

Last week we endeavored to provide a bird's eye view of chapter 8-11 and focused in on three apocalyptic symbols used in chapter 8 - the number seven which has been used before in other chapters, the trumpets blown by seven angels and the fraction 1/3.

Today we will focus on the details pertaining to the sounding of the first four trumpets.



Trumpet	Impact
1. Hail and fire, mixed with blood	1/3 of earth, trees, all green grass burn up
2. A huge mountain ablaze thrown into the sea	1/3 of sea turns to blood, sea life dies, ships destroyed
3. A great star (Wormwood) blazing like a torch fell from the sky	1/3 of rivers, springs turn bitter
4. Celestial beings struck	1/3 of sun, moon, stars turn dark 1/3 of day, night without light

The plagues which happened with the blowing of the first five trumpets, deliberately point the reader back to the time of Exodus – when God through Moses and Aaron released 10 plagues upon Pharaoh and the nation of Egypt.

- The Egyptian plagues demonstrated the sovereign power of God.
- Through the plagues God brought judgment upon all the gods of Egypt – see Exodus 12:12 – revealing them to be as nothing.
- Through them the Egyptians were held accountable for the wrong they had done to the Hebrew people.
- The plagues were a part of God’s rescue of his people from their slavery.

- Because of the plagues the Hebrews plundered the Egyptians – and were finally paid in full and more for the labor which they had been forced to give to the Egyptians.
- Through the plagues the hardness of Pharaoh’s heart was exposed for all to see – his fickleness, his treachery, his propensity to lie.
- The plagues gave opportunity for any to come and join themselves to Yahweh and his people – which, by the way many did, Exodus 12:38.

In the last days... what God did in Egypt... he will do on a global scale.

First trumpet.

This plague points the reader back to the seventh Egyptian plague - Exodus 9:22-26.

Exodus 9:22-26

²² Then the LORD said to Moses,

“Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt—on people and animals and on everything growing in the fields of Egypt.”

²³ When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground.

So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; ²⁴ hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth.

Exodus 9:22-26

It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation.

²⁵ Throughout Egypt hail struck everything in the fields—both people and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree. ²⁶ The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were.

The first trumpet also connects to what the prophet Joel said, which Peter referenced as he spoke to a great crowd on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:17-21.

Acts 2:17-21

¹⁷ "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

Acts 2:17-21

¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

With the sounding of the first trumpet... there comes from heaven disaster which impacts the natural world... **which results in famine**... and mankind can do nothing to stop this plague.

But remember - the fraction 1/3 emphasizes God's mercy and the opportunity... provided by him... to mankind... to repent.

Second Trumpet

This plague and the next points the reader back to the first Egyptian plague – Exodus 7:19-21.

Exodus 7:19-21

¹⁹ The LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs—and they will turn to blood.’ Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in vessels of wood and stone.”

Exodus 7:19-21

²⁰ Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. ²¹ The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt.

With the sounding of the second trumpet... there comes from heaven disaster which impacts the natural world... also causing famine... and there is nothing mankind can do to stop this plague.

But remember - the fraction 1/3 emphasizes God's mercy and the opportunity... provided by him... to mankind... to repent.

Third Trumpet

gotquestions.org says,

The word “wormwood” was a well-known bitter herb... mentioned only here in the New Testament, but it appears eight times in the Old Testament, each time associated with bitterness, poison and death. <https://www.gotquestions.org/wormwood.html>

With the sounding of the third trumpet... there comes from heaven disaster which impacts the natural world... causing famine....and again... there is nothing mankind can do to stop this plague.

But remember - the fraction 1/3 emphasizes God's mercy and the opportunity... provided by him... to mankind... to repent.

Fourth Trumpet

This plague points the reader back to the ninth Egyptian plague...

Exodus 10:21-23

²¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness spreads over Egypt—darkness that can be felt."

²² So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. ²³ No one could see anyone else or move about for three days.

Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived.

This disaster comes from heaven... and impacts the natural world... and mankind can do nothing to stop it.

But remember - the fraction 1/3 emphasizes God's mercy and the opportunity... provided by him... to mankind... to repent.

There are three questions we need to ask in order to have a clear understanding of Revelation 8 and what it is teaching the reader.

1. Who is God warning?
2. When does this warning take place?
3. What is God's purpose in the plagues?

Revelation 8:13 answer this question – “the inhabitants of the earth.”
This phrase is used six other times in chapters 6-11.
It was used in the question asked by the martyrs of chapter six.

“How long, Sovereign Lord,
holy and true,
until you judge
the inhabitants of the earth
and avenge our blood?”

Revelation 6:10

And then five more times in Revelation 9 and 11.

Revelation

9:4 - ... those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

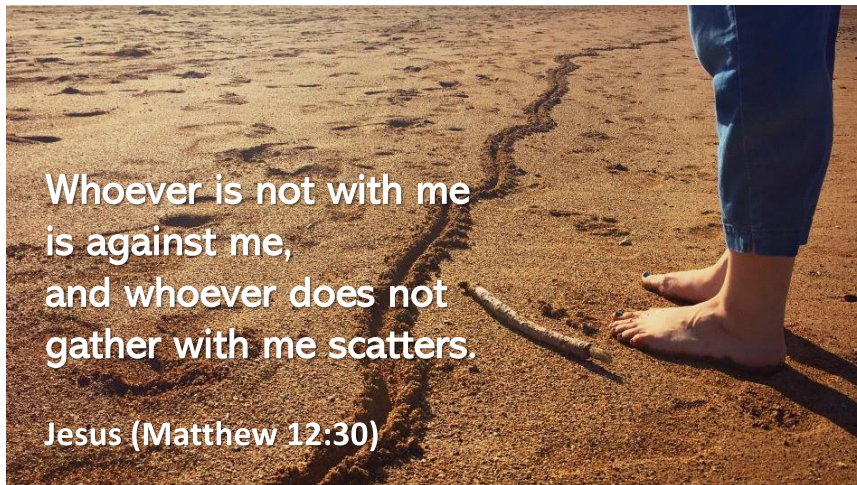
9:20 – The rest of mankind... who did not repent...

11:10 - ...the inhabitants of the earth ...who gloat over the death of God's two witnesses...

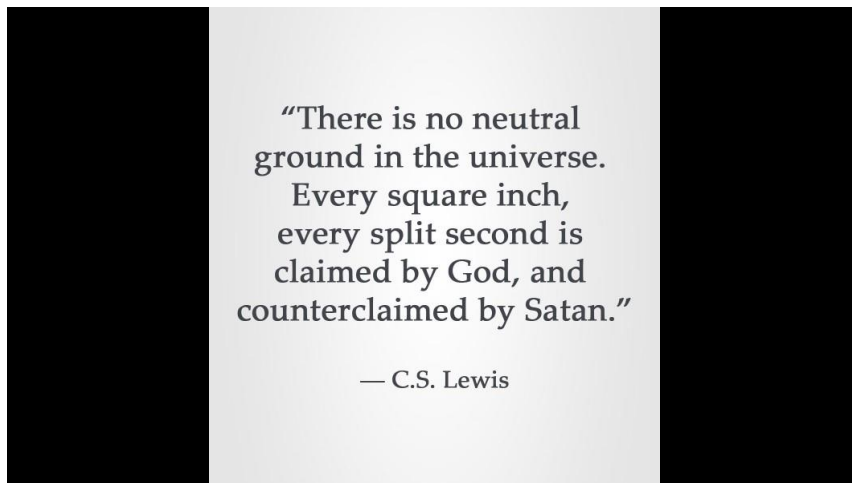
11:15 – [the inhabitants of the earth who are part of]... the kingdom of the world...

11:18 - ...[the inhabitants of the earth] who destroy the earth.

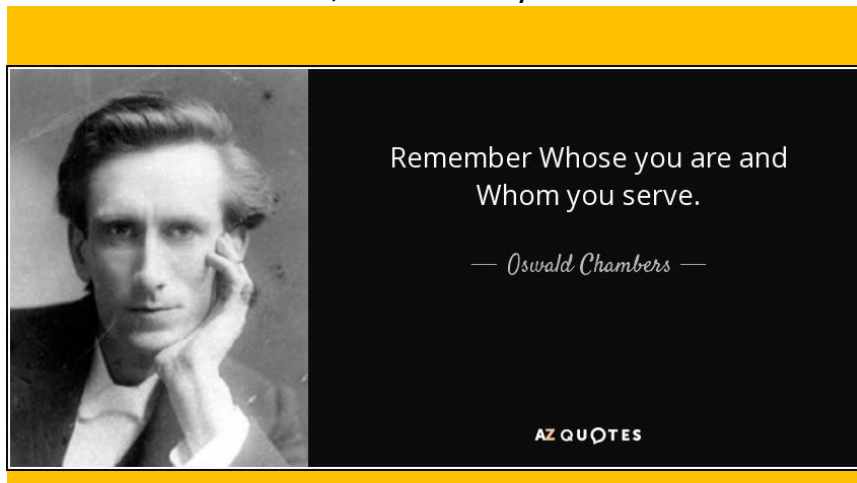
What is God communicating through his warnings to mankind?
In the spiritual realm... there is no neutral ground.
Jesus said...



C.S. Lewis wrote...



If one is not with God, then one by default... is with the ‘serpent.’



What Oswald Chambers said can be framed as a question that is relevant to every person – whose are you???

When Jesus appears... and all answer to God for what they have done with their life... the answer to this question will be of utmost important.

1. Who is God warning?
2. When does this warning take place?
3. What is God's purpose in the plagues?

There are three possibilities.

1. **After** Jesus appears.

But according to what Jesus himself said in Matthew 24...

- v.6 – wars and rumors of wars
- v.7 – nation against nation, famines, earthquakes
- v.9 – persecution
- v.10 – turning away from the faith
- v.11 – appearing of many false prophets
- v.12 – the love of most will grow cold
- v.14 – the gospel preached in the whole world
- v.29 – the sun and moon darkened, stars fall from the sky, heavenly bodies shaken

... all these things.... happen before his appearing.

This also is what Joel prophesied...

Acts 2:17-21

¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood **before** the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

2. **AS** Jesus is appearing.

But the partial nature of the plagues as evidenced by the fraction 1/3 and then 5 months with the sixth plague, do not leave this option as a possibility.

3. **Before** Jesus appears.

Tom Wright says this, “The long process of catastrophic events is meant to function as warnings to those who live on earth... who live as though there were no heaven, or as though, if heaven were there, it was irrelevant.” p.84

Darryl Johnson writes, “The harsh realities of history sound the alarm to humanity...’something is seriously wrong.’” p.195

Johnson adds this: Just as the seals of the scroll of history are being broken open now, so the trumpets are also being sounded now.

The seals provide the perspective of how the church is being impacted in the last days, and the trumpets provide the perspective of how the world is being impacted in the last days. p.196

1. Who is God warning?
2. When does this warning take place?
3. What is God's purpose in the plagues?

It is a tendency of human nature... infected by sin... to dismiss one's accountability to God as the Creator and Judge of all the earth.

But the message of the Bible is that God "will not indulge mankind's inattention. He will be taken seriously." EP, p.99.

Eugene Peterson writes,

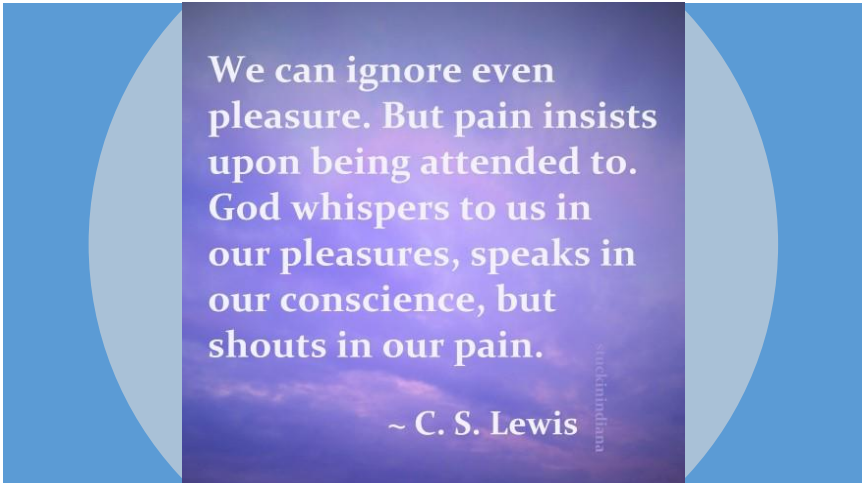
"Genesis made it clear that everything we see is a result of God's creative will; Revelation makes it clear that everything is subject to God's creative judgement."

Eugene Peterson

What we see happen with the sounding of trumpets one to four.... are natural forces "...let loose, so that they no longer operate in their intended ways..." DJ, p.197... and the distress and the pain they bring upon humanity when this happens.

It is at the initiative of God that the trumpets sound.
The things that happen are caused by him.

C.S. Lewis provides remarkable insight as to why God intervenes in such drastic ways.



Why does God confront humanity's pride as he does?
Because sinful pride causes humanity to be enamored with itself; to trust in human ingenuity and creativity.

The trumpets unleash natural events which cannot be managed or controlled.
The sheer magnitude and scope of the plagues announced by the sounding of the first four trumpets overwhelms human capability to solve.
Think of it... can we stop...



...a heat wave...
Can we control, let alone, change...



... the path of a hurricane...



...or a tornado?

Can we stop...



...an earthquake...
or a tsunami...



Can we stop...



... drought?
Can we redirect...



... the jet stream?

Can we stop...



... a glacier from melting?

Can we stop...



...the sea level from rising?

Can we make the ocean currents move...



Even now, our culture, in order to avoid recognizing the Creator, believes if we go green, if we don't use oil, if we stop using plastic, etc., etc., etc., we can reverse the unprecedented climate changes happening right now.

Hear me please – don't tune out.... God created human beings to steward the earth. We are to responsibly care for the creation and not abuse it. We should embrace sustainable practices... and reduce, reuse and recycle.

But based on what we have read this morning in the Revelation, we must consider the truth revealed in Scripture... that climate crisis, though humans bear responsibility and need to make changes... ultimately is happening because of God.

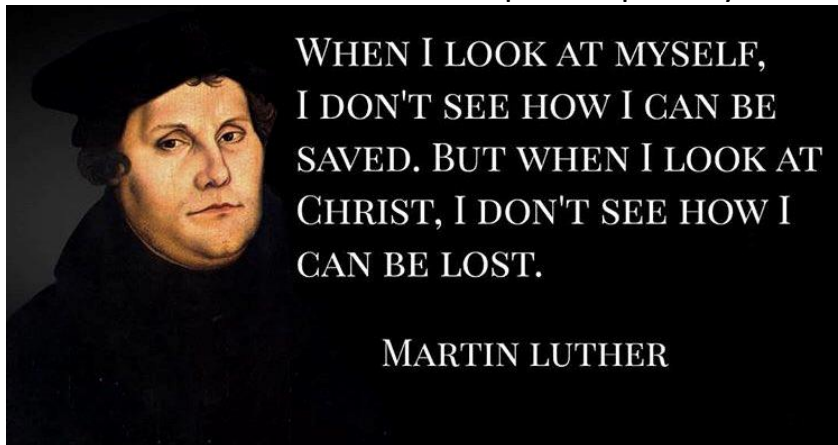
Is God sovereign or is he not?
Is the earth and all in it, not his?
Is he in control or is something or someone else in charge?

In the sounding of the trumpets God is warning... in order to shake awake, many people in the nations of this world... that they might come to their senses, repent and return home to him through faith in his Savior?

This is God's world.
It works God's way, or it doesn't work.

The testimony of history is that when a person, when a community, when a nation comes to the end of itself... when they in desperation cry out to God... this is when and where they encounter the surprising, remarkable grace of God... grace that is greater than sin... grace that saves, as the King James Version says, to the uttermost, or as the NIV says, completely.

Martin Luther wrote of his own spiritual poverty and of God's grace...



Who is the Revelation directed towards, who was its original audience?

The church of Jesus!

According to Jesus it is important that his church understand who the triune God is and how he is active in human history.

It has always been the nature of God to warn; to give opportunity for mankind to repent and return to him.

Until the return of Jesus this is what God will do – he warns of the folly of sin and he calls us to trust in his Savior.

The same trumpets that announce the bad news of the gospel, announce good news.

Today... if you hear his voice...there is still time.

Today... one can believe God and what he has said.

Today... one can repent.

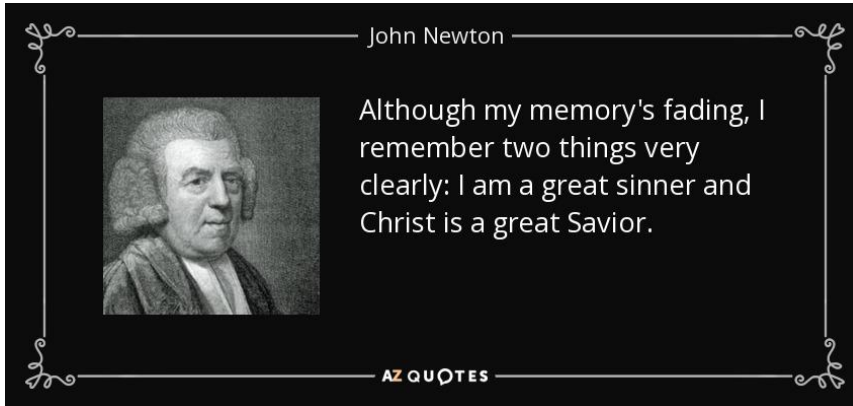
Today...one can be forgiven their sin.

Today...one can receive Jesus into their life.

Today...one's destiny can be changed.

Today...a rebel can become a son, a daughter of God.

Near the end of his life John Newton wrote this:



Dear church, Jesus is the hope of those who live in your neighborhood!
He is the hope of your family!
He is the hope of those you work with!
He is the hope of your classmates!
He is the hope of our city and our province!
He is the hope of Canada!

Jesus is the hope of the nations.

Our closing song speaks of this grace... that saves, that restores and that welcomes one home to God.