

## “Six Trumpets (Chap. 8:6 - 9:21)”

### NOTES ON 8:6 - 9:21

1. The **seven trumpets** is the second of three sets of seven judgements: the first is the seals in 6:1-8:5, the third is the bowls in chap. 16. As is the case with the seals, there is an “interruption” between the sixth and seventh judgement which the author uses to describe other action.
2. The use of **trumpets** to herald the end of the age have deep roots in Israel. Trumpets were used to warn the people of an emergency and summon them to battle, so it was natural for the prophets to use them as a symbol to warn the people of approaching judgement (i.e. Ezekiel 33:1-6, Joel 2:1). Trumpets also heralded the beginning of Jewish festivals and feasts, and to call the people to assembly. And, the trumpet on the last day heralds the deliverance of God’s people and the, in the New Testament, the coming of Christ (Matthew 24:31; 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16).
3. Compare **the first four trumpets** to the first four seals in chapter 6. Note how the tribulations have intensified. The smaller fraction (1/4) has become 1/3. The fraction is pervasive throughout the trumpet signs, and signifies that the punishment is terrible but not yet complete and final. Also, there are many similarities between the trumpet signs and the plagues on Egypt in Exodus (i.e. hail, fire, water turned to blood, darkness, locusts).
4. **Wormwood** (8:11) is a plant with a strong, bitter taste - used here as a metaphor for calamity and sorrow. The root is not poisonous, but its bitterness suggests grief and death.
5. **The last three trumpet signs** are called “Woes”, relating to the message of the eagle in 8:13. These three trumpet signs are marked by how they fall on the unbelieving world rather than the righteous who have been “sealed” (see 7:3). But also note how the intensity of these judgements seems to have little effect on turning surviving unbelievers to faith (9:21-21).
6. The word “**abyss**” is mostly unique to Revelation, but in both the Greek and Hebrew it means “bottomless deep” and is often thought of as the abode of demons. Swarms of **locusts** often are linked in the Old Testament with the day of the Lord’s coming and judgement (Exodus 10:1-20; Joel 1:2-2:11). The “five months” suggests the limits placed on this plague, and the dry season in Israel when the danger of locusts was greatest. But it is clear that these are not your average locusts! (read their description in 9:7-10).
7. **Abaddon/Apollyon** - the angel of the abyss, has been described by some as a demon and by others as Satan himself. The name means “destroyer.”
8. The **horses and riders** of the sixth trumpet are most probably demonic, based on their graphic description in 9:17-19. The Euphrates is the area’s longest river, and traditionally marked the boundary between Israel and her enemies.

### QUESTIONS:

1. How does hearing a trumpet sound make you feel?

2. Only a third of the earth, trees, sea, creatures, drinking water, sun, etc. are affected by the first four trumpets. The locusts are allowed to torture, but not to kill. The four angels kill only a third of mankind. Why do you think God sends such horrifying plagues, yet limits them? Does this mean that God is cruel?
3. How do the inhabitants of earth respond to the horrible but still limited plagues of the first six trumpets? What does this tell you about human character? Do you see this attitude alive today?
4. How are these visions relevant in our time? What lessons do they teach us about God, suffering, endurance, and the coming of the Kingdom?

### **FOR FURTHER STUDY**

1. God sent plagues on Egypt to deliver His people from slavery, reveal His power, judge the Egyptians, and prove that the gods of Egypt were false gods. Compare the plagues in Exodus 7:14-11:10 to the judgements of trumpets and bowls in Revelation. Do you think God intentionally planned these two events to be similar? Why?
2. In many of His judgments, God afflicts nature in order to warn or punish humans. Why does He do this? See Genesis 2-3 and Deuteronomy 28.
3. What do you think the locusts of 9:1-12 are? Literal locusts? Demons? Symbols of torments of life that make unbelievers want to die? Try to explain your reasoning.