

Sermon – 26/08/2007 pm

The Last Trumpet

Study Text: Revelation 11:15-19

In military tradition the ‘last post’ is sounded but across the camp as soldiers go to rest at the end of the day’s battle. You will be familiar with this tune being played on the bugle at ANZAC day services. The tune is also played at funerals to signify the end of valiant service and victory on the battlefield. It signals the end of the battle and the beginning of peace.

The seventh and last trumpet was sounded by the angel in this vision given to John. Along with the sounding of the trumpet was a loud cry from heaven *the kingdom(s) of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ* (11:15). This is a cosmic cry of victory, of the end of the battle, indeed of the end of the war.

Christ Conquers

When the previous trumpets sounded, destruction came upon a third of the land, the sea, the rivers and the sun, and then upon a third of mankind. John saw plaques not unlike those that Moses saw God inflict upon the Egyptians. Through these plagues God judged Egypt, finally destroying Pharaoh and his army in the Red sea. God delivered his people from the hands of the enemy and brought them into their inheritance, the land of rest.

This Old Testament background continues with the seventh trumpet. The declaration, *He shall reign forever and ever* (11:15), is the same as that made by Moses and the children of Israel when the Lord saved them and destroyed the Egyptians (Exodus 15:18) – *The Lord shall reign forever and ever*.

The Lord brought his chosen people into Canaan, judging and destroying the nations along the way. They marched around Jericho seven times with priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant and blowing trumpets. Note the presence of the same things in this passage. The walls of Jericho came down and the city was destroyed, never to be rebuilt.

This passage notes the end of the evil world kingdoms. They will all be destroyed just like Jericho and the other Canaanite kingdoms. The kingdoms of this world are those that seek after power in this world. They defy God and exalt man. We think of Hitler as a modern example of such a ruler, but in effect all earthly kingdoms are the same. Even the kings and queens of England have opposed the true church, as John Knox and other Reformers testify.

Is it only political kingdoms that we are to consider here? The *kingdoms of this world* extend beyond politics. There are global economic kingdoms with rich and powerful men at the head. There are influential think tanks and philosophical groups that oppose the kingdom of God. At the more local level are rulers similarly motivated by sin and directed by Satan in opposing the kingdom of God. All will be destroyed when their rulers are taken out and Satan himself is cast into the lake of fire.

The last trumpet heralds the coming of Christ in all his glory. He **has** come – the tense is not future but perfect (11:15, 17). With this cry from heaven, all the power that Satan was allowed is

dissolved. The worldly kingdoms over which he reigned as the ‘ruler of this world’ crumbled the instant Christ came. Here is the answer to the prayer of the martyrs – *How long, O Lord they cried, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth* (6:10).

Here is the answer to your prayer also. Do you not pray *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven?* What are you praying here? Do you really want the kingdom of God to come? If so then the kingdoms of this world must go. You cannot pray for the Lord to come while at the same time wishing he would delay so you can enjoy this world a bit longer.

In this vision we see God’s kingdom come in its fullness and finality with the overthrow of all earthly kingdoms. The battle is not even mentioned – it just happened. There is no question; there is no doubt, about the ultimate victory of Jesus. Nothing and no one will oppose God again. Nothing and no one will persecute the people of God again. Christ shall reign forever and ever.

Christ inaugurated his kingdom when he came to this earth – *the kingdom of God is at hand* he declared. His death and resurrection was confirmation of this victory. *Now is the judgment of this world, now the ruler of this world will be cast out* said Jesus shortly before he was crucified (Jn 12:31). This victory is consummated in this vision. Even now, Christ is on the throne in heaven, but when he comes again he will destroy all his enemies and the only kingdom that exists will be the kingdom of Lord and of his Christ.

Back in heaven John saw the 24 elders fall down and worship God when they heard the seventh trumpet sound. We saw them worshipping in this heavenly throne room back in chapter 4. This is the throne from which all judgments emanate. They give thanks and praise to the Lord for taking power and reigning over all creation (11:17). The anthem of praise is now ‘the One who is and who was’, in contrast to the earlier ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come’ according to most manuscripts. The ‘who is to come’ has now arrived.

Judgment

*Why do the nations rage and the people plot in vain
The kings of the earth set themselves
and rulers take counsel together
against the Lord and his anointed (Psalm 2)*

It was said of the apostles that *they have turned the world upside down* with their preaching (Acts 17:6). Like Jesus, the apostles simply preached the kingdom of God. They did not take up arms, they did not go into politics, and they did not march in the streets. There did not pressure anyone to believe but simply preached the gospel of the kingdom of God. Yet for this they were violently opposed. The world raged against them, throwing them out of one city after another. The world continues to rage against faithful witnesses of Christ.

Remember how the Gadarene demoniac recognised Jesus as the Son of God. He feared Jesus would torment him. And the demon-possessed girl at Philippi recognized Paul and Silas as servants of God. These are instances of kingdom conflict. The Devil or Satan recognises his enemy. His followers who rule over earthly kingdoms also recognise Christians as a threat to their power and authority. And so they rage against them.

Do you sometimes wonder at the persecution directed at just a handful of Christians in some nations? Do you wonder at those who do their utmost to keep Christians out of the workplace? Do you wonder at the vehemence with which evolutionists and some scientists attack those who believe in a Creator. The kingdoms of this world oppose the kingdom of God, but not for much longer.

In this vision John is shown the wrath of God coming upon the nations and the dead being judged. Death is no escape for persecuting tyrants, evolutionists, or atheists. They will all face divine judgment. God will *destroy those who destroy the earth* (11:18).

It is a great irony that those who think they are preserving the earth are actually destroying it. There is a proverb that says *a righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel* (Proverbs 12:10). Those who fail to see the hand of God in all that exists are really fumbling in the dark when it comes to the environment and the animals. They try to make an enduring world but are in fact destroying it, according to word of God. The root of all our problems is sin; sin in the heart of all people. Sin brought man into conflict with God, with other men, and with all God created.

Reward

The song of thanksgiving refers not only to judgment but to rewards also. Who will be rewarded when Christ comes again? The prophets and saints of God and all who fear the name of the Lord (11:18). There is no reason to make a distinction between prophets and saints in this verse. Remember the faithful witnesses who were killed and whom God raised from the dead, earlier in this chapter.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is at the centre of all New Testament preaching. Why? Because Jesus took the penalty for sin, and by his resurrection declares all who believe in him will live. All who believe have the hope of the resurrection. They will be raised to enter into the presence of the Lord and reign with him eternally. Do you look forward to your heavenly reward in Christ Jesus? *You have made us kings and priests to our God and we shall reign* was part of what these elders sang in a previous song (5:10).

Covenant Fulfilled

Finally John saw the temple opened in heaven. The Ark of the Covenant was inside. This picture from the OT tells of the presence of God in his temple and of access into the Holy of Holies. The Ark was the focus of worship in the Old Testament. On the Day of Atonement blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat above the Ark. It was also a symbol of judgment. Not only were the priests blowing trumpets as they marched around Jericho they were carrying the Ark.

Under the New Covenant, Jesus is on the throne in heaven. From his throne will come judgment upon the whole world. *Lightning's, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail* come from the throne. This happened when the seventh seal was opened – only now great hail is added to the outpouring of divine judgment upon the earth.

The end of the world has come. From the days of Adam, all who have ever been born are judged by Christ who now reigns forever and ever.

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