



LIFE GROUP NOTES

Week Beginning:



Revelation 8:-11:14 Six Trumpets: the stuff of nightmares

Warm Up

Do you like horror films? What attracts you to them? What drives you away from them?

Background and context

The vision continues and John witnesses the opening of the seventh seal revealing God's plans for the future of humanity and the earth. The opening of this seal creates silence in heaven because of a sense of awe and expectation about the nature of the revelation. It seems heaven is holding its breath!

The imagery used and described by John would be familiar to his Jewish readers. For example, Jesus Himself spoke of mountains being tossed into the sea (Mk 11:23).

The unravelling of these plagues, linked with the pouring out of the bowls of wrath in chapter 16, feels like a re-run of the Exodus plagues. They served as a warning to the Egyptians of God's power and authority. They also provided the ultimate means by which God rescued His people. What John describes would resonate with his readers and hopefully reassure them that the same outcome was on the horizon. The introduction of the lamb earlier in the vision would help the readers see the connections. John's visions serve as a warning to humanity and also become the process through which the Church is delivered.

The stylised way John describes the events revealed by the first six trumpets would let his readers know that God was taking drastic action to purify the world and to make the world take notice. Just as a surgeon removes a deadly cancer to save a patient, so God will upset the human systems through which millions have suffered and been enslaved. It is not necessarily literal.

The locusts and strange war-like horses would have been understood as the invading empires such as the Romans. Today we might view them as various military powers with the ability to strike terror into the lives of the world. The four angels that are released at the 6th trumpet seem to be our worst political and military nightmares.

Thinking it through: Main discussion/activity

READ Revelation 8-11:14. What are the surprising things in the passage? What is new? What don't you really understand? This could be a time to discuss and share reflections and ideas on the passage or watch a Bible project type video that helps explain things.

1. **Read 8:6-9.** What do the first two trumpets reveal?
2. How might we interpret these events? Past, present or future?
3. **Read 8:10-13.** The next two trumpets are also similar. What do they suggest?



4. How might a star falling from heaven remind John's readers of another 'star' that fell? See Isaiah 14:12. How might this help his readers understand the ultimate meaning of the plagues?
5. What links are there to the Egyptian plagues in the first four trumpets? What message should we take from these plagues?

The final three trumpets are also called "woes" by an eagle proclaiming the coming disaster. It suggests that the world is hurtling headlong toward the end.

6. What happens when an angel (star) opens the abyss/ bottomless pit?
7. Why do you think John describes the super-locusts in so much detail?
8. What are the limitations of the locusts? What is their purpose?
9. **Read 9:13-21.** the sixth seal is released.

Humans were made to reflect their loving creator but their hearts have become full of rebellion and destructiveness. The imagery here is that God usually restrains the rebellion and destructiveness but in order to fully deal with it, it must be allowed total freedom and show its true colours.

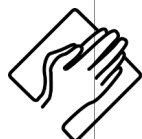
10. What do you think these horses and riders symbolise?
11. Despite the awful horrors of the 5th and 6th trumpet, what is the response of the survivors?



Growing in discipleship: Practical application

The final verses in ch 9 reflect the true problem of humanity; we are controlled by our idols and become blinded to the truth, just as the idols are blind and lifeless, like items of gold or wood, or even plastic! We are consumed by our lifestyles and have rejected God.

12. What idols are we tempted to worship and how do we become like them when we choose to serve them rather than God?
13. Repentance is a radical change in us. God it seems will do anything to bring about repentance in His created beings. How is God calling us to repent today?



Try to leave 15-20 mins to talk about prayer needs of the group and to pray.

We want to encourage the development of prayer, to help everyone grow in confidence in praying. There are many creative ways of praying together: writing prayers, using candles as a focus, reading prayers or praying for each other in pairs.