

Sabbath School Lesson #7 – The Seven Trumpets – 9-15 February 2019

Christ would have us understand the meaning of the seven trumpets. “But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets” (Revelation 10:7). The previous Lesson covered the seals, which was the history of the church during what is called the gospel dispensation. In the seven trumpets, now introduced, we have the principal political and warlike events which were to transpire during the same time period.

Having, as it were, in Revelation 8:2, brought out the seven angels, and introduced them before us upon the stage of action, John for a moment directs attention to the angel with censer (verses 3-5). This interlude is for a message of hope and comfort for the church. The seven angels with their warlike trumpets had been introduced; terrible scenes were to transpire under their sounding; but, before they commence, the church is pointed to the work of mediation in their behalf above, and their source of help and strength during this time. Though they should be tossed like feathers upon the tumultuous waves of strife and war, they were to know that their great High Priest still ministered for them in the sanctuary in Heaven, and that thither they could direct their prayers, and have them offered with incense to their Father in Heaven. Thus could they gain strength and support in all their calamities.

First trumpet: “The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth; and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up” (Revelation 8:7). “The first sore and heavy judgment which fell on Western Rome, was the war with the Goths under Alaric, who opened the way for later inroads. After the death of Theodosius, the Roman emperor, in January 395, before the end of the winter, the Goths, under Alaric, were in arms against the empire. The terrible effects of this Gothic invasion, are represented as ‘hail,’ from the fact of the northern origin of the invaders; ‘fire’ from the destruction by flame of both city and country; and ‘blood,’ from the terrible slaughter of the citizens of the empire by the bold and intrepid warriors. The blast of the first trumpet has its location at the close of the fourth century, and onward, and refers to these desolating invasions of the Roman empire by the Goths” (Smith, DAR, 1882, 596-7).

Second trumpet: “And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea and the third part of the sea became blood; And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed” (verses 8-9). “The Roman empire, after Constantine, was divided into three parts and hence the frequent remark; ‘a third part of men,’ etc., in allusion to the third part of the empire which was under the scourge. This division of the Roman kingdom was made at the death of Constantine, between his three sons, Constantius, Constantine II, and Constans. Constantius possessed the East, and fixed his residence at Constantinople, the new metropolis of the empire. Constantine the Second held Britain, Gaul, and Spain. Constans held Illyrica, Africa, and Italy” (Smith). “The history illustrative of the sounding of the second trumpet evidently relates to the invasion and conquest of Africa, and afterward of Italy, by the terrible Genseric. His conquests were, for the most part, naval; and his triumphs were ‘as it were a great mountain burning with fire, cast into the sea.’ What figure would better, or so well, illustrate the collision of navies, and the general havoc of war on the maritime coasts? In explaining this trumpet, we are to look for some events which will have a particular bearing on the commercial world. The symbol used, naturally leads us to look for agitation and commotion. Nothing but a fierce maritime warfare would fulfill the prediction. If the sounding of the first four trumpets relates to four remarkable events which contributed to the downfall of the Roman empire, and the first trumpet refers to the ravages of the Goths under Alaric, in this we naturally look for the next succeeding act of invasion which shook the Roman power and conduced to its fall. The next great invasion was that of ‘the terrible Genseric,’ at the head of the Vandals. His career was marked by the years AD 428-468. This great Vandal chief had his headquarters in Africa” (Smith, DAR, 1882, 600-601).

Third trumpet: “And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters. And the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third part of the waters

became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter” (Revelation 8:10-11). It is said that this trumpet has reference to desolating wars and furious invasions of Attila against the Roman power, which he carried on at then head of his hordes of Huns. In the manner of his appearance, he strongly resembled a brilliant meteor flashing in the sky – he suddenly poured down his Huns on the Roman empire. He was referred to a Wormwood denoting the bitter consequences of his inversion and the calamities he inflicted.

Fourth trumpet: “And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise” (verse 12). “We understand that this trumpet symbolizes the career of Odoacer, the barbarian monarch, who was so intimately connected with the downfall of Western Rome. The symbols sun, moon, and stars evidently denote the great luminaries of the Roman government, its Emperors, Senators, and Consuls. Bishop Newton remarks that the last emperor of Western Rome was Momyllus, who in derision was called Augustulus, or the ‘diminutive Augustus.’ Western Rome fell A.D. 476. Still, however, though the Roman sun was extinguished, its subordinate luminaries shone faintly while the senate and consuls continued. But after many civil reverses, and changes of political fortune, at length, A. D. 566, the whole form of the ancient government was sub-verted, and Rome itself was reduced from being the empress of the world, to a poor dukedom, tributary to the Exarch of Ravenna” (Smith, 607-608).

Fifth trumpet: “And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit” (Revelation 9:1). This was the first woe. Constantinople was besieged for the first time after the extinction of the Western empire, by Chosroes, the king of Persia. While Chosroes contemplated the wonders of his art and power, he received an epistle from an obscure citizen of Mecca, inviting him to acknowledge Mohammed as the apostle of God. Chosroes rejected the invitation, and tore the epistle. Mohammedans waged war until Choroos was overthrown and fell dead. What about a bottomless pit? “And the fall of Chosroes, the Persian king, may well be represented as the opening of the bottomless pit, inasmuch as it prepared the way for the followers of Mohammed to issue from their obscure country, and propagate their delusive doctrines with fire and sword, till they had spread their darkness over all the Eastern empire” (Smith, 617).

Sixth trumpet: “And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men” (Revelation 9:7-19). This was the second woe. “The hordes of Saracens and Turks were let loose as a scourge and punishment upon apostate Christendom. Men suffered the punishment, but learned therefrom no lesson” (Smith, DAR, 1882, p 636).

Seventh trumpet: “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in Heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned” (Rev 11:15-17). “From the 15th verse to the end of the chapter we seem to be carried over the ground from the sounding of the seventh angel to the end, three distinct times. In the verses last quoted, the prophet glances forward to the full establishment of the kingdom of God. Although the seventh trumpet has begun to sound, we do not understand that the great voices in Heaven have yet proclaimed that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, except it be in anticipation of the speedy accomplishment of this fact; but the seventh trumpet, like the preceding six, covers a period of time; and the transfer of the kingdoms from earthly powers to Him whose right it is to reign, is the principal event to occur in the early years of its sounding; hence this event, to the exclusion of all else, here engages the mind of the prophet” (Smith, 660-1). “the temple of God was opened in Heaven” (verse 19). “This took place at the end of the 2300 days, when the sanctuary was to be cleansed, the time when the prophetic periods expired, and the seventh angel commenced to sound” (Smith, 663).