

Trumpets Means War!

Christ Returns with a Sword!

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I suspect that to most of us the Feast of Trumpets primarily means that the Feast of Tabernacles is only two weeks away.

We, of course, understand its deeper significance and what its true meanings are, but we mostly think of it as the beginning of the wonderful time we always seem to have during the fall holy day season. To us, it is like the crack of the starter's pistol that begins our race to the Feast of Tabernacles.

In its fulfillment the Feast of Trumpets does indeed mean the beginning of The World Tomorrow—the Millennium. The Kingdom of God is at hand! It has come!

But, the it emphasizes the importance that must take place before that wonderful time can be realized. Christ must return! He must return at a specific time. And, that is what the day of Trumpets means. The saints in their graves must be raised. And, the living saints who are on earth at that time changed in a twinkling of an eye. That is what this day means. And will that not be great?

But still, another thing must be done. The armies of mankind that turn to fight against our returning Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, must be destroyed. It has got to happen.

So, the day of Trumpets not only looks forward to Christ's return, and the establishment of God's Kingdom, and the raising of the saints to eternal life—what I would like to speak about today is that the day of Trumpets also means, WAR!

Let us go to Leviticus 23. We always seem to start off our holy days in Leviticus 23 because it really does set the groundwork for what the meaning of these days are.

Leviticus 23:23-24 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ` In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a Sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord."

We are going to look specifically at a "memorial of blowing of trumpets." This is literally, "A remembrance of shouting." This is kind of a strange phrase.

The Hebrew scholars think that the word shouting is simply a shortened form of another phrase, "The shout of the shofar." But, instead of putting the whole, "The remembrance of the shout of the shofar," God just used, "the remembrance of shouting" and everybody knew that He meant the shout of the shofar.

I think that it is a good translation. And in Psalm 81:3 where it talks about the blowing of the shofar on the new moon, we know that this is indeed a correct translation.

Turn to Numbers 10 where it talks about the use of trumpets within the camp of Israel.

Numbers 10:1-2 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps.

Numbers 10:9-10 When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the Lord your God, and you will be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the Lord your God."

Here we see a direct connection between the day of Trumpets—referring to "day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts"—and war. Notice in verse 9 the word remember shows up again. The memorial of blowing of trumpets means, "a remembrance of shouting." And here God says that He will remember when the trumpet of war is sounded in the land when the enemy comes. Just keep that in the back of your mind.

So, the sound of a trumpet, then, is a cry of alarm in the land when talking about war. It is a call to action, and a call to arms for the people of Israel.

Turn to Psalm 81. In the Psalm, we have the Old Testament understanding of the Day of Trumpets as a memorial.

Psalm 81:1-3 Sing aloud to God our strength; make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob. Raise a song and strike the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the lute. Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, at the full moon, on our solemn feast day.

Here we see the trumpets being blown on the day of Trumpets. And we know that all of God's festivals look back in memorial on certain historical events, and then they look forward in anticipation of future events that will take place. And we mostly look at it in terms of the future event. They are more exciting to us because we believe that they will happen in our day.

So, we see here that the trumpet was blown on the new moon, and it goes on to say in the verses between 3 and 14 about being freed from bondage, and being free to be able to worship God. It was not just deliverance alone, it is also looking upon their redemption to be able to worship God.

And then, we see another thing that it looks back upon, another meaning in verse 14. This is

God speaking:

Psalm 81:14 I would soon subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries.

So, we see that another meaning of the day of Trumpets is that God has promised to fight against our enemies—for us. He is a God who will make war for the saints—for His people.

Turn to Exodus 15. If you have not read this recently this may give you a bit of a shock about what the Bible says about our God. This is Miriam's song she sang once God had delivered them through the Red Sea.

Exodus 15:1-3 Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him. *The Lord is a man of war; The Lord is His name.*

Did you know that it said that? Did you know that our God is a God of war? He is a God who makes war!

One of His names that is very often repeated—272 times in the Old Testament—is, "The Lord of Hosts." Do you know what that means? It means He is "The God of Armies." Another way that it could be translated is that He is the God of Warfare. Or, one of the more strange ones in relation to our stand against military service is that He is "The God of Military Service." But, that is a *special* military service.

At least six verses in the Old Testament specifically say that He fights for us against our enemies; and there are many more that say He will deliver us from them. So, not only will he fight for us, He will deliver us from them. So, our God is not a pansy, passive god. He is a God of war. We should not forget that!

Please turn to Psalm 18 and we will look at something else that is startling about God. You may not have considered this either. And, notice all the military language that is sprinkled throughout all that we read here:

Psalm 18:1-2 I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Psalm 18:30-34 As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him. For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God? It is God who arms me with strength, and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of deer, and sets me on my high places. [Notice this] He teaches

my hands to make war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

What does the Bible say in the book of Isaiah? "When the Millennium comes, we shall learn war no more." We will not learn war anymore, but David says here in Psalm 18 that God taught him how to make war—that God is a military strategist and tactician. He gave David the strength and talents to learn the sword, the bow, and the spear. He taught David how to win battles, campaigns, and wars against the enemy.

This flies directly in the face of the weak god of our Protestant past. We have a God of strength—a God who will not take any guff when it comes to His law. Our God is not a pacifist. He makes war. And it says that even in the New Testament, if you care to look. It is in Revelation 19:11. When Christ returns, He makes war against His enemies.

So, I think from all of this we can draw only one conclusion, and Solomon said it best in Ecclesiastes 3:8—there is a time for war.

Of course, the church of God is not a nation. I want you to stick that in the back of your mind also. The church of God is not a nation that can make war. During what some call the church age—from Christ's first coming to His second coming—we are strictly forbidden from going to war either as a body or as individuals. We are told to submit to governments. James 4 says that going to war is wrong, calling them adulterers and adulteresses who do this. The sixth commandment specifically says that you shall not kill.

God instructs us to be at peace in I Thessalonians 5:13. He says to love the truth and peace in Zechariah 8:19. He says to have peace with one another in Mark 9:50 and He says to follow peace with all men in Hebrews 12:14. And of course, in the beatitudes in Matthew 5:9 blessed are the peacemakers.

This is all very clear that as a church and as a people of God, we cannot wage war.

But, turn to Isaiah 66 and a prophecy of the end time. The heading in my New King James Version Bible is "The Lord Vindicates Zion." Here it is talking about the church of God.

Isaiah 66:5-8 Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at His word: "Your brethren who hated you [this is interesting], who cast you out for My name's sake, said, 'Let the Lord be glorified, that we may see your joy.' But they shall be ashamed. The sound of noise from the city! A voice from the temple! The voice of the Lord, who fully repays His enemies! Before she [Zion] was in labor, she gave birth; before her pain came, she delivered a male child [Christ]. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children.

Guess what happens? The church of God suddenly becomes a nation—the Kingdom of God! And Christ returns to this earth with the army of His nation. He now has a nation to lead into battle. Remember, He did not have a nation. He is not even crowned the King until His return. And

now, He has a nation to lead into battle like David led the nation of Israel into battle under God.

Next, here, we will see that immediately He engages the enemy in battle.

Isaiah 66:14-16 When you see this [the church of God born as a nation], your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like grass; the hand of the Lord shall be known to His servants, and His indignation to His enemies. For behold, the Lord will come with fire and with His chariots, like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and render His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword the Lord will judge all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many.

So, unlike with ancient Israel, God comes with an army of resurrected saints—not fallible, physical, corruptible human beings—but with an army of resurrected saints who are holy—who can wage war in righteousness and holiness. They will know how to do it correctly.

I can imagine the great war-makers of the past in the Bible—David, Moses (a great general), Joshua (was a great general), Abraham (the leader of 318 who defeated the kings against Sodom), Caleb, Jephthah, and Samson (among others)—may very well be at the front of the charge because God taught them to make war in righteousness.

Obviously, this brings up a question. We have seen two sides here. When is it right to make war? We have to answer that question. And, there is only one reason that has any validity. It is very simple: Only when God says to go to war!

Only when God says that it is right to go to war is it right to go to war. God is not capricious. He does not go to war for the reasons that men go to war. He does not go to war for reasons of conquest alone. He does not do it to get a kick from this power that is going through Him. He does not do it for wealth.

We just heard in this morning's offertory that He owns everything. He does not need to go to war to have everything. He does not do it for territory. He owns all of that too. He does not do it to get slaves, or any other spoils of war.

So, why does God go to war? When does He decide that war is the only viable, correct or right option? I believe that there are two scenarios.

The first is that when men or nations become so wicked that He must destroy them to prevent a greater, more eternal disaster. God wants to give every individual a chance to repent of his sins, and to have eternal life. He wants everyone to come to repentance. He says that in one of the epistles of Peter.

But, sometimes even before some have had this opportunity, the minds of those people can become so calloused to sin, that repentance becomes impossible. They are totally warped.

The Bible uses the phrase in I Timothy 4:2 "their conscience is seared with a hot iron." When something is seared, it is set. It cannot be moved.

Titus 1:15 To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled

and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.

It cannot be cleaned up.

Ephesians 4:19 Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

They are totally depraved. There is no chance for repentance—they are so caught up in the spell of sin that they just cannot work out of it. God does not want that to happen. He wants to give every man and woman the chance to repent of their sins.

This was the kind of circumstance that God faced before the flood. Every imagination of their hearts was to do evil. The people of the world were so wicked that God chose to destroy them all—however many millions there might have been—except for those 8 people saved in the ark of Noah.

That was a war that God waged with water. He did not take armies to do his killing for Him. In mercy, He used water. And this story of sin before the flood is a serious thing for us because Jesus said that wickedness like what was found in Noah's day will be around at the end time.

Against Sodom and Gomorrah, God used fire and brimstone to eradicate all traces of a society that was permeated with perversion and violence. He was willing to spare them if only ten righteous people could be found there. But they could only find one—Lot was righteous.

So, what did God do? He annihilated those cities of the plains. He totally eradicated those cities with fire, and then covered them with the Dead Sea. He did not want them to become so hardened and calloused that they could not repent.

There is a principle found in Leviticus 18, which you probably heard said before, but I need to repeat it because it is important. The earlier parts of this chapter speak mostly of sexual perversions, although there are some portions on idolatry and human sacrifice. But, it is mostly sexual perversions found here that God forbids the Israelites to do.

Leviticus 18:24-28 Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you.

God said that even if Israel, His chosen people, did these things, that He would allow the

natural process of removal to take place—the land would vomit them out of it.

Often, God uses natural disasters with the land where violent things like earthquakes, or windstorms, and other things would chase them away. In one place it says that He would get the hornets and wild animals to chase out the Canaanites who were in the land for this very reason.

But sometimes He used war. Remember He chose Assyria to come to war against Israel. And later He chose Babylon to do the same against the remnant of Judah.

So, what we find here is that the land vomits the inhabitants out for their evil. This is one of the methods that God uses to make sure that sin does not spread either geographically or generationally—He does not want people to become so calloused to sin that they cannot repent.

Deuteronomy 7:1-2, 16 When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, and when the Lord your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them *and* utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. . . And you shall destroy all the peoples whom the Lord your God delivers over to you; your eye shall have no pity on them; nor shall you serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you.

Guess what happened?

Israel went into the land, but did not conquer it all—those practices they chose to learn from the people still in the land later proved their downfall. They did not do what God said to do, and did not become the weapon of God to vomit the Canaanites out of the land, and it came back to bite them.

According to Genesis 15:16 one reason why Israel went into captivity in Egypt was because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet complete. There was a period of about 400 years where God knew that toward the end of it the people would get so bad that they would need to be vomited out of the land of Canaan, and that would coincide with the release of Israel from Egypt. But, Israel did not kick them out as required.

So, God not only goes to war to ensure that these people can repent, but also that the plague of evil would no longer spread out to others, or to another generation.

The second scenario that I have regarding the reasons why God chooses to go to war is when men or nations attack His people, especially without a cause.

If someone attacked His people with a just cause, then He might allow it as our punishment for sin. However, especially when it is without cause, He will defend His people and go to war.

Turn back to Exodus 17 and see one of those times when somebody attacked His people

without a cause. Israel had just left Egypt. They had crossed the Red Sea in chapter 14, and so this is only a couple of weeks out of Egypt. Israel had been slaves. They were not trained in war. They did not know how to defend themselves. I am sure that there were a few among them who did, but the vast majority of the people were not warlike at all. They had no training in war.

And then, here come the Amalekites.

Exodus 17:8-9 Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand."

And you know the story where Moses went up to the top of the hill, and he had to keep his hands up. And so long as he kept his hands up in the air, then Israel prevailed; but when he let them drop down, Amalek would begin to prevail.

They had to prop Moses' hands up with the help of Aaron and Hur to make sure that Israel would continue to prevail. Remember they were not trained in war. They needed the intervention of God. Listen to God's reaction to what happened in this episode.

Exodus 17:14-16 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven [God did not take this lightly]." And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner [Yaweh-Nissi]; for he said, "Because the Lord has sworn: the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

That is quite a curse! God will go to war with this people from generation to generation because they attacked Israel when they were least able to defend themselves.

God says even more about this in Deuteronomy 25. It did not leave His mind. He was infuriated by what happened here in Exodus 17.

Deuteronomy 25:17-18 Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God.

Amalek had not thought that Israel would have such a defender on hand as God was.

Deuteronomy 25:19 Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will

blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.

God was still angry. This is forty years later when He told Moses this. He did not like what Amalek had done. He had attacked His people without cause, and no less than at Israel's weakest places. And not only so, but he did not fear God. He took God so very lightly that he did not have any regard for God.

But when Israel went into the land, and finally had a bit of peace, guess what they did not do? They did not blot Amalek out from under heaven.

God specifically called Saul to a mission of blotting Amalek out (Agag). Remember how he failed? He spared the king, and the best of all the stuff. "Oh, they are to be for sacrifices!" But, that is not what God had told him to do. God told him to blot out Amalek out.

So, since Saul did not do that, guess what David had to do? He had to fight Amalek. And many others of Israel had to fight Amalek. And they were never blotted out.

Notice that Psalm 83: 6 is an end-time prophecy listing conspirators against God. And who should be named in the middle of the list? Amalek, along with Edom, Assyria, and others who have been the great enemies of Israel.

So we can see here that God not only fights back when He is attacked, or His people are attacked, He will continue the fight until it is done, and He will be victorious. God does not give up.

Turn to Revelation 19. When Christ descends from heaven, my second scenario kicks in. The combined armies of mankind immediately attack Him. And He retaliates.

Revelation 19:11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

Remember it is said that He would come back with the saints who could make war in righteousness.

Revelation 19:12-21 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven [the saints], clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses [even their mounts are white—how holy they are and able to make war!]. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron [a reason He is doing this, to defeat them, and then rule them]. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God [another reason, due to be judged for their disobedience]. And He

has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

These armies are so much under the thrall of Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet that they will ignore all the evidence that God has given—that Very God is returning to earth. And they will turn, and futilely try to destroy the indestructible. Christ will lead His army of resurrected saints, and His legions of angels, and just utterly devastate them until there is nothing left. Their flesh will melt off their bones. Their eyeballs will melt out of their sockets. Whatever He does will obliterate them.

And of course, behind this attack upon God is Satan the devil, who has a very long history of attacking God, and a very long history of losing. God will win this battle also. He will fight back and destroy them.

Take another look at our place in all this.

There is a song in our hymnal taken from Joel chapter 2. On most Days of Trumpets we sing "Blow the Horn, Let Zion Hear!" I will be doing the song leading this afternoon here in Charlotte and we will sing this song. These verses describe the Army of God that we will be a part of.

Joel 2:1-2 Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand: A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations.

I get the impression from this that maybe when Gog and Magog rebels at the end of the Millennium, that the like of Them will be seen one more time.

Joel 2:3-11 A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame

burns; the land is like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; surely nothing shall escape them. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like swift steeds, so they run. With a noise like chariots over mountaintops they leap, like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, like a strong people set in battle array. Before them the people writhe in pain; all faces are drained of color. They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks. They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column [that is the unity of the saints]. Though they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down [incorruptible, indestructible]. They run to and fro in the city, they run on the wall; they climb into the houses, they enter at the windows like a thief. The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it?

I sure do want to be on the right side of that army!

These verses describe the very first stage of the fulfillment of the Day of Trumpets. War against the enemies of God. It has to happen first. It prophesies complete and utter victory for the good guys in white. God will be victorious.

And only when this stage is fully accomplished will the earth be able to have peace for one thousand years.