

Revelation 8 & 9 - The Trumpets Of Judgment

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Revelation chapter eight. Just a quick review for those of you who may be new, or may be just joining us mid-study here. The book of Revelation is a book that speaks of a future time period, a period of what we call the great tribulation. It'll be a time when God will bring about an expression of His wrath upon the earth.

But it's not just wrath. God is going to be working during that time to also get men's attention, and particularly the attention of the people of Israel. But there will be an opportunity given during the time of the great tribulation for people to get saved. Many people will come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ during the great tribulation. So that's something that a lot of people struggle understanding. But we've looked at that in the past and now I've told you that I personally believe that Jesus is going to come and catch away His bride prior to the great tribulation.

In fact, I believe that is the next prophetic event that is on the horizon. We don't know when that's going to happen, but we know that Jesus is coming for His church, for His bride, and we are going to be caught up to meet Him in the air, as Paul says in 1 Thessalonians chapter four. There are people, in fact might even be people in this room, who disagree with me on the point of the timing of the catching away of the church. I believe that it's going to happen before the great tribulation.

There are a good many Christians who believe that it is going to happen midway through the great tribulation. We call those mid-tribers.

And then there are people who believe that Jesus is going to come for His church, or the church is going to be caught up to be with Him when He returns to the earth, which is at the end of the great tribulation which would be a post tribulation position.

In the last 25 years or so, there has even been kind of a new position that was popularized called pre-wrath, the pre-wrath rapture of the church, which basically puts the coming of Christ for His bride, midway between the last, in the last half of the great tribulation.

So anyway, all that to say that I do believe that Jesus is coming for the church before the great tribulation. And every so often I get questions from time to time, people saying to me Pastor Paul, would you give me a scripture to help me to understand the pretribulation, rapture? And I tell him, no, I can't. If I could give you one single scripture, there wouldn't be a debate between pre, mid, and post-tribers. It'd be great if I could give you one verse and say, well, there you go, that proves it right there.

My position on the timing of the rapture, which by the way doesn't have any effect on your salvation. In fact, there are some people that tell me that they're pan tribulation. They believe it's all going to pan out in the end. Well, however it happens, it's all just going to pan out. And so they say, I'm pan-trib. It's like, well, good for you.

My position on the timing of the rapture as it relates to the great tribulation has come about through years of studying through the entire Bible. And so I've gotten to the point now where if somebody asks me, can you share with me why you are pre-tribulation in your position related to the rapture? I'll say, well go through my teachings through the whole Bible. It'll take you about two years if you really are diligent, and then you'll see because that's really what came out of it. It came out of years of just going through the entire Bible, Genesis to Revelation, because it all fits together.

There are so many puzzle pieces that go together to form someone's opinion. And so, I guess all that to say it's not an easy sort of a thing. If you've come to a position where you are pre, mid or post and you haven't studied through the entire Bible, I would challenge you to do that and let that be the way you make a determination. But as I said, it doesn't affect your salvation. You're going to be saved. You might be surprised the way things kind of happen, and like, whoa, the trumpet, before the tribulation appears. Wow.

Anyway, within the prophecies of the book of Revelation, we see essentially three successive periods within the great tribulation that are ushered in by three separate events. And you'll remember, and we've already gone through these, we're just going to read about the very last, but the first event is the opening of the seven seals. That sealed a scroll, which we came to identify as essentially the writing of God's redemptive plan for mankind. And no one in heaven was worthy to open the seals of that scroll except the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. And every time He opened one of those seals, a new element of judgment took place.

The second event, which is the one we're going to be covering tonight, is the sounding of the trumpets.

And then the third event of this book is the pouring out of the seven bowls of God's judgment. I do believe these are successive events in the Bible or in within the context of the time of the great tribulation. But after the pouring out of the seven bowls of God's wrath, that will be the finishing work of the Lord's wrath at that time. And in case you are a little unclear on the whole timeline of last days events, I'm going to put something up on the screen for you.

(slide)

Last Days Timeline

www.ccontario.com/revelation

And this is the url, the web address, where you will find a link to a pdf which has the last days timeline that I created. And for those of you that are here in the room, you can take a picture of that or whatever with your phone. For those of you who are watching online, you can pause the thing and write it down, but that's where you'll find it. Just go to the page where our revelation study is and you will see a button there that says Last Days Timeline. Click that and you can download that and have it for your very own. So there you go.

Revelation chapter eight. Let's get into it here. And we begin with the opening of the final seal that was on the scroll. It says in verse one, *"When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour."*

I've had people write to me, believe it or not, and ask me how there could be silence in heaven for 30 minutes when there's no time, when there's only timelessness in heaven. And so they'll say, that doesn't make any sense in eternity there's these 30 minutes of silence. Well, you got to be careful not to dance on the head of a pin. We can't even fathom timeless eternity. And yet we find in the book of Revelation that there are these references, these time references, and we have to ask ourselves, why are they here? Well, I believe that this reference to this period of silence is, if you will, the calm before the storm. Because the breaking open of the seventh seal is going to usher in the trumpet judgments and the cataclysmic judgments that are going to go along with that. I think it's something that we have to be kind of careful not to obsess over.

I think what's interesting is that up to this moment, John has been hearing, and as we've read through these previous chapters, all these sounds in heaven, there are these voices. He's heard angels speaking. He has heard thunder and he has heard rumblings and all kinds of noise, and yet for this time period, whatever it

was, he says, a half hour, there is utter silence. And you have to imagine what that must have been like. To suddenly be thrust into this time of just absolute complete silence. I heard one commentator say it was the silence of breathless expectancy as all of heaven waited for the hand of God to move.

And John then says in verse two, *"²Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them."*

Now, trumpets are an important thing in the Bible. When you read through the Bible, Old Testament particularly, you're going to see that trumpets were sounded for many different reasons, particularly during the wilderness wanderings. Trumpets were used to rally the nation of Israel for several different reasons. But in this particular case the sounding of the trumpets each herald the arrival of a new judgment from the Lord.

And we begin in this next phase of judgments, you'll notice in a very interesting way, look at verse three. It says, *"³And another angel" (not one of the seven, but another angel) came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, ⁴and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel."*

Now, once again, because the book of Revelation is so full of signs and types and symbols, it's important for you to understand that incense throughout the Bible is a picture of prayer. And that is one of the reasons why they were to keep incense burning in the presence of the Lord. This was a picture of the prayers of the saints coming before God. And we're told here in this imagery that John is seeing that the prayers of the saints are being brought before the Lord.

Notice what it goes on to say in verse five. *"⁵Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake."*

So isn't this interesting as this whole time of judgment is being kicked off, prior to the blowing of these seven trumpets by these angels, the first thing that happens is that the prayers of the saints are brought before God. And not only brought before the Lord, and it says that it specifically *"rose before God from the hand of the angel"*, but then all of these prayers mingled with fire are cast upon the earth. Isn't this an incredible picture? I believe this is prayer in action. And I believe that what is happening here prior to these judgments that are being brought forth through the blowing of the trumpets, this is a response of

God from the prayers of God's people throughout the ages who are crying out to Him for justice upon the earth. This is something that you can read in the Psalms. David prayed, Lord, he said, bring these things down upon their heads. He would talk about the evil man who was just bent on doing evil and he would pray and say, oh God, be the God who brings recompense and justice upon the earth (Psalm 7).

Well, David wasn't the only one that prayed that way. That prayer has been echoed by many many saints throughout the ages. And what has happened to all those prayers? They were kept. They were kept in heaven to be fulfilled at a specific time. And this is that time. And so not only are these prayers of the saints brought before the Lord, but they are cast down upon the earth, and this is incredible.

It goes on to say in verse six, *"Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them."*

Now I need you to know that at this particular point we have come to the midpoint, the halfway point of the great tribulation. But there are some things you need to know before we read about the blowing of these seven trumpets and the judgments that go along with them. You're going to see that God is going to bring forth various plagues upon the enemies of the Lord.

But you're going to notice in each one of these things, these judgments that are cast down upon the earth and upon the people of the earth that they are only partial. And that's an important distinction. They are not total. This is not total destruction. This is not total judgment. It means that these judgments are going to be carried out with a desire on God's part of producing repentance. In fact we're going to hopefully get to the end of chapter nine tonight, and you're going to see at the very end of chapter nine, that the idea of people repenting is going to be mentioned. And that is the purpose behind these partial judgments.

God doesn't have to bring partial judgment. He can bring complete judgment if He wants to. He could go in and just wipe everybody out if He wanted to, but He does not. These are partial for the purpose of getting people's attention that they might respond to these things with an attitude of repentance. And we'll see that as we get to the end of the next chapter.

Verse seven. *"The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood,"* (I want you to take note of that phrase) *"and these were thrown upon the earth."* (now, notice here the partial judgment) *"And a third of the earth was burned up,"* (that means two thirds of the earth was not) *"and a*

third of the trees were burned up," (and of course, that means two thirds of all the trees on the earth were not) *"and all green grass was burned up."* I believe that this is a literal calamity that is being referred to here. So we see with this first trumpet that these first judgments are directed upon the earth. But remember, the earth is the habitat of mankind, and so this is going to affect mankind.

In fact, it could be that some of these things result in death because of that statement that was made that these were mixed with blood and that may speak of the loss of human life. But I want you to think for just a minute about the ramifications of what these things would do. How these things would kind of play out in the world if a third of the earth was burnt up, a third of the trees, fruit bearing as well, were burnt up. You can just kind of imagine. And there's no grass at all. So there's no place to graze a person's livestock. You can see from this that food would undoubtedly become very precious, very scarce during this time to feed the population of the earth and probably get very expensive food prices would skyrocket. We see this happening from time to time. This happens. That happens, and suddenly the price of eggs, a dozen eggs just goes through the roof. Well, or we think it's through the roof, \$6, \$7 for a dozen eggs or something like that. And we're all just, oh heavens, what is going on? Well, I think during the great tribulation, it's going to be that on steroids. It's going to be turned way up as it relates to those sorts of expenses and so forth. So you can just kind of imagine how these things are going to affect the earth.

Verse eight, *"⁸The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. ⁹A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed."* Now, you'll notice that when we read here that John describes *"something like a great mountain, burning with fire"* This just invites people to apply all of the 21st century possible explanations to this because they'll say, John didn't say he saw a mountain burning with fire. He said it was *"something like"* it's the language of similarity. We're going to hear it a lot more. So people love to wonder, well, I wonder what he saw. I wonder, could this have been some kind of a nuclear sort of a blast that poisoned the waters or something like that? Well, the fact of the matter is we don't really know, but what we know is what we read. And that is that a third of the sea creatures were destroyed along with a third of all the ships on the seas.

Next, verse ten. *"¹⁰The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch,"* (I don't know, maybe an asteroid) *"and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water."* So you can see that previously it was the salt water that was affected with the blowing of that second angel's

trumpet. But now we're dealing with the drinking water. This is the freshwater that's being affected. And we're told in verse eleven that, *"¹¹The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood,"* (that word in that case literally means bitter.) *"and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter."* So again, we don't know exactly what this is, but instead of the salt water being affected, now the drinking water. This is getting a little more desperate and personal, but it's also limited. Notice a third. So not all of the water on the earth is affected, but this time we are told that people die because of this. That's what it says in verse eleven, that many people died from the water because it had been made bitter. John says that the star that fell was called Wormwood. And wormwood, by the way, is a bitter tasting herb. And it's known for its bitterness. It's actually used for other things today, but it is known for being very bitter.

Verse twelve, *"¹²The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night."* Now this is really interesting. You can see from the fourth trumpet here that this ushers in a plague upon the heavens that actually results in darkness upon the earth. Something about the day and night cycle is disrupted. And it's interesting how a third of the light and even a third of the day, the light of the sun is kept from shining. Somehow, the light of the sun is reduced, which of course would explain why the light of the moon was reduced by a third, because the moon gets its light from the sun. It's just simply reflecting its light from the sun. But, this is one of those crazy sort of things. Interestingly enough, crazy though it may be, Jesus said it would be so. Let me show you on the screen:

Matthew 24:29 (ESV)

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light..."

So Jesus said this was going to happen. Now imagine what darkening the sun by a third would do to the environment. Imagine what that's going to do to the temperature of the earth. And the atmosphere. I mean, I went outside today, I took a break from my study. I saw the light was coming in through the door, so I went outside and I just stood in the driveway and closed my eyes. I love the sunshine. I just sat out in the sun and I was just like, thank you Jesus. This is so good. Imagine, a third of the sun being darkened and what would happen to the atmosphere of the earth. I would imagine that there would be a fairly drastic drop in temperature. The earth, it would become much colder and so forth. So this is a terrible thing.

Next, I want you to notice that John hears a message of warning. He says in verse thirteen, *"¹³Then I looked and I heard an eagle crying"* if you have a New King James Version Bible, yours says angel. But unfortunately, the Greek word does mean eagle. He says, *"I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, "Woe, woe, woe" (And that's a threefold woe) "to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!"* So three woes for the remaining three trumpets. And this is a warning. We're not sure if the warning is given to the earth or if it's just something that John is being made aware of. We don't really know. But these next trumpet blasts are considered to be very very dangerous, very bad, because of the fact that they will affect mankind more specifically in terms of death. But I want you to notice, and I want you to be aware of the fact that these next judgments appear to have a spiritual element. And what we're going to see here as we look into these judgments is that, you hear that term, all hell broke loose. We use that term, to usually describe something that got really bad. Well, that's what's happening here. That's what's going to happen with the blowing of these final three trumpets. All hell is going to break loose.

And you're going to see that here as we get into into the next chapter nine verse one. *"¹And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth"* and somebody might read that and say, well, it looks like we have another asteroid or something that's falling to earth and so forth. No no no. But wait a minute, he's going to apply a personal masculine pronoun to this star. I want you to notice that it says, *"and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. ²He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. ³Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. ⁴They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads."* All right, let's stop here and let's go talk about this because this is pretty crazy.

It says, *"only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads."* and that would refer to any unbeliever, but those who have the seal on their foreheads, that would include the 144,000. We saw in the previous study how they were sealed with the seal of the Lord. But I believe that also refers to the tribulation saints, because we saw how the 144,000 don't just get sealed for the purpose of being sealed. They go out and they evangelize the earth, and many many people are brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus. And John sees that multitude right after the 144,000 are sealed. And so I believe that they are sealed as well, and that means that they would not be harmed by this.

We'll talk about these locusts here in a moment, but let's read verses five and six. It says, *"⁵They were allowed to torment them" (and this is the people who are not sealed by God) "for five months," (again, so it's limited, it's only going to go on for five months) "but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. ⁶And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them."*

And the reason is because God's in charge of the end of our lives. And He can prolong it if He wants to. And He will during the time of the great tribulation. All right. Let's talk about what John is seeing here. What's interesting about this section is that John says he saw locusts, and you'll notice that he doesn't use the language of similarity. He doesn't say they look like locusts. I don't know, there's something that came out of there, this dust and this smoke, and they. . . it's not what he says. He says they were locusts. But were they in fact locusts? I don't think so because as he goes on to describe these things that he calls locusts, you're going to notice that he leans very heavily on the language of similarity. And you're going to also see that these are like no locusts you've ever heard of or seen in a book or magazine, or maybe even in real life. But we're told that they are going to be given the power to torment the people of the earth who have not been sealed by God. And it says that *"their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone."*

Has anyone here ever been stung by a scorpion? I don't see any hands. Neither have I. I'm sure it's extremely painful. I mean, I've been stung many times by a bee, and that's bad enough. In fact, one time I was cruising home from Boise on my motorcycle. I was alone. And I was cruising along. It was a hot hot day, so I was wearing my riding jacket, but I had it kind of unzipped and it has these zippers on the sleeve to let air kind of come in and cool you down while you're riding. And when you're on a motorcycle, your arms are out like this. And I had a hornet or a wasp, I didn't ask its name. Fly up my sleeve and stung me, like, seven times. I'm going 75, 80 miles an hour on the highway going, ow ow ow. And finally, I pulled over and I have all these welts on my arm. I actually came home, took a picture. I was kind of proud, but that hurt. Man that hurt. So I can only imagine what this is like.

John's describes these as locusts. But I want you to notice here just how many times he uses the language of similarity in his description of these things. Look at beginning in verse seven, it says, *"⁷In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle:"* And by the way, whenever you see the word 'like' that is the language of similarity. He's not saying that they were horses prepared for battle. He's saying though, they were like horses prepared for battle. That's

number one. *"on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, ⁸their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; ⁹they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. ¹⁰They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails."*

Did you notice there eight full references to 'like', and the language of similarity. The reason I think it's kind of creepy that they've got women's hair is because I happen to like women's hair. And these are really creepy things and it just seems really strange to have something that would look really nice on these things that are so creepy otherwise and are able to do such incredible torment upon the earth. So after reading this description, isn't it strange that when John first sees these things coming forth, he would say, and then locusts came out of the smoke. He just called them locus at first, even though the description belies anything that we would know related to that.

I believe that there is a spiritual element to this whole description. And the reason I believe that is because of what he goes on to say in verse eleven. *"¹¹They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon."* These names mean destruction and destroyer. And I believe that we are talking about satan himself, who literally is kind of in charge. It says he's king over these. So personally I believe that what John is describing for us is a spiritual demonic hoard that is leashed upon the earth. And that's why it's like nothing we've ever seen and even the description that John gives is like nothing we've ever seen. You remember I told you as we started this chapter, this is going to be when all hell breaks loose. Literally, this is when these beings, these demonic beings that had been locked up, which by the way, the Bible tells us in the book of Jude that some of these demonic beings are kept locked away (Jude 1:6). Well, they're going to be released at this time during the great tribulation, and they're going to be given the freedom to torment those upon the earth who are not sealed with the seal of God.

Now, John writes in verse twelve, *"¹²The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come."* Boy, I tell you, that's pretty nasty. You think this is bad enough, but things are going to get worse. *"¹³Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, ¹⁴saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."* So with the blowing of the sixth trumpet there is a release of four angels. But again, we have to assume that these are evil angels because remember, demons are just angels that have fallen.

And so the word angel can be applied even to a demonic being. And the reason I believe that they are evil angels is because of the fact that they have been bound. We see elsewhere in scripture that some of the angels are free during this time period, and some are bound. And here's another interesting clue as to why these are in fact demonic angels. It's where they were released from. Did you notice that, if you look at that again in verse fourteen it says, *"¹⁴saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."*

If you know your biblical geography, you know that the river Euphrates runs through that ancient area of Persia, Babylon, what we would call modern day Iraq. What's interesting about that is that Babylon, throughout the scripture, and we'll see this later in the book of Revelation, is a focal point of God's judgment because of the evil that comes out of Babylon. And also later on, in fact, in chapter eighteen, we're going to read something interesting about the falling of Babylon. Let me show you this on the screen:

Revelation 18:1-2 (ESV)

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. And he called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

Isn't that interesting? It says, Babylon has become a haunt for these things. And where are these four demonic angels released from? This very area of Babylon, from the Euphrates. So it's just an interesting clue that brings us to a better understanding of these particular four demonic angels.

Look at verse fifteen. It says, *"¹⁵So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind."* That's another reason I believe that they're demonic spirits. And he says, *"¹⁶The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number."* By the way, that comes to 200million. 200million. And by the way, this is another reason why we don't believe that this is a literal human army, because this would be unprecedented in terms of the size of a human army. 200 million. That's just never existed. China has made boasts in the past of having an army 200 million strong, but they like to boast about a lot of things that have no basis in reality. So I believe that we are hearing about, and even numbering it at this point, a demonic hoard that is released along with these four demonic angels at this time.

And check out their description. This is interesting, verse seventeen, *"¹⁷And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths. ¹⁸By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed,"* Now remember when he says a third of mankind, I'm assuming that means a third of whatever was left after all of the other judgments that had already taken place. Of course, this is all future, so I have to be careful using past tense references. Ever since the fourth seal has been opened, there have been people dying. And so, who knows exactly how many people is a third of mankind at this point, but the people who like to crunch numbers, and I'm not one of them, estimate that before this angel blew his trumpet, before this happened, already half of the world's population had been killed. If we're using the same numbers as our current population numbers, we would be talking about 4 billion people died before the sixth angel blew his trumpet. Before. And then, so what is left, which would be about half of the world's population, then a third of that was killed.

So I think we're still referring to something like 1.5 billion people or something along those lines. It says, I'm still kind of in the middle of verse eighteen, *"a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. ¹⁹For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound."* You can look at these descriptions and you can say, well, I think that these probably refer to, everything from tanks to helicopters to different kinds of things. I believe this is spiritual. I believe that this is a work of a demonic hoard. And that's just my personal view. We'll read the last couple of verses of the chapter.

"²⁰The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, ²¹nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts."

Now what's interesting about those last two verses is that we're told that after all of this, these people still did not repent, which tells you that God brought these partial judgments, as difficult as they have been, with an eye toward the possibility that people would repent. He's giving them the opportunity to repent. But they are refusing, they're saying, no, we still are not going to do that. It's interesting. Again, I've shared with you in the past how the book of Revelation is about getting people's attention upon the earth at that time. The people who are left behind, God is going to bend over backwards to give them an opportunity to get saved. Do you know that the word repent appears ten times in

the book of Revelation alone. Ten times. So this is a theme that we're seeing in the book of Revelation. It's not just about wrath. It's about mercy. It's about God's mercy. The Bible tells us God is not willing that any should be lost, but that all would come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

And sometimes in order for someone to come to a place of repenting, they have to come to a crisis point. And I don't know if that's happened in your life. I think with many of you, it probably has. I'm willing to bet, that if you had the opportunity to get up and give a testimony right now of how you got saved, many of you could say, well, we went through a really rough season in our life and God got our attention and I came to Christ. You guys know my story. That's exactly what happened. My marriage had to fail. Thankfully God saved Sue and me and healed our marriage. But it was a very painful experience. But it was used by the Lord. I'm not saying He caused it. We caused it with our stupidity. He used it. He used it to get our attention and bring us to Him and to bring us to our knees, to surrender our lives to Him and say, Lord, look at the mess I've made of my life. Now I want to invite you into my life. I want to see what you can do. And He's pretty good at putting things back together at healing. But I'm willing to bet that there are many of you who can tell a story similar to that. Different details perhaps, but a similar way that God got a hold of your heart. Although that was a painful time in your life, it was a sign of God's mercy. He loved you so much so as not to let you keep rolling down the road, happy-go-lucky, heading to hell. But He got a hold of you, didn't He? He got a hold of you, like my mom used to say, shook you till your teeth rattled, and you came to Christ.

Can I encourage you that that testimony of how you came to the Lord, use that when you tell people about your faith. That's your testimony. That's something nobody can take from you. Tell people how it happened. Tell people how you got saved. Tell people what the Lord used in your life to get your attention. How you had to kind of come to the end of yourself. Had you hit the bottom, no place to go but up. And boy, when you came to that place, there was Jesus. There was Jesus. About the time you thought you were drowning, you put your foot down and there was a rock to stand on. A sure foundation. And He lifted you up and saved you out of His great mercy.

Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for your word tonight. Thank you for these two chapters in the book of Revelation. Thank you, God, that even in the midst of a book that speaks of the outpouring of wrath, we see clearly the expression of your mercy throughout this book, calling mankind to repentance. Calling mankind to bow the knee. To give up the things that the world says are so important and to open our lives to you and to your goodness.

Father, I thank you in Jesus' name, that you loved us enough to draw us to you, to yourself, and save us through the sacrifice and resurrection of your Son. I praise you and I worship you, Lord, along with my brothers and sisters here tonight, and thank you for your amazing goodness. We pray all of these things in Jesus' name, and all God's people said: Amen.

God bless you.