

Revelation as Trilogy
The Two Powers
Chapter 9: Chaos Expands – Part 2

Introduction: Chapter eight began the second part of the Revelation trilogy, called The Two Powers. At the heart of The Two Powers is a confrontation between the forces aligned with the Holy Trinity and the forces aligned with the Unholy Trinity; between the forces of flourishing and the forces of destruction. Chapter nine offers us a glimpse of the ever-increasing scale of chaos that God is allowing to be poured out upon the earth. This happens because God is removing God's protective power which has kept the primordial chaos at bay. In Chapters eight and nine this unleashing is illustrated through a vision of another set of seven; the seven trumpets. With each successive trumpet blast, we witness an ever-increasing level of destruction; in chapter eight of the earth, and in chapter nine destruction of humanity. Finally note the literary connections with the plagues from Exodus and the individual incidents of chaos in this chapter.

The Story: In the previous chapter we watched as the first four trumpets unleashed chaos upon the earth, destroying a third of the grass, trees, waters, sea animals and other natural things upon which humans depend for their lives. The chaos now turns towards human beings.

The fifth trumpet allows a star to fall from heaven with the power to open a shaft into the underworld. The star represents an anti-God power, perhaps Satan, perhaps not. The key which is given is one provided by God, because God alone holds the keys to life and death. This opening unleashes locusts whose task it is to attack those who are not part of the Fellowship of the King. The locusts are described in great detail but suffice it to say that they are unnatural. This unnaturalness shows them to be a perversion of God's good creation. Evil is the perversion of God's good creation and God's desires for the good of humanity. Note that these scorpions only torture and do not kill, causing people to long for death.

The sixth trumpet unleashes the four angels of destruction and their cavalry. It is not clear if these angels are good or evil, yet those they lead are once again perversions. The horses have heads like lions who emit sulfur and flame and their tails are like serpents who inflict harm. Their task is to kill a third of humanity, just as had previously been done to a third of the earth.

In the final portion of this chapter we discover that God's intention in unleashing this chaos on the earth is to have people repent of their worship of demons, idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see, hear or walk and of their murders, sorceries, fornications and thefts. Those first reading these words would be drawn back into the Old Testament once again. The idols references come directly out of the Book of Daniel, where the king demands that Daniel and his friends worship such an idol. The murders, sorceries, fornication and thefts are direct violations of various aspects of the Torah.

Reflection: On the surface this chapter is no more than a description of the ever growing chaos that is coming upon humanity when God allows it to do so, much like in the story of Noah when the waters of chaos were unleashed on the earth. Yet there are two important themes which need to be noted. The first them is that evil disguises itself as something good (locusts/horse) yet is actually a perversion of the good. This disguising of evil as good is central to The Two Powers. The second theme is that God desires repentance and the restoration of the good. God never desires death, but life. What we are to realize is that even during chaos, God desires the restoration of order and the flourishing of life.

Questions:

1. Where have you seen evil masquerading as good in order to bring death and not life?
2. Why do you suppose that God would allow chaos to be unleashed on the world?
3. What other interpretations of this chapter have you read/heard?