

Revelation 8 to 11 and the Seven Trumpets

[Rev 8-11 - Trumpets from the early 90s \[This is the Word Document\]](#)

An Exposition of the Seven Trumpets

by Eugene Prewitt

Introduction

As a young Bible Student, I was fascinated by the discoveries I made while investigating the prophecies of Revelation. Chapters four through eleven especially gripped me. The scenes described were no doubt relevant to the end of the world. Here I read about an army of 200,000,000 soldiers; I discovered the horsemen of the apocalypse—five of them in the first four seals, and a host of others in chapter nine. I noticed with enthusiasm that our prophet, Ellen White, pinpointed the time of Revelation 8, verses 2–5 as the close of human probation. Her statements about the prophecy of Matthew 24 (see DA 628) gave me license to reapply and partially apply prophecy at will. By and by I began to jot down my conclusions.

The historical interpretation of the seals and trumpets appeared about as sound as a rowboat on the wild sea. I noticed that *The Great Controversy* referred to Litch's thoughts as a "prediction"—not a prophecy (see GC 334–5). As I perused works prepared by such notables as Haskel and Smith, I felt righteously disgusted by the apparent use of an agnostic's writings (those of Gibbon) as an inspired commentary on the trumpets. My quick mind constructed an imaginary visit to the study of Josiah Litch. I saw him pouring through history books, vainly looking for events to fit prophecies that described the future. And I saw God smiling on his efforts enough to help him find scattered events that could be stretched into fulfillments. I imagined Providence causing Josiah's one concrete prediction to come true in order to establish faith in the day-for-a-year principle.

And I was wrong. Very, very wrong. I mistakenly attributed Litch's findings to poor scriptural knowledge and study. The following is another commentary. Its general conclusions are much the same as those reached by our pioneers. Its difference lies in its attempt to show that the Bible is its own expositor and to supply the Bible knowledge that would make the commentaries of our pioneers credible to those inclined to scoff.

While that scriptural acumen was general in the church of the 1840's, historical quotes supporting the Biblical account were in demand by those who couldn't afford their own library. The pioneers wrote to supply the need. But as our grasp of present truth waned, texts that were once plain became mysterious to our people. This work is intended to fortify the pioneers' labors by giving to

modern Adventists what early Adventists use to have—a solid scriptural footing in prophetic interpretation.

Eugene Prewitt

March 4, 1995

For references to historical facts, see *The Seer of Patmos*, by Steven Haskel; *The Seven Trumpets*, by Josiah Litch; and *Revelation*, by Uriah Smith. References not available in those sources are quoted in the text. Revelation chapter eight begins with the opening of the seventh seal, a type of the Second Coming that follows immediately on the heels of the events of the sixth seal.

Finally, the book sealed in the fifth chapter of Revelation will open. On that day those that murdered our Saviour will see Him (Rev. 1:7) and “in all its vindictiveness [the decision to crucify Jesus] will appear before them.” COL 294. That book contains the record of sin, woe, mourning, and the prophetic history of the world. It was “the roll of the history of God’s providences, the prophetic history of nations and the church. Herein was contained the divine utterances, His authority, His commandments, His laws, the whole symbolic counsel of the Eternal, and the history of all ruling powers in the nations. In symbolic language was contained in that roll the influence of every nation, tongue, and people from the beginning of earth’s history to its close.” 20MR 197 (see Ez. 2:9–10, Rev. 5:1).

At the Second Coming, the ban on prophetic time imposed in 1844 is lifted (see notes on Rev. 10). God Himself proclaims a message of time—the hour of His coming (GC 641). The Thousand Years are ushered in by a seven-day trip to heaven. That is “about the space of half an hour” of prophetic time, where a day is counted for a year (See Ez. 4:6). Like the messages to the seven churches, the prophecy of the seven seals reaches to the end of time.

8:2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

“And I saw” The common expression of John denoting a new line of prophecy. See the beginnings of chapters 14,15,18,20, and 21 for a few other examples.

8:3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer [it] with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

“Another angel”, Jesus (cf. EW 279–281), and not one of the first seven. He was “given” much incense. This signifies the opening of Christ’s ministration—the beginning of his work in the temple in AD 31. He here ministers for “all” saints—the symbol illustrating the entirety of Christ’s intercession, from His ascension to His coming. This work is done “before the throne”, in the presence of the Father. The “counsel of peace” is between them both (Zech. 6:13).

The Godhead here covenants to preserve the saints and to answer their prayers while the guilty inhabitants of the earth suffer the effects of Divine justice. Revelation presents Jesus, not only as the Lamb, but also as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. It is a “revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who shall render. . .tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil,” and “glory, honour, and peace” to the righteous, see Rom. 2:3–9.

8:4 And the smoke of the incense, [which came] with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

The thought deserves more than passing notice. Our prayers, unmingled with the everlasting righteousness that was brought in at the cross (cf. Dan. 9:24) would not ascend at all. The incense is represented, not as coming from the censor, but from the hand of the Angel, for there, where nails pierced the Messiah, is the hiding of His power (Hab. 3:4). The blood of the covenant poured from those wounds, and the Messenger of the Covenant ever retains them as marks of His humiliation.

The Hebrew word translated “Messenger” (Mal. 3:1) is Malauk——translated “angel” 164 times. The Greek word in Revelation 8 translated “angel” literally means messenger. Like the Cherubim and Seraphim, Jesus, justly an “equal with God” (Phil. 2:6) is not ashamed to minister in our behalf or to call us brethren. In those capacities, He has taken the form of an angel. That humiliation, so far from demeaning the Deity, glorifies our God by revealing another aspect of His beautiful character.

8:5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast [it] into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

Doubtless this represents the close of probation, when our High Priest has finished His work as intercessor. These wonderful events (lightnings, voices, etc.) naturally follow. One should note that these events takes place during the sounding of the seventh trumpet, as well as the seventh plague (Rev. 11:19; 16:18). Thus, the alert student would find that Revelation 8:5 is fulfilled, not as a precursor to the trumpets, but as part of their grand finale.

The figure above demonstrates the relation between Revelation 8:2–6 and 8:7–11:19. Both periods cover the same ground, excepting that the first period begins while the seven trumpets are preparing to sound—that is, before the first judgment began. Christ's ministration ends during the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

PARENTHETICAL PROPHECIES

The interruption between verses two and six is in harmony with the general policy of Revelation. Spiritual works done in heaven or by heavenly agencies are revealed as parenthetical prophecies. These are incorporated into larger pictures of contemporary events, and often seem to interrupt the flow of that scene. Examples in prophecy include chapters seven and ten of Revelation, which

interrupt the seals and the trumpets respectively.

For our benefit, the invisible or intangible scenes, such as Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, are inserted in such a way that we can find the time of their fulfillment. The first step is to find the fulfillment of the prophecy that surrounds the parenthetical revelation. The second step is to look for clues in the position of the parenthesis.

Accordingly, we look for Revelation seven to be contemporary with the sixth seal, Revelation ten to be contemporary with the sixth or seventh trumpet, and this prophecy to parallel the entire period of the trumpets. Rather than being included before or after one of them, it is introduced after all seven (8:2) and concluded before all seven (8:6); its conclusion is that of the seventh, and its beginning precedes the first in as much as Christ was interceding for the first saints before the book of Revelation was written.

8:6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

We are brought back to our subject—the trumpets and the judgments associated with them. The second Commandment, removed from Catholic scriptures, forbade the introduction of idols into Christian worship. But the attempt to change the law changed neither of the principles found in it. God described himself as “visiting the iniquity of fathers upon the children. . . .and showing mercy unto thousands that love me and keep my commandments.” The mercy is illustrated above; the wrath incurred by the abomination is related below.

HOW TO FIND THE TIME

This is the first step in all prophetic interpretation. We know that the first trumpet did not fall before the time of John, for the Revelation declared that it was a revelation of things that must shortly come to pass, not that had already taken place. Revelation 10:6 tells us that the completion of the mystery of God takes place during the seventh trumpet, but apparently after it begins.

The mystery of God, in short, is the gospel of Divinity dwelling in sinful flesh. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit without measure during the time of the Latter Rain marks the consummation of that process for the 144,000 that have received the character of Christ in full. On the basis of these two hints, we look for the first six trumpets between the time of John and the close of probation.

The plagues mentioned in the seven trumpets are strangely reminiscent of those brought on Egypt (Ex. 7–12). Egypt, once favorable to the Church of God, never surrendered its paganism and thus became the instrument of persecution. When we look for a nation between the time of John and the close of probation that has drawn the Divine displeasure in a similar manner, we look no further than Rome.

And in looking for a time for its punishment, we need only look at how its demise has been

described in previous prophecies. Both Daniel two and seven predicted the disintegration of Rome into ten kingdoms, and the last verse of Daniel nine predicted that a predetermined judgment was to be poured out upon the power that would destroy Jerusalem.

Every succeeding prophecy of Daniel devoted more time to that mystery of iniquity. As the revelation of Satan's form of government, it had to be unmasked before the second coming (2 Thes. 2), and we could not expect Revelation to overlook its demise. Immediately after describing the triumphs and trials of the church of God, the fall of that empire is taken up.

The fall of Rome took place during the fourth and fifth centuries.

The previous points would be sufficient to launch us into our study. But to the student that retains confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy, we have another hint at the time. The fifth and sixth trumpets both contain time prophecies, and by that criterion alone must fall before 1844.

Without a chronological guide, prophetic interpreters could not even reasonably hope to escape the dangers of speculation in their expositions. The principles already given cause us to look to the fall and division of Rome for the fulfillment of the first trumpet. The Encyclopedia Britannica gives that fall three initial stages, and we are inclined to concur with that assessment.

"The Barbarian invasions were among the most momentous phenomena of the later empire. . . . The European provinces of the Roman Empire were subjected not only to innumerable small raids and plundering forays by land and sea, but also to three major waves of attack by the Germanic peoples of the North. The first of these major assaults came in 376 when the Visigoths, fleeing before the Huns, were permitted to cross the lower Danube. . . . The second great intrusion of barbarians began on Dec. 31, 406 when the Vandals, the Suebi, and the non-Germanic Alani crossed the middle Rhine, . . . The last of the major barbarian invasions followed on the collapse of the empire of Attila and his sons in 455." Vol. 19, pg. 542, article "Roman History", 1966. The primary events in each of these three waves of attack on Rome are outlined in the first three trumpets.

In the visions of the seven churches and the seven seals, the history of the Christian church was brought to the attention of all that had ears to listen. It is presented as a series of causes and effects. During the experience of the church of Pergamos, the history of the church became the history of the state as the two began forming bonds that would last for over a millennium.

"Antipas," the "faithful martyr" (Rev. 2:13), typified those that were protesting the papal usurpations. The word is a conjunction of the Greek words "against" and "fathers". The church fathers that they were against were those who had just taken the title "pa", as the supposed universal father. This spiritual fornication, despised not only by Antipas, but by God Himself, called forth the seven trumpets.

8:7 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.

Hail, frozen water that exercises destructive force, is a fit representative of those first responsible for fracturing the empire into tribes. Water, in general, represents people and the position or properties of the water points to the location of the people, (see “where the whore sitteth,” Rev. 17:15). The Visigoths, under Alaric, descended from the far north—their origin typified by the frozen state of the water, and their movement by its designation as “hail”—and cruelly burned the cities and slaughtered the inhabitants of Roman civilization. Thus, in the Roman mind, fire and blood were inseparably connected with the memory of those cold-hearted men.

Constantine divided his empire into three kingdoms, giving each to one of his three sons. The term “one third” is used throughout the prophecy in reference to this division. In cases where a catastrophe was received primarily by one of the sections rather than the whole, the fact is represented as a plague on one third of the ships, trees, stars, etc.

Alaric’s conquest fell on the “earth” as a unit. He killed the emperor of the East (Valens), sacked the capital of the middle empire (Rome), and settled in the West (Gaul) where he continued to make himself a professional pest.

The western division was ruled in generations following by the emperor in Rome, causing the central and western empires to be generally thought of as one. But, to avoid confusion and in harmony with the principle that designated the division of Greece into four parts despite their rapid consolidation, the prophecy maintains the fraction throughout chapters eight and nine.

Grass, representing men as very mortal (cf. Is. 37:27; 40:6–7; 1 Pt. 1:24), was destroyed in all three of the provinces, typified in the prophecy as “all the grass”. Jesus refereed to Israel as in a “green” tree while He was with them, and predicted the change that would come in the nation after His departure (Lk. 23:31; DA 794; AA 25). Trees, representing the more significant members of society, specifically rulers and teachers (See Dan. 4 for another example) are pictured as destroyed in only one third of the earth—that is, in Western Rome, where Aleric finally settled the Visigoths as an independent entity.

In Ez. 17:22-24 the children of Abraham are compared to a large green Cedar. The prophecy indicates that a tender twig would be cut from the Cedar and planted on a high mountain. Though drying quickly in the transplanting process, it would revive and grow to great heights while the cedar would perish.

Jesus, from a “root of David” and as a “branch out of dry ground”, would be set a light “on a hill-top” and would grow into a nation of kings and priests. The Christian body would flourish while the Jewish body withered.

In Ez. 20:47 and 21:3–4, trees are used to designate professed Christians, and the terms “green”

and “dry” are used to differentiate between the righteous and the wicked. Jesus used this same comparison in Matthew seven. This distinction in the color of the foliage becomes more important in the fifth trumpet.

8:8 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;

Referring to Babylon, God had said in the Old Testament—“Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth: And I will stretch out my hand upon thee. . .and will make thee a burnt mountain.” Jer. 51:25–26. While looking for the second judgment on the Babylonian system that had recently made a mock conversion to Christianity, we also look for a catastrophe affecting, not the land of one third of the empire, but its sea.

See comments on verse nine for evidence that this sea is literally a body of water as opposed to a group of people. The next consequential series of battles waged against Rome did indeed come via the Mediterranean, generalled by Genseric. He seemed to sense his calling, and would tell his pilots to let the elements direct the ship to that coast against which God was angry. The Vandals under his direction separated yet another territory, Northern Africa, from the once mammoth empire. In the year 455, like Aleric in 410, Genseric sacked Rome itself. On this occasion the pillaging lasted fourteen days.

8:9 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.

The fact that there are creatures and ships in this sea alerts us the fact that it is literally water. Water turning to blood is mentioned twice elsewhere in the Bible, but symbolically in neither case (Ex. 7 and Rev. 16). Here “the sea” is used to typify that portion of the world’s oceans and seas that was claimed by the Roman power.

While most high-school history students have heard of the destruction of the Spanish Armada, a loss of about 51 ships in the 16th century, remarkably few have heard of Genseric. In one day his men destroyed over three hundred ships, the preparation of which had taken Western Rome three years.

Fearing his growing power, the empire united in secretly putting together another fleet of 1,113 ships prepared for battle. But by a cunning and daring move, Genseric ignited the entire fleet while they waited for his surrender, and sent thousands to their graves. The cost of the last fleet had been recorded at the time as 130,000 pounds of gold. The loss was equal to the entire navy, men and ships, of one of the three Roman divisions.

The word “creatures” literally means “created.” It is used of people, in James 1:18. The word denotes those who owed their existence to God and highlights the wickedness of their defiance of

the fourth commandment.

8:10 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;

Satan has been represented as a falling star, but his fall preceded the incident described here. The star falling, is a fit emblem of a pompous career ending in quick defeat. The first two trumpets gave an indication of the geographic sphere where we ought to look for their accomplishment. The work of the third judgment on Rome fell along the base of that stretch of mountains that, for much of Europe, indeed are the fountains of waters.

From the foot of the Alps most of the great rivers of the continent trace their head. This trumpet opens with the extinguishing of the star. Soon after Genseric initiated his conquest (406), Attila was stayed in his course by his first defeat (451) in a lifetime of conquering. See notes on verse 11 for more on Attila as the star spoken of here.

8:11 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.

Another allusion is made here to God's Old Testament predictions— "And the Lord saith, because they have forsaken my law, which I have set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Balaam, which their fathers taught them. Therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink." Jer. 9:13–15.

Just as Rome's custom of honoring Sunday was gaining near universal honor, God sent a "minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Rom. 13:4. Those in positions of civil trust are indeed "ministers of God", albeit for wrath rather than salvation, and are justly denoted as "stars" (cf. Rev. 1:20; Hebrews 1:14). Like Necho, (cf. 2 Chron. 35:20–22), Attila knew why he was ravaging the Roman populace. The "scourge of God" was a name he appropriated to himself, and inserted among his royal titles.

Not only the Huns, over which he was the king, but the Lombards, Heruli, Vandals, Suive, Bergundians, and Franks were moved out of their native lands by His will, and placed where they would make incessant gouges in the Roman territory. Each of those tribes eventually settled in Southern Europe after clearing their way by bloodshed.

Like the rivers from the Alps that carry the properties of the spring from which they issue, these tribes left a bitterness wherever their marauding bands embarked reminiscent of him (Attila) who was the fountain of their pillaging. Attila boasted that the grass never grew on the place where his horse trod. As might be expected of a falling star, Attila's reign was short. But his death, so far from bringing an end to the raids, is regarded even by secular authors as the beginning of the third

wave of Barbarian invasions.

8:12 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.

The Republican government of Rome resembled, in several ways, the patriarchal government at the time of Isaac. A short review of that earlier period will throw light on the symbols of the fourth trumpet.

As the patriarch, Isaac was supreme ruler in his clan—an infant nation inherited from Abraham. As queen of the tribe, his wife was far from powerless. Each of the twelve sons was destined to head their own tribe, and each commanded their own servants and children. In a vision, Joseph saw the family government represented as the sun, moon, and stars. His brothers and his father understood the dream, and the implication that family government would bow to Joseph filled them with deadly indignation (Gen. 37:9–10).

Like the patriarchal government, the Roman hierarchy could be described by the luminous bodies of the day and night. In Rome, the emperor was the supreme Authority. During the noontime of the empire, the position of Caesar was filled by a powerful man. As the nation began to wane into its night, the political influence of the moon and stars came to light.

The Roman consuls were next only to the Roman emperors in their authority. And the members of the senate were signified by stars. The darkening of these bodies represented the end of their political power.

The Western empire again received the scourge as the forces of Odoacer made an end of Romulus' career (476). After dethroning Romulus, the last emperor in the West, Odoacer made himself the first barbarian ruler in Italy. A few years later, western Rome lost even the dim independence of a ruling senate and consul, and made itself a willing vassal of Byzantium, the capital of the East.

Not for the entirety of the dark ages, but for a “third of the night”, the consulship was subdued. Little less than a century later a new consul (Clovis) of the west was named by Anastasius, emperor of the East. Having been converted earlier to Catholicism, he became her puppet, and prosecuted her wars.

8:13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

The papacy dared to restart the Holy Roman Empire in the west. And it brought upon that same

empire, by its blatant apostasy, the very worst judgments that Rome had ever received. The causes of the first four tragedies are found in the history of the church of Pergamos. We will examine those causes before perusing the study of the woes.

Pergamos represented the church at a time when false teachers, like Balaam two millennia earlier, were uniting their interests with heads of state, typified by Balaac in Revelation two. These leaders taught the members to join them in this spiritual fornication. It was the use of the civil power, rather than gospel power, to accomplish the goals of the church, that was labeled national adultery in the Old Testament (see Ez. 16 for several examples).

The Christians of the fourth and fifth century were also taught to “eat things sacrificed unto idols”—to incorporate the customs, altars, ceremonies, and statues of their pagan ancestors into their “Christian” worship. The guilt Rome had accumulated in its purely pagan days combined with that of its later hypocrisy to fill its cup of iniquity to the brim. The first four trumpets were political judgments on a corrupt political system.

But the woes were reserved for Thyatira. There, the same doctrines were taught (Rev. 2:14,20), but no longer from fringe teachers. Jezebel represented the church that had been fully united with the state and that took it into her own hands to destroy the true teachers in Israel. Jeremiah, foretelling some of the curses that were to fall on Babylon, gave this as the ultimate cause—they were idolaters. See notes on 9:20. The papal system, as it progressed from a corrupt goal in Pergamos to an abominable reality in Thyatira (began 538), turned the trumpets into woes.

9:1 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.

Again, as in 8:11, a political head is represented as a star, or minister of wrath. The term “bottomless pit” is derived from a Greek word widely used in the Greek Scriptures to denote waste and barrenness. During the millennium, it signifies the earth in its state of chaos. At creation, it referred to the disorganized surface of the earth, and is translated “deep” in the King James.

During the early middle ages, there was a vast area of waste that had made little political impact on Europe or the East. The deserts of Africa and Arabia, while they had seen their share of war, had never produced conquering armies. That is, until Mohammed. And, like the fallen Attila before him, his impact on world history had only begun when he gave up the ghost. To recognize he had the “key” is a simple matter of observation. That wasteland is still controlled by that religion that he formed.

How the key was given to him is also a matter of interest. His political agenda would have ended with a bloody slaughter of himself and his troops if it had been met with the skilled and well equipped soldiers of either the Roman Empire to his north or the Persian empire to his east. But Heraclius of Rome and Khosrua of Persia decimated each others’ resources, leaving Khosrua with

nothing and Heraclius with everything—saving the power to keep what he had just conquered. The swarms of Muslims soon overran and subjugated the provinces that had been under dispute.

9:2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

Just ask, “Where in the world has the light of Christianity met with the most determined resistance?” Those nations accepting the one God “Allah” have made little room for His gospel. And although the whole world will soon shine with the glory of the Lord, until this time a dense cloud has rested on the Islamic nations.

Perhaps the “sun” here, used in connection with the “air” rather than the “moon and stars” refers to the true Lord of Lords, the Sun of Righteousness. The religious character of the woes expands the horizon of the prophecy to show how Satan’s synagogue has, by both action and reaction, injured the kingdom of heaven. It was their idolatry that especially inflamed the fanaticism of the Saracen, building up a wall of prejudice which decades of Protestant evangelism have not succeeded in demolishing.

9:3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

The characteristics of the Saracen bands are reflected well in the swarms of Locusts that plague that portion of the world. Showing up suddenly in mass, they destroy all vegetation on that ill-fated field where they next rest. But the Locusts do not generally hurt men. Here the parallel breaks down and John assures us that those represented here, in some ways, are more like scorpions. The fierce pride of the Arabians held dishonour as worse than death. Their passion for revenge is ably illustrated by the scorpion’s striking at its foe.

9:4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

Who issued the command is not revealed, but we know the One who gave the sea its boundaries and who has the heart of kings in His hand. The angel of destruction was not to pass over the threshold of the one having God’s seal. The promise of Ps. 91 was fulfilled for the scattered remnant—“A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.”

The seal of God is a “sign of the righteousness” that is imputed to the true believer. Circumcision lost all significance as the sign when the body of those holding to it rejected the cardinal truth of the Kingdom—that Christ was the Messiah. Circumcision had been chosen to distinguish the depositories of truth from the rest of the world (Rom. 3:1). To obey was to admit the sovereignty of God.

Reason alone could not enforce the sign. To obey was to make a sacrifice—the seal could not be had by a mere intellectual assent to truth. When the Jews maintained the rite despite their national apostasy, another seal had to be appointed. One command of God stands out from rest as resting on faith in God's word. Naturalistic morality alone would not lead men to keep it.

For centuries the seventh-day Sabbath signaled ecclesiastical independence from Rome, and even in the present its keepers alone demonstrate the Protestant ideals of Bible supremacy and Righteousness by Faith. While the papacy was thinking to change times and laws (Dan. 7:25), this Edenic institution remained the sign of allegiance to the government of heaven (Ez. 20:12, 20). As given in the fourth commandment, it settles the issue of God's sovereignty on the basis of His creation and, like all good seals, verifies his Name, Title, and the extent of his Kingdom (cf. Ex. 20:8–11).[\[1\]](#)

Ethiopia contained a Sabbath keeping Christian community that has remained extant even to modern times. The Waldenses were still Sabbath Keepers while the Saracens made their ravages on Spain, Constantinople, and Alexandria. But neither of these primitive Christian bodies felt the thrills of terror that befell the bands of European crusaders.

While the first plagues on Egypt were felt universally, the later plagues made a distinction between those that served God and those that did not. A similar difference is found between the first and fifth trumpets. We find no record of Alaric respecting the more pure Christianity that still survived to a large extent in that Western empire where he settled.

History does reveal how the comparatively apostolic Celtic church (Sabbath Keepers in Britain and Northern Gaul) suffered under the hand of barbarian forces (see Truth Triumphant, B.J. Wilkinson, ch. 7, 8, 11 and 12). For the significance of the “green trees”, see notes on 8:7.

9:5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment [was] as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

They could not “Kill them.” That is, collectively, not individually. The Muslims extracted large numbers of casualties from the Roman legions, but during the allotted time they could neither bring an end to the Roman independence nor obliterate Roman defense.

There are two types of scorpions, those that emit poison similar to that of the wasp, and those that emit neurotoxins. The first class can not kill a man, and is apparently referred to. The damage done by the scorpion is entirely the work of its tail. See notes on 9:15 for the “five months” and notes on 9:19 for more on the tail of the scorpion.

9:6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

Strange the battles of the crusades where Pope and Sultan alike proclaimed everlasting life as the reward of dying in the holy war. Valor, not cowardice, was rewarded with promises of heaven. The verse may not imply attempted suicide, but, on the contrary, a carnal and groundless security in the face of a probable demise.

9:7 And the shapes of the locusts [were] like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads [were] as it were crowns like gold, and their faces [were] as the faces of men.

9:8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as [the teeth] of lions.

9:9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings [was] as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

A general description of the warriors will suffice. They were mounted on Arabian steeds and wore their peculiarly decorated turbans (like gold, not “of gold”). They grew their hair long, but had nothing like a feminine bearing. Their approach was marked by the sound of their running horses. In the days of Mohammed, the breastplate was used by his mounted warriors.

9:10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power [was] to hurt men five months.

The repetition of the time period belays its importance to God's purposes. The principle of a day representing a year had received much support among prophetic scholars, but had drawn strong criticism from deists, infidels, and agnostics. The fulfillment of this prophecy silenced many opponents. See notes on 9:15.

9:11 And they had a king over them, [which is] the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue [is] Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath [his] name Apollyon.

As often in prophecy, the name denotes the character rather than the title. Abaddon and Apollyon both mean “destruction”. The angel is the king, a conformation of our previous interpretation of the word. The successive Sultans are characterized by their reckless disregard for the life and culture of those they set out to conquer. The empire eventually formed of the Mohammedian host is mentioned here in direct correlation with the period of the five months of the previous verse. See notes on 9:15.

9:12 One woe is past; [and], behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

The contrast of this verse with that separating the second and third woes gives a hint at either immediate succession or substantial separation between the first and the second. On the basis of history and the contrast between verses 5 and 15, we accept the former view.

9:13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

The change in events marked on earth was not the result of generalship or politicking. It was ordered from heaven. The horns of the altar represent the books of record that have the ultimate power in this world—to decide a man's destiny. There human history is recorded (cf. Job 19:23–25, Jer. 17:1) and there the blood of Christ is applied (Lev. 4:18,25,30). As divine judgments, the trumpets are also guided by the horns.

9:14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

These ministers of wrath have been bound some time in the past, and that knowledge is presumed in the verse. It was the locusts of the fifth trumpet that were forbidden to destroy the Roman empire whilst engaged in its torment. Here they are freed.

The city of Babylon was located directly over the Euphrates, and would never have been defeated as long as that river had given the needed support. Now the Euphrates, representing that great body of people supporting the Holy Roman Empire (cf. Rev. 17:15) is no longer enabled to hold the Turkish power in check.

The four sultanies that bordered the actual river Euphrates (Baghdad, Damascus, Aleppo, and Iconium) gave their force to the accomplishing of the Sultan's desire—the capture of Constantinople—the remaining capital of Rome.

9:15 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.

Feudalism and its relation to Prophecy

The time periods introduced in the fifth trumpet can not be dwelt upon effectively until an understanding of medieval government has been presented. During the middle ages, feudal agreements and the relationships between lords and vassals dominated European politics. The system was one of strict hierarchy, and a brief study of it would enlighten the passages under study.

The lowest rung on the ladder was the peasant. He was allowed to use the land of his knighted lord in return for a portion of his produce. In more recent ages this was known as sharecropping. The knights themselves were vassals to their respective lords, the barons, and received common protection and the right to use the barons' lands in return for providing a share of the necessary arms and men in time of war.

The nobles and barons were generally lords to many and vassals to few. A lord ruling a large territory and a number of barons could be known as a king. But even kings were often vassals of other kings or emperors. The vassal/lord relationship was entered into as an agreement. The

vassal, once bound by his word, could not be considered independent and was a common criminal if he broke his vassal agreement. To put yourself under the authority or protection of another was to become, not his friend, but his servant.

The Time Periods

In the fifth trumpet, the Saracens are described as tormenting Eastern Rome for five months under a king, yet without bringing the nation into subjection. While Islam had made relentless combat since the time of Mohammed, the various tribes were not united under a single “king” until the time of Othman (Osman). He wielded them into the Ottoman empire. His first battle against Eastern Rome, the beginning of the torment, was made on July 27, 1299. One hundred and fifty years later (five prophetic months), in 1449, the Emperor of the East made himself, by the standards of his day, a vassal of the Sultan, his arch-enemy, by requesting his permission to ascend the throne.

The permission, crushing Roman independence by making the “Christian” emperor a vassal to a heathen, was granted. A new Sultan came to power two years later and actually made himself the master of Constantinople, making the old Roman capital into the Ottoman capital. This condition of Ottoman supremacy over Christian Europe was to last for the duration of the second time period of 391 years and fifteen days. The end of the first period marked the opening of the second. Combining the two into one makes a prophecy extending 541 years and fifteen days from the first attack by Othman.

Taking July 27, 1299 as the beginning, the period reaches to Aug. 11, 1840. On that day, by two distinct incidents, the Sultan lost that independence that he had taken from “Christian” Europe in the same way that he had procured it from them—by making himself a virtual vassal of the European nations.

On that day Mohammed Ali, the pasha of Egypt and the Sultan’s rebellious vassal, received a communication delivered by the Sultan himself. That document placed the European powers over the Sultan as his protectors against the aggressions of the pasha. That took place in Alexandria. Meanwhile, on the same day in Constantinople, the weak and fearful Sultan himself accepted a message from the European powers. They had leagued for his protection, but he was to remain a political outsider on the plans to save his kingdom. His acceptance of those terms ended the glory of Ottoman independence.

Both communications effectively put the reigns of Turkish power and authority into the hands of those European powers. Either of these would have sufficed to fulfill the prophecy, and from that time the Ottoman empire “reigned” (as a European of the dark ages would consider) by mere sufferance on the part of “Christian” nations.

This prophecy served the advent movement an invaluable service. Josiah Litch and William Miller, after careful study and prayerful consideration, came generally to the conclusions presented in the

study thus far, but varying in several particulars. In 1838 William Miller had already been preaching for half a decade about the second coming, and his expectation that it would arrive by March, 1843. Brother Litch, during that year (1838) printed an exposition of the seven trumpets that predicted the fall of the Ottoman Empire as an independent Islamic state in the fall of 1840.

The infidels were elated. Confidently expecting the date to pass without significant event, they waited for the opportunity to lay the entire advent movement in the dust. The friends of Litch, even those convinced that he was right, were not inclined to make their beliefs known, harboring the fear of “what if.” But Litch was bold nonetheless.

What occurred next is an event unparalleled in modern history. An example of what most thought they could expect from Litch appears in the history of the Watchtower. Their relation to a time prophecy shifted as the date for its fulfillment neared. The date in parenthesis is that of the statement’s publication. (1892)—“The date of the close of that battle is definitely marked in scripture as October, 1914.” (1894)— There is no reason for changing the figures; they are God’s dates not ours; 1914 is not the date for the beginning, but for the end. (1905) A chart is made pointing to 1914 as the beginning of the millennial age. (1914) “Armageddon may begin next spring, yet it is purely speculation to attempt to say just when.” (Nov. 1914)— “We did not say positively that this would be the year.”

These statements are given for the purpose of comparison. The human heart that has knowingly stretched truth, or that has built a conclusion upon an unstable foundation will not shrink from defending that assertion. But when history threatens to say with certainty whether the assertion was true, that pride of opinion gives way to common sense, and the assertion is stated with increasing uncertainty.

When the date passes, the assertion is abandoned, and the man moves on looking for some other issue to catch his interest. But not so with Litch. In 1838 he pointed to 1840. Then he narrowed his prediction to the fall of that year. But just weeks before the time specified he made a change again. Did he prolong the time? Did he abandon his teaching? No! No, he pinpointed the date of the expected event as August 11.

When August 11 came, the infidels made their yell of victory. News was slow, and for several days the fate of the advent movement was in doubt. Litch’s reputation, at the least, hung in the balance. But then, two weeks later, the news arrived— “At the very time specified, Turkey, through her ambassadors, had accepted the protection of the allied powers of Europe, and thus placed herself under the control of Christian nations. The event exactly fulfilled the prediction.” *Great Controversy*, pg. 335.

Ellen White referred to it as “another remarkable fulfillment of prophecy.” *Ibid*. When Litch republished his work on the trumpets with notes on how the final prediction had been fulfilled, he added that over one thousand ex-infidels had written to tell him how his willingness to venture

something on his understanding of scripture had led them to investigate the Bible and to renounce their unbelief. The day-for-a-year principle was established as beyond question for as long as the memory of the fulfillment would linger, and many were lead to study the scriptures regarding the Second Advent. Their experience was prophesied in Revelation chapter 10.

9:16 And the number of the army of the horsemen [were] two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

John did not estimate or attempt to count, but heard the number—200,000,000. Here is another striking evidence that the period referred to is not literal time. No nation has ever commanded such an army. In America it would take every able-bodied male born from 1860 to the present to make the ranks. But during the 391 years of the Ottoman empires' final independence, that figure, nearly impossible to verify, is matched by reasonable estimation.

9:17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses [were] as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

While the Turks remained mounted, the invention of gunpowder for ever changed the appearance of their cavalries. Muskets fired from horseback were the most effective modes of self- preservation that they had yet known. Blue (jacinth) smoke and sulfurous vapors issued from their "fire sticks". The breastplate, the emblem of self-preservation, is a fit symbol of that weapon that allowed battles to be waged at a distance.

The muskets served to save their lives. The fact that these colorful "breastplates" were not literally armor appears in the next verse. There the fire, blue smoke, and sulfur "issue" out of the mouths of the horses, apparently at the enemy. To quote a proverb, the best defense is a strong offense.

9:18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

Gunpowder, invented by the Latins, was the means of their own death and defeat. The knowledge of cannonry and musketeering was defected from the Roman forces to the Muslims. The treachery was an act of revenge for the ill-treatment the Romans gave one of their foreign workers, a forger of cannon.

9:19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails [were] like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

Very apparently, these are the same fighting forces represented in the fifth trumpet. See notes on 9:5 and 9:10. Isaiah says "The ancient and honorable, he is the head, and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail," 9:15. The arms of the Arabs were effective, but the sting in their tail,

the false prophets that inspired their fanatical zeal, were no less so.

These teachers became the more necessary as Islam spread further west and violence was replaced by reasoning. The familiar shahada, “There is one God, Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet,” unites Muslims from around the world. Attributing the damage done by the Islamic faith to Mohammed is historical equity and justice.

9:20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

Here the cause of the six preceding devastations, the story of the siege of Constantinople and of Rome thrice sacked, some two thousand ships and multiplied millions of men destroyed, is betrayed. As of old (cf. Amos 4), God sent judgments to awaken the sleeping souls of men to their great need.

The inability of their church-states to save them, the fallacy of the popes’ predictions of supernatural victory in the crusades, the singular vehemence of the barbarian assaults—each of these should have prompted men of note to ponder the rectitude of their course.

But despite sporadic outbreaks of iconoclasts, idolatry prevailed in both the east and the west. The adoration of statues (“things on the earth”) and saints (supposed to be “in the heavens above the earth”) led Rome to strike the second commandment from the Decalogue. When Israel turned to new gods, the idols of the neighboring nations, God affirmed that they were worshipping demons.

And again, when the professed Christians began giving homage to the rotting remains of those whom their spiritual forefathers had only counted as brethren, God reaffirmed the fact.

9:21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Idolatry can not abide alone. Men become like their gods, and the veneration of feeble fallible men brought the inevitable in its train—complete moral degradation in the hierarchy of the church (Rom. 1:22–25). By the time of the fifth trumpet, the papacy held the reigns of Rome. A few centuries later, the saying “All the seven deadly sins have worn the triple crown” became proverbial.

Revelation chapter 10

This chapter and the first portion of chapter 11 (verses 1 to 13) are not part of the trumpet narrative. But as mentioned in the notes on Revelation 8:5, the parenthetical prophecies are inserted where they are for a purpose. This chapter relates scenes largely invisible to the eyes of history. Located between the sixth and seventh trumpet, we expect its fulfillment to be

contemporary with one or both of these.

Revelation 10:6 mentions the Divine oath that there would be “time no longer”, immediately followed by the prediction of a future event under the seventh trumpet. Here is a wealth of information. What kind of time would no longer be? The context itself declares that it is not the end of the world.

One might suppose that probationary time were referred to, but a Biblical understanding of the mystery of God that is yet to be fulfilled under the seventh trumpet would demonstrate that probation yet continues. Some other versions suggest the word “delay” for “time”, but the word used here is translated time in a number of other passages where its correctness could not be disputed.

The translators of other versions, realizing that the time could not be literal or probationary, gave their next best guess. But with such a solemn declaration, we would not expect God to leave us to suppose as to what kind of “time” He referred to in the prophecy. But what times have been referred to the context of the seven trumpets? Why, prophetic times have. Its most detailed fulfillments were found in the fifth and sixth trumpet. But after this solemn oath in Revelation 10:6, messages predicting events on the basis of definite time prophecies were no longer to test the church.

The fulfillment of the various time periods, and the preaching that accompanied that fulfillment, had its purpose. But time setting since the beginning of the Great Antitypical Day of Atonement has failed in every case where time has lasted long enough to prove its error.

The first verses in Revelation 11 conspicuously come before the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and if it were not so, we would be in perplexity, for they also contain time prophecies (cf. v. 3 and v. 9). But inspiration placed these pictures where there would be no excuse for the confusing of the facts—the last time prophecies were fulfilled before the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and the seventh trumpet is sounded before the close of probation. It is not within the scope of this paper to show that this declaration (the end of prophetic time) was made in 1844, but such the diligent Bible student will find on close examination.

11:14 The second woe is past; [and], behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

There was a period, short but ascertainable, between the end of the sixth trumpet and those events described in the first portion of the Revelation 11, and the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

11:15 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 for ever and ever.

Revelation 10:7 highlights the fact that the seventh trumpet is not blown for a few minutes or hours. After it has blown for a period described as days, it is still just in its beginning. The fact that this voice is in heaven is proof enough that it is not spoken at the very moment of the seventh seal, a time when there is silence in heaven (Rev. 8:1) and while the heavenly host accompany Christ on His round trip to earth. That it is not spoken after the trip is assured from verses 17 and 18. This declaration immediately precedes its execution. The feudal kingdoms of this earth, for none of them are actually owned and each lord and king is subject to the Lord and King, need only the declaration of the true Possessor to forfeit the feudal agreement. The stewards have not been faithful, and their responsibility is removed, not by conquest, but by the simple Will of God.

11:16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

Notice that these Holy beings, comfortably seated, did not hesitate to leave their seat and kneel, face to the ground, while in the act of Worshipping. Only Bereans (see Acts 17:10–11) should read the rest of this sentence, but the 24 elders are those that were raised at the special resurrection when our Saviour gave up His life at Golgotha.

11:17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

11:18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

What period is here portrayed? The nations have ceased fighting each other, and are experiencing the wrath of the Lamb in the seven last plagues. The time for the millennial investigative judgment, when we shall judge angels, has arrived, albeit the court is not yet in action. The culmination of that judgment will be execution of its verdicts—the reward of the earth to the meek, and of eternal destruction to the wicked.

11:19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

The timing of this event harmonizes chronologically with the statement of the 24 elders rather than with the final fulfillment of their prediction. Their statement is made as a prefix to the second coming, where we expect to see the Law of Jehovah, otherwise known as the “testimony”, revealed clearly to the world as the standard by which they are all to be judged in the millennium immediately following. No intercession continues to mix mercy with justice. The censor has been thrown down.

Time Line Emp. = Emperor

313 Constantine's "conversion", end of Persecution

321 1st Constantine's Sunday Law

376 Visigoths permitted to cross lower Danube

395 Theodosius, Emp. of Rome, died

396 Visigoths overran Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece in East

406 2nd Vandals crossed the Rhine, began tormenting Gaul

410 Visigoths pillaged Rome. [later settled in Spain

428 Career of Genseric as Vandal leader begins

431 Vandals Straits of Gibraltar

451 3rd Huns stopped by Roman and German troops at Chalons 453 Attila died

455 Vandals pillaged Rome, Remnants of Attila's empire begin new wave of destruction

468 Genseric's forces destroy 1,113 Roman ships at Carthage

476 4th Western Rome Fell, last Emp. was Romulus, Odoacer became first Barbarian ruler of Italy.

(493–526) Theodoric, Odoacer's successor and an Ostrogoth declared Royalty, with reluctant consent of the East

508 Clovis gave Western Rome to Pope

538 Belasarius defeats Ostrogoths at Rome

541 Roman Consulship ended by Justinian

552 Narses, Belasarius' successor defeats Goths and Rome

628 Chosroes (Khosrau II), Emp. of Persia, murdered, 5th-a leaving Persian empire nearly

powerless

624 Mohammed fights against Meca

632 Abu-bekr succeeds Mohammed

(610–641) Heraclius I, Emp. of Rome, weakens nation exponentially

669 Mohammed flees Meca

(1299–1346) Osman (Othman) Sultan and founder of Ottoman empire

1299 5th-b July 27, first attack of Osman against Romans

1449 6th January, Constantinople lost its independence to the Sultan of the Ottoman empire by an act of base submission on the part to the last Greek Emp.—Constantine

1451 Mohomet II becomes Sultan

1453 Constantinople violently taken after siege by Sultan

1840 August 11, Ottoman empire lost its independence

1843 Giving of first and second angel's messages

1844 Declaration "time no longer" from Revelation 10.

Indefinite—7th angel began to sound, mystery of God is being finished.

Close of Probation

2nd Coming

Millenial Judgment for 1,000 years

Reward of Saints and Executive Judgment on wicked

SCRIPTURE INDEX

Mt. 24	Rev. 1:7	Ez. 2:9–10	Ez. 4:6	Rev. 5:1	Zech. 6:13
Rom. 2:3–9	Hab. 3:4	Dan. 9:24	Mal. 3:1	Phil. 2:6	Rev. 16:18
Dan. 2	Dan. 7	Amos 4	Ex. 7–12	2 Thes. 2	Rev. 2:13

Rev. 17:15	Ez. 20:47	Ez 21:3–4	Dan. 4	Is. 37:27	Is. 40:6–7
1 Pt. 1:24	Lk. 23:31	DA 794	Jer. 51:25–26	Jer. 9:13–15	2 Chron. 35:20–31
Rom. 13:4	Rev. 1:20	Gen. 37:9–10	Heb. 1:14	Ez 16	Rev. 2:14,20
Ps. 91	Rom. 3:1	Dan. 7:25	Lev. 4:18,25,30		Job 19:23–25
Jer. 17:1	Ex. 20:8–11	Ez. 20:12,20	Rom. 1:22–25	Acts 17:10–11	DA 628
GC 334–5	COL 294	20MR 197	GC 641	EW 279–281	AA 25.

For a Word Doc, click here:

[1] January 24, 2005—in the ten years since this was written my understanding of the seal has grown considerably. See www.canvassing.org/docs and read the article “The Seal of God and the Mark of the Beast.”