

The Second Coming of Christ Pt. 4

The Sounding of the Last Trumpet

Ken Birks, Pastor/Teacher

I. Introductory Remarks & Review.

In the previous message we began to look at the “Rapture Question” and saw some clearly stated Biblical passages that refer to the Second Coming of Jesus as happening at the very end of the Great Tribulation. In this message we will see this mystery continue to unravel as we look at the clue concerning the last trumpet.

II. The Sounding of the Last Trumpet.

One of the major keys to unlocking the puzzle of this great mystery concerning Christ and His Church, is understanding the timing and the events that take place at the last trumpet.

If one is to solve this great mystery then one must approach it in the same way a detective would approach a mystery, which is by looking for clues. There are many clues as we have already seen in this study but I believe this clue concerning the last trumpet is a major clue that will unlock the puzzle for us.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And **the dead in Christ will rise first**. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air... (see vss. 13-17) for context)*

There are some key thoughts and words in this passage of scripture concerning the timing of the Second Coming.

1. The Dead in Christ Rise First.

It says, *"those of us who are alive and remaining at The Second Coming of Christ shall not precede the dead in Christ."* In other words what it is saying is that those Christians who have already died in Christ shall meet Jesus in the air first before those of us who are alive and remaining.

Notice that it also said that the Lord would descend from heaven with the voice of an archangel and the trumpet of God. This ties together with the passage in Matthew 24 where Jesus said His coming shall be announced by the angels of God with a great trumpet. The obvious question to ask yourself here is, "When do the dead in Christ arise?" Because there is going to be no rapture of any kind until this happens.

2. It Is At The Last Trumpet When The Dead In Christ Are Raised.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

It says, "At the last trumpet the dead shall be raised." It is absolutely at the last trumpet that the dead are raised and if it is the last trumpet that is exactly what it means. If something is the last it is the last.

1Thessalonians 4:13-17 is the primary scripture used by those who advocate a pre-tribulation rapture. It is very obvious now that what we need to find out is, "When precisely does the last trumpet sound?"

3. The Timing of the Last Trumpet.

In the Book of Revelation there are seven trumpets that are to be sounded by angels who are to bring forth God's final judgment upon the earth before His return. The opening of the seventh seal is a prelude to the sounding of the seven trumpets.

Revelation 8:1-2 *When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.*

In this study we are not so much concerned with the timing and order of the seal judgments or even the other trumpet judgments, but the area of focus will be the timing of the events that happen during the sounding of the seventh or last trumpet, since it is during the sounding of this trumpet that the dead are raised and then we who are alive and remain on earth are raised to meet them in the air.

- **The Mystery of God will be Finished.**

At the sounding of this seventh trumpet by the seventh angel the mystery

of God will be finished that He has declared to His servants the prophets. Let's remember at this point in this study that according to Acts 3:20-21 that Jesus is being retained in heaven until all that has been spoken by the prophets since the world began comes to pass. It's at this point that the Bible says, everything that has been declared by the prophets is now finished and Jesus is free to return.

Revelation 10:7 *but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.*

Note that it says, "in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel". This suggests the sounding of this trumpet takes place for a number of days.

Revelation 11:15-19 *Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" ...because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged... Then the **temple of God was opened** in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.*

This is another passage of scripture that has to do with the sounding of the seventh trumpet also. In it we find some more clues as to what is happening during this trumpet.

- Christ shall reign forever and ever over the kingdoms of this world.
- The nations are very angry because God's final wrath is about to come.
- It is a time for the dead to be judged
- and the time to reward the servants of God.
- The temple of God was opened

This passage ends with a major clue, which leads us to the next clue.

It says, "Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple." God's temple is now being opened, but no one is able to enter it yet, until the seven final plagues of God's judgment are completed. This is all taking place during the sounding of the seventh trumpet. (*Revelation 15:1-8*).

Revelation 15:5-6 *After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. And out of the*

temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.

This is the third woe spoken of in Revelation 11:14 that is to come quickly. There are two major reasons that lead me to believe that these plagues are happening during the blowing of the seventh trumpet.

1. The scene of the temple being opened in Revelation 11:19 is the same scene found here in Revelation 15:5-6. In fact, it is out of this temple that the seven plagues come from.
2. The scene described in Revelation 16:18 during the seventh bowl judgment concerning the noises, thunderings, lightnings, hail and a great earthquake is the same description in Revelation 11:19 that takes place during the sounding of the seventh trumpet.
3. The reason this is so important is that in I Corinthians 15:52 it says, "at the Last Trumpet the dead shall be raised". This could happen at any time during the sounding of the last trumpet, but Revelation 16:15-21 places the second coming somewhere between the sixth and seventh bowl of God's judgment.

Revelation 16:15 "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, but we are not in darkness, so that this day should overtake us as a thief.

1 Thessalonians 5:2,4 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night... But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

This passage of scripture is referring to the passage in I Thessalonians 4:17, which places it now in the context of Revelation 16:15 at the end of the tribulation.

The apostle Peter also confirms the timing of this great event by using the same terminology. He says, "*the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise.*" The seventh trumpet spoke of the great noises and thunderings that would occur at this time.

2 Peter 3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

Every clue that we have received up until now has shown that it is here at the end of the great tribulation that Jesus is going to return. This is where the dead in Christ are raised.

There is nowhere in scripture where it speaks of Christians being raptured to heaven prior to this event. This is the same scene the apostle Paul described in I Thessalonians 4:17 and 2 Thessalonians 2:8 and the same one Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24:29-31.

III. The Actual Return of Jesus Christ.

As the seventh angel pours out his bowl into the air, the announcement is made, "It is done!"

Revelation 16:17-18 *Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. (See vss. 15-21 for whole context).*

The consummation of all things is at hand and Jesus is finally able to be released from heaven to destroy the inhabitants of the earth. But before He does that, all of the saints who have died in Christ and those of us who remain are gathered into the heavens to meet Jesus in the air and we then return with Him.

Matthew 24:31 *"And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

Jude 1:14-15 *Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, "to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."*

Revelation 19:11 *Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. (See Vss. 11-21 for whole context).*

I believe it has been established very well up to this point in this study that the actual return of Jesus Christ takes place at the very end of the Great Tribulation or in a Post-tribulation period.

IV. The Problem with Post-Tribulation.

There still remains a major problem to this mystery and that is that there are a number of scriptures that actually refer to Christians being preserved or protected from the tribulation. As was stated at the beginning of this study, there are problems with all three views that pre-millennialists hold to.

The scriptures that speak of Christians being preserved from or not going through tribulation are used by those who advocate a pre-tribulation and a mid-tribulation rapture.

The obvious thing to do at this point would be to look at the scriptures that speak of being preserved and then to see if God has a plan of how He intends to do that.

1. Will Christians Be Preserved During The Great Tribulation?

Revelation 3:10 *"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*

This scripture speaks of being kept from the hour of temptation which shall come upon the world. The word (kept) here is the Greek word (tereo), which means to guard from loss or injury, by keeping the eye upon. It also implies a fortress or full military lines of apparatus. (*Strong's Concordance #5083*)

"By guarding to cause one to escape in safety out of the power and assaults of Satan." (*Thayers #5083*)

God's wrath, tribulation and anguish are to be poured out on the unrighteous, but glory honor and peace to every man that does good.

Romans 2:7-10 *...eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing*

good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (See Vss. 5-6 also).

Romans 5:9 *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*

1 Thessalonians 1:10 *and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

1 Thessalonians 5:9 *For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ...*

Nahum 1:7-8 *The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him. But with an overflowing flood He will make an utter end of its place, and darkness will pursue His enemies. (See vss. 1-11 for whole context).*

This passage of scripture deals with God's final outpouring of His wrath during the great tribulation. Verse 7 says, "The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knows them that trust in Him." God will be a stronghold to the Christians who have complete trust in Him during this terrible time. But we must take heed unto ourselves and be on guard against the enemy or we shall be snared.

Luke 21:34-36 *"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. "For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."*

Therefore we are to watch and pray that we be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass.

Zephaniah speaks of a gathering together before the day of the Lord's fierce anger comes. He instructs us to seek righteousness and humility and it may be that we will be hidden in the day of the LORD'S anger.

Zephaniah 2:1-3 *Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O*

undesirable nation, before the decree is issued, before the day passes like chaff, before the Lord's fierce anger comes upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger comes upon you! Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger.

The Bible has spoken very clearly that the first resurrection or the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ takes place at the very end of the Great Tribulation of God's wrath. It has also spoken of Christians being preserved and kept during this time and that if we watch and pray and seek humility and righteousness there is a good chance we will be hidden or kept from the fierceness of God's wrath. So what is the answer? Is there a way out for God's people?

Isaiah 26:20-21 *Come My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain.*

God does have a plan for His people, as we shall see in the next study.

V. Summary.

- The word rapture is not in the Bible, but is derived from the words "caught up" found in 1 Thessalonians 4:12-17.
- The rapture is all actuality refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ.
- When Jesus returns He shall return on the clouds of heaven. It is at the end of the "Great Tribulation" that Jesus returns on the clouds of heaven.
- When the disciples asked Jesus when His Second coming would be, He stated specifically it would be at the end of the "Great Tribulation". He did not speak of any other appearing.
- The apostle Paul said that the "falling away" and the revealing of the antichrist must come before the second coming of Christ, when warning the Thessalonians about being deceived about His return.
- The second coming of Christ will take place during the sounding of the Last Trumpet or the seventh trumpet in the book of Revelation.
- The Last Trumpet sounds at the end of the "Great Tribulation".
- At the sounding of the Last Trumpet the mystery of God will be finished and Jesus is finally free to be released from heaven to come for His Church.

- There are many scriptures that elude to the fact that Christians will be preserved and kept safe during the Great Tribulation. God has a plan as we will see in the next lesson.
-

End Notes

1. The three viewpoints of postmillennial, amillennialism, and premillennial were also taken from the Book, "A Summary of Contemporary Doctrines of Abbott Loop Christian Center, Conference Edition", pages 100-102.

2. The doctrinal position that has been communicated in this study is a result of the wonderful input I have had from people like apostles, Dick Benjamin and Jim Feeney and also from the teachings of W.H. Offiler and W.W. Patterson.