

Revelation 8-9

1. Introduction and Overview

- a. Let us remind ourselves again...
 - i. We are interpreting this prophecy symbolically because of the literary genre of the book (1:1).
 1. The absolute best way to avoid subjectivism about the symbolism is to find the Old Testament background of the symbolism. We interpret Scripture with Scripture!
 - ii. We are interpreting this prophecy as referring to the near future from John's perspective because the text says, "the time is near," (1:3) and "these things must soon take place" (1:1).
 1. The internal evidence of the book strongly suggests that John wrote this book shortly before the destruction of the temple in AD 70.
 - a. There are many references to the destruction of the temple as a future event.
 - b. In Revelation 11, the temple still appears to be standing.
 - c. In Revelation 13:18, the number of the Beast is 666. Caesar Nero's name has the numerical equivalent of 666, and he lived before the destruction of the temple.
 - d. In Revelation 17:9-10, if you count the Caesars beginning with Julius Caesar, then Nero is the one who is reigning at the time the book was written.
 - iii. We are seeking to remain humble because the symbolism is difficult, and we are seeking to avoid dogmatism about the details.

2. The Opening of the Seventh Seal (8:1-5)

- a. When the seventh seal is opened, we witness the silence before the storm (8:1).
 - i. David S. Clark: "But the trumpets are slow to sound. There is still another halt. God is never in a hurry to smite; He is longsuffering and slow to anger."

- b. When the seventh seal is opened, John sees seven angels with seven trumpets (8:2).
 - i. Trumpets were used in Israel to rally troops for war or announce the invasion of an army (Ezekiel 33:1-5). Trumpets are also associated with God's judgment and the day of the LORD (Zechariah 1:14-16).
 - ii. These angels announce the fall of the city of Jerusalem in imagery reminiscent of the fall of Jericho (Joshua 6).
- c. The prayers of the saints are again associated with incense in God's heavenly temple (8:3, cf. 5:8).
 - i. We should observe that the angel takes the golden censer and uses the prayers of the saints to bring to pass God's judgment.
 - ii. God uses the prayers of His people to bring to pass His plan for history!

3. The Seven Trumpets (8:6—9:21)

- a. **The blowing of the first four trumpets speak of God's covenantal curses coming on Israel (8:6-13).** We can see this by taking note of various details:
 - i. The use of "a third" is taken from Ezekiel and shows God's judgment on rebellious Israel (Ezekiel 5).
 - ii. The language resembles the plagues of Egypt, but now these plagues are coming upon the city of Jerusalem (8:6-7; Ex. 9:23, 24)!
 - iii. The language of a great mountain being thrown into the depth of the sea is used elsewhere of the fall of Babylon (8:8-9; Jeremiah 51:25).
 - iv. The defiling of the waters with wormwood is a reversal of God's blessing on Israel (8:10-11; Exodus 15:22-27).
 - 1. "Wormwood"- Deut. 29:18; Jer. 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7
- b. **An eagle cries out the first of three woes (8:13; cf. 9:12; 11:14).**
 - i. The "eagle" is significant: Deut. 28:49; Jer. 4:13; Lam. 4:19; Hos. 8:1; Hab. 1:8; Matt. 24:28 (Also Luke 17:37; literally: "eagle" not "vulture")
 - 1. Interestingly, the Romans had eagle ensigns on their banners.
 - ii. Adam Clarke: "These woes are supposed by many learned men to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem: the first woe—the seditions among the Jews themselves; the second woe—the besieging of the city by the Romans; the

third woe—the taking and sacking of the city and burning the Temple. This was the greatest of all the woes, as in the city and Temple were destroyed and nearly a million men lost their lives.”

c. The blowing of trumpets five and six describe both the internal and external judgments that were soon coming on Jerusalem (9:1-21).

i. The Sixth Trumpet: Demonic Activity in Jerusalem (9:1-12)

1. Matthew 12:43-45

a. “So it will be with this evil generation.”

2. David Chilton: “The entire generation became increasingly demon-possessed; their progressive national insanity is apparent as one reads through the New Testament, and its horrifying final states in the pages of Josephus’ *The Jewish War*: the loss of all ability to reason, the frenzied mobs attacking one another, the deluded multitudes following the most transparently false prophets, the crazed and desperate chase after food, the mass murders, executions and suicides, the fathers slaughtering their own families and the mothers eating their own children. Satan and the host of hell simply swarmed through the land of Israel and consumed the apostates.”

3. “A star fallen from heaven” (9:1) is a reference to Satan.

a. Luke 10:18

4. Satan releases locusts on the land (9:2-6).

a. These are not literal locusts. What kind of locusts do not harm grass, plants, and trees (9:4)?

b. The word “locusts” is probably used because locusts were a means of judgment on Israel in the OT (Joel). In some places, it seems like locusts referred to a foreign army. In this case, it seems like locusts refers to Satan’s army of demons.

c. The good news is that God’s people are sealed and are not harmed by these demons (9:4).

- d. Unbelievers, however, are capable of being stung, and they sting seems to bring despair. “They will long to die, but death will flee from them” (9:6; cf. Rev. 6:16; Luke 23:27-30).
 - e. “Five months”-
 - i. This could just refer to locusts coming from May to September.
 - ii. This may refer to Gessius Florus, the procurator of Judea, and his slaughter of 3,600 peaceful citizens.
5. This demonic army is given a vile description in 9:7-11.
- a. Their king is Abaddon (“Destruction”) and Apollyon (“Destroyer”). This refers to the devil.
 - b. The description is probably spiritual, but it may also resemble the demonized activities of Jewish zealots in Jerusalem.
 - c. Josephus described these Jewish zealots like this: “With their insatiable hunger for loot, they ransacked the houses of the wealthy, murdered men and violated women for sport; they drank their spoils with blood, and from mere satiety and shamelessness gave themselves up to effeminate practices, plaiting their hair and putting on women’s clothes, drenched themselves with perfumes and painted their eyelids to make themselves attractive. They copied not merely the dress, but also the passions of women, devising in their excess of licentiousness unlawful pleasures in which they wallowed as in a brothel. Thus they entirely polluted the city with their foul practices. Yet though they wore women’s faces, their hands were murderous. They would approach with mincing steps, then suddenly become fighting men, and, whipping out their

swords from under their dyed cloaks, they would run through every passerby." Wars, IV.9:10

ii. **The Seventh Trumpet: Roman Invasion of Jerusalem (9:13-19)**

1. The Euphrates River was the boundary that was crossed with Israel's ancient enemies invaded: Assyria and Babylon.
2. The Roman armies were also stationed at the Euphrates (9:14).
3. The number of mounted troops is not literal (200 million) but meant to impress with the sheer size of the Roman armies and their confederates (9:16). Jerusalem is greatly outnumbered.
 - a. Deuteronomy 28
4. The armies of Rome are intimidating and strong (9:13-19).

d. **Tragically, the judgments on Jerusalem in 70 AD did not lead to repentance (9:20-21).**

- i. This shows the justice of God's judgment.
- ii. David Scott Clark: "This is a warning to all men to be sensitive in regard to their own sins; to heed God's warnings, and to repent and seek God's mercy. It is always a safe thing and a wise thing to repent of sin."

