

The Book of Revelation

Lesson 8: The Seven Trumpets Sound -- Revelation 8:1-9:21

The Lamb breaks the seventh seal, and you brace yourself for the loudest thing yet. Instead, the room goes quiet. "When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour" (8:1). After the thunder of chapter 4, the singing of chapter 5, the cry of the martyrs under the altar, heaven falls still. It is the hush before God acts, the held breath of a universe that knows something solemn is coming. And in that silence, an angel steps to the golden altar with a censer, and "the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God" (8:4). The prayers of ordinary, suffering believers, the ones the world ignored, are gathered up and presented at the throne. Then the angel fills the censer with fire from the altar and hurls it to the earth, and the trumpets begin.

Seven angels take up seven trumpets, and as each one sounds, a blow falls on the world. A third of the earth burns. A third of the sea turns to blood. A third of the rivers go bitter. A third of the sun and moon and stars go dark. The plagues echo Egypt, hail and fire, water turned to blood, darkness over the land, locusts swarming. If you know the Exodus, you can feel God doing again what He did to Pharaoh: striking a hardened, rebellious world with warning blows. And notice the word that keeps repeating: a third. Not everything. Not yet. These are partial judgments, limited on purpose, because they are not the end. They are the trumpet, the alarm, the summons. God is sounding a warning over a world that has forgotten Him, and the warning has a purpose, that people would hear it and turn back.

Then chapter 9 grows darker still. A star falls, the bottomless pit opens, and out of the smoke come locusts like war-horses with human faces and lions' teeth and scorpions' tails, demonic torment loosed on a world that chose the darkness. But look closely at who they may touch: only "those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads" (9:4). The very ones God sealed in chapter 7 are untouchable here. The torment of hell cannot lay a finger on the people God has marked as His own. After the locusts comes an army from the great river Euphrates, two hundred million strong, a picture of overwhelming judgment poured out. The point of all of it is not a code to crack or a date to circle. The point is mercy disguised as severity, God shouting through trumpets to wake a sleeping world.

And here is the heartbreak that ends these chapters, the verse you cannot read without a lump in your throat. "The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent" (9:20). After the burning, the bitterness, the darkness, the torment, after every trumpet of warning, they will not turn. They keep their idols, "which cannot see or hear or walk," and they keep their murders and their sorceries and their immorality and their thefts (9:20-21). The trumpets were never meant to destroy them; they were meant to save them. And a hardened world heard the alarm and rolled over and went back to sleep. So this lesson presses a tender, urgent question into your own heart. God is still sounding warnings of mercy over your life. Are

you the kind of person who hears them and turns, or the kind who hears them and does not repent?

Group Discussion: These chapters describe partial judgments, a third struck and not the whole, sent as warnings to call a rebellious world to repentance. Why might God choose to warn before He finishes, and what does the repeated “a third” tell us about His patience even in judgment?

Personal Reflection: Verse 9:20 says “the rest of mankind... did not repent.” Name one warning God has been sounding in your own life lately (a conviction, a loss, a restlessness, a word of correction). Have you been turning toward Him, or quietly rolling over and going back to sleep?

Read Revelation 8:1–9:21

Study Questions

1. The seventh seal opens not into a louder vision but into “silence in heaven for about half an hour” (8:1), and then an angel offers incense so that “the prayers of the saints” rise before God (8:3–4). Why does heaven fall silent, and what does it mean that the prayers of suffering, ordinary believers are gathered and presented at the very throne of God before any judgment falls?
2. The angel takes fire from the same altar where the saints’ prayers ascended and throws it to the earth (8:5). When you pray under pressure, do you actually believe your prayers reach the throne and matter to what God does? What would change this week if you prayed like someone heaven is listening to?
3. As the trumpets sound, the judgments are deliberately partial: “a third of the earth was burned up” (8:7), a third of the sea, a third of the waters, a third of the sun and moon and stars (8:8–12). Read symbolically, what is God teaching by striking a third and not the whole, and how does this “a third” reveal that these are warning judgments and not the final, total end?

4. These trumpet plagues fall again and again across the whole age, hail and fire, water turned bitter, darkness, sounding their alarm over and over. Where in your own life has God sounded a repeated warning, the same lesson coming back around, and how have you been responding to a God patient enough to warn you more than once?

5. The trumpet plagues deliberately echo the plagues of Egypt, hail and fire (8:7; Exodus 9:23–25), water turned to blood (8:8; Exodus 7:20–21), and darkness (8:12; Exodus 10:21–23). What is John teaching the church by casting these judgments in the shape of the Exodus, and what does it tell us about the God who reigns over a rebellious world?

6. The Exodus plagues fell on Egypt but spared God's people in Goshen; here the demonic locusts may harm only those "who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads" (9:4). How does it steady your heart to know that the very torments these chapters describe cannot touch the one God has sealed as His own?

7. Out of the bottomless pit come locusts with the faces of men, the teeth of lions, and the tails of scorpions, led by a king named Destroyer (9:7–11), and from the Euphrates an army of two hundred million (9:16). Reading these as symbols of real demonic torment and overwhelming judgment rather than literal insects or modern weapons, what are these armies meant to show a complacent, idolatrous world?

8. John says these demonic locusts may not touch the sealed, yet they torment those who refused God for “five months” until people “will long to die, and death will flee from them” (9:5–6). What does this picture of restless, God-haunted misery say to anyone tempted to think life away from God is the free and comfortable road?

9. After every trumpet, after fire and bitterness and darkness and torment, the sobering verdict falls: “The rest of mankind... did not repent of the works of their hands” (9:20), clinging still to idols “which cannot see or hear or walk” and to their murders, sorceries, immorality, and thefts (9:20–21). On the basis of this text, explain why these partial judgments are best understood as God’s merciful, age-long call to repentance (compare Romans 2:4–5; 2 Peter 3:9), and why we must reject reading the trumpets as a date-stamped countdown to a future seven-year tribulation or as a code for modern headlines (Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:7).

10. Look back across both chapters, the holy silence, the rising prayers, the trumpets of warning, the sealed who cannot be touched, and the tragic refusal to repent. Name one specific way the Lord is using this passage to form you, whether to pray with new confidence, to take His warnings seriously, or to soften a place in your own heart where you have quietly refused to turn.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Exodus 7–12, the plagues on Egypt that the trumpets deliberately echo; Romans 2:4–5, God’s kindness meant to lead us to repentance, and the danger of a hard,

unrepentant heart; 2 Peter 3:9, the Lord patient, not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance; Joel 2:1, blow the trumpet and sound the alarm, for the day of the Lord is coming; Luke 13:1-5, unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

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