

Seven Trumpets Revelation 8-9:21

MPS The judgment of God exalts His holiness and demonstrates His power to call all people to trust in Him.

OBJ Every person should trust in Jesus for salvation because of Four ways God works in judgment.

INTRO Did you ever read one of those mystery books where you got to choose your own ending? At certain points along the story you had to choose how you thought a character would or should respond. And based on your choice you read a certain part of the book next that traced the story line according to that decision. Today we see the story of all stories, history, which has only one ending. The ending has already been written, and the author, God, is the One carrying it out. But while there is only one ending, there are two paths: one for those who are sealed by God, and one for those who are not. **God is merciful and gracious to show us which is the right path by His judgment.**

The judgment of God exalts His holiness and demonstrates His power to call all people to trust in Him.

8:1-5 The Seventh Seal

8 When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ²Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. ³And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, ⁴and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. ⁵Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

Revelation 8 begins with the seventh seal, which ends the first series of judgment. Immediately upon the Lamb opening this seal a silence fell in heaven for half an hour. This is the most dramatic of all dramatic pauses, a silence that falls with such tension to announce and prepare for the grand finale. "The greatest event since the fall is about to take place. All heaven is seen waiting in great expectancy."¹ Heaven is stilled in holy anticipation as God prepares this final judgment. The seven angels stand before God and seven trumpets are given to them. Trumpets are the instrument of announcement and of war, and in the New Testament they are associated with Christ's return. (Matt 24:31; 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thes 4:16) Another angel joins the first seven and this one is holding a golden censer and has been given much incense, which is used to accompany prayers. The smoke is joined with the prayers of the saints rising before God. Then, the angel fills the censer with altar fire and throws it to the earth, and this is followed by great natural disaster. **The end of the seal judgments God initiates His plan to consummate history.** (see Hamilton)

TRANS These next chapters reveal judgement from God, but in them we see that even when God vindicates His righteousness He is working to save people who will turn to Him.

OBJ I want you to understand **Four ways God works in judgment** and why every person should trust in Jesus.

1. God hears and answers the prayers of His saints.

Last week we identified some ways that we know God is working in judgment. One way was through the divine passive verbs of the text where the character was acted upon. We see this again in today's passage. God gives much incense for the censer to join the prayers of the saints, an act that answers the prayers in agreement with them. Then, God answers by stoking the embers of the saint's prayers into a holy fire that is hurled to the earth to reveal His holiness.

Christ-follower, do not give up praying no matter what it costs you. If you find yourself still in the waiting, keep trusting and praying. God hears your prayers. It is God's will to use the prayer of the saints to accomplish His will. **You can be confident that He will answer them perfectly in His timing for His glory and your good. You may have to wait for God's perfect timing, but you can be sure of this; God hears and answers the prayers of His saints.**

¹ John MacArthur. *Because the Time is Near*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 152.



8:6-12 The First Four Trumpets

⁶Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

⁷The **first** angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

⁸The **second** angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. ⁹A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

¹⁰The **third** angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. ¹¹The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.

¹²The **fourth** angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.

8:6-12 The trumpets reveal a greater severity of judgment than the seals. The first trumpet begins with hail and fire, mixed with blood that burns up a third of the earth, trees, and all grass. The second trumpet is like a great mountain burning thrown into the seas so that it becomes blood, maybe a volcano. A third of living creatures in the sea died and a third of the ships were destroyed. There is a vastness in this destruction of all that depends on the sea. The third trumpet heralds a star like a blazing torch falling from the sky that falls on the rivers and springs and makes them bitter such that many people die from them. We learn that the name of this star is Wormwood. Wormwood is actually a shrub that produces a very bitter, dark green oil, such that “the term ‘wormwood’ came to symbolize bitterness and sorrow.”^{2,3} The fourth trumpet strikes the sun, moon, and stars so that a third of their light was darkened, both in day and at night. [These first four trumpets introduce the second round of God’s judgment, which is greater in severity in every way.](#)

The text reveals that the trumpets are clear judgment from God by several evidences. The first clue is found in the pattern of “a third” with each trumpet. While the devastation is greater than the first round of judgment, it still has a limit and is not yet absolute. A second evidence is that “The first five trumpets are patterned after five of the plagues of Exodus.”⁴ We have seen this work from God before. And just as God demonstrated his power to hallow His name before Pharaoh, so He hallows it here as well. A third evidence is the use of fire, which also represents judgment. And a fourth evidence is the extended darkness. Robert Mounce writes, “Darkness as a symbol of judgment runs throughout the OT.”, and, “In the NT darkness is often connected with the demonic.”⁵ The darkness not only signifies judgment, but even greater divine warning. [These five textual evidences confirm that God is sending His judgment on sin.](#)

TRANS And this shows us a second way God works in judgment.

2. God hallows His Name through judgment to show that He is God.

What does it mean that God hallows His Name? God acts in power to show that He is like none other, that none other compares to nor competes with Him. He is holy and sovereign above all other, worthy of all worship, honor, praise, and glory. If God’s Name is not hallowed against sin, then He remains no different. But God leaves no doubt about His power. He leaves no room for comparison with His glory. God is making a declaration of eternal magnitude. [God reveals His holiness to show that He ALONE is worthy of honor and glory and praise.](#)

² J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 126.

³ G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, [Revelation: A Shorter Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 176. Beale writes, “It is mentioned in “other parts of the OT figuratively to refer to the bitterness of suffering resulting from divine judgment (Deut. 29:17–18; Prov. 5:4; Amos 5:6–7).”

⁴ G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, [Revelation: A Shorter Commentary](#), 171.

⁵ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 182.



ILLUS One of the greatest arguments that divide generations today is this: **Who really is the G.O.A.T of professional basketball?** Many say Michael Jordan. All the others just can't bring themselves to admit that they are wrong. **God hallows His Name through judgment to reveal that He is like no other; He is God and God alone!**

READ Revelation 8:13

¹³Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!"

Verse 13 serves as an interlude in the text. John hears an eagle cry out with a loud voice. He repeats "woe" three times to those who dwell on earth. These three woes will be revealed in next three trumpet blasts. But the purpose of this interlude tells us that the severity of judgment is about to greatly increase. A "Woe" in Scripture is used to issue a strong warning of impending doom if immediate response and action is not taken, and the triple woe multiplies its warning even more. **Woes tell us that God's warnings left unheeded cannot be ignored forever.**

9:1-12 The Fifth Trumpet and First Woe

⁹And the **fifth** angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. ²He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. ³Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. ⁴They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. ⁶And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.

⁷In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, ⁸their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; ⁹they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. ¹⁰They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails. ¹¹They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.

¹²The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.

When the fifth trumpet blows, a star falls from heaven. This star is "an angelic messenger sent from God as an agent of judgment (cf. the parallel figure in Rev. 20:1)."⁶ The one this star represents is given a key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. When opened, smoke billows from the pit and darkens the sky. From the smoke come locusts which are given power like scorpions. They are told not to harm anything except those who do not have the seal of God on their head. And they were allowed to torment them, but only for five months, and not to kill them. Their torment held great suffering, like the sting of a scorpion and to such an extent that the people would seek death and not find it, long to die, but only to have death flee from them. **This imagery of suffering is severe and increasing torment and suffering, but not without limitation.**

The description of the locust is stunningly fearful. Crowns of gold, faces like humans, hair like women's, teeth like a lion, breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was deafening as it shook the earth. Their tails sting like scorpions, which is their power to hurt people. I cannot help but think of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians when he asks, "O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin." (1 Cor 15:55-56) The scorpions tail is the sting of death, not to kill them but to torment mercilessly in suffering. And we learn that these locusts were no locusts at all, but demons led by a king, Apollyon. And the scene of the fifth trumpet ends as the first woe passes. But this last statement causes one to cringe at the thought of the next woe.

Do you see the evidence of judgment compounding here in the "woe"? Everything is increasing and intensifying; the smoke of fire, the work through divine passives, darkness, and those without the seal of God as the target of judgment. Even the

⁶ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), , 131.



sight of the plague holds great fear-inducing effect. This is not hard to see unless, of course, you do not want to see it. Then, almost nothing can make you see it. **But still, God limits both the judgment and the time for His divine purpose.**

TRANS The third way God works in judgment is...

3. God judges sin to call sinners to repentance.

God is sovereign over the whole universe, and His judgment will be far worse than one dare imagine. As we have seen, it will be so horrendous that people will long to die to escape the torment, but death will flee from them. When God judges sin, no one is able to escape. But God does not yet allow those under judgment to die either. This passage shows that even while God judges sin, He calls people to repent. **We know God wants people to repent because Jesus remains in control of all judgment.**

Did you see Jesus in this passage, though? He was there. The key to the bottomless pit was given to them. They were given power in their tails. They were told only to sting those who did not have the seal of God on their forehead. And they were allowed to do so for only five months. This is all they could do, and no more because they were not in control. The purpose was not to destroy, but to reveal God's power to turn their eyes and hearts to Him in repentance. Though the judgement of God will be far worse that one dare imagine, Jesus will still be in control. And those sealed by God need not fear, for though they may suffer they will not be destroyed in judgment. **God works through judgment to call sinners to repent because He is loving and patient.**

Are you heeding God's call on your life to repent, recognizing His mercy and grace to respond in faith?

TRANS Verse 12 ends with a refrain from the first woe, a moment of pause where the immediate destruction has ceased, but the impending destruction looms. While one woe passes, there is no real relief because the next approaches. When God hallows His name and judges sin, there is still time for people to repent but that window of opportunity is closing. In judgment God remains merciful and gracious. One cannot help but think, "surely people will see and turn!"

9:13-21 The Sixth Trumpet and Second Woe

¹³Then the **sixth** angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, ¹⁴saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." ¹⁵So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind. ¹⁶The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number. ¹⁷And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths. ¹⁸By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. ¹⁹For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound. ²⁰The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, ²¹nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

The sixth trumpet blows and a voice from the altar says to release the four angels bound at the Euphrates. "The prayers of God's people play an active role in the eschatological drama. The voice does not come from the horns or corners of the altar but from the altar itself."⁷ These angels had been prepared for this time, and here are unleashed to destroy a third of mankind. This declaration unleashed sure destruction because the chief enemies of Israel lie just across the river.⁸ And the vision that followed was a guarantee of that destruction. Mounted troops numbering "twice ten thousand times ten thousand", "literally 'double myriad of myriads'", John expresses "an indefinite number of incalculable immensity."⁹ **ILLUS I**

⁷ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 193.

⁸ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 194. Mounce notes, When God made a covenant with Abram, he promised him and his seed the land that stretched from the Nile to the Euphrates (Gen 15:18; cf. Deut 11:24; Josh 1:4). The Euphrates marked the boundary between Israel and her chief enemies.

⁹ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 195.



can only think of movies such as Lord of the Rings and the armies of Moridor. And yet, those images pale in comparison to what John describes. The expression is not intended to represent an actual calculation, but to symbolize the overwhelming proportion of an eschatological event¹⁰, clad in armor of equally overwhelming imagery, riding horses whose bodies were formed for terror and destruction and breathed out destruction from their mouths of fire, smoke, and sulphur. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed. And just as the overwhelming imagery sets in, the reality of people's response is even more shocking. After watching a third of mankind destroyed, the rest remained unmoved in the hardness of their rebellion and would not repent. And so as with Pharaoh, people remain hard in rebellion. So, God allows evil to destroy itself.

OBJ This brings us to see the fourth way God works in judgment.

4. God shows the seriousness of deception through idolatry, but people still rebel and reject Him.

What is described here is suffering beyond comprehension in apocalyptic vision, but it is not unreal. And we are not dealing with people who were innocently living their lives and minding their own business who God just wiped out. No matter how innocent they may be perceived, these were people who had ignored, denied, and rejected God in their life. They failed to recognize His glory in worship, and instead worshiped "created things". (Romans 1:25) Their lives, both outwardly and inwardly, were entangled in every vice that opposed God, murder, sorceries, immorality, and theft. One scholar even notes that John's vision pictures for us people led astray by false teaching from both within and outside the church.¹¹ Scholar Robert Mounce reflects, "Nowhere will you find a more accurate picture of sinful humanity pressed to the extreme. One would think that the terrors of God's wrath would bring rebels to their knees. Not so. Past the point of no return, they respond to greater punishment with increased rebellion. Such is sinful nature untouched and unmoved by the mercies of God."¹²

ILLUS Rebellion is a cancer of the soul, that multiplies and compounds to overwhelm the heart in hardness at every confrontation. It cannot be reasoned nor wooed away. It can only be broken or crushed. For rebellion only hardens until it is crushed in death. Humility breaks rebellion by faith to soften and receive truth by turning. But this does not and cannot happen from within the rebellion.

Guard your mind, friend, from thinking this is some special form of idolatry and rejection of God unknown to us today. It is the same that runs rampant today. Rejecting God by rebellion and idolatry always produces suffering beyond compare. You can't worship idols forever and never answer for it. Robert Mounce notes, "Once the heart is set in its hostility toward God not even the scourge of death will lead people to repentance."¹³ **You become what you worship: worshiping dead idols can only produce death in you, but the living God makes you alive with Him.**

The judgment of God exalts His holiness and demonstrates His power to call all people to trust in Him.

¹⁰ G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, [Revelation: A Shorter Commentary](#), 191. Beale explains, "The number is symbolic, as with other numbers in Revelation. The word myriads ("ten thousand") is used in Greek to refer to an innumerable multitude. In the plural, it is used in the OT in the same way (Gen. 24:60; Lev. 26:8; Deut. 32:30; 2 Chron. 25:11–12; Mic. 6:7; and especially Dan. 7:10). Never in the Bible does it refer to a specific number unless prefixed by a numerical adjective (as in "three myriads" or 30,000 in Esth. 1:7 LXX). Use of the double plural ("ten thousands of ten thousands"), prefaced by the further intensifier "twice," makes it almost impossible to calculate accurately and shows that a symbolic reference is indicated here."

¹¹ G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, [Revelation: A Shorter Commentary](#), 197. Beale states, "A careful examination of the picture shows that the actual form in which these creatures confront people is often that of human false teachers (inside and outside the visible church), who promote worship of anything other than the true God."

¹² Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 193.

¹³ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 198.

