



Lamb and Lion in Revelation #6: Sound the Trumpets

Revelation 8:2-5

And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. *The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God* from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came **thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.**

Each septette of judgments (7 Seals, 7 Trumpets, 7 Bowls) begins in the temple and always ends there (8:1; 11:19; 14:17; 16:17).

The angel at the altar is given **"much incense"** in his golden censer where it **mingles** (and thus ascends) with the **prayers of "all the saints"** before the **throne of God**. It is no longer just martyrs praying (6:10) but **"all the saints"** (8:3, 7:10-15). **The Trumpet-judgments are God's answer to these prayers.**¹

Indeed, all divine judgments (Jas 5:4; 2 Pet 3:12) come in response to the saints' prayers. Their prayers move God to send preliminary judgments upon proud humanity, to turn them from rebellion against Him. (see 9:20-21)

In **vs. 5** the censer which is **"cast down"** contains the **coals from the place of atonement, the altar of sacrifice** (there were no coals on the altar of incense). We are judged according to our response to the atonement of Christ, which **brings judgment as well as salvation.**²

¹ Thomas, "The Imprecatory Prayers of the Apocalypse," p. 127. The concept of incense under the old covenant suggested divine acceptance, and the same acceptance is granted prayers when in association with incense. *When acceptance is granted, the answer is also guaranteed.* In other words, incense gives efficacy to the worship accompanying it, and the smoke cloud (cf. 8:4) symbolizes the divine acceptance (cf. Gen 8:21; Deut 33:10, ASV marg.; Ps 141:2) . . . "The association of the prayers with the incense, therefore, whatever form it may take is a pledge of the success of the prayers." Ibid., pp. 125-26.

² Ford commented: "Verse 5 alludes to Ezekiel 10:2 and Exodus 19:16. Christ declared that He came to cast fire on the earth, and in this passage that fire is shown to come from the altar of the atonement. It is the Cross which brings the weightiest judgment upon men. All that follows in the succeeding two chapters can only be rightly interpreted in the light of this verse. The dissolutions of earth which we shall witness, the very opening of hell, the grief, torment, and death of men are all the result of rejecting the precious gift of Calvary" (Desmond Ford, *Crisis*, 2:433). J. B. Ramsey applied this casting down of the censer in an existential and universal way to the resistance of the gospel by men and nations: "In the heart of the sinner, the doctrine of Christ's offering Himself a sacrifice for man's sins, and thus making atonement, when it enters and comes in contact with the corruptions and lusts that nestle and reign there, creates often fearful commotions, and deadly struggles, and fierce conflicts, a very earthquake of the soul, before the power of sin is destroyed, and the peace of God reigns undisturbed. So, also, it is in the world. As the doctrine of the cross comes in contact with the wickedness of men, with their proud, self-righteous and

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Numbers 10:9

When you go into battle in your own land against an enemy who is oppressing you, **sound a blast on the trumpets. Then you will be remembered by the LORD** your God and rescued from your enemies.

Illustrative Trumpet Passages

- Exodus 19:18-19 = **Mount Sinai**
- Joshua 6:1-16 = **Fall of Jericho (6 x, then decisive 7th trumpet blast)**
- Judges 7:19-22 = **Gideon**
- 1 Thessalonians 4:16 = **2nd Coming of Christ**

The **7 Trumpets** in Rev 8-11 and the **7 Last Plagues** in Rev 15-16 target the **same group**; and are almost identical, having the **same order** of symbols with the **same meaning**. The major difference is that the **7 Trumpets are partial judgments**, limited in nature and duration, thus allowing time for humanity to repent and accept the salvation of the “*everlasting gospel*.”

But the **7 Last Plagues** are **not limited nor mingled with mercy**. They are the “last” (15:1) because in them the wrath of God is finished. Their purpose is only retributive upon those with implacable hostility to God and to His people: the final intensification of divine judgment poured out to bring down evil after all men's destinies are sealed.

Finally, the 7 Trumpets (thus the Bowls) are modeled on the idea of **the undoing of creation, of order reverting to chaos**. Jacques Ellul said John is portraying “**the return to chaos, the plunge again into nothingness . . . the de-creation.**”³

The **7 Trumpets (7 Seals, 7 Last Plagues)** follow the same literary pattern. The first 4 Trumpets (**1-4**) come in quick succession. **5-6** are more detailed and intense plagues, then comes the **Interlude**; the **Trumpet 7** signals final judgment.

In the **first four trumpets**, each division of **God's creation (man's environment)** --the **earth, the seas, fresh waters, and the heavens**--becomes a threat to man's existence. Nature without God offers us no security. The creature severed from the Creator will ultimately destroy creation.

ambitious schemes and systems, it meets with stern and determined opposition. . . Hatred to the true doctrine of the cross has caused all the perversions of Christianity, and all those various forms of fanaticism that in its name have withstood it, and sweeping over the world, have kindled its fiercest wars, and desolated its fairest portions” (J. B. Ramsey, *Revelation*, p. 364).

³ Jacques Ellul, *Apocalypse*, trans. George W. Schreiner (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), p. 74. “It is the triumph of chaos, **the return to what was before the Spirit of God installed order in this disorder; . . . we are here in the presence of the opposite of that which was the creative act of God.**”

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Yet in each trumpet the **damage done is always partial** (“*one third*”), which indicates that the **primary purpose of the trumpets is to warn.**

Revelation 8:7

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 trees** were burned up, and **all the green grass** was burned up.

In the Old Testament, **healthy vegetation** symbolized the **faithful, penitent people of God**; *withered vegetation was a symbol of apostasy*; and the **destruction of vegetation symbolized divine judgment upon those fully committed to apostasy.**⁴ Jesus warned Jerusalem, the green tree, that she would become a dry tree and be destroyed (Luke 23:28-31; Matt 21:18-19, 33-44).

Revelation 8:8-9

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.

“*Something like:*” Throughout Revelation the Greek words *hos* and *homos* (both meaning “like” or “akin to”) are used **thirty times.**⁵ It is **not** literally a great mountain thrown into the literal sea, but it is **like seeing such an event.** The main Old Testament source for these symbols is **Jeremiah 51** which verifies the interpretation of this *flaming, falling mountain as a disintegrating kingdom*:

Jeremiah 51:25, 42

I am against you, **O destroying mountain**, you who destroy the whole earth,” declares the Lord. “I will stretch out my hand against you, roll you off the cliffs, and make you a *burned-out mountain*. **The sea will rise over Babylon**; its roaring waves will cover her.

Revelation 8:10-11

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.

⁴ Ps 1:3; 52:8; 92:12; Isa 65:22; cf. Isa 5:1-7; 10:17-18; Jer 11:16-17; 21:14; Ezek 15:6-7; Hos 10:1; Zech 11:1-2.

⁵ References with “like” include: 1:13, 14, 15; 2:18; 4:3, 6, 7 (three times); 8:7; 9:7 (three times), 8 (twice), 9 (twice), 10, 19; 11:1; 13:2-4, 11; 14:14; 16:13; 18:18, 21; 21:11, 18.

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The fallen star connects the 3rd Trumpet with the personified fallen star of the 5th Trumpet. *This star is both aflame and “cast down,” signifying divine judgment.* Biblically a 'star' symbolizes an angel (Job 38:7; Dan 12:3; Rev 1:20).

The primary Biblical example of such a heavenly messenger being cast down is the **expulsion of Satan or Lucifer**. This divine act is referred to in the **Old Testament** (Isaiah 14:12-14; cf. Ezekiel 28:14-17), in the **New Testament** (Luke 10:18), and in **Revelation 12:4-10**.

The star is named “**wormwood**” which in the Old Testament signified *apostasy* (Jeremiah 23:15; Amos 5:7). *Wormwood turns life-giving waters into poisonous streams.* In the whole Bible, the blessings of the Spirit of God are referred to as **living waters** (Ps 36:8-9; Jer 2:13; 17:8, 13; Isa 41:18; John 4: 10-14; 7:37-38), and “**wormwood**” symbolized the tendency of the heart to “turn away from the Lord our God, to worship other gods” (Deuteronomy 29:18; Heb 12:15).

Proverbs 5:3-5 uses “**wormwood**” in its description of the *seductions of the adulterous woman*. Her lips drip honey, but in the end her seductions are **as bitter as wormwood** and lead to death. Applying this to John's picture of **spiritual Babylon in Rev 17:1-6**, the **apostate church** in every age becomes the “**great harlot**” whose union with the dragon and his agencies **poisons the life-giving waters of salvation** as she turns men from the gospel of Christ.

Babylon becomes “*a dwelling place for demons and for every unclean spirit*” (Rev 18:2); a ministry of death. Embracing heresy and rejecting truth causes God to “*give them over to a depraved mind*” (Rom 1: 28).

Revelation 8:12

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. [6 x = a **third**]

This scene recalls the 9th Egyptian plague of darkness (Exodus 10:21-23) then two messages are implied: **First**, God punishes the proud in heart by honoring their self-deifying choices through *withdrawing His light*. **Second**, this darkness reminds us that the Trumpet-judgments fall upon the world and apostate church, **but not on true believers**. During the time of “thick darkness” when the Egyptians could not see one another, “*all the sons of Israel had lights in their dwellings*”. **This concept of protection for the faithful becomes explicit in Rev 8:13 and 9:4.**

Throughout the Old Testament, **darkness is a symbol of judgment** (Isaiah 13:10; Amos 5:18; Joel 2:2). In the New Testament, **darkness** retains this meaning (Matt 8:12; John 3:17-19) but also becomes a **symbol of demonic evil** (Col 1:13; Rom 1:21; 2 Cor 6:14-15; Eph 5:8, 11).



Within history, the smiting of the heavenly lights, resulting in partial darkness, is a symbol of the **loss of heavenly truth and descent into error by the church**. As God's Spirit withdrew, the *light of the church dimmed and it descended into the dark world it once illuminated*.

For even though they knew God they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their **foolish hearts were darkened**. (Romans 1:20)

The darkness is **partial**. **God sends truth to lighten the minds** of any who humbly seek Him.

Revelation 9:1-3

The **5th 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** 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 on the earth and were **given power like that of scorpions** of the earth.

The first four trumpets were characterized as *descending* from heaven. But now **judgment deepens**: the ungodly become vulnerable to demonic powers *ascending* from the abyss. Through bizarre symbols John describes "*the brutal despair and horror of existence apart from God*."⁶ A "*fallen star*" (angel, Lucifer)⁷ is "*given*" the key to the "*Abyss*". When he opens the Abyss **smoke** billows forth, darkening the **sun** and carrying hordes of **scorpion-like locusts** who are **given power** for "*five months*" to torment mercilessly **only those without the seal of God**:

Revelation 9:3-6

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 allowed 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. During those days people will **seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them**.

Though of hellish origin, **the sovereignty of God** over these terrifying events is declared by the phrase "**was given**." Satan has no independent power; nor do the locusts. **God allows them** to exercise such power in a limited way. The restrictions of the 1st four trumpets were only spatial,

⁶ Unjhem, p. 106.

⁷ The "fallen star" mentioned in the third trumpet (8:10) is again used here in its primary and personal sense as a symbol of Satan (Isa 14:4, 12-14; cf. Rev 12:4, 9-13; Luke 10:18), who is the contrast and counterpart of Christ, who is "the bright morning star (22:16)," and who holds "the keys of death and Hades" (1:18). This is verified by the way John identifies the star as a being to whom the key to the Abyss is given, and even more specifically in 9:11 where as the "king" of the Abyss he is called Abbadon or Apollyon (Destroyer) again in opposition to Jesus (Saviour).

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but **God imposes 3-fold restrictions** in the 5th Trumpet: **time** (five months), **extent** (only the ungodly); **degree of affliction** (they can only torment, but not kill).

Satan opens the “**shaft of the Abyss**” (9:1; cf. 20:2-3) which signifies the *place of the dead* (Rom 10:7) and the *prison-domain of demons: fallen angels* (Luke 8: 28-31; Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4). **From the abyss the persecuting beast rises to make war against God's messengers** (11:7). Thus, the abyss symbolizes the **dark kingdom of Satan**.

The opening of this abyss signifies **a time in which God allows the increased activity of demonic deception among ungodly men**. **Dense smoke** rises to shield the sun from the gaze of **those who inhabit the earth**. This darkness is an intensification of the 4th Trumpet where a third of heaven's luminaries were darkened. Now **darkness deepens for those without the seal of God**. The sun remains, but it can no longer be seen, its radiance blotted out by hellish smoke.

This aligns with the description given in **Romans 1:21-26**. The light of the gospel is still present but deceived mankind no longer discerns it. **It has become obscured by the “smoke” of heresy:**

If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel* of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. . . . For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (**2 Corinthians 4:3-4, 6**)

In **John 3:17-21** *darkness and light* symbolize rejection or acceptance of Christ. This paves the way for the suffering described in **the 5th and 6th Trumpets**.⁸

A **plague of locusts** is an instrument of divine judgment in the Old Testament, both on **ungodly nations** (Exodus 10:12-15; Jeremiah 51:14, 27) and upon apostate Israel (Deut 28:42, 45). In **Joel 2** an army of locusts prefigure the final judgment of all the wicked at the day of the Lord.

Revelation 9:7-11

The locusts looked **like** horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something **like** crowns of gold, and their faces were **like** human faces. Their hair was **like** women's hair, and

⁸ For further discussion of the darkness in 9:2 as Satanic deception and denial of the gospel, see Paulien, “The Fifth Trumpet: Rev 9:1-11,” pp. 31-50; or Hendriksen, p. 145. Carrington gives a highly existential but perceptive twist to the opening of the Abyss: “We all have a *minor* key to the Abyss, and no commentator need look far to find the door. . . . It is that bottomless sea in all our souls, from the great deep, of which do arise monstrous and amazing suggestions of evil; from which arose every crime, and before it was committed looked good in the eyes of some human being. For from within, out of the hands of men, do all evil arguments proceed, adulteries, thefts, murders, harlotries, coveting, evil lining, guile, lasciviousness, envy, insults, arrogance, folly . . . all these originate from within, says our Lord Jesus (Mk vii. 21)” (Carrington, 2:164, Emphasis supplied.)

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their teeth were **like** lions' teeth. They had breastplates **like** iron, and the sound of their wings was **like** the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails with stingers, **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 is **Apollyon** (that is, **Destroyer**).

Considering their **origin** (the Abyss), their **king** (Satan), and their **human-like faces** the logical conclusion is that these are **demonic hordes** who, as a consequence of the "**eclipse of God**,"⁹ have greater freedom to **torment the minds and bodies** of men through diverse fears, heresies, and degrading vices (see Rom 1:26-32).

Ezekiel 2:6: "Be not afraid of **their words**, though you dwell among **scorpions**."

Revelation 9:4 is the **interpretive key** and **Gospel assurance** to the faithful. It makes clear that the **real battle** between Christ and Satan is for the **minds of men**. Among all earth's inhabitants only those who "**dwell in heaven**," who by faith have the **seal of God** on their foreheads will **escape** from these "**deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons**" (1 Tim 4:19:4; 2 Tim 2:19).¹⁰

But those who **refuse the sealing of the Gospel** will *not be able to refuse its alternative*. They open themselves to the *indwelling of every demonic error of the pit*. The end result is **a life of mental agony**. This picture of human agony reaffirms Minear's insight: "**Those who serve evil are bound to be punished by the Lord of evil**."¹¹

Their ultimate inspiration comes from **Satan (the king of the Abyss, 9:11)** who is the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning (**John 8:44**).¹² John declares their power to torment is in **their "tails"**. Isaiah compares the deceits of false prophets to **tails** (Isa 9:15; cf. Jesus' warning in Matthew 24:24-25). It was with "**his tail**" that **Satan, who deceives the nations (Rev 20:3), cast a third of the stars of heaven to earth (Revelation 12:4, 9-12)**.

⁹ Says Schick (1:88); "The 'eclipse of God' is the consequence of that obscuration which God's adversary brings with him whither he goes."

¹⁰ This verse (9:4) may point back to the special protection God gave to Israel during the seven last plagues upon Egypt (see Exod 8:22; 9:4, 26; 10:23; and 11:7: "The Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel"). Ezell (pp. 50-51) sees a close parallel with Luke 10:17-21 where Jesus gives His disciples power over *scorpions* and *serpents* (cf. Rev 9:19) because their names are written in heaven.

¹¹ Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, p. 94.

¹² By calling Satan Abaddon (Hebrew: "destruction," Job 26:6, 28:22) or Apollyon (Greek, "destroyer") in opposition to Jesus (i.e., "Saviour"), John sets forth the ultimate choice of every man in stark terms. Inevitably all will turn their souls over either to the *Destroyer* or to the *Saviour*.



The **locusts' tails** are described as their source of power, indicating they also use deceptive messages which turn men from God and cause them to believe a lie¹³ The **scorpion-like tails**, said Ellul, “*means they act by the power of the lie.*”¹⁴

But now the *mental anguish* of the **5th Trumpet** is superseded by the terrors of *physical death* in the **6th Trumpet** and eternal destruction in the **7th Trumpet**.

Revelation 9:13-16

The **sixth angel** sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the **golden altar that is before God**. It said to the 6th 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 troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number.

This Trumpet releases **200,000,000** hellish horses and riders who kill a third of mankind.

Whenever John uses the **number 6**, he has antichrist or his followers in view (cf. 6:15-17; 9:13; 13:18; 16:14). There is a **close parallel** between the **6th Trumpet** and the demons gathering of the wicked for destruction pictured in the **6th Bowl**. Both symbolize the **final surge of demon-inspired human rebellion**. The **6th Trumpet** sets forth a vast increase (though still limited) in **demonic destruction and deception** just prior to the end of time (10:6). The **6th Trumpet** **portrays the brief period of final decision** for mankind when God's church proclaims and finishes its testimony to the gospel of Christ (cf. 10:11; 11:7; 14:6; 18:1-4); as **God's restraint over Satan's persecuting hosts is released**, allowing them to surge forward in a final great effort to counter this work through deception and through destruction.¹⁵

The sixth trumpet is the last intense confrontation of good and evil in a duel for the souls of men and prepares the whole world for Armageddon at the sounding of the **7th Trumpet**. It is the final fulfillment of **Matthew 24:14**; and **2 Thessalonians 2:9-12**: “*so that all will be condemned who*

¹³ Near the end of chaps. 12, 13, and 16, John returns to this theme of the intensification of Satanic deception. Portrayed in these parallel passages are the events of Paul's prophecy in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11: “The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore, God sends them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false.”

¹⁴ Ellul, p. 78.

¹⁵ Mounce, recognizing this final intensification, commented: “From this point on the Apocalypse becomes a multi-dimensional presentation of the final triumph of God over evil. Any attempt to arrange the material in a strictly sequential pattern is doomed to failure. From his vantage point on the brink of eternity John unveils the evil forces which operate behind the scenes of history and in the last days will mount a final and furious assault upon the faithful. As persecution and martyrdom precede the seventh trumpet, the overthrow and destruction of the persecutors (demonic powers as well as their earthly agents) will follow it. The bowls of God's wrath (16:1-16) are a prelude to the final destruction of all evil and the inauguration of the eternal state” (Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 213).



*have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.*¹⁶

The destruction is released from the “**Euphrates**” the northern boundary between Israel and its enemies. From there God sent His judgments upon apostate Israel (cf. Isa 8:5; Hab 1:5-11). “**Four angels**” signifies a surge of demonic activity over **entire realm of rebellious mankind**.

Revelation 9:17-19

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 these three plagues 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**.

“*Fire, smoke, and brimstone*” are OT symbols of judgment.¹⁷

In 19:19 it is emphasized again that the **power of each horse** is in its “**tail**” which, for John, is **an emblem of demonic deceit**. These tails are “**like serpents**” or **like Satan** (Rev 12:9; 20:2-3, 10; cf. John 8:44), who works through deceit and whose goal is murder (John 8:44). **In the 5th Trumpet the venom of these serpent-like tails only tormented men, in the 6th it kills**.

The progression is evident. The rulership of Satan not only robs men of their peace and sanity, but inevitably of life itself. All who *embrace vice are soon steeped in violence*; and ungodliness leads to oppression, terror, and death. **Evil becomes its own destroyer**. Having rejected the Lamb of God they become easy prey for the lions of hell.

Revelation 9:20-21

The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues **still did not repent of the work of their hands**; they did not stop worshipping 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.

Even the horrors of the 5th and 6th Trumpet do not turn the rebellious world back to God. They continue **worshipping the works of their own hands**, the choice which brings their suffering.

¹⁶ Similarly, Ford concluded that the sixth trumpet “points to the last crisis of the world when men will receive either the message of the gospel from the mouths of God’s witnesses, or the false gospel from the ‘mouths’ of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet through the ministry of the spirits of devils (pictured here as horses from the Euphrates pit or sea. Compare Isa 8:6-8). This sixth trumpet has showed a stream of horses from the pit of hell--the opposite number of the white horse which came from the throne of God in the first seal. Ultimately, we must all become tied to the reality symbolized by either one or the other” (Desmond Ford, *Crisis*, 2:458-59).

¹⁷ Various Bible passages, including Rev 14:10-11, use fire, smoke, and brimstone to identify the fate of the wicked in the day of judgment (Deuteronomy 29:23; Isaiah 30:33; 34:9; Ezekiel 38:22; 2 Peter 2:6; Rev 20: 10).



Such is the fatal delusion of sin.¹⁸

Summary of Trumpets One to Six

- **Those who trust in the Lamb** are not the objects of divine “judgment” (9:4 makes this explicit). They are **not found** in the Trumpets.
- Chronologically, the 7 Trumpets serve as the counterpart to the Lamb opening 7 Seals and occur during the **same span of time** between the two advents. While the **Seals focus on the Lordship of the Lamb over the church**, the **Trumpets** look at the same era from the perspective of **God's judgments upon the enemies of the gospel of Christ**.
- The Trumpets show **God's sovereignty over the activity of Satan** in history. Even the forces of evil are agencies which God can use to preserve the church until the end.
- The first six trumpet-judgments also teach that **those who embrace evil are punished by evil**. Each opportunity for repentance rejected ensures deeper darkness and intensified affliction. The restraint upon Satan and his legions is removed and the **dark lord of the Abyss becomes**, even to those who serve him, **Apollyon--the “Destroyer.” God removes** His protection and allows their persistent choice to reject Him reach its *inevitable fruition in suffering and death*.

INTERLUDE of Revelation 10-11:14. But before the 7th and final Trumpet announces the irreversible and eternal destruction of the wicked, John again pauses to insert a final offer of hope in his **Second Interlude**. The message of Christ is to be carried to “*those who dwell on earth*” by the very church the proud have persecuted. **Revelation 10:1-11:13** emphasizes this glorious proclamation of **God’s final offer of grace to a stubborn world**.

The 7th Trumpet and Final Judgment

Revelation 11:15-16

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.” And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God—

Revelation 11:17-18

¹⁸ Caird perceptively stated: “The monster which the whole world worships comes from the abyss (xi. 7; xiii. 4, 8), yet the fault of its worshippers is that they *‘did not renounce the gods of their own making’* (ix. 20). It is human idolatry that corrupts the created order, turning the works of God into demonic powers. The abyss is a vast reservoir of accumulated evil, from which come many plagues to torment mankind; but it is fed from the springs of human sin. This is why the locusts that issue from the abyss are said to have human faces (ix. 6); for though evil may assume a thousand disguises, in the final analysis it has a human face” (Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, p. 293).

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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**. The nations were angry. **Your wrath has come**. The time has come for **judging** the dead, 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 11:15-18 is the **third and central of five judgment hymns**. Each hymn celebrates the victory of the saints through the work of Christ. The **first two** (5:8-10 and 7:10-12, cf. 14) focus on the eschatological implications of **the cross**; while the **last three** (11:15-18; 15:2-4; 19:1-8) emphasize Christ’s **coming** as the consummation of the victory the cross ensured.

By comparing **11:18**: “**your wrath has come**,” with **15:1**, where the 7 angels pour out the 7 last plagues: “**last, because with them God's wrath is completed**”—it becomes clear the **7 Last Plagues are John's detailed description of the “wrath” predicted in 11:18**. The saints who receive their reward in 11:18 also reappear in 15:2-4. The correspondence is complete.

God's wrath is not for the saints. The nations are **angry** (*thymos*) and God’s **wrath** (*orgy*) has come (11:18), but the saints can be confident because “**God did not appoint us to suffer wrath [orgy] but to receive salvation through . . . Jesus Christ**” (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Chapter 11 ends with **the open temple** and the **ark of the covenant**. The ark symbolizes the place of God's presence, His throne. (Exodus 25:22, 17; cf. Hebrews 4:16; 10:19-22).

At the conclusion of this section we have the **ark of the covenant**. . . It is accompanied by **earthquake, and lightnings and thunder**, and it is **intended that we should think of Calvary**. There the same events occurred, climaxed by the tearing of the inner veil, that the place of the ark of the covenant might stand revealed, assuring all that **every barrier which denied access to God had been abolished by the death of the LORD of the covenant.**¹⁹

The **temple** is the source from which judgment emanates (11:19; cf. 14:15; 15:5-8; 16:7); and it

¹⁹ Desmond Ford, *Crisis*, 2:471. “At Christ's death, after the shout of victory, an earthquake marked the rending of the temple veil and the revelation of the place once sacred to the ark. Rev 16:17 points to the repetition of the Calvary cry, 'It is finished.' The intercessory ministry based on the merits of the sacrifice of the cross terminates, and the door of mercy is shut just prior to the judgment plagues of the seventh trumpet. We are thus intended to mark the parallel between Christ's enduring the wrath of God on our behalf, and the fate of the impenitent who must drink that wrath for themselves. The most holy place, containing the law and the mercy seat with its sprinkled blood, symbolically summarizes the everlasting gospel. That gospel is the glorious solution to the problem of how God could be just, and yet be justified of the sinner; how He could reconcile law and mercy. The rent veil (symbolizing the sacrificial body of Christ) and the blood drops answer the 'how.' Now, because of Christ our Mercy-seat, God can be 'faithful and just' in forgiving sin.” pp. 498-99. Rom 3:25-26; Heb 10:19-20; 1 John 1:9.

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is also the place of refuge, rest, and reward for the redeemed (3:12; 7:14-17; 14:1; 21:22). The “*lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and an earthquake*” are John's now familiar symbols of divine judgment. These symbols reappear with increasing intensity, until the devastating scene of **the 7th bowl** when the voice from the throne declares: “**It is done!**” (16:18; cf. 19: 30).²⁰

²⁰ Rev 6:12ff.; 8:5-7; 11:13, 19; 16:18-21. Consistent with John's dual foci of divine judgment as present in both Advents of Christ, these four signs also occurred as Jesus bore the wrath [judgment] of God on the cross. The hailstones (11:19) also appear during the 7th Bowl. The addition of hail to the list of judgment symbols goes back to Exodus 9:13-26 where Egypt was smitten by a plague of thunder, lightning, and killing hail. Once again, this Old Testament source allows John to imply a double message of both judgment and comfort. All who rejected the warning of the Lord to seek shelter died in the hail-storm (Exodus 9:19), but the storm did not touch the people of God: “*The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were*” (Exodus 9:26, NIV).