

Bruce Almighty is an early 2000's comedy where Jim Carrey gets the chance to be God for a week. The movie is ridiculous but there is one scene that has stuck with me. Bruce has to deal with the constant stream of prayers and it gets overwhelming. So he decides to just automatically answer yes to everything that comes in. This predictably leads to chaos all over the earth. And it is a good remind even from a possibly blasphemous movie that God does not always say yes to our prayers.

But there is one day, when He will. Or at least God will finally say yes to the prayers of the saints who have cried out since the days of Able, "how long O Lord?" He will answer the prayers of those who have cried out for vengeance and justice. And His answer comes with the 7th seal.

The seventh seal will now open on the earth. God's judgment will continue to fall through a series of 7 trumpets. Each of them is terrible in their own way. This morning, we are only going to focus on the first four. Because there is plenty of meat in this chapter for us to chew on.

Turn in your Bibles to Revelation 8.

### **I. Our prayers impact eternity (v. 1-5)**

You see the seven trumpets of judgment begin with prayer.

God does not just bring them on the Earth.

We will see that it's actually the prayers of the Saints throughout eternity which bring this judgment.

So, as we look a little closer, I want you to keep the big picture of this passage in mind that our prayers even now impact eternity. And our prayers make a difference in the plan of God.

We begin in verse one, **"When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour."**

What happens here as we have a moment of silence.

But half a time that nothing happens.

It's right after the seventh seal is opened

Because back in chapter 6 the seals were opened.

Then we had a break to find out how God will protect His people,  
but now the last seal is opened.  
But before this judgment comes everyone is quiet and there is a hush.

We may wonder why.  
Cause there's already been lots of activity in the throne room of God.  
There have been the multitude, the elders in the creatures.  
There's been loud rejoicing and worship.  
There has been prayer and weeping.  
There has been the thunder and the lightning in the fire that crackles.  
There's been lots of noise.  
But now all of the sound fades, and there is only silence.

We would be right to ask why.  
There are a couple of different reasons.  
There's a number of different reasons for this, and I think that all of them  
were actually correct.

One of them is that repeatedly their times in scripture where the Earth is  
called to be silent before God.  
We have one in Zechariah 2:13.  
We have another one in Habakkuk 2:20.  
Job is moved to silence by God's appearance at the end of the book.

But there is another reason I think.  
Verse 2, **"And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven  
trumpets were given to them."**

Part of what comes out are seven angels and seven trumpets.  
The number seven is a significant number in the book of Revelation.  
But it is an important number in the rest of the Bible.  
This moment is similar to what happens in the book of Joshua.  
When Israel comes to Jericho.  
And there are seven priests with seven trumpets to march around the city  
for seven days and on the last day they do it seven times.

And Joshua warns the people that as they march. They are to be silent. And on the last day after Marching 7 times in silence, then they will cry out with a shout, and then God's judgment will fall on the city.

It's almost like God knew what He was doing when He set the plan all the way back in Joshua's day for how He would destroy an evil city. And then it was a taste, and a foreshadowing of how God would come and bring His judgment on an evil world.

And this moment of silence is also an acknowledgment of the judgment that is coming.

Before the fullness of the judgment of God is unleashed onto the world, they will be silent.

And that is a proper response.

You may ask what does this have to do with prayer.

Well, the rest of the section moves to prayer.

No, I think that it does begin partially with silence because prayer should always begin with some silence.

It's hard for us to actually pray and commune with God if we don't begin by being quiet ourselves.

If we treat prayer as something where we do all of the talking and we don't ever do any listening.

If we treat prayer as something where I come, and I tell God all that is on my heart and all that I feel and all that desire, and then when I'm done prayers done, and I move onto something else.

If we wanna pray in a way to impact eternity we should begin with silence.

Silence is hard and silence is uncomfortable.

Our world constantly wages against silence.

It tries to fill up every moment and capture all of our attention.

Every app and every website and every device is created in order to try and get as much of your attention as possible.

That the moment you hear silence and the moment you were not entertained that it is calling out for you and trying to get you to come to it.

But if we can sit in the silence not with our own thoughts, but if we can sit in the silence with God, then we can have meaningful prayer

Verse three, **"Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne."**

Another angel comes up to the altar to offer incense and all of the prayers before the throne of God.

And the picture of what he is doing is, he is carrying things that are burning and on fire, along with a sweet smell of our prayers.

And here it does not appear just to be the prayers of the martyrs who are under the altar. It is the prayers of all believers.

It is our prayers as we cry out to God.

All of those prayers have a physical place in heaven.

And I don't think that this is just a nice symbolic picture to show us that God hears our prayers.

I believe that this is literally true.

That our prayers are a tangible reality.

That in the spiritual realm, our prayers are something that you can see.

Our prayers are something that can be touched.

Our prayers are something that can be smelled by God.

Verse 4, **"The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand."**

Here the prayers again rise before God.

It is repeating it so that we do not miss it,

Repeating it so that we understand it and hear it.

Our prayers rise up to God and will be before His very face.

And then in verse five, **"Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake."**

We see the angel takes them and throws the prayer.

And the prayers actually become the very judgment that comes.

Because for the rest, the angels will blow the trumpets and things will happen on the Earth.

We're meant to see is that they are coming and happening not just because of the angels not just because of the trumpets, but because of our prayers

What kind of prayers are happening here?

It seems to me like these are prayers for God to bring justice.

The prayers for God to make all things new

The prayers call for God to stop the wicked from prospering

The prayer of every son and daughter who has cried how long oh Lord?

Those prayers come to the Earth God answers them.

Their times I've had people ask why should we pray?

Or they will ask why pray since I am a Calvinist.

And they will wonder, why if you believe God is in control of every single thing and nothing happens outside of His will that we should pray for God to do things when he's gonna do it anyway?

That's a great question.

There's a lot of answers to that question.

It's probably deserving of a whole sermon by itself, but I'm not trying to take six years to get the Revelation so we're gonna be faster than that.

Because someone might ask, why would I pray for God to bring justice when He's going to do it anyway?

The seven angels are gonna rise up and they're gonna blow those seven trumpets and that judgment is gonna fall whether you pray for it or whether you do not

I believe that is absolutely true.

God's judgment of God's plan for the world does not depend on you and it doesn't depend on me.

So why would we pray?

One reason we pray is because we can know that God is gonna answer.

It's really encouraging to pray for your prayers when you know that God is saying yes.

Every time you pray and ask for God to bring judgment, He is saying yes.

He might be saying not yet, but He's not saying no.

The judgment will come.

And the other reason we pray anyway is because we get to participate in what God is doing.

It is not that our prayers cause God to do something that He wouldn't have done otherwise.

But it is that our prayers actually do make a difference and do something.

That God has allowed us to participate in His plan, even at the end of the world.

I've always been partial to the image of God as the heavenly father inviting us as His son and His daughters to go to work with Him.

And we get to have a hand with Him in his work on the Earth.

He's the one who really does the work, but He lets us do it with Him.

When you read this passage, we should be encouraged and should strengthen our prayers.

Because our prayers are going to be answered.

And our prayers do impact eternity.

## **II. God's glory and judgment against nature (v. 6-12)**

We're only gonna look at the first four trumpets.

And each of these trumpets brings the judgment upon the very earth itself.

We see the judgment does not fall on people as much as it seems to fall primarily on nature and creation itself

This naturally raises questions for us.

The main question people have that we always have to ask is if this a literal judgment that falls on the Earth or is it symbolic of some kind of judgment?

And because so many of these talk about great numbers of the Earth being destroyed, there are those who wanna take it symbolically or just say that it has just a deeper spiritual meaning.

I am very sympathetic that argument, and I think there is almost always a deeper spiritual meaning in the Scriptures, especially in Revelation.

But I do believe that this is talking about a literal judgment that will fall on the Earth.

That at the same time as a deeper spiritual meaning.

Look at verse six, **"Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them."**

Here we have the angels are beginning to blow, and now the judgment that has been prayed for will come.

One of the reasons of this judgment is going to come upon the Earth is because of sin.

Because our sin has not just ruined our spiritual souls, it has also broken creation.

Genesis 3 when the curse came, it was said the ground would produce thorns.

Our earth itself is cursed and broken.

And the promise of God in Revelation is that He will bring the new heavens and the new Earth

But before the new comes, the old must fade away.

And part of what happens in these judgments, especially is a kind of de-creation.

The very elements spoke into existence are now being broken down.

Then they're being broken down so that God can remake them.

See in verse seven the first trumpet, **"The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up."**

Hail, fire, and blood are thrown in the Earth.

The fire consumes the earth, almost 1/3 of it.

Can you imagine the devastation that would come if the third of all of the trees and all of the land across the whole world was burned in a fire?

How horrifying the smoke and ash?

Verse eight, **"The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed."**

Then something that like a great fiery mountain thrown into the sea.

A fiery rock and a third of all the fish and creatures in the ocean die

Third of all the ships were destroyed.

And a third of all of the sea turns to blood.

So incredibly devastating.

Many of these plagues are similar to the plagues that fall Egypt.

The fire in the hail and the water turning to blood.

Egypt was punished because of their injustice and their sin.

They worshiped their own gods, and they mocked the true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

And they also kept people enslaved and refused to set them free.

And God offered them after chance to repent, and they refused, and so the judgment of God continued to fall on them.

There's a sense in which what God did in Egypt was just a preparation for what He will do on this day.

Verse 10 we get the third trumpet, **"The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water— <sup>11</sup> the name of the star**



**is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter."**

Here we have a star that falls from the heavens on fire and lands in the rivers in the spring.

And 1/3 the water in the earth that is good to drink turns bitter.

Many people in the world would die if suddenly a of the water isn't drinkable.

There are already those who in our world now try to raise an alarm about the problem of drinking water and how precarious our situation is on earth. It would get very bad very quickly for this to happen.

This should also remind us of other incidents in the Bible of God's judgment.

When God's people leave Egypt, they wander in the wilderness.

And they make the golden calf and reject God.

So, Moses melts it down, places it in water to make it bitter, and makes them drink it.

There is one other place in Numbers 5.

A woman cannot just be accused of adultery and discarded like in other cultures.

She is to be brought before the priest and made to drink bitter water.

If she is guilty, then the water would curse her.

If she was innocent, nothing would happen.

Because the water was only a judgement against sinners.

And here God does it again.

To a world that has complained against God.

The world that has doubted the provision of God and the goodness of God.

A world that has mocked and wanted nothing to do with God,

Now we'll have to drink the bitter water. And here God does it again.

To a world that has complained against God.

The world that has doubted the provision of God and the goodness of God.

A world that has mocked and wanted nothing to do with God,  
Now we'll have to drink the bitter water.

Verse 12, **"The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night."**

Here again we see part of the sun and moon and stars go away.

This is where I understand somebody don't wanna take it literally.

Because how can a third of the light and a third of our sun and moon disappear?

I like to think that I'm pretty smart and I have a lot of stuff figured out.

Like most pastors I like to think I know a lot more about more than I do.

I don't understand a lot of physics or science or the way that the sun works or light for that matter.

But I do understand the Bible and theology well.

And I understand enough to believe that the God who said let there be light and who created the way light functions and how the stars shine and move.

That God is allowed to change the rules and to tell them to do something different.

It seems on this day that He will tell our world to get a third darker.

But this is what I mean by we have kind of a de-creation.

It was almost as if God is going back backwards and time the seven days of creation are being reversed.

Even the light that God has brought is beginning to peel back.

But even here or even in this moment of the judgment of God, we still see His grace He still holds back even now.

It is not all of the water is not total complete destruction.

There are limits placed on it most of them here for a third.

God is only destroying a third of the Earth.

And these things seem so terrible and so horrific and so awful.

And they are.

But if we read them and we hear them and we think that it is unfair, but we think that our God is ruthless, then we misunderstand two things.

We misunderstand the greatness and the holiness of God, and we misunderstand the greatness of our sin.

Because our God is holy, our God is just our God is true. Our God is love our God is mercy.

So nothing that God does here is anything other than good, righteous, loving, and just.

And it only seems unjust to us because we do not realize the grander of His glory and the greatness of His holiness.

And we do not understand the depth of our sin and our rebellion.

Because our sin is not just something not nice that we do.

Sin is ultimately, a rejection of God, it is rebellion against God.

Our sin is spitting in the face of God

And our sin deserves to be punished

It deserves that far more than we realize .

And so as we read these judgments.

We need to not just be asking ourselves. What will the effect of this be on the Earth?

Or when has this taken place or when will it take place in the future.?

Or question the science between how the world get darker?

Really what we need to see is that this is what the world looks like without God

This is what a world without God looks like.

It will collapse in on itself.

It will not hold up because it cannot

And this is the consequences of our world, trying to behave as if it does not have to worship God.

That is the point.

That is the theological truth that we have to hold onto

That is what we need to see.

This is part of what I think is the essential truth behind Revelation eight.

We can disagree about the particulars.

We can disagree about how God revealed it.

The heart of what all of us need to see as believers is that

God is revealing His glory, revealing His wrath against sin through these trumpets on the Earth itself.

Again, when we come to the book of Revelation, would I want to see as a church?

And what I am hoping and praying for is not that we leave these doors and walk back into our communities as people who understand the book of Revelation and can explain it to others.

Although that's part of my hope, but my greater hope is that we would walk out of here as people who are trying to obey Revelation

People who are listening to the voice of Jesus in chapter 1, who told us Blessed are those who keep the words in this book.

### **III. We must proclaim the woe on the earth (v. 13).**

You see, we are to proclaim this woe

Verse 13, **"As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: 'Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!'"**

Tell us there's a creature like an eagle flying over the Earth crying out Woe!

Woe is a wonderful Old Testament word.

It's a word that we do not use very often.

It is one that the prophets would repeatedly proclaim.

And the proclamation of woe is a proclamation of warning.

And hear that woe is repeated three times  
Which should tell us how serious the judgment is and how necessary the proclamation of it is.

And this woe is proclaimed to those who dwell on the Earth.  
This phrase is not just talking about people who live on Earth.  
This is the description for unbelievers.  
Those who are followers of Jesus are citizens of heaven.  
They are those who might temporarily live on the earth, but they are just immigrants and aliens.  
We are passing through while those who dwell on the earth are those whose citizenship is here in this world and not the world to come.

And there is a warning to them.  
The warning is that things will get worse.  
That what we just talked about is only at the beginning.

This proclamation is going forth is not like godly trash talk.  
It is not like God is just mocking the Earth.  
It is a warning of the judgment that is coming.  
And a warning and a proclamation of judgment is always an invitation to repentance.  
The judgment of God is always accompanied by an invitation to repent

So this eagle flies over the Earth crying now woe.  
Go forth proclaiming, and those who are dwelling on the Earth to turn to God and to find deliverance.

Because God offers Grace.  
God offers an escape from judgment and punishment.  
God seals His people, and He will bring them out of the great tribulation and even though all of these terrible things will fall the Earth God will keep His people safe.  
And then invitation goes out to join the elect of God.

The invitation to join those who have been sealed and washed in the blood of the lamb goes forth  
It always goes forward and here it goes in the warning of woe.

And the way that the world should respond as one of repentance.  
They should respond like Rahab, who took the spies into her house and said I know that God has proclaimed who against the city of Jericho, but I believe in your God and can save me and show me mercy.  
And even though the walls and everything and Jericho come tumbling down Rahab, and her family, and all who have called on the mercy of God are saved.

And it's the same thing that is true today, that anyone who responds to Jesus  
Anyone on that day, who responds and hears the woe and falls on their face and repents and asks for forgiveness, can be delivered and can join in with the heavenly chorus.

But those who do not will face something terrible.  
The eagle is the one who goes across the world to proclaim this.  
I think this is both some heavenly creature that does so and it is also the church.  
That we are to proclaim and to preach, and to say woe to the Earth.

We are to join in and proclaim the entire council of God.  
In this passage, in this part of God's word tells us and warn us that there is terrible, terrible judgment coming for those who dwell on the Earth.

And we as followers of Jesus, and these Christians have to proclaim that.  
We can't deny it or downplay it or run away from it.  
One of the essentials of the faith is that the only way to salvation is belief and faith in Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ alone  
Part of what that means is that other religions are not correct.

Part of what that means is that not everybody gets to experience the blessings in the good life when they die.

And part of what that means is that there is judgment for those who rejected Jesus and reject the warning that they hear from his word.

I am not saying that we have to lead with God's judgment.

It doesn't have to be the first thing that we proclaim that we say we are preaching or sharing the gospel

I don't necessarily think the scripture is telling us we gotta get signs and go stand on the corners that say repent or burn in hell

But we do have to be honest with the world about what is coming.

We can't downplay it and never say anything.

We can't be embarrassed about it.

We have to say yes, we use Christians do you believe that anyone who rejects Jesus Christ will suffer and faith the wrath and judgment of God and it will be terrible.

We have to be honest about that. We cannot hide it or pretend that it is not so.

Because these trumpets are about to blow.

The judgment will come.

And it's gonna come, whether you think Revelation is still waiting to be fulfilled in the future or whether you think it is all symbolic.

The judgment of God is certainly coming on those who dwell on the Earth

And it is our job as followers of Jesus to proclaim God's Word and to be honest about the woe in the judgment that is coming.

But we do so always acknowledging first and foremost that we are ourselves deserving of the judgment,

And the only reason that we have escaped is not because we are better.

It is not because we are more righteous and more incredible and more awesome.

It is only by the blood and grace of Jesus Christ.  
That He took the punishment that we were supposed to face.  
He took the judgment that should've fallen upon our shoulders, and He took it on Himself.  
Because He did so that all who placed their faith in the crucified and risen Savior escape.

Instead of facing eternal judgment, they will face eternal blessing in the life to come with Jesus.  
That is what we proclaim and that is what we preach.

You see ultimately, the book of Revelation is about the gospel.  
And this whole book is about Jesus.  
Even the trumpets of judgment.

Where have we been this morning?  
Our prayers impact eternity.  
We have seen God's glory and judgment against nature.  
We should proclaim God's woe to the earth.