

St. Therese Catholic Church

Book of Revelation

Chapters 8-9

December 10, 2024

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The Seventh Seal

- After a comfortable interlude in Revelation 7, Jesus breaks open the seventh and climactic seal that binds the scroll (152).
- The opening of the seventh seal unleashes another series of signs, heralded by seven angelic trumpets. The pattern of the seven trumpets follows the pattern of the seven seals (152).
- Whereas the chastisements of the four horseman mainly follow from the actions of human beings (conquest and consequences), the events that follow the first four trumpets depict grave disruptions of nature, events that insurance policies call “acts of God,” since human beings are able neither to cause nor prevent them (152).

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The Seventh Seal

- Silence: Whereas there was loud praise by heaven up to now, the seventh seal brings silence. The silence signals readers for what will happen next (153).
 - Zeph. 1:7: Silence in the presence of the Lord! For near is the day of the Lord.
 - Zech. 2:17: Silence all people, in the presence of the Lord, who stirs forth from his holy dwelling.
- Note: In heaven, there is praise and silence. In hell, there is constant discordant noise, weeping, and anger – “wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:42).

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Trumpets in the Old Testament

1. For worship: Numbers 10:1-10
2. For warfare – Joshua 6:1-20
wherein seven trumpets were
blown Jericho's walls fell down.
In this Revelation, the trumpets
lead to the fall of Babylon.
3. Warning – Joel 2:1 – Blow a
trumpet in Zion...for the day of
the Lord is near, a day of
darkness and gloom.



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Heavenly Prayers

- Prayers of the holy ones: The previous mention of the prayers of God's people (Rev. 5:8) identified the prayers with incense in the golden bowls held by the elders, but here the incense and prayers are distinguished (154).
- Key: It seems the focus here is prayer of vindication (Lk 18:3; Rev. 6:10). They ask for God's kingdom to come - for God's intervention to judge and to save (154).
- Angel took the censor...hurled it to the earth: Symbolizes the answer to this prayer. The prayer of Christians mounts up to God and has a decisive influence on the course of events (154).

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Trumpets - Overview

First Four Trumpets	Last Three Trumpets	The Final Trumpet
The first four blasts involve <u>natural disasters</u> that affect everyone.	The final three are called woes and involve <u>demonic attacks</u> .	The final trumpet blast opens a section that presents us with three signs: • The woman • The dragon • The seven bowls of God's wrath

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First Four Trumpets

- There is an echo of the Egyptian plagues in the blowing of the seven trumpets. God judges those who oppress his people. Goal: Idolaters repent and submit to God's will.

Trumpets in Revelation	Plagues in Egypt
First trumpet: Hail and fire mixed with blood falling on the earth	Seventh plague: Hail and fire struck humans, vegetation, and animals.
Second trumpet: Burning mountain turned a third of the sea into blood	First plague: Nile turned to blood
Fourth trumpet: A third of the sun, moon, and stars become dark; day and night lost light for a third of the time	Ninth plague: Darkness covered the land of Egypt

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First Four Trumpets

- The first four trumpets harm the natural order on which life depends; they unleash ecological disasters. They strike every aspect of creation – the land, sea, springs and rivers, and sky. All involve natural disasters (157).
- Fire: First three judgments have fire. Conquering armies often used fire to totally destroy a city. In the Old Testament, fire was a potent symbol of judgment (156).
- Blood: First two trumpets involve blood. Recalls the first Egyptian plague and prophetic threats of judgment. Blood arouses a feeling of danger (156).

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First Four Trumpets

Genesis Creates Temple	Genesis Fills Temple	Revelation Uncreation
Day 1: Day and Night	Day 4: Sun and Moon	Third & Fourth trumpets: Large star falls from the sky turning water bitter; third of sun, moon, stars become dark
Day 2: Gathers water into a single basin	Day 5: Fills the sea with fish	Second trumpet: third of the sea is turned to blood; third of sea creatures die
Day 3: Land and vegetation	Day 6: Animals and human beings	First Trumpet burns third of land and trees, and all grass

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First Four Trumpets

- The first four trumpets that cause natural devastation on a third of the land, trees, grass (first trumpet), third of the sea and sea creatures (second trumpet), large star falling from the sky turning third of freshwater bitter (third trumpet), and third of the sun, moon, and stars dark (fourth trumpet) is a kind of “uncreation” or “reversal of creation” as presented in Genesis 1 where God creates the world and fills it with life.
- Additionally, the first four trumpets call to mind the Egyptian plagues that were judgments on false gods. The first four trumpets are judgments of idolatry – the worship of demons and idols made from gold, bronze, stone, and wood, as well as murders, magic potions, unchastity, and robberies (Rev. 9:20-21).

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First Four Trumpets

- Third trumpet: The large star may be a reference to Lucifer who fell from heaven. Satan was called the daystar before the fall (Is. 14:12-14).
- Wormwood: The name of a bitter plant that symbolizes the sorrow and distaste of human affliction (Hahn and Mitch, 47).
- In the Book of Exodus, the Israelites could not drink the water at Marah because it was too bitter (Ex. 15:23). Moses threw a piece of wood into the water, and the water became fresh (Ex. 15:25).
- Key: The devastation of the third trumpet reverses the story – in Revelation 8, the water becomes bitter (Hahn and Mitch, 47).

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Summary

- First four horsemen (seals): Calamities arising from human causes – death-dealing wars, famines, and epidemics have happened in many places over the course of history (160).
- First four trumpets: Symbolize natural disasters that God allows to occur in various times and places, perhaps becoming more severe toward the end of history, rather than a series of four specific historical events.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_trumpets

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Summary

- Key: None of the trumpet judgments is allowed to destroy everything – the repetition of the fact that only “a third” of the sea, land, and so on, is affected indicates their limited impact (160).
- These partial judgments are tempered by mercy, to give the inhabitants of the earth opportunity to repent, as a comment after the sixth trumpet indicates (9:20-21).
- The fourth seal judgment affects “a quarter of the earth” and the first four trumpet judgments strike a third of the earth, sea, fresh waters and light – thereby indicating an escalation as the end approaches (160).

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A Warning Cry

Woe, woe, woe, to those who dwell on the earth” is a cry of the vulture/eagle introducing the next three trumpet blasts.

- The disasters are called woes because of their more serious nature, all three involve demonic attacks culminating in the attack of Satan himself against the Church.
- The woes are directed to “those who dwell on the earth” and this, we have seen, is the book’s technical term for non-believers and idolaters (McIlraith, 89).



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Revelation 9

- We have now reached the chapter of Revelation whose imagery is probably the most bizarre and terrifying of all. It is the stuff of our worst nightmares (165).
- If we look for a comparison in the world of cinema, Rev. 9 resembles a horror movie (165).
- The first four seals afflict humanity in general. The first four trumpets strike the created order. The three woes (or last three trumpets) are discriminating in their effects.
- They strike only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (165).

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The Fifth Trumpet

- Star fallen from sky: Represents a fallen angel, probably Satan himself (Is. 14:12-14; Lk 10:18; Rev. 12:7-9) (166).
- Key for the passage of great abyss: God allows a release of evil forces residing there. The reason is given at the end of the chapter – to lead the inhabitants of the earth to repentance (9:20-21) (166).
- Like smoke from a huge furnace: Words that echo the description in Gen. 19:28 of the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah (166).

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The Fifth Trumpet

- Locusts: Exodus 10 describes the eighth plague against Egypt as a swarm of locusts so numerous that they consumed every green thing growing in the land (166).
- Joel 1:2-2:12 describes a devastating plague of locusts, a trumpet blast, and an announcement of the “day of the Lord,” God’s judgment against Judah (166).
- In both cases, the purpose of the judgment by locusts is remedial rather than punitive, intended to bring about a change of attitude rather than to destroy those whose crops are smitten by it (166).

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The Fifth Trumpet

Locusts in Exodus / Joel	Locusts in Revelation
Harm vegetation	Harm people (no seal)
Eat plants	Inflict torment...like a scorpion when it stings a person

- God retains control of these scorpion-like locusts and restrains their malevolence: They are not allowed to kill their victims, but only to torment them for five months (167).

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The Fifth Trumpet

Locust Appearance	Meaning
Horses ready for battle	Causes fright as they charge
Crowns of gold	Claim to rule
Faces were like human faces, had hair like women's hair	Resemble human beings but not human (humanoid)
Teeth...like lion's teeth	Indicates their ferocity
Chests like iron breastplates	Indicates their invincibility

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The Fifth Trumpet

- The Book of Kells is a beautifully decorated medieval manuscript that has survived for 1,200 years. It was made by Celtic monks escaping from Viking raiders.
- One of its illustrations is a beautifully adorned locust with women's hair. Don't let its cuteness fool you, however, as its teeth are like lions' teeth (Rev. 9:8).



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The Fifth Trumpet

- Power to harm for five months: They are given limited power to harm (not destroy) and limited time to do it. Five months was the average life cycle of a locust.
- King as the angel of the abyss: Indicates their diabolical nature as the angel of the abyss is a demonic power (168).
- Hebrew Abaddon: Destruction
- Greek Apollyon: One who destroys
- Key: The three woes correspond to the three trumpets.

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The Fifth Trumpet

- If you see a ferocious locust-looking creature like this, run!
- It pretends to be nice and cuddle with you (purring) but this is just to draw you in.
- It will bite and sting you with its tail without any remorse, then look for other innocent people to consume. It is truly awful.



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The Sixth Trumpet

- The blast of the sixth trumpet signals the final warning.
- Horns: The altar had four horns that protruded from it (Ex. 37:25-27).
- In Rev. 8:3, an angel offered incense and the prayers of all the holy ones from the gold altar before the trumpets began.



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The Sixth Trumpet

- Four angels: Probably fallen angels given they are bound and their intention is to kill a third of the human race (169).
- Great Euphrates River: The eastern most boundary of the Roman Empire and Israel's enemies (Assyria and Babylon) came from beyond the Euphrates. Any mention of an army crossing the Euphrates would have been disturbing (169).
- Like the events that accompany the opening of the sixth seal (6:12), the attack that the sixth trumpet precipitates occurs just before the end of the history, the completion of God's judgments and his salvation of his people. With the blowing of the seventh trumpet, the kingdom of God has come (170).

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The Sixth Trumpet

- The judgment of the sixth trumpet is more severe than the fifth. The enemy is larger and more potent

Fifth Trumpet	Sixth Trumpet
Locusts harm people	Horses and riders kill people
Allowed to torment people for five months	No timeframe is given

- Two hundred million: An immense multitude, multiplying the largest number in Greek language (a *myriad*, ten thousand) by itself, and then doubling it (170).

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The Sixth Trumpet

Close-up of the Monsters	Meaning
Red, blue, and yellow breastplates “Color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur”	Colored armor reminiscent of Parthian calvary
H heads of horses like heads of lions	The most vicious beast known to the ancient people of the Mediterranean
Out of mouths came fire, smoke, and sulfur; kill a third of human race	Fire and sulfur rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah; suggest false speech, propaganda
Tails like snakes that inflict harm	Snake is another symbol of demons

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Humanity's Response

- The final verses of the chapter make clear that God's intention for the trumpet judgments – indeed, all the calamities thus far – is to lead people to repentance (172).
- According to John's vision, however, conversion is not the response of the vast majority.
- Even the most severe wake-up call possible, the death of a large number of people, does not suffice to persuade the rest of the human race to repent, to renounce their wrongdoing and turn to God (172).

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Humanity's Response

- Works of their hands: Old Testament language of idolatry – the worship of any god other than the true God, or the worship of an image of the true God rather than the true God himself (175).
- Worship of demons: At its root, idolatry entails worship of demons. St. Paul says, “What pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God” (1 Cor. 10:20).
- Key: Just as the worship of the true God leads human beings to a pattern of behavior that resembles God's character and conduct, so also the worship of idols and demons leads to a pattern of conduct that resembles that of the devil, who was a liar and murderer from the beginning (John 8:44) (173).

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Humanity's Response

- Key: The fifth and sixth trumpet judgments strike only those who have not received the seal of the servants of God (173-174).
- Sin opens the door for demonic activity. Those who practice evil, worship idols, and reject the testimony of Jesus become the prey of the demons they serve. The devils seek to torment and destroy their adherents, since that is their nature (174).
- Revelation presents the deadly demonic onslaught that follows the sixth trumpet as belonging to the period shortly before the end (174).

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Humanity's Response

- The release of Satan to deceive the nations and gather them against God's holy people depicts a period immediately before the final judgment (20:7-9) (174).
- While some interpreters understand these as distinct events and try to place them sequentially on a timeline, it seems to others, myself included, that these diverse visions present complementary descriptions of the same final period (174).



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Humanity's Response

- The horrors of the sixth plague failed to bring about conversion. Fear, it seems, just does not do it (McIlraith, 92).
- This is not the end of the sixth trumpet. Like the sixth seal, this trumpet also has the expansion in chapters 10 and 11.
- Revelation 11 will show us that what brings about conversion is the prophetic witnessing unto death of the Wife, the Christian community. To these chapters we now turn (McIlraith, 92).

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Next Time

- Tuesday, January 7th



Revelation 10

Angel with the small scroll	10:1 – 11
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Revelation 11

The two witnesses	11:1 – 14
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The seventh trumpet	11:15 – 19
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