

THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE
Revelation 8; text Revelation 3: 19, 9: 20- 21
August 30, 2020

I. Understanding God's Call to Repent

- A. Sometimes, we people don't take the hint that we might be going in the wrong direction, and we refuse to turn around.**

Revelation 9:20-21 (NIV) The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

- B. To repent is to turn around.**

1. **The Greek word that is translated repent in this verse literally it means to change one's mind.**
2. **The Hebrew word that is often translated repent means to turn completely around—to do a hundred-eighty-degree about-face.**

- C. Specifically, God is calling people to repent of their idolatries and of their evil actions that have resulted from their idolatries.**

Revelation 9: 20b-21 they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

1. **Idolatry is worshipping or centering our lives on anything or anyone other than God.**
2. **Idolatry includes worshipping images or even parts of creation.**
3. **Some people don't worship images or creation by engaging in religious rites or ceremonies, but by ignoring the Creator God or by foolishly denying his existence and treating creation as if it is all that is real.**

Psalms 53:1 (NIV) The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and their ways are vile; there is no one who does good.

- a. **The atheism and agnosticism that is on rise today is only another form of idolatry.**
- b. **And when we don't believe there is a god, or when we ignore his existence. we worship the created gifts he gave us, such as money, pleasure, science, and self.**
4. **We know we are serving idols when we are engaging in actions that spring from idol worship.**

Revelation 9:21 (NIV) Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

- a. **When people stop worshipping the one true God, they begin to curse, demean, use and abuse those made in his image.**
- b. **Some even resort to theft and murder**
5. **This verse speaks of worshipping demons.**
 - a. **There is no power in an idol or an image.**
 - b. **It is the demon or spiritual power behind the image that gives it its power.**
 - c. **Once we are under the demon's power, it can be very difficult for us to repent.**
6. **When pleasure and material things become our idol, the demons that seduce us to center our lives on such things, begin to control our lives.**
 - a. **Money, pleasure, and things become an obsession with us.**
 - b. **And we find it almost impossible to change that.**
7. **It's similar with addictions to drugs, alcohol, and sex.**
 - a. **There is a physical chemical component to most addictions.**
 - b. **There is a psychological component.**
 - c. **But there is also a spiritual one.**

Ephesians 6:12 (NIV) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

8. **We can only fight such demons by the power of God.**
 - a. **Repentance is not just a matter of will power.**
 - b. **We must pray for the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Questions:

- 1) **When have I foolishly refused to stop doing something only to regret it later? Why was it so difficult for me to stop and turn around?**
- 2) **Have I ever worshipped idols or been tempted to do so? What idols were they?**
- 3) **Have I ever thought of agnostics and atheists as idol worshippers before? But does it make sense to me that since they do not worship the true God and they center their live on things, activities, or other people that they also fit into this category? (also see Romans 1: 18-28)**
- 4) **Why does God consider all forms of sexual immorality as evil and as often the result of idolatry? (Think about what it means to use another person to satisfy one's own passions and pleasure without making a real commitment to that person.)**
- 5) **Have I tried to fight my idolatries and addictions on my own? How did that turn out? Why do I need the help of the Holy Spirit to do so?**

II. Understanding the Plagues in our World as God's Call to Repentance

- A. God's purpose for sending the plagues is not just to punish people for their idolatry, but also to warn the people of the earth that Judgment Day is coming when all idolaters will be judged and punished eternally.**

1. **Not wanting any to perish on that day, he is calling the inhabitants of this world to repent.**
2. **Before Jesus came, God was patient with the idolatries of this world, but as Paul points out in Acts 17:30, God now wants everyone to repent**

Acts 17:30 (NIV) In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

3. Some see the horrors we find symbolized in chapters 8- 9 as predictive of things that will happen immediately before Jesus returns; maybe they are right.

4. But such horrors also surely speak to every age with a warning and a call to repentance.

B. According to Ezekiel the prophet, trumpets, like those referred to here, symbolically remind us that these events are warnings from God.

Ezekiel 33:1-5 (NIV) The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, speak to your countrymen and say to them: 'When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman, and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people, then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not take warning and the sword comes and takes his life, his blood will be on his own head. Since he heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning, his blood will be on his own head. If he had taken warning, he would have saved himself.

C. As we examine the events after the first trumpet, we see this clearly.

Revelation 8:7 (NIV) The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon 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.

1. Think about the fires raging today in California.

2. According to Jesus tragedies like this do not happen because these people are any worse than we are.

3. In commenting on similar tragedies in his day, Jesus said that things happen as warnings calling us all to repentance.

Luke 13:1-5 (NIV) Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them--do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

4. These fires are a warning to us of the judgment that will come when Christ returns.

2 Peter 3:10 (NIV) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

D. Other warning come as the other angels sound their trumpets introducing more suffering.

1. We don't have time this morning to try to unpack all of that symbolism.

2. If the truth be told, Bible scholars aren't all agreed as to what some of that symbolism means.

3. But the important point is that each plague or curse is a warning from God calling this world to repentance.

Questions:

- 1) In the vision God uses angels or his heavenly messenger to announce each new warning? How can I be used as God's messenger to proclaim his warning today?
- 2) Some think that God is unfair if he punishes all idolaters in the world, because not all of them had equal opportunity to repent. What do I think about that? What do I understand the scriptures to say about that?
- 3) Do I understand disasters in our world, such pandemics, fires, hurricanes, and wars, as God's warning me and all people to repent? Why or why not? Why is it wrong to say that such things are only meant as warnings to those who are suffering from them?
- 4) If such disasters are warning from God, why is it so important for Christians to pray for and reach out to help the victims, and to try to engage in behaviors that help to prevent such things? How does doing this help us to point others to Christ and to the new earth that he will bring? How does it point the world to a loving God who sacrificed his own Son so no one needs to perish eternally?
- 5) How do I understand the disasters that are introduced by the other trumpets and how they call the world to repentance?

III. Realizing God's Mercy in Spite of Many People's Refusal to Repent

A. Many stubbornly refuse to repent.

Revelation 8:13 (NIV) 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!"

1. Greater woes were to come, but the people of earth hang on to their idolatries.

2. Perhaps, some even feel that they gone so far that they can't turn around.

B. But God's love persists in reaching his own.

Revelation 3:19 (NIV) Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

1. Not only do others worship idols, so do God's people.

2. Not only do atheists and agnostics live as if there were no God, so do we at times.

3. We who confess Christ have swindled, belittled, used, and even killed other imagebearers of God, even brothers and sisters in Christ.

4. We struggle with the same addictions as the rest of the world.

5. Today, God meets us in love, calling us to repent.

Questions:

- 1) What pressures prevent people from repenting?
- 2) When have I last lived as if there was no God? When has my behavior been little different than that of idolaters outside of the church?
- 3) How can disasters in the world and in my own life be signs of God's loving discipline to me?
- 4) When have I last heard God's call to me to repent? When have I experienced his fence barring me from going any farther? How have I responded?

Today when through God's Word we see his fence barring our way, let us all examine our own lives and the results of our own attitudes and actions, and lets us discover our idolatries and the griefs they have caused us and those we love, including our Lord. And then let us repent--turn around-- and start back home