

**Hurstbourne Baptist Church, January 24, 2021**  
**Sermon Notes and Quotes: Revelation 8-9**  
**“The Seven Seals”**

**The Profundity of Prayer**

- Chapter 8 opens with profound picture about the prayers of the saints.
- First, consider...
  - Psalm 4:2, **How long** will the wicked dishonor Christ the Messiah?
  - Psalm 6:1-3, **How long** until we are healed of our sin?
  - Psalm 13:1-2, **How long** will it seem like God is hiding His face?
  - Psalm 35:17, **How long** will the Lord look on before He delivers?
  - Psalm 62:3, **How long** will the righteous be attacked?
  - Psalm 74:10, **How long** will the enemies of God mock and revile His name?
  - In Psalm 79:5, God finally gets angry. But the Psalmist still asks, “**How long?**” and in verse 10, “Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?” Cf. also Psalm 73, “Is there any knowledge in the Most High?”
  - In Psalm 80:4, Asaph wonders if God will answer the prayers of His people. He asks, “**How long?**” And in verses 5 and 6, he writes, “You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure. You make us an object of contention for our neighbors, and our enemies laugh among themselves.”
  - Psalm 90:13, “Return, O Lord! **How long?** Have pity on your servants.”
  - Psalm 94:3, “O Lord, **how long** shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult?” In anguish, the psalmist says it twice.
  - Psalm 119:84, “**How long** must your servant endure? When will you judge those who persecute us?”
  - And then, of course, we saw a couple of weeks ago in Revelation 6:10, the voice of the martyrs, those who have been slaughtered for faith, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, **how long** will you before you will judge and avenge our blood?” And they were each given a white robe and told, “Rest a little longer. A few more of your brothers and sisters must first be killed.”
  - Consider the fact that over 35 million Christians were martyred for their faith in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, according to Gordon Conwell.
  - Consider the millions and millions of times that Christians have prayed – as Jesus taught us to pray – “Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”
  - Consider that, according to Romans 8:21, creation itself groans for release from its bondage to corruption. The sin of disease is everywhere.
  - Now consider that in Revelation 8, all of the millions upon millions of prayers from the people of God have accumulated before the altar of God. Not one of these prayers has been ignored or forgotten. They are instrumental in bringing God’s final judgments upon the world.

**The Trumpets of Judgment**

- The Four Trumpets of Revelation 8 unleash disaster upon creation.
  - **Trumpet #1:** The first trumpet that blows brings hail and fire mixed with blood. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees and all green grass die.
  - **Trumpet #2:** The second trumpet that blows and a great mountain burning with fire is cast into the sea. And a third of the sea creatures die, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

- **Trumpet #3:** The third trumpet blasts a third of the waters turned bitter because of Wormwood. Wormwood is the name of a plant with a very bitter taste.
- **Trumpet #4:** The fourth trumpet blows and a third of the sun is struck, a third of the stars fall, and the sun and moon lose a third of their brightness.
- The Two Trumpets of Revelation 9 unleash demonic forces upon unbelieving mankind.
  - **Trumpet #5** (9:1-12): Demons from the Abyss
    - The descriptions of this demonic realm is frightening. They are described as Locusts who possess the power of scorpions, to sting and inflict pain. But they have the face of a human. They are not allowed to harm the people of God – that is, those who are sealed, according to verse to verse 4 of chapter 9. They have as a king over them, Apollyon, who is described as an Angel from the bottomless pit.
  - **Trumpet #6** (9:13-21): Demons Unleashed the East.
    - These are assembled like an army numbering 200 million (twice ten thousand times ten thousand according to the verse 16). They march throughout the earth and destroy 1/3 of humanity.

Christians have differences of opinion about the precise meaning of these trumpets in Revelation 8-9. Many wonderful Christians take the trumpets in Revelation 8 and 9 as literal events, and many wonderful Christians take the trumpets of Revelation 8 and 9 as symbolic events. Whichever way you read this passage, we must never minimize that these judgments are from God and they are awful. IOW, whether God uses a literal locust with a scorpion tail or not, the judgments are awful. If a locust with a scorpion tail is a symbol, then that symbol stands for something awful.

My understanding is that trumpets in Revelation 8 and 9 are real judgments of God in human history that serve as symbols of God's coming and final and terrible judgment. In short, they are real judgments in human history that build toward a final judgment.

The point for us to receive is that when God rises in judgment against the unbelieving and rebellious world, He will not enter into some kind of compromise or negotiation with Satan, or with the demonic realms, or with the Kings of the Earth, or with you, or with me. He takes no half-measure concerning sin. He's not seeking a quiet or diplomatic settlement. When He rises in judgment to condemn sin and vanquish evil, He will act decisively and definitively.

### **How Do We Respond to This Passage?**

1. First, I want to consider Christians who are comforted by these verses about God's judgment.
2. Second, I want to consider Christians who are disturbed by these verses about God's judgments.
3. And third, I want to consider unbelievers.

### **First, some Christians are comforted by these verses.**

These are Christians who recognize that this world is disfigured and marred and distorted by sin. They recognize that the disease of sin runs so deep and touches every aspect of life on this planet. They know that this world is not what it should be, and it is not what it will be. They see the ravages of sin and its effects on people they dearly love, and they know that God must rise in judgment to bring an end to evil and establish order and justice and harmony. These are not Christians who wish evil on anyone. On the contrary, they want to see evil destroyed. If that's how you respond to these verses, then that's a healthy Christians response. That's what it means to pray, as Jesus taught, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

**Second, some Christians are disturbed by these verses of judgment.**

Some Christians struggle to understand how God can be gracious and compassionate and good and loving but still judge the world so fiercely.

Tim Keller gives the illustration of an “ecological balance” to the character of God, which will (I hope) help this kind of Christian. Keller writes, “If an area is rid of its predatory or undesirable animals, the balance of that environment may be so upset that the desirable plants and animals are lost – through overbreeding with a limited food supply. The nasty predator that was eliminated actually kept in balance the number of other animals and plants necessary to that particular ecosystem. In the same way, if we downplay the hard doctrines within the historic Christian faith, we will find, to our shock, that we have gutted all our pleasant and comfortable beliefs too. The loss of the doctrine of hell and judgment and the holiness of God does irreparable damage to our deepest comforts – our understanding of God’s grace and love and of our human dignity and value to him. To preach the good news, we much honestly preach the bad news also” (Keller, “Preaching Hell in a Tolerant Age,” in *Art and Craft*, 629).

Sin has wreaked havoc in our lives and in our world. Many are victims of sin. At the same time, all are sinners (Romans 3:23). That’s the bad news. But the Good news is that God sent Christ to the cross to rescue us from our sin and His judgement (John 3:16).

Until you understand how much and how deeply God hates sin, then you will never understand and appreciate what Jesus accomplished on the cross to rescue you. The love of God for sinners was magnified in the very moment that Jesus suffered on our behalf. Jesus knew how fiercely His Father hated sin, even our sin. He knew what it meant to go to that cross on our behalf and absorb the judgment of God. He knew it would be awful, but He did it anyway...even voluntarily. He did it for us. There is no greater expression of love than this. If we downplay the judgment of God, then we downplay the glory of the cross. And we must never do that.

**A word about unbelievers.**

Consider the response of unbelievers to the judgments of God in 9:20-21: “The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or sexual immorality or their thefts.”

The judgments of God will never melt the heart of an unbeliever. That’s what is so staggering about this passage. What melts the heart and changes a person from the inside out is when they finally discover that Jesus absorbed the wrath of God on their behalf. That’s the Good News. “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

If the kindness of God doesn’t lead you to repentance, then nothing will. When the judgments of God start hitting, the unregenerate heart will just get harder and harder and harder, like Pharaoh’s heart did. If the unregenerate refuses to turn to God in the good times, then they will never turn to God during those final days of judgment. In Schreiner’s commentary, he writes that these judgments “are designed to bring people to repentance, and the failure to repent [only] demonstrates that the judgments are just” (Schreiner, *Revelation*, 631).

### **Final Questions for Application and Reflection**

- Do you have a teachable heart? Do you have a humble heart? Has the Gospel of Jesus Christ melted your heart? Do you have a sincere love for Jesus?
- Or do you have a hard heart? How does your heart respond to the Scriptures? How does your heart respond when sin is uncovered in your life? We all stumble in many ways. Nobody is perfect, except Jesus. But the important question is this: is your heart repentant and contrite. The stubborn heart, the unrepentant heart is also an angry heart, a defensive heart, a self-justifying heart. Proverbs 19:3, "When a man's folly brings his own way to ruin, his heart rages against the LORD." It's their own fault, but they blame others, even God!
- Students, when your parents speak to you and even correct you, do you have an open heart to receive their instruction and their correction? Or do you despise your parent's instruction? Oh, students, value your parents' wisdom, especially if you have Christian parents! Treat their instruction to you like gold. Ask for their instruction. All of your life, as a Christian, you will discover things that are not pleasing to the Lord. View those moments opportunities to humble yourself before the Lord and before those who love you dearly. Receive their correction with a humble heart, and receive the grace of God also. Say, thank you, thank you, thank you, for the Good News of the Gospel. Thank you, dear God, for looking upon me in mercy, and not as my sins deserve. Hope, peace, joy. These belong to the humble heart that trusts the Lord.