

Chapter summary - *Now the boundary between the supernatural and natural universe is breached; locust-like, demonic beings are unleashed to torture humankind (9:1–12). The sixth trumpet unleashes four unspeakably evil powers, with 200 million minions [followers], who kill a third of humankind (vv. 13–19).*¹

*Evidently some of the angels who rebelled with Lucifer before the dawn of history were so malicious and murderous that God shut them up in the bottomless pit where they could not vent their fury upon the human race.*²

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4. The fifth and sixth trumpets soundings, (9:1-21)

1) The fifth trumpet sounds, (1-12) - "AN INVASION FROM HELL!"

(1) The duration and means of torment, (1-11)

INTERPRETATION:

Demonical Disasters

¹ **Then** (after the announcement of the worse judgments to come), **the fifth angel sounded: And** (when he did), **I** (the Apostle John), **saw a star** (an angelic being [probably Satan being cast out of heaven - cf., Isa. 14:12-15; Lu. 10:18]), **fallen from heaven to the earth. To him** (the star), **was** (divinely), **given the key** (or the power and authority),³ **to the bottomless pit**, (Hades, the present residence of the most vile demons [cf., Luke 8:31; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6-7] *Satan himself will be incarcerated here in Revelation 20:1, 3*).⁴

² **And he** (probably Satan), **opened the bottomless pit** (to release its inmates), **and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great** (a mammoth), **furnace**, (as the demons were turned loose). **So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit**, (symbolizing the pollution of Hades upon the earth).

COMMENTARY:

¹ Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, Logos Library System.

² Benson, *Revelation: The Grand Finale of History*, p. 43

³ Just as God divinely gave Satan certain powers and restrictions in Job 1:12; 2:6, He does the same now here in Revelation 9.

⁴ "The Abyss" (9:1). The abyssos is a Gk. term for the underworld, the place of the dead. The N.T. pictures the Abyss as a prison, smoldering with subterranean fires, where demons are held captive (cf. Luke 8:31; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). John witnesses the opening of the Abyss and the release of hordes of demons to torment the lost. Those whom God has sealed, however, are safe from them (cf. 7:3). The size of the horde of demons given in 9:16 has led some to argue the number is symbolic. (Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, Logos Library System)

- ³ **Then out of the smoke locusts** (like creatures [like the eighth plague in Egypt {Ex. 10:12-20}]),⁵ **came upon the earth. And to them was given** (divinely delegated), **power, as the scorpions of the earth have power**, (to inflict excruciatingly painful and incapacitating wounds).⁶
- ⁴ **They were commanded** (divinely ordered though), **not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal** (of the ownership), **of God on their foreheads**.⁷
- ⁵ **And they were** (also), **not given authority** (divine permission), **to kill them** (the unrepentant), **but** (only), **to torment** (to torture), **them** (and only to do that), **for five months**, (the natural life span of a locust). **Their** (these demonic locust-like creatures), **torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man**, (it caused unbelievable and indescribable agony).
- ⁶ **In those days** (those five months), **men** (i.e., unbelievers), **will seek** (desire vehemently) **death and will not find it** (they will not be able to make their desire a reality); **they will desire to die, and death will flee** (escape), **from them**, (from their every attempt).
- ⁷ **The shape of the locusts** (demons), **was like horses prepared for battle**, (with their armor [Joel 2:4]) . **On their heads were** (victors, conquerors), **crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of** (human), **men**.
- ⁸ **They had** (long), **hair like women's hair, and their teeth were** (canine and fierce), **like lions' teeth**.
- ⁹ **And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron** (like a suit of armor), **and the sound of their wings was** (clattering and pounding), **like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle**.
- ¹⁰ **They had** (snapping), **tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails** (like the scorpions also). **Their** (these horrible and terrifying demons), **power** (or mission), **was to hurt** (torture unbelieving), **men five months**.

⁵ Locusts symbolizes their uncontrollable numbers and massive destructive capabilities. (MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11*, p. 260)

⁶ Picture what the world would be like if we were to open the doors of all the penitentiaries of earth and set free the world's most vicious and violent criminals, giving them full reign to practice their infamies upon mankind. Something worse than that lies in store for the world. Satan, cast out of heaven, is now permitted to summon to his aid the most diabolical fiends in the abyss to act as his agents... (*Exploring Revelation*, rev ed. [Chicago: Moody 1987; reprint, Neptune, N. J.: Loizeaux, 1991], 125) (MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11*, p. 258)

⁷ This obviously excludes the 144,000 of Revelation 7, and the protection may extend as far as this plague is concerned to all who know the Lord in that day. According to II Timothy 2:19, "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." In a similar way, believers in the present age are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise according to Ephesians 1:13-14. It would seem improbable that any true believer in that day would be subject to the torment of the locusts; the torment is rather a judgment upon Christ-rejecting men. (Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 161.)

¹¹ **And they** (these demon creatures), **had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit** (the star who was granted the power to set them free, Satan), **whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon** (Destruction), **but in Greek he has the name Apollyon**, (destroyer, *"The thief [who] does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy..."* [John 10:10]).

(2) The conclusion and departure of the torment, (12)

INTERPRETATION:

¹² **One woe** (i.e., of the three judgments and devastations), **is past**, (over). **Behold** (however), **still two more woes are coming after** (following), **these things**, (on the heels of the diabolical disasters).

F APPLICATION:

It is unnecessary to try to "spiritualize" these symbols, or to interpret them in light of modern means of warfare. John is heaping image upon image to force us to feel the horror of this judgment.⁸

2) The sixth trumpet sounds, (13-21) - "LOOK OUT! ANGELS ON THE RAMPAGE!"

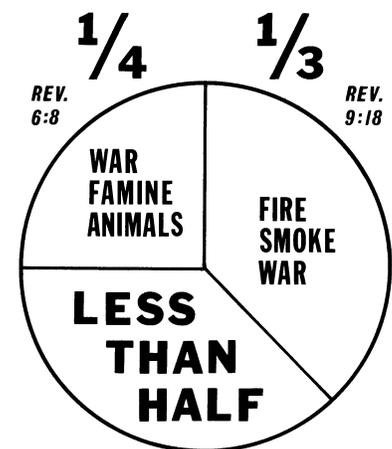
(1) The death toll, (13-15)

INTERPRETATION:

¹³ **Then** (after the passing of the fifth trumpet woe of the demonic locusts), **the sixth angel sounded: And** (when he did), **I heard a** (solitary), **voice from the four horns of the golden altar** (of incense [Rev. 8:3-5]), **which is before God** (as He sits on His throne),

¹⁴ **saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet** (that announced the second woe), **"Release** (set free), **the four** (fallen), **angels who are** (east of the promised land), **bound** (incarcerated), **at the great river Euphrates.**"⁹

¹⁵ **So the four** (demonic), **angels, who had been prepared** (i.e., divinely held in preparation), **for the hour and day and month and year** (for this exact, divinely appointed moment in history), **were released to** (not torment, but), **kill a third of** (the population of), **mankind.**¹⁰



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⁸ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Logos Library System.

⁹ Attention has been abundantly called by commentators to the region of the Euphrates as that place where human sin began and also Satan's empire over man; where the first murder was committed; where the first war confederacy was made (Genesis 14) ; and back of this it is where Nimrod began to be "a mighty one in the earth," and where the vast system of Babylonian idolatry, with its trinity of evil-"father, mother and son" originated, to deceive the whole world by the Satanic fable of "the queen of heaven." Here, moreover, as we saw in Zechariah 5, iniquity is to have its last stage on earth (see Revelation 18 also). (Newell, *The Book of the Revelation*, p. 133)

¹⁰ God limits the extent of the demons carnage not only numerically, but by people groups as well. The demons would no doubt like to go beyond God's limitations and would certainly wipe out every Jew if it was possible in order to prevent Christ's second coming!

¹¹ Pie Chart – (Paul Lee Tan, *A Pictorial Guide to Bible Prophecy*, TX: Bible Communications, 1991, p. 296)

 **INTERPRETATION:**

- ¹⁶ **Now** (to accomplish this, they assemble a demonic army), **the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them**, (maybe each of the four leading demons, taking a segment of the army)¹²
- ¹⁷ **And thus I saw the horses in the vision:** (and), **those** (demons), **who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue** (a dull or smoky blue, almost black), **and sulfur yellow** (similar to the fire, smoke and brimstone of hell, [cf. 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8; e.g., Gen. 19:24-28]); **and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions** (frightening and fierce); **and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone**, (which would consume, asphyxiate and/or gas its victim).
- ¹⁸ **By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed** (one out of every three)—**by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their** (the horses), **mouths**.
- ¹⁹ **For their power** (to harm), **is in their mouth and in their tails; for** (the reason being), **their tails are like serpents** (deadly snakes), **having heads; and with them** (like any deadly snake), **they do harm**.

F **APPLICATION:**

The description of these hellish creatures and their afflictions is a good description of the afflictions of those who are in, our bound for hell. The only thing is, in hell they cannot die! This kind of environment and judgment was not meant for man. It was only meant for fallen angels, (Mat. 5:41). Even when man fell to sin and became worthy of this kind of judgment, God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ to redeem us back to God and to deliver us from this eternal horror, (Jn. 3:16-18). Man has a choice where he will spend eternity, but the fallen angels do not.

 **INTERPRETATION:**

- ²⁰ **But** (even as horrific a display of God's anger against sin as this second woe was), **the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent** (turn away from their sin), **of the works of their hands** (idols),¹³ **that they should not worship** (reverence and honor), **demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor**

¹² Some believe that this is a "human army" (namely China), and try to see similarities between modern war machines and the depiction's of this passage. I take the literal translation here.

¹³ An idol is anything that keeps you from regularly worshiping God (individually and corporately), as well as living a habitual life of godliness.

hear nor walk (but worship the Most High God [cp., Dan. 5:3]).¹⁴
²¹ **And** (because of this), **they did not repent of their murders** (concerning tribulation believers or their personal rivals), **or their sorceries** (e.g., drugs, seances, black magic, casting spells, contacting mediums, etc.), **or their sexual immorality** (e.g., premarital sex, adultery, rape, homosexuality and other sexual sins), **or their thefts**, (stealing one another's necessities of life. It's everyone for themselves!)

F APPLICATION:

A believer's life should in no way, shape, manner, or form, resemble that of these unrepentant unbelievers in the most heinous of days. Days in which the Holy Spirit's restraint upon the depravity of man is removed (2 Thess. 2:5-12), and the wickedness of man runs free and wild. Idolatry and demonic worship is the epitome of evil. If there is anything that keeps you from consistently worshiping God or living for him drop it and run from it just as fast as you can.

Indications That the Locusts Are Demons

1. Literal locusts do not originate from the abyss (9:1-2).
2. Literal locusts do not have a king which originates from the abyss (9:11).
3. Demons are mentioned in the passage (9:20).
4. Idolatry occurs, and literal locusts do not cause idolatry, but demons do (9:21).
5. Later in Revelation, frogs symbolize demons; if frogs can, locusts can.

Indications That the Locusts Cannot Be Literal

1. They do not originate from the abyss (9:2).
2. They do not injure people (9:4).
3. They do not ravage for five months (9:5).
4. They do not have long hair (9:8).
5. They do not have a king (9:11).
6. They do not sting with their tail like a scorpion (9:10).
7. They are clearly said to be an army in 9:16 from beyond the Euphrates

Why Locusts Are an Appropriate Symbol for an Army

1. They inflict injuries on people (9:4).
2. They resemble horses (9:9).
3. They make a terrible noise (9:9)
4. They destroy men (9:11, 18). --John L. Benson

¹⁴ *Demon worship*, which goes hand-in-hand with *idolatry* (see 1 Cor. 10:19–21), will be the leading sin. Satan will be at work (always under the permissive will of God), and Satan has always wanted to be worshiped (Isa. 14:12–15; Matt. 4:8–10). A great deal of “religion” will be practiced at this time, but it will be false religion. People will worship the works of their own hands, which could well include the buildings they construct, the machines they make, and the cities they build, as well as their idols. Here are dead sinners worshiping dead gods! (see Ps. 115) Their gods will not be able to protect or deliver them, yet these people will continue to reject the true God and worship Satan and idols! (Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Logos Library System)