

Revelation 9 - The Fifth and Sixth Trumpet

I. The Fifth Trumpet (1-11)

A. The Abyss is Opened (1-2)

1. The Star Had Fallen From Heaven (1a)

- a) Notice the perfect tense - John sees a star that "had fallen" from heaven.
 - (1) He doesn't see the star falling but that a star had fallen
 - (2) Almost all commentators of different stripes believe this "star" is a fallen angel or Satan himself - next we are told that the key to the abyss is given to "him"
 - (a) He is probably not a good angel because he is said to have fallen - just like the star called wormwood (8:10), Babylon the great (11:13), the cities of the nations (16:19), and the five Roman kings (17:10).
 - (b) Some say this is the same angel called Abaddon in v. 11, and others differentiate the two

b) The Star should be seen as Satan Himself (who had fallen)

- (1) We see the same language in Isaiah 14 as Isaiah prophesies the fall of the King of Babylon, but transitions to speak of Satan the evil power behind the king
 - (a) Isa. 14:12-13 "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God and I will sit on the mount of assembly...I will make myself like the Most High...Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit
- (2) Jesus' words are also reminiscent of John's vision in this chapter
 - (a) Luke 10:18-19 - And he said to them, I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy and nothing will injure you
 - (b) Notice that we will see the images of serpents and scorpions in this chapter of revelation, along with the falling of this star

2. The Star is Given Authority over the Abyss (1b)

- a) The "bottomless pit" - literally, the "well of the abyss" - in some contexts Abyss means without bottom
- b) Abyss (*abussos*) is the abode of evil, demons, the realm of the dead
 - (1) In Job 41 - it is the abode of the sea dragon Leviathan
 - (a) Several times in Job and in Jonah it is the heart of the deep or the recesses of the ocean
 - (2) In Isa. 24:21-22 - God will punish angels and evil kings by confining and punishing them in the abyss
 - (3) In Luke 8:31 - The demons beg Jesus not to send them into the abyss
 - (4) In Revelation, the abyss is where the beast and the dragon will be confined (Rev. 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-3)
 - (5) Paul says the abyss is the realm of the dead in Romans 10:7 - He is quoting Deuteronomy 30:12
- c) The fallen star is given authority to open the abyss
 - (1) Notice that he is given the authority, God is still in control
 - (2) Everything that is happening is coming about by the sovereign judgment of God

3. The Abyss is Opened (2a)
 - a) The image here is that hell itself is opened to be released on earth
 - b) We will see the result of this as the judgments pour from the abyss
4. The Abyss Pours Forth Smoke (2b)
 - a) Smoke comes from the pit "like the smoke of a great furnace"
 - (1) The exact same phrase is used in Gen. 19:28 as God pours out judgment on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and in Exodus 19:18 as God's presence warns the people at Sinai of his judgment
 - (a) And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace Gen. 19:28
 - (b) Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently - Exodus 19:18
 - b) Smoke definitely connotes judgment in Revelation 9:17-20; 14:11; 18:9, 18; 19:3
 - c) The smoke darkens the sun and the air - alluding to Joel 2:10 - Before them (locusts) the earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness
- B. The Torment of The Locusts (3-6)
 1. Apocalyptic Locusts Pour out of the Abyss (3a)
 - a) These locusts will be vividly described and are obviously demonic forces
 - b) They will be used as God's judgment upon the people
 - c) Locusts were legendary in the ancient world for their destructive power - they destroyed crops and vegetation, causing famine, starvation, and death
 - d) The wording of the release of these locusts is similar to Exodus 10:12 when the plague of locusts is set loose on Egypt
 2. The Limitations of the Locusts' Power (3b-5)
 - a) The Locusts are given power like scorpions (3)
 - (1) Notice again that they are given power - God is still sovereign and in control
 - (2) These locusts are given power like a scorpions, which are poisonous
 - b) The Locusts are not permitted to harm vegetation (4a)
 - (1) These are not normal locusts - they are not allowed to harm the vegetation
 - (2) In the Exodus plague of locusts, they did destroy the vegetation (Ex. 10:15)
 - (3) These locusts are sent to harm men not plants
 - (4) NOTICE: In 8:7 the grass was destroyed by the seal judgment, but now the locusts are told not to harm the grass - this shows that these are symbols of a greater reality
 - c) The Locusts are allowed to harm the unsealed (4b)
 - (a) They are not allowed to harm God's people
 - (b) Just like the plagues of Egypt didn't harm Israel - see Ex. 8:22-24; 9:4-7, 26; 10:21-23
 - d) The Locusts are allowed to torment but not kill (5)
 - (1) They are not permitted to kill men (Mankind is a translational choice, the word is men) only to torment them for 5 months
 - (2) Why five months? There is much debate
 - (a) Some see the number as purely symbolic having the sense of a limited period of time

- (b) It is a reference to the time during which locusts commonly came through the land (from May through September) - but it is unusual for them to remain for the entire duration
- (c) Some think this was the actions of Gessius Florus, the procurator of Judea who, beginning in May of 66, terrorized the Jews deliberately inciting them to rebellion. This is when Josephus dates the start of the war.
- (d) F. F. Bruce in New Testament History p. 382 say, Titus began the final siege of Jerusalem in April of 70 A.D. The city held out for five months but by the end of August, the city was occupied and the Temple was burnt to the ground. While the siege was going on, the people in the city went absolutely crazy.
 - i) David Chilton writes, "The entire generation became increasingly demon possessed; their progressive national insanity is apparent as one reads through the New Testament and it's horrifying final stages are depicted in the pages of Josephus' The Jewish War, the loss of all ability to reason, the frenzied mobs attacking one another, the deluded multitudes following after the most transparently false prophets, the crazed and desperate chase after food, the mass murders, executions, and suicide, the fathers slaughtering their own families and the mothers eating their own children. Satan and the host of hell simply swarmed throughout the land of Israel and consumed the apostates. (Chilton, The Great Tribulation, 246)
- (e) It refers to the obviously demonic activity inside the city as the Roman's surrounded Jerusalem. (Wars 5:1:5)
 - i) And now, as the city was engaged in a war on all sides, from these treacherous crowds of wicked men, the people of the city, between them, were like a great body torn in pieces. (28) The aged men and the women were in such distress by their internal calamities, that they wished for the Romans, and earnestly hoped for an external war, in order to their delivery from their domestic miseries. (29) The citizens themselves were under a terrible consternation and fear; nor had they any opportunity of taking counsel, and of changing their conduct, nor were there any hopes of coming to an agreement with their enemies; nor could such as had a mind flee away; (30) for guards were set at all places, and the heads of the robbers, although they were seditious one against another in other respects, yet did they agree in killing those that were for peace with the Romans, or were suspected of an inclination to desert to them, as their common enemies. (31) They agreed in nothing but this, to kill those that were innocent. The noise also of those that were fighting was incessant, both by day and by night; but the lamentation of those that mourned exceeded the other; (32) nor was there ever any occasion for them to leave off there lamentations, because their calamities came perpetually one upon another, ...but, for the seditious themselves, they fought against each other, while they trod upon the dead bodies as they lay heaped one upon another, and taking up a made rage from those dead bodies that were under their feet, became the fiercer thereupon. (35) They, moreover, were still inventing somewhat or other that was pernicious

against themselves; and when they had resolved upon anything, they executed it without mercy, and omitted no method of torment or of barbarity.

- ii) It is therefore impossible to go distinctly over every instance of these men's iniquity. I shall therefore speak my mind here at once briefly:-- That neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world. (Wars 5:10:5)
- iii) and here I cannot but speak my mind, and what the concern I am under dictates to me, and it is this: I suppose, that had the Romans made any longer delay in coming against these villains, the city would either have been swallowed up by the ground opening upon them, or been overflowed by water, or else been destroyed by such thunder as the country of Sodom perished by, for it had brought forth a generation of men much more atheistical than were those that suffered such punishments; for by their madness it was that all the people came to be destroyed. (5:13:6)

3. Those Tormented Desire Death (6)

- a) They were not permitted to die even though they wanted it
- b) This was not a protection but a punishment. They believed death would be a release from their misery
- c) Josephus writes: The madness of the seditious did also increase together with their famine, and both those miseries were every day inflamed more and more; for there was no corn which anywhere appeared publicly, but the robbers came running into, and searched men's private houses; and then, if they found any, they tormented them, because they had denied they had any and if they found none, they tormented them worse, because they supposed they had more carefully concealed it. (Wars, 5:10:2)
- d) Jesus himself predicted this demonic infestation on the generation in Jerusalem in Matthew 12:43-45 "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation."

C. The Appearance of the Locusts (7-10)

- 1. Remember, not necessarily what they look like, but what they are like
- 2. The Locusts appear as Horses ready for battle (7a)
 - a) This refers to the locust plague that assaulted Israel in Joel's prophecy - Joel 2:4-5 says, "Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like war horses, so they run. With a noise as of chariots they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble, like a mighty people arranged for battle.
 - b) Some think Joel's locusts are symbolic of the invasion of the Assyrian army in Israel, others see them as an actual locust plague
 - c) It is clear that John is seeing a similar vision to that of Joel
 - d) Joel's locusts also pour forth after the blowing of a trumpet (see Joel 2:1, 15)
 - e) Joel's locusts also torment men - Joel 2:6 - Before them the people are in anguish; all faces turn pale.

3. The Locusts have crowns on their heads (7b)
 - a) They have been given the authority to do what they are doing
 - b) There is lots of speculation - we can't know for sure why they wear crowns
 4. The Locusts have human features (7c-8a)
 - a) They have faces like humans
 - (1) This may indicate that these locusts are actually men who are infesting Jerusalem
 - (2) The symbolism definitely has something to say since they have both animal and human characteristics, and characteristics of both sexes
 - b) They have hair like women's
 - (1) while their inclination to plunder was insatiable, as was their zeal in searching the houses of the rich; and for the murdering of the men, and abusing of the women, it was sport to them. (561) They also devoured what spoils they had taken, together with their blood, and indulged themselves in feminine wantonness, without any disturbance till they were satiated therewith; while they decked their hair, and put on women's garments, and were besmeared over with ointments; and that they might appear very comely, they had paints under their eyes, (562) and imitated, not only the ornaments, but also the lust of women, and were guilty of such intolerable uncleanness, and they invented unlawful pleasures of that sort. And thus did they roll themselves up and down the city, as in a brothel house, and defiled it entirely with their impure actions; (563) nay, while their faces looked like the faces of women, they killed with their right hands; and when their gait was effeminate, they presently attacked men, and became warriors, and drew their swords from under their finely dyed cloaks and ran everybody through whom they alighted upon. - Wars 4:9:10
 5. The Locusts have teeth like Lion's (8b)
 - a) Joel 1:6 - For a nation has invaded my land mighty and without number; its teeth are the teeth of a lion and it has the fangs of a lioness
 6. The Locusts have Iron Breastplates (9a)
 7. The Locusts' wings sound like many chariots (9b)
 8. The Locusts have tails like scorpions (10)
 - a) Scorpions are associated with the power of Satan the enemy in Luke 10:18-19
 - b) They have stings like scorpions to hurt people
 - c) They are permitted to hurt people for five months
 9. The Ruler of the Locusts (11)
 - a) His name in Hebrew is Abaddon
 - b) His name in Greek is Apollyon
 - c) Both of these name means destroyer
- II. The Sixth Trumpet (12-21)
- A. Judgment is Commanded to Be Released (12-15)
 1. The Interlude (12)
 - a) The first woe is past - is this John speaking?
 - b) The announcement of the escalation of the judgment
 2. A Voice Comes From the Altar (13-14a)
 - a) Probably Christ's voice - we are not told, but it is "before God" from the altar
 - b) This is the divine response to the saints cries for justice
 - c) From the "horns" of the altar

- (1) In Exodus 27:2, the altar was commanded to be constructed with four horns on the corners - Don't think animal horns, or trumpets, but corner pieces
 - (2) Sometimes people sought safety and protection from others by holding onto the horns of the altar (see 1 Ki. 1:50-51; 2:28-34)
 - (3) The place that was often sought for safety is now where judgement comes from
3. The Four Angels Are Commanded to Be Released (14b-15)
 - a) Why are the angel's bound?
 - (1) These are the four angels from chapter 6 who were commanded to hold back the four winds of judgment
 - (2) Here these angels are commanded to release the judgments they are holding back
 - b) The Angels are Bound in the Euphrates River?
 - (1) (*Epi to potamo to megalō Euphrate*) the preposition (epi) when used with the dative is most likely spatial which means it should be translated on, upon, at, near (on the KJV says "in")
 - (2) These angels are bound at the Euphrates from releasing their judgments
 - (a) In John's day, the Euphrates was the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire
 - (b) The Euphrates river was the border of the promised land given in Genesis 15:18 and the border given to Joshua in Joshua 1:4.
 - (c) It was also from across the Euphrates that Assyria came under the general Sennacherib and conquered the northern kingdom of Israel
 - (d) It was also from across the Euphrates that Babylon came under the general Nebuchadnezzar and destroyed Jerusalem.
 - (e) This idea of an army massing from the Euphrates would have been a terrifying image based in the history of Israel.
 - (f) Tacitus in Annals 4:5 says, "The huge stretch of territory between this end of Syria and the Euphrates was controlled by four brigades."
 - (g) "And when he (Titus) had stayed three days among the principal commanders, and so long feasted with them, he sent away the rest of his army to the several places where they would be every one best situated; but permitted the tenth legion to stay, as a guard at Jerusalem, and did not send them away beyond Euphrates, where they had been before" (Wars 7:1:3)
 - (3) They were prepared for a particular time (v. 15)
 - (a) God has not lost control. The exact moment has been prepared in advance
 - (b) Daniel 9:26 - "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolation are determined."
- B. The Demonic Army of Judgment (16-19)
 1. The Army's Appearance (16-17, 19)
 - a) An Innumerable Army of Horsemen (16)
 - (1) The number is 200 million. The number is obviously symbolic.
 - (a) According to the Food and Agricultural Organization which is part of the United Nations, in 2011 there were only about 58 million horses on the planet. If we take the number literally, we have to wait for more horses!

- (b) The actual words are *dismuriades muriadon* which means "double myriad of myriads"
 - (c) The word myriad does mean ten thousand in some contexts, so the idea is that this means double 10,000 times 10,000 which is why it is translated 200 million
- (2) The point is that there is an immense number of many in this army
 - (a) Psalm 68:17 says, "The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands"
 - (b) The word *urias* is used throughout the Septuagint designating an immense number when it isn't used with a numerical adjective
- (3) The number is designed to terrorize. The entire empire of hell is coming in judgment against the land. The fulfillment is the Roman Legions and the auxiliaries from all the nations of the empire coming against the city of Jerusalem
 - (a) This is the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant promise to Israel in Deuteronomy 28:49-68; there were other immediate fulfillments in Assyria and Babylon but this is the final fulfillment
 - (b) The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar from the end of the earth as the eagle swoops down a nation whose language you shall not understand, a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. Deut. 28:49-50
- b) They Wore Colored Breastplates (17)
 - (1) Notice John qualifies the next section by saying, "this is how I saw in the vision" - this is a clue that we should not take the description as to what they looked like but what they are like
 - (2) They are similar to the locusts - monstrous horses
 - (3) Many interpretations of what the colors mean
- c) They have Heads Like Lions and tails like serpents
 - (1) Probably denoting their fierceness and destructive power
 - (2) They are destructive both front and back as the locusts before them. Joel 2:3-4 "A fire consumes before them and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them but a desolate wilderness behind them and nothing at all escapes them. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses and like war horses, so they run.
- 2. The Army's Destructive Power (17c-18)
 - a) Fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths
 - (1) Fire and sulfur (brimstone) and sometimes smoke indicate judgment in the OT
 - (a) Genesis 19 - Sodom and Gomorrah - fire and brimstone rained down upon them and smoke rose from the cities
 - i) Notice that fire, smoke, and sulfur occurs together only here and in the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen. 19
 - ii) Notice also that in Deuteronomy 29:22-23, the destruction of these two cities is called a plague - later in this chapter, fire brimstone and smoke will be called plagues
 - (b) Isa. 34:9-10, He is sending judgment on the nations. "It's streams will be turned into pitch, and it's loose earth into brimstone, and it's land will become burning pitch

- (c) Ezekiel 38:22 "With pestilence and with blood I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone" (Gog)
- (d) 2 Samuel 22:9 God's protection of David - "Smoke went up out of His nostrils, fire from his mouth devoured; coals were kindled by it."
- (e) In Revelation 11:5 fire comes from the mouth of the two witnesses as they pronounce God's judgment
- (f) Fire and sulfur are only used in Revelation to denote Judgment 14:10; 21:8; 19:20; 20:10
- b) By these plagues a third of mankind was killed
 - (1) See above, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is called a plague in Deut. 29:22-23
 - (2) So the soldiers, according to custom, opened the cases wherein their arms before lay covered, and marched with their breastplates on; as did the horsemen lead their horses in their fine trappings. (351) Then did the places that were before the city shine very splendidly for a great way; nor was there anything so grateful to Titus's own men, or so terrible to the enemy as that sight; (352) for the whole old wall and the north side of the temple were full of spectators, and one might see the houses full of such as looked at them; nor was there any part of the city which was not covered over with their multitudes; (353) nay, a very great consternation seized upon the hardiest of the Jews themselves, when they saw all the army in the same place, together with the fineness of their arms, and the good order of their men; (354) and I cannot but think that the seditious would have changed their minds at that sight, unless the crimes they had committed against the people had been so horrid, that they despaired of forgiveness from the Romans; (355) but as they believed death with torments must be their punishment, if they did not go on in the defense of the city, they thought it much better to die in war. Fate also prevailed so far over them that the innocent were to perish with the guilty, and the city was to be destroyed with the seditious that were in it. (Wars 5:9:1)

C. The People Refuse to Repent (20-21)

- 1. Men did not repent of their works
- 2. Men did not cease their Idolatry
- 3. Men did not repent of their sins (21)
 - a) Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers, and such as belied God himself; while they did not attend, nor give credit, to the signs that were so evident and did so plainly foretell their future desolation; but, like men infatuated, without either eyes to see, or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them. (Wars 6:5:3)
 - b) Nay the terror was so very great, that he who survived called them that were first dead happy, as being at rest already; as did those that were under torture in the prisons, declare, that, upon this comparison, those that lay unburied were the happiest. (386) These men, therefore, trampled upon all the laws of man, and laughed at the laws of God; and for the oracles of the prophets, they ridiculed them as the tricks of jugglers: (387) yet did these prophets foretell many things concerning [THE REWARDS OF] virtue, and [PUNISHMENTS OF] vice, which when these zealots violated, they occasioned the fulfilling of those very prophecies belonging to their own country: (388) for there was a certain ancient

oracle of those men, that the city should then be taken and the sanctuary burnt, by right of war, when a sedition should invade the Jews, and their own hand should pollute the temple of God. Now, while these zealots did not [QUITE] disbelieve these predictions, they made themselves the instruments of their accomplishment. (Wars 4:6:3)