

## Warnings Upon a God-forsaken World

Revelation 8 and 9

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There was a farmer who had three sons: Jim, John, and Sam. No one in the family ever attended church or cared about God. The pastor tried for years to get the family interested in the things of God but to no avail.

Then one day Sam was bitten by a rattlesnake. They called in the doctor, and he examined Sam well. He announced that the prognosis for Sam was very poor. So the pastor was called, and when he arrived he began to pray as follows:

O wise and righteous Father, we thank Thee that in Thine wisdom Thou didst send this rattlesnake to bite Sam. He has never been inside the church, and it is doubtful he has, in all this time, ever prayed or acknowledged Thine existence. Now we trust that this experience will be a valuable lesson to him and will lead to his genuine repentance.

And now, O Father, wilt Thou send another rattlesnake to bite Jim, and another to bite John, and another really big one to bite the old man? For years we have done everything we know to get them to turn to Thee, but all in vain. It seems, therefore, that what all our combined efforts could not do, this rattlesnake has done. So, Lord, send us bigger and better rattlesnakes. Amen.

Revelation 8:6:

*Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets made ready to blow them. The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, which fell on the earth; and a third of the earth was burnt up, and a third of the trees were burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.*

*The 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, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.*

*The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the fountains of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died of the water, because it was made bitter.*

*The 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 was darkened; a*

*third of the day was kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.*

*Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice, as it flew in midheaven, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets which the three angels are about to blow!"*

*And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key of the shaft of the bottomless pit; he 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.*

*Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth; they were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green growth or any tree, but only those of mankind who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads; they were allowed to torture them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torture was like the torture of a scorpion, when it stings a man.*

*And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them. In appearance the locusts were like horses arrayed for battle; on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; they had scales like iron breastplates, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle.*

*They have tails like scorpions, and stings, and their power of hurting men for five months lies in their tails. They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abad'don, and in Greek he is called Apol'lyon. The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.*

*Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphra'tes."*

*So the four angels were released, who had been held ready for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, to kill a third of mankind. The number of the troops of cavalry was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number.*

*And this was how I saw the horses in my vision: the riders wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulphur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulphur issued from their mouths.*

*By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulphur issuing from their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; their tails are like serpents, with heads, and by means of them they wound.*

And now, “May God bless you and keep you and make His face to shine upon you and give you peace.”

But *wait* a minute!  
What the H-E-LL was going on there?  
What *was* that?

I’ve been studying it a long time, and I’m not exactly sure. It seems there’s stuff going on here that we see, like people dying. And there’s stuff going on here that we *don’t* see, like the golden altar. Just like we see conquest, warfare, famine, and death, but we don’t see four horsemen. At least it doesn’t seem we see them *objectively* in space and time.

I’m not sure what we see objectively in space and time, and I’m not sure when it happens in space and time. Did the hail, fire, and blood fall 3,000 years ago in the plagues upon Egypt? Or will it fall again some time in the future? Has it been falling now for thousands of years as hail, lightning, and bloodshed worldwide? Or all of the above? And what does it mean?

The first trumpet—“hail, fire, and blood”—is like the first and seventh plagues on Egypt, as God was about to take Israel to the promised land. So a person could wonder, “Gosh, are we supposed to be leaving this place . . . going somewhere?” That’s a good question. The first, seventh, eighth, and ninth plagues on Egypt are here in these trumpets.

At the second trumpet a great, burning mountain is cast into the sea, and one-third of the sea turns to blood. Some people think the mountain is Babylon. Jeremiah 51:25 and 42 is a good argument for that. Some people think it’s Mount Zion, for in 70 A.D., probably a little bit before this book was written, Rome utterly obliterated Zion and plowed the temple into the ground.

Many informed people think The Revelation is all about the destruction of Jerusalem. They have some great reasons for that. In fact, it’s very difficult to tell when Jesus, in the Gospels, is speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem and when He is speaking about the end of the world. In the Olivet discourse He speaks about *both together*. So some people think it’s Mount Zion that is thrown into the sea. Rome ruled the sea.

Many people think this burning mountain is a volcano — actually, Mount Vesuvius in Italy. In 79 A.D. this great, burning mountain *was* cast into the sea. Ten to fifteen thousand people were killed, encased in stone, or burned or drowned in sinking ships on the Bay of Naples. In fact, you can still see the remains in Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Did you know that if Yellowstone erupted as it did in prehistoric times it could

easily destroy most all of the crop production in the United States of America and push this world into a global famine and maybe even an ice age? They say it's going to go off again some time.

At the third trumpet a great star falls to earth. At any time astronomers could look up in the sky and see a comet hurling towards earth, and Bruce Willis with all his Rocket Jocks couldn't stop it.

When this star hits the water at the third trumpet it turns a third of the water bitter. It is the opposite of the story of Marah, when the Israelites came to the bitter water, and Moses cast a tree into the bitter water, and it turned sweet. It's like God's hand is being removed from His people, undoing His blessing. Jeremiah 9:15: "He will give disobedient Israel wormwood to eat and poisoned water to drink."

At the fourth trumpet a third of the light from the heavenly bodies is kept from shining, like an ash cloud from Mount Vesuvius, like the plague on the Egyptians, like the locust cloud in the prophecies of Joel, like Peter quotes in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost explaining what happens:

This is what was spoken of by Joel: 'In the last days I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh . . . and I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes . . . '

"These are the last days," says Peter. So tonight you might see a blood-red moon.

The fourth of the seven trumpets undoes what God did on the fourth of the seven days of creation. Maybe God is "un-creating" or "re-creating."

Seven days in Genesis;  
Seven seals, trumpets, and bowls in The Revelation.

At the fifth trumpet the locusts are released from the abyss, like the plagues in Egypt, like those locust plagues prophesied in Joel. You know, a locust's lifespan is five months. But these locusts don't act like other locusts. They don't afflict and eat plants; they afflict *people*.

They have crowns,  
and human faces,  
and women's hair,  
and lion's teeth.

They are clearly demonic, under the control and authority of the Ancient Serpent.

Josephus records that during the horrific, six-month siege of Jerusalem, roving bands of

possessed, Jewish transvestites raped and murdered their fellow Jews in the condemned city. They had women's hair, men's faces, and lion's teeth. For five months these bands of transvestites assaulted the city.

(You didn't see that one coming, did you?)

Hal Lindsey suggests the locusts may be black Cobra helicopters spraying nerve gas from their tails. Some Catholics have argued the demon locusts are Lutherans. Roving bands of possessed, Jewish transvestites in black helicopters, and Lutherans. Whatever this is, it's *bad*; really *bad*.

Actually, I believe I've talked to some of the locusts. I think they're demons. They hide behind crowns and human faces and gorgeous women's hair, but they long to inflict you with pain. If you're a believer you battle them, and they can harass you and keep you in fear. But they themselves cannot truly harm you — they cannot kill you. For you are sealed with the seal of God, the Holy Spirit, and they have been disarmed.

However, even though they cannot kill you, they can possess the godless people of this world, kings and soldiers and armies, such that they *can* kill you.

At the sixth trumpet a great army is released from over the Euphrates. It kills a third of mankind. I suspect this pictures people and armies under the control of demons. Rwanda, Bosnia, Serbia, the Sudan, and the Third Reich . . . that was far more than just angry people.

Just this cavalry is 200 million strong. The combined United Nations forces in Desert Storm were 1 million. There is no single army this big on earth.

Or maybe this is all the evil armies that have ever marched over the face of our earth.

Or maybe this is the Battle of Armageddon.

Or maybe it's a poetic description of the Parthian cavalry north and east of the Euphrates.

Others say it's obviously the poetic description of the siege of Jerusalem . . . it's the fall of Jerusalem, just like the fall of Jericho, which you'll remember was preceded by seven trumpets blown by seven priests as they marched around the city seven times.

If *you* were in Jericho on the walls, I'm sure about the sixth time around you would have thought to yourself, "What the H-E-LL is going on?" And after six trumpet blasts we wonder what the hell is going on.

Well, it appears that *hell* is going on, that all *hell* is breaking loose! Actually, only one-third of hell is breaking loose, as if it's a warning for the other two-thirds. So for those

who die, maybe these *are* the bowls of wrath (they parallel the trumpets). But for the two-thirds, they are a warning.

The trumpets are part of the seals. Broken seals reveal mysteries. Blaring trumpets announce news (“*evangelia*”). I suppose that whether the news is good or bad depends almost entirely upon which side of the wall you are standing . . . just like the plagues were good news to the Israelites but pretty bad news to the Egyptians.

Good news if you’re planning to leave,  
Bad news if you call Egypt home;  
Good news if you’re inheriting the Promised Land,  
Bad news if you’re highly invested in Jericho.

These trumpets proclaim news—a message. We don’t know the details, and maybe we’re not *supposed* to know all the details. That way . . .

. . . whether we look back in time and see Mount Vesuvius, the fall of Jericho, the plagues, and the fall of Jerusalem;

. . . whether we look in the paper today and see earthquakes, disasters, and demonic activity;

. . . whether we look into the future and see predicted Seismic activity in California, global warming, and Armageddon . . .

No matter which direction we look, the message comes across very loud and clear: You are living in a “God-damned” world. And I choose my words carefully, theologically, and Biblically.

If you’re offended that I say that, I understand. You may have some cultural moralisms that you need to sort through. But you should somehow inform your children that God cursed the earth. It’s a damned world. You may say, “That’s cursing!” No, it’s not. God already did the cursing. You’re living in a God-cursed world that *will* be consumed with fire.

Maybe you find that offensive not because of some cultural baggage over swear words, but maybe it’s offensive because you’re on the wrong side of the wall. Maybe you’re highly invested in Jericho and Egypt, and I just *really* insulted your investment portfolio.

But stop being offended, and repent. This *is* a God-condemned, cursed, damned world, and you don’t need black Cobra helicopters to tell you so. The creation literally devours itself. One organism lives off the death of another. We call it “the survival of the fittest,” and we think it’s *normal*.

As we speak, millions die in wars, famines, and natural disasters. Afflicted by demons, men rape little girls and murder people for sport. We hide from it here in Laodicea. But

the truth is, you may take your last breath this evening, and all those things are just a warning . . . symptoms of the disease. For long ago and not far away God said to the man, “The day you eat of the fruit of the tree you shall surely die.”—the law.

In rebellion the man and woman ate, and I believe that on that day they *did* die. They became the walking dead, their hearts dead to God, unable to see, unable to love, incapable of real love.

But on that very day God came to them, and in the deepest love (because that is what God is) God damned the world. He cursed the world. In Genesis 3:17 God says, “Adam, cursed is the earth for your sake.” And on that day God invented the rattlesnake. God cursed the Dragon and cast it to earth, and he became the Snake. And God said, “You shall bruise the man’s heel.” God subjected us to snakes, and “God subjected the world to futility,” writes Paul, “in hope.”

Hope of *what?!  
Our repentance.*

Rattlesnakes, demons, wars, famines, black helicopters . . . they *may* be our enemies, but they are not the real problem. The real problem is your *own, dead, unrepentant* heart. We don’t love; we don’t *trust* God; we don’t depend on God; we depend on ourselves, the works of our hands, and the things of this world.

So in the face of the trumpets, what do we do?

- Get better insurance policies
- Take vitamins
- Hire a police force
- Pay geologists to study Mount Vesuvius

Maybe we get religion because we think, “Oh, man, God will be *so impressed* with the good works of my hands, because I’m going to make this world a better place!” But God *cursed* this world. *Wake up.*

It’s like we’re dead on a ship bound for hell, and we don’t know it. God fires a torpedo to sink the ship, and now it’s a sinking ship . . . a God-condemned, damned ship. Satan’s the captain and doesn’t want to lose his cargo, so what does he do? He runs up and down the hallways of the ship yelling to everybody, “You can have all the steaks you want! You can have all the drinks you want! Hey, no rules! You can play soccer in the Grand Ballroom! Live the good life!”

If that doesn’t work, and we wise up and begin to look around and say, “Hey, the ship is sinking!” he says, “Well, don’t play soccer in the Grand Ballroom, get to work! Grab a hammer; get some tools; make this ship a better place! Go to church, do good deeds . . .”

And what does God want the whole time? *Abandon ship.* Repent. Cry out for salvation,

and stop trusting the works of your own hands. God doesn't really even have to launch torpedoes. All He has to do is remove His hand, and creation begins to devour itself.

And the demons rage,  
And the armies march,  
And the Serpent strikes,  
And we taste hell—the wrath of God.

So listen to the trumpets; pay attention to the rattlesnakes. Maybe a war, famine, or plague would do America some good, and we'd have a revival. Like that pastor prayed, "Lord, send us bigger and better rattlesnakes. Amen."

Revelation 9:19: *For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; their tails are like serpents (snakes), with heads, and by means of them they wound (strike the heel).*

"Lord, send bigger and better rattlesnakes!"

Next verse: *The 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 either see or hear or walk; nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their immorality or their thefts.*

*Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven . . .*

Did you get that? Six trumpets, a lot of snakes, and *nobody . . . nobody . . .* repents. Nobody! They just get better insurance policies, stronger drugs, and more religion; that is, idolatry. They trust in the works of their own hands.

Rattlesnakes,  
by themselves,  
do not produce repentance.  
I know this.

Several years ago, sitting down to dinner in our new condominium down near Bowles and Kipling, I was interrupted by a man at the front door. He said, "You need to come see what's out in your front yard."

So my friend Brian and I ran outside and found this *huge*, six- or seven-foot-long snake. It looked like a rattlesnake, but it was a bull snake. So I said, "Brian, watch the snake, and I'll go get a box, and we'll catch it."

Now, Susan and I had just moved in. I had been wanting to meet our neighbor, who lived next door, and maybe even share the Gospel. Well, when I came back out with the box, my friend Brian was standing on our neighbor's front porch



holding the tail of the snake.

The snake had tried to get away from him, crawled up on this lady's porch, and started to crawl into the brick vents that led into this lady's house. Now it's head was wedged in the vent. The rest of it's body was trying to go to the same place.

I ran up and grabbed the snake . . . Brian grabbed the snake . . . we are pulling on the snake on this lady's front porch, and I met my neighbor. She opened the door and said, "What the hell is . . . !" Then she saw the snake and said, "Oh, (potty word)!" and slammed the door and ran back inside.

So Brian and I stood on the porch trying to pull this huge snake out, and we couldn't do it. Finally, we had to let it go, and it crawled into her home. And then I had to knock on the door and say, "Um, sorry, but you know that snake you saw? It's in your home. And my name's Peter. I live next door."

I don't know if she ever repented, because she never spoke to me again.

Some folks think that what we Christians are all about is chasing snakes into their homes and then prophesying doom. But I don't think we're called to prophesy doom like Joel and Elijah did . . . maybe point it out, because an awful lot of it is already here.

So when people say, "Man, this world sucks," your job is to say, "Amen!" In fact, more than that, say, "Did you know this is a 'God-damned' world?" But we're not to be messengers of doom—bad things—but messengers of Jesus—good news.

I don't think you're called  
to prophesy doom;  
You're called to prophesy Jesus  
in the midst of doom.

Next John sees another, mighty angel. John receives a scroll, and he's told to prophesy about many nations, tongues, peoples, and tribes. And "the testimony of Jesus *is* the spirit of prophesy" (Revelation 19).

Then we see two witnesses who prophesy the testimony of Jesus. And when they *do*, people give glory to God. They repent. And then the last trumpet sounds.

But what *is* the testimony of Jesus, the spirit of prophesy? It's right in front of us. The slaughtered Lamb is sitting on God's throne, and *He* opens the seal; *He* opens the scroll.

The seventh—the last—trumpet anticipates the last plague. Do you remember the last plague? — The slaughter of the firstborn. John 3:16: "For God so loved the

world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” He *is* the Passover Lamb for us, the new Israel.

So what is the testimony of Jesus? It’s the good news in the midst of this “God-damned” world: that God so loved this “God-damned” world that — dare I even say it? — God damned God.

That’s our *creed*. He died and descended into hell. Galatians 3:13: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree’ . . .” In Christ, God offered His only begotten Son, His sacrificial Lamb, in our place. Trumpets always sounded proclaiming sacrifice on the Day of Atonement.

In Christ, God bore our hell, suffered our cross, and died in our place. And, you see, He’s not content to only pay. He’s not content to only save. He goes to hell on our behalf, but even more, He bears our pain.

- He boards the sinking ship
- He is born in a manger
- He suffers with his children in Pompeii
- He weeps over Jerusalem
- He feels the pain of every soldier in battle
- He whimpers with every beaten and abused child hiding in a closet
- He communes with us in all our sufferings

In that communion He allows us to taste the hell that *He* bore for us. So in this “God-damned” world, this God-cursed God exposes His heart and calls to His people, “Would you lose yourself now? Would you stop trusting the works of your hand? Would you surrender to my love?”

“And I when I am lifted up,” said Jesus, “will draw all men to myself.” “Cursed is every man that hangs on a tree,” said God in the Old Testament. Jesus came to be bitten by the Snake. But He crushed the Snake’s head, and God raised Him from the dead.

So what is the testimony of Jesus?

When I was in high school an old member of our church came and shared his testimony. His name was John Rankin. He was one of my dad’s old friends, who fought in the same war as my dad did—World War II. He was a tank driver in Europe. His job was to ride the iron horse spewing fire, smoke, and sulfur, right into hell.

John rode in it with one other man, and this man was a believer. He had shared with John his testimony of Christ’s love, how God loved John so much that He became a man, entered this world, and suffered in this world. He bore John’s

pain, He hung on a cross for him, and He took John's curse for him in a cursed world.

John *could* believe that this was a cursed, "God-damned" world. In the midst of World War II he could taste the curse.

This man told John how God bore His own wrath on the cross for John, and how He rose victorious over death on the third day. John listened, but he did not repent.

One day they were riding "unbuttoned." (That's what John called it.) That's when they rode in the tank with their heads exposed at the neck. They had to speak to each other through a tube that went to their throats, because the sound of the engine was so loud in that tank. As they were riding, John's friend yelled through the tube, "John, what are you going to do about Jesus?"

John, trying to put him off, said, "What do you mean?" He didn't hear anything, so he said again, "What do you mean?" Again he didn't hear anything, so he turned and looked. His friend's head had been completely blown off by enemy fire.

The trumpet sounded.

And that night John surrendered his heart to the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Trumpets are sounding all over.  
The last one may sound for you tonight.

The third woe is not spelled out. I think that's because the third woe is this: missing such an incredible salvation. Don't miss it. Repent.

I don't know who does and who doesn't name Jesus as Savior and Lord. But if you want to repent, it's not a magic formula. Peter said, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." It's surrendering your heart to Him.

You can repent by saying this little prayer with me if you mean it. Even if you don't mean it, ask Him to help you mean it, and He will. (If you do repent, you need to tell somebody, and you need to be baptized.)

Lord God, I confess that I'm a sinner. I think I may have a dead heart.  
But as best as I'm able, I put my trust in You. You died for me; Jesus,  
You paid for me; You bore the curse for me. And God raised You on the  
third day. Jesus, give me a new heart. I want to live for always with You.  
Amen.

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[Benediction]

“Lord Jesus, we want to change the world out of gratitude for You. And we look forward to the day when You will raise this entire creation . . . just like Your Son and our Lord, who died and descended into Hell, but You raised Him from the dead. A new heaven and a new earth, our promised land. In Jesus’ name we praise You, Lord God. Amen.”

For those of you who think that was kind of a bummer of a message, know that the knowledge that we live in a “God-damned” world really is wonderful news. (Susan was worried about me saying this, but I think it’s the right word. It’s the word that catches the meaning.)

This last Wednesday I was really having a hell of a day. I had spent a long time on the phone with people who wanted to remove their money from the giving because of something I had done . . . I was involved in all kinds of other stuff that was bugging me . . . I really think I was under the oppression of those stinking, demon locusts . . . It was a very hard day, one of the hardest days I’ve had in quite a while.

In the afternoon I walked into the bathroom and saw my son Coleman imitating Elvis Presley in the bathroom mirror. And I thought to myself, “You know, for a ‘God-damned’ world, this is a pretty great day!”

And you ain’t seen nothing yet, children of God.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

### Further Reading

“ . . . And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets. The trumpets shall be to you for a perpetual statute throughout your generations. And when you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the LORD your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies. On the day of your gladness also, and at your appointed feasts, and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; they shall serve you for remembrance before your God: I am the LORD your God.”

-Numbers 10:8-10

“ . . . And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; and on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, the priests blowing the trumpets. And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, as soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up every man straight before him.”

-Joshua 6:4-5

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." To the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

-Genesis 3:14-19

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day. And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’”

-Acts 2:14-21

The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.

-II Peter 3:9-10

Consider, for example, the descriptions of the plagues of the seven trumpets (8:6-9:21) and the seven bowls (16:1-21). These form a highly schematized literary pattern which itself conveys meaning. Their content suggests, among many other things, the plagues of Egypt which accompanied the exodus, the fall of Jericho to the army of Joshua, the army of locusts depicted in the prophecy of Joel, the Sinai theophany, the contemporary fear of invasion by Parthian cavalry, the earthquakes to which the cities of Asia Minor were rather frequently subject, and very possibly the eruption of Vesuvius which had recently terrified the Mediterranean world. John has taken some of his contemporaries' worst experiences and worst fears of wars and natural disasters, blown them up to apocalyptic proportions, and cast them in biblically allusive terms. The point is not to predict a sequence of events. The point is to evoke and to explore the meaning of the divine judgment which is impending on the sinful world.

-Richard Bauckham, The Theology of the Book of Revelation

We can rest contentedly in our sins and in our stupidities . . . we can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

-C. S. Lewis

We need our pain warnings before we can turn to love. Yet if we watch television or read magazines, we often come across a different attitude toward pain: avoid it, deaden it. But when we take a pill, when we kill the pain, we don't heed its warning.

-Madeleine L'Engle

God never threatens; the devil never warns.

-Oswald Chambers

If you think of this world as a place intended simply for our happiness, you find it quite intolerable; think of it as a place of training and correction and it's not so bad. Imagine a set of people all living in the same building. Half of them think it is a hotel, the other half think it is a prison. Those who think it a hotel might regard it as quite intolerable, and those who thought it was a prison might decide that it was really surprisingly comfortable. So that what seems the ugly doctrine is one that comforts and strengthens you in the end. The people who try to hold an optimistic view of this world would become pessimists: the people who hold a pretty stern view of it become optimistic.

-C. S. Lewis

The modern philosopher had told me again and again that I was in the right place, and I had still felt depressed even in acquiescence. But I had heard that I was in the *wrong* place, and my soul sang for joy, like a bird in spring.

-G. K. Chesterton

The Mahabharata says, "Of all the world's wonders, which is most wonderful? That no man, though he sees others dying all around him believes that he himself will die."

-Annie Dillard

When the world shook and the sun was wiped out of heaven, it was not at the crucifixion, but at the cry from the cross: the cry which confessed that God was forsaken of God. And now let the revolutionists choose a creed from all the creeds and a god from all the gods of the world, carefully weighing all the gods of inevitable recurrence and of unalterable power. They will not find another god who has himself been in revolt. Nay (the matter grows too difficult for human speech), but let the atheists themselves choose a god. They will find only one divinity who ever uttered their isolation; only one religion in which God seemed for an instant to be an atheist.

-G. K. Chesterton