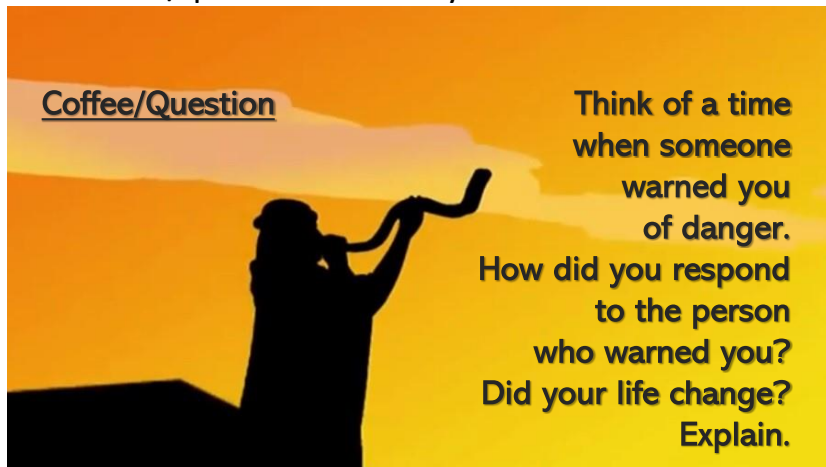




It was Matthew Henry who wrote – God warns before he wounds. The coffee/question for today came out of that statement.



My grandparents warned me about the girl I was dating before I met Barb. They did so out of love – they didn't think she was the right girl for me. But I didn't immediately heed their advice. Eventually I did – two years later - and my life changed when Barb came into it.

As the Judge of the earth, God who is just, intervenes, when and as he determines necessary, to bring about justice. God's justice always works in harmony with his love and mercy.

Out of his superabounding grace God warns before he judges sin in order that a person, a community, a nation might have opportunity to run to him and be saved.

In Revelation 8-9 God has revealed how his justice and mercy work together.

But it is here we must be wise and intentional to guard our heart –human nature is quick to take offense with God... to accuse him of being too demanding, too strict, too vengeful, too harsh... and in doing so, to give an opportunity for bitterness to take root.

A.W. Tozer wrote...



God's justice and mercy are complementary attributes... they go hand in hand... because there is no contradiction, no ambiguity in God's person.

We will interact with Revelation 8-11 over the next several weeks. As we do, each week we will read aloud these chapters.

The reason we do so is because...

- of what Darryl Johnson says, **“The images of Revelation 8-11 need to be heard in order to be seen” [and understood].** p.191.
- of what John himself wrote at the beginning of this book:

Revelation 1:3
Blessed is the one
who reads the words of this prophecy,
and blessed are those who hear it
and take to heart what is written in it,
because the time is near.



As I read, I encourage you to sit back, get comfortable, close your eyes... please don't fall asleep though, lol – and listen to what John heard and saw.

Like this picture....



... we will first take a bird's eye view of our passage.

Do you see Greg and Ingrid's house?

Do you see the bench at the end of the Spit?

Do you see the driftwood on either side of the path?

Do you see the rope swing?

They are there...but the perspective of this picture... shows us the Spit from a great distance ... its shape and it's position relative to everything else around it... and this perspective is important.

It is the same with our passage – we need to first see the great sweeping themes of Scripture that are revealed in it.

In the following weeks we will zoom in and look with greater detail at the specifics of the truth that was seen and heard by John.

Let me remind you of three things.

1. Remember... the Revelation does not reveal new information.

Eugene Peterson says it well – “in the Revelation we encounter truth that has already been revealed in Scripture... but which is taught in a new way.” p.xi-xii

What is being taught in a new way in today’s passage?

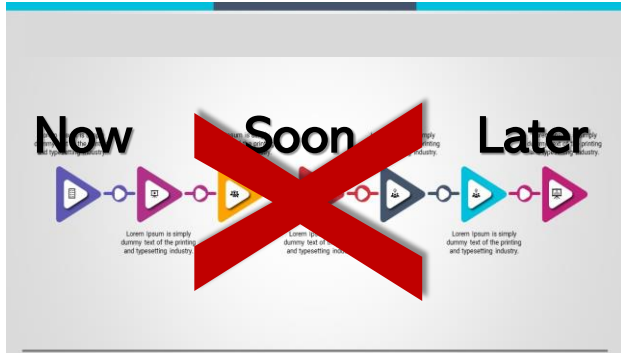


Just as we hate cancer, so God abhors sin.

Just as a person with cancer is committed to pursue treatment that would remove cancer from their body, so God is committed to remove sin and evil from his creation – this is the purpose of his judgments and his wrath.

1. Remember... the Revelation does not reveal new information.

2. Remember... an important key to understanding the Revelation is to realize that the book does not lay out a linear timeline of the future, proceeding from now...to soon...to later.



John recorded the visions in the order that God the Spirit revealed them to him.

Tom Wright says... as it pertains...

... to the return of the King to the earth

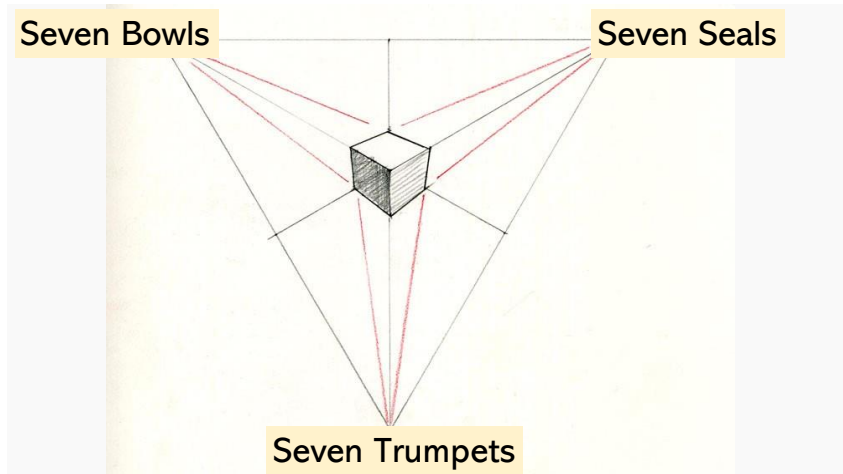
... to the opportunity in the last days for all to repent of their sin

... to the appearing of all before the Judge of the earth on the last day

... to the disarming, unseating and removal of sin and evil to a place where it can never again influence or harm

... to the making of all things new

... with the seals, with the trumpets and with the bowls...



... **“the reader is given in the book of Revelation three different angles of vision on the same glorious reality.”** p.63.

Let me say it again...John is not laying out a timetable, but is declaring a prophetic word concerning Jesus Christ and his exaltation.

There is no question in the Revelation as to who holds all authority. Yes, there is struggle on the earth because the Lamb of God took the sealed scroll, as we read in Revelation 5, and opened it, as we read in Revelation 6.

And yes, Hebrews 2:8 speaks the truth... of this present time...

Hebrews 2:8
“...we do not see everything subject to him.”

But the outcome of the struggle of this present time is never in question; it never hangs in the balance.

Jesus Christ is the Victor... and as Psalm 110:2 says...

Hebrews 2:8
“...we do not see everything subject to him.”
Psalm 110:2
**“Rule in the midst
of your enemies!”**

...in this present time, Jesus, from heaven, rules in the midst of his enemies.

As the followers of Jesus... worship, pray, serve, proclaim and stand their ground... they participate in the victory being worked out by the triune God in this present time... between the ascension of Christ and his return, his second coming to the earth.

1. Remember... the Revelation does not reveal new information.
2. Remember... an important key to understanding the Revelation is to realize that the book does not lay out a linear timeline of the future, proceeding from now...to soon...to later
3. Remember...the Revelation uses symbols, numbers and vivid imagery to communicate truth.

In Revelation 8-9, we encounter...
...the number...

7

...we see angelic beings blowing trumpets.... that announce the unleashing of God's judgement upon the earth



... we read over and over about the fraction...

1/3

... we hear the cry of an eagle who warns of three great woes



... we observe a key being given to "a star" [a supernatural being] that this being might open the Abyss



...we see fallen angels being allowed to torment those on the earth who do not have the seal of God



...and we are told of three plagues – fire, smoke and sulfur - that are unleashed by riders and horses who number 200 million



As we have done in every chapter, we ask... what is being communicated in these chapters to the church of Jesus Christ?

Today we will consider the first three symbols which are interconnected.



The number seven communicates completeness.
Completeness about what?

The second symbol answers this question.

The sounding of seven trumpets points the reader back to OT practices.

In the OT trumpets were used in battle.

Numbers 10:8-9

The sons of Aaron, the priests, are to blow the trumpets. This is to be a lasting ordinance for you and the generations to come.

When you go into battle in your own land against an enemy who is oppressing you, sound a blast on the trumpets.

Then you will be remembered by the LORD your God and rescued from your enemies.

In the OT trumpets were used in worship

Numbers 10:10

Also, at your times of rejoicing – your appointed feasts and New Moon festivals – you are to sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, and they will be a memorial for you before your God.

I am the LORD your God.

In the OT trumpets were also used to warn of impending danger.

Jeremiah 4:5-6

“Announce in Judah
and proclaim in Jerusalem and say:
Sound the trumpet throughout the land!
Cry aloud and say: ‘Gather together!
Let us flee to the fortified cities!’
Raise the signal to go to Zion!
Flee for safety without delay!
For I am bringing disaster from the north,
even terrible destruction.”

The people of Jeremiah’s day had so hardened their hearts to God that only this drastic warning of disaster was sufficient to awaken them to the grave spiritual danger they were in, and persuade them to take action.

The people of Jeremiah’s day did cry out, **“Woe to us! We are ruined!”** to which God through Jeremiah said to them... **“O Jerusalem wash the evil from your heart and be saved. How long will you harbor wicked thoughts?”**

What we read of in Jeremiah 4... is God both warning of disaster... and calling people to repent; to return to him.

In Revelation 8-9... is the sounding of the trumpets...

...a call to battle...

...or are they blown as an act of worship...

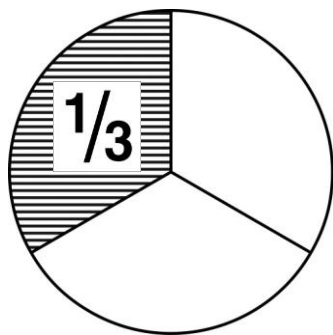
... or are they sounded to warn of impending judgement?

Tom Wright says, "Our western world is inclined to dismiss the seriousness of sin, or approach sin as something humanity can manage or overcome by their own efforts or ingenuity."

What Revelation 8-11 impresses upon the reader is that the first six trumpets announce judgments...which are meant to function as a series of warnings to the world of humanity regarding the horror of sin, and humanity's absolute helplessness to save themselves.

But in the sounding of these trumpets and the judgments that follow... there is also great mercy expressed by God.

We know this because of the fraction 1/3.



- ...of the earth
- ... of the trees
- ... of the sea
- ... of the living creatures in the sea
- ... of the ships
- ... of the rivers and springs of water
- ... of the sun
- ... of the moon
- ... of the stars
- ... of the day
- ... of the night
- ... of mankind

Darryl Johnson reminds that "the fraction 1/3 is a symbol not a statistic." p.194.

A symbol of what?

Let me say it again - of mercy.

God would have been just to completely wipe out, but he didn't

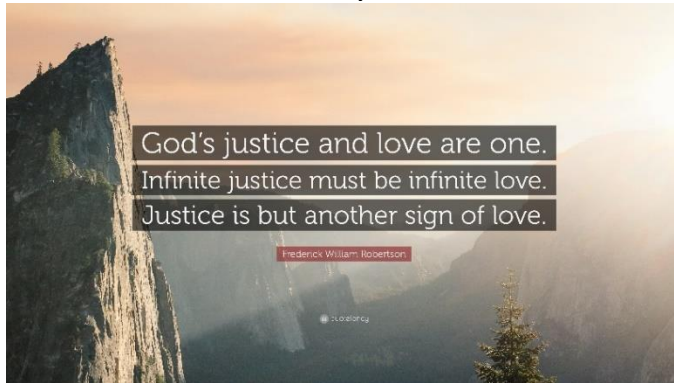
This fraction reminds the reader that the Judge of all the earth is full of mercy.

He warns before he wounds and his warning is enough, it is sufficient, it is complete.

He warns before he wounds... and he wounds in order to save.

In the sounding of the trumpets, we encounter the God who is just and the God who is love.

Frederick Robertson says...



You've probably noticed ...I am purposefully repeating myself this morning. I say it yet again - motivated by love... the God of justice warns before he judges... in order to provide opportunity... for men and women to repent of their sin and run to him to be saved.

Let me remind you of two OT examples.

The flood.



How long did the people of Noah's day have before the rain fell and covered the entire earth?

How long did they have to change their mind and enter the ark with Noah and his family?



They had 100... days? weeks? months? No!

They had 100 years – the time it took for Noah and his sons to construct the great boat, whose design had been given to Noah from God.

How many people in those 100 years responded to God’s warning and ran to him for mercy?

Peter in his second letter tells us.

2 Peter 2:5

...if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others....

Was God unjust in his judgement of flooding the earth?

Was he cruel in sending the flood?

Had he in some way not provided adequate warning?

The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.



How long did the people of these cities have before fire fell from heaven?

The entire time Lot and his family lived among them.

The Bible doesn’t tell us specifically how long that was.

But we can piece together from the narrative in Genesis that it was years!

How many responded to God’s warning?

How many inquired of Lot regarding Yahweh?

How many ran to Yahweh for mercy?

Listen to what Peter wrote.

2 Peter 2: 6-8

...if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly, and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)...

The book of Genesis tells us... that only Lot and his family... were saved. The rest refused to come to God.

Was God unjust in his judgement?

Was he cruel in sending fire from heaven?

Were the people of those cities in some way not given adequate warning?

Since the return of Jesus to his Father's home – how long has humanity had to respond to God's offer of salvation accomplished by the sacrifice of Jesus' life?



For almost 2000 years “whosoever will” has been able run to Jesus.

Many have come – we know this from the scene which John saw in Revelation 7:9 – of a great multitude that no one could count standing in the presence of God, expressing their gratitude and praise to God for his salvation.

But many have not come.

We also know this from the scene described at the end of Revelation 6 and again in Revelation 9.

What we read at the end of Revelation 6 and 9 is heart-breaking for us who love God – we see those who refuse to be saved...those who want nothing of God ... those who hate him... those who prefer death over life... those who choose the serpent over their Creator.

Remember the quote we began with... made by Matthew Henry –



The sounding of the trumpets announces and then releases trouble, with clear boundaries, upon humanity disconnected from God.

The sounding of the trumpets allows limited hardships and pain to touch a person's life...for the purpose of exposing the insanity of sin that persuades a person... to believe right is wrong and wrong is right... and that perversity is wholesome and goodness is perverse... and that death is life.

Why would a good God do this?

Why would he wound?

Because of his love for humanity.

Because of the value of every life created in his likeness.

Human beings were not created to inhabit hell, or to die.

The triune God created humanity to live in fellowship with him in a world permeated by righteousness.

When our first parents turned from God, and sin and death entered the human experience, God immediately set in motion his plan to redeem... to do everything necessary in order that the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve could return home to him.

This is why God warns and why he wounds.

This is why he takes the drastic measures described in our passage.

This is why he relentlessly pursues after humanity... even using what some would call... drastic measures.



the Hound of Heaven

He is not willing that any should perish.

We know this to be true... because of what God the Son, our Savior Jesus, did in order to pay in full the sin debt of humanity.

Having provided everything needed for humanity to come home to him, it is an act of justice and mercy for God to shake a person's life in order to bring them to their senses.

This is what the number 7, and the fraction $1/3$ and the sounding of the seven trumpets impresses upon the church of Jesus.

Our God is on the move here on the earth.

He has gone to and continues to go to extraordinary lengths in order to save.

The book of Revelation reveals there is a great spiritual conflict being waged for the fallen sons and daughters of Adam and Eve.

And it is in this great work of rescue... God engages his church – he involves us with him, as we shall see in the weeks ahead... in the proclaiming of the gospel.

For those of us who follow Jesus my prayer is that our passage for today would grip your soul in a fresh way... regarding the gospel of Jesus as the world's only hope and why spending our lives for Jesus is what we were recreated to do.

I also realize some of you listening may not yet know Jesus.
Has your heart been gripped this morning by a great sense of urgency to run to God... to lay hold of his Savior, Jesus Christ?

Hear the words of Jesus – come to me all you who are weary and burdened...and I will give you rest.

I urge you to come to Jesus.

Confess your sin to him; lay it down, and turn to God with your whole being – heart, mind and will.

Believing that what Jesus did... he did for you, receive him and his gift of forgiveness and new life.