

Chapter Nine THEME: The fifth and sixth trumpets

Introduction: These woes mark the deepest darkness and the most painful intensity of the Great Tribulation period. They are generally associated with the last three and one-half years of the Seventieth Week of Daniel, which is the Great Tribulation period. These will be the blackest days in human history.

The language used in this section is admittedly the most difficult of interpretation, but this does not preclude our policy of following the literal line. If another interpretation is proper, John will furnish us the key.

FIFTH TRUMPET -- **FALLEN STAR AND PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS** (9:1-12)

9:1, Here we have a description of the scene as the fifth angel sounds a trumpet and a star falls from heaven.

I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth. We have already seen two stars, and we said that they were literal stars or meteors, that fall to the earth. But here we have a different kind of star because it is called *him* and acts with intelligence. We are talking now about an unusual person. This star is different, therefore, from the stars mentioned at the sounding of the fourth trumpet. This star not only acts with intelligence, but he is given a key which he uses -- no inanimate star could do this.

I believe that this *star* is Satan. Some have identified this star as Antichrist; if this is so, it lends support to the view that Antichrist is Satan incarnate, but I do not accept that. My point is that Antichrist is exactly that: he is everything Christ is not, and he is motivated by Satan.

See 9:11, and Satan was put out of heaven and cast to the earth (see Rev. 12:7-9). If we have established the fact that the "star" is Satan being cast out of heaven, then what does he do? He goes down and takes the key to the abyss, which apparently means that God is permitting him to do so. A key denotes authority and power, and this is given to him of God; it is the permissive will of God.

The abyss is the *bottomless pit* which will be seen in chapter 20, verse 3. The Lord speaks here of His descent into the "heart of the earth." He went to the abyss, which apparently is hades or sheol. When the Lord Jesus told about the deaths of the rich man and Lazarus (see Luke 16:19-31), He made it quite obvious that hades is in two compartments:

The rich man died and went to the place of torment. The poor man died and went into Abraham's bosom, or paradise as our Lord called it.

The Lord went down there in His death to announce to the saved His victory and that He would be leading them into the presence of God. That is, I believe, what Paul meant when he said that the Lord Jesus ". . . led captivity captive . . ." (Eph. 4:8). He went to the abyss to announce that His redemption had been wrought and preached to the souls who died in the flood of Noah.

It behooves us not to be dogmatic where the Scriptures are silent, but there is the thought that a shaft leads from the surface of the earth to the heart of the earth.

The Lord now holds the key to the abyss (see Rev. 1:18). Peter tells us the demons are imprisoned there. (2 Pet. 2:4).

In Luke 8:30-31 we read: *"And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep (abyss)."*

The abyss is a very literal place. The idea that heaven and hell are mythological is not the teaching of the Word of God. The teaching of the Word of God is that heaven is as literal as the place where you live today and that hell is equally as real as the place where you now live.

9:2, During the last part of the Great Tribulation, the key to the abyss is given to Satan, and he is given a freedom that he never has had before. Out of the shaft, like a great erupting volcano, will come smoke to cover the entire earth.

John uses symbolic language which describes creatures so frightful that this is the only way he could speak of them.

9:3, These are locusts, but they are of a very unusual character. As Govett remarks (The Apocalypse Expounded by Scripture, pp. 185-186), they are "no common locusts," and he gives the following reasons:

(1) for they eat no vegetable productions;

(2) the locusts of the earth have no king (Prov. 30:27); these have;

(3) in the plague of Egypt the inspired recorder had said, "Before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such" (Exod. 10:14);

(4) yet they are literal creatures resembling the literal animals named: the lion, the horse, the scorpion, the man.

This is a plague of locusts which is as literal as the plague of locusts in Egypt. Joel prophesied of a coming plague of locusts (see Joel 1).

9:5, The difference between the locusts here and the locusts in Joel is the character of the locusts and the object of their destruction. They sting as scorpions, and their objects are evil men. The scorpion's sting is in his tail and is very painful.

Rev. 9:6, *"Men during this period try to commit suicide and are unable to do it -- this reveals something of the awfulness of that day. Satan wants them here because there is a battle between light and darkness being waged. There are others who think that maybe it is God who will not let these men die because sinful man must face the consequences of his rebellion -- there is no escape."*

"It is not a laughing matter to reject Jesus Christ; it is not a simple thing to ignore Him. People say there are so many important things in this life -- and I am willing to grant that many things take second, third, and fourth place -- but the most important thing is your decision concerning Jesus Christ." McGee

Rev. 9:7-10, This is a frightful and unnatural description. A little closer examination, however, will reveal a striking similarity to the locusts of Palestine, which I think we need to note. Dr. Vincent makes this comment in his book on Revelation: *"The likeness of a locust to a horse, especially to a horse equipped with armor, is so striking that the insect is named in German Heupferd hay-horse, and in Italian cavaletta little horse."*

The faces of locusts resemble the faces of men, and the antennae of the locust are compared to a girl's hair. Joel compares the teeth of the locust with those of a lion (see Joel 1:6). Many have commented on the weird sound that the locust makes. In his Word Studies in the New Testament, Dr. Vincent quotes Olivier, a French writer:

"It is difficult to express the effect produced on us by the sight of the whole atmosphere filled on all sides and to a great height by an innumerable quantity of these insects, whose flight was slow and uniform, and whose noise resembled that of rain."

Rev. 9:11, These locusts are further differentiated from ordinary locusts in that they have a king over them. *Proverbs 30:27* says of natural locusts that they have no king. The king or leader of these locusts is probably one of the fallen angels, and he is permitted to lead an invasion of earth for the first time.

This is something that is going to be frightening. His name in Hebrew (Abaddon: אַבַּדּוֹן - אֱבִירָא) means "destruction," or angel of death, and in Greek (Apollyon: Ἀπολλύων) means "the destroyer." In the [Hebrew Bible](#), *abaddon* is used with reference to a bottomless pit, often appearing alongside the place *הַיָּאֵשׁ* ([Sheol](#)), meaning the realm of the dead.



Figure 1 Pilgrim's Progress

This confirms what Daniel told us, that the demon world of the fallen angels is divided into levels of authority. I think there are generals, majors, lieutenants, sergeants, etc. In Ephesians we find that the angels of God are divided in the same way.

Rev. 9:12, The first woe introduced to us the last half of the Great Tribulation period, and it had a duration of five months. Apparently, the last two woes will cover the remainder of that period. The warning here indicates that worse things are to follow, and the next trumpet reveals that this was not just an idle warning.

SIXTH TRUMPET -- ANGELS LOOSED AT RIVER EUPHRATES (9:13-21)

Rev. 9:13-14, When the sixth angel blew the trumpet, a command came from the horns of the golden altar. The sixth angel not only blows the trumpet but is also given a command to release the four angels bound at the river Euphrates.

This angel receives in turn his orders from a voice that was there at the horns of the golden altar. It is the voice of Christ. The angels who are bound are evidently evil. Why would they be bound if they were not evil? Releasing them turns loose a flood tide of destruction on the earth. They were bound away from the others, I believe, because of the enormity of their acts.

Why were they bound at this particular location at the Euphrates River? The Garden of Eden was somewhere in this location. The sin of man began here. The first murder was committed here. The first war was fought here. Here was where the Flood began and spread over the earth. Here is where the Tower of Babel was erected. To this area were brought the Israelites of the Babylonian captivity. Babylon was the fountainhead of idolatry. And here is the final surge of sin on the earth during the Great Tribulation.

The Euphrates actually marks the division between East and West. It was Rudyard Kipling who said, *that East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.* That is true to a certain extent.

Perhaps there has been a restraining influence in the past which has kept the hordes of the East from spilling over into the West, but it is going to be broken down. It was Napoleon who made the statement: *"China is a sleeping giant, and God pity the generation that wakes her up."*

China's population (1.5 billion). If you take the peoples of the East, of the Orient, beyond the Euphrates River, you have most of the population of the world. Suppose they start moving?

Zechariah locates Babylon as the last stand of false religion (see Zech. 5). This is where Satan's last stand will take place.

Rev. 9:15-16, *"That they might kill the third of men."* At the blowing of the sixth trumpet, one-third of the population of mankind will be removed. We have already seen a fourth removed, and now a third is removed. Over one-half of the population of the earth will be destroyed in the Great Tribulation period. No wonder that the Lord Jesus said, *"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved . . ."* (Matt. 24:22).

The size of the army is stupendous. It is numbered at 200 million. Are these 200 million human beings?

Possibly, but also may be an invasion by the demon world, which is a further result of Satan's opening the door of the shaft of the bottomless pit. The following description of these horsemen further confirms this fact.

Rev. 9:17-18, Many suppose these to be tanks. Notice that the colors are as striking as the horsemen are unnatural. "Fire" is fiery red; "hyacinth" is the same color as the flower -- dull, dark blue; "brimstone" is light yellow.

The horse is the animal of war (see Job 39:19-25). The underworld is now making war on mankind. These creatures from the underworld are unnatural. They are probably demons or demon-controlled.

We are given a literal description of them. In his book on Revelation, William R. Newell makes this very timely observation, *"Believe, and you scarcely need any comment."* The problem with men who come to Revelation and say that it is difficult to understand and impossible to interpret is that they do not believe it. If you simply believe it and read it, it is very clear. Hellish forces will be at work during this period.

These three plagues mentioned here are literal plagues. The fire, the smoke, and the brimstone are literal. At this point one-third of the population is killed. One-third of nature had already been affected, but mankind had not been touched with a judgment of this magnitude. If the population of the world were 7 billion, this would mean that 3.5 billion would be slain. Remember that a fourth part had been slain under the fourth seal.

Rev. 9:19, These are unnatural horses which are able to kill with their mouths. The weirdest feat of all is that, instead of horses' hair for tails, they have serpents which are also used in destroying mankind.

Rev. 9:20-21, "Sorceries" is the Greek word φαρμάκων, from which we get our English word pharmacy. Pharmacy means "drugs." *"The Great Tribulation will be a period when the use of drugs will not be controlled. Drugs will play a large part in the lives of the unsaved and will serve several purposes. Drugs will enable them to bear the judgments of the Great Tribulation period. I am sure that many a person will turn to drugs when he is stung or bitten by these unnatural creatures. Although they will not die, they will feel like they are going to die, and as a result, they will take drugs to overcome the pain and help them endure the Great Tribulation."* McGee

Dr. J. A. Seiss from his book (The Apocalypse, p. 106) published about 1906 says,

"We have only to think of the use of alcoholic stimulants, of opium, of tobacco, of the range of cosmetics and medicaments to increase love attractions, of resorts to the pharmacopoeia in connection with sensuality -- of the magical agents and treatments alleged to come from the spirit-world for the benefit of people in this -- of the thousand impositions in the way of medicines and remedial agents, encouraging mankind to reckless transgression with the hope of easily repairing the damages of nature's penalties -- of the growing prevalence of crime induced by these things, setting loose and stimulating to activity the vilest passions, which are eating out the moral sense of society -- for the beginnings of that moral degeneracy to which the seer here alludes as characteristic of the period when the sixth trumpet is sounded."

We are told here that they were guilty not only of sorceries, of indulging in drunkenness and in drugs, but also of fornications which lead to thefts. Sorceries and fornication and robbery are going to be increased and a greater emphasis placed upon them. Maybe the Antichrist will use all three of these to bring mankind into subjection to himself. Mankind is easily lured. Under the influence of drugs, he will accept anything.

McGee and other scholars believe that the gospel will go out to every creature before the Rapture, and certainly each one is going to hear it during the Tribulation period.

What Paul describes here will only happen to those who have rejected the Word of God. *"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:11-12).*

