

The First Trumpet Dooms the Jewish Nation

12. **Rev 8:7-- hail and fire mingled with blood, and cast upon the earth, burning up a third part of trees and all green grass**
- a. **Ezek 9:6; 1 Pet 4:17**--Judgment begins with the house of Israel
 - ii. **Fruitful trees**- The faithful people of God often represented as trees in the Old Testament (**Ps. 1:1-3; Ps 52:8; Ps 92:12; Isa 61:3; Isa 65:22**)

- iii. **Burnt trees**—unfaithful nation of Israel symbolized (**Isa 10:16-20; Jer 11:16, 17; Jer 21:24; Ezek 15:6-7; Ezek 17:16-24; Ezek 20:46-49; Zech 11:1, 6; Joel 1:19-20**)
 - iv. **Dry, unfruitful trees**-- the Jewish nation struck rejected by God—(**Matt 21:19; Mark 11:13-21; Luke 23:31 Luke 13:1-9; Ps 80:8-11, 15, 16; Ps 79:1-5**)
 - v. **Grass**--People are often compared to grass (**Deut 32:1-2; Ps 37:1-2; Ps 103:5; Ps 129:6; Isa 40:6-7; 1 Pet 1:24**)
- b. Fulfilled in the final overthrow and destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the armies of Rome in 70 AD (**Dan 9:26-27**)

The work of destruction begins among those who have professed to be the spiritual guardians of the people. The false watchmen are the first to fall. There are none to pity or to spare. Men, women, maidens, and little children perish together. **GC 656.**

...**The parable of the unfruitful tree represented God’s dealings with the Jewish nation.** The command had gone forth, “Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” (Luke 13:7) but divine mercy had spared it yet a little longer. There were still many among the Jews who were ignorant of the character and the work of Christ. . . .

The long-suffering of God toward Jerusalem only confirmed the Jews in their stubborn impenitence. In their hatred and cruelty toward the disciples of Jesus they rejected the last offer of mercy. Then God withdrew His protection from them and removed His restraining power from Satan and his angels, and the nation was left to the control of the leader she had chosen. **GC 27-28.**

13. The first trumpet occupies the same timeframe as that of the church of Ephesus and the opening of the first seal—i.e., first century (the apostolic era)
14. Uriah Smith’s interpretation of the first trumpet—i.e., Visigoth invasions of western Rome under Alaric beginning in 396 AD is problematic on several grounds:
- a. Leaves the first 3 centuries of the Christian dispensation unaccounted for
 - b. Does not line up with the timeline of the two preceding visions (7 churches & 7 seals)
 - c. Literally interprets “trees” and “grass” when they are symbols and require symbolic interpretation

Ephesus	Smryna	Pergamos	Thyatira	Sardis	Phildelphia	Laodicea
1 st seal	2 nd seal	3 rd seal	4 th seal	5 th seal	6 th seal	7 th seal
1 st trumpet	2 nd trumpet	3 rd trumpet	4 th trumpet	5 th trumpet	6 th trumpet	7 th trumpet

The Second Trumpet Heralds the Dissolution of the Roman Empire

15. **Rev 8:8-9**—A great mountain burning with fire cast into the sea destroying a third of ships and sea creatures

- a. **Barbarian invasion**—causing the downfall of the Roman empire; after the fall the Jewish nation, the next scene of judgment is that of Rome; like flames of fire from heaven came the Barbarians led by Alaric, Genseric, Attila the Hun, Odoacer leaving in their wake scenes of ruin, carnage, for a period of many years during the 4th--5th century;
- b. John borrows imagery from the Old Testament speaking of the destruction of Old Babylon and applies it to the destruction of Rome—the Babylon of the New Testament (**1 Pet 5:13**)
 - vi. **Jer 51:24-25**—Babylon was to be destroyed like a mountain being burned up
 - vii. **Jer 51:41-42**—Babylon cast into the sea
 1. **Mountain**- symbol of ruling powers (**Jer 51:24; Isa 2:2; Isa 13:6; Dan 2:35, 44, 45**)
 2. **Sea**—symbol of turbulent sea of people; the Gentile (unconverted) world (**Isa 60:5; Dan 7:2, 3, 17; Rev 17:1, 15**)
 3. **Blood**—a symbol of war, strife, bloodshed (**1 Ki 2:5; Eze 32:6; Joel 2:30; Mic 3:10**)
 4. **Ships**—often used as a symbol of riches, flourishing commerce (**1 Ki 10:22**)
- c. Lines up with the timeline of the church of Smyrna and the 2nd seal (red horse with great sword that brought down the Roman empire)

The Third Trumpet Brings About the Falling Away of the Christian Church

16. **Rev 8:10-11**—A great star from heaven called Wormwood falls upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters, thereby the many men who drink from the embittered water

- a. A symbolic portrayal of a falling away of the mainline Christian church; once a well-spring of life on account of its pure teachings, the church becomes corrupted with the suppression of truth and introduction of human theories and heresies
 - i. Star falls from heaven—symbol of apostasy from a high estate
 1. Satan’s fall depicted as star falling—**Isa 14:12, 13; Rev 12:3, 4, 9; Luke 10:18**
 - ii. Fountains and springs of water are a source of life and blessing—**Ps 36:8; Jer 2:13; Prov 14:34; Zech 13:1; Joel 3:18-20**

Christ has opened a fountain for the sinful, suffering world, and the voice of divine mercy is heard: “Come, all ye thirsting souls; come and drink.” You may take of the water of life freely. Let him that

heareth say, Come; and whosoever will, let him come. Let every soul, women as well as men, sound this message. Then the work will be carried to the waste places of the earth. The scripture will be fulfilled: In that day the Lord shall open fountains in the valleys, and “rivers in the desert,” and “with joy shall ye draw **water out of the wells of salvation.**” Isaiah 41:18; 43:19, 20; Isaiah 12:3. **6T 86.**

Wonderful is the work which the Lord designs to accomplish through His church, that His name may be glorified. A picture of this work is given in Ezekiel’s vision of **the river of healing**: “These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.

From the beginning God has wrought through His people to bring blessing to the world. To the ancient Egyptian nation God made Joseph a **fountain of life**. . .

God chose Israel to reveal His character to men. He desired them to be as **wells of salvation in the world**. To them were committed the oracles of heaven, the revelation of God’s will. **AA 14.**

- iii. **“wormwood**-- represents the introduction of the worship and veneration idols the Christian papal church (**Deut 29:18**);
- iv. **“wormwood”**---is a symbol of the divine displeasure for the worship of the Baalims and forsaking his Law (**Jer 9:13-15**)
- v. **“gall of bitterness”** is associated with sorcery (spiritual Babylon deceived the world by her sorceries (**Acts 8:18-23; Rev 18:23**)
- vi. corrupt fountains become a source of illness and death (**Prov 25:26; Jer 6:7; Jas 3:11**)
- vii. Falling away in the Christian church results in the creation of the corrupt papal church with its idolatrous system of worship , legalism and ceremonialism (**2 Thess 2:3-5**)

The world needs evidences of sincere Christianity. The **poison of sin** is at work at the heart of society. Cities and towns are steeped in sin and moral corruption. The world is full of sickness, suffering, and iniquity. Nigh and afar off are souls in poverty and distress, weighed down with a sense of guilt and perishing for want of a saving influence. The gospel of truth is kept ever before them, yet they perish because the example of those who should be a savor of life to them is a savor of death. Their souls drink in bitterness because the springs are poisoned, when they should be **like a well of water springing up unto everlasting life**. **PK 232.**

- 17. Lines up with the timeframe of the church of Pergamos and the 3rd seal (rise of the Papacy; spiritual famine in the church)
- 18. There is no biblical support for Uriah Smith interpretation that the third trumpet applies to Attila the Hun’s incursions on Rome;

The Fourth Trumpet Introduces the Dark Ages

19. Rev 8:12-13—A third part of the sun, moon and stars darkened.

- a. The Dark Ages--Spiritual darkness resulting from apostasy from the truth
 - i. The sun, moon and stars are emblems used in the connection with God's people in the Old and the New Testament
 2. **Gen 37:9**--Jacob's dream of his father, mother and brothers (sun, moon and stars) bowing down to him in a dream
 3. **Rev 12:1**--The pure church of Christ (clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and wearing crown of 12 stars) reflecting the light of heaven

The accession of the Roman Church to power marked the beginning of the Dark Ages. As her power increased, the darkness deepened. Faith was transferred from Christ, the true foundation, to the pope of Rome. Instead of trusting in the Son of God for forgiveness of sins and for eternal salvation, the people looked to the pope, and to the priests and prelates to whom he delegated authority. They were taught that the pope was their earthly mediator and that none could approach God except through him; and, further, that he stood in the place of God to them and was therefore to be implicitly obeyed. A deviation from his requirements was sufficient cause for the severest punishment to be visited upon the bodies and souls of the offenders. Thus the minds of the people were turned away from God to fallible, erring, and cruel men, nay, more, to the prince of darkness himself, who exercised his power through them. **GC 55.**

The darkness seemed to grow more dense. Image worship became more general. Candles were burned before images, and prayers were offered to them. The most absurd and superstitious customs prevailed. The minds of men were so completely controlled by superstition that reason itself seemed to have lost its sway. While priests and bishops were themselves pleasure-loving, sensual, and corrupt, it could only be expected that the people who looked to them for guidance would be sunken in ignorance and vice. **GC 57.**

Popery had become the world's despot. Kings and emperors bowed to the decrees of the Roman pontiff. The destinies of men, both for time and for eternity, seemed under his control. For hundreds of years the doctrines of Rome had been extensively and implicitly received, its rites reverently performed, its festivals generally observed. Its clergy were honored and liberally sustained. Never since has the Roman Church attained to greater dignity, magnificence, or power. **GC 60.**

But "the noon of the papacy was the midnight of the world."—J. A. Wylie, The History of Protestantism, b. 1, ch. 4. The Holy Scriptures were almost unknown, not only to the people, but to the priests. Like the Pharisees of old, the papal leaders hated the light which would reveal their sins. God's law, the standard of righteousness, having been removed, they exercised power without limit, and practiced vice without restraint. Fraud, avarice, and profligacy prevailed. Men shrank from no crime by which they could gain wealth or position. The palaces of popes and prelates were scenes of the vilest debauchery. Some of the reigning pontiffs were guilty of crimes so revolting that secular rulers

endeavored to depose these dignitaries of the church as monsters too vile to be tolerated. For centuries Europe had made no progress in learning, arts, or civilization. A moral and intellectual paralysis had fallen upon Christendom. **GC 60.**

- b. “A third part of the sun. . .”--partial darkness—parallel with “hurt not the oil and the wine” of the 4th seal;
- c. Coincides with the timeline of the church of Thyatira and the 4th seal (a pale horse, spiritual death)

20. Uriah Smith’s interpretation making the fourth trumpet refer to the diminishing of the power of Rome’s political luminaries seems artificial and contrived;

21. While it is true Ellen White endorsed Uriah Smith’s book Daniel and Revelation, that endorsement is not to be taken as blanket approval for everything said in the book: doctrinal position should always be open for close investigation:

There is no excuse for any one in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation. **RH Dec 20, 1892.**

* The 5th, 6th and 7th trumpet covered in the next study