

Revelation 9

The Fifth Trumpet: The Abyss Opened (9:1-2)

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. 2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

This "star," by contrast, is given a key to open the bottomless pit (or abyss). This star, then, is a living being, probably an angelic messenger. The word "fall" here simply means he came down from heaven in a rapid descent.

Locusts that Torment (9:3-6)

And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

God used locusts as a terrible plague on Egypt (Exodus 10:4-6), but the locust plague here is much worse. It is also much worse than the 'locusts in Joel's day that darkened the sun, warning the Israelites to repent (Joel 2:10-14).'

These are not ordinary locusts. They come out of the abyss, the bottomless pit. And the description in verses 7-10 confirms that they are not like locusts as we know them. These are called locusts not because of their form, but because of their nature to devour and 'destroy.

They are given scorpion-like power to inflict pain. However, it goes beyond what can be inflicted by the ordinary scorpion, causing a misery serious enough for its victims to desire death.

These locust are released at this time to let people know that a holy God demands judgment on sin, including the sins of unbelief, rebellion against God, and rejection of the gospel.

Ordinary locusts would destroy grass and green plants and strip trees of their leaves. They would come in a cloud that would settle down on cultivated land and move through the fields eating all vegetation (see Exodus 10:15).

The fact that these locusts are specifically told not to destroy grass and green plants and strip trees of their leaves shows us even more clearly that these are different from any other locusts that have appeared on earth before. Their purpose is to injure human beings.

The Bible does not tell us who gave them their orders but the orders limit their activity. They are not to hurt those who have "the seal of God in their foreheads.

John has already identified those who have the seal of God in their forehead as the 144,000 of the 12 tribes of Israel (7:3). At this point in time, they are still on the earth, for here they are being protected from the torments of these demonic locusts.

Their sting is not arbitrary or senseless torture. It is rather another warning and another opportunity for people to repent and turn to God.

God always wants people to repent and receive forgiveness and salvation (2 Peter 3:9).

The Locusts Described (9:7-10)

7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. 8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. , 9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. 10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

These locusts really look like war horses arrayed and prepared for battle

On their head are something *like* gold crowns. They are not real crowns, and they are not real gold.

Their faces, quite unlike the faces of real locusts, have the appearance of human faces with insect bodies.

The teeth "as the teeth of lions" reminds us of the description in Joel 1:6 where lion-like teeth speak of destruction. These locusts may be capable of rending and destroying like a lion but they are not allowed to do so.

The King of the Locust: Abaddon/Apollyon (9:11)

And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew language is Abaddon, but in the Greek language his name Apollyon.

The angel that we read that was given the key verse one, was a messenger of God. This angel is on the enemy's side.

It seems more likely that the king over these locust is one of the principalities and powers that are under Satan. (See Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 2:15)

The Hebrew name for this locust king is Abaddon which is a place-name found in Job 26:6; 28:22; Psalm, 86:13; and Proverbs 15:11. All of these uses mean destruction, the place of destruction, the realm of the wicked dead. John deliberately uses the word to identify the angel that rules over these demon locusts: Apollyon, meaning "the destroyer".

Two More Woes to Come (9:12)

One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

John now goes in his vision to the end of the five months of torture by the demon locusts ("one woe is past"); they are gone. Their ultimate destination will be the lake of fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels (compare Matthew 25:41).

Two more woes are to come, and it is implied that they will be even worse. The 'second woe will be introduced by the sixth trumpet. The third woe will be introduced by the seventh trumpet, which will lead into the seven bowls of God's wrath. As we look ahead, it seems that the increase in the severity of the judgments matches the increase in the stubborn rebelliousness of mankind against God.

The Sixth Trumpet: Four Angels Loosed (9:13-14)

13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

At the time of the sixth trumpet the Euphrates seems to serve as the boundary of the Antichrist's kingdom. That is, these four angels-having been bound-are a different group from the four mentioned in Revelation 7: 1. Holy angels are never bound; therefore these four seem to be evil angels who are over demonic hosts. And so for one last time God uses the Euphrates River-having become a symbol of the spirit of conquest-as the origin of His end-time judgments.

A Third of Mankind Killed (9:15)

And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

While the demon locusts could only torture people, these angels are authorized to take life: one-third of what's left of the entire the human race.

When the command is given. These destroying angels are set free to bring this terrible judgment on a corrupt and rebellious world. Thus, they are being governed by God to accomplish His purpose. God is the One who is in control.

Demonic Armies as Agents of Judgment (9:16-19)

9:16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand, thousand: and I heard the number of them. 9:17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. 9:18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. 9:19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

When the four angels are released, John sees a mounted army suddenly spread out before him,'

stretching as far as he can see and he is unable to 'count them; But their number, is told him: "two hundred thousand, thousand", that is, two hundred million.

The emphasis of verse 19 is that these horses with heads like lions have power not only to kill, but to torture, hurt, and injure. Like the locusts, they have this latter power "in their tails." However, instead of their tails being like that of the scorpion, their tails are like that of the snake, having heads that can give poisonous bites.

No One Repents (9:20-21)

20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood; which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: 21 neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

There was opportunity for people to repent when the plagues came upon them. But the Bible is clear here that those who are left after this sixth trumpet, the second woe, remain defiant toward God-not one person repents.

"Men" (*anthropon*) means mankind. Thus, by the conclusion of this second woe, mankind is described as those who have been killed and those who remain alive but unrepentant.