

## Chapter 9

**V.1-12 The Fifth Trumpet** With the blowing of the fifth trumpet we begin the three woes that are introduced in Chapter 8. At first glance there appears to be an angel that is referred to as a star coming from heaven to earth to get the key to the bottomless pit, but after closer consideration we can tell that this is some type of demonic being that God is using at His disposal to accomplish His will. The reason that we can tell this is because this star is given the personal pronoun (he) in vs.1&2. He is also referenced at the end of the account in verse 11 as the angel of the bottomless pit whose name is Abaddon and Apollyon. This then is either Satan himself or one of his chief demons who carries the title of “Destroyer” as both Abaddon and Apollyon mean. You could try and distinguish the star in verse 1 as different from verse 11 and say that it is Satan in verse 1 and Destruction in verse 11 but the context suggests otherwise. In verse 11 he is said to be the king over the locusts and in verse 1 he is given the key and it would be normal to assume that whoever has the key is the king therefore most likely it is the same being. Now whether this is Satan or one of his chief demons is debatable, but I believe more likely to be the Destroyer than the devil only because this would be the only place in Scripture where we would see Satan given this name Destroyer and it seems to be very specific with the titles of Abaddon and Apollyon being proper names. The other possible point to contribute to this understanding is that we are getting ready to be introduced to the dragon in Chapter 12 and I don’t think this would be the first reference to him in a peripheral way considering his prominence in the Revelation account. We know from different passages in Scripture that there are a third of angels that have fallen from heaven and it is not unreasonable to know that there are arch types of demonic angels just as there are arch angels of God.

I have to admit that it is disturbing indeed to see this demonic being getting a key to anything even if it is the bottomless pit. We know ultimately that Jesus has the keys to Death and Hades. It would be similar in nature to a parent who gives their children the key to the car. Not that this being is by any means related but that the relationship is clear that even this key is limited in scope and time to the direction of Christ. It is important to remember that it is Jesus’ key to give and the key appears to only allow some demonic spirits to get out of the Abyss and there are specific limitations given to these demonic locusts about what they can damage and who they can harm. We must be firm in our understanding of God’s sovereignty even in the events of unexplainable suffering and carnage that He is in complete control and He is working out the ultimate good of His people and the doom of His enemies. Even the devil himself and any of his chief demons are subject to the permission and will of God to do only what He says when He says it. It is intriguing to think about this from the perspective of those who knowingly and willingly serve the enemy because it appears in this encounter with these demonic locusts that they will not be spared the pain and torment. Only those who have the seal of God are protected so we see that Satan’s demonic kingdom is forced to inflict suffering on those who either unwittingly or knowingly serve his kingdom. Of course, the ultimate purpose of this suffering is to bring people to repentance and their understanding that the enemy is not out for their ultimate good and only God can and should be trusted.

This suffering from the 5<sup>th</sup> trumpet will be tremendously painful and will last a length of 5 months. Interestingly, the rains of the flood lasted 5 months as well but, in that judgment, there was no opportunity for life only death. And so, we see the mercy of God displayed here in that death is not permitted in hopes that some will turn to Christ in their great torment. This torment is indicated to be so great that people will seek death but they won’t be able to find it. Although

I have suffered in this life it has never been to such an extent as to wish for death. That will be the case with these locusts and apparently there will be no escape or relief. This is an appropriate place for us to discuss the distinctions between heaven and hell and what exactly is the bottomless pit that this demonic angel is given a key to. Depending on the translation, it may be indicated that this is the Abyss or the bottomless pit. The Greek word is abussos and where we get the transliteration for the word abyss. It is not entirely necessary for us to be completely specific on the locations of hell and heaven as they are often described in Scripture as a state of being in safety and comfort or pain and agony but we must remember that there are real physical locations as well. Generally speaking, the generic word for the place of the dead is Sheol or Hades and then within Hades there would be a special place of torment called the Abyss or bottomless pit. This is where the demonic spirits are coming from in this locust attack and apparently is a place of confinement where some demons are held while others roam. We see this in Jesus' ministry as well in Luke 8:31 where Jesus is casting the legion out of the man and these demons beg Him not to send them to the Abyss. Amazingly Jesus complies and sends them into a herd of pigs. We normally understand this place of suffering in Hades in the New Testament as Hell. Ultimately, we see it described by Jesus as an eternal fire and eternal punishment in the separation of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25) and it is called the lake of fire in Revelation chapters 19&20. The terms overlap though as it says in 2 Peter 2:4 that hell will be a temporary holding place for the evil angels until the time of judgment so we should not be overly legalistic about it and our common terminology for heaven and hell is accurate. Probably the best description of both the understanding and differences of the two places is located in Luke 16:19-31 where Jesus describes the Rich Man and Lazarus and where they are located at the time of His telling. The distinction about heaven is that although there may have been a more general understanding of paradise in the Old Testament as a non-specific location. We see Jesus redefine paradise as heaven with Him to the thief on the cross. This is our normal and appropriate understanding of heaven that we have today for all who serve Christ and die before His return. This is part of the same heaven being described in Revelation 4&5. But we must also remember that this will not be our eternal resting place either and that all of our musings and questions about heaven are better directed to understanding the New Heavens and the New Earth which we will get to in this study of Revelation. The eternal destiny for those who follow Christ will be with our resurrected bodies on a real material earth.

There have primarily been three different interpretations of these locusts in Chapter 9 and their startling description by John. One view is that these are demonic spirits because they arrive from the Abyss and the king over them is Apollyon. Their torment in this case would not be visible but real none the less. A second view is that these are literal locusts that are demonically inspired and John is trying to describe them with as much accuracy as possible considering their unusual appearance. A third view is that these locusts are representative of a human army and compared to modern military warfare that John is trying to describe. If we take John at face value, he does repeatedly say that they are locusts regardless of how fanciful they may sound. We are reminded of the plague of locusts in Egypt which also demonstrated the great blight and devastation that locusts incur. The difference being that these locusts in Revelation are specifically told not to harm the plants, trees, or earth so they would be different in behavior and description than we have ever seen before. The only comforting reality of the attack of these locusts is that they are commanded not to harm anyone with the seal of God. It will be an interesting dynamic on the earth at this time and probably cause more hatred, persecution, and martyrdom because of the anger and confusion about God's people being

spared but at least we won't be suffering from the locust attack. It is a powerful thing to know that God is in complete control and that even the angels of hell and insects of the earth do His bidding.

**V.13-21 The Sixth Trumpet** The second woe begins with the sixth trumpet and doesn't end all the way until Rev. 11:14 "The second woe has passed; behold the third woe is soon to come." With the blowing of this trumpet, we are introduced to a catastrophic event that appears so devastating that the likelihood is that this is a representation of what happens at Armageddon or very nearly related. That is one of the reasons that we have indicated that it appears by the severity of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal and the 6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet that they are reserved for the end of the tribulation and released in conjunction with the 6<sup>th</sup> Bowl. This would mean that the first five Seals could be consecutively released before the first five Trumpets which may be sequential with the first five Bowls but the sixth trumpet appears to be nothing other than near the end of this world.

The command that comes forth at the sixth trumpet is to release four angels that are bound at the river Euphrates. It says that these angels have been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year. Obviously, this is very specific and amazing to think about with the sovereignty of God who had a day for the birth of His Son, He had a day for His resurrection, He has a day for His return and apparently there is a specific day for this event. That does not mean that there aren't foreshadowings and events like this or other of the events in Revelation that transpire from Christ's ascension onward but especially for this event it is clear that there is a time in the end that is very specific for its release. The purpose of these angels was to kill a third of mankind. Who are these angels? Because of the proximity to the 5<sup>th</sup> Trumpet which appears to be demonically inspired some commentators believe these to be fallen angels as well and point to the fact that they are bound as such an indication. I am not convinced of this and don't see any other indication that these are fallen angels. Although their actions are terrifying that should not eliminate the possibility of these angels being servants of God. It says that this death to mankind comes through plagues of fire, smoke, and sulfur. It sounds similar to how Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed even though that was to entire cities instead of to individuals. There are many tragic deaths to human life that are accomplished by God's angels in the Bible and the type of event does not necessitate a fallen angel. One other note about these angels is that they are stationed by the Euphrates River. We know that the Garden of Eden was also near the Euphrates River. Is it possible that these four angels in Revelation 9 are the same angels that were stationed to guard anyone from entering the Garden? It is impossible to know for sure but we do know that there were multiple cherubim that were stationed to prevent any access to the Tree of Life. (Genesis 3:24)

John infers that these four angels release a great army and he describes their horses in detail. He indicates that there were 200 million mounted troops and he is specific about their number. There are other times in Revelation where John sees multitudes of angels or people and he says that their number was beyond counting or we may get the impression that it was an incalculable number because it was so large. But in this case, he specifically says that he heard the number of them. The question about these mounted troops is whether they are some type of angelic force or whether this is a literal army similar to the one gathered for the battle of Armageddon. If you believe this 6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet happens in conjunction with the 6<sup>th</sup> Bowl then this would lead to the understanding of it being the army at Armageddon because that is the 6<sup>th</sup> Bowl of wrath. However, if you are inclined to think that the sixth trumpet happens in sequential order then the interpretation is more likely to be an angelic force of some type. Regardless, the

loss of life is catastrophic and now the realization is that we saw the loss of life of a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the earth with the 4<sup>th</sup> Seal and now we see  $\frac{1}{3}$  killed with the 6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet. That means between these two judgments and other deaths and martyrdoms that approximately half of the world's population has been lost. The saddest part is that this chapter ends by verifying that all of the torment, sorrow, and death has not had God's desired effect on the population of the earth. One of the primary reasons God completes these judgments is to awaken people to the reality of His rulership in hopes that they will turn to faith in Christ. It is clear in this Scripture that those who were still alive did not repent. And so, the saga of Revelation continues...