

Ministry of Grace

Revelation Chapter 9

The 5th and 6th Trumpet Judgments

Last time we were together, we learned about the first four trumpet judgments. We also learned about the importance of the golden incense altar in the midst of the trinity in God's throne room. This is the altar beneath which the martyrs were seen who had been killed for the word of God and for their witness. They were praying for God to execute judgment against the permanent earth dwellers who had killed them. Then, just before the first trumpet judgment, an angel took coals from the incense altar and cast them to the earth, which began a series of judgments against the permanent earth dwellers.

After the coals were thrown down to the earth, the "presence angels" began blowing their trumpets. The first four trumpets brought about cosmic catastrophes upon the earth that burned-up trees and grass, killed 1/3 of the animals in the sea, and destroyed 1/3 of the ships in the sea. Then the sun moon and stars were stricken so that they lost 1/3 of their brightness and only shone 2/3 of the time that they had before.

Finally, at the end of chapter eight, we were told about the angel (or eagle) who announced that the next three trumpets would bring 3 woes to the permanent earth dwellers. As we open chapter 9, we now encounter the first two woes, from the 5th and 6th trumpets.

Revelation 9:1, 2

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. 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.

“star”

In the previous chapters of Revelation there have been several references to stars falling from heaven including stars falling onto the earth, into the sea, and onto the rivers and springs of water. These are all best seen as physical heavenly bodies such as asteroids, meteorites, and comets. In this case, however, it is more likely that the reference is to an angelic being (spiritual heavenly body). As an example of angels being referred to as stars, here's what God said to Job as He rebuked him:

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements--surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:4-7)

Satan, himself, was referred to as a fallen star by Isaiah, where he says:

How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! (Isaiah 14:12)

“fallen”

This word is in the perfect tense indicating past completed action with a current effect (current in terms of John's narrative). Therefore, this star fell at some time previous and as a result, he is now “fallen” from heaven to the earth. We could, therefore, translate this as “and I saw a star having fallen from heaven to earth” This implies that the fallen star now has the earth as his abode. The text does not specifically identify this fallen star as Satan, but it is clear that this is either Satan, as described by the Isaiah passage above, or it is one of his high-ranking minions who fell with him.

Whether this is Satan or another fallen angel, the current reference to his fall is apparently a result of the “war in heaven” which John reveals to us in the 12th chapter of Revelation.

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world--he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (Revelation 12:7-9)

Most Christians believe that Satan has already been kicked out of heaven. This is based primarily on a passage from Isaiah:

How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit. (Isaiah 14:12-15)

Since this passage says that Satan has already fallen, people believe it is describing a past event. However, the verb translated “are fallen” is what is known as a “proleptic” verb which expresses future action as if it has already happened. The misconception is further increased by a comment that Jesus made when he sent out the 70 disciples:

And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. (Luke 10:18)

But – Jesus, as God, is able to see the future as if it was the past. Then, if we continue on with the verses we just quoted from chapter 12, we find:

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. (Revelation 12:10)

The expression “who accuses” is more accurately translated as “the one accusing,” which is a present participle, indicating continuous, ongoing action (that is, up until the time he is kicked out of heaven). What this tells us is that Satan currently (today, as you read this) has access to heaven and he enters the throne room of God regularly in order to accuse you and me of wrongdoing.

Another piece of evidence that Satan has not yet been kicked-out of heaven: In the Isaiah passage quoted above, it says, “But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.” This is a reference to the incarceration of Satan at Armageddon. This is described in Revelation 20:1-3.

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. (Revelation 20:1-3)

Finally, as one last piece of evidence that Satan has not yet been kicked out of heaven. If he is currently kicked-out of heaven, how does he get back with his fallen angels to fight against Michael as we are told in Revelation chapter 12. This war in heaven and the casting out of Satan will occur in the middle of Daniel’s seventieth week as evidenced by the following, which is also from the twelfth chapter of Revelation:

And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she

might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. (Revelation 12:13-14)

The expression, “a time, and times, and half a time” is a specific reference to three and a half years, which covers the second half of the tribulation. Therefore, Satan will be kicked out of heaven at mid-trib. Couple this with the fact that this 5th trumpet occurs during the second half of the tribulation, it is very likely that the “star (having) fallen from heaven” is, indeed, a reference to Satan.

“he was given the key”

The key was given to him by none other than Jesus Christ. Remember, Christ announced in the first chapter of Revelation that the keys of death and Hades are now in His possession. John said,

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and **I have the keys** of Death and Hades. (Revelation 1:17, 18)

“the shaft of the bottomless pit”

This is literally “the pit of the abyss.” It is probably the same as “Tartarus,” where fallen angels have been bound. Also, notice that it is a place where demons (fallen angels) don’t want to go.

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell (*tartarus*) and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness; (2 Peter 2:4)

Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. (Luke 8:30, 31)

Revelation 9:3

Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth.

These are not actual locusts as we will see in the following verses. These are demonic beings which John had a hard time describing. The swarming appearance of their ascension from the abyss resembled a locust swarm to John. Also, the fact that they were given the power of scorpions further indicates that these were not actual locusts.

Revelation 9:4-6

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. 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. And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.

These verses add detail to the form and function of the demonic ones. The fact that they were commanded not to harm plant life is further indication that they are not really locusts. Also, the fact that they are not allowed to harm those having the seal of God on their foreheads is an indication that these are spirit beings, as this marking appears not to be seen physically, but spiritually.

It is not specifically stated that everyone but the 144,000 are intended by the statement “those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.” However, the sealing of the 144,000 is the only mention of sealing in the book of Revelation. Therefore, it appears that all the inhabitants of the earth are tormented except the 144,000. It is possible, however, that those who are saved during the tribulation will also be sealed, in which case they will also be protected from the demon stings.

“torment”

This is from the Greek word *basanidzō* which means “to examine by torture” or “to afflict with pain.” These locust-like beings were given the ability to inflict pain on men for 5 months with a sting as painful as a scorpion sting. It is interesting to note that during the dark ages, and particularly during the various inquisitions carried out by the leaders of the Catholic church, torture devices of unspeakable horror were devised by those claiming to be of the “church of God” and used on those whose only crimes were a true faith in God and refusal to accept the false teachings of the “church.” God will turn the tables on those who reject His message during this torturous time in the tribulation.

“torment them for five months”

The typical life-span of a locust invasion is five months from May through September, once again indicating the resemblance of these demonic beings to locusts. While some commentators have attempted to explain the five months as something other than a literal five months, nowhere in scripture is the word *mēnas* used to refer to anything other than a literal month.

“torment of a scorpion”

A scorpion sting is excruciatingly painful and can last for days on end. Some scorpions can inject powerful enough venom that death occurs after days of torment.

“people will seek death and will not find it”

The torturous pain inflicted by these demonic beings will be so overwhelming that people thus inflicted will seek death as a way out, but they will not be able even to commit suicide to escape the torture. And, even if they could die, they would only be giving up temporary torture for eternal torture!

Revelation 9: 7-10

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, their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; 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. They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails.

“like ...looked like ... like ... like ... like ... like ... like ...”

Throughout John’s description of these beings, he uses the word *hōs* meaning “like” and various forms of *homoios* meaning “similar to” or “resembling.” The word *homoios* denotes a correspondence in feature, property, or nature. It does not mean “the same as.” John has never seen creatures like this before and uses comparative descriptions to describe the features of these creatures the best that he can.

“appearance”

The word “appearance” is also translated from *homoios*, meaning “likeness.” We are not told anything specific about the size of these “locust-like” creatures. The fact that they are repeatedly compared to locusts, however, seems to imply that they are small. Though small, they are nonetheless shaped like horses ready for battle. This implies that these beings are aggressive. Upon their heads are something like crowns (*stephanos*) similar to gold. This seems to imply that their power (authority) had been given to them. The description of hair like women’s hair may imply that it was long rather than a short stubble. The description of their teeth indicates their fierceness and voraciousness.

“breastplates”

The word translated “breastplates” is *thorax*, meaning “the chest area.” The fact that their chests were like chests of iron implies that they were resistant to or possibly even immune to destruction. This would make their torment even more frightening if they couldn’t be killed.

“noise of their wings”

The sonic pitch of their wings was apparently a low rumbling frequency rather than the high frequency that we are accustomed to hearing from most insects, as evidenced by the fact that they sounded like chariots and horses running into battle.

“stings like scorpions”

Their tormenting power is once again likened to that of scorpion stings. It is said that they had tails like scorpions and stings (literally “points”) in their tails. Notice that it is not “like stings in their tails,” but “they *have* tails and stings.”

Revelation 9:11, 12

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. The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.

“king ... Abaddon ... Apollyon”

Both the Hebrew word *abaddōn* and the Greek word *apolluōn* mean “destroyer.” Some commentators specifically identify this individual as Satan but the text does not say this. Nowhere else in Scripture are either of these names applied to Satan, and he is nowhere else described as the angel of the abyss. Instead, he is said to be the “prince of the power of the air” and is nowhere else even associated with the abyss until he is incarcerated there *after* the battle of Armageddon.

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. (Revelation 20:1-3)

“The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come. “

In spite of the fact that the inhabitants of the earth have undergone agonizing torture for five months, John reminds us that this is but one of the three woes predicted. There are yet two more, and the sixth and seventh trumpet judgments will be even worse than this one.

Revelation 9:13, 14

Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

“a voice”

In the original Greek this is written “one voice.” There is a single unified voice giving the command to the sixth angel to release the four bound angels.

“from the four horns of the golden altar”

This is most likely the voice of God (probably the Lamb) coming from the altar of incense from which the hot coals were taken and thrown to the earth back in chapter eight. This may indicate that this judgment is in response to the prayers of the martyrs under the altar as described in Revelation 6:9, 10.

“the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates”

Since good angels are never said anywhere in Scripture to be bound, these must be fallen angels (demons). The word “bound” is in the perfect tense indicating past completed action with current continuous effect. These angels were bound at some time in the past and, as a result, are now bound. The use of the definite article “the” indicates that these are four specific angels bound there. We don't

really know who they are, but here's what John MacArthur said about them in his *New Testament Commentary, Revelation 1-11*:

“Their precise identity is not revealed, but they may be the demons that controlled the four major world empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Daniel 10 provides insight into the warfare between holy angels and the demons that influence individual nations. In verse 13 a holy angel told Daniel that ‘the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.’ Then in verse 20 he added, ‘Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come.’ Whoever they are, these four powerful fallen angels control a huge demonic army set to wage war against fallen mankind when God releases them to do so.”

Revelation 9:15, 16

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. The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number.

“the hour, the day, the month, and the year”

The use of the definite article “the” indicates that this is not a timeframe during which they are released. Instead, it is a specific point in time; “The very hour of the very day of the very month of the very year ordained by God.” The significant thing is that these four powerful demons are totally under God’s control and are bound until the specific point in time that God has determined to release them.

“to kill a third of mankind”

The result of the release of these four demons is that one-third of all of mankind still alive up to this point will be killed. You may recall that back in **Revelation 6:8** the judgment of the fourth seal (death riding on a pale horse with Hades following along with him) resulted in one-quarter of the population of the earth being killed. From the three-quarters of the population that was left, one-third of those are now killed. Between these two judgments alone, one-half of the population of the earth is killed. And that does not include the many who were, and are yet to be, killed by the other judgments and those who will be killed for their testimony.

“The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand”

This is 200 million. This is the single largest specific number written in the New Testament. Often the term “myriads of myriads” is used in Scripture to denote an uncountable number. The fact that this is “two myriads of myriads,” however, coupled with John’s statement that “I heard the number of them” indicates that it is a specific number.

Revelation 9:17-19

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. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. 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.

There is disagreement even among Biblical scholars, even those who hold to a literal interpretation of the book of Revelation, as to whether this army is a human army or a demonic army. Some believe that the description given here of the horsemen and of their destructive power is a description of modern warfare,

perhaps of tanks or airplanes. This argument is based on the description of “[by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths.](#)” However, the description of the power that is in their tails, “[like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm](#)” does not sound like modern tanks or planes. I think that it is best to think of these horsemen as demonic beings who have been given authority to kill mankind.

“[horses in my vision](#)”

Literally this is “[horses in the sight.](#)” The word translated “[vision](#)” is not the word normally used for a spiritual or prophetic “[vision](#)” but refers to “[that which is perceived by the sense of sight.](#)” Therefore, it appears that John actually saw some kind of horsemen, not military vehicles. The description of the horses and horsemen must, therefore, be of demonic hordes.

“[breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur](#)”

Literally this is “[chests fiery, hyacinth like, and sulfurous.](#)” It most likely refers to the colors red, blue, and yellow.

Revelation 9:20, 21

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, nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

“[sorceries](#)”

This is a translation of the Greek word *pharmakeiōn*, from which we get our English word “[pharmacy.](#)” It is primarily a reference to the use of drugs and, by extension, to acts of sorcery and witchcraft.

The most amazing part of this entire chapter is what is stated in these two verses, “[the rest of mankind ... did not repent of the works of their hands ... nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.](#)” Even after five months of demonic torture from the locust-like beings, followed by the annihilation of one-third of the human population by these demonic war creatures, mankind is so spiritually blind that they refuse to believe that God is willing to accept their repentance and save them. Instead, because of their total spiritual blindness, they steadfastly hang on to their pagan beliefs and demonic worship and refuse to give up their sinful acts in exchange for God’s mercy.

We are not told what criteria these demonic hordes will use to decide who to kill and who to spare. It is entirely possible that those who worship the beast and fully buy-in to his satanically inspired religion are protected from the demon army and that those who are “[on the fence](#)” or who are converts to the true faith are the ones who are killed. This would explain why those who remain are so unrepentant.

Whether this be the case or not, in the face of the witnessing of the 144,000, the two witnesses of Revelation chapter 11, and the testimony of the thousands of martyrs killed for their faith, the unrepentant earth dwellers are so tied to their own man-made, demon-worshipping, humanistic beliefs that they will refuse to submit to the mercy of a loving God and they will cling to their own pride, thus incurring the wrath of a righteous God. This will be a time of widespread religion throughout the earth, but a religion that is dead. Warren Wiersbe put it this way:

[Here are dead sinners worshiping dead gods!](#)

That’s incredible! Here is mankind at its lowest, refusing to believe the truth because it is inconvenient. And yet, even Isaiah recognized that it is only through the power of God that a sinner can come to a saving knowledge of the Lord.

Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them."
(John 12:39, 40)

John was quoting this from Isaiah's commissioning by God:

And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."
(Isaiah 6:9-10)

So What?

Don't you find it amazing that after God has demonstrated His power over mankind - after having several large heavenly bodies fall from the sky, blazing with fire and Sulphur – after a monster tsunami that destroys 1/3 of all ships and having 1/3 of the animals in the sea die – after having 1/3 of all the trees on the planet burn up – after much of the earth's water supply has become bitter and poisonous– after the days being shortened to 18 hours instead of 24 – after five months of demonic scorpion torture – after 1/3 of the population of the earth is killed - the surviving permanent earth dwellers still, still refuse to believe that these things are from God. In fact, it appears that they still refuse to even believe that there is a God!

It's pretty remarkable, isn't it? After all the hints that God has given them and they still ignore Him. So, how about you, my friend? Are you ignoring the clues that God is giving to you?

As you know, the men in this church have been going through a book called *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Through this study we are all becoming more aware of God's presence throughout the day. You notice that I didn't say that we are becoming more aware of God's blessings throughout the day. After all, the Christian life is not all sunshine and roses. Did you know that? We can become aware of God's presence even in the difficulties of life. Let me give you an example:

Last Tuesday night I only got a few hours of sleep. So, Wednesday, I went to bed early and got a great night's sleep, nine hours! Thank-you, Lord! But I still felt groggy after I got up, so I planned on napping for a little bit later in the morning. However, just as I was about to fall asleep, I heard a knock on the front door. I had forgotten that I had agreed to watch my granddaughter, Abby, for a few hours. We ended up watching an episode of *The Chosen* together. That was a blessing. But even though we had a great time together, it's not how I had planned to spend my morning. Thank-you, Lord! Then after she left, I headed out to mow the grass in our field. This is the field where I got the lawn mower stuck two weeks ago. Well, guess what? I got stuck again, but this time my good friend with the tractor was out of town for a few days, so the lawn mower is still stuck in the field. Thank-you, Lord!

Then I got a text from my granddaughter, Samantha, asking if I could take her to the eye doctor to pick-up her new glasses if she could get an appointment in the next couple of days. I texted her back to see if the eye doctor was open on Saturday, so her mother could take her. She texted me back almost immediately to say that she just got an appointment in two hours and wanted me to take her. By this time, I didn't want to do anything but what I had planned for the day. However, I was very aware of the presence of God and realized that He is blessed when we make the good of others more important than our own. Thank-you, Lord! So, I told her I would take her. As I picked her up, she informed me that she needed to be brought back to the school after the eye doctor appointment. I had planned on just going home afterward. Now, I had to drive all the way back to the school to take her back. Thank-you, Lord!

After I got home, as I was parking the car in the garage, I realized that I had not accomplished anything that I had planned on accomplishing and the day was nearly over.

I was also reminded of what the writer of Hebrews tells us:

And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? (Hebrews 12:5-7)

We who are the adopted sons of God are disciplined by God. And yes, ladies, even you are called sons of God, meaning those children who will inherit the riches of the father. In fact, this disciplining is the evidence that we *are* His children.

So, as I sat in the car in the garage, I thought, “Lord, are you chastening me? Have I done something that I need to apologize to someone for? As I talked to the Lord about it, I realized that my heart was clean before Him. This was not chastening. This was God helping me be more aware of His presence all day long. And it worked!

Now, if we can be so aware of God’s presence when things don’t go well, how much more so when we are experiencing His blessings, right? Unfortunately, when God is raining His blessings all around us, we tend to become like the permanent earth dwellers. Not only do we not recognize that He is the source of our blessings, we act as if He hasn’t had a thing to do with them and we take credit for them ourselves.

Now What?

Let’s take a minute here to think about all the blessings that God has laid on us. If you can’t think of any, then your focus may be on your problems instead of your blessings. Do you have your health? A home? A car? Clothes on your back? More than one pair of shoes? More than 10 pairs of shoes? Food in your refrigerator? A job? An amazing church family? How about a salvation that you so, so, so don’t deserve? How about a loving Heavenly Father who has promised that He will never leave you, nor forsake you? How about the promise that we will spend eternity with our God without any pain or suffering of any kind, ever again? How about the promise that He will take you home before He rains down terror on the Permanent Earth Dwellers? How about the fact that we will be sitting in His presence watching it all from His throne room in Heaven! And, that’s just a few of the blessings that pop off the top of my head.

Let’s take the next 60 seconds to think of how God has blessed us and give Him thanks. Then, I challenge you to take even more time this afternoon and thank Him for all that He brings into our lives.

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