

CHAPTER 9

The Fifth Trumpet Judgment

Revelation 9:1–6

[1] And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. [2] He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. [3] Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. [4] They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. [5] They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. [6] And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.

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Upon the fifth angel blowing his trumpet, another star falls to earth. John identifies this star with personhood, so we know that this isn't a meteor but rather a fallen angel, a demon. He carries out actions, so we know for certain that he has an identity.

In fact as we will read later he has a name Abaddon in Hebrew and Greek Apollyon. So this demon is given the keys to the shaft of a bottomless pit. This bottomless pit is a prison for disobedient spirits.

This is sometimes referred to as Sheol in the Old Testament. Sheol is talked about in Luke 16 as a place for unbelievers and before Christ's work on the cross, the souls of Old Testament believers. For believers it was a place of comfort, for unbelievers a place of torment.

Peter tells us that there are special places reserved for fallen angels in 2 Peter 2:4-5. When Jesus confronted the demonic force named Legion in Luke 8, they asked not to be sent back to the abyss. So it would seem that there is a special place reserved for demons in the pit. Many demons roam the earth today, but some were so terrible that they were banished by God to this pit.

Abaddon/Apollyon is given the keys to this pit to release upon the earth these demons to inflict pain upon the earth. As the pit is opened, smoke comes up from the earth to blot out the sun. Out of this pit comes what John describes as locusts with the power of a scorpion.

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But their power comes with restrictions. They cannot hurt vegetation of earth but only certain people. They can hurt anyone who does not have the seal of God upon their foreheads.

So these "locusts" can inflict anyone who is not a part of the 144,000 that were saved or those who saved as a part of their evangelizing. This is the first time that they are mentioned as being excluded from a judgment so the previous judgments would have impacted them as well.

The "locusts" inflict a painful sting upon humanity. It is a painful sting that will last five months. The pain is like that of a scorpion sting which is incredibly painful but rarely lethal. Whether a single sting lasts five months or the torment is from five months of stinging.

The fallout is that individuals will seek to end their own lives, yet they won't be able to. How will God do this? We aren't sure, it could be that they won't simply be able to die, almost immortal. It could also be that these locusts will inflict so much pain that they simply can't do anything other than be in pain.

You can imagine how painful this must be because otherwise sane people will long for death in the face of the pain that they are facing.

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Revelation 9:7–11

[7] In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, [8] their hair like women’s hair, and their teeth like lions’ teeth; [9] they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. [10] They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails. [11] They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.

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John says they were like horses prepared for battle, so they emerged ready to carry out their mission. You can see why John refers to them as being like scorpions based on their long tails. That's a prominent feature and that coupled with their powerful sting leads you to see why John would refer to them as scorpions.

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He also says they have crowns on their heads indicating authority in the demonic realm from where they came. Many people have tried to refer to this as being machines of war - helicopters, planes, etc.

But as of now the world is pretty desolate so most likely most of the mechanical equipment is hardly functioning. The world is very much filled with people just trying to survive. And in the middle of the suffering, these locusts inflict more suffering on those who are not believers.

How do these locusts inflict harm on all unbelievers on earth? Well if they are demonic they are supernatural entities, so it is highly possible for them to move unrestricted by barriers. I also think that most likely people can see them so that they know the source of their judgment.

It is interesting that this is carried out for five months on the earth because five is the number associated with grace. You might ask how is God showing His grace here? Well even in judgment God is giving an opportunity for unbelievers to repent. They know that the judgment comes from God and here God is giving them a taste of what it looks like in Hell.

Constant torment, wishing to die but never being able to. So for five months no individual goes into the pits of hell since the Garden of Eden.

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The Sixth Trumpet Judgment

Revelation 9:12–19

[12] The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come. [13] Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, [14] saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” [15] So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind. [16] The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number. [17] And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions’ heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths. [18] By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. [19] For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound.

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Verse 12 tells us that these two additional woe judgements need to wait for the first to be finished - so they are sequential. Five months pass and you would think that humanity was so relieved to not experience the pain of the sting of these locusts. But after five months, another judgment comes upon the earth.

And this one is initiated by angels who were bound at the Euphrates River. So the fact that these angels were bound and their location in Babylon, the Euphrates River, indicates that they were fallen. These were demons who were bound and could not be released until a certain time. It would seem that this woe coupled with the last woe would indicate that some fallen angels are more harmful to humanity than others. And they were so awful that they had to be bound by God lest they should be unleashed on earth and kill humanity.

So what was the army that devastated the earth? Well it was an incredible army because John says the number was 200 million. And this army has been speculated to be a number of different things, but if you look at the description that John uses there are some similarities to the locusts.

So most likely this is a demonic horde unleashed on the earth who have the ability to kill a third of humanity that was on the earth. If you read Joel 2 you will see a prophecy of this coming army.

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Revelation 9:20–21

[20] The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, [21] nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

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Those who survived these devastating plagues who were unbelievers did not repent. These individuals had been through so much, but still refused to turn their hearts toward God in repentance.

At the end of this chapter, we have reached the halfway point of the tribulation. As a result of the first 3.5 years, 50% of the earth's population is dead. 1/3 of the earth's surface is uninhabitable and 1/3 of the waters are undrinkable and unnavigable. And we've reached the middle of the tribulation which is an important time.