

## Revelation Chapters 8-9 (Week 9)

Revelation 8 opens with the seventh seal, leading to silence in heaven, then introduces seven angels with trumpets. The first four trumpets bring partial judgments on earth, sea, waters, and heavens. Chapter 9 describes the fifth trumpet (locusts from the abyss tormenting unsealed people) and sixth (four angels release a massive army, killing a third of humanity). These chapters escalate from seals to trumpets, emphasizing warning and limited destruction before full judgment.

**The Seventh Seal and First Four Trumpets (Rev. 8:1–13)** Key elements: Silence in heaven (half hour); prayers with incense; fire cast to earth (thunder/earthquake); trumpets: hail/fire/blood on earth, burning mountain turns sea to blood, star (Wormwood) poisons waters, heavens struck (darkened day/night); eagle cries "woe" for remaining trumpets.

- **Preterist:** Seventh seal's silence as solemn pause before AD 70 judgment; trumpets as escalating Roman assaults on Judea (hail/fire as siege engines, sea blood as naval battles, Wormwood as bitter suffering, darkened heavens as societal collapse); clarifies Old Testament parallels (e.g., Exodus plagues on Rome as new Egypt), integrating as covenant curses on Israel with strengths in historical time-text alignment but critiqued for over-localizing; further details tie silence to temple liturgy pause (Zeph. 1:7), eagle as Roman emblem (Matt. 24:28), and one-third limitation as partial judgment on Judea.

**Supporting Scriptures:** Exodus 9:23–25 (hail/fire on Egypt); Joel 2:30–31 (blood/fire/smoke before day of Lord); Jeremiah 51:25 (destroying mountain cast into sea).

- **Idealist:** Timeless principles; silence as awe before God's action; trumpets symbolize partial, warning judgments (one-third affected) on creation corrupted by sin; eagle's woe as call to repentance; clarifies recurring cycles of divine intervention with strengths in ethical application but critiqued for vagueness; further details portray hail/fire as purifying trials, Wormwood as bitterness of sin (Jer. 9:15), and darkened heavens

**Supporting Scriptures:** Amos 3:6 (trumpet warns city); Isaiah 24:4–6 (earth mourns, few left); Ezekiel 32:7–8 (heavens darkened in judgment).

- **Progressive Dispensationalist:** "Already/not yet"; silence as intercessory pause; trumpets as progressive judgments in church age (e.g., historical calamities) building to end; one-third limitation shows mercy; clarifies blended fulfillment with seals and strengths in covenant continuity but critiqued for modifying dispensationalism; further details describe censer/incense as ongoing prayers (Ps. 141:2), mountain/sea as disrupted creation (Hab. 3:6), and eagle as prophetic voice (Hos. 8:1), integrating as kingdom advancement through trials.

**Supporting Scriptures:** Zechariah 13:8–9 (two-thirds cut off, one-third refined); Haggai 2:6–7 (shake heavens/earth); Acts 2:19–20 (wonders in heaven).

- **Classical Dispensationalist:** Literal future; silence as anticipation post-rapture; trumpets as mid-Tribulation plagues (hail literal, mountain/star as meteors); eagle as angelic announcer; clarifies sequential escalation with strengths in literal hermeneutic but critiqued for rigid eras; further details emphasize silence as half-hour tension (Zech. 2:13), Wormwood as literal toxin (Jer. 23:15), and woes as structured Tribulation

**Supporting Scriptures:** Joel 2:1 (trumpet alarm on Zion); Isaiah 13:9–10 (day of Lord with darkened heavens); Revelation 16:3 (sea blood in bowls parallel).

How do the trumpets' partial nature (one-third) reflect God's mercy? Which view best integrates Old Testament imagery?

**The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets (Rev. 9:1–21)** Key elements: Star falls, opens abyss (smoke/locusts torment unsealed for five months, like scorpions but not harming vegetation); locust king Abaddon/Apollyon; sixth trumpet: four angels at Euphrates release 200 million horsemen (fire/smoke/sulfur kill one-third); survivors don't repent of idolatry/murder/etc.

- **Preterist:** Fifth as demonic torments during AD 70 siege (locusts as Roman soldiers or internal strife, five months as siege duration); Abaddon as destruction; sixth as massive Roman army (Euphrates as empire border); clarifies Joel 2 locusts and strengths in historical parallels but critiqued for stretching symbolism; further details include abyss smoke as siege fires (Josephus' accounts), locusts' armor as Roman legions (Joel 2:7-8), and no repentance as Israel's hardness (Isa. 6:9-10), integrating as covenant climax before temple fall.

**Supporting Scriptures:** Joel 2:1–11 (locust army as judgment); Exodus 10:12–15 (locusts darken land); Jeremiah 51:27 (horsemen from north).

- **Idealist:** Timeless; abyss as evil's source; locusts as demonic oppression (torment but not death, allowing repentance); horsemen as catastrophic wars; no repentance highlights hardened hearts; clarifies symbolic woe for spiritual warfare with strengths in devotional depth but critiqued for lack of timeline; further details portray Abaddon as destroyer (Job 26:6), five months as complete but limited suffering (Gen. 7:24 flood), and sulfur as purifying fire (Gen. 19:24), integrating as exposure of unrepentant sin.

**Supporting Scriptures:** Luke 8:31 (demons beg not to abyss); Proverbs 30:27 (locusts without king); Isaiah 14:31 (smoke from north, woe).

- **Progressive Dispensationalist:** "Already" demonic influences in history; "not yet" intensified end-time woes; locusts as partial torments; 200 million as symbolic vastness; clarifies progressive escalation and strengths in blending fulfillments but critiqued for ambiguity; further details describe star/key as fallen authority (Isa. 14:12), Euphrates as boundary of evil (Gen. 2:14), and no repentance as ongoing resistance (Rom. 1:18-32), integrating as kingdom tension building to consummation.

**Supporting Scriptures:** Daniel 7:21 (horn wages war on saints); Ephesians 6:12 (spiritual forces in heavenly places); Micah 7:2–3 (no repentance amid violence).

- **Classical Dispensationalist:** Literal future; abyss opens for demonic locusts (supernatural tormentors); Apollyon as Satan; horsemen as 200 million demonic army; clarifies mid-Tribulation, post-rapture with strengths in sequential literalism but critiqued for sensationalism; further details emphasize five months as literal duration, breastplates as demonic armor (Eph. 6:14 inverted), and unrepentance as Tribulation characteristic (2 Thess. 2:10-12), integrating as preparation for bowl judgments.

**Supporting Scriptures:** Job 26:6 (Abaddon before God); Isaiah 5:26–30 (whistle for distant nations); Revelation 20:1–3 (angel with key to abyss).

Why don't people repent despite judgments? Discuss supporting Scriptures on hardened hearts.

### Comparison Table

Element	Preterist (Gentry)	Idealist (Hamstra)	Progressive Disp. (Pate)	Classical Disp. (Thomas)	Example Supporting Scriptures
Seventh Seal/First Four Trumpets (8:1–13)	AD 70 siege calamities	Partial warning judgments	Progressive in history/future	Future mid-Tribulation plagues	Ex. 9:23–25; Joel 2:30–31
Fifth/Sixth Trumpets (9:1–21)	Demonic torments/Roman army	Ongoing oppression/wars	Demonic influences escalating	Future demonic locusts/horsemen	Joel 2:1–11; Luke 8:31
Application	Historical warning	Repentance amid trials	Kingdom mercy in judgments	Prepare for Tribulation	Amos 3:6; Isa. 24:4–6

### Questions:

1. How do chapters 8–9 balance judgment and mercy?
2. Which view best explains the trumpets' progression?
3. What does unrepentance teach about human nature today?

**Homework:** Read Revelation 10–11 and note little scroll/two witnesses.

In his commentary on Revelation in the *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation* (Tyndale House, 2011), M. Robert Mulholland Jr. interprets Chapters 8 and 9 through an idealist lens with "already/not yet" eschatology, viewing the trumpet judgments as symbolic of timeless spiritual realities rather than a literal sequence of historical or end-times events. These chapters continue the unfolding of God's redemptive plan from the seals (ch. 6), emphasizing partial, limited judgments (affecting "one-third" of creation) that expose the chaos and rebellion of the fallen "Babylon" world, calling for repentance while demonstrating God's merciful restraint. Mulholland stresses that the trumpets parallel the plagues of Egypt (Ex. 7–11), subverting expectations of divine power by showing judgments as opportunities for transformation, not mere destruction. The "already" aspect is the inaugurated kingdom through Christ's sacrifice, allowing judgments to reveal sin; the "not yet" is the full consummation where evil is eradicated. He critiques literal interpretations (e.g., tying trumpets to AD 70 or future Tribulation), arguing the symbols are multivalent, drawn from Old Testament imagery (e.g., Joel's locusts, Ezekiel's fire), to convey ethical imperatives: Believers must endure and witness in a hostile world, resisting assimilation to evil systems.

Mulholland notes the structure—silence in heaven (8:1) as a solemn pause for prayers (8:3–5), then escalating trumpets—highlights God's response to the saints' cries (6:10), with increasing intensity symbolizing the deepening exposure of rebellion. The lack of repentance (9:20–21) underscores human hardness, urging radical discipleship.

### Key Interpretations

- **The Seventh Seal and Silence in Heaven (8:1):** A half-hour silence symbolizes awe and anticipation before God's action, echoing temple liturgy (incense/prayers ascending); timeless reminder of divine deliberation amid chaos.
- **Prayers and Censer (8:2–5):** Angels with trumpets prepare judgment; censer fire cast to earth (thunder/earthquake) as God's response to saints' prayers; symbolizes intercession igniting divine intervention, subverting passivity for active faithfulness.
- **First Four Trumpets (8:6–13): Partial Judgments on Creation:** Hail/fire/blood (earth burned), mountain to sea (blood/death), Wormwood star (bitter waters), darkened heavens; symbolic of limited chaos exposing sin's consequences (one-third affected shows mercy); parallels Egypt plagues, calling believers to trust God's provision amid environmental/spiritual upheaval.
- **Fifth Trumpet (9:1–12): Locusts from Abyss:** Fallen star opens pit (smoke/darkness); locusts (scorpion torment, five months) as demonic oppression, not physical; king Abaddon/Apollyon (destruction); timeless symbol of evil's torment on unsealed (unbelievers), urging sealed believers to witness without fear.
- **Sixth Trumpet (9:13–21): Four Angels and Horsemen:** Angels at Euphrates release 200 million horsemen (fire/smoke/sulfur kill one-third); symbolic of massive, demonic-inspired destruction (wars/plagues); unrepentance despite judgments highlights rebellion's grip, subverting hope for transformation through suffering.

Mulholland's focus is devotional: These chapters confront the church's temptation to compromise, assuring God's judgments are redemptive, preparing for the kingdom's full realization. He ties symbols to ethical living, encouraging perseverance as participants in Christ's victory.

## Preterist Perspective on Parallels Between Revelation 8-9 and Josephus' Writings

From a Preterist viewpoint, Revelation 8-9 (the trumpet judgments) symbolically depicts the escalating divine judgments on apostate Israel during the Jewish-Roman War (AD 66-73), culminating in Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70. Preterists argue these chapters parallel Jesus' Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24) and find historical fulfillment in Flavius Josephus' *The Wars of the Jews* (c. AD 75), an eyewitness account. The trumpets are seen as warnings (like Egypt's plagues in Ex. 7-11 or Joel's locusts), affecting "one-third" (limited scope, showing mercy), and recapitulating the seals' judgments. Josephus' descriptions of portents, military invasions, and devastation are viewed as the earthly "mirror" of heavenly visions, confirming Revelation's "soon" fulfillment (Rev. 1:1) in the 1st century. Critics note Josephus (a non-Christian) attributes events to fate, not prophecy, but Preterists emphasize striking linguistic and thematic alignments.

Below are key parallels, with direct excerpts from Josephus (*Wars of the Jews*) and Preterist insights (drawn from sources like Kenneth Gentry and Adam Maarschalk's analysis).

### 1. Rev. 8:7-9 (1st and 2nd Trumpets: Hail/Fire/Blood on Earth; Burning Mountain into Sea, Turning Blood, Destroying Creatures/Ships)

- **Preterist Interpretation:** The 1st trumpet symbolizes fiery devastation on land (Roman scorched-earth tactics in Judea); the 2nd depicts naval bloodshed and shipwrecks. These parallel Roman assaults in Galilee (AD 67), where fire/blood filled the land and sea battles turned waters red with corpses. The "mountain" may symbolize burning cities cast into chaos, limited to "one-third" showing targeted judgment on Israel.
- **Josephus Excerpt** (*Wars* 3.4.1): "So that Galilee was all over filled with fire and blood; nor was it exempted from any kind of misery or calamity..."
- **Josephus Excerpt** (*Wars* 3.9.3, Sea of Galilee battle): "The sea was bloody a long way, and the maritime parts were full of dead bodies... the shores, they were full of shipwrecks, and of dead bodies all swelled."
- **Josephus Excerpt** (*Wars* 3.10.9): "One might then see the lake all bloody, and full of dead bodies... the shores, they were full of shipwrecks, and of dead bodies all swelled."
- **Preterist Insight:** These match the environmental/military horrors, fulfilling Matt. 24:6-8 (wars/famines as birth pains). The bloodied sea echoes Egyptian plagues (Ex. 7:20-21), subverting Rome as the new oppressor judged by God.

### 2. Rev. 9:13-16 (6th Trumpet: Four Angels at Euphrates Release Massive Army to Kill One-Third)

- **Preterist Interpretation:** The four angels symbolize restrained destructive forces unleashed; the 200 million horsemen (symbolic vast number) represent invading armies. This parallels the Idumean (Edomite) forces aiding Zealots in Jerusalem (AD 68), led by four commanders, causing massive slaughter. The Euphrates as a boundary evokes invading empires (like Babylon/Assyria in OT).

- **Josephus Excerpt** (*Wars* 4.4.2): "Twenty thousand of them were put into battle-array, and came to Jerusalem, under four commanders, John, and Jacob the son of Sosas; and besides these were Simon, the son of Cathlas, and Phineas, the son of Clusothus."
- **Preterist Insight:** The "four commanders" mirror the four angels; the army's size (20,000 as "two myriads of myriads" in some readings) and destructive impact (killing one-third) align with Josephus' accounts of internal carnage, fulfilling covenant curses (Deut. 28:49-68) on unfaithful Israel.

Preterists like Gentry argue these parallels validate Revelation's early date (pre-AD 70) and fulfillment in AD 70, as Josephus (writing post-70) unwittingly documents the prophesied events without knowing the text. However, not all details match perfectly (e.g., no exact "locusts" in Josephus for Rev. 9:1-12, though some link to siege torments or demonic influences). This view sees trumpets as warnings exposing sin, leading to repentance or further judgment.