

Listening To The Seven Trumpets

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- [0 : 0 0] My friends, I love bushwalking, and if you enjoy it, then perhaps you've had similar experiences that I have had. Perhaps you set out to climb a particular hill.
- You know that if you get to the top of this hill, there'll be a spectacular view from the top, and so you set off. As you walk, you see the range in front of you, and it looks quite manageable, so you set out to climb it.
- And every now and then, you glimpse above you at the horizon that is appearing up there, and the blue sky that indicates you're up to the top, and then you walk on, and closer and closer you get.
- And finally, you reach the last climb of the last slope, or at least that's what you think it is. You approach the summit, and you look forward to the view that awaits you.
- And then you arrive, and then you realise you've been duped by your own senses, because there's actually a higher summit beyond the first. You begin to worry that perhaps there's another one beyond it as well that you have missed.
- [0 : 5 9] Anyway, you soldier on, and you enjoy the walk. And then finally, you arrive, and the view is all that you have been told it is. The summit gives views in all directions, and it is spectacular.
- Friends, working your way through the book of Revelation is a bit like this. You tend to get false summits every now and then. And when you get to the real summit, the view is spectacular. It is really amazing.
- Today, we're going to do some significant bushwalking through the book of Revelation. And at times, you'll think we've arrived. But when we get there, let me promise you, it will actually be something else.
- It will be fantastic. So I hope you'll walk with me. Actually, I should slightly amend that. I hope you'll run with me, because that's what we're doing today. Anyway, we're going to move quickly.
- We're going to pass through magnificent scenery and great viewpoints. So let's get underway. Now, first, we need to remember where we've come from. The whole of Chapter 1 formed an introduction to the book.
- [2 : 0 1] We're told that we're dealing with an apocalypse, that is, a revelation. At the same time, it was said to be a prophecy, a testimony, and a letter. Then we looked over John's shoulder as he transcribed the seven letters to the seven churches.
- And we found that they were a mixed bag of churches. Then we came to Chapter 4, you remember. And Chapter 4 was a grand picture of all the created order before God, the great and good creator.
- That great and good creator had a scroll in his hand written on both sides. It was a scroll that contained the plans and purposes of the creator of this created world. We wanted to see its contents.

However, it had seven seals. And those seven seals could only be unlocked by one who was worthy to do so. So two things were necessary. First, we needed to find someone worthy to open the seals.

And second, we needed to see the seals, each one of them, or seven of them, open before we could actually read the scroll. Only when those two things had happened could we fully read the contents of the scroll.

[3 : 02] So in Chapter 5, we found one worthy, the Lamb who was slain but was alive. That is, the Lord Jesus who had been slain but been resurrected. And then in Chapter 6, verse 2 to Chapter 8, verse 1, which was Wednesday night, we saw him unlock the seals.

Now, we haven't read them yet because all the seals needed to be broken before the scroll could be read. And I showed you that on Wednesday night. However, we did see some things.

Even if we couldn't read the scroll, we could see things. As each seal was broken, we watched what happened as a result of it being opened. We watched, and there was a whole series of momentous events involving the whole created order, but also the people of God.

Anyway, in Chapter 8, verse 1, and that's where I want you to have your Bibles open, Chapter 8, verse 1, the final seal is opened. But I want you to notice what happens. There is a long silence. A silence that simply builds our expectations and anticipation.

You see, the seven seals are finished, but then instead of reading the scroll, we again see something happen. Just like we saw before with the previous six seals when they were broken, we find ourselves watching something.

[4 : 14] Look at Revelation 8, verse 2. John speaks not of what he heard, not of what he read, but of what he saw. Clearly, we cannot yet read the scroll.

We are going to have to wait. For a moment, we'll just have to watch. And so, we look over John's shoulder and we see what he saw. Let's explore exactly what that is. Let's see what John saw.

Follow with me from verse 2. The first thing John sees is seven angels who stand before God and they are given seven trumpets. Then there's yet another interlude, another break, and we don't learn yet about the seven trumpets.

Instead, we see another angel other than the one with the trumpets. And this angel is given a golden censer. And he comes and he stands beside the altar in verse 3.

Look at it. It's said that he's given much incense to offer with the prayers of all God's people on the golden altar in front of the throne. He's very close to the presence of God. And the smoke of incense, together with the prayers of God's people, go up before God from the angel's hand.

[5 : 17] The impression is firm. He is one who assists the prayers of the saints. His incense perhaps indicates that they are sweet-smelling and acceptable to God.

We have a parallel, don't we, in the birth of Jesus. I wonder if you remember it. In Luke chapter 1 verse 8, we read that Zechariah was chosen by Lot to go into the temple to burn incense. So there he is. He goes right inside the temple, burns incense.

Then in Luke chapter 1 verse 9, we hear that when the time came for that burning of incense, the worshippers outside were praying. Same sort of scenario as is painted here. Perhaps the image is of all believers in all ages who pray for the coming of the kingdom.

And it's a potent picture. The prayers of the people of God are assisted by an angel who stands in the very presence of God. And their intercessions together go up before him.

Fragrant smoke rises. Perhaps a symbol of God's acceptance. But now look at verse 5. The peaceful prayers of intercession meet with a divine response at the hand of the messenger.

[6 : 20] And it's a response of judgment. The angel takes the censer. He fills it with fire from the altar. And he hurls it on the earth. The prayers of the saints, you see, have played an important, if not essential part, in bringing the judgment of God on all the earth.

The peals of thunder, the lightning, the rumblings, and the earthquake make that clear. And with that we move to verse 6. The seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.

Now, we readers know that judgment is coming. What will it be? What will it consist of? Friends, I wonder if I could just show you some larger observations about the judgments in Revelation and about the trumpets in particular.

Do you remember our last talk? We noticed that there was a pattern in the seven seals. The pattern was four plus two plus one.

Four seals started off. They belonged together. Followed by two seals that belonged together. Followed by one climactic seal.

[7 : 26] Well, a similar pattern is picked up with the trumpets. So, the first four trumpets announce four disasters that will impact all of humanity. Believer and non-believer alike.

They affect the four major regions of the created world. Trumpet one affects the dry land, verse 7. Trumpet two focuses on the sea, 8 and 9.

Trumpet three focuses on fresh water. 10 to 11. And trumpet four focuses on the sky, verse 12. And they are a step up from the judgments that we found within the seals.

However, although they fall on all major regions of the created world, although they fall on all the major regions of the created world, they are restricted in their reach and damage. Did you notice that?

In the first trumpet, verse 7. Only one third of the earth, the trees and the grass are burned up by the hail, the fire mixed with blood. Only a third. In the second trumpet, verses 8 and 9.

[8 : 24] Only one third of the sea, of the living creatures, of the ships are impinged upon. In the third trumpet, 10 and 11. Only a third of the waterways are affected. In the fourth trumpet, verse 12.

Only a third of the heavenly bodies are affected. Moreover, only a third of the day and night is without light. So the judgments of the first four trumpets are a step up on the seals.

But I need to warn you that this progress keeps going as we go on. So by the time we get to the bowls, which will follow after the trumpets in chapters 15 and 16, the level and the intensity is stepped up again from the trumpet judgments.

Okay, now look at verse 13. Do you remember the judgment of the seals? Do you remember that the first four affected the whole created order, just as we see here? Do you remember that the focus, though there, shifted to unbelievers in the last three?

So in 5, 6 and 7, the focus became unbelievers. Do you remember that the intensity increased with those last three? Well, so it is with the trumpets.

[9 : 24] Look at the details of verse 13. An eagle screeches, whoa, whoa, whoa, to the inhabitants of the earth because of the trumpet blast about to be sounded off by the other three angels.

I wonder if you can see what's happening. There is a progressive severity within the seven seals. There is a progressive severity in judgment across the seven seals, the trumpets and the bowls.

Now, the concept of a progressive severity of judgment, let me tell you, is nothing new. The apostle Paul tells us about it, even in the first chapter of Romans. You might remember from Romans 1, 18 to 32, we're told that as human idolatry escalates, so God gives the world up to the impact of it.

Increasing judgment is God's way of dealing with the world's evil and also with personal evil. Three times in Romans 1, verse 24, verse 26, verse 28, Paul tells us that God gives humans over to the impact of their godliness.

That is, he says, you want to go that way, you can have the results. Now, let's take a closer look at the final three trumpets. Well, three of the four trumpets echoed the Exodus plagues.

[10 : 42] So does the fifth. We've had hail and fire, trumpet number one, blood, trumpet number two, darkness, trumpet number four, and now locusts.

Now, let me tell you, though, that these are not the little locusts found in the book of Exodus. They are very different. The locusts of the fifth trumpet are locusts energized by more than just wings and food.

Look at verses one to three. We read the fifth 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.

And when he opened the abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and the sky were darkened by the smoke from the abyss. And out of the smoke, locusts came down to the earth and were given power like that of scorpions on the earth.

You see, these locusts came from a personalized fallen star. He is given the key to the shaft of the abyss.

[11 : 46] And when he opens the abyss, smoke rises from it like smoke from this gigantic furnace. In verse three, the locusts are given power like the scorpions of the earth.

In verse four, they are told not to take on their normal targets. That is, they're not to harm grass and earth or any plant in the tree. No, no. At this point, we're reminded that the seven seals and the people with the seal of God on their foreheads, the company of the redeemed, the people of God are there.

And the scorpions are only to attack others. They are to attack people. But they are only to attack the people who are not among the company of God's sealed people.

Remember the sealed from the seals. That is, they are to attack only those not among God's people. But even here, there are restrictions. There were restrictions in the first four trumpets.

They're not allowed to kill those people. They're only allowed to torture them. And then, only for five months. Can you see the restrictions there? But look at the pain they inflict.

[12 : 50] Verses five and six. Stings like that of a scorpion. Pain so fierce that people will seek death instead of the locust harassment. However, they won't be able to find death.

Now look at verse seven. These locusts look like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wear something like crowns of gold. Their faces resemble human faces. Their hair is like women's hair.

Verse eight. Their teeth are like lion's teeth. They have breastplates like breastplates of iron. The sound of them in flight is like thunder. Verse 11.

Their king is the angel of the abyss. He who is known as the destroyer. Friends, the references to the source of these locusts should alert us. They are from the abyss.

Their king is the angel of the abyss. He is known as the destroyer. That is their source, their origin. Now what does that tell us? Well, I wonder if you remember the story of Jesus casting multiple demons out of a man called Legion in Luke chapter eight.

[13 : 53] Do you remember that the demons begged Jesus not to send them into the abyss? Even for demons it was a place of terror. So Abaddon, Apollyon, the destroyer.

These are clear references to him who dominates that domain. They are therefore references to some satanic figure. He is either the devil himself or his representative.

And that finds support back in verse one of chapter nine. It speaks of a fallen star who has the key to the shaft of the abyss. So what does this make the locusts, do you think?

Well, they are those who come from that place of evil spirits ruled over by the devil and his representative. They come from that domain, that domain of evil spiritual powers. They torment those who are not protected or sealed by God.

They are therefore not flesh and blood locusts, are they? No, they are spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. They are demonic. The object is to cause widespread but restricted spiritual agony.

[15 : 04] Friends, this is of a very different calibre to the first four trumpets. This is overwhelming, ugly, terrorizing, spiritual harassment and destruction.

But let me remind you, it may cause agony and torture among the ungodly, but it will not touch those sealed by God. They are protected by God himself.

They are exempted by God's decree. Now look at verse 12. We have the first four trumpets blown. We have reached the three woes that make the seven.

And we have seen the first of them. Two other trumpet woes are to come. Two other trumpet woes. But let's move on. I wonder if you noticed what I noticed in this woe. Do you remember something similar in a comparable seal judgment?

Do you remember the fifth seal that we looked at on Wednesday night? We saw the terrible suffering of the godly. Those who were sealed, who suffered badly. They were slain because of the word of God, the gospel.

[16 : 06] They were slain because they maintained their testimony. They longed for judgment upon their persecutors. But they were told, no, no, no, you must wait. There is no respite for them.

So here in this fifth trumpet, the first woe upon the ungodly. Not the godly this time, the ungodly. And there is no respite for them either. But now let's turn to the sixth angel with his trumpet.

Chapter 9, verse 13. Now to understand this trumpet, this woe, I need to give you some background about the Roman Empire. In the Roman Empire, they were not an empire without fears.

One of their strong fears was a fear of attack from the east, east of the Euphrates River, from the Parthians. And that fear is sort of picked up and spiritualised a bit in verse 14.

The language is clear. The Parthians were a trivial annoyance compared to what is revealed in verse 14. That is, what they fear, the Parthians, that's a nothing compared to what's coming.

[17 : 07] For in verse 14, the sixth angel is told to release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates. And their task is clear, to kill one third of mankind.

They seem to stand at the head of a great horde of spiritual forces whose number is overwhelming, even innumerable. Their presentation is given in verses 17 to 19. They are like monstrous horses, or like lions with breastplates and tails that inflict harm on people.

The picture is one of grotesque, demonic, ferocious and dreadful beings. Friends, I need to just, at this point, because you'll have all read some books that think it's about, you know, all sorts of modern contraptions.

No, it's not. These are demonic forces. These are spiritual forces. They afflict people in fierce, appalling and devastating ways, both physically and spiritually.

The focus is on their mouths in verses 18 and 19, which I think indicates false teaching. But notice verse 20. Despite the plain evidence of God's work of judgment, it is not met with repentance.

[18 : 14] You see, here is God judging the world. The hearts of the ungodly are hardened. They continue in their independence and false worship.

They don't stop their sinning. In fact, they continue to do the sorts of things prohibited in the first part of the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. They don't stop worshipping demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood.

Nor do they repent of the sorts of things in the second half of the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue. Murder, magic, arts, sexual immorality and theft. Friends, please take this in.

It is a picture of our world. A picture of our world. Here is human inability at its worst and most shocking.

Humans overwhelmed by evil. God wanting to turn them back, but they are unable to do it. Only God can overcome that intransigence.

[19 : 13] Humans are impotent in the face of evil, in the face of their own inability. That is the end of the second woe. Now friends, I wonder if I might just make a personal observation here.

You see, I have been a clergyman for 30 plus years. And I think we here in Australia and in other parts of the world are entering dark days.

Dark and godless days. Similar to this? Oh, we do see occasional bright lights such as gospel openness among the Chinese and people like the Iranians.

Many of them turning to Christ. But elsewhere there is hardness. Particularly in the western world. In the developed world. The place that I notice it most over the 30 years is funerals.

You see, when I was first ordained, there were unbelievers present at church funerals. But they sang the hymns. They even prayed the Lord's Prayer.

[20 : 17] And knew the words. But not now. Friends, not now. There is, by many of them now, no bowing of head. There is no mouthing of the words.

There is no respect for the beliefs of others. There is sometimes folded and defiant arms. There is a distinct closure to anything connected with God.

In fact, there is more than this. There is a growing dominant note in Australia and various other places around the world. And it is defiance. Open ungodliness. Lives filled with the sorts of things listed in verses 20 to 21.

And a lack of any sense of God. There is therefore no consideration or room for repentance. And that is a worrying place to be. Now, we now reach the beginning of chapter 10.

We have looked at the first six trumpets. I want you to flip over to chapter 11 and look at Revelation 11 verse 14. 11 verse 14 says this. The second woe has passed.

[21 : 24] The third woe is coming soon. Now look at verse 15. It says, 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 forever and ever.

The sixth trumpet ends the second woe. The seventh trumpet, that is the third woe, begins at verse 15 of chapter 11. So can you see what's happening? There's this massive gap. A gap that goes from the end of chapter 9 to verse 15 in chapter 11.

And that is not new. Now that's why I've given you my little coloured diagram in the outline. You won't find that anywhere else. It's my own creation. You can see what's going on there.

Can you see when you get to the seven there's a gap and you get other things open up? So you can check them out later on. What happens is the interlude between the sixth and the seventh seal is taken up with seven trumpets.

But now the trumpets themselves are interrupted and between the sixth and the seventh trumpet we again have a gap, an interlude. Now what happens in that gap is an interlude with two scenes.

[22 : 31] Scene 1 takes up the 11 verses of chapter 10, takes all the 11 verses of chapter 10 and scene 2 takes up the first 13 verses of chapter 11. Now in my view the overall theme of the two scenes in this interlude are the same.

Both have as background the picture of the immense spiritual evil seen in the first two woes revealed in the fifth and sixth trumpets. Both prepare for what is the third woe, the seventh trumpet.

The common theme in both scenes is the role of the followers of Jesus in this time of great distress. It is the place of witness to Jesus during this time of great distress.

Now friends, I don't think we can locate the time and it may very well be that there are repetitions of this sort of time. But what has happened is, it is the place of witness to Jesus in the time of this great distress that is focused on and it is intended to engage us, the readers, and to motivate us to be right in this area.

It's to stir up God's people in their struggle with evil. Let's see what we can learn from it because it's got lots to teach us as God's people. Let's see how God wants us to think about how we live in an age of great distress.

[23 : 55] For I think the times may come, friends. But even without the great distress being there, we can learn lots about what happens here. Take a look at the first scene.

It begins at the beginning of chapter 10 with a mighty angel descending from heaven. He's holding a little scroll. It is open. Apparently he gives the content of this little scroll.

And apparently it's another series of seven, this time seven thunders. And John has to write it down in verse 4. However, the voice from heaven prohibits him.

Apparently there's still some stuff you see in God's plans and purposes that we're given no access to. So if anyone tells you they know everything that God's doing, they know more, you know, and they say it's all in Revelation.

It's not because there's stuff in Revelation that's not there. That is stuff that we know about that God hasn't caused to be written down. God still has some secrets that remain with him.

[24 : 53] So don't let anyone map out the whole future for you. Because only God knows it. Now look at verse 8. John's told to take the scroll. There'd be no more delay.

Oaths are taken by an angel. And then in verse 9 he's told to eat it. Now there's a great precedent for this. Ezekiel did the same in Ezekiel 2, 3 to 3, 9.

Now I think the meaning is about the same as what we mean when we talk about devouring a book. I've never seen anyone actually get and eat it.

But devouring a book means to sort of take it in, know it, hear it, imbibe it, mark it, take it on board. Does that make sense? You devour it.

It's totally consumed by you. However notice that the angel tells John in verse 9 that it will make his stomach bitter. But in his mouth it will be as sweet as honey. And verse 10 tells us that's exactly what John experiences.

[25 : 55] It is sweet as honey in his mouth. However after being eaten it makes his stomach bitter. I think what this means is that the scroll contains news about suffering.

However, its first point of contact is from the hand of a good God who ordains good for his people. So although it contains much news of suffering and persecution of the people of God, it's also God's word about final vindication and therefore it can be received as sweet food as well.

That I think is scene one. Now let's go to scene two. With scene two, we're looking at one of the most complicated and confounding passages in the whole of the book. So what I'm going to do is give you a sort of framework for reading it.

Okay. First thing I want you to notice is that John is told to take a reed like a measuring rod. So a little bit of a reed. That's a way of measuring things. He's commanded to perform a symbolic prophetic action.

Sort of thing that Ezekiel is asked to do in Ezekiel 8 and 9. This symbolic prophetic action reminds us of the measuring of the temple in Ezekiel 40 to 42.

[27 : 06] Anyway, it's very unlikely that John is actually measuring the physical temple in Jerusalem. Okay. Either now or then.

Rather, the temple is a way of speaking about God's people. Okay. The New Testament uses that language, doesn't it? We are the temple of God. I think that's what's going on here.

So what I think is happening is that God is ordering the measuring of God's people. Measuring implies that he knows about them and he cares about them. You measure them. Okay.

You know where they are, what they're doing, and you caring for them, protecting them. You're committed to that. You know all about them. So measuring the temple of God and the altar with its worshippers represents measuring the true worshippers of God.

They are the ones singled out here. They're protected by God, just as the sealed ones were back in seal of chapter 7. They're known by God.

[28 : 03] They're safe in God's care. But did you notice there are others around? Gentiles. That is, outsiders out in the outer court.

Not measured, not protected. They are permitted to oppress believers who are represented by those measured and the holy city. The picture is a picture of God's people under siege, harassed, under opposition but resilient and standing firm.

And that brings us to verse 3. In verse 3 we hear about two witnesses. Now two witnesses, I'll tell you why I think it's two. Two witnesses is what is required in the Old Testament to establish an offence against someone.

Remember two or three witnesses? I think so. The two is what you need, the bare minimum. Okay. In this case two witnesses are establishing that an offence has been committed against God.

Now let's see what else we can find out about these two witnesses. How do they go about their business and what do they do? Well, look at verse 4. They are called two olive trees and two lampstands who stand before the Lord of all the earth.

[29 : 13] That language comes from Zechariah. The reference to olive trees is probably a reference to the Spirit. The reference to lampstands probably means that they stand before the Lord, Zechariah 4 verse 14, and provide light for the world.

In verse 6 they're seen to be prophesying. In verse 7 they're said to be those who testify. In verse 10 they're called prophets. Do you notice how many of those words are about saying things?

Okay. They're about saying things. The overwhelming impression that you get from these descriptions is what they do is speak of God and for God.

They are those who, like John, are ministers of the word, that is ministers of the gospel, and the testimony of Jesus. They are gospel preachers in my view.

Okay. That's who these witnesses are, gospel preachers, and their preaching is done for 42 months. Now 42 is a symbolic number. I'll give you how to do the math. 42 is the same approximately as 1260 days.

[30 : 19] 1260 days is three and a half years. Three and a half years is half of seven years, which is a full or complete number.

So when you say three and a half years, you're saying a full time span cut short. Okay. Cut short. A full time span cut short. That is, they are prophesying during a period of persecution which is limited.

Cut short in its time. Did you notice that they also have two other prophetic powers? See verse 6. They are like Elijah the prophet.

That is, they have the power to shut up the heavens so it won't rain while they're prophesying. They're also like Moses the prophet. They have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want to.

The gospel preaching of these two witnesses has great power. Look at verse 10. It torments those who live on the earth. Now, I don't mean that their word sort of cuts into them as it were, but it cuts into them morally and spiritually.

[31 : 25] You see, they hear what they don't want to hear. That's what gospel preaching does to those who don't want to listen. It causes offense, doesn't it? It cuts them. It reminds them of things they'd prefer to avoid.

You don't want preachers around telling you this, do you? It tells them of a God to whom they are accountable. It calls them to repent, just as Jesus called people to repent.

And their message goes into all the world. Friends, who do you think those two witnesses are? I think they represent the church of all time.

And I don't think they're spot people around the world. I think they're the church throughout the world. I think they represent the church in all time.

The whole church of God with the whole message of Jesus. That is, they represent who and what we are. Now let's look at what happens to them. Verse 7. We're told that the time comes when they have finished their testimony.

[32 : 22] I suspect that means that what Jesus prophesied has happened. That is, the church of God has preached the gospel to the whole world as a testimony to all the nations. Matthew 24, verse 14.

That time has arrived. And it will appear to be defeated. The beast who is the devil himself will attack them.

He will overpower and kill them. That is, he will appear to have triumphed over the church of Christ. And its voice, the voice of the church, will be silenced.

That is what I think is meant by the witnesses apparently being overcome and killed in verse 7. Their voices are silenced. That's what happens when you kill someone. They stop speaking. And the world rejoices.

The witness of the church had tormented the world by reminding it of its accountability to God. They did not want to be accountable to God.

[33 : 23] Now that witness has been silenced and it's time for great rejoicing. The party starts, as it were. But look at verse 11. The words used here come from the story of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37.

After three and a half days, the breath of life enters into the witnesses of God. And they stand on their feet.

That is, the church stands on its feet again. And that strikes terror in those who see it. But then, as their enemies look on, they ascend to heaven.

It's all picture language, friends. The picture language is about the spiritual resurrection of Christ's church. This resurrection validates their testimony and authenticates its existence as the resurrection of their Lord did.

God also tangibly vindicates it by exacting judgment on the earth. Friends, do you remember that I said that Revelation is fundamentally presenting eternal truths in picture language?

[34 : 22] Well, if that's so, what do these pictures here mean? Well, let's see if I can summarize. I think the two witnesses, as I said, represent the church throughout the world. Their testimony is the testimony of the church.

Like their Lord, they will experience a lengthy period, three and a half years, of gospel ministry, followed by a relatively short period, three and a half days, of apparent defeat.

I think that this seems to indicate that there will be a time at the very end of history that a supreme onslaught will be made on the church. Remember what I said about apocalyptic?

It sort of gets heightened as time goes on. I think maybe that is what's going on here. And the church will seem at some point to succumb. However, like her Lord, she will rise.

And she'll be vindicated. And the world will give begrudging acknowledgement. Now look at verse 14. We're on the home straight now. We've travelled a long distance. Do you remember where we've come from?

[35 : 27] We started with the opening of that seventh seal. There was silence. Then the silence was burst with the beginning of the seven trumpets. The first four came.

At the end of them, an eagle flew in midair, calling out three woes upon the world. Whoa, whoa, whoa. Trumpet five was the first of those woes. Trumpet six was the second, and we've just rehearsed it.

Now in verse 14, the third is announced. We anticipate that after this woe, we will have finished the seven seals. Inside of which nestled the seven trumpets.

Inside of which nestled the seven thunders. Perhaps then we'll finally be able to read that scroll we've been waiting to read since chapter four. When the lion of Judah who was risen, after being slain, took from the hand of God the seals, the scroll with seals on it.

Now let's take a look at this third woe, this seventh trumpet. Look at verse 15 in chapter 11. Our focus moves. You can see from heaven, from earth to heaven. And loud voices resound in heaven.

[36 : 36] The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah. And he will reign forever and ever.

What is happening is that heaven is declaring that the future is so certain that it can be spoken of in the language of the past. The Messiah of Israel, the one we know of as the Lord Jesus Christ, will one day rule the world.

And the way in which that will come about will be spelled out. The future is secure. That is the pronouncement of the third and final woe. It will take until chapter 22 to be realized.

But it will come. It is sure. It is certain. It is secure. Friends, we have traveled a long distance tonight. I hope you've got a feel for now for what God is doing in his world and some of what will happen to the church of God.

I wonder if I might therefore draw some threads together by way of application for our own lives. First, friends, I want you to hear this final woe. See, this is where God is headed in his world.

[37 : 49] Look at verse 18. There is a time coming upon the world. On the one hand, that time will be one for judging the dead and destroying those who destroyed the earth.

Friends, that day is coming. It is certain. However, that day will also be a time for rewarding God's servants who speak for him and revere his name.

Two sides to the coming judgment of the Lord Jesus, the king of all of God's kingdom. It will be a time when God will call people to account for what they have done in the world, whether for good or bad.

Friends, this day before God is certain. Our world is increasingly forgetting it. It is certain. So are you living for it?

Are you preparing to meet your God? To meet God if he is not your God? Second, do you remember the mark of the church in the sixth woe?

[38 : 57] The setting is immense spiritual evil and opposition. And yet the church of Jesus Christ knows him, is sealed by him, makes him known, and suffers in order to speak of him and make him known.

And friends, this day around the world. That is happening. In the last 100 years, more Christians have died as a result of their faith than all 20 centuries beforehand.

Today it is happening. Today it is happening. But that church is sealed by him. It makes him known and it suffers in order to speak of him and make him known.

Friends, there is no picture here of a slack church full of laid-back Christians. Dark times demand Christians full of light, firm of witness, willing to speak, ready to be different from the world morally and ready to suffer even as their Lord did for them.

We are increasingly getting flabby. But I think dark times might help. Third, I want you to see and hear the identifying mark of the church of God in chapter 11.

[40 : 19] You did hear it, didn't you? Witness. Testimony. Prophecy. All in a world that doesn't want to hear it.

Friends, is that mark etched into our being as Christians? It was the mark of our Lord. He died for it. Is it our mark as well?

And finally, I want you to ask yourself if your view of God is like the view here in Revelation. Or is it plasticised? Weak?

And pitiful? The view of God and Jesus here is strong. It is bold. Is your view the same?

For that is the God who really exists. That is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the Lord Jesus himself. Now let's pray.