

Revelation 8:1-9:21—The Trumpet Judgements

Revision

As a brief revision, Revelation chapter 6 is the start of the tribulation and describes the seal judgements. It describes the events that will happen chronologically. Then chapter 7 was a vignette or interlude or pause, which shows us who the 144,000 are—Jewish evangelists who evangelise the whole world and will be used by God to win a multitude souls for Jesus during the 7 year tribulation period.

Now we come to chapters 8 and 9 which carry the story forward chronologically, as they describe the first 6 trumpet judgements. It starts with a period of silence before the judgements begin.

Revelation 8:1–9:21 NKJV

8:1 When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. **2** And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. **3** Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. **4** And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. **5** Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

First Trumpet: Vegetation Struck

7 The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

Second Trumpet: The Seas Struck

8 Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. **9** And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Third Trumpet: The Waters Struck

10 Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. **11** The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.

Fourth Trumpet: The Heavens Struck

12 Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.

13 And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

Fifth Trumpet: The Locusts from the Bottomless Pit

9:1 Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. **2** And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. **3** Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. **4** They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. **5** And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. **6** In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them. **7** The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. **8** They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. **9** And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. **10** They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months. **11** And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon. **12** One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.

Sixth Trumpet: The Angels from the Euphrates

13 Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, **14** saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." **15** So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. **16** Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. **17** And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulphur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. **18** By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. **19** For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm. **20** But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. **21** And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Silence in Heaven

Revelation 8:1 NKJV

When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

The sealed scroll was introduced in Revelation 5, and the seals were opened one by one up to the sixth seal in Revelation 6. We waited for the last seal to be opened and the contents of the scroll to be revealed—but then were given a pause or interlude with Revelation 7, a vignette describing the sealing of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses and the great multitude they lead to Christ during the great tribulation. The idea of a pause between the sixth and **the seventh seal** is emphasised by this **silence in heaven for about half an hour**.

There are several possible reasons for this silence:

1. The angels are silent so the prayers of the saints can be heard, perhaps even the cry of the martyrs of Revelation 6:9–11. God always hears our prayers.
2. More likely, this **silence in heaven** demonstrates a sober, awestruck silence at the judgments to come, now that the seals are off and the scroll can be opened.

Personally, I think that the real reason is probably a mix of all these reasons.

Revelation 8:2–4 NKJV

And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. ³ Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.

v 2 **The seven angels who stand before God:** Here we learn that there are seven angels who stand in God's presence. These must also be very powerful angels. They will each be given a trumpet which will announce in turn the 7 trumpet judgements. By the end of them another third of the earth's population will be killed. That's a total of 50% of the earth's 8 billion people dead, that's 4 billion dead.

v 2 **And to them were given seven trumpets:** In the Old Testament, **trumpets** sounded the alarm for war and threw the enemy into a panic, or they called an assembly of God's people. Here, at this time, the **seven trumpets** will sound as God's battle-alarm during the great tribulation.

v 3 **Then another angel:** Who is this angel? Some see this **angel** as Jesus, functioning as a mediator and because of Old Testament references to Jesus as "the Angel of the Lord." Others disagree and say it could only be a mere angelic being because the specific ancient Greek word for **another** means "another of the same kind," and obviously there is only one of Jesus. You will have to make up your own mind.

v 3 **...came and stood at the altar** - What altar is this? The golden altar of incense. In the old testament, the priests would daily offer incense on this altar. It represented the prayers of the people and the prayers of the priest interceding for the people.

v 3 **upon the golden altar which was before the throne...** What we see in heaven is actually the original temple design, which was copied here on earth. God told Moses to "Make the Tabernacle and the furniture "according to pattern that I show you," (Exodus 25:9). It was imperative Moses followed God's plan because the tabernacle, and later the temple, was an earthly shadow of the heavenly reality. Here are some similarities:

- Just as heaven has a door, so did the tabernacle (see Revelation 4:1)
- As heaven has a sea, the tabernacle had a brass laver, or "molten sea."
- As heaven has a lampstand, so did the tabernacle.
- As heaven has an altar of incense, so did the tabernacle.
- And as heaven has a throne of grace, the tabernacle had a seat of mercy.

v 3 **A golden censer ... the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God:** Prayer and incense are often associated in the Bible. The idea is that just as incense is precious, pleasant, and drifts to heaven, so do our prayers. So

here, before the first trumpet sounds and the first of these next seven judgements begins, the prayers of God's people come before the Lord God.

A short study on effective prayer

What does this show? Guzik says, "Significantly, the prayers of God's people set in motion the coming consummation of history." Torrance says "More potent, more powerful than all the dark and mighty powers let loose in the world, more powerful than anything else, is the power of prayer set ablaze by the fire of God and cast upon the earth."

Don't ever doubt the effectiveness of your effective prayers. As we mature in our walks with the Lord, we become more effective in our prayer life. So what kind of prayers do you think are effective?

1. Specific prayers (1 John 5:14-15)
2. Persistent prayers (Luke 18:1-8) - note especially the promise to avenge us.
3. Prayers that are according to God's will, especially those rooted in Scripture - praying in Jesus name (John 14:13-14)
4. Prayers that are offered in Faith (James 1:6-8)

So let's go through these scriptures and see what we can learn about prayer.

1. Specific Prayers

1 John 5:14-15 NKJV

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we **ask** anything **according to His will**, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatever we **ask**, we know that we have **the petitions** that we have asked of Him.

Firstly, the Greek Word translated "**ask**" here describes a person who speaks out and prays boldly and authoritatively. This person knows specifically what he needs and isn't afraid to humbly, yet boldly, come into God's Presence to ask and expect to receive what he has requested, even things concerning themselves.

Next we'll look at the word "**petitions**," because the form used in the original text emphatically shows us that God wants us to get *very specific* when we pray!

The word "petition" in the Greek denotes *a specific, exact, explicit, precise, detailed request*. This request is so in-depth, thorough, and comprehensive that there is no room for misunderstanding exactly what has been asked. This is why in many Bibles the word is translated as "**petition**." It paints the picture of a prayer so detailed and explicit that it is like a detailed "petition" that has been prepared and submitted to court.

Thirdly, we'll look at, "**according to His will**":

David Guzik says, "The most powerful prayers in the Bible are always prayers which understand the will of God, and ask Him to perform it. We may be annoyed when one of our children says, "Daddy, this is what you promised, now please do it," but God is delighted when we pray His promises. It shows our will aligned with His, our dependence on Him, and that we take His Word seriously."

Now some of you might be asking the question,

If something is God's will, why doesn't He just do it, apart from our prayers? Why would He wait to accomplish His will until we pray? Because God has appointed us to work with Him. 2 Corinthians 6:1 says: *as workers together with Him*. God wants us to work with Him, and that means bringing our will and agenda into alignment with His. He wants us to care about the things He cares about, and He wants us to care about them enough to pray passionately about them. Prayer isn't just about getting our prayers answered, but also about changing us as we learn to depend on Him.

Lastly, we'll look at what God is promising here, that He "**hears us.**" What a comforting promise, God always hears us. He is always listening, even if it doesn't seem like God is answering our prayers.

So what have we learnt from 1 John 5:14-15 about prayer?

- We can ask confidently, even about things that concern us, yet at the same time giving God the honour He is due.
- We need to ask according to His will—we will come back to this concept.
- Next, God promise is that He will hear us, but not that He will always answer our prayers as we want or expect them to be answered—God is wiser than us and knows what is best for us.
- We are encouraged to bring our detailed petitions to Him. I just want to encourage you today to open your Bible and explore its pages until you find *specifically* what the will of God is for your situation. Once you know it, be assured that you have the right as a child of God to go straight into His presence and, with honour and respect, *insist* that His will be done in this matter! In fact, God *wants* you to come to Him boldly like that! But just remember that God's timing might not be your timing, which brings us to the next main point about prayer. The prayers that are more effective are:

2. Persistent prayers

Luke 18:1-8 NKJV

Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart [give up], ² saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. ³ Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' ⁴ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, ⁵ yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' "

⁶ Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. ⁷ **And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?** ⁸ I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

While God does avenge us now to a degree, many times our persecutors seem to get away scot free, without any kind of punishment or chastisement or hard times coming their way. But here, in Revelation chapter 8, we see God answering these prayers for justice, for vengeance, when God pours out His fury on a Christ rejecting world in response to nothing less than the prayers of the saints.

3. Praying according to God's will.

John 14:13-14 NLT paraphrase

You can ask for anything **in My name**, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴ Yes, ask me for anything **in My name**, and I will do it!

In My name... describes Jesus Character and motivation. Look at what Jesus' main motivation was and still is: to glorify the Father. Other aspects of Jesus character are His love for other people and His utter selflessness. He was always seeking what was best for others. Also, Jesus hated the things that the Father hated, and loved the things that the Father loved. If we pray with this kind of heart or attitude, then we are praying according to the name or character of Jesus. We are in His will. We are walking with Him. What God wants has become what I want. It's a beautiful place to be, walking with Jesus in agreement, just simply abiding in Him.

4. Prayers that are offered in Faith

James 1:6-8 NLT paraphrase

⁶ But when you ask Him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. **⁷ Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.** **⁸ Their loyalty is divided between God and the world,** and they are unstable in everything they do.

When we are divided between God and the world—it means that our motives are selfish. We are not really depending on God or seeking what is best for God.

Revelation 8:5 NKJV

Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

The ...**fire from the altar**... This is the brazen or bronze altar, which was always kept burning.

We see the impact and power of answered prayer as the prayers of the saints are hurled back to earth. Don't ever think that your prayers are wasted. God will answer your prayers just at the right time, never too early, and never too late, but rather when they are most effective. Here we see God answering the prayers of the saints in a very powerful way as He judges a wicked world.

The first trumpet judgement—the plague on the vegetation.

Revelation 8:6-7 NKJV

So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. **⁷ The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.**

It is very possible that these trumpet judgments that include flowing blood, pelting hail, and consuming fire describe what would happen in a nuclear holocaust. Remember that there are many nations now who have nuclear weapons, and the number of weapons is only increasing.

Also consider that when a nuclear warhead detonates, 400 km/hr winds of fire follow, vaporising everything in their path. In addition, aboveground nuclear tests on the island of Bikini caused the surrounding water to shoot thousands of feet into the air, where it froze and returned as hailstones big enough to destroy the equipment intended to monitor it. So with a nuclear blast, you get both fire and ice..

I am not saying this passage can only refer to a nuclear holocaust, the effects described here could be of supernatural origin, or caused by something else like meteors, who knows. We'll just have to wait and see what causes one third of the trees to be burned up, and all the grass and crops to be burned up by this fire and hail mingled with blood. But something very important to consider is that no matter what *method* God uses to bring judgment, the people on earth *know* these events are from God, and do not think them to be merely natural disasters (Revelation 16:9, and 16:11, Revelation 19:19).

The second trumpet judgement — the plague on the oceans.

Revelation 8:8a NKJV

Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea,...

v 8 **Something like a great mountain:** John carefully said that this is not an actual or literal mountain (note the use of **like**), but it was a blazing mass as large as a **mountain** and **like** a mountain.

Revelation 8:8b-9 NKJV

And a third of the sea became blood. ⁹ And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

“Come on,” some say. “These judgments are allegories. You can’t take them literally.” In response, I challenge them to compare the trumpet judgments with the plagues that befell Egypt (Exodus 7–12). Were those plagues allegorical or literal? Ask Pharaoh.

A third of the sea became blood: This disaster is a cataclysm, perhaps a meteor that crashes into the sea and results in great oceanic upheaval with residual pollution. Researchers today say that this sort of phenomenon has happened before in the history of the earth, sometimes resulting in great ecological upheaval and disaster. Here, the result is that **a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.**

The third trumpet judgement—the plague on fresh water supplies

Revelation 8:10 NKJV

Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.

A great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch: We may easily associate this with a comet or meteor crashing into the earth and bringing ecological disaster. But God may have something else in mind also.

Revelation 8:11 NKJV

The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.

Wormwood means bitter.

A third of the rivers ... a third of the waters: What’s interesting to me is that The *proportion* of ecological disaster stays the same. In each one of the trumpet judgements, **a third** of an ecological system is destroyed in judgment. First the

vegetation, then the oceans, then the lakes and rivers and springs. This trend will continue in coming trumpet judgements.

The forth trumpet judgement—the plague on the heavens and darkness on earth.

Revelation 8:12 NKJV

Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.

A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night: This does not only describe a one-third lessening of light, but one-third of the day and night are plunged into absolute darkness. As Jesus said: *the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light* (Matthew 24:29).

Again, we don't know what causes this, but we know with certainty what the literal result will be—darkness for a third of the daytime. Just imagine the effect on the vegetation with less light and temperatures plummeting. I just hope that this plague won't last for too long otherwise people will starve and/or freeze to death. Again, it will be an ecological disaster.

Revelation 8:13 NKJV

And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”

In other words, the angel is saying, “The worst is yet to come because the last three trumpets are worse than the first four.”

As we will see in chapter 9, the next three trumpets to blast judgment upon the earth are much more devastating than the first four. The first four trumpets dealt with the arena of the natural. The last three deal with the supernatural—specifically demonic activity, and one third of the remaining population will be killed.

Before we move on into chapter 9, here are some key points from the first four trumpet judgements in chapter 8.

These first four trumpets reveal the severity of God's judgment. He attacks all the ordinary means of subsistence, such as food and water; and He attacks all the ordinary means of comfort, and knowledge, such as light and the regular rhythm of days. As you can imagine, this will cause great fear and anxiety in people, just like when there is a huge storm, earthquake, flood, or tsunami.

The first four trumpets also reveal the *mercy* of God's judgment; these are partial judgments striking only one-third, and are meant to warn and lead a rebellious world to repentance before the final set of judgements. For now, God *spares* more than He *smites*. This will change in the final three trumpet judgements. They are called the three woes, and for good reason—they will be demonic. If the world wants demons and insists on worshipping demons, then demons they can have. As I've said before, sometimes the worst thing that God can do for us is to give us what we want. But sometimes it turns out to be a good thing, in that when we do get what we want, we finally realise that it's not good for us and only hurts us.

The fifth trumpet judgement—demonic locusts from the bottomless pit

Revelation 9:1a NKJV

Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit.

Who is this star fallen from the earth?

I saw a star fallen from heaven: The text clearly shows us that this star is a *person* (to *him*), not a literal star. The verb tense (**fallen**) indicates that he already had fallen. So who is this star? Lucifer, or Satan, who also bears the name “Shining One.”

There was Another who also saw Satan fall from heaven, and what He has to say is an important application for us (Jon Courson):

“Master,” said the excited disciples, returning from their first missionary venture, “even the demons are subject to us as we minister in Your Name.”

“I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning,” answered Jesus. In other words, “You guys are so excited about the power you’re experiencing in ministry, but be careful: I saw Satan fall from heaven because he got wrapped up in the power he possessed as heaven’s worship leader. No longer a servant, he wanted heaven to serve him. Therefore, do not rejoice in what you are doing or what you have seen happen in your service for Me. Rejoice instead in the fact that your names are written in the Book of Life—that you’re saved by the goodness and generosity of God” (see Luke 10:20).

The sober warning to anyone in ministry is to make sure that seeing demons flee or lives changed doesn’t become your passion. Rejoice, instead, in what God has done for you in rescuing you from the fires of hell.

To him was given the key to the bottomless pit...

When Lucifer fell from heaven, Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, and Revelation 12 tell us one-third of the angels went with him and became demons. The worst of these demons—those who “left their first estate” (Jude 6) and had the audacity to have relations with women, producing the “nephilim,” or giants, seen in Genesis and Numbers—God cast into the *abussos*, or bottomless pit.

Jude 6

⁶ And I remind you of the angels who did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them but left the place where they belonged. God has kept them securely chained in prisons of darkness, waiting for the great day of judgment.

But now watch what happens as the plot thickens....

Revelation 9:2a NKJV

And he opened the bottomless pit,...

The bottomless pit: Some wonder where this is. The most straightforward answer is that it is in the centre of the earth, because there, one might say that all is “top” or “up” and nothing is “bottom.” This also makes sense because of the reference to the bottomless pit being under or within the earth. You may have heard of the term “the Abyss.”

Luke 8:31 NKJV

And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss.

The *abyssos* is a prison for certain demons (Luke 8:31, 2 Peter 2:4, and Jude 6). This is probably the same place as this **bottomless pit**, or at least a subsection of it. More generally, this place is considered the realm of the dead, the same as Hades (Romans 10:7).

Do you remember how I was saying how some use an allegorical or non-literal method of interpretation for prophecy. Well, Revelation 9:1 is a good example of how the Book of Revelation is sometimes wrongly spiritualised or allegorised in its interpretation. Some commentators say that the **star** is the word of God, the **pit** is human nature, and the lesson is that if the gospel is rejected, horrors are unleashed. But this is far from the plain meaning of Revelation 9:1.

Back to our text though, can you imagine what will happen when the worst demons presently chained are suddenly released? Just imagine that every prison in our nation was opened and all the inmates immediately released. It would be terrible but still nothing compared to what will happen when these demons are freed.

Revelation 9:2-4 NKJV

And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. ⁴ They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

v 2 **Out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth:** These are obviously not natural locusts. They avoid plants and attack men like scorpions attack. They are, as Walvoord says "A visual representation of the hordes of demons loosed upon the earth."

The idea is simply that as part of the judgment of the great tribulation, God will allow demonic hordes, previously imprisoned, to descend upon the earth like a swarm of destructive **locusts**.

v 4 **The seal of God on their foreheads:** Those who have the **seal of God on their foreheads** (the 144,000 and perhaps those who are saved at the time) are protected, but *no-one else is*. This is an inescapable judgment of God. At least every unbeliever will suffer this 5-month horror.

Revelation 9:5-6 NKJV

And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. ⁶ In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.

v 5 **They were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months:** Their purpose and period is expressly governed by God, and the purpose of all this is to bring repentance (Revelation 9:20-21). God goes to amazing lengths to get people's attention.

v 6 **In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them...** Can you picture or imagine this time on earth, this period of 5 months where people are most likely incapacitated due to searing pain. Probably, aside from Christians being martyred, the obituaries or death notices in the newspaper will be empty. But for these unbelieving people who want to die, they don't realise that if they were able to kill themselves, it would only result in a much greater suffering, hell, and eventually eternity in the Lake of Fire.

Revelation 9:7–10 NKJV

The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. ⁸ They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. ⁹ And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. ¹⁰ They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months.

Why would God call them **locusts** if they are not literal locusts, but demonic spirits who swarm and destroy like locusts? Among other reasons, because locusts are agents of God's judgment. This is a consistent Old Testament figure in passages like Exodus 10:4–14, Deuteronomy 28:38, 1 Kings 8:37, 2 Chronicles 7:13, Joel 1:4, and Amos 4:9, where locusts were used as a judgement by God.

Also, notice the repetition of the word "like". **Like horses ... like gold ... like the faces of men ... like women's hair ... like lion's teeth:** The repetition of **like** indicates something other than a literal description is intended. The total impact of this picture is one of unnatural and awesome cruelty.

Revelation 9:11 NKJV

And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.

The angel of the bottomless pit: Since this is the king of these locusts, and since he has the name **Abaddon** or **Apollyon**, this is obviously Satan himself or another high-ranking leader of demons.

Both names mean "destroyer." No matter what your language or culture, the devil always does the same thing: He's an equal opportunity destroyer. He destroys everyone.

Revelation 9:12 NKJV

One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.

You might be wondering how it could get much worse than what it is now. The planet's ecology all but destroyed, all unbelievers extremely suicidal, depressed to the point where they no longer want to live. Wouldn't you just love to be a counsellor in those days... not.

However, there is an application for us here. Jon Courson says, "God desperately desires to see people who have rejected salvation wake up. Therefore, He will do whatever it takes in their families, financial situations, health, or marriages to get them on their knees where they can finally call out to Him. The question is, what kind of locusts will God have to allow in our lives to wake us from our lethargy, to wake us from our apathy? Whatever it takes, He loves us enough to let it happen."

Revelation 9:13–14a NKJV

¹³ Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, ¹⁴ saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels...

v **13 I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar:** In the tabernacle and temple of Israel, **the golden altar** was the altar of incense, which was a representation of the prayers of God’s people.

The four angels who are released are most likely very powerful and evil angels who were so evil and destructive that God had them bound until it was His will for them to do their thing

Revelation 9:14b NKJV

... who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”

Why would these 4 powerful demonic angels be bound at the Euphrates river? The Euphrates river was a landmark of ancient Babylon which has always been a centre of evil and will likely be the headquarters for the antichrist.

Revelation 9:15 NKJV

So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.

When the demons that reside in the Euphrates are loosed, they will kill one-third of humanity. Added to the number of those already killed, 50 percent of humanity will be dead, that’s about four billion people. How will this take place? Read on.

Revelation 9:16–19 NKJV

Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. ¹⁷ And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulphur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. ¹⁸ By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. ¹⁹ For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.

What *is* this **army of the horsemen**: Does this speak of a natural or a supernatural army? Is this an army of men or an army of demons?

If this describes a natural army of men, then the weird description may speak of modern, mechanised warfare. It may be John simply describes modern machinery in the only terms he can, and the result is this weird, grotesque, terrifying account.

Or, perhaps the safest interpretation is to see this as a literal 200 million strong demonic army invading earth. This is consistent with the demonic army like locusts described earlier in the chapter. Whatever the case, it will be terrifying and devastating—another 2 billion or so people dead.

Revelation 9:20 NKJV

But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.

But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent: In general, mankind showed no repentance, despite the presence of some pretty overwhelming signs and wonders. Instead, man continued with his demonic idol worship in a business as usual sort of way.

“Well,” you say, “this can’t apply to us today. We don’t have idols of brass, metal, or gold.” But have you looked in your garage lately? What about your bank balance, your nice house, your leisure time, or what you view on your computer when no-one is looking (except God of course). Remember that an idol is anything that we make more important than God.

Revelation 9:21 NKJV

And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Here God makes it clear what His purpose was for all these judgements — repentance.

This list of sins hits close to home for us in today's world. You don't have to look very far to see that our modern world is characterised by **murders, sorceries** (associated with the taking of drugs), **sexual immorality** and **thefts**. Why? Because our society has rejected God. Romans 1 tells that a world who rejects God becomes depraved and wicked.

So in summary, the first six trumpet judgements were:

1. One third of all trees destroyed, and all the grass and crops
2. One third of all the seas or oceans destroyed (turned to blood)
3. One third of all the fresh water sources destroyed or poisoned
4. One third of all the heavens dimmed/stop shining (sun, moon and stars)
5. The Locusts from the Bottomless Pit that cause torment for 5 months
6. The four angels from the Euphrates river and their demonic army of 200,000,000 that kill 1/3 of the remaining people on the earth.

However, I believe that the most important application we can get is that God promises to hear our prayers and we see Him answering our prayers here. As a reminder, what kind of prayer is effective prayer:

1. Specific prayers (1 John 5:14-15)
2. Persistent prayers (Luke 18:1-8)
3. Prayers that are according to God's will, especially those rooted in Scripture - (John 14:13-14)
4. Prayers that are offered in Faith (James 1:6-8)

Let's praise God that we are counted worthy to escape all these things, the Tribulation, and stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:36). Remember that to be worthy means that we are born again, that we are in Christ, that we have repented and have put our faith and trust in Him for the forgiveness of our sins, understanding that Jesus' death on the cross was the payment for all our sins.