

Warm Up

Have you ever watched a film/read a book where you thought it was near the end because something climactic had happened, but then you realise there is still a long way to go? There is still more drama to come. Can you think of examples?

Background and context

Chapters eight and nine, come as a bit of a shock to the reader. After the opening of the sixth seal and what appears to be the end of the age, you expect the seventh seal to herald the golden age of God's Kingdom. But no, what is unleashed is another set of judgments upon both creation and humanity. Often in today's world people can have a deluded view of God— that God is soft, gentle and forgives everything that people do. These chapters show this to be untrue. We will meet God, either receiving His mercy or His wrath; there is no middle ground. The cross of Christ is where sin is dealt with, we have either accepted God's mercy and will face Him with joy or we choose to pay the price of our rejection of God by facing His judgment.

Thinking it through: Main discussion/activity

READ Revelation 8 and 9. What are the surprising things in the passage? What is new? What don't you really understand?

1. What do you think is the significance of the silence in heaven? Cf: **Habakkuk 2:20, Zephaniah 1:7, Zechariah 2:13.**
2. **Read Psalm 141:2.** God hears every prayer even if they seem to be unanswered. Will God bring justice and judgment for His people? cf: **Luke 18:1-8, Revelation 6:9-11**
3. It is possible that the seals, the trumpets and the bowls are not sequential but layered events, that run parallel intensifying with each one. **Explore Rev 4:5, 8:5, 11:19, 16:17-18.** How do these descriptions support that idea?
4. Why do you think the trumpet judgments affect only one-third of creation?
5. What similarities do you see between the Exodus plagues and the first 4 trumpets?
6. The fifth and sixth trumpet are particularly horrifying. How might they have reminded Jewish readers of how God dealt with their ancestors when He judged them?
7. God is acting in history. Sometimes He uses human empires to mete out judgment. How does this bring comfort during uncertain times?
8. Why do you think people still refuse to repent even after experiencing harsh times?
9. How should Christians respond to passages about judgment—with fear, hope, urgency, or something else?

Discipleship and Application

10. How do these chapters motivate us to faithful witness and prayer?

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

There are many creative ways of praying together: writing prayers, using candles as a focus, reading prayers or praying for each other in pairs.