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The Trumpet Judgments

Revelation 8:1-5

Prayer: *Father, we again thank you for who you are, we thank you for the gift that you've given to us, we thank you for the privilege we still have of coming together and gathering safely. We know that many of our brothers and sisters throughout the world do not have that privilege and so we are thankful for it. We just continue to pray as well for the gift of your Holy Spirit. Lord, we pray that you would guide us, come alongside us, give us the ability to take in this material, difficult as it is and to again make it of permanent value. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, the last time out we concluded chapter 7 of Revelation and we saw that it acts as an interlude, that is it's a brief pause between the carnage that we saw in chapter 6 and what's going to be taking place in the remaining chapters of Revelation. So I'm going to be reading a lot of scripture this morning. Actually I'm not going to be reading it, Peter is going to be reading it. It's an opportunity to hear his mellifluous voice as opposed to mine which is fading. But the reason why is if you recall one of the unique

aspects of the book of Revelation is that it is intended by God to be read aloud.

If you remember back to the very first message I gave on this, this was some ten messages ago, we read in *Revelation 1:3*: *Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.* And one thing I do to accomplish that, I just go to my Bible App, in which case it's the ESV Bible App, I just go to the scripture that I want and hit the speaker icon and it just reads out loud for as long as you want. I hit that over and over again, I get to listen to what God is saying as his word is read aloud. And I have to say in this instance listening to Revelation, it is terrifying what is in store for this world.

We've been through the seal judgments. They consist of the four horsemen, each bringing a seal judgment of false teaching and war and famine and death to the planet. And that's followed by the fifth seal judgment which was the plea by the martyred saints who are under the altar, the plea that God would bring them justice. And that judgment was followed by sixth seal which included mountains and rocks falling on people who still refused to turn to God but sought instead to be buried rather than face the wrath of the Lamb.

And what follows next is the seventh seal and here's where things get very confusing. You see, one thing you have to understand about the book of Revelation is that it is not organized chronologically. There are events that happen way out of chronological sequence that could either be considered a flashback or simply a reflection without regard to a time frame. I mean that sixth seal judgment where people are seeking for the mountains to literally fall on them, that could well be a reference at the very end of all of the judgments or it could be a separate judgment itself. The text doesn't identify these things, so we're left to speculate as to whether or not all of the seals, trumpets and bowls are reiterating the same set of judgments from different perspectives or actually three different sets of judgments. Literally only God knows.

So chapter 8 opens up with the unrevealing of the seventh seal which is really the beginning of the trumpet judgments. Peter, if you give us that, this is *Revelation 8:1-5: When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And 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, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the*

saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. Then 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.

This silence in heaven, it is setting the stage. After literally thousands of years of the saints of Christ bearing persecution and martyrdom, after centuries of patiently waiting for those chosen sheep of God to come into the fold, God is now on the very edge of exacting the judgment that he promised would come. The martyred saints who were under the altar asked: *"O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"* And if you remember, they were given a white robe. They were told to wait just a while longer. Well that quote -- "while longer" -- unquote, is coming to an end. God is about to execute judgment on behalf of the precious saints and on behalf of the Lamb who was slain.

God calls out seven angels and they're each given a trumpet to sound out the trumpet judgments, and the judgments begin when God has another angel throw a censer from the altar down to the earth. That censer has in it something very precious. Along with the incense in that censer is the prayer of the saints. That's you and me, folks. How many prayers have you prayed that seemed to get

stopped by the ceiling and seemed to go absolutely nowhere? Understand God has taken those prayers along with the contents of this censer and by the hand of an angel he hurls it down to the earth. And the thunder, lightning and the earthquake that it causes sets the stage for the next seven judgments known as the trumpet judgments.

So you might ask, why trumpets? Well, God has always used trumpets to announce great events such as giving the ten commandments. He also uses it to sound a warning. *Exodus 19* said: *On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.* The rapture, the rapture itself is heralded by trumpets. It says: *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

Well, in terms of events this is probably the most significant event in the history of mankind outside of the cross and the resurrection. All of history is headed to this day. And John MacArthur puts it this way, he says: "The hour of God's final judgment had come—the hour when the saints will be vindicated, sin punished, Satan vanquished, and Christ exalted." (Exalting Jesus

in Revelation (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (p. 192). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.)

Peter, if you'd read for us Revelation 8:6-12. Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them. The 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. The 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. A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. The 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. The 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. The 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.

There's no other way you can view these type of events as anything other than a judgment of God, I mean, one would have a very tough

time trying to explain this in terms of some kind of environmental issue or even a belligerent nation acting in some kind of rogue way. This is clearly a supernatural devastation coming to the earth. And not only is it supernatural but there's always been a written account of exactly what is going to transpire. It's available to anybody who wants to pick up a Bible. So I don't think this is going to be something swept under the rug or explained away by any type of explanation other than the fact that this is God's judgment, and it's going to divide people between those who see it as God's final severe mercy designed to bring people to God and those who see it as God's final attack who will harden their hearts appropriately.

And this first set of trumpet judgments appear to be largely environmental. If you notice, every one of the judgments is by thirds. And again, this, too, is a mercy of God. God is still giving opportunity for repentance. But the punishment is nonetheless incredibly brutal at this point, I mean, this is the collective wrath of a holy God built up over centuries where God warned that every single individual who refused to go to the cross for forgiveness, that individual was storing up wrath for this inevitable response. *Romans 2* tells us: *But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.*

Well, now it's being revealed. A third of the earth is burned up followed by a third of the sea turning into blood. It's perhaps a massive outbreak of red tide or maybe it's actual blood. The net result is a third of all the creatures in the sea die. That's hundreds of millions of tons of rotting flesh to be dealt with.

And then a third of all the ships are somehow destroyed and that's followed by another trumpet, a star called Wormwood falls into the rivers and streams of the world causing a third of all fresh water to be polluted resulting in the deaths of hundreds of millions of people. That's followed by another trumpet which causes a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars to be diminished by a third. I mean the brightest day and the most moonlit night are now pale shadows of what they once were. And if that's not bad enough, chapter eight ends on this ominous note. It says: *Then 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!"*

Can you see why I had very little interest in doing a series on Revelation? I mean certainly there's plenty of wondrous things to cover if you're going to do a pick-and-choose basis but to go through the book on a verse-by-verse basis, line-by-line and see it

in all of its horror, it's something I had no desire to do. I mean it's one thing to talk about two different kingdoms and the war that exists between them, I speak of that all the time, but it's another thing entirely when one of those kingdoms finally begins to assert itself in judgment.

And we know for 2,000 years now that judgment has been laying and waiting and because it's been such a long time, the average person on the street thinks it's not an inevitability, in fact they don't even think it's even a possibility. I mean that God's going to finally unleash that stored-up wrath that's been building for millennia? But understand, this unbelief is nothing new. Over 2,000 years ago the early church was dealing with scoffers so much so that Peter said in *2 Peter 3: Knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."*

So all the way back in Peter's day the scoffers said, you know, your Jesus came, he lived, he died. Nothing's changed.

Everybody's still lives, everybody still dies in the exact same way they always have. Again, nothing has changed. Add 2,000 more years to that declaration and people have now just stretched that

scuffing to include hundreds of millions, billions of years of evolution. And since nothing has happened in all of that time, we can all rest assured, so they say, that nothing's going to happen in the future. But someday that future is going to arrive. And the awful things that are described here represent environmental disasters on a scale never before seen in the history of mankind.

You know, by and large folks tended to put it in the same category as those dire predictions of the end of the universe. You've all heard of them, some scientist declares that the sun's going to eventually burn out and eight billion years from now the universe is going to be completely devoid of life at a temperature of just about absolute zero. Who cares. That's eight billion years from now. I mean to be sure, God's judgment could be thousands or even millions of years in the future but it also might be this very afternoon.

We see so many things happening that seem to be pointing towards the end, not the least of which is seeing Israel formed as a nation. You know, many folks think that that is setting the timetable for the eminent end of the world but that's not necessarily so either. I read one imaginary scenario where someone pointed out that Israel could continue to grow in power only to be annihilated by some nuclear attack and then remain a nothing until

it pops up again some ten thousand years from now when the final end could really be at hand, and the point is nobody can point to any set date with any level of assurance. God's will and God's plan is known only to God. And that also includes the very real possibility that this world will begin the process of judgment by the end of this very day or maybe not for ten thousand or ten million years. That's why Jesus gave this particular story in *Matthew 24*.

This is what he said. He said: *Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* Cut him in pieces. Cast him into that place where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth. Is this the same meek and mild Jesus we all know? I mean this is Jesus speaking in *Matthew 24*, the very chapter that he devoted to

warning his disciples about what's going to be happening at the end. Well the days of meek and mild Jesus as the lamb have come to an end and the time of Jesus as the lion of the tribe of Judah has begun.

Peter, would you read for us *Revelation 9:1-12*. *And 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. He 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. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. They 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. They 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. And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them. In 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, their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots*

with horses rushing into battle. They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails. They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon. The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.

Did you notice who opens the gate to this hideous pit? It says: *"And I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit."* Well that star fallen from heaven is none other than Satan himself. Isaiah described it in *Isaiah 14*. He said: *"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'* But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit." And Jesus himself once said: *"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."*

So we ask, is God actually using Satan to punish earth? And the answer is, yes, he is. He allows Satan to unleash one of the most hideous and terrifying punishments that only Satan himself could

devise. I mean these monstrous creatures, they're called locusts but they're somehow arrayed like horses. And I don't know if that has to do with their size or the way they carry themselves, and again, here's where John's descriptions are of things that are hard even to conceive. It says they had golden heads like human faces, hair like a woman and teeth like a lion. Well, some folks see this as a literal description of some incredibly bizarre creatures and others see it as symbolic, that these creatures have the ability with human-like faces and hair like a woman to kind of ingratiate themselves with people on the same level while at the same time having teeth like a lion that demonstrates an inherit viciousness that ingratiates only in order to kill and conquer.

Now I think we've all seen those Predator movies. You see these creatures that Hollywood produces that's about as terrifying a creature as you can imagine, it's got nothing on these demonic locusts that literally boil out of a pit from hell. It says they have tails that sting like scorpions do and for five months they're there to torment every single human with one very notable exception: They're not allowed to touch those who have the mark of God on their foreheads. And the attacks are so dreadful, they're so awful it says that *people will long for death itself but death will be withheld from them*. And it says these demonic locusts have a king, he's called Abaddon or Apollyon which is yet another name

for Satan himself also called the destroyer. And at long last his hatred of human beings allows him to torture them mercilessly. But that's only the first of three separate woes. It says: *The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.*

Peter, if you'd read to us *Revelation 9:13-16*. Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." So 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. The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number.

Well, what we know about these angels, they've been bound for thousands of years and there's never been any report of any legitimate angels ever being bound so the likelihood is that these are fallen angels, these are demons. These demons have been bound for thousands of years until the precise moment down to the very hour when they are unleashed. And whether they're unleashed to foment a human army or to form an army themselves, we don't know. And what we do know it's a known fact that China's been able to muster an army of 200 million men, so it's entirely possible these four angels are there to indwell and empower some pagan foreign

army such as the Chinese army or some other nation, another nation that may arise a thousand years from now. We don't know. What we do know is that this is an army 200 million strong that's demonically empowered to exercise slaughter that has never before been seen in history. World War II killed 120 million people. This war's going to kill many more than that; again, a third of mankind. The slaughter is beyond precedent, is beyond comprehension.

Peter, if you would just read for us verses 17 through 21. *And 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. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. For 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.*

Well these are clearly not the same type of horses that you and I picture. And they bring with them three different plagues: Fire, smoke and sulfur all coming out of their mouths. Says in addition these creatures had tails like snakes that could wound as well. Now, I don't know if you younger folks know, but any of you younger

folks remember Hal Lindsey, Hal Lindsey's very famous book *The Late Great Planet Earth*, you might remember that he thought that all of these description were nothing more than a first century person encountering 20 and 21st century weaponry. Well, Lindsey's books were filled with wild speculation and outright errors, and I believe it set a whole generation back in the study of Revelation. In fact, one of the reasons why I was really hesitant to take on this project is because 45 years ago I was a huge Hal Lindsey fan. I thought he's got this whole thing wrapped up, he's got it all summed up in his books, and in many instances I don't think he was even close. But we can't rule out the possibility that these locusts that John is describing might be some type of helicopter and that these beasts he's describing might be some other kind of military equipment that John's mind simply couldn't begin to grasp. And whether it's the sheer number of those killed in the book of Revelation, whether they're killed by supernatural means, I mean literally by monstrous creatures from hell itself or by John's attempt to understand the monstrous machines that man is capable of making, it doesn't make a great deal of difference to those people who are slaughtered by them.

So just how many people are we talking about? Well, one website attempted to work out the numbers based on what John has said. This is what they noted. They said: At the sound of the sixth

trumpet -- that's way back when -- four angels are released to kill one-third of mankind (Revelation 9:14-15). Well, the four horsemen had already killed a quarter, leaving three-quarters; we now kill a third of the remainder, which is another quarter of the original. The horsemen and the angels kill half of all humans across these two verses. In 2019 that was 3.8 billion people.

So any way you look at it, this is unexplainable by any other means than this is the judgment of God himself. Judgment has clearly arrived on planet earth and yet judgment still is less than complete. I mean over and over again you hear the term one-third, one-third, one-third. One-third of the sea is destroyed, one-third of the rivers are made poisonous, one-third of the sun, moon and stars' light is diminished indicating that God is still opening the door for those who are willing to repent.

And understand, at this point there is precious little faith required at all. Everyone can see with their own eyes that judgment has arrived, and yet stunningly we read these words. It says: *The 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, nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their*

thefts.

How could it be that someone who has witnessed a quarter of earth's population destroyed, then another third killed as well followed by a third of the earth burned up, a third of the vegetation destroyed, a third of fresh water made poisonous along with a third of the sun, the moon and the stars made dark and you follow that up with monstrous locust-type creatures boiling out of a pit to torture folks for five months followed by a 200-million-man army mounting horses that come out of some kind of demonic nightmare and yet and yet people are still not willing to put up their hands and surrender. You lost, dude. You lost. God is in the act of winning. It is so self-evident to be beyond debate.

It's also stunning to realize that all of this power, all of this incredible destructive power lay in the very hands of the Lord Jesus Christ as he was being mocked and tortured as he went to the cross. You know, I flash back to that incident that took place in the garden of Gethsemane where Peter flashes his sword and he cuts off the ear of the high priest servant and Jesus stops him with a rebuke and he says: *"Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be*

fulfilled, that it must be so?" Well we know there's 6,000 in a legion so that would be 72,000 angels who since eternity past have been worshiping and adoring the very one who's being slapped and pummeled and spit on and mocked.

And Matthew tells us of some such mockers. It says: *Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"* How do you think those 72,000 angels in heaven reacted to that slap? I mean their King, their Lord, their Creator is being made sport of by mere humans who have no idea who they are trifling with. If it wasn't for Jesus' divine, direct intervention, who knows what they would have done. And Jesus refused to avail himself of any relief, knowing as he asked: *"But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"*

So the next time you're wondering -- and all of us do -- the next time you're wondering if God really cares about you, the next time you're wondering just what the love of Jesus means, take yourself immediately to the cross. Ask God to help you imagine what Jesus suffered for us, what options he had to refuse in order for the scriptures to be fulfilled. And those scriptures plainly tell us: *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* I mean, understand, the

mocking, the slapping, the degradation of being stripped naked was nothing compared to the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ in all of his perfection became the sacrificial Lamb who took on the sin of the world so that we by faith in that sacrifice could stand before God cleansed of our sin and filled with his righteousness. So we now can stand before this same holy God, we have no fear whatsoever.

The world, it's got plenty to fear. I mean, I imagine these angels were dying for the opportunity to just show the Roman soldiers and those Jewish leaders what divine supernatural power unleashed looks like. This morning all we've been doing is looking at a small taste of that power unleashed through less than a dozen of those angels and the world is in shambles. There's just absolutely nothing that anyone has ever depended on, whether it's power or money or safety or security or weaponry or anything that has survived this onslaught of judgment, but people still will not repent. I mean does that tell you anything about the nature of human beings and the nature of the war that's existed between the kingdoms?

I mean just last week in our communion time I spoke about Ephesians 2 which describes all of us, all of us before we were saved as children of wrath. I want to repeat that. It says: *And you were*

dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience -- among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ -- by grace you have been saved.

And so last week I asked a very simple question. I said, how do dead, blinded children of wrath who are determined to carry out their own bodily desires while thinking the cross is absolute nonsense, who by the way have also been thoroughly blinded by the god of this world who is now actively tormenting the very people of this world because it's Satan himself, how do these people ever come to a place where they see the gospel as lifesaving and life changing? Well, just as I said last week. When that happens they have clearly experienced a miracle. *Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."*

See, we know for a fact that many are going to come to Christ during this time of tribulation. We also know and it's pretty

obvious that many are going to harden their hearts and turn their backs. These folks are going to reach out for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them rather than turn to God. See, the hard fact is it doesn't really matter if you're in the midst of worldwide tribulation that is literally destroying the planet in front of your eyes or whether you're sitting at a kitchen table next week somewhere in Orange County, New York, denying that Jesus is Lord. Both situations are equally impossible. Both situations can only be changed by the direct intervention of God. See, the bottom line is that God is the only end that can change hearts.

But there's another bottom line that we need to understand. That bottom line is this: We are the means to that end. See, the only hope mankind will ever have will always be the gospel alone. And the only ones given that sacred task is us. *Romans 10* says: *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"* Let's pray.

Father, this is a clarion call to arms that all of us preach that good news. Father, I can't possibly overemphasize how incredibly

important it is for us to get that word out while there is still time. This world is headed for judgment beyond our wildest nightmares and yet there's -- the door is still open, the gate still stands ready for others to come and enter in. So I pray for each of us to have just a holy zeal and a desire for the impossible to take place and that is for hearts to be changed by your direct intervention. You are the end, we are the means. Give us the courage, the wisdom and the drive to be that means, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.