

USA Today ran a story about Apatheists: "We might as well be cars. That, to me, makes more sense than believing what you can't see."

I wrote "What is Christ going to do to reach them?" Beau corrected me, but I said that we have no response to 'So what?'

There is no such thing as a new problem. God has been in the business of rousing people out of their sleep forever.

The seven trumpets are God's alarm clocks that he has been ringing for thousands of years to awaken people to their need for him.

Even though these trumpets clearly bring pain, we should not view them as judgments. They represent discipline.

Discipline brings consequences up close. So you can see and change before it is too late.

If you choose to live independently of God, you are choosing death. With these limited punishments, God awakens us to those consequences so we can turn an live.

Revelation 8:2-5 ESV

Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense,

Revelation 8:2-5 ESV

with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

The rule of all biblical interpretation -- context, context, context. To understand these trumpet calls we must first ask how do they start. They start with the prayers of the saints.

Why is God blowing these trumpets, sending these punishments? He is answering our prayers. But wait a minute, what prayers?

1. Why God Sends Trumpets

A. In Answer to the Prayers of the Saints.

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on
earth as it is in heaven.

(Matthew 6:9-10

ESV)

How did Jesus teach us to pray?

The purpose of these trumpets is to bring about the answer to this prayer. God is not just willy nilly striking the earth to do as much damage as he can, he is using these alarms to startle people to life and to bring his Kingdom to the Earth.

What are we praying for when we pray that God's kingdom would come and His will would be done on Earth the same as it is done in Heaven?

We are praying that this kingdom, the kingdoms of the world would become his Kingdom: redeemed, peaceful, abundant with grace, food, justice and peace.

He is answering these prayers through these trumpets of warning.

You don't believe me do you? You think I am just trying to spin Revelation differently, ignoring the obvious fact of judgment. If I am right, what would you expect to see when the 7th trumpet sounds?

Okay, let's skip to the end

Revelation 11:15 ESV

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”

Read that over to yourself, think about it till it gives you a lump in your throat -- Now read it with me.

That is what God is accomplishing through these trumpets of alarm. He is not judging or destroying the Earth, he is saving his people. He is redeeming the Earth, taking dominion over it. He is claiming his rightful place as the king, and by doing that he is making all things right.

He has been doing this continually. He is not twiddling his thumbs in heaven waiting for some day when he stretches and then does all his work at once. The angels have been blowing the first six trumpets as long as the saints have been praying. But as we read the text we see there is a long pause between the 6th and 7th trumpet. Once all his people are awake, once all his children have come to themselves and returned home. Then he will blow the final trumpet and we will all say

The Kingdoms of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

1. Why God Sends Trumpets

- A. In Answer to the Prayers of the Saints.
- B. Old Testament Parallels
 - A. Joshua
 - B. The Exodus

We also look to context to understand what in particular God is doing through these judgments.

Clear passages interpret unclear ones. Has God done this before? Yes, twice actually.

Joshua at Jericho, 7 priests held 7 trumpets

And we have another precedent: the Exodus.

The Old Testament revolves around 3 themes:

Abraham and Salvation by Faith

David and the need for a King

The Exodus -- salvation from slavery

The Exodus represents God's work of Salvation. God's people were held captive, but they were his rightful people. So he crushed Egypt to set them free. They then followed him in the wilderness till he took them into the promised land.

In the same way now, Christians have been set free to follow, until he takes us home to the promised land.

Plagues Trumpets Bowls

River, Frogs	Hail, Fire	Harmful Boils
Gnats, Flies	Sea to Blood	Sea to Blood
Livestock	Water Struck	Rivers - Blood
Boils	Sun Struck	Sun Struck
Hail, Locusts	Locusts	Throne -Dark
Darkness	Death	River, Frogs
Death	Praise, Ark	Hail, Thunder

How does he set us free? In the Exodus it was through plagues, he struck all of the things the Egyptians worshiped. Not just arbitrary lashing out, but God destroyed their idols.

Now look what he does in the Trumpets and the Bowls.

What is he saying, "There is no place that is safe. Turn to me and live, everywhere else will only lead to death."

Remember that USA Today article? Bianca asked me what I would say to someone who says, "we might as well be cars." I responded, then no one you have loved has ever died.

2. What Are the Trumpets?

A. Not Irrational Wrath, But Intervention

He Strikes every source of false security.
"God whispers to us in our pleasures,
speaks in our conscience, but shouts
in our pains: it is His megaphone to
rouse a deaf world." C.S. Lewis

These are already being blown, and have been getting blown for 2000 years. Each age and culture hears different ones, as God rouses each of us from our slumber.

What is the difference between us and the Israelites held captive by the Egyptians? We are slaves by our own choice. We choose to sin, we choose to remain captive.

When God sends the punishments of these trumpets, it is to wake us up. It is like an intervention. He is drawing us away from our addictions, by forcing us to face the results of that addiction.

You are addicted to wealth. So he sends a recession, pictures of absolute stability crumble, wealthy and powerful commit suicide. Nothing is stable. Turn to me.

2. What Are the Trumpets?

- A. Not Irrational Wrath, But Intervention
- B. The Locusts of Torment

For an example let's look at one of the trumpets in particular:

Revelation 9:3 - 10

Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. 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. They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone.

Revelation 9:3 -10

And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.

In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth;

Revelation 9:3 -10

they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails.

How did these locusts appear?

crowns of gold -- power, wealth

horses, breastplates -- strong, invincible

faces, hair -- beautiful

What is God sending? A spirit that dangles beauty, power, and wealth out in front of us. But that spirit only leads to torment. Where is the torment?

In the mouth -- you never have enough, you are not pretty enough, you are not really as powerful as you think

In the tail -- When the power, wealth and beauty leave you realize the sting.

2. What are the Trumpets?

- A. Interventions
- B. Torment for those who seek Peace from power, status, wisdom or beauty.

As we age, we look in the mirror and see we are not pretty anymore. When you achieve status you realize that you are not as invincible as you thought you would be. What you thought would make you content and happy only leaves you wanting more.

Madonna -- My drive in life is from this horrible fear of being mediocre. That fear is always pushing me, pushing me. Because even though I'm somebody, I've got to prove that I'm somebody. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will.

Have you experienced that yet? Even though you are beautiful, are you pretty enough? Will you still be tomorrow? Even though you have money now, do you have enough, will you have enough tomorrow?

2. What are the Trumpets?

- A. Interventions
- B. Torment for those who seek Peace from power, status, wisdom or beauty.

Why can they not hurt the Christians?

Their thinking has been protected by the gospel.

There is a sting in the tail. The things you thought would make you complete, only bring torment. If you realize that in time, you hear the trumpet and cry out for something that lasts. That something is the love of Christ offered in the Gospel. Love for the poor, the weak and the ugly. Love that makes you invincible, wealthy and beautiful.

Notice that these Locusts cannot touch or torment God's people. Why? Because they have the tattoo on their forehead. What is the mark?

It is the knowledge that my value comes from being loved.

Why do we seek wealth, power and beauty? We think they will give us something. We want security. Wealth and Power mean nothing can hurt us, beauty will make us beloved.

How Should You Respond?

1. Evaluate yourself.

Whose lies do you believe?

Disney

Shape

Fortune

So if the trumpets are God's alarm clocks, awakening us to our need for him, how should we respond?

We have an easy yardstick to use -- commercials. Which ones get to your heart? Which lies do you believe?

How Should You Respond?

1. Evaluate yourself.
2. Repent and Believe
 1. What should you give up?
 2. What should you change?
 3. Believe Christ is better.

Repentance requires action.

What should you give up?

How Should You Respond?

1. Evaluate yourself.
2. Repent and Believe
3. Faithfully Testify
 1. When you hear the trumpets, give your friends the truth.

Finally we testify. This is next weeks sermon, but let me give you two seconds on it now.

After the 6th trumpet we hear that they have all failed. Still no one would repent. The judgments are not enough, God must add something to bring people to repentance. So there is a pause, and he adds the faithful testimony of his church in the midst of suffering.

When you hear bad news, acknowledge it but also testify that you know your fate does not lie in the hands of a professor, or a beauty salon, or a adolescent boys feelings that day. Tell your friends how awesome it is to know that you are absolutely loved by the Lord of the Universe. Tell them how that knowledge allows you to take defeat without being crushed.

Your friends may be asleep right now. They may only worship the religion of so what. But God will wake them up one day. One day the news will hit so close to home that they feel the shake, and they will want something. That is the time to tell them, they can only find security in Christ. What will you do when you hear the trumpet for yourself.