

Revelation - Chapter 8 & 9 Trumpet Judgments

John continues to describe what he sees in heaven. God is on His throne surrounded by a rainbow of emerald greens. The twenty-four elders, the four living creatures, the Church and the angels are worshipping God and the glorified Christ. They are joined by the 144,000 Jews who have been sealed to protect them from death during the Tribulation Period. They will bring about the greatest revival ever known. Also joining them are the the Great Multitude, clothed in white robes and waving palm branches, they were martyred during the Tribulation Period. They now have a special place of service in the throne room of God.

Praise ceases as Jesus begins to open the first six seals of judgments. The judgments will extinguish all evil on the earth and then Jesus will return. The first four seals include horses and riders (the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse) which bring about false peace, then war, famine and death of one-fourth of the people on the earth. The fifth seal is God's divine judgment on those who have persecuted His people. John sees the martyred souls under the altar and they are given rest until it is time for God to avenge their deaths. The sixth seal is the greatest physical destruction ever known on earth and begins with a earthquake that shakes the entire globe resulting in worldwide panic.



Seventh Seal: Silence in Heaven & The Seven Trumpets

When Jesus breaks open the seventh seal there is silence in heaven for thirty minutes perhaps the longest period of silence in heaven. Seven trumpets are given to seven angels. As it becomes apparent that God is preparing to intensify His wrath with the coming judgements from the seven trumpets, this silence is the only proper response to the looming judgments (Ps 76:8; Isa 41:1; Zeph 1:7).

During this interlude of reverent silence, another angel approaches the altar and mingles the prayers of the saints with incense. In the Old Testament the priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the altar. The coals from this offering would then be placed in a golden censer, or container, and the smoke would rise to heaven as incense.

The incense and prayers of the saints are a sweet fragrance in the nostrils of God.

This offering of incense symbolizes the prayers of the martyred saints in Revelation 6:10. The time has finally come to answer those desperate pleas for God's intervention (Deut 32:35-36).

The golden altar represents the fire of worship. The altar of judgment represents the death of Jesus for our sins. His sacrifice is meant to be a blessing, but for those who do not accept Him as Lord and Savior His sacrifice is about to become a judgment.

In the Bible a trumpet was used for positive events like gathering a convocation or announcing a coronation. It was also used to gather troops for war. In Revelation, Isaiah, and Joel the trumpet announces the coming of the day of the Lord (Isa 27:13; Joel 2:1). The temporary restraint of God's wrath to seal the 144,000 Israelites is removed.

The first four trumpets sound in rapid blasts, taking up only six verses. The first four trumpet blasts will affect the earth's ecosystem and atmosphere, erratically altering living conditions on the earth. The latter judgments will produce demonic destruction of people.

Limits are placed on the early judgments reminding us that God will still be exercising restraint allowing room for repentance and salvation even in the midst of wrath. The first four plagues affects one-third of the planet, the demonic torment of the fifth trumpet is limited to five months and the deadly spiritual attack of the sixth trumpet affects one-third of the world's population.

The First Trumpet Blast: Devastation on the Earth

At the sound of the first trumpet blast, hail and fire, mixed with blood are thrown to the earth and one-third of the earth's vegetation and all its green grass are destroyed. Hail is frequently associated in Scripture with divine judgment as is fire. A parallel is found in the tenth plague in Exodus 9:18-26 where there was literal hail and fire.



An earth quake the size described would likely trigger worldwide volcanic eruptions and violent thunderstorms that would produce large hail. This will decimate crops and forests, filling the air with smoke and ash. One-third of the earth is burned up, one-third of the trees were burned up and all the green grass was burned up.

Though not directly aimed at human beings, it will indirectly affect food supplies, the global economy, and health on a massive scale. Whether the blood is a result of the hail and fire or is literally thrown to the earth it is only an introduction of what is to come. Six more trumpets are to sound.



The Second Trumpet Blast: Devastation on the Sea

At the sound of the angel's second trumpet blast, a large burning object, something like a mountain, falls from the heavens and lands somewhere in the world's oceans with an explosive power far greater than that of an atomic bomb. It is possible that the "something like a mountain"

could describe an asteroid that will strike the ocean. The tsunami caused by this kind of impact would inflict death and destruction on the scale described. The impact on human life would be inestimable.

Because all the world's oceans are connected, the devastation will spread across one-third of the ocean waters, causing a third of the sea to become blood from the death of life in the seas. Giant waves will destroy ships in one-third of the seas. Those who depend on ocean life for food would suffer hunger and hardship on an unprecedented scale.

The destruction of ships would cause disruption in global trade as well as present security crisis as naval ships are also destroyed. Economic chaos will result. This parallels the plagues of Egypt in which the Nile River and all other bodies of water in Egypt were turned to blood when Aaron stretched out his rod over them (Ex 7:17-19).

The Third Trumpet Blast: Waters Made Bitter

As the third trumpet blasts, a great star, possibly a heavenly body or mass from outer space burning as it enters the atmosphere of earth, falls on one-third of the rivers and waters contaminating them with a bitter and poisonous substance, wormwood.

The Greek word here for “star” can refer to any celestial body other than the sun and moon. The fact that it is described as burning like a torch supports that it is likely a meteor or comet, since torches were used in ancient times to describe meteors and comets. Its fiery debris fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters, polluting the fresh water around the globe. ¹



The reference to wormwood seems to parallel the experience of the children of Israel at the waters of Marah (Ex 15:23-25). There the tree thrown into the bitter waters made them sweet. Here the wormwood has the opposite effect. Such also is the contrast between Christ on the cross atoning for sin and making that which is bitter sweet and Christ coming in judgment that turns the vain hopes and ambitions of unbelievers into bitterness and despair. ²



The Fourth Trumpet Blast: Heavens Darkened

As the fourth trumpet blasts, judgment shifts from the earth to the heavens. The heavenly bodies are hit with a plague from God so that one-third of the heavens are darkened.

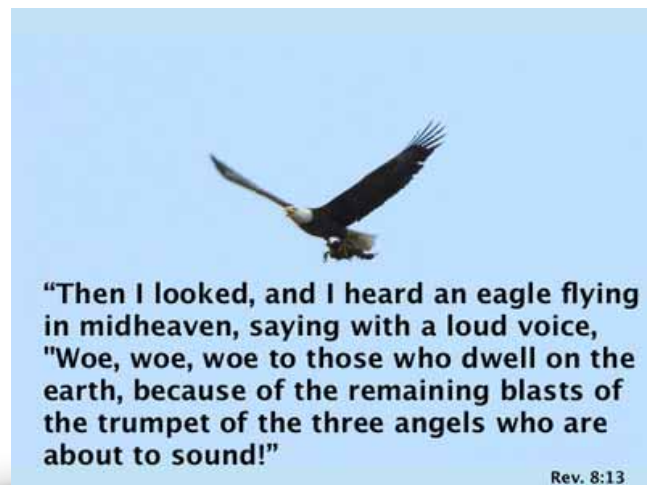
This partial eclipse is temporary, as God will later increase the amount of heat coming from the sun (Rev 16:8-9).

The loss of heat from the sun will cause temperatures to plunge drastically all over the world. The earth's weather patterns and the seas' tides will be severely disrupted, leading to violent, unpredictable storms and tides and the further destruction of crops, and loss of animal and human lives.

Areas hit the hardest by the previous trumpet judgements will have already lost electrical power and deteriorated into desperation and despair. The only place not to have been struck with catastrophe is the skies. Add natural darkness to this situation and the result will be anarchy and chaos. Rioting, looting and crime will exacerbate the horrors experienced around the globe.

Old Testament prophets associated such signs in the heavens with the day of the Lord (Eze 32:7-8; Isa 13:9-10; Joel 2:10, 31:3-15; Amos 8:9). Jesus warned that "there will be signs in the sun and moon and stars" (Luke 21:25; Mark 13:24).

As John witnesses the scene of the heavens darkening, he hears the loud voice of an eagle, a bird of prey rushing to consume its victim, pronouncing a triple woe as the peoples of the earth are warned of judgment to come. Woe is used throughout Scripture as an expression of judgement, destruction and condemnation.



Flying in midheaven the eagle would be at the height of the midday sun and visible to all. The worst is yet to come. No amount of government aid, relief efforts or advanced preparation will be able to bring recovery.

The blessings from God of light from the sun, moon and stars, water, and the beauty and benefits of the tress and green grass are from a loving God to an underserving world and have now come under the blight and judgments described in these trumpets. Although they acknowledge that the disasters have come from God they will not repent. Because they fail to listen to the warning God addresses to all sinners they will be destroyed (Heb 3:7-8).



Fifth Trumpet: Demons Dominate

As the angel blew the fifth trumpet, Satan is permanently cast down to the earth (Rev 9:1-2). Satan was previously banned from heaven but has up until this time had access to God's presence, where he constantly accuses believers (Rev 12:10; Job 1:6).

During the tribulation, Satan and his demon hosts will unsuccessfully battle Michael and the holy angels (Rev: 12:7-9). As Satan falls from heaven to the earth, Jesus gives him the key to the abyss (underworld) or bottomless pit. This is where certain demons have been kept in prison until judgment (Luke 8:30-31; 2 Pet 2:4).

These are not the demons that roam the earth since they fell from heaven. When Jesus cast the demons out of a man, "they begged Him not to banish them to the abyss" (Luke 8:31). These are the vilest, most malicious and powerful demons. God in His mercy prepared a special pit in which to lock them away until the appointed time. As they come out of the pit, the sun and air is darkened by the smoke of the pit.

John sees a new terror emerge. For the first time in history, all those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ will come under demonic possession and affliction. The invisible warfare that people experience today will seem insignificant compared to the frontal assault of the enemy's army during the Tribulation.

The demons are described as locusts with the power of scorpions and are given power by God to only hurt those who are not sealed by God for five months. They are not allowed to kill. It is a judgment upon those who have rejected Christ; the 144,000 sealed Jews and those who have accepted Christ and are still alive at that time will be protected.

Since demons do not have physical shape, what John sees must symbolize demonic possession. They appear to have a combination of human and animal qualities. Like locusts they will be uncountable in numbers capable of darkening the sky and blotting out the sun and massive in destructive capabilities.

The devastating physical, mental, emotional and spiritual agony they inflict will be worse than that of actual scorpions which are known to have the capability to kill small children. They are not actual locust because real locusts devour plant life and they are not allowed to harm the grass. This means that some time has passed since the first trumpet judgment scorched all the grass that was then in season (Rev 8:7).

Like the normal life cycle of the locust, the demons will be allowed to torment the unbelieving for five months during which time they will wish they could die but will not be able to. They will however, have the opportunity to repent and embrace the gospel.

These supernatural soldiers in the kingdom of darkness are led by Abaddon or Apollyon probably a high ranking lieutenant of Satan who lives in the bottomless pit. It is like all the prison doors in the world were flung open and every rapist, murderer, pervert, arsonist, abuser, and thief were free to roam the earth with no police protection for the citizens.

When divine restraint is released the true character of Satan is revealed. They are described by John as:

Like horses prepared for battle (9:7)	No one can stop them. Not the military, no amount of money, or medicine will not stop the pain.
Crowns like gold on their heads (9:7)	Satan has always wanted to wear a crown and they appear to have golden crowns. By rejecting Jesus they have crowned Satan and his demons to rule. It will be a reign of terror. Hell has a holiday.
Human like faces (9:7)	Like man they will be intelligent. They will also be crafty and subtle.
Hair like women (9:8)	As a woman's hair is to be her glory, they will seem alluring, hideously beautiful and brilliantly deceptive.
Teeth like lions (9:8)	Warlike, brutal and fierce, a picture of Satan (1 Pet 5:8).
Breastplates like iron (9:9)	They will be wearing impenetrable armor so the groan, cries and shrieks of their victims will be meaningless to them.

<p>Sounds of wings like horses and chariots (9:9)</p>	<p>They will not be moved from their course of action. Wave after wave will come. They cannot be stopped. They cannot be out run. There is no place to hide.</p>
<p>Tails like scorpions (9:10)</p>	<p>Until their deed is done, they cannot be stopped. Five months is the normal lifespan of a locust. Five is also the number of completeness. Nothing but the hand of Almighty God can stop these durable spirits. They cannot be destroyed. There is no weapon against them.</p>

The Sixth Trumpet: The Return of Death

At the sound of the sixth trumpet, a voice from the golden altar, possibly Jesus, commands the sixth angel who had the trumpet to release the four angels who were bound at the great river Euphrates to kill a third of mankind.

A third of mankind today is over two billion people. Never since Noah has such a substantial proportion of the earth’s population come under God’s righteous judgment.



This horrific slaughter will again bring chaos to the world. Just disposing of the dead bodies alone will be inconceivable. The sickly stench of decaying corpses will permeate the world and it will take an enormous effort on the part of the survivors to bury them.

This is the final mention of the golden altar where incense is offered consisting of the prayers of the saints. This judgement like those preceding it, is partially an answer to the prayers of the martyred saints.

Since the angels are bound they are not the same four angles mentioned earlier in Chapter 7:1 but are evil angels. There is no mention anywhere in the Bible that holy angels are bound. Since angels carry out the will of God they would not need to be bound. This judgment comes by God’s precise appointment, right down to the year, month, day, and hour.

Although there is controversy about whether these armies are made up of humans or demons, because these creatures are identified as the armies of the four wicked angels of the Euphrates, it seems most reasonable to conclude that they are symbols for an army of demons bringing death and destruction upon the people of the world. This is the second demon inspired attack on humans.

These four high-ranking fallen angels may very well be the invisible influences behind four ungodly nations in power during the Tribulation period. They may also be the same demons that controlled the four major world empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Demonic principalities and powers have stood behind world leaders throughout history. Daniel 10 gives us a glimpse of the kind of spiritual warfare that occurs in the invisible realm. Daniel mentions the prince of the kingdom of Persia and the prince of Greece (Dan 10:12-13).

The number in the army is staggering: two hundred million. The three colors on the rider's breastplates match the color of the plagues that proceed from the mouths of their horses. The figurative language used to describe this army's horses also suggests that this is a supernatural rather than human force; the colors on their breastplates are the very colors and features of hell.



Breastplate Colors	Three Plagues
Fiery red or orange	Fire
Deep hyacinth blue	Smoke
Sulfuric yellow	Brimstone

As distressing as it is to read of the horrific judgments with a fourth of mankind killed during the fourth seal and another third killed in the sixth trumpet for a total of over half of the world's population killed (three billion using today's population count), it is even more disturbing to read that the survivors will close their ear to God's message of mercy and grace rejecting the preaching of the 144,000 missionaries, choosing instead to accept the wrath that will continue to increase in severity.

John lists five sins representative of the defiance of those who refused to repent:

- Worshipping other gods and demons.
- Violent crimes like murders. Without any sense of morality unrepentant people will imitate the demon horde's murderous blood lust.
- Sorceries. Sorceries is a Greek word from which the English words pharmacy and pharmaceuticals derive. Drugs were and still are believed to induce a higher religious state of communion with deities. In the Tribulation man will be reduced to rubble through their abuse of drugs.
- Immorality will prevail. Indescribable sexual perversions will be rampant in that day.
- People will refuse to repent of thefts. As people compete for the scarce supplies of food, clothing, water, shelter and medicines honesty will be nonexistent. There will be no restraints or negative consequences from civil authorities. ³

SEVEN JUDGEMENT TRUMPETS			
Order	Revelation	Event	Impact
1st Trumpet	8:7	Hail & Fire	1/3 Vegetation Destroyed
2nd Trumpet	8:8 - 9	Burning Mountain Drops Into Ocean	1/3 Oceans Turn To Blood 1/3 Ocean Creatures Die 1/3 Ships Destroyed
3rd Trumpet	8:10 - 11	Star Falls Into Rivers & Springs	1/3 Fresh Water Poisoned
4th Trumpet	8:12	Sun, Moon & Stars Turn Dark	1/3 Earths Light Diminished
5th Trumpet	9:1 - 12	Locusts Attack People Without Seal Of God	Unbelievers Tormented For 5 Months
6th Trumpet	9:13 - 21	200 Million Horseman Attack People	1/2 Population Of Earth Now Dead
7th Trumpet	11:15 - 18	Angel Announces 7 Bowls	Flashes of Lightening, Thunder, Earthquakes & Great Hallstorm

God uses a number of ways to call people to repentance and accept his gift of grace. He has used the gospel, the witness of fulfilled prophecy and changed lives. He has revealed coming judgments, warning the world of things to come.

As the Bible tells us, humans are a stubborn lot. Spiritual blindness, self-will and an inborn habit of disobedience all work against the humility and submission that God desires. Saul of Tarsus who was persecuting the early church was struck blind to get his attention. How can a righteous Redeemer snare the attention of a wicked world? Christian apologist C.S. Lewis approached that question this way:

Anyone who has watched gluttons shoveling down the most exquisite foods as if they did not know what they were eating, will admit that 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. ⁴

A day is coming when the hardness of the unbelieving hearts of the unregenerate will intensify. In these chapters we see God using an intensifying series of judgments to capture the world's attention for the purpose of redemption. It's clear that a major purpose of God's judgments in Revelation is to seize the world's attention when it refuses to listen. The redeemed martyrs in Revelation 7 tell us that many will respond to God's end-times call. The rest of Revelation, however, tells us that most will harden their hearts even more. ⁵

If you are reading this it is not too late to be counted in the redeemed who will spend eternity with God. Do not harden your heart by turning away from God but confess with your mouth that you want Jesus to be your Lord and Savior and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead to die for your sins, you will be saved and spend eternity with God in heaven.

“while it is said, “Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.” (Hebrews 3:15, NASB95)

“that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” (Romans 10:9–10, NASB95)