



Christ's *Parousia* Contemplated in the “Mystery” of “God’s Trumpet.”

ANDREAS HOECK, S.S.D.

Saint John Vianney Theological Seminary
Archdiocese of Denver

Resumen: La trompeta es una característica común en el Antiguo Testamento; aparece en una amplia gama de circunstancias, todas las cuales son significativas en la vida de Israel. Las recurrencias mucho menos frecuentes en el Nuevo Testamento describen el regreso de Cristo a este mundo en los mismos límites del tiempo. Este estudio explora dos frases paulinas que involucran esa trompeta del tiempo final (1 Cor 15: 51-52; 1 Tes 4:16), buscando interpretarlas en la luz intertextual del asombroso espectro de veintiún contextos cívicos, belicosos y litúrgicos de los precedentes del Antiguo Testamento, y finalmente sacar una conclusión teológica concerniente al *Señor parusiaco*. ¿Será posible comprender más profundamente la amplitud espiritual de su nuevo advenimiento en este mundo y su historia al contemplarlo a través del lente del “misterio” de la “trompeta de Dios”?

Palabras clave: Biblia, Escatología, vínculos intertextuales, Parusía.

Summary: The trumpet is a common feature in the Old Testament; it appears in an extensive range of circumstances, all of which are of significance in the life of Israel. The much less frequent recurrences of it in the New Testament depict Christ’s return into this world on the very boundaries of time. This present study explores two Pauline phrases that involve that end-time trumpet (1

Cor 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:16), seeking to interpret them in the intertextual light of the astounding spectrum of twenty-one civic, bellicose, and liturgical contexts of Old Testament precedents, and to finally draw a theological conclusion concerning the *parousiac Lord*. Will it be possible to deeper grasp the spiritual breadth of his renewed advent into this world and its history by contemplating it through the lens of the “mystery” of “God’s trumpet”?

Keywords: Bible, Eschatology, intertextual links, Parousia.

INTRODUCING THE “TRUMPET” AS INTERTEXTUAL CHALLENGE

The trumpet is a familiar occurrence in the Old Testament. It is featured in an extensive range of circumstances, all of which signal an instant of considerable pertinence in the life of the chosen people of Israel. Far less frequency can be ascertained in the New Testament, yet those occurrences wholly portray Christ’s return into this world on the very boundaries of time and history. Thus, the trumpet becomes *the parousiac instrument par excellence*. Exceptions are Mat 6:2 with its portrayal of a cultural situation, Heb 12:19 as an allusion of Sinai’s theophany, as well as 1 Cor 14:8 with its military metaphor.¹

Two most enthralling passages, however, both evocative of Christ’s *parousia*, seem to nudge the reader toward a more profound layer of meaning interconnected with the trumpet, namely, 1 Cor 15:51f, where Saint Paul speaks of a “mystery” involved, and 1 Thess 4:16, where the same author mentions “God’s Trumpet”.

The purpose of this essay would be to first examine this pair of expressions, “mystery” and “God’s trumpet”, study their impact on the portrait of Christ’s eschatological advent, and subsequently probe the latter in the echo chamber of Old Testament citations of that trumpet: do they open up *vistas* unto further strata of senses regarding the concept of *parousia*? And if they do, how do they qualify the message that is proper to that eschatological event. We expect that the exegetical investigation will enable us to draw some theological conclusion. Let us now begin our biblical analysis by attempting to hone in on the word “mystery” at 1 Cor 15:51a.

1 Cf. Richard, E.J., *First and Second Thessalonians*, Sacra Pagina, The Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN 1995, pp. 227-229.

1. A “MYSTERIOUS” TRUMPET

Toward the closing of his First Epistle to the faithful in Corinth, Paul felt the necessity to re-emphasize the Risen Christ as the first fruit of all those who have fallen asleep in death. His words on the occasion end up being the broadest treatment of the fact and manner of the resurrection of the dead in the entire New Testament. His thought crystallizes around consequences of Jesus’ resurrection, namely, that all flesh will be revived (see 1 Cor 15:1-34), and that the resurrection of the dead consummates the work of redemption, vv. 35-58.² At the very pinnacle of his elucidations he exclaims³: “Listen, I will tell you a mystery (μυστήριον, *mysterium*)! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet (ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ σάλπιγγι, *in novissima tuba*). For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed”, 1 Cor 15:51-52. This avowal indubitably amounts to one of the most tremendous Pauline prophecies.

In a way, the apostle’s revelation of “the last trumpet” in v. 52a is eloquently framed by the directly preceding “mystery”, v. 51a. Earlier in his letter he had already meditated on “God’s wisdom, mysterious and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory”, 1 Cor 2:7. What exactly was that “hidden wisdom,” or “mystery”? One thing is for certain, namely, that the grand finale of the mystery will be unambiguous: it is our transformation into incorruptible bodies precisely at the sound of the last trumpet. In other words, it is a concealed truth revealed to and through Paul about what is to happen at the end, akin to the explanation encountered at Rom 11:25.⁴ This end-time scenario is tantamount to what is rendered in 1 Thess 4:15-17.⁵ Since God’s omnipotence is the only force that can bring about the resurrection, so also only his word can expose it.⁶

A crucial component of that eschatological mystery is “the last trumpet”, condensing the simile of suddenness, as well as adding the aura of the defini-

2 Nestle-Aland offers the following captions: *Christus Resuscitatus Primitiae Dormientium*: 15,1-58; *In resurrectione Christi omnes vivificabuntur*: 15,1-34; *In resurrectione mortuorum opus salutis consummatur*: 15,35-58; see *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, Deutsche Biblegesellschaft: Stuttgart 271993, pp. 466-468.

3 Scripture quotations throughout are in consonance with the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRS 1989).

4 Cf. Brown, R.E. – Fitzmyer, J.A. – Murphy, R.E., eds., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ 1990, p. 814.

5 Cf. Collins, R.F., *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina, Vol. 7, The Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN 1999, p. 580.

6 Cf. Montague, G.T., *First Corinthians*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, MI 2011, 283f.

tiveness of a divine charge and ordered sign. It rouses a slumbering army, instantly stirred to action, including probable battle when the alert is sounded. In view of its soldierly background, with which the early ecclesial audience would have been entirely conversant, sound would be unanimously understood less as the tone of a musical note than as a flamboyant squeal for all to hear. The trumpet, therefore, announces the mystery of both instantaneous and cosmic change, in harmony with the timing of God's plan: transition from death to life and from corruption to incorruption.⁷

It is not redundant to observe that against the backdrop of the "mystery" (1 Cor 15:52), the apocalyptic motif of trumpet sound is brought up twice, on a par with the word "change" (*immutabimur*). The sacred author uses the rhetorical device of *repetitio* to good effect as he leads his hearers up to the discussion of the resurrection: the trumpet as a standard ingredient in apocalyptic literature symbolizes a new beginning (cf. 1 Thess 4:16; Rev 11:15). That it is the "last" may not suggest so much last in a series (cf. Rev 8:2.6.13; 9:14; 10:7; 11:15), as the source of the final trumpet blast.⁸ With it comes the passing of the present order of reality and the birth of the kingdom of God.⁹ Parenthetically mentioned, there is no scriptural justification to assume "the last trumpet" to refer to the seventh trumpet of Rev 11:15. To make this assumption is to take that last trumpet out of the ambience of "the mystery", within which Paul delineates it.¹⁰

What we can uphold at this juncture is that the end-time trumpet takes on the added depth of a mystery, beckoning that all-decisive hour – "in the twinkling of an eye" – of universal re-creation. With this critical realization in mind, let us now focus on the second quotation under scrutiny, and look at the implications of that trumpet also being the "trumpet of God".

2. "GOD'S TRUMPET"

In the earliest years of Christianity, the community in Thessalonica was caught up in a crisis of faith concerning the Last Things. In his First Epistle addressed to their church, Paul seeks to hearten them regarding their Chris-

7 Cf. Thiselton, A.C., *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI 2000, p. 1296.

8 Cf. Friedrich, G., ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. VII, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI 1971, 87-88.

9 Cf. Collins, *First Corinthians* 580.

10 Cf. Koester, C., *Revelation and the End of All Things*, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI 2001, p. 201.

tian hope of life without end.¹¹ In more clear-cut terms, 1 Thess 4:13 – 5:11 enquires into questions correlated with Christian eschatology, culminating in a first apocalyptic disclosure regarding the *parousia* at 4:13-18. Successively, the prophetic statement of 4:16-17, rife with apocalyptic motifs, may be an outgrowth of a Jewish apocalyptic tenet in relation to the coming of the Son of Man.¹² The sacred writer presents the matter not in any unimaginative way, but with this glowing reassurance: “For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of God’s trumpet (*ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ, in tuba Dei*), will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first”, 1 Thess 4:16.

At an initial level of assessment, we recognize that the formulation “trumpet of God” is altogether unique in the Scriptures, although an analogous precedent can be spotted at Zech 9:14, “Then the Lord will appear over them, and his arrow go forth like lightning; the Lord God will sound the trumpet (*καὶ κύριος παντοκράτωρ ἐν σάλπιγγι σαλπιεῖ, et Dominus Deus in tuba canet*) and march forth in the whirlwinds of the south”. Likewise, a certain affinity can be established with the trumpet perceived by the apostle John on Patmos at the inception of his visions: “I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet”, Rev 1:10.

Biblical scholars in the past have sought to comprehend the symbolization of this “trumpet of God”, ruling out the literal sense that would unavoidably imply the anthropomorphism of God being a trumpeter. Alternatively, it has been propounded that it simply excels all human or earthly trumpets in the strength of its sound (a LAPIDE, CALOV, WOLF, BENSON, BENGEL, BAUMGARTEN, BOLTEN, *et al.*); or because it will be blown at the behest of God (BALDUIN, LAURENTIUS, PELT, SCHOTT, OLSHAUSEN, *et al.*); or else, because it belongs to God and is used in His service (de WETTE, WINER, KOCH, ALFORD, *et al.*). Furthermore, the AMBROSIASTER¹³ understands the trumpet as a beacon of divine triumph when all historical strife is over¹⁴, a viewpoint that is confirmed by the lexical value of *sa,lpigx* as “war-trumpet”.¹⁵

11 Nestle-Aland suggests the following subtitle for this text: *De spe credentium: 4,13-18*; see *Novum Testamentum* 536.

12 Cf. Brown – Fitzmyer – Murphy, *Commentary*, p. 778.

13 Cf. *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles*, CSEL, 81:183.

14 Cf. Bray, G., ed., *1-2 Corinthians*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VII, InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL 2006, p. 176.

15 Cf. Liddell, H.G. – Scott, R., *Greek-English Lexicon*, The Clarendon Press: Oxford, reprint 1990, p. 723.

1 Thess 4:16 bears much resemblance with the presentation at 1 Cor 15:51-53, yet without the detail involving the eschatological changeover of the living. Instead, in its own right it expounds on the sonance of the *parousia*: at first sight, v. 16 speaks of three distinct audible acts associated with the coming of the Lord from heaven, i.e., (a.) “with a cry of command” (*in iussu*), (b.) “with the archangel’s call” (*in voce archangeli*), and (c.) with “the trumpet of God” (*in tuba Dei*). Some commentators have advocated that the cry may come from the archangel. Incidentally, Paul’s word “shouted command” (*kéleusma*, ke,leusma) occurs only once in the New Testament¹⁶, and in classical usage it conveys an order as a technical military term.¹⁷ It is suggestive of an injunction from the celestial Lord that implies both a vehement cry and combatant action.¹⁸ Then the archangel’s voice and the trumpet would be the means by which the call is articulated. That Christ will return escorted by hosts of angels is attested to already in 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 1:7; Mat 16:27; 24:30f; 25:31; Mar 8:38. Moreover, blending in with a post-exile Jewish notion, the angels were organized in various classes, over each of which presided an archangel. Exegetes over the centuries have identified the archangel hinted at by Paul as Saint Michael, others speculated that it was Christ himself or the Holy Spirit. In any case, he is the harbinger of the commencement of the second advent, who with a thundering voice calls upon the dead, and arouses them by this clarion call.

Additionally, the triple *crescendo* of “command”, “archangel’s call”, and “God’s trumpet”, quite similar to the “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” at 1 Cor 15:52a, clearly signposts an apogee in divine initiative ushered in on the very edge of time and space. One exegetical current, also known as the “Hellenistic interpretation”, cites the pompous procession of a king into a (conquered) city as its blueprint, which coincides with the *literatim* sense of the word *parousia*. Since the Ptolemaic period¹⁹ it was used in the East to denote the visit of a king/queen, publicly celebrating his/her supreme and sovereign authority. It chiefly highlighted his/her physical arrival and presence, and secondarily, it dramatized royal ownership or inheritance.

Another opinion maintains that the biblical description of the theophany at Sinai provides the exemplar for this sketch of the *parousia*.²⁰ Judaism later on cultivated the belief that God will employ a powerful and far-sounding trumpet

16 There is only one reference of it in the Septuagint at Prov 30:27.

17 Cf. Thucydides, *Peloponesian War*, 2.92.1; Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 17:140.

18 Cf. Richard, *Thessalonians*, 227-229.

19 From the 3rd century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D.

20 Cf. Brown – Fitzmyer – Murphy, *Commentary*, pp. 777-778.

to raise the dead, which is neatly mirrored in the Gospel of John 5:25.28-29: “²⁵ Amen, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁸ Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and will come out, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation”. Captivatingly, and complementary to the verse here at 1 Thess 4:16, according to Mat 24:31 a “great trumpet call” will precede the gathering of the elect. It will function like a catalyst bringing about the end of human history and the concomitant approach of the Lord out of the heavenly sphere, whereas in 1 Cor 15:51f the trumpet blast marks the flash when the dead awaken to their resurrection.²¹

Taking one more look at the underlying Greek noun phrases, we could realistically translate them as follows: “with a cry of command, *that is*, with an archangel’s shout and a blast of God’s trumpet”. In this way, they all appertain to the same agent, namely, the returning Lord; thus, they act as absolutely concurrent indices of the Lord’s glorious return. Apocalyptic imagery commonly presents the Messiah as initiating and participating in the visitation. Therefore, these prepositional sentences are most appositely characterized as attendant conditions, since they happen simultaneously to the main action of the clause. Besides, the diction “God’s trumpet” does not necessarily state that God is the trumpeter, but alternatively accentuates the extraordinarily majestic sound of the instrument²², as well as its divine authority.²³ Yet, if this tripartite sound effect encompasses a single agent, as argued above, then they are attributable not only to Christ, but to all three persons in the Holy Trinity²⁴, which would be the *sensus plenior* of “God’s trumpet”.

With that we have reached a stable footing in our research that encourages us to now turn our attention to the endeavor of fleshing out the contents of this mysterious trumpet of God, enriching it with the multi-faceted Old Testament context.

21 Cf. Wanamaker, C.A., *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI 1990, pp. 172-174.

22 Cf. *Sibylline Oracles*, 4:175.

23 Cf. Richard, *Thessalonians*, pp. 227-230.

24 See the principle of Trinitarian theology which states that the external operations of the Trinity are indivisible (*opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*).

3. TRUMPET AS INTERTEXTUAL KEY

In light of the above investigation into the mystery of God's trumpet, let us now explore its ample theological connotations as regards the central truth of Christ's return at the end of history, "for the Lord himself will descend from heaven", 1 Thess 4:16. In both Jewish and Christian apocalyptic traditions²⁵, the trumpet unites in itself elements of theophany and eschatology.²⁶ When talking about those kinships, there is the basic awareness that the exegetical method of juxtaposing typology with realism is not new, of course. Among numerous others, it had a noticeable trailblazer in Saint Zeno of Verona († 371), who, for instance, points out with zestful brevity thirteen parallels between the persons of Job and Jesus.²⁷ In order, therefore, to achieve a more thorough grasp of the mystery, we will illuminate the second coming of Christ by contemplating it through the prism of Old Testament iterations of the aforementioned instrument. As will become more apparent, the employment of "trumpet" in the New Testament is fundamentally determined by Old Testament usage²⁸, mainly in civic, bellicose, and liturgical contexts.²⁹ We are hopeful that this intertextual collage will elicit the brightest possible colors of that defining end-time icon. All the same, given the wealth of biblical evidence, we will have to limit ourselves to underlining the most salient of parallelisms. And now, without any further ado, let us rediscover those biblical cross references.

3.1. Witnessing *the* Theophany

Ever since Yahweh appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai, the sound of a trumpet is scripturally bonded to theophany³⁰, possibly in anthropomorphic imitation of his supernatural voice³¹: "On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder", Exo 19:16.19 (cf. 20:18; Heb 12:19; Rev 1:10). Since

25 Cf. *Pss. Sol.*, 11:1; *2 Esdras*, 6:17-24; *Apoc. Mos.*, 22, 37-38.

26 Cf. Balz, H. – Schneider, G., eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 3, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI 1994, p. 225.

27 Cf. *Tract.*, 15, 2: PL, 11:441-443.

28 Cf. Balz – Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary*, p. 225.

29 On the definition of the Greek *sálpigx*, the origin of the trumpet, its use in times of peace and war, and at theophanies, cf. Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary*, pp. 71-88.

30 Also known as *Kratophany* (manifestation of divine power) or *Hierophany* (apparition of the Sacred).

31 Cf. Balz – Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary*, p. 225.

the Lord's end-time return will be surrounded by God's mysterious trumpet, it cannot but be the last and most grandiose theophanic episode in human history.

3.2. Re-introducing the Cosmic Messiah

Linked to the earlier perspective is the prophet Zechariah's announcement of the long-awaited Messiah and his redemption, prophesying: "Then the Lord will appear over them, and his arrow go forth like lightning; the Lord God will sound the trumpet and march forth in the whirlwinds of the south", 9:14 (cf. Isa 27:13). In logical continuity with this prediction, and applying it to the eschatological trumpet, the Lord will be re-introduced to the world. Yet, he will arrive no longer to the tune of the "whirlwinds of the south", but rather to be received on a cosmic scale.³² In the subsequent paragraphs we will try to determine the whole gamut of significance implied by that scene.

3.3. Accomplishing the Ascension

Psalms 47 and 98 are known as "Divine Enthronement Psalms".³³ When read against a Christological horizon, they contain an anticipatory intimation of Jesus' ascension: "God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet", Psa 47:5 (cf. Psa 98:6). On that momentous day in Bethany (cf. Lk 24:50), the "two men in white robes" standing by the apostles (Acts 1:10) relate this happening to the eschatological arrival of Christ: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven", Acts 1:11. Hence, construed within the encircling mystery of God's trumpet, his *parousia* signalizes the inherent completion of his own historical ascension, in accurate execution of the angels' word. Yet it also demonstrates in what way redeemed humanity will be taken up into heaven with him on that last day, and thereby allowed to "ascend" into the Blessed Trinity for boundless life.

3.4. Crowning the Battle with Victory

The trumpet's association with armed campaigns is among the most recognizable in Old Testament books. In times of war, horns (cf. 1 Sam 13:3; Job 39:24f; 2 Sam 2:28) and trumpets (cf. Num 10:9; 2 Chr 20:28) were blown.

³² Cf. *Ibd.*

³³ Cf. Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary*, p. 79.

Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the “Rule of War” (*IQM*), encompassing an apocalyptic prophecy of conflict between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness, prescribes precisely differentiated trumpet cues for specific martial operations.³⁴ On the battlefield, trumpets were sounded both to start an offensive (cf. Judg 7:18-20) and to call off an attack (cf. 2 Sam 2:28; 18:16).³⁵ How can we fail to evoke the image of the demolition of Jericho’s wall through persistently repeated trumpet blasts, Josh 6:5-20? This is in accordance with God’s programmatic mandate to the Israelites: “When you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, so that you may be remembered before the Lord your God and be saved from your enemies”, Num 10:9 (cf. 31:6; 2 Chr 13:12.14; 1 Macc 3:54; 5:31.33; Jer 4:19.21; 42:14; 51:27; Zeph 1:16; 1 Cor 14:8). Thus, also upon returning to this earth at the end of time the Lord will issue his “cry of command” (1 Thess 4:16), comparable to a general calling out final tactical orders to his troops. Seen in conjunction with God’s trumpet blast on that day, humanity will be comforted about the pivotal victory having been won, victory especially over the fiercest enemy, which is death.³⁶ This marks the cessation of all temporal warfare: indeed, the *parousiac* trumpet ushers in *pax aeterna!*

3.5. Judging the Living and the Dead

Pertinent to the scope of the biblical trumpet is also to herald the anticipated interventions of God in history³⁷, in particular the day of Yahweh, also known as the fearsome Day of the Last Judgment³⁸: “Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!” Joel 2:1-2a (cf. Zeph 1:16; Isa 27:13; Zech 9:14). Along these lines, since Jesus will arrive within the framework of God’s mysterious clarion, there can be no doubt that the hour will have come for him to pass perennial judgement on the living and the dead.

34 Cf. Balz – Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary*, p. 225.

35 Cf. Hahn, S., ed., *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, Doubleday: New York 2009, p. 926.

36 Cf. LONGMAN, T. – REID, D.G., *God is a Warrior*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology Series, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI 1995, pp. 173-179.

37 Cf. Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary*, p. 80.

38 Cf. Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, p. 926.

3.6. Quelling Rebellion Forever

Tied into that presence of the divine Judge is the certitude that on that day all human agitators will be ultimately silenced. This is yet another aspect of the mysterious trumpet sound attendant to the *parousia*: “Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins”, Isa 58:1. In the same vein, the prophet Ezekiel laments over his recalcitrant people: “They heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; their blood shall be upon themselves; they are taken away in their iniquity”, 33:5f. One is also reminded of an infamous rebel: “Now a scoundrel named Sheba son of Bichri, a Benjaminite, happened to be there. He sounded the trumpet and cried out, ‘we have no portion in David, no share in the son of Jesse! Everyone to your tents, O Israel!’” 2 Sam 20:1. Projecting this scenery unto the *parousia*, the inference is easily made that at that crossroads all creatural insubordination will be eradicated. Only filial obedience can endure, and only harmony will subsist.

3.7. Terminating Idolatry and Apostasy

The Lord’s second appearance will equally spell the prompt disappearance of all idolatry, often connected with trumpet sound in the Old Testament: “When you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, you are to fall down and worship the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire”, Dan 3:5-6. In the same way, Israel’s apostasy is denounced by a trumpet: “Set the trumpet to your lips! One like a vulture is over the house of the Lord, because they have broken my covenant, and transgressed my law”, Hos 8:1. Based on these antecedents, there is the conviction that God’s trumpet will put an inexpungible stop to religious disloyalty and infidelity, make false gods vanish, and indicate the surge of undivided devotion to the Triune God.

3.8. Concluding the Fast

Another ramification of the message sent by the trumpet blast in Scriptures was that of pinpointing the seasons of religious fast: “Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast”, Joel 2:15a (cf. also Mat 6:2). Naturally, when Christ comes back in glory, all fasting will come to an end. Indeed, fasting will have lost its very *raison d’être*, since the Bridegroom will reunite himself with his Bride forever. Thus, Christ’s rhetorical admonition, “can the wedding guests mourn as long as

the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast”, Mat 9:15 (Mar 2:19; Luk 5:34), will by then have become obsolete. Conversely, all those who are judged worthy to be with him in heaven will happily disengage from all worldliness, and their mourning in this *vallis lacrimarum* will give way to a never-ending opulence of the Lamb’s wedding banquet.

3.9. Fulfilling all Prophecy

In combing through the variegated purport of the eschatological trumpet, we also come across this exhortation by Isaiah: “All you inhabitants of the world, you who live on the earth, when a signal is raised on the mountains, look! When a trumpet is blown, listen!” 18:3. The prophet here inculcates the worldwide import of his charismatic ministry, and that of all divine prophecy. In choosing to embed himself with that same trumpet blast at the hour of his return to this earth, the Lord Jesus compellingly nods at the fulfillment of all previous prophecy, as he had begun already while accompanying the disciples to Emmaus: “Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures”, Luk 24:27. An equivalent consolation he had shared with the apostles prior to his ascension: “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled”, Luk 24:44. In his *parousia*, therefore, the God-Man answers all transcendent stipulations to humankind, and thereby evinces the comprehensive “reason” of God’s immutable designs³⁹: “For in him every one of God’s promises is a Yes. For this reason, it is through him that we say the Amen, to the glory of God”, 2 Cor 1:20.

3.10. Reaching the Timeless Encampment

As we continue to expand on the textual interwovenness of Christ’s eschatological trumpet, we also recall how Israel after its Exodus had to live in the tension of leaving behind a land of oppression, and venturing to enter the land of promise. During the colossal challenges of this pilgrimage “the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Make two silver trumpets; you shall make them of hammered work; and you shall use them for summoning the congregation, and for breaking

39 “Christus Iesus est [...] arcana et suprema humanae historiae sortisque nostrae *ratio*”, Blessed Paul VI, Homily preached in Manila, Philippines, on November 29th, 1970.

camp”, Num 10:1f. Thus, trumpets signposted the steady advancement of the encampment of the elected people towards freedom and lasting peace; it was to be a progression towards “a land flowing with milk and honey”, Exo 3:8; 33:3, foreshadowing “the land of the living”, Psa 27:13. Consequently, when Christ appears for the postlude of history, he will usher in a new creation flowing with the milk and honey of God’s very presence. It will mark the denouement of all human yearning as he invites his beloved people to dwell forever in his blissful *shekhinah*, at last seeing him “face to face”, Rev 22:4a.

3.11. Home-coming to the Heavenly City

Yet another use of the Old Testament trumpet has equal potential to shed light on Christ’s return at the end of time, namely, during the post-exilic reconstruction of Jerusalem: “Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with rejoicing, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres; some of the young priests [arrived] with trumpets”, Neh 12:27.35. As a result, this apocalyptic clarion enlightens the collective home-coming of the people of God to the New Jerusalem: “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day, and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life”, Rev 21:23-27.

3.12. Entering the Perpetual Temple

Linked to the above characteristics of desert encampment and city is the dedication of the Temple built by king Solomon⁴⁰: “The priests stood at their posts; the Levites also, with the instruments for music to the Lord that King David had made for giving thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures forever; whenever David offered praises by their ministry. Opposite them the priests sounded trumpets; and all Israel stood”, 2 Chr 7:6. In a like manner, the post-exilic rebuilding of the Temple avails itself of the trumpet: “When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments were stationed to praise the Lord with trumpets, and the Levites,

40 Cf. Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary*, p. 79.

the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, according to the directions of King David of Israel”, Ezra 3:10. In the process, hostile plots against the restoration of the Temple were thwarted: “And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. And I said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, ‘The work is great and widely spread out, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. Rally to us wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet. Our God will fight for us’”, Neh 4:18-20. Centuries after those events, and following the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid empire, the Second Temple was re-dedicated and became the religious pillar of the Jewish Hasmonean kingdom: “Then they tore their clothes and mourned with great lamentation; they sprinkled themselves with ashes and fell face down on the ground. And when the signal was given with the trumpets, they cried out to Heaven. Then Judas detailed men to fight against those in the citadel until he had cleansed the sanctuary”, 1 Macc 4:39-41. Hence, given the prominent place of the trumpet in all these Temple-related scenarios, the re-appearance of it at Jesus’ second advent will indisputably display the fulfilment of Rev 21:22, “I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb”. Heaven will have become humanity’s common sanctuary for unceasing glorification. Which brings us to the next overtone of that mysterious trumpet of God.

3.13. Gathering for the Sacred Assembly

The *qahal* was the theocratic matrix in ancient Israel, with the Hebrew root קהל meaning “to convoke”, typically translated by the SEPTUAGINT as ἐκκλησία, which literally means “they who are called forth” (e.g., Nm 20:8; Dt 4:10).⁴¹ The prophet Joel records how sacred assemblies were gathered: “Blow the trumpet in Zion; [...] call a solemn assembly”, 2:15a.c. We also understand that the *parousiac* Lord will gather all the nations – Joel 3:2 adduces the valley of Jehoshaphat as the gathering place – to submit to their final judgment: “He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”, Mat 24:31 (cf. Mk 13:27). It is again the trumpet that will identify that resultful date in history when the totality of the human race will be assembled in one place to receive the ruling of their permanent destiny.

41 See also the cognate noun συναγωγή, “synagogue”, with the same lexical significance.

3.14. Acknowledging the Ark of the Covenant

Moreover, the importance of Christ's mysterious end-time trumpet is augmented by the Old Testament convention of honoring Yahweh's presence in the ark of the covenant: "So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet", 2 Sam 6:15; "David and all Israel were dancing before God with all their might, with song and lyres and harps and tambourines and cymbals and trumpets", 1 Chr 13:8 (cf. 15:24.28). Additional passages illustrate how everyday prayer was instituted and preserved in the presence of the ark in Jerusalem; once David had set up a temporary tent, "the priests Benaiah and Jahaziel were to blow trumpets regularly, before the ark of the covenant of God", 1 Chr 16:6. "Heman and Jeduthun had with them trumpets and cymbals for the music, and instruments for sacred song", 1 Chr 16:42. Later on, the ark is transferred into the temple: "Now when the priests came out of the holy place, for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to their divisions, all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kindred, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with one hundred twenty priests who were trumpeters. It was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the Lord, 'For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever', the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God", 2 Chr 5:11-14. Deriving from these rough outlines is the idea that Jesus' own *parousia* will definitively replace the function of the venerable ark, introducing saved humanity to the sanctity of his heavenly Father: the now antiquated shadows give way to *lux aeterna*.

3.15. Completing *Yom Kippur*

To even further unfold the copious spectrum of subtexts attached to that mystery of God's trumpet, we must turn again to the Book of Leviticus with its directives as to the Day of Atonement⁴²: "Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud; on the tenth day of the seventh month, on the day of atonement, you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land", Lev 25:9 (cf. 23:27). *Yom Kippur* was and is one of the most significant of Jewish holidays, the holiest day of the year, with its central themes of atonement and repentance expressed by fasting and intensive

42 Cf. Balz – Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary*, p. 225.

prayer. The Hebrews regarded it as the “Sabbath of Sabbaths”, keeping in mind that Moses had been ordered to keep this extraordinary institution to also celebrate periods of rest, the jubilee dimensions of which are laid out at Lev 25:1-55. As a commonsense extension of this phenomenon when applied to Christ’s return, we could deduce that now the spirituality of *Yom Kippur* will be accomplished: after attaining perfect atonement for all sin on the cross (cf. Rom 3:24f), Christ will then be reaping the ultimate fruits of this his own mystical *Yom Kippur*.

3.16. Commencing the Eternal Sabbath

Coupled with the foregoing trait is the Old Testament custom of granting the people seasonal times of leisure, a special Sabbath, as it were: “Speak to the people of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of complete rest, a holy convocation commemorated with trumpet blasts”, Lev 23:24. True still to our methodical choices, we can further round out the bearings of that iconic trumpet to entail that Jesus’ *parousia* will inaugurate celestial repose: Israel’s Sabbath will have met with its eschatological transmutation into *requiem aeternam*.

3.17. Celebrating the Unending Festival

Continuing our examination of cultic settings, the trumpet was sounded, too, during sacrificial ceremonies⁴³, as documented in these two scriptural quotes: “Also on your days of rejoicing, at your appointed festivals, and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over your sacrifices of well-being; they shall serve as a reminder on your behalf before the Lord your God: I am the Lord your God”, Num 10:10. “Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our festal day”, Psa 81:3. These practices inevitably increment the theological width of Jesus’ second advent, as his redeemed ones will enter upon the feast of incessant delight at the “marriage of the Lamb”, Rev 19:7.

3.18. Observing the Everlasting Jubilee

Several interrelated texts speak of the affixed utility of the trumpet as an instrument to publicize the launch of a Jubilee⁴⁴ year among the people of Israel.⁴⁵

43 Cf. Balz – Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary*, p. 225.

44 The very noun “jubilee” has its etymological root in the Hebrew *yōbēl*, which translates as “ram’s horn trumpet”.

45 Cf. Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, p. 926.

At Lev 25:8.10-12 one reads: “You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the period of seven weeks of years gives forty-nine years. Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud; on the tenth day of the seventh month, on the day of atonement, you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you: you shall not sow, or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest the unpruned vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you”. Taking into account this feature, we can define the *parousiac* trumpet also as the initiation of an ageless Jubilee. Christ comes to take all those who are saved into the realm of everlasting holiness and freedom.

3.19. Proclaiming Royalty

Our research would be incomplete if we overlooked the regal use of the Old Testament trumpet.⁴⁶ King David gave these instructions at his son Solomon’s accession to the throne over Israel: “There [Gihon] let the priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan anoint him king over Israel; then blow the trumpet, and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’” 1 Kgs 1:34 (cf. 1:39.41; 2 Kgs 9:13). One comes across further illustrations of how the trumpet broadcast the enthronement of a newly crowned king at 2 Sam 15:10; 2 Kgs 11:14; 2 Chr 23:13. That ritual takes on prophetic proportions when brought into contact with the mystery of the *parousiac* trumpet: the returning Christ will be hailed as King of the Universe. At that stage, correspondingly, the dynastic proclamation of the archangel Gabriel will be realized: “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end”, Luk 1:32-33. In point of fact, his will be “an eternal and universal kingdom, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace”.⁴⁷

3.20. Joining in Divine Praise

Further refining the contours of roles played by the trumpet in biblical times, we cannot ignore that it also provided musical accompaniment for the praises

⁴⁶ Cf. Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary*, p. 79; see also Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, p. 926.

⁴⁷ Cf. Roman Missal, *Preface* on the last Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

of Israel sung to the Lord.⁴⁸ Plentiful are the Old Testament recurrences that particularize divine adoration, as for instance in Psa 150:3, “Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!”. At the renewal of that liturgical veneration under King Hezekiah, the Second Book of Chronicles comments: “He stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king’s seer, and of the prophet Nathan, for the commandment was from the Lord through his prophets. The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets”, 29:25-26 (cf. 1 Chr 15:28; 16:6.42; 2 Chr 29:28). In our effort to come to grips with the spiritual breadth of Christ’s *parousia* through the lens of the trumpet, we intuit that it will motion the *terminus* of all terrestrial liturgy, as well as the starting point of unfading worship before the throne of God.

3.21. Experiencing Interminable Joy

Lastly, and perhaps most plainly, the sonancy of a trumpet is a congenial articulation and celebration of human existence and joy. Its absence, on the other hand, ominously communicates an atmosphere of sadness and perdition. Thus, at the time of Babylon’s fall a mighty angel solemnly declares that “the sound of harpists and minstrels and of flutists and trumpeters will be heard in you no more”, Rev 18:22a. Consequently, the hour of the *parousia* will not just strike fear in the hearts of many, but it will even more be characterized by prodigious elation: “Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near”, Luk 21:28. All those who are judged worthy will partake with the God-Man Jesus Christ of a pure state of gladness over the gift of life that will have not end.⁴⁹ And that would be the gist of Paul’s teaching about the eschatological “change from corruption to incorruption”, 1 Cor 15:52.

THEOLOGICAL CONCLUSION CONCERNING THE *PAROUSIAC* LORD

After having searched into the nuances of the second advent of Christ when envisaged from the vantage point of the accompanying trumpet, we can now proceed to make some theological extrapolations. In looking back over this disquisition, we are confident that the selected method has successfully

48 Cf. Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, p. 926.

49 Cf. Boethius’ famous definition of eternal life: “aeternitas est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio” (“simultaneously full and perfect possession of interminable life”), *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, 5.

unearthed a number of facets of the “mystery” of “God’s trumpet”. It did so by systematically analyzing the relationship between Old Testament trumpet contexts and Christ’s *parousia*. The sheer variety of backgrounds did not disappoint, even more so since it consistently points forward to and enhances the tenor of that event. Concretely, the research yielded a more nuanced picture of the person of the *parousiac* Lord as the “Alpha and Omega” of human history, Rev 1:8; 22:13. There can be little hesitation about the fact that the trumpet is a most appropriate companion of his second advent. It has been shown to concomitantly elevate the theology of the *eschaton*, specifically the doctrine on the *parousia* itself.

Yet, what might perhaps be the most rewarding outcome of this study is the capability of ameliorating our understanding of some of the most traditional Christological titles. Therefore, recapitulating the above findings, we can draw up the following paradigm:

Jesus proves himself to be the *Creator*⁵⁰ in humanity’s home-coming to the heavenly city (cf. 3.11.); he is the *Lord*⁵¹ witnessed in his theophany (cf. 3.1.) and adored in divine praise (cf. 3.20.). The enjoyment of infinite festivities (cf. 3.17.) and the memorialization of an undying Jubilee (cf. 3.18.) unveil him again as the *Savior-Messiah*.⁵²

At the same time his threefold *munus* is underscored: the *Shepherd/King*⁵³ will be re-introduced as the cosmic Messiah (cf. 3.2.); he comes to accomplish the substance of the ascension (cf. 3.3.), to commence a termless Sabbath (cf. 3.16.), and to be acclaimed as royalty (cf. 3.19.). Then, by making the elect enter the perpetual Temple (cf. 3.12.), gather for the sacred assembly (cf. 3.13.), acknowledge the ark of the covenant (cf. 3.14.), and complete the *Yom Kippur* (cf. 3.15.), he shows himself to be the *Eternal High Priest*.⁵⁴ Not least by bringing all prophecy to fulfilment (cf. 3.9.), he manifests himself as the unsurpassable *Prophet*.⁵⁵

Furthermore, as *Warrior God*⁵⁶, Jesus will put an end to all earthly hostility (cf. 3.4.); as *Prince of Peace*⁵⁷, he is set to quell human rebellion forever (cf.

50 Cf. Joh 1:3; Col 1:16.

51 Cf. Mat 3:3, *et passim*.

52 Cf. Luk 2:11; Joh 4:42.

53 Cf. Mat 27:37; Joh 10:14; Heb 13:20; 1 Pt 2:25; 5:4; Rev 7:17.

54 Cf. Heb 2:17.

55 Cf. Luk 4:24; Joh 6:14; Acts 7:37.

56 Cf. Exo 15:3.

57 Cf. Isa 9:6.

3.6.); as *Bridegroom*⁵⁸, he will not only conclude any temporal fast (cf. 3.8.), but also make his faithful bride experience interminable joy (cf. 3.21.); as *Teacher*⁵⁹, he will eliminate idolatry and apostasy (cf. 3.7.); as *Pioneer-Perfecter (dux)*⁶⁰, he will empower the New Israel to reach its timeless encampment (cf. 3.10.); and finally, as supreme *Judge*⁶¹, he will lay down his irrevocable sentence over the living and the dead (cf. 3.5.).

All these intertextual linkages of the biblical image of the trumpet surely aggrandize the original lexical value of the noun *parousia*, i.e., the king’s visit to his people in the ancient Orient. Accordingly, a more inclusive array of hues is disclosed about this colossal Pauline prophecy of the “mystery” of “God’s Trumpet”.

In wrapping up, the more explicit insights gained into the signification of Christ’s return might spur us on to better prepare for it, as well. Constant vigilance will be beneficial to counter the suddenness of his arrival, predicted to happen “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet”, 1 Cor 15:52a; or, in his own words, “as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day”, Lk 17:24. Is it even conceivable to overstate the paramount relevance of that moment? “When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory’. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” 1 Cor 15:54f. We stand ready in joyous anticipation to hear and welcome that sound of the mysterious trumpet of God, and to embrace all that it represents.

CONTENTS

Introducing the “Trumpet” as Intertextual Challenge.....	8
1. A “Mysterious” Trumpet.....	9
2. “God’s Trumpet”	10
3. Trumpet as Intertextual Key	14
3.1. Witnessing <i>the</i> Theophany.....	14
3.2. Re-introducing the Cosmic Messiah	15
3.3. Accomplishing the Ascension.....	15

58 Cf. Joh 3:29.

59 Cf. Mat 8:19; Joh 1:38; 11:28; 13:13.

60 Cf. *Dux*, Mat 2:6; Acts 3:15; 5:31; Heb 2:10; 12:2.

61 Cf. 2 Tim 4:8; Heb 12:23; James 5:9.

3.4. Crowning the Battle with Victory	15
3.5. Judging the Living and the Dead	16
3.6. Quelling Rebellion Forever	17
3.7. Terminating Idolatry and Apostasy	17
3.8. Concluding the Fast	17
3.9. Fulfilling all Prophecy	18
3.10. Reaching the Timeless Encampment.....	18
3.11. Home-coming to the Heavenly City.....	19
3.12. Entering the Perpetual Temple	19
3.13. Gathering for the Sacred Assembly.....	20
3.14. Acknowledging the Ark of the Covenant.....	21
3.15. Completing <i>Yom Kippur</i>	21
3.16. Commencing the Eternal Sabbath	22
3.17. Celebrating the Unending Festival	22
3.18. Observing the Everlasting Jubilee	22
3.19. Proclaiming Royalty	23
3.20. Joining in Divine Praise	23
3.21. Experiencing Interminable Joy.....	24
Theological Conclusion concerning the <i>Parousiac</i> Lord	24

