

# REVELATION

## The Trumpets - Part 2

John 3:19  
April 20, 2024

Last week we looked at the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 Trumpets of Revelation 8 and where those events fall from an historical perspective.

Now we will turn our attention to Trumpets 3 and 4.

Chronologically, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Trumpet occurs after the collapse of the Roman Empire.

- **3<sup>rd</sup> Trumpet** (8:10-11)

The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water -- the name of the star is Wormwood (Bitterness). A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.

In the books of Job and Isaiah, stars are symbols of angels and the fact that this star is described as "great" gives us a clue as to the identity of this being:

- **Job 38:7** - while the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (God is questioning Job as to where he was when the foundations of the earth were laid)
- **Isaiah 14:12-14** - How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." (also see Ezekiel 28:12-19)

This is a symbolic description of Satan, who was thrown out of heaven, but not permanently excommunicated until after the enthronement of Christ as described in Revelation 12:7-10 (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; John 12:27-33).

This star's name is *Wormwood*, an herb known for its bitter qualities.

All 8 Old Testament references to *Wormwood* are associated with bitterness (Deut. 29:18; Proverbs 5:4; Jeremiah 9:15; 23:25; Lamentations 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7; 6:12).

The *Wormwood Star* causes the waters to become bitter and many people die.

Springs of water symbolize the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, Jesus and Salvation bringing life to spiritually thirsty people:

- **Psalm 1:2-3** - But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.
- **Isaiah 12:2-4** - Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted.
- **Isaiah 44:3-4** - For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams.
- **John 7:37-38** - On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." (also see John 4:10-14)

- **Revelation 22:17** – The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

However, in Jeremiah 23:14-15, when the people turned to other gods and rejected the Covenant, they were symbolically given wormwood to eat and poison water to drink.

Here’s what that looks like in reality:

- **Psalm 81:11-12** – But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. So, I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices.
- **Jeremiah 17:13** – O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water.

The symbolism we see in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Trumpet points to Satan, who turned the Gospel into “*wormwood*” by introducing false teachings and human traditions that slowly replaced the simplicity and truth of Scripture. False religious teachers polluted the springs of living water, causing them to have a bitter and poisonous effect.

Jesus, Paul, Peter and John all warned believers about these false teachers/teachings and how to spot them. More importantly ---- they warned believers, “*have nothing to do with them*”:

- **Matthew 7:15-20** – Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.
- **Acts 20:28-30** – Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.
- **Romans 16:17-18** – I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.
- **2 Timothy 3:1-5** – But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God -- having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.
- **2 Timothy 4:3-4** – For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.
- **Titus 3:9-10** – But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.
- **2 Peter 2:1-3** – But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them -- bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.
- **1 John 4:1-3** – Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

Paul predicted, in 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:1-12, that a great apostasy would invade the church, but that it would not come until after “the restrainer” – the Roman Empire – had been removed.

The Middle/Dark Ages followed the collapse of the Roman Empire. This period witnessed the increased power of the institutional church and at the same time great spiritual decline and apostasy. The Gospel truth was replaced with church tradition and man-made philosophies. The Judgment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Trumpet describes the consequences of this apostasy in terms of the spiritual death of those who drink from the polluted waters of the institutional church.

- **4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet** (8:12)

The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.

This description reminds us of the 9<sup>th</sup> plague to strike Egypt – Darkness (Exodus 10:21-23).

In Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel and Micah, darkness announced the coming of God’s judgments:

- **Isaiah 13:9-11** – See, the day of the LORD is coming--a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger-- to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.
- **Ezekiel 32:7-8** – When I snuff you out, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give its light. All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you; I will bring darkness over your land, declares the Sovereign LORD.
- **Joel 3:14-16** – Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the sky will tremble. But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.
- **Micah 3:5-6** – This is what the LORD says: “As for the prophets who lead my people astray, if one feeds them, they proclaim ‘peace’; if he does not, they prepare to wage war against him. Therefore, night will come over you, without visions, and darkness, without divination. The sun will set for the prophets, and the day will go dark for them.”

In the New Testament, Light is a symbol for Jesus and the Gospel (also see Psalm 119:105):

- **John 1:1-4** – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.
- **John 8:12** – When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
- **John 12:46** – I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.
- **Colossians 1:12-14** – giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
- **1 Peter 2:9** – But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Darkness, then, is the symbolic absence of Jesus or the Gospel.

From an historical stand point, the 4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet follows the Middle Ages. In the 1500’s (16<sup>th</sup> century), the Reformation, and the rediscovery of the simple Gospel, restored the Bible as the rule of faith - in contrast to the man-made rules and traditions created by the institutional church. Reformers included: Martin Luther, John Calvin and Huldrych Zwingli.

“The Reformation, also known as the Protestant Reformation and the European Reformation, was a major theological movement in Western Christianity in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Europe that posed a religious and political challenge to the papacy and the authority of the Catholic Church. Following the start of the Renaissance, the Reformation marked the beginning of Protestantism. It is considered one of the events that signified the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the early modern period in Europe.” - wikipedia

However, the vigor of the early reformers was replaced by lifeless controversies and theological arguments, which were designed to undermine opposing positions. Once again, a personal relationship with Jesus was replaced with the importance of church membership in the "official" church (Lutheranism, Calvinism, Church of England, Anabaptists, Puritans). This situation had a deadly effect on Christianity.

The Reformation Period was dealt a death blow when it was ultimately replaced by the Age of Enlightenment – the intellectual revolution of the 16-1700's. The Enlightenment brought new ways of thinking about philosophy, science, politics and religion. "The human capacity for reason was championed as the tool by which our knowledge could be extended, individual liberty maintained and happiness secured." – Mark Cartwright

This period ended the dominance of Christianity in the Western world and gave rise to:

**Rationalism** – regards human reason as the chief source and test of knowledge.

**Skepticism** – certain knowledge is impossible. Some reject all forms of knowledge while others limit this rejection to certain fields, like moral doctrines or the external world.

**Humanism** – a system of thought that attaches prime importance to human reason rather than divine or supernatural matters. This belief stresses the inherent value and goodness of human beings and seeks rational ways of solving human problems.

"Although orthodox Christians participated at every stage of the new republic, Deism influenced a majority of the Founders. The movement opposed barriers to moral improvement and to social justice. It stood for rational inquiry, for skepticism about dogma and mystery, and for religious toleration. Many of its adherents advocated universal education, freedom of the press, and separation of church and state. If the nation owes much to the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is also indebted to Deism, a movement of reason and equality that influenced the Founding Fathers to embrace liberal political ideals remarkable for their time." – David L. Holmes ("The Founding Fathers, Deism and Christianity" – Encyclopedia Britannica)

**Liberalism** – willingness to respect or accept behaviors or opinions different from one's own; openness to new ideas:

- o Politics – hold views that are socially progressive and promote social welfare, individual rights, civil liberties, democracy, and free enterprise.
- o *Theology* – many traditional beliefs are dispensable, invalidated by modern thought, or liable to change.

**Secularism** – the principle of being indifferent to or skeptical/critical of religious belief. This includes the separation of church and state and may seek to remove or to minimize the role of religion in any public sphere.

As a philosophy, secularism seeks to interpret life based on naturalistic principles derived solely from the material world, without recourse to religion. It shifts the focus from religion towards "temporal" and material concerns.

**While there were positives to come out of the Age of Enlightenment – scientific advancement, religious liberty and education – the rise of materialism, the denial of the supernatural and skepticism of faith of any kind, allowed human reason to replace the Bible's authority. The Christian faith was degraded into lifeless formality and spiritual apathy, robbing millions of the hope of salvation.**

**When people reject the Gospel, they are choosing darkness:**

**John 3:19** – This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

**Romans 1:18-24** – The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities -- his eternal power and divine nature -- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over....

**Ephesians 4:17-19** – So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

The Judgment of the 4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet, then, is Spiritual Darkness. In essence, God is giving those who have rejected Him what they desire most – His absence.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet is only a partial darkening – which means there is still hope – salvation is still available.

Unfortunately, Spiritual Darkness only deepens and its deadly consequences become more evident in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Trumpets.