

UNDERSTANDING THAT WEIRD BOOK OF REVELATION - Part nine

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WILL THERE BE A SECRET RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH BEFORE THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST? (Part 1)

Revelation 10:5-7 - "And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven [6] and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, [7] but that *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 his servants the prophets."

This is the second study from Revelation chapter 10. We went through the whole chapter last week, but today I want to retrace our steps and go back to that phrase in the middle of **verse 7** - "*...but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled....*"

Notice, "*...in the days...*" Not in the *day*, but in the *days*. The sounding of the seventh trumpet is not just *one instantaneous act*, but an action that *unfolds a rapid series of events*. Remember, each of the three series of *sevens* - seven *seals*, seven *trumpets*, seven *bowls* - each series leads right up to the end of this age and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. These three series of sevens are revealed as *piling up on top of each other* rather than simply *following in sequence one after the other*.

Also, the seventh seal *contains* the seven trumpets. And the seventh trumpet *contains* the seven bowls of God's wrath. That's why, in John's vision in Revelation chapter 10, he writes of the "*days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he was about to sound....*" This final sounding of the seventh trumpet will initiate the final outpouring of God's wrath in the seven bowls. God's wrath is poured out *explosively* at the *end* of the Tribulation. The Tribulation doesn't *just* feature the wrath of God. We saw this in the opening of the seven seals. Not all the seven seals are the result of the outpouring of God's wrath.

Then more of God's wrath is revealed in the seven trumpets. That's why, you will recall, God's people are *sealed* from the effects of God's wrath as the Tribulation unfolds: **Revelation 9:3-4** - "Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. [4] They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads."

Then finally, at the very *close* of the Tribulation the wrath of God is poured out very specifically in the seven bowls. The seven bowls are very specifically called the seven bowls of the *wrath of God* - **Revelation 16:1** - "Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

Now, back to Revelation chapter 10. I want to just work for a minute with this phrase, "*...in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel....*"(10:7). I want to take this one study to pull together some of the threads of the events of these "*...days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel....*" from other relevant New Testament prophetic texts. I want to use this teaching to tie in our study of Revelation with what *Jesus* taught about these last *days* and what the *Apostle Paul* taught about these last *days* - the *days* of the voice of the seventh angel.

Quite significantly, both Jesus and Paul felt this idea of the sounding of a trumpet was significant in their teaching about the events of the last days and the Second Coming:

Matthew 24:31 - "And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

1 Corinthians 15:52 - "....in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed."

1 Thessalonians 4:16 - "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first."

What I want to do in this teaching is give you *my* understanding of these "*days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel,*" and the events of the *Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, the *resurrection of believers*, and what has come to be known as the *rapture of the Church*. I'm focusing on these three key events because I believe they are the key events of the "*days of the trumpet*"

call to be sounded by the seventh angel,” though they are not all dealt with in detail by John in Revelation chapter ten.

I believe the trick of a good working eschatology isn't simply to have an idea about what you would like a certain verse to say. Rather, the important thing is to make sure your interpretation of any *one* portion of Scripture fits in properly with the *other* texts on the same subject. That's what we're quickly going to try to do today.

1) JOHN'S SEVENTH TRUMPET AND THE PROPHETIC TEACHING OF JESUS AND PAUL

Matthew 24:1-3 - “Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. [2] But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” [3] As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?”

Jesus' disciples actually ask at least *two* questions, rather than just *one*. Jesus has just told them that their temple was going to be completely destroyed (24:3). So the *first* question they ask Jesus is when will *these things* happen? When will all that we're looking at right now be destroyed? *Then* they ask Jesus about His *coming* and *the end of the age* (24:3).

Now, because the disciples were still frequently confused about the *kind* of Messianic kingdom Jesus was going to usher in - because they still thought the Messiah would come and deliver Israel from her political and military enemies right away, and right here on this earth, they probably thought that these two events (the destruction of the temple and the retaliatory might of the conquering Messiah) were merely different phases of the same event. They thought these things would surely happen at the same time, or in very close, logical succession.

That's the mistake Jesus now labors to clear from their minds: **Matthew 24:4-6** - “And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. [5] For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. [6] And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, *but the end is not yet.*”

“The end is not yet.” Those are very important words. The end is not going to come as quickly as they think. It has been the case of church history that every time there is trouble on earth - war (especially in the middle east), huge earth-quakes, or intense persecution - people automatically jump on the Bible prophecy band wagon. Do you remember the *gulf war*? Or can you go back to remember the Middle east in 1967? Have you seen Grant Jeffery and Jack Van Impe on television lately? Do you remember the turning of the millennium? Have you read all of Tim LaHaye's novels?

I'm not saying all of those things are bad in themselves. Certainly we are told in the Scriptures we are to know the times and the seasons in which we live. But there is always this caution from Jesus about *sensationalizing* Bible prophecy. Don't see the end of the world in every disturbing new headline.

Matthew 24:7-15 - “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. [8] All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. [9] “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. [10] And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. [11] And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. [12] And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. [13] But the one who endures to the end will be saved. [14] And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. [15] “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)....”

We can't get into all those words today, but we're going to study that event when we get to **Revelation chapter 13**. Let's continue in Matthew 24:

Matthew 24:16-21 - “....then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. [17] Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, [18] and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. [19] And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! [20] Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. [21] *For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.*”

Look at **verse 21**. This is a very significant verse - **“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.”** This is a firm clue as to the interpretation of the passage. We know this *isn't* describing the persecution of Israel and the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. because Jesus is describing tribulation greater than anything that ever *has* happened and anything that ever *will* on the whole earth. And He also says that if those days weren't *shortened* no flesh on earth would be saved: **Matthew 24:22** - **“And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”**

Let's continue....

Matthew 24:22-27 - **“And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. [23] Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. [24] For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. [25] See, I have told you beforehand. [26] So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. [27] For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”**

Here Jesus tells us that His Coming will be *visible, dramatic and self-announcing*. No one will be wondering whether or not Jesus has actually returned. The whole world will have its attention riveted on Him as He comes to reign and judge. Then Jesus tells us, as clearly as He ever does, *when* this great event will take place: **Matthew 24:28-29** - **“Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. [29] Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”**

Remember, I said it is always important to *fit the prophetic passages of the Bible together*. Just take a minute and shift your mind back to what we've been studying in the book of Revelation. Remember the most important point we've been making. Each of the three series of sevens *leads right up to, and includes, the end of the age and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*.

Jesus said there would be these *cosmic signs* in the moon and the stars just before He came back to earth. Now, look at the very same kinds of signs mentioned as the period of the seven seals comes to a close:

Revelation 6:12-17 - **“When he opened the sixth seal, (remember, the seventh seal actually initiates and contains the seven trumpets, so the sixth seal is really the *last* seal to be opened in and of itself), I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, [13] and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. [14] The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. [15] Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, [16] calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, [17] for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"**

So both Jesus and John see these *great cosmic events* announcing the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Back to Jesus' words in Matthew 24:

Matthew 24:30-31 - **“Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. [31] And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”**

Now, these verses bring us right up to the verses in Revelation chapter ten we are studying today. Both Jesus and John (and, as we'll see next week, the Apostle Paul as well) speak of this sounding of a *great trumpet* just as Jesus comes again. John's gigantic angel in Revelation chapter ten says he's going to reveal the events that accompany the *“days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel”* (10:7). Those are the events Jesus has just been describing in **Matthew chapter 24**.

And here's the key point of tonight's study: If you take the words of John and Jesus and *put them properly together* it

becomes unmistakably clear that the only coming of Jesus, and the only gathering of the saints either one of them describes, takes place ***immediately after the tribulation of those days.***

The terrible events of the outpouring of the seven bowls of God's wrath (which we still have to study in future weeks) are going to be poured out ***very quickly*** - almost ***as*** Jesus comes again to judge the world. That's why John's angel says these things will take place ***"in the days"*** of that last trumpet. The last trumpet initiates a ***series*** of rapidly unfolding events. It initiates the outpouring of the seven bowls of God's wrath. Christians will, in one way or another, be either ***removed*** or ***spared and protected*** from those events of God's frightening wrath on those who side with the beast and the antichrist in the seven bowls.

I think, as we look next week at the eschatology of the Apostle Paul in **1 Thessalonians chapter 4** and **2 Thessalonians chapter 2** that he says the very same thing as Jesus and John.