A TALE OF TWO KINGDOMS

WEEK 10

REVELATION 8-9

REV. TONY SCIALABBA

PRAYER PROMPTS:

- Pray for believers facing persecution to remain faithful to Jesus.
- Pray for God's kingdom to come: for justice, salvation, and the defeat of evil.
- Ask God to expose anything you are trusting more than Him.
- Pray for hearts willing to repent and for courage to keep obeying Jesus.
- Pray for those who have not trusted Christ to turn to Him while there is time.

Our Prayers Matter - Revelation 8:1-5

Before the winds of judgment blow, God marks His own. The seal on the forehead isn't a literal brand; it shows who a person belongs to. And the judgments of God will expose the reality of every heart.

- **The seventh seal (vv. 1–2):** Heaven falls silent in anticipation of God's judgment. Seven angels receive seven trumpets.
- **The prayers of the saints (vv. 3–4):** Incense rises with the prayers of God's people. The cries for justice from Revelation 5–6 have not been forgotten.
- **The fire from the altar (v. 5):** God hears His people and acts according to His purposes. Prayer does not control God; He chooses to work through it.

Our response — PRAY: Ask for more than personal comfort: "Your kingdom come, your will be done" (Matthew 6:10).

QUESTION TO CONSIDER:

DO MY PRAYERS REACH BEYOND MY OWN NEEDS TO GOD'S PURPOSES IN THE WORLD?

Our God Reigns - Revelation 8:6-9:19

God reigns over creation (8:6–13)

- Four trumpets affect the land, sea, fresh water, and heavenly lights. Their imagery echoes the plagues of Exodus.
- The repeated “one-third” emphasizes the severity of the judgments and their limits; these are not the final end.

Key truth: Creation can sustain our lives, but it cannot save us. Only the Creator can.

God reigns over evil (9:1–12)

- The terrifying locust-like beings rise from the abyss and torment people. Their imagery points to the destructive reality of demonic evil.
- The key is given; power is granted; the targets and duration are restricted. Evil is real, but it has never escaped God’s authority.
- Those with God’s seal belong to Him. This does not promise freedom from suffering; it points to the security of His people in Christ.

Key truth: We might not be safe, but we are secure.

God reigns over judgment (9:13–19)

- A command comes from the altar before God. Four bound angels are released at the appointed hour, day, month, and year.
- The devastating sixth trumpet is not outside God’s knowledge or timing. God has not been caught by surprise.

Our response — PERSEVERE: Continue obeying Jesus, return to His Word, and stay close to believers who will remind you what is true.
Question to consider: Where do I need to trust that Jesus still reigns, even when following Him is costly?

QUESTION TO CONSIDER:

WHERE DO I NEED TO TRUST THAT JESUS STILL REIGNS, EVEN WHEN FOLLOWING HIM IS COSTLY?

Our Idols Cannot Save - Revelation 9:20-21

The refusal to repent: Even after terrible warnings, survivors continue worshiping powerless idols and holding on to sin.
The danger for us: An idol is anything we trust for the security, satisfaction, or hope that only God can give—money, success, comfort, approval, or control.
The invitation to repent: Turn from sin and false saviors, and return to the Lord for mercy (Isaiah 55:6–7; Joel 2:12–13).
Our response — REPENT: Confess what you have trusted above God; ask for help to obey; trust Jesus, who died and rose again to forgive and save.

QUESTION TO CONSIDER:

WHAT AM I HOLDING ON TO THAT GOD IS CALLING ME TO SURRENDER?

The Lamb Is Our Hope

Polycarp would not abandon Christ, even when threatened with death (Revelation 2:10). We, too, can remain faithful—not because of our strength, but because Jesus holds His people.

Pray according to His will. Persevere because He holds you. Repent and turn to Him.

A TALE OF TWO KINGDOMS

WEEK 10 - SYMBOLISM & TERMS

STUDY REFERENCE • REVELATION 8–9

How to Read the Judgments

These are apocalyptic visions, filled with Old Testament imagery. Some scenes portray the created world being shaken; others explicitly evoke demonic torment. Christians differ on how literally each plague will unfold. The point is not to identify modern weapons or predict a mechanism, but to see God's rule, the limits He sets, and His summons to repentance.

Revelation 8: The Seventh Seal and First Four Trumpets

Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls: These judgment cycles may be understood as overlapping views of the period before Christ's return, each revealing more of the same conflict and moving toward final judgment. This is called recapitulation; the cycles need not form one continuous timeline.

Seventh Seal / Silence (v. 1): Heaven's silence conveys the weight of approaching judgment. The "half an hour" need not be treated as a literal countdown.

Seven Trumpets (vv. 2, 6): Trumpets could announce God's presence, summon His people, and warn of judgment (Joshua 6). The seventh trumpet appears in Revelation 11:15.

Golden Altar, Censer, and Incense (vv. 3–5): Temple imagery portrays the prayers of the saints rising before God (compare Revelation 5:8).

Fire Thrown to Earth (v. 5): Fire from the altar depicts judgment coming upon the earth. John links God's coming action with the prayers of His people.

Exodus Plague Imagery (vv. 7–12): Hail, blood, darkness, and later locusts recall the plagues against Egypt (Exodus 7–10). The Creator confronts human rebellion and false gods.

Burning Mountain in the Sea (vv. 8–9): A vision of immense destruction affecting the sea, living creatures, and ships. It may also echo prophetic imagery of a judged kingdom (Jeremiah 51:25).

Wormwood (vv. 10–11): Wormwood is associated with bitterness; here it portrays polluted, deadly freshwater (compare Jeremiah 9:15).

Darkened Sun, Moon, and Stars (v. 12): The heavenly lights fail to give their normal light. Cosmic darkness is a familiar prophetic image of divine judgment (Joel 2:10, 31).

One-Third (8:7–12; 9:15, 18): The repeated fraction underlines that the judgments are extensive but limited, not yet the complete and final end.

Eagle (v.13): An eagle flying overhead announces the approaching judgments. Its position high in the sky emphasizes that the warning is meant to be heard by all. The eagle serves as a herald of coming judgment rather than necessarily representing a particular person or nation.

Three Woes (v. 13): Three warnings announcing the increasing severity of the final three trumpets (the fifth, sixth, and seventh). They emphasize the seriousness of God's coming judgment.

Revelation 9: The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets and the Call to Repent

Fallen Star and Key (v. 1): The star behaves as a personal agent and is given a key. The authority to open the abyss is delegated, not independent.

Abyss / Bottomless Pit (vv. 1–2, 11): A place associated with demonic powers. Its opening shows evil permitted to act within limits, not an escape from God’s control.

Smoke from the Abyss (v. 2): Smoke darkening the sun and air expresses the terrifying darkness accompanying the release of destructive evil.

Locusts and Scorpions (vv. 3–5, 10): These do not behave like normal locusts: they torment people instead of eating plants. Their origin and mission suggest demonic affliction.

Locusts’ Crowns, Faces, Hair, Teeth, and Armor (vv. 7–9): A composite battle image: crowns, human faces, women’s hair, lions’ teeth, iron breastplates, and thundering wings communicate menace, force, and overwhelming power (compare Joel 2:4–5). It is not a straightforward zoological description.

Seal of God (v. 4): Those marked as belonging to God are protected from this particular torment. The seal signifies security in Christ, not freedom from all suffering (Revelation 7).

Five Months (vv. 5, 10): The period of torment has a set limit; evil cannot continue beyond what God permits.

WEEK 10 - SYMBOLISM & TERMS (CONTINUED)

Seeking Death but Not Finding It (v. 6): A stark picture of suffering so intense that people long for death. It emphasizes the torment's severity, not a general promise that death is impossible.

Abaddon / Apollyon (v. 11): Hebrew and Greek names associated with "destruction" and "destroyer" for the angel of the abyss. The text does not require identifying him as Satan.

Four Horns of the Golden Altar (v. 13): Recalls the altar before God's throne, linking the sixth trumpet back to the prayers and judgment of chapter 8. Altars in Israel's worship had horns at their corners.

Euphrates / Appointed Time (vv. 14–15): The Euphrates evoked the direction of hostile armies for ancient Israel. The angels' release occurs at an appointed time under God's authority.

Two Hundred Million Mounted Troops (v. 16): John hears an immense number ("twice ten thousand times ten thousand"). It communicates staggering scale; interpreters differ over whether the count is literal or symbolic.

Lion-Headed Horses / Serpent Tails (vv. 17–19): Grotesque imagery combines ferocity with deadly power. Both their mouths and their tails inflict harm; the vision is not necessarily a description of modern military hardware.

Fire, Smoke, and Sulfur (vv. 17–18): Images of deadly devastation, recalling the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24).

Idols That Cannot See or Hear (v. 20): Handmade gods are powerless to hear, act, or save (Psalm 115:4–8). Anything treated as our ultimate source of hope can become an idol.

Repentance (vv. 20–21): More than fearing consequences or feeling regret: turning from sin and false saviors to the living God for mercy (Isaiah 55:6–7).