

## God's Great Mercy Ignored

**Text:** Revelation 9.1–21

**Theme:** Only those whom God seals will be protected from His terrifying judgments upon unbelievers

### Introduction — In book of Job, we see a fascinating scene in first two chapters

- referring to the courtroom of God, where Satan actually appears
- what we learn from this, that Job never sees, is that Satan causes all Job's calamity
- but what we are also given to see is this: God is in ultimate control of Satan
- Satan is allowed to wreak havoc upon Job & his life
- but God constantly has a leash around Satan's neck
- Satan is allowed to do damage, but only to a certain point

### Job, a true believer in the One True God, while suffering greatly, is protected by God

- only those whom God seals will be protected from His terrifying judgments upon unbelievers
- those who do not repent & turn to Jesus for salvation will perish for all eternity

### Our great need is to see evil for what it is

- the sins that tempt us are not pleasant things
- we often think we could enjoy so many things if it weren't for God's commands
- the sins that trap us, however, are set by a dark one more wicked than any in some fiction
- we need to feel the evil of sin
- we need to be so convinced of the sinfulness of sin, the evil of evils, that we flee from it
- God's commands are good and meant for our good
- if we do not see this, obey them by faith in Jesus Christ, we are doomed
- God will judge sin, the unbelieving, impenitent, unrepentant sinner
- but those who are His, He seals, protects, preserves, and finally, brings them home to Him

### From Revelation 6 on, we see God warning each one of us

- the seals opened in ch. 6 are God's pronouncement of His judgment upon sinful man
- the trumpets, of which we saw four in ch. 8, and now two more here in ch. 9...
- are God's clarion call of warning: Repent! Or Perish!
- the bowls, when they come in ch. 16, will be the actual pouring out of God's ultimate wrath

### Last week, as we heard the first four trumpets sounding, spoke of God's judgment upon creation

- this paralleled the first four seals being opened in ch. 6
- then, an interlude came in 8.13: **"Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice crying 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!'"**
- this interlude prepares John spiritually for what he is about to see and hear

*Now, let's look at...*

#### I. TRUMPET #5: THE TERRORS OF THE FIRST WOE

- read Revelation 9.1–6
- let's consider these things a bit at a time

##### 1. What is this "fallen star"?

- we know from description, not a literal astronomical phenomenon
- this "star" is given a key

- where else do we see something like this in the Bible?
- Isaiah 14.12–15 says, **“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.”**
- also, in OT prophecy, we read this
- **“Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord God: “You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you. In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.” — Ezekiel 28.12–16**
- and then there is Jesus Himself in Luke 10.18
- **“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”**
- so, I believe John is given to see Satan being cast from the presence of God

## 2. God’s sovereignty once again: the key

- in this we see God’s sovereignty
- note the words: “he was given” — Satan did not possess this key
- it was given to him, by the Almighty Sovereign Lord & Creator of all things
- with this key, he opens the pit, hell itself

## 3. Locusts and devastation

- v. 3—5 depict the horrors of what is unleashed upon the earth to plague mankind
- now remember, we’re seeing a picture of some other reality, not reality itself
- these are, of course, no ordinary locusts; nothing like them in nature or in history
- they are a picture of something, but of what?
- what does Satan control? What would come from pit of hell?
- demonic forces, of course, and they will have great power over unbelieving sinners
- they will torment them for five months...again, longer or shorter matters not
- this torment is horrible

## 4. God’s almighty control on display

- Satan is on a leash, remember; God is sovereign over him
- and God is sovereign over Satan’s minions
- note the words here: v. 3 — “they were given power...”
- v. 4 — “they were told not to harm...”
- and in v. 5 we see they could only torment, not kill those who dwell on earth

## 5. Protection by God’s seal

- brothers and sisters in Christ, rejoice that you are sealed by God & Christ the Lamb

- praise God that He has marked you with His very own Spirit & are kept from this
- Do you have the seal of God on your forehead?
- Gods servants are the ones sealed in 7:3
- in 1:5, 6 God's servants are those who have been freed from their sins by the blood of Jesus and made into a kingdom and priests.
- Have you been freed from your sins by the blood of Jesus?
- Do you believe that since He shed His blood on the cross, you are free from the penalty due your sin?
- Do you believe that since he shed his blood on the cross, you are free from the dominion of sin?
- Have you been transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of Jesus?
- Is Jesus your king?
- And are you serving him as a priest?
- A priest worships God and mediates the knowledge of God to others – is that what your life looks like?
- When the judgments of God begin to fall, you want to have the seal of God on your forehead.
- If you fear that you do not have that seal, confess all your sins to God right now, turn from them, and believe in Jesus.
- Pray for God to show you mercy.
- Ask him to give you his Holy Spirit.
- Jesus promises in Luke 11.13 that the Father would give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.

#### 6. **Seeking death that will not come**

- v. 4: it is unrepentant sinners who are tortured, stung by the devil's schemes
- they give in to wickedness and evil temptations, not realizing the ruin it brings upon them
- v. 6: seek death and will not find it
- man has always seen the terrible consequences of his or her sinful choices

#### 7. **Their evil king**

- these evil forces are further described in vv. 7–10
- your worst nightmares cannot compare to the reality of these evil demons
- J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* has some horrible creatures depicted within its pages
- but the worst would be the Nazgûl—former kings who were once noble, but are now like living dead, riding huge dragon-like beasts.
- Consider this description of these frightful enemies in *The Return of the King*:
  - The Nazgûl came again, as their Dark Lord outgrew and put forth his strength, so their voices, which uttered only his will and his malice, were filled with evil and horror. Ever they circled the City, like vultures that expect their fill of doomed men's flesh. Out of sight and shot they flew, and yet were ever present, and their deadly voices rent the air. More unbearable they became, not less, at each new cry. At length even the stout-hearted would fling themselves to the ground as the hidden menace passed over them, or they would stand, letting their weapons fall from nerveless hands while into their minds a blackness came, and they thought no more of war, but only of hiding and crawling, end of death.
- and then there is the king of these foul demon forces, v. 11
- Abaddon or Apollyon — both names mean “destroyer” — Satan himself
- he wishes to only destroy; any promise he holds out in temptations of happiness & life is a lie

#### 8. **Your only hope**

- remember what this book is about

- it is about God's glorious justice being carried out
- it is glorious because it completely vindicates His holy righteousness
- it is judgment because the cosmic treason man has committed is worthy of such justice
- and then there is God's steadfast mercy
- here it is, calling out to any today who have not looked to Jesus & repented of their sins
- these warning blasts from these trumpets call to you, you who dwell on earth
- you who have no thought of heaven and Christ's marvelous presence: He calls you today
- this is your only hope to escape the judgment of Almighty God

*Nom, let's hear the blast of...*

## **II. TRUMPET #6: THE TERRORS OF THE SECOND WOE**

- read Revelation 9.13–19

### **1. Before the altar of God**

- again, these words are important, like a signal calling to us "God is in control"
- all that takes place is the judgment of God

### **2. Four angels — which are these?**

- these cannot be good angels, for they are bound
- and when they are released, at the bidding of God, they bring all sorts of killing

### **3. Why the Euphrates?**

- it could be literal, but I think not, once again, believing this to be a symbol
- if it's literal, then consider the sheer physical impossibility of 200 million horsemen in v. 16
- there is no land that could hold that many for a single battle
- so, this is God showing John that there is a spiritual boundary for His people's safety
- in the OT, the Euphrates is a boundary for God's people Israel
- God's covenant promise extended to this boundary where His people would find rest

### **4. The hour, day, month, and year**

- next we see something very specific spelled out for these angels of war & death
- God is meticulous in His sovereignty; none of this is left to chance
- President John F Kennedy said in 1961 at the United Nations:
- "every man, woman, and child lives under a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident or miscalculation or by madness."
- His view is still that of many people today, who say there are enough weapons in the arsenals of the country of this world to wipe out the population of the Earth.
- If the future hangs only upon chance, upon the calculations of fallible human politicians, or upon the sanity or insanity of a particular leader, then this is a frightful world in which to live.
- thanks be to God, He is sovereign even over these four angels

### **5. Wars and rumors of wars**

- what follows then is a symbolic description of war...war throughout the centuries
- war is often one of the worst horrors mankind faces
- Think about the millions of people who have been killed in wars.
- According to some estimates, between 1480 and 1941, Britain engaged in 78 wars;
- France, in 71 wars; Spain, 64 wars; Russia, in 61 wars;

- Austria, in 52 wars; Germany, in 23 wars; the United States, in 13 wars;
- China, in 11 wars; and Japan, in nine wars.
- And still the war drums keep sounding. Many countries are at war right now.
- Think of how much blood shed there has been
- how many people have been exterminated during times of war.
- A third of mankind will perish under the awful calamity of war, says verse 15.
- War is the single most monstrous act of man's rebellion.
- It is the single most awful illustration of man's depravity and what he is capable of.

*Perhaps the worst woe of all comes in the final two verses where we see...*

### **III. THE SAD OUTCOME OF THE EARTH-DWELLERS**

- read Revelation 9.20–21

#### **1. The rest of mankind**

- please, please remember, these are earth-dwellers being spoken of here
- unbelievers, sinners not found in Christ
- the impenitent, unrepentant person, seeing all this judgment & devastation
- still...does not...repent...of his or her sins
- all this and they do not look to God for salvation
- they continue to reject Jesus Christ's free offer
- the Holy Spirit cannot change their sin-hardened, rebelliously stubborn heart

#### **2. Breaking the 1<sup>st</sup> Table of the Law**

- humanity is depraved, meaning their hearts are sinful from the moment they are born
- people are inveterate sinners
- they're not just unreasonable, they are rebels
- the truth is right there before them...and they ignore it, turn away from it
- despite the mercy of God warning them, they simply shrug it off
- earth-dwelling unbelievers say, "I don't believe in God" but blame Him for bad things
- James 4.1–3 explains this:
- **"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."**
- all that we see here in Revelation 9 is the result of man's sinfully dark heart & God's judgment upon it
- he will worship whatever he wishes, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary

#### **3. Breaking the 2<sup>nd</sup> Table of the Law**

- v. 21: nor did they repent of breaking the latter half of the Ten Commandments
- the sins listed here are all against your neighbor
- God calls out, even in harsh, horrifying judgment: Repent! There is still time!
- but they refuse to give up their sinful lives

### **Conclusion – What will you do?**

- v. 14 reminded us of the altar before God
- in the OT, the altar was the place of sacrifice: atoning blood poured out; priests interceding

- the priests interceded with sacrificial blood to hold back the wrath of God
- and here is the altar again, reminding us of Christ's great work of sacrifice
- it is His blood that cleanses us; it is His death that appeases the wrath vengeance of God
- the only place to be safe is in the altar of Jesus Christ Himself: His life, His death, His offering

**With this chapter of Revelation?**

- serves as one of the gravest warnings yet if you are not a Christian
  - if your life not hid in Christ, you will not be safe
  - your life is forfeit for eternity, not even the mountains falling on you will save you
  - why do you keep putting God off, holding Him away, thinking you have time
  - come to Him today, cry out for mercy, turn to Jesus Christ in repentant faith
- 
- for the Christian however, this serves us well
  - you are reminded once again: you have been sealed by God in Christ Jesus with the Holy Spirit
  - He will preserve you, keep you from His wrath
  - yes, you may suffer at the hands of these vile men due to their demon-inspired hatred of God
  - but you are completely safe in the hands of God

**With your life?**

- stand, brothers and sisters, against the onslaught of evil
- stand and fight against temptation
- the book of Revelation is pulling back the mask of beauty that evil wears
- underneath that mask is exposed to perverse and destructive reality of what tempts us
- stand and fight for your life
- know that God will preserve and keep you