

The Trumpet Calls

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[0 : 00] Please keep your Bibles open to Revelation 8 and 9. We're going to look at two chapters today. I don't know if you remember the 2004 earthquake and tsunami that hit the Indian Ocean.

It was terrifying. I was living there at the time. I was 14. It's the most powerful earthquake ever recorded in Asia and the most powerful earthquake worldwide in the 21st century.

It directly impacted eight countries, Indonesia being one of the worst, and indirectly impacted many others because of its economic effects.

It killed almost 185 people and injured 125,000 others. It killed 185,000 people.

So in total, that's more than the population of Geelong. Almost 44,000 people went missing. That's almost twice the population of Doncaster missing.

[1 : 12] And 1,740,000 people were displaced. That's a lot more than the population of Adelaide displaced. It was terrifying.

But throughout history, there have been many disasters, terrifying disasters. Disasters that we like to call natural. From earthquakes, floods, bushfires, cyclones, hurricanes.

So how are we meant to respond when we hear about those disasters? Well, our passage from Revelation today tells us that we're meant to see those disasters as both God's judgments and warnings.

Like trumpets. So let's read in chapter 8, verse 1. When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

So last week, the first six seals of the scroll were opened to reveal six parts of God's plan. From all the bad things that are happening, like wars, people killing each other, inflation, famine, diseases, even the persecution of God's people.

[2 : 37] Everything is already planned in God's sovereign scroll. And finally, the judgment of those who persecute God's people is also planned in seal number 6.

Now in this verse, the seventh seal is opened. And instead of something terrible happening straight away, there's silence for half an hour. But as we've read, this silence is the calm before the storm.

Like when the water recedes prior to a tsunami hits. Heaven is in reverent silence in anticipation of God's glorious judgment.

And indeed, after the silence, in verse 2, seven angels are given seven trumpets. At this point, you know that it won't be silent anymore.

It will be loud. But before the seven trumpets are sounded to bring God's judgment and warnings, John tells us of what happens in heaven in verse 3 to 5.

[3 : 47] This is the important bit. And we can even treat it as an anchor for the whole passage. And especially for Christians, that's where our identity lies.

Here, another angel carries a censer and stands at the altar. What altar? Well, this brings to mind the altar revealed in the fifth seal from last week.

Remember, the martyrs hide under the altar and pray, How long, O Lord, until you judge? Now, the martyrs are not pictured on the altar as if their deaths are sacrifices for God.

Nope. Only one worthy sacrifice in Revelation. There is only one worthy sacrifice, and that's the Lamb who is worthy. Here, the martyrs are under the altar because they are protected by the Lamb.

Now, that is the anchor for the passage. For those who don't have Jesus, they have to endure all those judgments that are coming to the point that, like we have seen last week, they will ask the rocks to fall on them.

[5 : 08] But those who have Jesus, that's where we are. We are protected by the sacrifice of Jesus. We will repeatedly return to this image as we go through the judgments brought by the trumpets.

And then, the angel who stands at the altar is given the prayers of God's people. It's that prayer, How long, O Lord, until you judge?

And in verse 4 to 5, as the prayers go up to God, the censer with its fire is hurled down on the earth.

And then, straight away, the trumpets of judgment follow. In other words, the judgment of the world is, at least in part, an answer to the prayers of God's people.

How long, O Lord, until you judge? God says, I will judge. And so, the first four trumpets are sounded in verse 7 to 12.

[6 : 18] And then, disasters follow. After the first trumpet, there's a disaster on land. There's hail and fire, and a third of earth and trees are burnt up.

After the second one, there's disaster on the sea. And a third of the sea, with its sea creatures and the ships are all destroyed.

After the third trumpet, a star named Wormwood, which is a name of a bitter plant or bitter substance. It falls onto the rivers and the springs of water, and so now a third of the fresh water becomes polluted.

It becomes bitter, and people die from it. And after the fourth trumpet, a third of the sun, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars are struck.

And so, disaster in the sky. Now, here we have pictures of disasters.

[7 : 27] The first four trumpets, there are disasters that struck all regions of creation. The land, the sea, fresh water, and the sky. But as bad as these trumpets sound like, they are just warnings.

Our Old Testament passage in Ezekiel 33 says that trumpets are used to warn people of the coming invasion.

The first trumpets are used to warn people of the coming invasion. We're just getting an ambulance for Dorothy.

So, yep, it's on the way. We're going to continue with our service, not out of being unloving, but we're just going to continue particularly for those online, and so we're not all, you know, invading the privacy of the Wignies, but we will look after her.

So, we're going to continue on. Thanks, Ricky. So, these trumpets are just warnings.

[9 : 04] So, from our Old Testament passage in Ezekiel 33, trumpets are used to warn people of the coming invasion, and so the coming judgment.

And that's why in our four trumpets, it's highlighted over and over again that only a third of each area is destroyed.

It's not a total destruction. It's just a warning. And before God allows humans to be targeted in trumpets 5 and 6, here, the focus is on creation, because, again, it's just a warning.

God allows the creation to be destroyed so that the people might return, might repent. So, here are pictures of natural, what we call natural disasters, but they are actually warnings from God.

In passages like Romans 1 and Psalm 19, creation is supposed to show God as its creator.

[10 : 25] But because of their sin, people can't see that. We often can't see that. When we see creation, we don't see God as its creator. And so, here, the destruction of creation is supposed to show, as well, the anger of its creator.

But, again, people can't see that. We can't see that. We are so blind. Even though God has been warning us over and over again through the destruction of the world, through disasters, disasters, we can't see God or His wrath.

Disasters are warnings. So, God, in His grace, even when He judges today, still gives grace and mercy and gives people opportunities to repent and return to Him.

You know, like when parents say to their kids, I'm going to count to three, and if you don't come here, I'm going to give you a smack.

One, two, two and a half, two and three quarters. For the suffering Christians who have to endure suffering and persecution, that is frustrating.

[11 : 54] No wonder, then, they cry, How long, O Lord, until you judge these people? Just judge them already. But God is exceedingly patient.

And He wants people to see all the destruction of the world and return to Him and hide under the protection of the altar, protected by the Lamb.

Disasters are warnings. But people don't return to God, so the next trumpet is sounded, and it's going to get more intense.

When the fifth trumpet is sounded, in chapter 9, verse 1 to 3, we read, The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth.

The star was given the key to the shaft of the abyss. When He opened the abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace.

[13 : 05] The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the abyss, and out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth.

Stars in Revelation often refer to angels, not always, but often. Like the seven stars in chapter 1, they refer to the seven angels of the seven churches.

And so here too, it seems the star is an angel because he can hold a key. He is given the key to the abyss. The abyss or the pit in the Old Testament is always associated with the power of death.

And so this angel is given the key to open and release hell power, demonic power, power of darkness.

And this angel might be even Satan himself, because in the Bible, Satan is depicted as a fallen star. And then this angel releases locusts with the power of scorpion.

[14 : 19] Now, these are not literal locusts, because in verse 7 to 11, the description makes them look bizarre. They don't look like locusts at all.

With a mixture of human-like, lion-like, horse-like and scorpion-like characteristics. My Bible study actually tried to draw this description, and we did not arrive at anything that looked like a grasshopper or locust.

These are demonic forces. And so their description as locusts with scorpion-like power in verse 3 is fitting.

Locusts are known for their destructive power when they swarm. They just destroy everything. And scorpions have the ability to torture without killing, which is what they do in verse...

Which is what these demonic forces do in verse 4 to 6. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or any tree, which is ironic, because that's what locusts eat.

[15 : 37] But only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not allowed to kill them, but only to torture them for five months.

And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes. During those days, people will seek death, but will not find it.

They will long to die, but death will elude them. The target is clear.

It's those who don't follow Jesus and therefore they don't have the seal of God. Now here, it becomes terrifying. These demonic forces, perhaps even along with Satan himself, are only allowed to torture people who don't follow Jesus.

And yet, in the book of Revelation, people who don't follow Jesus are said to belong to Satan. It's either you follow Jesus or you follow Satan.

[16 : 42] No other choice. And so here, the implication is that those who don't have the seal of God are actually those who belong to Satan. And yet, Satan and his demonic forces here torture his own followers to the point that they wish for death.

That's the opposite of what happened in the previous chapter to the Christians. Christians are sealed by God, we belong to God, and we are protected by him.

Those who belong to Satan are tortured by Satan. and that's, in a way, a part of God's judgment.

God surrenders people who rebel to the demonic forces that they want to follow when they refuse Jesus. And those demonic forces torture them.

And yet again, this is just a warning. And that's why the torture only lasts for five months. It's intense torture.

[17 : 49] People will want to die, but it's not forever. It's limited. It's a warning. So it doesn't refer to the suffering in hell.

What does it refer to then? If it's just a warning, how do we see this as a warning? Is it happening now?

What warning? The first four trumpets are relatively easy. We see a lot of disasters, and we can see them as warnings. But do we see demonic forces torturing people here on earth that we can take as a warning?

Actually, yes. and often not in a way that we often think demonic forces operate. Unlike how horror movies portray demonic forces, you know, with scary possessions and haunted cabins in the woods or Ouija boards, the book of Revelation portrays demonic forces differently.

At the end of our passage, the worship of demons is equated with idol worship. That's how demonic forces operate, through getting people to worship idols.

[19 : 13] And so, do we see that today? Yes. What are the idols of today? You see, Satan uses means to draw people from God.

money, sex, power, worldly recognition, beauty, and other things that we often devote ourselves to these days.

Every time we devote ourselves to those things and not to God through Jesus, the Bible says that we are following Satan's deception and influence.

And I think that might be why these demonic forces in our passage are pictured like God's creation. Human, lion, scorpion, locust, horse.

God's creation is good originally, but Satan and his demonic deception takes what's good and perverts it, transforms it into something monstrous, something that destroys us.

[20 : 29] And so when we devote ourselves to things like money, sex, power, recognition, beauty, and other things that are originally good, but we put above God, we are deceived by demonic forces.

And we see today people who devote themselves to those things become so consumed that they are, in a way, tortured.

There are a lot of people who get depressed, for example, because they devote themselves to acceptance or recognition, or people who destroy their own bodies for the sake of beauty.

beauty. I recently read on the news about a man who injected his arms with some oil substance to make it look like he's got big muscles.

And afterwards, of course, he got ill and had to have multiple surgeries to remove the substance. And he even risked losing his own arms.

[21 : 39] He was tortured, so to speak, both physically and perhaps mentally, by his devotion to perhaps beauty, perhaps acceptance.

Seeing these things around us should be a warning to repent and to turn to the God who gives us life and happiness instead of torture.

and destruction. And then the sixth trumpet is sounded. Verse 13 to 15.

The sixth angel sounded his trumpet and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.

Jesus. And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind.

[22 : 47] Again, a third because it's not complete. It's just a warning. Now, these four angels are most likely also demonic forces because in the Bible only demonic forces are said to be bound by God.

but here they are released and not only to torture like in trumpet five but to kill.

Perhaps this trumpet is the accumulation of all the previous trumpets and perhaps it refers to those people who look at all the brokenness of the world portrayed in trumpets one to four and their own idolatry tortures them in trumpet five and they don't have hope because they don't have Jesus and then they seek death and here they find it.

It's a terrifying judgment. what's what's more terrifying is the idea what's more terrifying is the idea that in all these judgments God just has to let go and let people destroy themselves by their own idolatry and sinful desires through the deception of the demonic forces.

it is as if in this warning God is saying I'm going to let go now. See what happens if you follow your own sinful desires.

[24 : 35] See what happens if you continue your worship of worldly things apart from me. See what kind of life they give you. See what happens if you depend on creation.

it gets destroyed. See what happens if you depend on your idols. They torture you. And see that as a warning and return to me.

But a tragedy happens in verse 20 to 21. The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands.

They did not stop worshipping demons which are the very things that torture them in the first place. And idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood. Idols that cannot see or hear or walk or money or sex or whatever the idols today.

Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts. Tragic. They don't heed the warnings and so the final judgment will come.

[25 : 53] I was very naughty when I was a boy. Very naughty. One of my prayers before I had Kai was, please don't make this baby as naughty as I was. My parents liked love to tell me all the naughty stuff that I did.

And one of the stories that they often tell is when I was about two or three and during dinner, I decided to put my feet on the table.

Now, that's very offensive, especially in Indonesia where respect towards elders is highly valued. So my dad said, Ricky, put your feet down.

But I didn't do it. He warned me three times and I still didn't put my feet down. And so he gave me a light smack. smack. And I still didn't do it.

And he smacked me for about five to seven times. And after each smack, he would give me another opportunity to do what he said. I still didn't do it.

[26 : 58] The smacks became harder and harder. And remember, this was in the 90s in Indonesia. Smacks were not only legal but also expected.

it. So the smacks became harder and harder and eventually I started crying and screaming but I still did not put my feet down until my mom removed me from the table.

My pride would rather endure pain and crying than apologizing and doing what my dad said.

such is the nature of sin, isn't it? And that's what is portrayed in this chapter. Judgment after judgment after judgment is sent as a warning and humans would rather endure torture and even die than turning to God.

We have seen that last week with the sixth seal. people. They would rather say to the rocks, rocks fall on us than turning to God in repentance.

[28 : 14] Tragic. And so if you haven't accepted Jesus yet don't harden your hearts. Please consider him.

Consider the brokenness of the world as a warning. Return to God through Jesus. He's the only solid foundation.

He's the source of life. He's the fountain of happiness. And he loves you. You might love the things of the world, all the idols.

You might love them, money, acceptance, but they don't love you back. And if you devote your lives to them rather than God, they will torture you and they might even demand your life.

But God loves you and he gave up his own life for you. Jesus died on the cross so that you might gain life in him.

[29 : 18] He left his heavenly happiness so that you might gain your heavenly happiness in him. love you like that.

So return to him. To those who have accepted Jesus, there are two things that you can do in light of this passage.

First, you can take part in God's plan to warn the world sound the trumpet through evangelism. And we'll talk about this in two weeks times when we look at the next two chapters because it will talk about that.

But second, let this passage be a warning to you as well, even though you are already a Christian. To us, actually, me included. it. Because the book of Revelation shows that some people in the church, we have seen that in Revelation 2 and 3, some people in the church who claim to follow Jesus also practice the idolatry and rebellion and sexual immorality, all those things that are there pictured in verse 20 and 21.

And sometimes us as well. Sometimes we still devote ourselves to things other than God. So let's be warned.

[30 : 49] Our worship shows who we are. If we faithfully worship Jesus, we show that we belong to the sealed people of God, protected by the blood of Christ.

But if we worship things other than Jesus, then we show that we belong to the unsealed who are tortured by their own idolatry.

So repent and return to God through Jesus and he will protect you under the altar. Let's pray.

Lord, we praise you because you are just and gracious. thank you for giving us Jesus, who protects us by his blood from the coming judgment.

In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen. Amen. forgive you.