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HEARING THE TRUMPET SOUND

As we have often pointed out, Israel's festival cycle runs with the agricultural year in the land. Passover occurs in the early spring. In this holiday the first sheaf of ripe barley is waved before the Lord as a sign of coming harvest. Afterward the counting of the *omer* is begun. All this leads us to Pentecost, fifty days later. This early-summer holiday marks the general firstfruit harvest of grains and some early fruits. After Pentecost, there is the long growing and maturing season of the summertime. During this period, the bulk of Israel's widely diversified harvest grows as it approaches the end of the season.

Along with the harvest, of course, grow the tares, which are weeds that look like wheat, but have no fruit. Ultimately the growing season comes to an end. This end of the season is pictured for us in the fall feasts of Israel with the sounding of the *shofar* blast on *Rosh Ha-Shana*.

Spiritually, it appears that we are now nearing the end of this summer growing season. The feast of Passover has been fulfilled for us Christians, along with the Feast of Pentecost, as we see in Acts 2. We now await the final period of harvest, with its festivals and convocations, beginning with the sounding of the trumpet.

As we wait, the harvest among mankind continues to mature. Like the natural harvest, it also is made up of the wheat and the tares. It is the rule of the kingdom that the wheat and tares must grow together until the harvest (Matt. 13:29-30). Indeed it is very difficult to tell them apart for awhile. As they mature, the difference soon becomes apparent, and at the final harvest the difference will plain for all to see (Mal. 3:18). The wheat heads will be heavy and bowed low with their goodness and blessing; the empty heads of the tares will be lifted high. Today evil people are becoming more and more evil (2 Tim. 3:1-5), while the truly good people are growing in the knowledge of the Lord with abundant fruitfulness and blessing for all humanity.

The summer is the period of growth and change. Once the trumpet sounds, that period will be over forever. Now we can grow in grace, be made into the image of Christ, and bow in repentance before him. When the trumpet sounds it will be too late for change. The prophet lamented over Israel because he realized this all-important fact. He said, *"The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved!"* (Jer. 8:20).

EARS TO HEAR THE TRUMPET

There is some evidence that the trumpets may already be sounding, at least in the spiritual realm. Revelation 10:7 is an interesting verse: *"But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."* We see that the last trumpet, or at least the preparation for this call, comes over a period of time (days). We also get this understanding from the whole passage in Revelation as it deals with the sounding of the seven trumpets (Rev. 8:6 - 10:7). We see that their sounding covers a period of time, and that the period is filled with many horrors and disasters for this sinful world. The last trumpet will bring an end to this creation. However, before the last trumpet, there must be a first trumpet, then a second and so on.

It is certainly interesting that the Jewish people have responded to the sounding of a great trumpet as they have returned home to Israel in our day. In Isaiah 27:12-13 we read: *"In that day the LORD will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you, O Israelites, will be gathered up one by one. And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem."* If the Jews, who have been returning home *en masse* for over a hundred years, have been doing so in response to the sounding of a trumpet, we can understand how near we are to the end. Most Christians did not hear this trumpet - but many Jews heard it. If we missed this trumpet, are we missing other ones as well?

WHAT WILL THE TRUMPETS ACCOMPLISH?

The sounding of the trumpet (*shofar*) in the Hebrew scripture pictures many things. It was used for marking sacred times and seasons (Psa. 81:3). It was used to call God's people together (Num. 10:2). Of course in those days they didn't have cell phones and pagers. The prophet Joel cries, *"Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber"* (Joel 2:15-16). Today God is calling his people together and he is also calling them to sanctification and holiness. God is calling together his leaders. We see in scripture that there is a specific trumpet call for the leaders to assemble (Num. 10:4).

The trumpet was also used not only to gather the people but to direct the movement of God's camps (Num. 10:2). God's people are going somewhere and we are being guided by the trumpet call of God. When great spiritual developments and revivals take place, God is probably sounding some spiritual trumpet to orchestrate them. The trumpet was also used in Israelite worship (Num. 10:10; Psa. 150:3). There is a call going out today a never before to worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth. Interestingly, the *shofar* is again being used in worship, particularly among Christian congregations in the land of Israel.

Trumpets were used in warfare (Num. 10:9; Josh. 6:16). In Jeremiah 4:19 the prophet exclaims, *"Oh, my anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain. Oh, the agony of my heart! My heart pounds within me, I cannot keep silent. For I have heard the sound of the trumpet; I have heard the battle cry."* Today there is the sound of marching in the mulberry trees, the rumble of heavenly chariots as the princes and principalities of this world gather in opposition to the Almighty and his armies. In Numbers 10:9, the Lord tells us to blow the trumpet when the battle gets hot and the Lord will remember and help. When we consider that Gideon sounded the trumpets and with 300 men defeated 120,000 Midianites, we might conclude that the trumpet is the most powerful weapon this world has ever known.

Likely, one of the most important uses of trumpets in the Bible was for the coronation of the kings of Israel. In 1 Kings 1:39, Solomon was crowned as we read: *"Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, 'Long live King Solomon!'"* The picture is plain in the spiritual realm. In the long, sad history of this world there have been many pretenders to the throne, and there are many today. However, God is the Creator and sustainer of this universe. He is, and has always been, its rightful king. This fact will soon be acknowledged by everyone, as the heavenly trumpet proclaims it.

We Christians believe that the Lord's Messiah will receive the crown and with it, all the authority in this universe. In Revelation 11:15 we read: *"The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ [Messiah], and he will reign for ever and ever.'"*

There is a great coronation about to take place. The true God is about to be acknowledged by men, angels, principalities, and powers. The Bible says, *"It is written: 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'"* (Rom. 14:11).

Before that last trumpet sounds, we are blessed with a time of growing and maturing. The summer still has not ended. We can still cry to the Lord, repent and ask for forgiveness. We can still bear fruit. Once the trumpet sounds we will be transferred immediately into a new era, into a realm beyond flesh and blood. Some will receive eternal shame and judgment, while others will receive eternal blessing and glory. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, *"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."*

- Jim Gerrish

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