

Dr. David Mathewson, Revelation, Session 14, Revelation 7-8, Trumpets Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathewson, Revelation, Session 14, Revelation 7-8, Trumpets, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Dave Mathewson's lecture analyzes Revelation chapters 8 and 9, focusing on the seven trumpets and their connection to Exodus imagery. He argues that John uses the plagues of Egypt as a symbolic framework to depict God's judgment on the Roman Empire's idolatry. Mathewson explores the symbolism of each trumpet plague, suggesting interpretations that emphasize spiritual rather than literal fulfillment. The lecture also examines the "woes" of chapters 8 and 9, particularly the locusts and horsemen, interpreting them as representing demonic forces attacking those who remain unrepentant. He cautions against interpreting the imagery literally, emphasizing the symbolic nature of John's apocalyptic vision.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 14 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Revelation).



**Mathewson_Revela
tion_Session14.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpts on Revelation chapters 8 and 9:

Briefing Document: Revelation Chapters 8 & 9 - The Seven Trumpets and Exodus Imagery

Introduction

This briefing document summarizes Dr. Dave Mathewson's lecture on Revelation chapters 8 and 9, focusing on the seven trumpet judgments and their connection to Exodus imagery. Mathewson argues that John utilizes the Exodus motif, drawing from the original Exodus story and Isaiah's use of it to depict a "new Exodus" where Christ redeems his people from bondage. He emphasizes that these plagues are primarily symbolic and intended to interpret the nature of God's judgment, particularly on idolatry.

Key Themes and Ideas

- **Exodus Motif and "New Exodus":**
- John draws heavily on the Exodus story, not just the original in Exodus but also Isaiah's use of the Exodus as a model for future deliverance (Isaiah 40-66). This framework emphasizes a new exodus from bondage to sin, evil, and the oppressive Roman Empire, led by Christ.
- "John may then himself go back to the original Exodus from the book of Exodus and draw on some of the historical Exodus features now to narrate this new Exodus that Christ has inaugurated in creating a people, redeeming a people from bondage and slavery to Rome and to sin and evil, and now creating a kingdom of priests."
- God's judgment on Egypt in the Exodus serves as a model for his judgment on a wicked empire (Rome).
- "As he did in the days of Exodus, God is, once again, pouring out his plagues and his judgment on a godless, wicked empire. So in the same way God judges Egypt, God judged Egypt for its oppression and wickedness and evil, and now God is doing that again in a new Exodus of his people."

- **Symbolic Interpretation:**

- The trumpet plagues are primarily symbolic, not literal, and are intended to convey the *nature* and *meaning* of God's judgment rather than providing a precise description of future events.
- The use of Old Testament and apocalyptic imagery means the reader should focus on the theological significance rather than the literal.
- "Again, I want to emphasize that it is more important than just figuring out the details of exactly what these are and exactly what they will look like; instead, it is recognizing that the significance is these interpret the nature and the meaning of God's judgment by appealing to the Exodus."

- **Judgment on Idolatry:**

- The plagues are not just a punishment of wickedness but also an attack on idolatry, mirroring how the Exodus plagues were aimed at the gods of Egypt.
- The trumpets may be directed at the gods of Rome and the emperor worship, exposing the futility of idolatrous systems and their emptiness.
- "And many have demonstrated, I think, that behind most of the plagues lied an attack on certain gods that were worshiped by the Egyptians. In the same way, I wonder if the trumpet plagues here modeled on the plagues of Egypt are not also aimed at the idolatry resident in the Roman gods and in things like emperor worship."
- The initial four trumpets, taken as a whole, demonstrate the complete futility of idolatry as judgment progresses from the land, to the waters, and then to the heavens, culminating in spiritual darkness.

- **Limited Judgment:**

- The frequent use of "one-third" signifies that these judgments are *limited* and *preliminary*, acting as precursors and warnings of a more severe final judgment.
- "The indication here of only one-third, which is a limitation, may suggest God's mercy, but more primarily, it suggests that these are only preliminary judgments. These are only anticipatory of the greater judgment that is to follow."
- This limited judgment also serves as an anticipation of the ultimate darkness described in Revelation 19 and 20 for the unrepentant.

- The judgments are meant for both the wicked empire and the churches that have compromised their witness.
- “And I would emphasize, like the seals as well, that we should probably read this in light of this not only being God's judgment on Rome but also God's judgment on the churches who refuse to repent.”
- **The First Four Trumpets (Chapter 8):**
- **Trumpet 1:** Hail and fire mixed with blood – Symbolic, not literal. A plague poured out on the entire earth but affects only one-third. It may indicate a severe famine and a limited judgment.
- **Trumpet 2:** A burning mountain thrown into the sea – The burning implies judgment; the mountain symbolizes a kingdom (likely Rome). The sea turns to blood, killing sea creatures and destroying ships, which may be a judgment on Roman commerce.
- **Trumpet 3:** A burning star falls from the sky and affects the water – The star may represent an evil angel, making water bitter, poisonous, and undrinkable, reminiscent of the Exodus plagues.
- **Trumpet 4:** The constellations in the sky are affected, leading to darkness – The darkening of the heavens is not total (limited to one-third), reflecting the Exodus plague of darkness. This can symbolize the spiritual darkness that idolatry brings.
- Taken together the first four may be meant to demonstrate the futility of idolatry.
- **The Final Three Trumpets (Chapter 9 - "Woes"):**
- The final three trumpets are preceded by three "woes" to signal that the coming judgments will be severe.
- These are expanded on greatly, suggesting their importance.
- **Trumpet 5/Woe 1:** Locusts emerging from the abyss, a demonic plague. They torment people who do not have God's seal and are led by Abaddon/Apollon (the destroyer).
- The locusts do not harm vegetation, but they harm humanity, tormenting them so greatly that they long for death.
- These are not literal locusts but symbolic of demonic beings, evoking terror and horror.

- The five month lifespan of a locust is symbolic.
- **Trumpet 6/Woe 2:** Four angels bound at the Euphrates are released. This unleashes a massive army of mounted troops, killing a third of humanity.
- The Euphrates River is symbolic of an invasion from the north, and, for the Roman world, the direction from where the Parthians would attack.
- The four angels may be the same four angels holding back the winds of judgment in chapter 7.
- The imagery depicts a supernatural and destructive plague.
- The two groups should be seen as similar or the same, not separate features.
- **Rejection of Modern Interpretations:**
 - Interpretations that see the locusts and horses as modern weapons (helicopters, nuclear war) are rejected due to anachronism. John's imagery must be understandable by his first-century audience, who lacked such technology.
 - The language is primarily symbolic and draws on Old Testament and apocalyptic traditions.
 - However, the fears evoked by modern-day warfare can help us to relate to the feelings of fear and destruction that were evoked by John's imagery for his readers.
 - "The fear of a possible world war that involves the potential for nuclear destruction. Those kinds of things could function for us in the same way that the images do here."

Conclusion

Dr. Mathewson's lecture emphasizes the importance of understanding Revelation chapters 8 and 9 within the framework of the Exodus narrative. The trumpet plagues are not literal descriptions of future events but are symbolic judgments meant to expose the futility of idolatry and the nature of God's response to sin. The judgments are both a warning to a wicked empire and to compromising churches and, ultimately, point toward a final and greater judgment. The rich symbolism, drawing from the Old Testament, and the rejection of anachronistic interpretations are all key to understanding this complex section of Revelation.

4. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 14, Revelation 7-8, Trumpets

Revelation: The Seven Trumpets and Exodus Imagery Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the main motif that John draws upon in Revelation, and how does he use it?
2. According to the lecture, what is the primary significance of the plague imagery used in Revelation 8 and 9?
3. How do the first four trumpet judgments in Revelation 8 build upon one another, and what might they represent collectively?
4. How does the limitation of "one-third" in the first four trumpet judgments affect the understanding of these plagues?
5. In Revelation 9, what emerges from the abyss when it is opened? What is their unique characteristic?
6. How does the lecturer interpret the locusts of Revelation 9, and what is their purpose?
7. What does the lecturer suggest about the five-month duration of the locusts' torment in Revelation 9?
8. What is the significance of the names Abaddon and Apollon given to the leader of the locusts in Revelation 9?
9. In Revelation 9, what is released when the sixth angel blows the trumpet? What is their purpose?
10. How does the Euphrates River function symbolically in the context of the sixth trumpet judgment in Revelation 9?

Quiz Answer Key

1. John draws on the Exodus motif, utilizing the original Exodus story and Isaiah's use of a second Exodus. He uses it to depict God's deliverance of his people from bondage and judgment on a wicked empire, paralleling the plagues on Egypt.

2. The primary significance of the plague imagery is not just in their literal details but in interpreting the nature and meaning of God's judgment by appealing to the Exodus. They serve as a symbolic representation of God's power over evil.
3. The first four trumpets progress from affecting the land, then the water, and finally the heavens, representing a comprehensive judgment on the world. Collectively, they may demonstrate the futility of idolatry and the spiritual darkness it causes.
4. The limitation of "one-third" suggests that these are not the final judgments but rather preliminary and anticipatory of greater judgment to come. It highlights that God's judgment is not total at this time.
5. When the abyss is opened, smoke rises, and out of the smoke come locusts with terrifying features, combining human, animal, and insect characteristics. They have the unique power to harm only those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.
6. The lecturer interprets the locusts as symbolic of demonic beings, emerging from the abyss, a place of evil and chaos. Their purpose is to torment and bring despair to those who do not belong to God's people, further highlighting the darkness of idolatry.
7. The lecturer suggests that five months is likely symbolic, reflecting the typical lifespan of a locust. Thus it indicates a limited period of activity and not a literal timeframe.
8. The names Abaddon (Hebrew) and Apollon (Greek), both meaning "destroyer," emphasize the destructive nature and role of the locust leader. They highlight that behind idolatry lies demonic, destructive forces.
9. When the sixth angel blows the trumpet, four angels bound at the Euphrates River are released, resulting in a multitude of horses and riders who are meant to cause destruction. These are meant to symbolize invading armies.
10. The Euphrates River functions symbolically as a reference to both Old Testament expectations of invasion and the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire. It evokes fear and the expectation of an invading army, reminding readers of the potential for chaos and destruction.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer the following essay questions in a well-organized, analytical essay.

1. Analyze the ways in which the lecturer connects the imagery of the seven trumpets in Revelation 8 and 9 to the Exodus narrative. Discuss the significance of using this imagery in the context of the Book of Revelation.
2. Compare and contrast the first four trumpets in Revelation 8 with the last two trumpets in Revelation 9. How do these two groups of judgments differ in their nature, scope, and purpose according to the lecturer?
3. Discuss the lecturer's interpretation of the locusts in Revelation 9. What textual clues and background information does he use to support his claim? Consider how these symbols relate to the broader themes of the Book of Revelation.
4. Explore the symbolic significance of the Euphrates River in the context of Revelation 9. How does the lecturer explain the historical, geographical, and prophetic implications of this river? What does it suggest about the nature of the judgment described in this passage?
5. How does the lecturer address the question of literal vs. symbolic interpretation of the trumpets in Revelation 8 and 9? What principles of interpretation does he emphasize, and how does he suggest readers understand the significance of these passages?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Exodus Motif:** A recurring theme or pattern drawn from the biblical story of the Exodus, where God delivers the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.
- **Apocalypse:** A literary genre characterized by symbolic language, visions, and revelations about the end times and God's final judgment.
- **Idolatry:** The worship of idols or anything other than the true God; it is seen as a major sin and offense to God.
- **Abyss:** In apocalyptic literature, a deep, bottomless pit or chasm that is often associated with evil, demonic beings, and the underworld.
- **Wormwood:** A bitter, poisonous plant used symbolically in Revelation to represent the bitter and harmful effects of judgment.
- **Parthian Empire:** An ancient kingdom that was one of Rome's fiercest enemies, located to the east of the Roman Empire.
- **Euphrates River:** A major river in the Middle East, historically significant in biblical narratives and as a border in the Roman Empire, often associated with invasions from the East.
- **Demonic Beings:** Supernatural entities that are evil and opposed to God, often associated with chaos, destruction, and temptation.
- **Symbolic Language:** The use of objects, actions, or images to represent deeper meanings or ideas rather than their literal forms.
- **Harbinger:** Something that foreshadows or signals a future event, like the judgments from the trumpets in Revelation as a warning of a greater judgment.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, Revelation, Session 1, Revelation 7-8. Trumpets, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: The Seven Trumpets and Exodus Imagery in Revelation 8-9

- **What is the primary significance of the Exodus motif in Revelation 8-9?**
- The Exodus motif in Revelation 8-9 is crucial for understanding the nature of God's judgment. Just as God judged Egypt with plagues during the first Exodus, He is now judging a wicked and idolatrous empire, symbolized by Rome, with similar plagues. This "new Exodus" aims at the redemption of God's people from bondage to sin and evil and the establishment of a kingdom of priests, mirroring the original Exodus narrative. It also draws on the prophetic use of Exodus imagery in Isaiah, where a "second Exodus" is promised. This framework emphasizes that the trumpet judgments are not just random events, but part of God's ongoing plan of deliverance and judgment.
- **How should we understand the plagues of the seven trumpets?**
- The plagues of the seven trumpets should be understood primarily symbolically rather than literally. John uses imagery drawn from the Old Testament, particularly the Exodus plagues, to depict God's judgment. The focus is not on identifying specific physical events, but on understanding the *meaning* of these judgments, which is to reveal God's opposition to idolatry and evil. They are not merely physical calamities but also spiritual and moral judgments, targeting the idolatry of the Roman Empire. The trumpets are a progression, starting with land, moving to the sea, then the waters, and finally affecting the heavens, illustrating the all-encompassing nature of God's judgment.
- **What do the first four trumpets collectively represent?**
- The first four trumpets (hail and fire mixed with blood; a burning mountain thrown into the sea; a burning star falling into the waters; and the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars) represent a progression in God's judgment. They are aimed at the futility of idolatry and reliance on the world's resources, particularly those of the Roman Empire. The fact that each plague only affects a third of its target (earth, sea, water, sky) indicates a limited, preliminary judgment meant to serve as a warning of the final separation from God. They depict the increasing spiritual darkness and futility of the idolatrous path. These preliminary judgments serve as a warning of a future greater judgment.

- **What is the significance of the "woes" that preface the last three trumpets?**
- The "woes" that precede the final three trumpets are a pronouncement of intense judgment. They signal that the judgments to come will be of an especially severe and horrific nature. These woes, drawn from prophetic literature, serve as a kind of "wake up call" to pay attention to the more dreadful plagues that are about to be described and the need to recognize the gravity of the coming judgments. They indicate a shift in tone and intensity within the sequence of trumpet judgments.
- **Who or what are the locusts described in the fifth trumpet, and what is their purpose?**
- The locusts described in the fifth trumpet are not literal insects but rather symbolize demonic beings emerging from the abyss. Their purpose is not to destroy vegetation but to torment those who do not have the seal of God, indicating a spiritual attack. They are described with bizarre and frightening imagery combining insect, animal, and human features to evoke terror and illustrate the demonic nature of the forces behind the idolatrous systems that the churches and world were struggling with. They inflict a kind of spiritual and mental anguish that causes people to seek death as an escape, highlighting the consequences of participating in idolatry.
- **What is the meaning of Abaddon/Apollyon, the leader of the locusts?**
- Abaddon (Hebrew) and Apollyon (Greek) both translate to "destroyer" or "destruction," a fitting title for the leader of the locusts emerging from the abyss. The name underscores the destructive nature of the demonic forces at play. Abaddon/Apollyon may allude to the angel of death from the Exodus plagues or a figure from apocalyptic literature associated with the underworld. The leader is symbolic of the destructive nature and origins of the demonic forces behind the pagan religions.

- **What do the four angels and the army from the Euphrates River in the sixth trumpet represent?**
- The four angels bound at the Euphrates River, likely the same ones holding back the four winds in Chapter 7, represent the release of God's judgment. The Euphrates River is symbolic, not literal. It evokes both Old Testament expectations of invasion and the historical reality of the Roman Empire's eastern boundary, beyond which resided the Parthians, Rome's fierce enemies. The army that emerges symbolizes an overwhelming force of destruction. It could be seen as the culmination of the previous judgments but may also represent the spiritual forces that God uses to bring about his judgments and the forces of opposition that come to try to harm God's people. This combination emphasizes that these judgments are not random occurrences, but strategically enacted under God's direction.
- **How should we interpret the descriptions of these monstrous figures and events in light of the literary context of Revelation?**
- The monstrous figures and events described in Revelation 8 and 9 should be interpreted symbolically, within the apocalyptic genre of the book, with its use of exaggeration and fantastical imagery to communicate theological truth. These are not literal historical predictions about future technology or military events. Instead, John utilizes existing Old Testament, Jewish apocalyptic, and Greco-Roman imagery, blowing them up and creating a larger-than-life scenario to evoke terror, fear, and awareness of the seriousness of God's judgment on idolatry and injustice. These images are meant to have a powerful emotional impact, urging readers to reflect on the spiritual realities of evil and the consequences of disobedience, and ultimately, to call the readers to repentance.