

# The Clarion Call - What Is the Last Trump?

- by Gary Stearman -

On the Arch of Titus, built in Rome at the end of the first century to celebrate the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, there are depictions of the loot brought from the Holy City, following the A.D. 70 sacking of Israel's Holy Temple. This fifty-foot-high triumphal arch is the only arch of its type still standing as an ancient memorial. Pictured in sculpted reliefs on the arch are what the Romans must have considered to be the most valuable of all their prizes, the Temple Menorah, and Table of Showbread and two ceremonial trumpets. It is truly remarkable that on this arch, we see the only realistic renderings ever made of the actual instruments of Temple worship, presumably executed by a Roman sculptor who patterned them after the real articles.

The Romans rightly valued the booty from the sacked Temple of Herod as the greatest prize ever to fall into their hands. The leaders of the conquering Flavian Dynasty, Vespasian, and his two sons, Titus and Domitian, believed the existence of a Jewish state to be the chief barrier to peaceful control of the Middle East. They did everything they could to make sure that they stamped out Israel so completely that it would never rise again. Their victory cry, IUDEA CAPTA -- Judea Captured -- rang out across the world in triumph. It was repeatedly struck upon coins of the realm for all to see.

Forty years after Christ's crucifixion, Vespasian and Titus overran Jerusalem, Israel and especially the Temple Mount, taking gold, silver and valuables, along with thousands of Jews to be sold in the slave markets of the world. From A.D. 66 through A.D. 73, the Romans systematically destroyed all Israel.

But as the Arch of Titus shows, it was the golden Menorah along with the Table of Showbread that the Romans regarded as the highest symbols of their victory. These two articles -- the light and bread of God's people -- were displayed as a token that not just the Jewish people, but the God of Israel, Himself, had been vanquished. It was their way of saying, "God is dead."

Interestingly, two trumpets are also carved into the picture. An important question emerges. Why are the two trumpets pictured on the arch, being given as much symbolic significance as the Menorah and Showbread table from the Holy Place? Why did the Romans consider these instruments to be so important that they, too, would occupy so important a position on the triumphal arch?

As it turns out, the blowing of trumpets is one of the Bible's major themes. The Romans could not have known this, but in fact, the carving on the Arch of Titus validates the Lord's view of an important fact. The trumpet is an important symbol of God's sovereign power, and a testament to His affirmation that He would never forget His promise to a redeemed people.

### The Trumpet of Grace

Within the body of Christ, there is a group (the percentage is impossible to calculate) that actively holds to the doctrine of imminency. Faithfully following the Apostolic example, they await the clarion call of the trumpet, in the belief that no intervening event must come to pass before it is sounded.

It is the trumpet of grace, which signals the transition to a glorified body and their full realization of God's Kingdom. There is even a special reward for those who actively live in this hope, stated by Paul in his second letter to Timothy:

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:8).

*Some would take the position that Paul is here referring to Christ's Second Coming during the great battle at the end of the Tribulation. But in the ordinary sense of the word, as it is perceived now, during the age of the church, he is talking about Christ's glorious epiphany at the rapture.*

Nevertheless, we are often faced with those whose theology has led them to a false conclusion: namely, that the trumpet that calls the church home is thought to be the same as the seventh trumpet of judgment in the book of Revelation.

In numerous books, pamphlets and letters to this ministry, we are more or less constantly challenged by those who want to warn us that we are wrong to teach that rapture will come before the judgments of the "Day of the Lord." This being true, we must therefore prepare ourselves for the horrors of the Tribulation just ahead.

### Listening for the Trumpet

But to the redeemed, the very thought of this event ranges from pleasant peace to thrilling anticipation. The trumpet is our signal to go home. It has nothing at all to do with judgment, wrath or divine retribution. And perhaps that is its major feature.

Of course, Paul goes to great lengths to describe this glorious event ... its timing, characteristics and meaning. Most of all, he goes out of his way to emphasize the simple fact that those alive at the time of the rapture will be taken to heaven prior to a unique and cataclysmic period of judgment.

His first and second epistles to the Thessalonians are centered upon the idea of comforting a group of people who have many questions about their ultimate destiny in Christ. Several times, he uses the word "comfort" to ease any concerns they may have about the future. Of course, Christians remember these letters as the ones that outline and detail the nature and timing of the rapture.

After describing the catching-away of the church, he writes, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (I Th. 4:18). A little later, he adds, "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" (I Th. 5:11).

In Second Thessalonians, after describing the Antichrist's rise to power as a sign that the Day of the Lord is present, he writes, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, "Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work" (II Th. 2:16, 17).

It must be remembered that when he wrote these words, the Temple was still in daily operation. Paul's words about the man of sin standing there and declaring himself to be God could have come to pass at any moment. But his readers never thought that they would see this event. It was, in fact, quite the opposite.

Both then and now, Paul's words are intended to bring solace to a people with many questions about the judgment of the sinful world system -- the Roman world of their day and the complex world of ours.

Thinking about life in first-century Thessalonica, the Roman capital of Macedonia, it was completely immersed in a pagan culture. The worship of Caesar and a panoply of gods and goddesses would dominate your daily existence. As a new Christian, taught by the Lord's own Apostles that judgment was coming, you would readily believe it.

Would you be a little concerned that you might find yourself in the midst of that judgment? Of course you would. For this reason, and for the benefit of the entire Church Age, Paul was inspired to write these words of comfort. The evil world system would be judged, but before that, the Lord would appear to call the dead in Christ and the living church into the heavens. They ascend into the heavens before that Day of the Lord. They were told to await the shout and the sound of the trumpet. Paul addressed them as the generation that would experience this glorious event. No intervening experience would alert them to its proximity. They were simply to wait in faith, believing in His imminent return.

Generations of the faithful have since gone to their spiritual reward. Along the way, some have weakened, reverting to alternate forms of expectation, that the rapture and Second Coming are the same event, or that it comes in the midst of the Tribulation.

But Paul's bold words proclaim that the catching-away into heaven come before the general judgment prophesied as the Old Testament "Day of the Lord" and the New Testament "great tribulation." Jesus, Himself, used this graphic term: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Mt. 24:21).

Yet the Apostle's words of comfort to the believer are so consistently misinterpreted that today, the majority of the world's Christian denominations profess alternate views. Some say that the rapture will come at some point during the Tribulation Period, whether earlier or later. Others deny it entirely, saying that it is a mere metaphor. Given the clarity of Paul's words, how can such misunderstanding exist?

Were it not for a single point of language, this scenario would be readily accepted by most of the church. But the wording used to describe the clarion call from on high, has come to be used as a basis for rival interpretations, clashes of opinion, and a variety of post-Apostolic theologies. Historically and intellectually, there are many reasons for this. But one of the major differences has revolved around an incomplete understanding of the trumpets of Scripture, and their application to biblical prophecy.

## The "Trump"

These false conclusions are often built around the novel interpretation ... or outright misinterpretation ... of a certain heavenly trumpet, mentioned twice in connection with the rapture. It is first mentioned in what is commonly regarded as the earliest of Paul's extant epistles:

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (I Th. 4:14-18).

Here is the "trump of God," sounded as Jesus and a host of angels descend into the lower atmosphere. Who has not dreamed of being alive at the moment this finally happens? The whirlwind of activities associated with this moment defy the wildest imagination, as perhaps the greatest logistical feat in history is flawlessly executed.

Graves are opened as the dead in Christ rise to receive their glorified bodies. Then the living saints somehow fly upward. They, too, receive His glory, as it is translated into their own bodies. And the whole, global operation apparently springs into motion as God blows His trumpet.

What is this "trump?" Certainly, it is no earthly instrument, though in the Greek, the word *salpinx*, referring to a natural musical instrument, is used. There must be a trumpet in heaven ... the real thing. But what kind of trumpet will it be? What could it be made of? We try to imagine what it might sound like, knowing at the outset that there is no way to conceive the sound that a heavenly trumpet might make.

In Paul's discourse on resurrection, the same event is described, using the same, identical word. This time, however, it is modified by an adjective:

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (I Cor. 15:51-55).

This time, the rapture is mentioned in the context of the general resurrection. This time, the Greek word for trumpet -- salpinx -- is used twice. But here, it is called the "last trump," raising the question about what precedes it. The context demands that it must be the last of a series.

Some suggest that since it is the last in a series of trumpets, it must be defined by the series, itself. One such series is found in Joshua, where on the seventh day, seven priests walked around Jericho's walls, blowing their ram's horn trumpets. Jericho was judged; the walls came down.

Following this pattern, another similar series in the Bible is found in Revelation, where seven trumpets are sounded, apparently in rapid succession. They progressively unleash an astounding series of judgments at the end of the Tribulation.

Let's look again at the seven trumpets in Revelation. Taken in order, the first one releases hail, fire and blood; the second brings a fiery mountain which falls into the sea; the third brings down a toxic falling star, falling into a poisoned sea; the fourth, a diminished sun; the fifth opens the abyss; the sixth releases demonic powers; the seventh heralds the culmination of wrath, the spilling out of the seven vials, or bowls of wrath.

## The Seventh Angel's Trumpet

To those who believe in a mid or late-Tribulation rapture, this seventh trumpet is identical to "the last trump" of I Cor. 15:52. But in Revelation the seventh trumpet is the ultimate expression of God's wrath, in divine retribution. The last trumpet, it unleashes the judgments of the seven bowls of wrath. Nothing in the description of this trumpet connects it in any way with the resurrection of the faithful. What it does is clearly described:

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

"And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God" (Rev. 11:15,16).

This seventh trumpet is definitely not the "trump of God." In the original New Testament Greek, this verse plainly says, "And the seventh angel trumpeted ...". This is an angelic trumpet, not "the trump of God," which Scripture elsewhere asserts to be His voice that sounds like a trumpet.

Furthermore, it specifically announces an event recognized, hailed and affirmed by a great chorus of heavenly observers ... observers already in heaven. They are not the church in the process of being raptured, as indicated by the fact that the twenty-four elders, who were there at the very beginning of the judgment process, are still present, now seated with God, as He enacts the long-awaited judgment.

But to truly understand "the last trump," we should go all the way back to the beginning, and the sounding of the "first trump," which is not only the first trumpet in the Bible, but God's own voice ... not a musical instrument.

## The First Trumpet

Let's begin at the beginning. It is at Mount Sinai that we find the first example of a heavenly trumpet:

"And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

"And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:

"There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

"And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.

"And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.

"And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

"And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

"And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

"And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

"And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up" (Ex. 19:11-20).

Three times in the passage above, the trumpet of God is described for the first time in all Scripture. Here, it is identified as the ram's horn or shofar. But the context completely rules out its identification as an ordinary ram's horn. To the people gathered below, its sound was deafening, and so frightening that their fear increased to the breaking point. In the chapter that follows, the Israelites are described as so stricken that they moved back to a great distance from Mount Horeb:

"And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off" (Ex. 20:18).

Flavius Josephus describes the event this way: "Now, as to these matters, every one of my readers may think as he pleases; but I am under a necessity of relating this history as it is described in the sacred books. This sight, and the amazing sound that came to their ears, disturbed the Hebrews to a prodigious degree, for they were not such as they were accustomed to ... [Moses] brought the people with their wives and children, so near the mountain, that they might hear God himself speaking to them about the precepts which they were to practice; that the energy of what should be spoken might not be hurt by its utterance by that tongue of man, which could but imperfectly deliver it to their understanding. And they all heard a voice that came to all of them from above, insomuch that no one of these words escaped them, which Moses wrote on two tables." [Antiquities, III, 5, 2; 4]

The book of Hebrews relates that they begged for the fearsome sounds to cease.

"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

"And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more" (Heb. 12:18,19).

The point is clear and unmistakable. In the plainest possible language, we are informed that the first trumpet heard in Scripture was God's own heavenly ram's horn. Or at least, on a gigantic scale, it sounded something like a ram's horn. It was not an earthly trumpet.

Anyone who has ever heard the tekiah, teruah, shevarim blasts of the trumpet on Rosh HaShanah knows that even an earthly trumpet will strike fear into the human heart.

A heavenly trumpet is something else, entirely. It sounded on Pentecost, and marked the giving of the Law. The "last trump" will mark the end of the church age, which also began on Pentecost. Could the final trumpet blast for the church also be sounded on a future Pentecost?

A trumpet need not be a condemnation. There are other trumpets in Scripture that sound the rallying call to move out to a new location, or to take some significant action.

## Two Silver Trumpets

Typical of this are the two metal trumpets, hand-crafted from single sheets of silver by Israelite craftsmen. And here, for the first time, we get some hint as to the significance of those two trumpets on the Arch of Titus.

As can be seen in the tenth chapter of Numbers, their specific function was to call and coordinate movements of the twelve tribes:

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

"Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps.

"And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

"And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes, which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee.

"When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward.

"When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys.

"But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm.

"And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations.

"And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies.

"Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God" (Num. 10:1-10).

The trumpets are *hatsotserah*, made of beaten metal, with a smooth, continuously tapered bore. By skillful overblowing they, like all trumpets, can be made to sound several different clear notes, much in the same manner as the

modern keyless cavalry trumpet, which can sound several complex calls when the trumpeter simply varies lip tension and air pressure.

To this day, all the armed camps of the world are trained to understand and obey trumpet calls. Perhaps this tradition dates back to the initial use of the two silver trumpets. Psalm 98, a psalm of Moses mentions both the metal trumpet and the ram's horn shofar, here called a cornet:

"Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.

"With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King" (Ps. 98:5,6).

By the time of David, Solomon and the First Temple, trumpets were used by the priests to announce the months and to celebrate the arrival of the various feasts, as seen in Psalm 81:3, where we read, "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day."

Here, the shofar is mentioned as the herald trumpet of important events in the House of David. Whether or not the original silver trumpets survived to the age of the First Temple is unknown, but Jewish history tells us that trumpeting was an integral part of Temple worship.

### First-Century Trumpets

When we come to the New Testament era, the two silver trumpets ordained in the days of Moses once again become used on a daily basis.

In Alfred Edersheim's book, *The Temple*, we gain considerable insight into the use of the famous trumpets seen on the Arch of Titus. Edersheim goes to considerable length to detail their use:

"The blasts of the trumpets, blown by priests only, formed -- at least in the second Temple -- no part of the instrumental music of the service, but were intended for quite different purposes. Even the posture of the performers showed this, for while the Levites stood at their desks facing toward the sanctuary, or westwards, the priests, with their silver trumpets, stood exactly in the opposite direction, on the west side of the rise of the altar, by the "table of the fat," and looking eastwards or down the courts. On ordinary days the priests blew seven times, each time three blasts -- a short sound, an alarm, and again a sharp, short sound (*Thekiah*, *Theruah*, and *Thekiah*), or, as the Rabbis express it, "An alarm in the midst and a plain note before and after it." According to tradition, they were intended symbolically to proclaim the kingdom of God, Divine Providence, and the final judgment. The first three blasts were blown when the great gates of the Temple -- especially that of Nicanor -- were opened. Then, when the drink-offering was poured out, the Levites sang the psalm of the day in three sections. After each section, there was a pause, when the priests blew three blasts, and the people worshiped. This was the practice at the evening, as at the morning sacrifice. On the eve of the Sabbath a threefold blast of the priest's trumpets summoned the people, afar as the sound was carried over the city, to prepare for the holy day, while another threefold blast announced its actual commencement. On Sabbaths, when, besides the ordinary, an additional sacrifice was brought, and the "Song of Moses" sung -- not the whole every Sabbath, but divided in six parts, one for every Sabbath -- the priests sounded their trumpets additional three times in the pauses of the Sabbath psalm." [Temple, pp. 59,60]

Edersheim's evocative description of Temple service in the days of Jesus and His disciples stirs the imagination, as it must have the Romans, who patrolled the city day and night. Jerusalem had declined to the point that it was a Roman military procurate. The Jews were uneasy, as groups among them campaigned for a general uprising ... a civil revolt.

The Romans knew this, bringing them in the days of Titus to put Jerusalem under siege, ultimately destroying it completely. But in the years preceding this catastrophe, Romans had heard the priestly blasts of the two silver trumpets on a daily basis. Imagine the awe and suspicion that must have filled them as they

witnessed mysterious rites and rituals. Priestly activities were accompanied by the flow of blood in streams of water and the smell of burning offerings.

And over it all, ringing throughout Jerusalem, were the mysterious blasts of the silver trumpets, assuring the twelve tribes that God was present, and that their nation was blessed. Roman soldiers and politicians, listening to the daily resonating call, must have inwardly shuddered at the thought that Jehovah was listening.

Then, under Titus and Vespasian, Jerusalem was laid waste. Right at the top of their pile of loot were those wretched and annoying trumpets that had plagued them on a daily basis. They were taken and paraded through Rome, glistening symbols that Rome had conquered the very God of Israel. His voice lay still.

A priesthood that had fallen to corruption was no longer privileged to minister the call of God's righteousness. Their calls were only the faint echoes of His magnificent call at Mount Sinai.

### The Real Last Trump

Almost fifteen hundred years elapsed between that first trump of God at Pentecost and the arrival of Pentecost in the house where the disciples gathered to await a moving of His Spirit. This time, in the voices of a faithful few men, another announcement came to the world. Through Christ, God had extended His grace to all men.

Then and now, the custom of the Jews is to remain awake all night, before the day of Pentecost ... or Shavout, the Feast of Weeks. They read special Scriptural passages in an observance now known as tikkun leil Shavuot, readings for the night of Pentecost. Then the next day dawns:

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4).

Again, just as divine fire descended upon Mount Sinai, tongues of fire encircled the heads of Israel's faithful. But this time, the message was grace, not Law. And this time, there was no frightening trumpet blast, only the declaration of Good News, and the joy of those receiving it in their own languages.

What a contrast! The Gospel has never been delivered with a fearful threat laid before those who would flaunt the Law. Rather, it came through love and self-sacrifice. And in the centuries that followed, that fact has never changed.

It has been said that the church -- the body of Christ -- is finite in nature. It began on a specific day, the day of Pentecost, and it will also end on a specific day, the day of the rapture.

Since it was initiated in grace, why would it end in a holocaust of solar and meteorological chaos, complicated by disease and famine? Why would it end with the fearful blast of the seventh trumpet, which is intended to call forth destruction upon those who have lived in iniquity and will die in judgment?

This is not the trumpet that calls the faithful home.

Jesus, speaking in the Olivet Discourse about the "abomination of desolation" at the middle of the Tribulation, addresses those who live in Judea in those days. He says that immediately following this occurrence, which we know to be a mid-Tribulation event, there will come a period characterized by the ultimate evil, when Satan and his followers rage across the earth. He then described the years immediately following the unveiling of the Antichrist:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

"And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Mt. 24:29-31).

Here, the "elect" are the saints of the Tribulation who have persevered to the very end of the awesome "Day of the Lord." They have received the Gospel by faith in the midst of fiery trial.

And the trumpet mentioned above must be the seventh trumpet of Revelation, sounding as the Bowls of Wrath are poured upon the earth. It precedes the Harvest Judgment of Revelation 14, perfectly corresponding with the gathering of the elect described by Jesus as He spoke to the disciples on the Mount of Olives.

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

"And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

"And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped" (Rev. 14:14-16).

Early in His public ministry, Jesus had mentioned this event as He expounded upon the sower, the soils and the weeds that grow up among them. He said,

"The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels" (Mt. 13:39).

He times the harvest as coming at the same future moment as the collapse of the world system. This makes the final harvest an act of mercy and salvation to those alive at a time of great distress, not the calling-home of a church in its ordinary state of daily living.

The trumpet voice to the church will not be a call of wrath, but the gentle assertion of great power, as to John, when Christ called to him:

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet" (Rev. 1:10).

Nor is the trumpet a mere instrument. We await the very voice of God. Its characteristics are unknown to us at present, but we'll know it when we hear it. And it will sound much like a trumpet. It has happened before, and it will happen again:

"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter" (Rev. 4:10).

The first trump laid down the Law. The last trump will be a loving invitation, welcoming the redeemed to their new home, and making way for the trumpets of judgment on earth.

Titus, a corrupt despot and enemy of God, was inflated with pride as he ordered his triumphal arch emblazoned with a panel to display Israel's destruction. But to those who know, its trumpets carry the subtle message that the Lord isn't quite finished yet.