

Rev 8-11a, The Trumpets¹

Overview

General shape of ch. 4-22

Two kinds of stuff:

- narrative, 4-5; 12-15; 17-21
- numbered "sevens": seals (6), trumpets (8), bowls or vials (16)

The seventh of each series seems to unfold into the next (cf. 8:1).

The first and third series have extensive prologues setting the scene in heaven (ch. 4-5) and on earth (12-15).

Reference to "voices, thunderings, and lightnings" at start of each: 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18 (suggests a fourth section without seven parts).

The trumpets fall into two groups (compare the seals).

How they are marked:

- Seals: four initial horsemen and three others after
- Trumpets: three final woes (8:13; 9:12; 11:14) and four others before

First four are drawn mainly from a single OT inspiration

- seals: Zechariah's horsemen;
- trumpets: plagues on Egypt

The four in each case are considerably shorter than the three

- Seals: 8vv/4, 31vv/3
- Trumpets: 6vv/4, 49vv/3

The general tendency in both cases, and between cases, is to move from general events to more specific ones. In the case of the trumpets, the movement is from the accessories of life (plants, sea, rivers, heavenly bodies) to matters affecting people directly. Cf. 8:13; it is the "woes" that target the inhabitants of the earth.

The prologue to the trumpets (8:1-6) recalls the fifth seal, while the first two trumpets unleash the judgments on the earth, sea, and grass that were explicitly restrained in 7:3 until God's servants could be sealed. Thus with the trumpets we have moved out of the present age and fully into the Great Tribulation.

¹ June 18, 1994

8:1-6, Prologue

1-2, Silence before Judgment

Best seen as a dramatic pause. The hallelujahs of ch. 7; the terrified cries of men on earth of the sixth seal in ch. 6; all are stilled as God's focused wrath is prepared. Cf. Hab. 2:20 "the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him"; Zech. 2:13 "be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord, for he is raised up out of his holy habitation"; Isa. 52:15 "kings shall shut their mouths at him"; Rom. 3:19 "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." The events of the following verses may be taking place against this ominous silence. We see seven angels before God; one by one, trumpets appear soundlessly in their hands.

3-4, Prayers of Saints

Still in utter silence, the vision of the angel before the altar.

The altar.--The definite article recalls the only previous mention of the altar, in 6:9, the mark of the sacrifice of the martyrs. Further described here as "the golden alter which is before the throne." Not the brazen altar of burnt offering, but the gold incense alter within the holy place before the veil. Confirms that the sacrifices of these martyrs are seen not as dealing with sin, but as a gift of worship to God.

Application: How diligent are we in our offerings to God?

The link to 6:9 also suggests the identify of these saints and their prayers with the scene of 6:9,10, the martyrs crying out to God for vengeance. But in the silence before the storm their prayers are represented not as sound, but as a rising vapor.

Role of the angel offering incense with their prayers: cf. 5:8, where the beasts have "vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints." Apparently, angels do play a role in the dynamics of prayer; but we are nowhere authorized or exemplified to address prayer to them. This illustration suggests that they join their praise with ours; our worship is stimulus and incentive for them to worship too. Compare the third group of doxologies in ch. 4-7. *Application:* Think of the leverage you can have through your prayers. You can stimulate angelic praise!!!

5-6, Judgment from the Altar

The silence is broken as judgment falls. Any who had mistaken the silence for divine weakness now know their error. Two OT images of this judgment:

- The thundering voice of God, as in 4:5, derived in turn from the vision of Sinai in Exod. 19.
- Casting coals from the altar onto the earth: Ezek. 10:2. Following the sealing of the true saints in Ezek. 9, the destruction is depicted as coals from the altar. The same fire that lifts up the praise of God's people also brings destruction to the wicked.

8:7-12, The Four Trumpets

These (as well as the first four vials) correspond closely to the plagues on Egypt.

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7, First Trumpet--Hail, Fire, and Blood on the earth, destroying vegetation--Exod. 9:23-25 mentions the hail, the fire, and the destruction of trees and herbs. This judgment brings an end to agriculture, and thus amplifies the famine of the third seal.

8-9, **Second Trumpet**--sea turned to blood. Contains some of the features of Exod. 7:19-21

- Water turned to blood
- kills living creatures in the water

Differences from Exod:

- This is the sea; that was the Nile river.
- Nothing in Exodus corresponding to the mountainlike flaming mass, or to the ships.

Intensifies the famine (through the loss of fish), and hinders trade.

10-11, **Third Trumpet**--rivers poisoned. The judgment on the rivers here is again reminiscent of Exod. 7:19-21, though they are turned to wormwood instead of to blood. A bitter desert shrub; its name comes from its use as a medicine to get rid of intestinal worms; one variety is used to flavor wine to form Vermouth. Here God is "de-worming" the earth.

12, **Fourth Trumpet**--partial obscuration of heavenly bodies. Compare Exod. 10:21-23, the plague of darkness. Here it is only partial, but still terrifying to people who are accustomed to thinking of the heavenly bodies as governed strictly by natural laws. The God of the Bible can adjust them as directly as we can the hands of a watch.

Lessons drawn from the similarity of these judgments with the **Egyptian plagues**:

- The first four seals were calamities common to earth's history, general indications of God's wrath against human sin. The trumpets, like the events in Egypt, are much more specific, in response to a specific offense. We have moved from the general judgments and disasters of the church age into the day of God's wrath (6:17).
- In Egypt, the plagues arose in response to Pharaoh's bondage and oppression of the children of Israel. These judgments, in response to the prayer of the martyrs, are addressed to those who oppress and enslave them. In the sequel, we will learn more about the Beast, the leader of this repression.

8:13-11:19, The Three Woes²

Three woes: 9:1-11; 9:13-11:13; 11:15-19. Shift from curses on the environment in the first four trumpets, to actions taken directly against men.

First woe and first part of the second one are closely related: demonic infestation of the world. Later, we shall see the human side of these same events (in ch. 16). As in Dan. 10, earthly political conflicts are simply reflections of demonic activity in the heavens.

Lesson: Eph. 6, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood." The spiritual forces of the adversary are real

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and powerful. The HS in us is more powerful, but we must not be lulled into insecurity.

8:13, Announcement of the Three Woes

In the MT, the one flying is an eagle, not an angel. Cf. 19:17; anticipates the slaughter that is to come.

inhabiters of the earth.--Shift from the first four trumpets, which are targeted at the earth itself. Now the focus is on the people, not the environment; cf. 9:4.

always in bad sense in Rev, of the unsaved; cf. 6:10, the object of the martyr's prayer for vengeance. Together with the vision of the incense at the beginning of the chapter, this announcement shows that their prayer is being answered.

12:12 shows the other category: those who tabernacle in the heavens.

- Cf. Eph. 2:6, we are seated with Christ in heavenly places.
- Phil. 3:20, our citizenship is in heaven.
- mind earthly things

Application: We are to be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," Heb. 12:13.

9:1-11, The First Woe (Fifth Trumpet)

Note chiasmic shift of focus: from the **angel** of the bottomless pit (1-2a, 11), to the **contents** of the pit (2b-5, 7-10), to their **victims** in the center (6).

1-2a, 11 The Pit and its Angel

The bottomless pit.--The first NT mention: Luke 8:31, where the demons didn't want to be cast. Compare 2 Pet. 2:4 and Jude 6, the notion of demons bound in hell. Elsewhere in Rev:

- Where the beast comes from, 11:7; 17:8
- Where Satan is bound during the Millennium, 20:1,3.

Thus "opening the bottomless pit" releases demonic hoards on the earth.

The angel of the bottomless pit.--Probably Satan.

Described (v. 1) as "a star fallen from heaven" (perfect tense; has already happened)

- Luke 10:18, the Lord reports it to the disciples as past. Time uncertain:
 - Eden? (but he is still in heaven in Job)
 - Christ's temptation? (early fathers)
 - Their testimony?
 - A past vision of a fall yet to take place?
- John 12:31, connected with our Lord's death on the cross.

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- Rev. 12:9, in the context of a heavenly battle, and removes him from his position as accuser.
- *Application*: Our adversary is a defeated foe.

Named (v. 11) "destruction." This is Satan's main role; not to build up, but to tear down. God is the great creator; Satan the great destroyer. Here he sets loose the elements of destruction. *Application*: What is our approach to life? Creative, or destructive? Do we seek to build up people, or to tear them down? Cf. Paul in 2 Cor. 13:10. Hegelian dialectic seeks to tear down what is bad in the hopes that something better will arise; the Lord is in the business of building up. Are we?

2b-5, 7-10, The contents of the pit

Smoke, indicating its fiery nature. (The biblical picture of hell is consistently one of fire.) This smoke is the aspect that is picked up in the recapitulation in ch. 16.

Locusts coming out of the smoke.

OT roots of this vision:

- Plague in Egypt, Exod. 10:4ff. Like previous trumpets.
- Recall Joel 1,2, where a locust plague illustrates the great invasion of Jerusalem in the day of the Lord.

Unlike ordinary locusts:

- they pass by the plants, but torture men directly (except for the sealed 144K).
- 11, they have a king (contrast Prov. 30:27). Centralized authority is the result of Satan's work. God's architecture for the world is emergent behavior from decentralized responsible agents.

Compared with horses in 7-9; cf. Joel 1:6; 2:4. In Joel there are two events (contemporary locust plague and eschatological invasion), distinguished by verb tenses. Here the two blur together.

Pointless to try to understand the details symbolically. John is simply giving an accurate description of what he saw. Many cultures have depictions of demons in equally fantastic terms; cf. the decorations in the Indonesian restaurant in Georgetown. There are demons in this world; people sometimes do see them; they often appear in fantastic, nightmarish forms; that's what John is describing.

Note the limitations on their power (3,4,5). As in Job, Satan and his forces can never do more than God permits, and in fact are here his instruments of judgment. The believer should respect their power, and certainly obey God's instructions not to dabble in spiritism and demon worship, but we who are in Christ need never fear them.

6, The effect on men

Torment without death.

Application: Recognize

- the reality of demons;
- their destructive orientation;

- the limitations on their power.

12, Transition

This verse terminates the first woe and begins the second. A similar transition at 11:14 shows that the second Woe extends that far.

9:13-11:14, The Second Woe (Sixth Trumpet)³

Overview

The transitions in 9:12 and 11:14 suggest that this entire section makes up the second woe, which is the sixth trumpet. But most commentators think that 10:1-11:13 is an interlude. Need to trace the continuity.

Ch. 7 is also thought by many to be an interlude following the sixth seal, but makes excellent sense as part of it, thus focusing on three groups of people who together exhaust humanity:

- 6:9-17, the unbelievers
- 7:1-8, the sealed Israelites
- 7:9-17, the martyrs in heaven

The sixth trumpet also has three distinct parts:

- 9:13-21, the demonic army
- ch. 10, the little book and the seven thunders
- 11:1-13, the two witnesses

The first and third of these have close connections with one another:

- The forces of evil in both cases come from the pit (9:14 "bound," see exposition; 11:7)
- The inhabitants of the earth, who throughout the woes are the victims according to 8:13, in both cases suffer judgment through fire from the mouths of their enemies (9:17-18; 11:5)
- In spite of these judgments, the inhabitants of the earth in both cases persist in rebellion against God (9:20-21; 11:9-10).

So this woe consists of a twofold spiritual attack against the earth-dwellers: one by the demons of hell, the other by the witnesses of heaven. In both cases men continue unrepentant. Whether God speaks through the gospel or through demonic judgment, the hardness of men's hearts is such that without the work of the Spirit, they will not hear.

How about the middle segment of this trumpet? It describes John's next phase of prophetic activity, once the cycle of trumpets is complete, and thus prepares for ch. 12.

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9:13-21, First segment of the Sixth Trumpet

Once again, the golden altar. God is still taking vengeance for the abuse of his people. Same four elements (location, leader, hoardes, men) as the second woe, but this time linear, not chiasitic.

14, **Euphrates**: Westernmost of the two rivers that delineated Mesopotamia ("the land between the rivers"). In the OT, whenever designated "the great river," it is used to indicate one of the borders of the land promised to Israel (the other being the river of Egypt, roughly the Suez canal). Later, in ch. 16, we will see the armies of earth massed on this river in preparation to invade Israel for the battle of Armageddon; the present chapter shows us the demonic activity that lies behind this event. Like the army of Desert Storm, massed along the borders of Iraq in preparation for invasion.

14-15, **The four bound angels**. Explain these by comparison with the bound fallen angels in 2 Pet. 2:4 and Jude 6.

These are the only angels ever said to be "bound" in scripture.

Place of bondage in Peter and Jude is Tartarus, the pit; the same location from which the locusts swarm in the first part of the chapter. At first glance, those in Rev. seem to be bound by the Euphrates; but it's also possible to understand Eu. as the location where they are to be loosed: "set loose at the Euphrates the four bound angels." Thus this scene is an extension of the previous one.

Peter and Jude say they are bound "for judgment," which may mean not just to be judged, but as instruments of judgment. So John recognizes (15) that they have been prepared for a specific moment.

Thus our attention now moves from the Satan, the angel of the abyss, to four of his lieutenants.

16-19, **The hoardes**, 200M strong. Probably further demonic elements from the pit. Again, the description is not symbolic, but an attempt by John to describe the nightmarish creatures that he has seen, and that God will one day set loose on the earth to bring his judgment. v.18, contrast v.5. The locust-demons could torment but not kill; these now have power to take life. Further intensification of the judgment.

20-21, **Their Victims**. Actually, these are the survivors. They refuse to repent. The description of their sin is a capsule description of the nature and results of false religion.

20, Its *nature*: the objects of their worship are described in three ways.

- "Works of their hands." The natural man delights to worship what he has made, thus glorifying himself. He will not accept the notion that he is a created, dependent being.
- "Demons." Cf. 1 Cor. 10:20. Idol worship is promoted by the demons, and those who worship false gods actually do homage to the demons. Irony here: those who suffer at the hands of the demons yet worship them.
- Description of their substance: gold, silver, brass, stone, wood, can't see, hear, walk. Classic OT condemnation of the impotence of idols.

Application: When we are tempted to direct our worship to anything other than the true God, this description can help us recognize the folly and futility of such action.

21, Its *results*: impurity in life. Murder, theft, and fornication are straightforward violations of the

Decalog. The fourth element, sorcery, is literally "pharmacy," dealings with drugs, which was a part of spiritism and demon worship (cf. the visions of those who "trip out"). A mode of worship can be evaluated by its results ("by their fruits you shall know them"). Unbelievers are in bondage to sin, and false worship only deepens that bondage. Only Christ can set us free.

10:1-11, Second Segment of the Sixth Trumpet

This section moves chiastically, beginning and ending with a reference to a "little book," and in the middle describing the mysterious "seven thunders." Both images describe things revealed to John, from which his subsequent revelation grows. Perhaps placed here because the third panel of the second woe introduces a number of themes (Jerusalem; Babylon; the antichrist; his opposition to the believers) that we have not yet seen and that shall be developed more fully in the sequel. We cannot understand these themes based solely on what has past, but ch. 10 serves notice that a new major phase of prophecy lies ahead, and alerts us to interpret what we shall see in ch. 11 in the light of ch. 12ff.

1-3, The Book Appears.

The episode of the little book is closely tied to ch. 5, both by similarities and by explicit contrasts. Thus this section pops us out of the narrative of tribulation on earth that has occupied us since ch. 6. We must be reminded that these events are not accidents of history, but the working-out of God's sovereignly defined plan.

Similarities to ch. 5:

- This angel is called "another mighty angel." The only previous "mighty angel" we have seen is 5:2 ("strong" there is the same Gk word as "mighty" here).
- The angel speaks "with a loud voice" (5:2; 10:3).
- In both cases, a book is at the center of attention.
- The book is not on a shelf or a table, but is held in someone's hand, ready to be presented.

Differences between the two scenes:

- Size of book. This one is diminutive.
- Closed (5:1) vs. open (10:2)
- Location of the book: the Father's right hand (5:1) vs. the angel's left hand (10:2, cf. v.5 decian "right hand").
- Who takes the book: the Lamb in ch. 5; John (upon divine command) in 10:8. There no one else is worthy.

Application: We have both the privilege and the responsibility of representing Christ and carrying out his ministry. We are the body of Christ, proclaiming his salvation, warning men of his judgment. We no longer live, but Christ lives in us (Gal. 2:20). Indeed, our book may be a "little" one, and we deliver it only in the authority of the one who alone can open that which is sealed, but still we must deliver it.

3-7, The Seven Thunders

These are embedded within the narrative of the little book. Not a separate episode. The dominant theme is the equipping of John for his further prophetic role.

He is allowed to hear but not to write. There are aspects of the purpose of God that are not revealed to the church at large. "Now we see through a glass, darkly Now we know in part"

The angel's oath in 5-7 tells us that this limitation is temporary. "... but then face to face. ... Then shall we know even as also we are known." This scene of the swearing angel is an echo of Dan. 12:7. God's people are not stuck in a hopeless situation. By the most solemn of promises, we learn that God will accomplish his purposes and fulfill his promises.

The angel's oath is a negated antonym paraphrase, saying the same thing in two ways, one of which is a double negative of the other.

- 6, "There should be time no more." Sounds like the beginning of eternity. But probably not.
 - The word occurs only four times in Rev. In the other three (2:21; 6:11; 20:3) it refers to a specific season or period of time, not to the abstract fourth dimension of the Einsteinian universe.
 - In particular, probably a reference to 6:11, the martyrs under the altar. Rev. 8:3-5 and 9:13-14 have already suggested that the trumpets are a specific answer to their prayer for vengeance, so it is not surprising to find other allusions to that promise here.
 - So what the angel is announcing is the end of the "little season" of persecution described in 6:11: "the period is over."
- 7, The Consummation. What is it for which we are waiting?
 - The martyrs under the altar wanted vengeance on their persecutors, and that will come.
 - John has the words of the seven thunders burning in his heart, and longs for the day when he can disclose them.
 - Both of these are coming, but neither is the primary focus of the angel's promise. These are only incidental to the Big Event at the end of this "little season," which is the coming kingdom of God.
 - Associated with the days when the seventh angel shall sound (*mellw* with inf. = future, Burton MandT p.36). The record of that sounding begins with the declaration of the arrival of God's kingdom, 11:15-17.
 - Described as "the mystery of God."
 - We know "mystery" as a distinctive Pauline word, describing the unity of Jew and Gentile in one body of Christ. But this Pauline mystery is something that was NOT proclaimed by the prophets (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:5; Col. 1:26), as John's mystery here is said to be.
 - The word is used in the synoptics (Matt. 13:11 and //s) to refer to the kingdom of God. This and John's reference to the prophets points us back to the OT.

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- There, we find only one place where the Greek word is used in the LXX of the canonical books. That one place is a single chapter, which uses the word no less than eight times: Dan. 2:18, 19, 27, 28, 29, 30, 47 (2x) (ET "secret"). It describes Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image, which is destroyed by the stone cut out without hands; the dominance of the rule of God over every human kingdom, exactly as the seventh trumpet proclaims!
- Conclude that John (and the synoptics) have this Danielian mystery in mind.
 - Linked to what was promised to the prophets. While the prophets other than Daniel do not use the word "mystery," they all proclaim the triumph of God's kingdom over all earthly dominions.
 - Conclude that the culmination and end of the present season of tribulation and uncertainty is the day when the church's prayer is finally answered: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

8-11, The Book Again

The narrative returns from the digression about the seven thunders to complete John's preparation for his subsequent prophesying.

The imagery comes from Ezekiel's experience in 2:8-3:3.

John emphasizes the mingled sweetness and bitterness of God's word; the joy of having God's own thoughts revealed to us, but the bitterness of the reality of the human condition that they set forth.

Application: Beware any reading of Scripture that does not recognize both its sweetness and its bitterness.

11, the ultimate purpose of the events in this chapter: to equip John for his subsequent prophetic work, beginning in ch. 12. Up to this point we have the unfolding of the events of the seals at the hand of the Lamb. Now John must take up the initiative, and prophecy concerning (not "before") many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings. "Again" suggests that there will be a measure of repetition in this prophecy with respect to what has gone before. Suggests that while the seven trumpets are contained within the seventh seal and are thus part of the events of the sealed book, the material from ch. 12ff is distinct, and should not be considered as part of the seventh trumpet. Rather, ch. 12ff repeat the earlier material, and the seventh trumpet is parallel to 19-22.

11:1-13, Third Segment of the Sixth Trumpet⁴

The Temple and the Two Witnesses. Called by many commentators the most difficult portion of the book. Yet if we take it at face value, as a narrative of what will come to pass, it is fairly straightforward.

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1-3, The Measurement of the Temple

Introduces a major distinction that dominates the latter part of the book: between the heavenly Jerusalem, and Babylon the great.

1-2a, the Measured and Unmeasured

Geography of the temple: distinguishes the holy place (where only Israel could go, marked off with warning signs) from the outer court of the gentiles.

Symbolism of measuring with a Reed

- Ezek 40:3-5, 42:15ff, the promised temple with purified worship, after the destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon's temple by Nebuchadnezzar
- Returns in 21:15 to measure the entire New Jerusalem.
- Thus identifies the true sanctuary, unpolluted by human hypocrisy, not subject to earthly devastation. John is being told that the temple, the worship of God, is divided into two pieces: that which is true, and that which is corrupt and false. The outer section is said to be delivered to the Gentiles, the unbelievers.

With the outer section, compare v.8, "the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." What is this city?

- Jerusalem? where the Lord was crucified? but never called "great" in Rev. (The adjective in 21:10 is not in the oldest segment of the MT.)
- "Great city" in Rev. is always Babylon: 14:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21.
- Place of the Lord's crucifixion? Cf. 18:24; Matt. 23:37. Babylon is what becomes of the "holy city" when it is taken over by spiritual gentiles.

This chapter thus introduces a critical contrast between the two cities: Jerusalem "the Lamb's wife" (21:9) and Babylon "the great whore" of the beast (17:1). Correspond to Paul's two Jerusalems (Gal. 4:25,26).

2b-3, Two gifts to deal with this division

Note repetition of the verb "to give" in vv. 2b, 3.

2b, God gives **the outer court** to the **Gentiles**.

It was given to them (aorist); as long as God has had a people, there have been strangers in the camp. Not an accident; under God's control.

Treading under foot:

- Isa 5:5, what God will do with his fruitless vineyard.
- Dan. 8:13, under Antiochus IV Epiphanes
- Luke 21:24, follows the fall of Jerusalem and continues for entire "times of the gentiles"

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- Thus various aspects of the treading down of Jerusalem have been taking place for nearly three thousand years.

This particular treading is presented as future, and has a limited time period (42 months).

Apostasy: not everyone who calls Jesus "Lord" will enter into the kingdom. Over and over the Scriptures warn of impurity and call us to separation from it.

3, God gives a **ministry** to the **Witnesses**

They represent the measured sanctuary (the new Jerusalem) to the unmeasured court (Babylon the great). Compare Jeremiah and our Lord. While we do not support apostate religious systems, we are called to witness against them.

Two witnesses.--Necessary for judicial action under both the OT (Deut. 17:6; 19:5) and NT (Matt. 18:16; 1 Tim. 5:19). The role of the witness is not just to bear witness to men, but also to God of how men have received the message. Note the verb: not "my witnesses ... shall bear witness," but "my witnesses ... shall prophecy." Toward men they are prophets; to God they are judicial witnesses. Application: When he asks us to take the stand, what witness will be able to bear? Have we confronted men with his claims? Can we truly bear witness to their rejection of them?

Sackcloth.--Worn by those who are in mourning. These prophets do not gloat over the sin of the people; not "God is going to get you, heh,heh." Rather, like Jeremiah, they mourn over the coming judgment. We are to feel and show compassion for those under divine condemnation.

Like the Gentile treading of the outer court, their ministry is for a limited time: 42 mos * 30 days/month = 1260 days. This period of 7/2 years is frequently mentioned in later prophetic revelation, where it is associated with:

- Antichrist's concentrated power over God's people.
 - Da 7:25 (3.5 times): the period during which "the saints of the Most High" are given into the hand of the little horn of the fourth beast.
 - Dan 12:7 (3.5 times): the period devoted to "scatter the power of the holy people," leading to the time of the end.
 - Rev. 11:2 (42 months), period of Gentile domination over Jerusalem
 - Rev. 13:5 (42 months) the period during which the dragon is given power to continue.
- God's protection over his chosen messengers
 - Rev. 11:3 (1260 days), the prophecy of the witnesses.
 - Rev. 12:6 (1260 days), 14 (3.5 times): woman preserved by God in the wilderness. (Or is this under Titus?)
- Non-eschatological references:
 - Period of Elijah's drought (Luke 4:25; James 5:11), during which he was fed by God; these witnesses have much in common with Elijah.
 - Period of Christ's earthly ministry, during which his enemies could not touch him.

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(Not in sermon:) Three other time references in Daniel should be distinguished from these: 8:14 (2300 days), 12:11 (1290 days), 12 (1335 days). I take them as referring to a different era of history (the time of A. IV rather than that of the Antichrist); see notes on Dan. 12. We do not have sufficient details of the life of A. IV to interpret these dates precisely, but the chart below outlines a possible set of references.

		12:11	12:12	8:14
		1290	1335	2300
Death of Onias the HP	171			
Sanctuary polluted	168			
Worship restored	165			
Antiochus IV dies	164			
News reaches Jerusalem				

4-6, *The Witnesses' Ministry*

Set off by present tense verbs. We don't know who they are. Two different OT pairs are alluded to in these verses, but these show their characteristics, not necessarily their identities. Take them as two believers, their precise identities unknown to us, whom God will raise up at the last day. The paragraph describes two directions of their ministry: toward God's people, and toward the unbelievers treading down the temple.

4 **two olive trees** is from Zech. 4:14, which describes Zerubbabel the prince and Joshua the high priests, the leaders of the restoration after the return from Babylon. They were the channel for the ministry of God's Spirit to Israel in that day; so the ministry of these two prophets will greatly encourage persecuted saints during the coming 3.5 years.

5, their **Defensive** power against their enemies. Compare the demons in 9:17, and Elijah in 2 Kings 1:10. Application: No one can touch God's people unless he permits it. God will defend us as long as he has a ministry for us.

6, their **Offensive** ministry of signs. The miracles attributed to them are reminiscent of Elijah (drought for 3.5 years, Luke 4:25; James 5:11) and Moses (various plagues).

7-10, *The Witnesses' Death (future) and its Result (present)*

Time: "when they shall have finished their testimony." While God has work for them, they are untouchable. When he does permit their enemies to touch them, it is for a purpose, as we shall see.

Adversary: "the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit."

- Do not confuse with "beast" in 4:6 etc. The word there is "living being." Here it is qhrion "wild animal," and goes back to the fourth beast of Daniel 7.
- This is the Antichrist; we'll meet him in more detail in ch. 13. Said to come from the pit in 17:8.

8, "the great city." What is this city? As discussed under vv. 1-2, the language merges the images of Jerusalem and Babylon. Babylon is what becomes of the "holy city" when it is taken over by spiritual

Rev 8-11, The Trumpets

gentiles. It is the apostate form of God's faith, and is represented today by established religion.

9-10, the "dwellers on the earth" will rejoice over their death, because during their life they tormented unbelievers. Cf. 9:5, the effect of the demons again! The honest prophecy of God's word is a torment to the unbeliever, who would rather not be reminded of his apostasy and ultimate doom. Rom. 1, he has the knowledge of God, and can only continue in sin by repressing it. Our job is to make contact with this knowledge; people can either respond by receiving the Lord, or by resisting under torment.

11-13, The Final Miracles

Marked by shift from present to aorist. Three cycles of miracle, each followed by human response.

11, **Resurrection**.--Note the similarity to our Lord: 3.5 years of protected ministry; death at the hand of their enemies; then raised from the dead after 3 days. Suddenly the party ends; their enemies see their foes walking around unharmed.

12, **Ascension**.--The similarity to Christ's passion continues with their ascent into heaven. In AD 33, only the believers saw it, but this time the unbelievers will see it as well.

13, **Earthquake**.--Cf. 16:17ff (earthquake destroys the "great city"); 6:12 (people recognize the Lord's hand as result of an earthquake). Their response: at a minimum, that of 6:12ff, acknowledging the Lord's agency (perhaps grudgingly). Compare 1 Sam. 6:5, what the Philistines did in returning the ark. Phil. 2, every knee bows. Does not necessarily equal conversion. Some may be saved; this would be just when the Lord returns, the point of Israel's conversion in Zech. 12:10.