

The ‘De-Creation’ of Creation in Revelation 8-9

The series of trumpets within Revelation 8-9 portray the systematic un-doing or destruction of the created order. The judgement of trumpets one through four target three aspects of creation: the earth, air, and water. Additionally, the pinnacle of creation—mankind—is the object of God’s wrath in the fifth and sixth trumpet.

Within the seven trumpets, the destruction is only partial; one-third of the various created things are affected. Throughout the three series of judgements (seals, trumpets, bowls), there is a progression where the seals impact a quarter of the earth, the trumpets a third, and the bowls are poured out on the whole earth. This is not to say that the judgement series are sequential in regards to the time when they occur; rather, these visions increase in their scope and intensity as a part of John’s literary tactic of ‘recapitulation,’ as the progressively parallel visions draw nearer to the final consummation and judgement.

The ‘de-creation’ of creation in these chapters underscores a critical perspective underlying Revelation, namely, a pessimism about this age and the world. From John’s point of view, the world is in such bad shape that it is beyond hope for reformation; nothing less than a complete destruction and a new beginning will solve the world’s problems. This, then, paves the way for the glorious future re-creation, and the climax of Revelation which is the New Creation (ch. 21-22).

This chart summarizes the parallels in creation/de-creation in Revelation 8-9 and Genesis 1-2:¹

Creation (Gen 1-2)	De-Creation (Rev 8-9)
<u>3rd Day</u> : plants and trees sprout on the earth (1:11-12)	<u>1st Trumpet</u> : 1/3 of earth and trees are burned (8:7)
<u>5th Day</u> : living creatures swarm in the sea (1:20-21)	<u>2nd Trumpet</u> : 1/3 of sea turns to blood; 1/3 of sea’s living creatures are destroyed (8:8-9)
A spring from the ground and a river from Eden water the garden (2:6,10)	<u>3rd Trumpet</u> : 1/3 of rivers and springs of water become wormwood (8:10-11)
<u>1st Day</u> : God separates light from darkness (1:3-5); <u>4th Day</u> : God makes sun, moon, and stars to rule day and night (1:14-16)	<u>4th Trumpet</u> : 1/3 of sun, moon, and stars are struck, affecting 1/3 of day and night (8:12)
<u>6th Day</u> : God creates mankind in his image and gives them dominion (1:26-27)	<u>5th & 6th Trumpet</u> : all unbelievers tormented; 1/3 of mankind killed (9:4-5,15)

¹ This chart is adapted from Brian J. Tabb, *All Things New: Revelation as Canonical Capstone*, NSBT (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2019): 150.