

# And the Trumpets Shall Sound

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Preacher: Paul Brennan

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we are going to turn now to our Bibles and our reading for this morning. If you need a Bible and you don't have one with you, there's some at the sides and at the front, do grab one and make sure that you can follow along.

Paul has been leading us through these studies in the Revelation of John, the very last book of the Bible. And we're coming today to chapter 8 and 9.

We're going to read together chapters 8 and 9 and then skip forward to just a little bit at the end of chapter 11. So it's quite a long section, but beginning at chapter 8, verse 2.

John says, Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne.

And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints rose before God from the hand of the angel. And then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth.

[ 1 : 14 ] And there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them. The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire mixed with blood.

And these were thrown upon the earth, and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.

A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers, and on the springs of water.

The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became Wormwood, and many people died from the water because it had been made bitter. A fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.

Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead. Woe! Woe! Woe to those who dwell on the earth at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow.

[ 2 : 46 ] The fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.

He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace. The sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft, and then from the smoke came locusts on earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions on the earth.

They were told not to harm the grass or the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them. And their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. And in those days people will seek death and will not find it.

They will long to die, but death will flee from them. In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle. On their head were what looked like crowns of gold.

[ 3 : 58 ] Their faces were like human faces, and their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lion's teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle.

They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails. They have as a king over them the angel of the bottomless pit.

His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon. The first woe has passed. Behold, two woes are still to come.

Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.

So the four angels who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year were released to kill a third of mankind.

[ 5 : 06 ] The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number. And this is how I saw the horses in my vision, and those who rode them.

There were breastplates the color of fire and sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lion's heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths.

By these three plagues, a third of mankind was killed by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths.

For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails. For their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound.

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by the plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood which cannot see or hear or walk, nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality.

[ 6 : 26 ] Or their thefts. Look over now to chapter 11 and verse 15, and we'll just read these final verses of the section.

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying, The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who was and who is.

For you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both great and small, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

[ 7 : 46 ] Amen. And may God bless to us this is word. Well, good morning.

Pleased to have those chapters of Revelation open in front of you. We'll be considering this long section together this morning, chapters 8 through to 12. We didn't read much of chapter 10 or 11, but we'll be referring to that a bit later on.

It's a chapter of seven trumpets, and the trumpet is a majestic instrument. It is regal, unmistakable, piercing. I have dusted mine off in preparation for Christmas.

It'll be making its outing, its annual outing, in a few weeks' time. It's a shame I didn't have one this morning. I should have brought it, and it would have been appropriate this morning. But there are seven trumpets in this section of Revelation, and it's a long, complex, and tricky passage.

I think the remainder of my sermons in Revelation will begin with those words. This is a long, tricky, complex passage. But although it is tricky at first glance, its message is astoundingly clear.

[ 9 : 01 ] You see, these trumpets, throughout Scripture, they have always been announcements of something significant. In the Old Testament, the sounding of the trumpet could signal a whole bunch of things.

The enthronement of a king, the gathering of God's people, a summon for battle, a call to repentance, a warning of an enemy approaching.

But it's really the warning element that is clear in this section of Revelation. It is an announcement. It's a warning of impending judgments.

God is arriving. He is bringing His judgment. And He's bringing His judgment particularly on a wicked and unrepentant world.

That is the focus in this section of Revelation. It's very sobering. It's all about God's judgment on a wicked world.

[ 10 : 05 ] We have another section of seven. Revelation is full of them. Last week, we considered the seven seals, as each of those seals was broken on that scroll. This morning, it's seven trumpets, and in a few weeks, or next time in Revelation, we'll be thinking about seven bowls, the seven bowls of God's wrath.

You have these repeated patterns of seven. There are seven churches in chapters two and three. And the pattern this week is very similar to last. We have four trumpets in the first section.

They come as a unit. Then there's another two trumpets, followed by an interlude in chapters 10 and 11, before the final trumpet at the end of chapter 11.

Very similar to last week. A set of four, then two, an interlude, and then the final trumpet, or the final seal. And rather than following on chronologically from where we left last week, the events in this section are giving us another angle on the same events that we saw last week.

And we saw last week the unfolding events in human history from Christ's first coming and up until His second coming. It's considering history in this age, the age that we're living in, between Christ's first and second comings.

[ 11 : 28 ] That's what we saw last week, and the same this week. It's the same period of history we're considering. It's a bit like watching yet another spectacular goal from Manchester United, and you get a replay.

The same goal, but from a different angle. And that's what we have here in this section. It's the same events, but from a different angle. And the particular emphasis last week was on the restraint that God exercises in judgment, with a particular focus on bringing reassurance to God's people.

And in the midst of all that's going on around us, the purpose last week was to give reassurance to God's people. We're not to fear, because we belong to God.

We were viewing history particularly from the viewpoint of God's people. But the emphasis here with the seven trumpets is a bit different.

There is a focus on God's judgment on an unrepentant world. We see that God will be victorious over his enemies. We're seeing history from the viewpoint, particularly, of those who are not God's people.

[ 12 : 41 ] And it's therefore a very sobering passage. We'll take it in three large chunks. We'll look at the first six trumpets.

Then we'll look at the interlude before considering the final trumpet in chapter 11. So first, chapters 8 and 9, looking at the first six trumpets, we see God's judgment on an unrepentant world.

God's judgment on an unrepentant world. Now this section, with much of the book of Revelation, is full of vibrant, shocking images. And we're to absorb the details, but not get lost in them.

Remember, the book of Revelation is not a puzzle book where you've got to try and work out every single precise meaning of every single tiny illustration. No, rather, it's a picture book where you have to get the general impression.

We're to step back and get the big picture, the big message. It's like those big screens you get at a massive public event. If you're at a big football match or a concert, you know you get those big screens which are about the size of the wall behind me.

[ 13 : 51 ] If you were to go up close, what would you see? You'd see random little colored dots. You couldn't make sense of it. You've got to stand at the back of the room and see the whole thing to get the whole impression.

That's what the book of Revelation is like. If you get caught up too close in the minutiae, you're going to miss the message. So don't do that. People get caught up. They get trapped in a tiny verse.

You've got to step back and get the whole message, the whole impression. Don't get lost in the trees and miss the woods. So let's look at these first six trumpets.

The first four come as a unit in chapter 8. And with each blast of the trumpet, we see God's judgment being poured out on a sinful world through a various number of different plagues on the created order.

With the first trumpet, we see hail and fire mixed with blood hurled on dry land, verse 7. With the second trumpet, a huge mountain is thrown into the sea, verse 8.

[ 14 : 58 ] With the third, a star is thrown into water sources, making the water undrinkable, verse 10. And the fourth trumpet, the sky itself is damaged, darkness falls.

And as you read those descriptions, as you read those verses, we're being reminded very clearly about another set of plagues brought about by God as judgment upon a sinful world.

They're reminiscent of the plagues. We read about an exodus which include hail, lightning, the river being turned to blood so that it's undrinkable, darkness coming over the whole land, and the plagues in Exodus were judgments from God on an unrepentant people.

Pharaoh refused to let God's people go and so God sent plague after plague. And as well as bringing judgments, these plagues revealed the power and the glory of God.

and these plagues upon the created order here in Revelation are just what we do see in history repeated over and over again.

[ 16 : 17 ] The insurance industry calls these things acts of God. And against such things, man is powerless. there's not a lot we can do in the face of natural disasters, of things of this scale, of huge moments of storm and hurricane and tsunami and fire.

We can't do anything about earthquakes. And the Bible's clear, such events are part of God's judgment on a sinful world and unrepentant world.

A world that has turned its back on its creator. And it's not that we can point the finger at victims of such things.

We can't say the people who've suffered a particular disaster, we can't say, oh, they must have deserved that in a way that I don't. We can't say that.

Remember the answer Jesus gives when he was presented with such an act of God. Listen to these words. Now there was some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

[ 17 : 41 ] Jesus answered, do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you no. But unless you repent, you too will all perish.

All those 18 who died when the Tower of Siloam fell on them, do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you no.

But unless you repent, you too will all perish. you see, the fact that we do live in a fallen world where such things do happen, it ought to move us to repent.

As we read these words about the first four trumpets and what we see happening in the created order, our response to seeing them happen, our response to reading these words ought to be to repent, to turn again to God.

Every instance of suffering, every act of temporal, partial judgment, it is an opportunity to repent, to give God glory before worse calamities come.

[ 19 : 01 ] And we push back against that, don't we? We don't like that because often our underlying assumption, the underlying assumption of the world is that we don't deserve judgment.

But Jesus, in that interaction, he flips the question around, doesn't he? His underlying assumption is that we do deserve judgment, all of us. none of us is any better off than anybody else.

We ought to be amazed that we've not yet been caught up in such things. It's only the grace and mercy and patience of God that preserves us. And as we read these words, as we see these things happening around us through history, we ought to repent.

But note too that these disasters are limited in nature. In each case, we read there's a limit to the judgment. Verse 7, a third of the earth was burnt up, a third of the trees.

Verse 9, a third of the living creatures in the sea died. Verse 11, a third of the waters became bitter. Verse 12, a third of the light was darkened. It is not total.

[ 20 : 25 ] This is partial. the end has not yet come. Now is the time to repent. That ought to be the response. There's more to come.

These things are a warning. Let's look on to the next couple of trumpets. And things do not get any easier. Just notice what we see in verse 13.

John hears an eagle crying out, woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on earth. At the blast of the other trumpets, the three angels are about to blow.

It's about to get worse. And the thing is, humanity deserves these things. None of this is undeserved. And what we're about to read is shocking, in terms of its imagery and what it's describing.

But these vivid words are describing the reality of the world around us. Sometimes we do need the vividness, the shock, so that we do see what is really happening in our world.

[ 21 : 38 ] We can deceive ourselves. As one writer put it, the lens of these visions enables us to see the spiritual dimension of our present world as it truly is, and to see the evil powers that afflict the lives of people with misery and dread.

These words are describing the world as it is. So let's look on to the fifth and sixth trumpets. The sound of the fifth trumpet, John sees verse 1 of chapter 9, John sees a star fall from heaven.

And verse 11 identifies this person as an angel whose name was Abaddon or Apollyon, means destroyer. And it's very likely that this is describing Satan himself.

And he's given the key to a bottomless pit, out of which come these beastly locusts who are given a task.

In verse 4, they were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

[ 22 : 56 ] it is the unbelieving world that is in view here with this fifth trumpet, those who are not sealed. We saw last week that the seals are those who have been washed in the blood of the lamb.

In other words, those who are Christians, those who have repented, who know the forgiveness of sin, who've got the gift of everlasting life. Satan's been granted power to torment those who are not sealed, those who are not Christians.

But note again, there are limits to Satan's destructive power. He's only able to unleash the locust because he's been given the key to the bottomless pit.

He didn't possess the key in the first place, he was given it. It was not something that he was able to initiate. Neither Satan nor his evil followers are able to unleash the forces of hell upon the earth unless, Jesus permits it.

And even then, it is limited. Note verse five, they were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them.

[ 24 : 13 ] And what is the nature of this torment that Satan's permitted to unleash on the unbelieving worlds? What's the nature of it? Well, we don't know exactly, but we see the impact of this.

we see the impact of the torment, and it's terrible. Look at verse six. In those days, people will seek death and not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.

What is the punishment that Satan is allowed to inflict upon those who don't belong to Christ? What can Satan do to non-Christians that he can't do to Christians?

What is the torment? Well, it's not cancer. Christians get cancer. It's not car accidents.

Christians have car accidents. It's not political upheaval or famine. Those things fall on Christians as well. It's not death. Christians die.

[ 25 : 18 ] We saw in the fifth seal that those who are martyred because of their testimony of Christ. So what earthly torments do unbelievers face that Christians don't? Or at least that Christians shouldn't face?

Well, it seems to be despair. Utter despair. Utter hopelessness. Verse 6 says they will long to die.

die. You see, Satan's hordes, writes one preacher, Satan's hordes are at work across the earth, destroying people's lives, inciting them to commit appalling crimes against one another, making life utterly miserable for millions, holding them captive in false religions.

see, Satan brings about despair, real deep despair, such that people long to die. Now, people can hide a lot from those around them.

So you look at somebody's life, and it seems okay, but you don't see the despair lurking beneath. But despair's all around us.

[ 26 : 41 ] Just speak with others here in the church who are on the front line, engaging with people at their lowest ebbs, those of the most vulnerable, where all the pretense is stripped away.

Speak to GPs, those who work in the police, social work. Our nation is the capital of Europe for drug deaths. Satan's influence is all around us.

Despair bubbles away, not far from the surface. And humanity is pretty good at suppressing it. We can entertain ourselves so we forget. But when real crisis come, despair is hovering.

That is the reality of our world. The great thing that Satan inflicts upon the unbelieving world is despair. Hopelessness. There's not much more to say about the fifth trumpet apart from two brief comments.

You see this despair that Satan spreads around, the despair that Satan breathes into people's lives. It ought to move people to repent.

[ 28 : 01 ] Outside of God, there is no hope. There's only despair. That's one thing. And the other is to say to Christians today who do feel real despair, there is hope for you.

Remember who Jesus is, what he's done, what he's promised you. read again the words at the end of chapter seven, which we saw last week.

Those words are true of you. If you're a Christian here this morning, Satan has no authority over you. Do not listen to his lies. Do not listen to him, but listen to the words of Jesus.

He says, do not be afraid. Do not be anxious, little flock. For it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. That is your destiny.

If you're a Christian here this morning, do not fear, do not despair. Well, that's the first of these woes.

[ 29 : 10 ] It's the fifth trumpet. Look on to the sixth. It doesn't get any easier. The sixth trumpet summons an army that is every bit as supernatural and demonic as the locust plague we saw with the fifth trumpet.

It's a vast army. If you look at verse 16, it tells us the number of the mounted troops was twice, 10,000 times 10,000.

200 million. This is an army from the depths of hell. The description is full of demonic imagery, fire, sulfur, horses with serpents for tails.

It's a terrifying picture. And huge swathes of humanity are put to the sword, verse 18. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and the smoke and the sulfur coming out of their mouths.

Again, the reference to a third of humanity being killed is pointed to the fact that it's limited. This is not final judgment. This is limited in its scope. There is further judgment to come.

[ 30 : 28 ] This is not the end. death. But this sort of demonic evil, mass killing through conquest is something that we do witness over and over again throughout history.

As we look back through humanity, humanity is capable of doing this sort of thing. Over and over again it happens. And the 20th century was the bloodiest yet.

there is no other way to describe what we see with Hitler and Stalin and others. It is demonic, isn't it? But even with such horrors going on in the world, we read these devastatingly sad words at the end of the chapter.

Look at verse 20. The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues did not repent of the works of their hands, nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, nor do they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual morality or their thefts.

you can hardly find sadder words in the Bible. Think of everything we just read in the previous verses.

[ 31 : 58 ] This terrifying demonic horde sweeping over humanity. Verse 20 tells us the rest who are not killed, they see this happening.

friends, family, countrymen, slaughters. Yet they did not repent. Even with such graphic warning, still, they do not give up their idolatry, their immorality, their witchcraft.

See, the sad thing is that some people, when they hit rock bottom, when they see all this happening, they keep digging. They say there's got to be something below this, there's got to be something deeper down.

They don't change. And the worst way of all may be the curse of a hard heart, a heart that refuses to repent. People can become so entrenched in their worship of false gods, they cannot repent, they just can't.

And the revelation mind would say, turn now, repent now before it's too late, before your heart becomes too hard. We must move on.

[ 33 : 23 ] There's so much more we could say, but we must press on because we need to come to the seventh and final trumpet. But before we get there, there's an interlude. Just like there was with the seven seals, there's a bit of a pause, a bit of a break.

And the interlude here runs from chapter 10 through to the middle of chapter 11. And things have been building, haven't they, with these six trumpets? The final woe, the final trumpet, is going to bring final decisive judgments.

That is to come. But notice the interlude. And the focus here is on the church. And we see the church's continual witness to a hostile world.

That is the focus of these two images, particularly. There are two pictures like there were of the last interlude last week. There are two pictures here. One concerning a little scroll in chapter 10, and the other two witnesses at the start of 11.

And both of them show a safe but threatened church in a hostile world. See, the church is not exempt from suffering. In fact, we can expect that the church will in some ways have more suffering as it faces opposition from a fallen world.

[ 34 : 49 ] But God wants us to know that his people will ultimately be safe and secure, even in the face of massive hostility and persecution.

temptation. In the midst of all that's going on, in the midst of all these events we've been reading about, these terrible things we've been seeing, what is the task of the church?

What is the church to be doing? Well, this interlude tells us. It shows us our focus. So let's consider these two pictures.

First, we find in chapter 10, the little scroll. Verse 2, it's in the hand of a mighty angel. And the angel, in verse 5, raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever and ever that there would be no more delay.

But in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to the prophets. You see, the angel is announcing the coming final judgment.

[ 35 : 56 ] With the final seventh trumpet, judgment will fall. The seventh and final trumpet call will usher in the return of Jesus Christ as the judge of the living and the dead.

All that was promised through the scriptures, God will fulfill. It's coming. And nothing will stop the day of judgment. It is the destiny of all mankind.

And given that that is where history is going, given that that is what is to happen, what are we to be doing? What are we as the church to be about?

Well, that's what we see in the second half of chapter 10. John, in his vision, is told to take the little scroll to eat it and then to prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings, verse 11.



it is an image of receiving God's word, which to us will taste sweet, will be like honey, but it makes the stomach bitter.

[ 37 : 11 ] God's message is a message of great hope and joy, isn't it? but it's also a message of warning. It is sweet like honey, but it's bitter to the stomach.

It contains the sweetness of salvation, but also the bitterness, the reality of judgment. And so when we have to speak of God's judgment on earth, the reality of everlasting condemnation, of the reality of Christ's coming, returning, to judge the living and the dead, that's a hard word.

When we have to speak about how God's truth impacts on the idolatries of today, that can be a hard word. And sometimes, often, you cannot do anything to remove the sting of God's word, because God's word will penetrate the idolatries of our hearts, of our world, of those around us.

The world's underlying assumption is that we are good, we are making progress, I don't need to repent, but God's word comes in and says, yes you do, you have rejected me, you have done your own thing, you must turn around, you are wrong.

And we cannot do anything to remove the sting of God's word. We can speak as winsomely and persuasively and articulately as you possibly can about any issue, human sexuality, gender, you can speak as winsomely as you like, but for some, for many, they will not like it at all, they will hate you for it.

[ 39 : 02 ] For many, it will be a bitter word, and there's nothing we can do about it. It's not to say we aim at presenting things bitterly, but at the end of the day, we can't do anything about it.

we can't change the message, we can't alter it. So don't panic. If the world thinks God's word is bitter, well, we know it's sweet.

And when folk repent, they see it's sweetness too. you. But if we're hoping that people will applaud us and celebrate us every time we give God's word to someone, well, we don't know much about Elijah, or Jeremiah, or Ezekiel, or John the Baptist, or Paul, or Jesus.

How are they treated as they proclaim the truth of God? God. The word of God will be a bitter pill for some to swallow, but we must proclaim it.

That is our task in this age. As all these things are happening around us, the task of the church is to take God's word and prophesy to the nations as we await for that day of judgment.

[ 40 : 28 ] That's the first image in this interlude. Second, look on to chapter 11. We see here the ongoing witness of the church throughout history.

We see what it is the church witnesses to, how the witness of the church is received by a hostile world, and what a hostile world does to a church, and how the church is then vindicators.

The two witnesses of verse 3 is not a reference to two individuals, but rather it's a reference to the church in its entirety, in its capacity, as witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The description of the two witnesses, look at verse 4, they're described as being two olive trees, and two lampstands is an image, it's drawn from the book of Zechariah, who saw two witnesses like two olive trees standing before the lampstands.

And these two figures from Zechariah represent Zerubbabel and Joshua, the king and the priest. priest. And that is part of the role we play today in the church.

[ 41 : 36 ] We are kings and priests declaring God's gospel message to the world. And the fact that there are two witnesses points, I think these are in the background, these allusions, they point both to their evangelistic task.

Remember, Jesus sent out his disciples two by two to go and be his witnesses. believers. So it speaks about their task, but also their reliability. In the Bible, often, the truth is established by the testimony of two witnesses.

So that's in the background. This task of witnessing, it's evangelistic, it's reliable. That's the task of the church, to be a witness to the Lord Jesus Christ. And the sack cloth, well, it's a reference to the fact that it's a call to repentance.

This is the task of the church in this present age. How will the church's witness be received? We'll look at verse 7.

There will be significant opposition. Verse 7, when they finish their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them.

[ 42 : 53 ] people. And this beast, I think it's representative of Satan himself and all his followers who do his bidding.

It is all those anti-Christian powers in the world that seek to silence the church's witness. And it will result in a seeming victory over the church. Look at verse 9. For three and a half days, that is a sort of reference back to Daniel.

It's talking about this present church age, which we're living, not three and a half days literally, but the period of time we're in now. For three and a half days, some from the peoples and times and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies, that is the dead bodies of the witnesses to Jesus Christ, and refuse to let them be placed in tombs.

And those who dwell on them will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents. Because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on earth.

See what it's saying? It's saying the unrepentant world will hate the church and its witness because the gospel reveals hearts.

[ 44 : 09 ] The gospel exposes evil for what it is, and the response will be fury. They will hate the church. How else do you explain so much of what we see in our world through history and today?

How else do you explain the forthcoming attempt to silence the gospel with the so-called conversion therapy ban? The aim of that legislation is to copy the gold standard from Victoria and Australia, which states that religious people must only pray in a way that affirms everyone as perfect as they are.

That is the law in Australia, in Victoria, and they want to do that here in Scotland. To affirm everyone as perfect as they are is the absolute opposite of what the Bible teaches, is it not?

The Bible says we are not perfect as we are. All of us must repent. That is just one example of the attempt to silence and suppress the gospel.

But that is always how it has been, Revelation tells us. We expect it to be like that until the end. The church has always faced this and always will. And the world will temporarily rejoice over their perceived victory, but it will not last.

[ 45 : 39 ] Verse 11. But after three and a half days, a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on all who saw them.

As one preacher put it, however many times churches are destroyed, and God's people martyred or exiled or persecuted, however many celebrations there are of those events among the unbelievers across the world, God will continue always to raise up for himself his church.

Ever since Jesus' death and resurrection, every victory of evil over good is always limited and temporary. temporary. The celebration that they enjoy here is temporary.

Tertullian's words have proved true time and time again throughout history. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. Satan cannot triumph over the church.

The gates of hell will not prevail against it. The church will continue to grow. There's nothing Satan can do about it. And these words, are they not a great comfort to those who will be receiving our Christmas offering?

[ 47 : 10 ] Churches have been burnt down. Pastors murdered. But they need to cling to these promises, don't they? There are words that we need to cling to too.

This interlude between the sixth and final trumpets instructs us, the church, as to our continual duty, which is to proclaim the gospel and its implications to the world.

Calling people to repent and believe. And for many, it will be the aroma of life. They will hear it. They will hear the call of Jesus. They will respond.

They will repent and they'll know great joy. It will be the aroma of life for them. But for many others, Revelation tells us, it will be the stench of death and they will hate you.

We must move on to the final trumpet, which gives us the ultimate perspective. And again, as last week, it gives us this glimpse of final judgment.

[ 48 : 24 ] And seeing this, seeing what is to come, it will enable us to stand now. In all that we see with trumpets one to six, the world as it is now, with these things happening, where the opposition will face, that we saw in the interludes, what we see with the last trumpet will enable us to keep going.

What we see in this last trumpet will enable us to stand firm now. We need to hear these words. And what we see with the seventh trumpet is God's certain consummation of his kingdom.

Christ will return. He will establish his kingdom over all the earth. And these are words to dwell on and reflect on. Just soak up.

Because these words, they take us above the fray. They lift our gaze above the battlefield of our present lives. And they give us perspective on history from heaven's vantage points.

John has shown here heaven's perspective on the pilgrimage of the church throughout all of time in the midst of a hostile world. It's as if we've been stumbling through these chapters this morning, trying to make sense of chaos, and suddenly we read these words.

[ 49 : 45 ] And a massive beam of light is cast over everything. And because of the light these verses give us, we understand everything else. These verses give us perspective.

And with the seventh and final trumpet blast, Jesus' promised return is announced. Just look with me here.

Verse 15. Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet. There was a loud voice in heaven saying, the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

And he shall reign forever and ever. On that day, the worldly powers will be no more.

The kingdom of this world will cease. Jesus' visible reign will begin, and it will be an everlasting reign. On that day, justice will be done.

[ 50 : 48 ] Do you remember last week, the martyrs crying out for justice? On that day, it will be done. Justice will be done. And verse 18 gives us the ultimate perspective on human history.

Just look with me there. I'll read from verse 17. We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who was and is, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged.

That is a three-word summary of human history. The nations raged. The rage of the nations is what we've been reading about.

The nations rage sums up human history, but the rage of the nations is limited. It will come to an end. The nations raged, but...

But your wrath came. The day of reckoning will surely come, and everyone will have to give an account of how they've responded to Jesus and for how they treated God's church.

[ 52 : 01 ] Everyone will have to give an account. On that day, there will be rewards for some and destruction for others. The rewards are for God's people, God's servants, their prophets, saints, those who fear his name.

Verse 18. But for those who've raged against him, well, they'll be judged. God will destroy the destroyers of the earth.

And then, God will usher in his new creation. Christ will reign. And the temple will be opened. Verse 19.

Friends, we know how the story will end. We've flicked to the final page of human history. We've seen the final chapter. And we know that in the end, Christ will reign.

His people will be vindicated. And his enemies will be judged. Friends, that is our perspective. We need these words deeply entrenched in our minds and our hearts.

[ 53 : 12 ] Because today, we're in the midst of battle, aren't we? We need these words to keep us going. Let me pray and then we'll sing to close our time together.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, we tremble at these words because we do not realize the sinfulness of sin.

We do not appreciate the depths to which humanity has rebelled against you. And that is why we're so shocked. But Lord, please help us to have our minds and our hearts shaped by your words.

Help us to heed the warnings. Help us to have compassion on an unbelieving world. That we'll be moved to keep going as your witnesses, proclaiming Christ and calling our city, our nation, to repent and believe and so have hope.

And Lord, please fill our vision with the future to come. When the kingdom of this world will be no more. And the Lord Jesus Christ will begin his reign, which will last for all eternity.

[ 54 : 41 ] Please fix our gaze on that, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.