

Rev 26-01-25a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services here at Grace & Truth Bible Church on this chilly 25th of January, 2026. We're progressing in our study of the book of Revelation. We are in chapter eight and moving into chapter nine this morning.

The Trumpet Judgments, quite a sobering picture that is painted here. And the anticipation is moderated greatly for us knowing that we will have balcony seats for these events and will not be present. Nevertheless, these things are written for our instruction.

And one of the challenges of looking at the book of Revelation is ensuring that once we have looked and we've done our observation and interpretation, that we turn the corner and answer the question, how should we then live? This is addressed to the church by the Lord Jesus Christ, and it obviously has a meaning and purpose for us in terms of that application, so we sure don't wanna miss it. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study, and we'll begin. Father, we are so grateful for your sustaining grace.

We are more difficult to care for than the animals of nature whom you have equipped to find places to dwell and to stay warm in times of winter coldness, such as we experience throughout our nation on this weekend. And we are grateful that you have provided for us. And not only are we able to gather and to look at your word together, but we have your Holy Spirit, we have the example of the Lord Jesus, and the entirety of the Trinity is available to enable us and to provide for us so that we can benefit, we can learn and grow, we can be prepared to serve and to function both now and in the times to come.

We pray that as we look at this portion of your word together, that the Holy Spirit will help us to see its pertinence and plant it in our thoughts in such a way that we will be renewed in our hearts and minds. We will be transformed in our thinking and thoroughly equipped for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

Looking at our passage, you remember that the seventh seal opens, there is a half hour of silence, seven angels who stand before God. I think these are the flaming angels, the seven spirits of God that have been mentioned previously. Are given seven trumpets.

This detail gives a sense of anticipation. We are awaiting the sounding of these shofarim, these trumpets, but there is a delay. And as with the sealing of the 144,000 that we saw in chapter seven, there is the processing of the prayers of the saints.

And those prayers are presented to God. And the details that follow in the blowing of the trumpets is therefore offered to us, interpretively speaking, as an effect, as a response to those prayers and a fulfillment of request and an honoring of those who offered those prayers. The prayers obviously were not answered immediately and it's a reminder to us.

We spent some time last session looking at the importance of our prayers and the priority that

God places on them and the extent to which he has made provision so that our prayers can be heard and be presentable in his throne room. So you have the golden altar, you have the smoke of the incense, the angel takes the censer, fills it with fire from the altar. This is sanctified judgment.

This is righteousness and justice at work on God's part. It's not vindictiveness, it's not anger, it isn't an emotional response. God takes a measured look, if you will, at these prayers and there's going to be a measured response.

And this is anticipated in a Hebraistic fashion, much as you see recapitulation in, say, the creation account and other narratives of the Old Testament. This tells us what's going to happen before it happens. What will follow when the trumpets sound is essentially the raining down of this fire from the censer, which is formerly the residing place of those prayers and incense.

So clearly designed to communicate to us that what follows is a response and its effects are a part of God's justice. I don't know about you, but when I look at what happens on the earth at this time, we've already seen the disruption, the hardship, the suffering, the catastrophe, the bloodshed, the death from plague and so on in the seals, now we're, which is sort of man's humanity to man, now we're going to see nature no longer supporting mankind, no longer providing and sustaining and sheltering man, but that which formerly fulfilled those functions is now going to be the opposite. We want to watch for this in terms of our own self-judgment.

When we look at ourselves, we know that there are great and precious promises that the Lord Jesus made to us, that God the Father has made to us, and there are promises of provision. I wish we had time to detail those. I could spend probably three double sessions just detailing all of the promises of provision, protection, of peace, of purpose, of fellowship, of representation, the opportunity to have the power of God in the person of the Holy Spirit and the presence of His word effective, manifest, creating the fruit of the Spirit, the love and joy and peace and those other elements, so many wonderful promises.

This is our heritage. This is our spiritual environment. And when the one another's are in effect, looking at those circles of love, we should have reciprocity in this and be a blessing to one another, be blessed by the one another's, be capable of offering neighbor love and the other spheres.

So what we're looking at here is a disruption as we saw last time when we read these trumpets, a disruption of the normal natural order that provides common grace. You see the New Testament teaching about the rain falling on the just and the unjust. There is general grace, the protection we have, and science helps us understand what the atmosphere and the magnetic fields, the Van Allen radiation belts and the position we occupy in the solar system and our solar system in our galaxy, the presence of Jupiter in orbit to sweep a lot of debris with its strong gravity and clean the area where our planet circles.

All of these benefit everyone and provide opportunity for everyone. And this is a wonderful thing. And the fact that there is both common grace and specific grace that God sends to us has a purpose.

What is that purpose? Why does God cause the rain to fall even on the unjust? Why does he tolerate sin and evil? Why does he allow abuse and warfare? This is one of the supposed arguments that atheists offer. If there was a God, how could he allow these horrible things to happen? Great injustices, abuse and suffering on the part of children and innocent people, quote unquote. So when we see the removal or the suspension of these graces in the same way that that grace communicates, this is a time of opportunity.

There is an expectation. This is God leaning forward and extending an invitation to respond, to enter into relationship and to exploit that relationship with him. When that opportunity is not exploited, when it isn't received, when it isn't accepted, there is prompting from God.

He doesn't say, I asked you a question, you didn't give the right answer. Here's terminal, final and eternal judgment. God will prod, God will nudge, and the nudges will get stronger.

The process may begin with a knock at the door and it may end with a storm coming and blowing the entire house down because it is not founded on the rock. So the first communication from God is natural. You know this from Romans chapter one.

We've seen it many times. What may be known of God is manifest in creation. For us spiritually, what may be known of God is manifest in the revealed word.

And this is our invitation. God doesn't throw a Bible at our head. It is up to us to take advantage of the presence of good teaching.

And it's everywhere. There's never been a day when there wasn't access to wonderful teaching by wonderful teachers. It's published.

You can get audible books. You can go online. There's a number of different ways, recordings, devotionals.

There's a cornucopia of spiritual provision. And it is presented. It is couched.

It is tailored in the hands of different individuals, different communicators. If one doesn't do it for us, there will be another one that does. But we are drawn.

If we care anything about the light, we are drawn unless we love darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil, in which case we run from the light. You know what happens if you live in a cheap apartment and turn the lights on in the middle of the night? You watch the roaches scattering. I've lived places where you didn't even have to wait for that.

They were so numerous that you could just be sitting on the couch and I would take my shoes off and have my tennis shoes handy. And I learned the rotation, kind of like flipping horseshoes

or people that throw darts backwards. You learn the rotation, or throwing a knife or a hatchet.

You get the rotation down just right so you get maximum effect on your target. And I got pretty good at, you know, making situations where I would need to wipe my walls down later. But they will generally scurry when the light appears.

And there are many things that will flee. You see mice running into the corners, out of the corner of your eye, when you flip on lights in a room or enter a room, they flee. They are not comfortable in the presence of humans.

They wanna take advantage of what's there, but they don't wanna be around you. Wild animals are this way. You take a walk in the woods, squirrels don't come like a Disney movie and wait for you to give them a little lotus petal or something, they flee.

They have a natural fear of man and rightfully so. There's a lot of squirrel hunting in these parts. I was talking to a piano customer who participated in a contest related to squirrels.

You've got to thin them out just as with the deer and others. But you think about an extremely cold and snowy environment such as we have, and there is opportunity and provision. And when they function according to their God-given instincts, they find hollows, they find places in the trees or in the ground or in coves and other sheltered environments.

And they ride out the coldness and the wind and the snow and the ice and other deleterious things. And they use what grace provides and they survive and they prosper and they are fruitful and multiply. What is happening here in the trumpet judgments following those seals is different in the sense that in the seal judgments, this is man creating hardship, havoc, his fallen and corrupt nature, driving economic hardship, bloodshed, starvation, disease, famine, and so on.

And the four horsemen are individuals who, men ride horses, and then you see the results followed by the fifth and sixth. And God will make provision and will seal those who belong to him. And the sealing doesn't necessarily mean preservation.

You have the souls that are under the altar in that seal judgment phase. And they didn't have a magic shield that kept them from harm or from martyrdom, but their faith is in God. And God says, be patient and wait.

God awards them the white robe and the promise that these things have a purpose in God's plan. So we understand that there can be legitimate suffering. There can be legitimate hardship, persecution, deprivation.

How do we know if it is something that God has woven into his plan and we are required to be faithful or that it is disciplinary and judgmental and we should respond, repent, and change our direction? This is why we have the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is why we have the word of God. Suffering in and of itself is not the message.

Suffering is a means of communication. Hardship, difficulty, these are occasions to come to understand what God is saying. Our whole investigation of this book of Revelation is sort of trying to figure out what God is saying.

The message is pretty clear. Bad times are a coming. But what is God's purpose? What should we take from this message? So as we look at these trumpet judgments, this is the background.

This is our understanding. And if we experience loss of provision, the seeming retraction of the fulfillment of promises, we don't immediately jump to a conclusion. Why is this happening? And it can be happening for more than one reason.

There can be a period of silence. If you're a child and you come home and you say, hi, mom, hi, dad, and they're looking at you and not speaking, that's a message in and of itself. It's a nonverbal cue.

And we don't immediately say, well, anytime mom and dad aren't talking, it means I messed up. They may be watching because there's a wonderful surprise and they wanna see if we'll look around the room and notice that there's something different. If we remember that it's a special occasion and their silence should create inquiry on our part.

This is out of the ordinary, what does it mean? So in a nutshell, when we encounter something out of the ordinary and we know this is the realm where God has spoken, we ask ourselves, suffering is not always a thump from God for failure. Sometimes it is an opportunity. Sometimes it is a part of our preparation.

Sometimes it is an enablement and puts us in a situation where God is gonna use us in wonderful ways for our blessing and His glory. And there will be blessing that spreads to other people. So we don't have a knee-jerk response.

If you watch current events and look at the news, there is so much by way of knee-jerk response. Something happens, I already know what it means. I'm angry, I'm going to react.

I'm going to go off. I'm going to manifest my extreme displeasure. And because I think my displeasure is righteous and justified, anything I do as a reaction is righteous and justified.

Here's a wrong situation, I identify it as wrong. I know I'm right and that's wrong. Anything I do is now righteous.

And this is what happens when several generations of people are raised and not taught how to think, not taught about logical fallacies, not taught to process and to recognize that our life is built on thinking, we are sentient. You can build a mousetrap that will respond to an input. People have to be more sophisticated.

We are designed to stop and think, to not be impulsive, to not overreact, to not draw hasty conclusions and never revisit them. So I say all of that to say this, the trumpet judgments are

God's reversal of the role of creation in its support and provision for mankind. God took the restraint away from the man of sin and his minions, his proxies, his factotai in the seal judgments, that's the perspective.

This is what happens when God removes restraint from people and they are allowed to do their worst. And you think, doesn't human history have plenty of examples of that? Nothing like the seal judgments, nothing like this has been seen before. Now, from a fresh perspective, we're looking at this same period of time, and God says, I am going to reverse the role of creation.

So we saw this, that when the first angel sounds in chapter eight, verse seven, hail and fire follow, mingled with blood and are thrown to the earth. This is exceedingly rare, and when it does happen, it is destructive. And the reason it has happened up to this point in human history is so that we know what it is like when hail and fire fall from heaven.

And it is something dreadful, it is something we don't wanna see, and it is very exceptional. It is extraordinary in the extreme. Now, this is going to be extensive, and it is the removal of the safety that we typically expect when we walk outside.

I don't expect to get destroyed by hail. This is what God does when he is cleaning out a land so his people can enter it under Joshua. This is what happens when destruction is warranted in Egypt, for example, to get people's attention.

So that's what's happening here. This is a natural occasion, and as a result, a third of the trees that normally provide in many wonderful ways for people, not the least of which is the oxygenation of the atmosphere, building materials, fruit, and so on, but the trees put here for all sorts of vegetation are burned up, and all green grass is burned up. Green grass is the bottom of the food chain for an agricultural economy.

If you don't have grass, you don't have animals, you don't have crops. You can have everything from dust storms in the Middle East where this is first received, where it is written, where it is understood. When the grass dries up, you have what we used to see as kids when we took Oklahoma history in Dust Bowl days.

So that's just the first trumpet. The second angel sounds, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea. Two points here.

One, why doesn't this say when the second trumpet sounds? Why does it say the second angel sounded? It is angels who blow the trumpets. Why couldn't there just be floating trumpets in heaven or the sound of a trumpet? And John says, I heard a second trumpet sound. The agency of angels is emphasized here so much so that when you get to the second trumpet, the trumpet's not even mentioned.

This is angelic involvement both in sustaining order and in withdrawing it in the natural world. And this great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea and a third of the sea became blood. We looked extensively at this last time and the extreme similarity of this to what

happens with a Chicxulub or Tunguska type event, one being very long years ago, 66 million years ago, according to science, the other being, you know, within recent recorded memory, but an otherworldly object completely beyond the control or reaction in terms of fending it off that human beings can do.

This is nature, upending nature. And we see this hitting the sea. This is going to be an asteroid, a comet, a meteorite that strikes the ocean, percentage-wise the most likely, since most of the planet is covered with water.

It's going to strike on one side of the planet. It's going to be at an oblique angle, and it is going to be the physical means by which these horrific effects are engendered and whereas in the seal judgments, we saw that a fourth of things were judged and removed. Now it accelerates to a third.

And so a third of the living creatures in the sea die and a third of the ships are destroyed. And you would expect this to happen when one side of the earth is impacted in this way. Things on the far side, there may be tsunamis and extreme conditions, but they're not going to be destroyed the way the ones on the impact side will be.

The third angel sounded. Once again, it is an angel that is the active agent for the initiation of this judgment. And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch.

Notice also the role of fire here. Fire from heaven is universally viewed as a judgment. This is why Job's three friends thought that he was under divine discipline when fire fell from heaven and burned up his sheep and his servants.

This is why when the first angel sounds, hail and fire follow. The second angel sounds and a mountain burning with fire hits the sea. Fire with number one, fire with number two.

Here, a great star burning like a torch. This is a third implementation of fire. This is the threefold fiery judgment that is released by God.

And we're going to see that some of these judgments are not so much initiated as restraint is removed. And there are two kinds of things that we observe. There are things that God will send and there are things that God will allow.

And there is a difference. So a great star falls from heaven, burning like a torch. It falls on a third of the rivers and the springs of water.

The name of the star is Wormwood. This has Old Testament roots. The mention of Wormwood is found in Joel.

It is found in Jeremiah. I thought about going to those passages and taking a look at it, but you know just from the names of those books that it is a judgment context. And God says, I will give them Wormwood to eat and gall to drink.

And this is a judgment on God's people for failing to respond. God has promised them a land flowing with milk and honey. What is happening when instead of milk and honey, instead of prosperity, you have gall and Wormwood.

God didn't arbitrarily or capriciously change his mind. Something has gone wrong with the recipients. Someone has taken themselves out of the realm of qualification for the fulfillment of promise.

And the withdrawing of the fulfillment of those promises is the message. Why have they been withdrawn? Is this a famine as a time of testing? Is this famine as a time of call to repentance? It isn't enough to say it's a famine, God's mad. Some famines are good.

Think of the days of Jacob and his sons and Joseph and there being a famine in the land. If God had not orchestrated famine and had not allowed for the failure of Joseph's brothers, there would not have been the ultimate situation in Egypt with Joseph second only to the Pharaoh and able to provide salvation, able to foreshadow the Lord Jesus Christ. And God wove even failure into a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus with Joseph, with his bloody coat, with the brethren who rejected him ultimately being saved by him because he has integrity, because he knows that he has been put where he is by God for a purpose.

And he doesn't lose sight of that. He doesn't take retribution into his own hands. He is there because there was a great famine.

So bad situations are not always judgment. They are sometimes a part of God's larger plan and purpose. So what do these mean to the people of the earth? Because they come in a sequence, there is the opportunity as each set of events unfolds to turn.

God says to his own people, "'Turn you at my reproof. "'Why will you die, O house of Israel?' "'Because the onward progress of these "'will eventuate in death.'" And we see this spiritually or socially or situationally. It doesn't have to be physical death.

There is a loss of opportunity, loss of function, loss of the operation of spiritual gifts. You think about pastors who go off the reservation and do things that are disqualifying according to scripture that we've studied in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. And if pastors do not fulfill their charge, if they do not take their God-given gift and their God-given opportunity and function properly, there is consequence that is permanent.

It is irreversible. And physical death is an irreversible consequence, the sin unto death, which we've studied in other contexts. So here, these successive waves of turning creation from protection and provision into punishment and persecution, has a point.

People should repent. They should change their mind when these bad things happen. So the name of the star is Wormwood.

A third of the water has become Wormwood, and many men died from the water because it

was made bitter. Not everyone dies. Not everything in the sea is killed.

Not all of the ships are destroyed. It's a third. And the loss of the third, as with the judgments of God in Egypt, it is the death of the firstborn.

This is the final ultimate communication from God. He didn't kill all of the Egyptians. How easy would the Exodus have been if they woke up the next morning and thanked God that the blood on the doorpost preserved them, and everyone in Egypt has died.

It's like the 186,000 that die overnight. It was partial. It was designed to communicate.

It gave the survivors an opportunity to respond. You think of Nineveh, just at the word of Jonah, and probably his appearance, I can't imagine what you would look like after spending a period of time in the digestive system of a great fish. But when he says 40 days in Nineveh will be destroyed, they respond just at the warning.

We have the warning here in scripture. None of these things have happened yet. The church hasn't left yet.

Knowing who God is, knowing what his policy and his plan is, there is the opportunity to respond and seek him early while he may yet be found. Call upon him while he is near. He has revealed himself.

He has leaned forward. He has bridged the gap and come more than halfway with the Lord Jesus Christ. And many people really think the Lord Jesus is great.

He was a wonderful teacher. Why can't Christians be like Jesus? The God of the Old Testament, why can't he be like Jesus? The God of Revelation, why can't he be like Jesus? Jesus never judged anyone. Jesus never swung a sword, never drew blood.

He healed Malchus's ear when blood was drawn. He's a man of peace and love and joy and nonjudgmentalism. And he ate with publicans and sinners.

And why can't we all just, people love the gentle Jesus. What they don't see is the gentle Jesus is a communication. He is the word.

He is a message that's designed to produce a response, to offer an opportunity. Respond to the positive presentation of God's grace and God's love so that the alternative does not follow. And as I've mentioned earlier, the fact that these judgments are unleashed at the initiation of a lamb, but not just a lamb, it's a lamb that has been slain unjustly.

Because of the fallenness and the failure of mankind. That's the starting point. This scroll would have never opened.

The trumpets would have never sounded. The trumpets would never crack and the bowls would never be poured out except for the worthiness of the lamb. Those in heaven recognize and

celebrate and sing of his worthiness.

Those on earth who came when he came did not receive him. And everyone since, who says, well, I really like how peaceful he is, but I'm not very interested in the reason for which he came and the reason for which he was peaceful. He was just a really nice guy, kind of like the Buddha or some other Gandhi type figure.

Martin Luther King is celebrated because he didn't lead riots. He led marches. And peaceful protests.

And people who don't really know the issues in civil rights just say, well, that Martin Luther King was a nice guy because he didn't create violence. And there's a lot more to that story that meets the eye, but people will respond and hear what they want to hear and see what they want to see and disregard the rest. We don't want to miss the message here.

So a third is judged. It is creation. And creation is managed by angels.

I think creation was implemented in Genesis 1 by angels. It's fascinating to me. I was processing some old Bible class files and found one where God says, this was during a break.

I was trying to figure out how to edit this thing and I was doing my usual thing of rambling on on the break. Someone asked a question. And I was talking about how it struck me that God speaks light into existence.

And God speaks and things happen on the earth. Then when it comes to the sixth day and after everything else is prepared, he says, let us make man in our image and after our likeness. And God does it himself.

He forms man out of the dust of the ground. And this communication is different for the creation of man. God says, let there be, and there is.

And I think this is angelic agency in the productivity, the creation of nature. Now it is angels that are sparking the disruption. So the fourth angel sounds and a third of the sun, a third of the moon, a third of the stars are struck.

It doesn't say be clouded. It doesn't say obscured. It doesn't say less visible.

It doesn't say hidden. It says struck. This is destructive to the normally beneficial role of the sun and the moon and the stars.

Again, in the creation account, they're put there for times and seasons and days and years. And it is not without significance when we come to chapter nine. So they're darkened, a third of the day doesn't shine.

And likewise the night. And there is an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, woe, woe, woe to the remaining inhabitants of the earth. These blasts of the

trumpet that are about to sound, the remaining three.

Three woes, three coming trumpets. And some manuscripts say eagle, some say angel. If it is an eagle, I think he represents an angel because he speaks.

And I don't think there's a heavenly eagle's nest where God occasionally details angels or eagles to act in the role that angels normally occupy. I think this is an angel. And once again, this entire sequence of judgments, angels are in the architecture.

Chapter nine, the fifth angel sounds, I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. Angels are associated with stars, Old Testament and new.

And this again is quite clearly an angelic individual. The fact that he falls, some think that this doesn't mean that he's been kicked out of heaven. But the word fall, falling is never a good thing.

Fall from grace, falling is not good. And this one doesn't descend, he doesn't appear, he doesn't alight, he falls. And I think this is a fallen angel and he is given, much as things are given to Satan's representative, the man of sin, the antichrist, if you will.

Things are given. And we're going to see that a lot of things are gonna be given here in chapter nine. Still in this realm of God's larger, global interaction with creation.

God's global superintending of his creation is mediated through angels. And his unraveling and destructuring of that is also going to be accomplished by angels. What does that mean for us as we go to our break? We do not pray to angels.

We don't get spooked and watch for them or see if we can catch them out of the corner of our eye. We are aware because scripture tells us that God's presence is mediated. His communication is often mediated by these heavenly messengers.

Earthly messengers are a reflection. They are a similar pattern where God doesn't just speak a Bible class to our hearts, he mediates it through human beings who print Bibles and distribute them and others who study them and prepare and present the truth of God's word. It is mediated.

We are not yet qualified to dwell in the direct presence of God. So his invisible and non-physical spirit touches us, indwells us and fills us and his word, the conceptual truth, propositional truth, promises, principles and doctrines touch us. God's will, God's plan and purpose is mediated to us.

And we want to watch for that. And we want to respond to it so that those very same agencies don't become the avenue and the pipeline for warning discipline and divine judgment. It is a message to judge ourselves lest we be judged.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're gonna dive into chapter nine.

We're gonna see the next three trumpets as they are blown.

And there is a lot of wonderful observation to be had when we do.