

Revelation 09 - Trumpet #5: Demon Locusts; Trumpet #6: Euphrates Angels; 1/3 of World Killed

IV. After These Things (Rev 4:1–22:21)

(2) During the Tribulation (Rev 6:1–19:21)

(C) 7th Seal & 1st Six Trumpet Judgments (Rev 8:1–9:21)

(f) 5th Trumpet - Demons released (9:1-12)

(i) Discharging angel (9:1)

(ii) Angel opens the abyss (9:2)

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(g) 6th Trumpet - one-third of humanity killed (9:13-21)

(i) Army released (9:13-15)

(ii) Army's number (9:16)

(iii) Army's description (9:17)

(iv) Army's destruction (9:18-19)

(v) Humanity's non-repentance (9:20-21)

In this chapter the use of the similes ("as" and "like") is more prevalent than any other chapter in the Bible. This shows how difficult it was for John to describe the scene which he saw in the vision.

Revelation 9

(f) 5th Trumpet - Demons released (9:1-12)

(i) Discharging angel (9:1)

1 Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a **star** from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the **key** to the shaft of the **abyss** was given to him.

1 Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him.

1 When the fifth angel blew his trumpet, I saw a star that had fallen to earth from the sky. The star was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.

1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

- "...star" - can refer to an angel (Cf. 1:16,20; 9:1; 12:4,9; Cf. Job 38:7; Is 14:12), but could also be a literal star (6:13; 8:10-11)

— Since this "star" is referred to with personal pronouns ("him," v1; "He," v2), he receives (v1) and uses (v2) a key, here it is referring to an angel

— Attempts to identify this angel/intelligent being have abounded, however the "star" must be an unfallen angel dispatched on a divine mission to advance the next stage of God's punishment against the rebellious earth dwellers

- "...key" - provides permission to open something

— In this case, the angel (star) had permission to open the abyss

- "...abyss" - *abusso*, the bottomless pit; a subterranean cavern connected to the earth's surface by a "shaft," whose opening has a secured lid of some type

— *Abusso* is used 9x in the NT, 7x in Revelation (9:2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3; Cf. Luke 8:31; Rom 10:7)

— It's a temporary holding area ("prison") for fallen angels/demons until after the millennial kingdom, when Satan and all demons will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. Some of these demons will be released back onto the earth during this Trumpet judgment.

- "...was given" - *edothē*, no angel retains permanent possession of the key to the abyss, so God had to give it to him for use on this special occasion

— A different angel will later be dispatched, also carrying the key to the abyss, to incarcerate Satan after the Second Coming and before the inauguration of the millennial kingdom (Cf. 20:1-2)

- "...him" - masculine personal pronoun referring to the 5th angel; same as the "He" in v2 [OT reference: Is 14:12-14]

(ii) Angel opens the abyss (9:2)

2 **He** opened the shaft of the abyss, and **smoke** ascended out of the shaft like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened from the smoke of the shaft.

2 He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.

2 It opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and smoke came out of the shaft like the smoke from a large furnace. The sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.

2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the

pit.

- "He" - masculine person pronoun referring to the fifth angel; an indication that the "star" (v1) represents an angel
- The angel now proceeds with his appointed mission of releasing the occupants of the abyss
 - The angel used the key given to him (by God) to unlock the shaft leading to the underground chamber. When he did this, smoke rose from the shaft like from an erupting volcano
 - "...smoke" - may pertain to holy things (8:4; 15:8), but most of the time it is in connection with judgment, doom, and torment (9:17,18; 18:9,18; 19:3)
 - Abraham saw smoke "like a furnace" after God judged Sodom & Gomorrah (Gen 19:27-28); smoke also "ascended...like a furnace" while Moses and the Israelites were at the base of Mount Sinai
 - The volume of smoke was so great that it will darken the light of the sun and the air through which that light might pass
 - Under Trumpet #4, the luminaries themselves were struck, which obscured their light; here, it is the hindering of the sun's effect that is struck, not the sun itself

(iii) Demons emerge from the abyss (9:3)

3 Then out of the smoke came **locusts** upon the earth, and **power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.**

3 Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

3 Locusts came out of the smoke onto the earth, and they were given power like that of earthly scorpions.

3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

- "...locusts" - locusts have been used by God in judgment before, most notably during the 8th Plague in Egypt (Ex 10:12-20; Cf. Joel 1:2-14)... but these are not ordinary locusts

— These "locusts" are described differently than the locusts God used in Egypt:

- They came out of the Abyss (v3)
- These locusts do not eat grass/vegetation (v4), as did the locusts in Egypt or as normal locusts do today
- These locusts attack mankind; normal locusts consume vegetation
- These locusts had the power to hurt people to the degree that scorpions can, an ability that normal locusts do not have
- These locusts have a leader (v11), but according to Prov 30:27 normal locusts do not have a leader

- Thus, it's best to view these locusts as demons because:
 - They come from the abyss, where demons are incarcerated
 - They attack man rather than consume vegetation
 - They have a form that no man has ever seen (Cf. 16:13; see note below on ability to demons to take on various material forms)
 - They are bent on spreading as much misery as possible

- The NT outlines two classes of fallen angels/demons:

- Those who are free to roam and can attack us at will (Eph 6:12)
- Those who are incarcerated and *not* free to roam (1 Peter 3:19-20; 2 Peter 2:4-5; Jude 6-7) because of God's judgment from the Gen 6 episode

— These "locusts" are the latter group, the incarcerated demons/fallen angels from Gen 6 who assume a locust-like form. They have been in prison since the days of Noah because of their sexual interaction with human women in Satan's effort to tarnish the human gene pool and prevent the birth of the Messiah (Cf. Gen 6:1-4).

1 Peter 3:19-20:

19 in which He also went and made proclamation to **the spirits in prison**,
 20 **who once were disobedient when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark**, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the* water.

2 Peter 2:4-5:

4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, held for judgment;
 5 and did not spare the ancient world, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

Jude 6-7:

6 And angels who did not keep their own domain but abandoned their proper dwelling place, **these He has kept in eternal restraints under darkness** for the judgment of the great day,
 7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they **in the same way as these angels indulged in sexual perversion and went after strange flesh**, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

- The ability of demons to assume an assortment of material forms is evident in 16:13 where three demons appear like frogs
- As for objections that demons cannot assume physical shape: Jesus cast demons, at their request, into a herd of pigs, who then jumped off a cliff (Matt 8:30-32; Mark 5:1-13; Luke 8:27-33)

- "...power was given them" - divine permission allows them the stinging power of scorpions in their tails (v5,10) to inflict their agony
- "...as the scorpions of the earth have power" - note the use of simile "as"...these were scorpions (they were locusts), but their "power" was like that of a scorpion
- The scorpion is the largest and most malignant of all insects. Its sting, located near end of its tail, is not always fatal, but can be. It ranks with the snake in its hostility toward human beings (Cf. Luke 10:19; 11:12).

[OT reference: Ex 10:12-15]



(iv) Demonic activity (9:4-6)

4 **They were told** not to hurt the **grass of the earth**, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the people who do not have the **seal of God** on their foreheads.

4 They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

4 They were told not to harm the grass on the earth, any green plant, or any tree. They could harm only the people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

- "They were told" - God exercises His sovereignty to narrowly control the impact of this judgment. He placed strict boundaries on these demon locusts:

- They *could not* hurt the grass of the earth (v4)
- They *could not* hurt any green thing (v4)
- They *could not* hurt any trees (v4)
- They *could not* hurt the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who have the seal of God on their foreheads (v4)
- They *could not* kill anyone (v5)
- They *could* wage their terror against mankind for 5 months (v5)

- God narrowly commissioned these demonic creatures to inflict severe pain on the earth dwellers who do not have God's "seal" of ownership and protection on their foreheads (7:2-3)

— Just as the Israelites in Egypt escaped the plagues that punished the Egyptians (Ex 8:22; 9:4; 10:23), the servants of God during the Tribulation period will be exempt from the attacks of these demon locusts

— God's restraint will not allow the demon locusts to touch what locusts usually destroy: vegetation. Damage to plant life came earlier (Cf. 8:7).

— Ironically, it is the earth dwellers, in full rebellion against God, who will be tortured by demons who are also in full rebellion against God. This is a classic example of the confusion and irrationality of evil, which logically should aligned with one another against God.

— This judgment will come upon unbelieving earth dwellers only; up to this point in the chronology of Revelation, the only people who have the seal of God upon them are the 144,000 Jewish evangelists

— For Church Age believers, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13; 4:30). After we're saved, nothing can come into our lives without the divine permission of God.

— This is why salvation (justification) is such a big deal. Once we're are regenerated and sealed by the Holy Spirit, Satan can do nothing to us unless God first allows it.

- "...grass of the earth" - all of the green grass of the earth was destroyed in the 1st Trumpet judgment (Cf. 8:7, see note there); either the grass referred to here is not "green grass" or some grass has grown back

- "...seal of God" - refers to the 144,000 (Cf. 7:2-3; 14:1)

- The post-Tribulation view uses this verse to bolster their claim that God will protect believers (the Church) through the Tribulation. However, in context, this verse only exempts certain items in creation and certain people from the affects of the 5th Trumpet judgment.

It is not a blanket insurance policy of protection for all believers from all Tribulation judgments (16:2; Cf. 6:1-2,9-11; 7:9,13-14; 13:15).

[OT reference: Ezek 9:4]

5 And they were **not permitted to kill anyone**, but to **torment** for **five months**; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a person.

5 And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man.

5 They were not allowed to kill them, but were only allowed to torture them for five months. Their torture was like the pain of a scorpion when it stings someone.

5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

- Further limitations are placed on the demon locusts by God: they could torture but not kill, and their reign of terror would be limited to five months

- "...not permitted to kill anyone" - God placed a limit on the demons to torment only, but they couldn't kill anyone; speaks to the sovereignty of God

- "...torment" - *basanizō*, to render acute pain, either physical (Matt 8:6; Rev 12:2), mental (Matt 8:29; 2 Peter 2:8), or metaphorical (Matt 14:24; Mark 6:48)

— In Revelation where persecution is so much in view, the thought of torment as punishment is uppermost (Cf. 9:5; 11:10; 14:10, 11; 18:7,10,15; 20:10). Rev 12:2 is the only exception.

— "...five months" - God placed a time limit on this judgment (150 days), as well as on the scope of the demon's power

— Only other 150 day timeframe in Scripture is Noah's flood (Gen 7:24)

— 150 days is approximately the lifespan of a locust...usually from May to September

6 And **in those days people will seek death** and will not find it; **they will long to die**, and death **will flee** from them!

6 And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them.

6 In those days people will seek death, but never find it. They will long to die, but death will escape them.

6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

- Interesting verse...for the first time since 4:1, John doesn't report what he saw, but rather speaks as a prophet, predicting the future

- This is another indication that Revelation is *prophetic* rather than *apocalyptic* in genre, which confirms that the literal method is the correct way of interpreting such material
- "...in those days" - during the five-month reign of terror of these demonic locusts
- "...people will seek death" - the torment of these demon locusts will bring such desperation to mankind that their natural desire will be to commit suicide; death is the preferred option over enduring this judgment for five months
- God's purpose with this judgment is to bring people to the end of themselves, and thus repent, but instead it evokes a quest for death
- Think of a situation where the pain and torment is so bad that all you want to do is kill yourself, yet death is not an available option
- Job 3 describes Job's dire mental state where he wished that he had never been born (v1-10), wished he would've died at birth (v11-19), and wished he could die right then and there (v20-26). 3:21 says that he "longed for death, but there is none."
- "...they will long" - *epithymēsousin*, a vehement desire
- Elijah desired to die in desperation while fleeing from Jezebel (Cf. 1 Kings 19:4)
- Job also desired death shortly after the events of Job 1-2 (Cf. Job 3, esp v21)
- "...will flee" - *pheugei*, emphasizes the elusiveness of death
- It's in the futuristic present tense, not only predicting the flight of death, but also affirms the certainty of that flight
- Death will not just be hard to find...it will aggressively run away from those pursuing it [OT reference: Job 3:21]

OT Background on the Demon Locusts

Rev 9 describes two major demonic invasions, the first to torment people for five months (but not kill them), and the second to kill one-third of humanity. The OT background to this passage is Joel 1:15—2:11. Joel begins to portray this demonic invasion by describing the devastation of the Day of Jehovah, or the Tribulation (1:15-20). After announcing its approach (v15), he relates the results on the crops (v16-17): little remains either for the Temple (v16) or for sustenance (v17). This is followed by a description of the devastation of the livestock (v18-20).

Joel then proceeds to give an account of the invasion itself (Joel 2:1-11). The alarm is sounded (v1), announcing the approaching army of demons, giving clear evidence that the Day of Jehovah has arrived with a vengeance. He then describes the Day of Jehovah (v2a) as being composed of gloominess, clouds, and thick darkness. As dawn is sudden and spreads around a mountain, likewise this judgment of the Day of Jehovah is sudden and widespread. It is then that Joel points to the invading army (v2b-9). He describes their approach, which shows their uniqueness (v2b) and their devastation (v3).

What is related here is similar to the Revelation passage, which again points to something other than human. The description of the invading army is presented next (v4-9), giving their appearance (v4), noise (v5), terror (v5-6), speed (v7), discipline (v8) and their attack (v9). The similarity with Revelation is striking and again points to these invaders as being demons. The results (v10) of this demonic invasion include convulsions of nature and a total blackout, the third one of the end time. The passage concludes with the reason for the invasion (v11): the judgment of God.

The text states that the army is great, for there are two hundred million demons, and it is enough for God to execute His Word: the destruction of one-third of humanity. It was pointed out in the introduction that one of the purposes of the Revelation was to give the chronological sequence to many of the OT prophecies. This is one example.

Dangers of Interpretation

Many conservative commentators and interpreters tend to over sensationalize the following passage. When studying Bible prophecy, you have to moderate between two extremes: seeing too little or under interpreting prophetic passages, or over-sensationalizing and seeing too much in a prophetic passage. Both extremes are equally damaging to the Word of God.

These "over-interpreters" see helicopters and other military machinery in these passages. The problem is, these come out of the abyss, not the United States Air Force; they are incarcerated demons who have been released, not created by Lockheed Martin or some other defense contractor. In addition, John uses figurative language along with similes in his attempt to explain what he sees.

(v) Demonic description (9:7-10)

7 The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like human faces.

7 The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.

7 The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were victor's crowns that looked like gold, and their faces were like human faces.

7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.

- After covering the origination and effects of the demon locusts (v1-6), John now describes the locusts themselves...

- "...like" - John uses similes a total of 9x to describe these locusts, as he struggles to describe 21st century beings with a 1st century vocabulary

- In his description, he begins with the head and progresses toward the tail of the creatures

- Basically, these creatures are "like" locusts, but their supernaturalness adds a degree of dreadfulness to their appearance for the sake of enhancing their terrifying effect
 - their appearance is "like" horses prepared for battle (v7)
 - "appeared" to be crown on their heads; the crowns were "like" gold (v7)
 - their faces were "like" human faces (v7)
 - their hair "like" the hair of women (v8)
 - their teeth were "like" the teeth of a lion (v8)
 - their breastplate was "like" a breastplate of iron (v9)
 - the sound of their wings was "like" the sound of horses rushing to battle (v9)
 - their tails are "like" the tail of a scorpion (v10)
- "...like horses prepared for battle" - the demon locusts resembled horses prepared for battle (Cf. Joel 2:4)
- "...on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold" - the demon locusts had something on the tops of their heads that *appeared* to be like a crown, but was not crown
- "...like human faces" - their resemblance to men suggests they have the intelligence and capacities of human beings, but clearly they are not men
- Mankind and the demon locusts are clearly distinct from each other in v3-4

8 They had hair **like the hair of women**, and their teeth were **like the teeth of lions**.

8 They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like *the teeth* of lions.

8 They had hair like women's hair and teeth like lions' teeth.

8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions.

- "...like the hair of women" - locusts have antennae, but not "hair"; this suggests long hair on their heads
- "...like *the teeth* of lions" - denotes their voracity (Cf. Joel 1:6); ordinary locusts have teeth, but not the powerful teeth of these creatures

— In spite of the voracity of their teeth, these demons do not use them to inflict pain or tear their victims apart

[OT reference: Joel 1:6]

9 They had breastplates **like breastplates of iron**; and the **sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots**, of many horses rushing to battle.

9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle.

9 They had breastplates like iron, and the noise of their wings was like the roar of chariots with many horses rushing into battle.

9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

- "...like breastplates of iron" - natural locusts have the appearance being equipped with armor
- The iron breastplates give them the appearance of invulnerability (Cf. v17)
- "...sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots" - the sound of their wings is the sound of 1st century battle
- The rushing sound of the swarm creates a psychological problem for mankind and implies the hopelessness of resisting them. Joel compares the noise of locusts' wings to the clatter and clangor of chariot wheels and the hoofbeat of horses moving swiftly into battle (Joel 2:4-5; Cf. 2 Kings 7:6; Jer 47:3). The same pictured here.

[OT reference: Joel 2:5]

10 They have tails like scorpions, and **stings**; and in their tails is their power to **hurt** people for **five months**.

10 They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.

10 They had tails and stingers like scorpions, and they had the power to hurt people with their tails for five months.

10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

- "...stings" - *kentra*, to prick or sting

- "...hurt" - *adikēsai*, what was referred to as "torment" (*basanismos*) in v5 becomes the power to "hurt" in v10

— Notice again that these demon locusts can only hurt people, not kill them, due to the limitation that God will place on them (v5-6)

- "...five months" - a reiteration of the time limit God has placed on this event

— The fact that the length of time of their torment is not six months, a year, two years, is due to God's grace. The earth dwellers who are the target of this judgment deserve full judgment, but God is gracious to give them enough judgment to hopefully bring about repentance.

(vi) Demonic leader (9:11)

11 They have as **king over them**, the **angel of the abyss**; his name in Hebrew is **Abaddon**, and in the Greek he has the name **Apollyon**.

11 They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.

11 They had the angel of the bottomless pit ruling over them as king. In Hebrew he is called Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.

11 And they had a king over them, *which is* the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue *is* Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath *his* name Apollyon.

- This verse is further confirmation that these locust creatures are not actual locusts, but locust-like demons. This verse gives the leader a name (two in fact), calls him an angel (demon), and assigns him a role as king of the demonic locusts.

- "...king over them" - the Holy Spirit inserts this to help us identify these beings as not ordinary locusts

— Prov 30:27 says that actual locusts do not have a king/leader, but instead go out in ranks

— The resemblance of the advancing locusts to an army going out to battle suggests the need for a commander to coordinate the battle plan

— "...Abaddon" - *Hebraisti*, Hebrew name, meaning "I destroy"

— "...Apollyon" - *Abaddōn*, Greek name, meaning "Destroyer"

— "...angel of the abyss" - many interpreters believe this is Satan, but Scripture typically uses other terms to identify Satan himself; this is likely a high-ranking demon

— Even though Satan is "the prince of demons" (Matt 12:24) does not necessarily make him king over demons in the abyss. The appearance of Satan later (12:3,9) is much more dramatic than this introduction of this angel.

— Satan's domain is in the heavenly places, not the "lower parts" (Eph 6:12. Just like God has with the angels, Satan has leaders and sub-leaders among the demons.

— Satan does not have a connection with the abyss in Scripture until he is cast into it after the Second Coming (20:1-3).

— The revelation of his name ("Destruction/Destroyer") simply expresses his objective

— The objective of these demons, like their leader's name implies, is to destroy people. God grants this lead "demon-king" creature permission to carry out his objective against unbelievers as part of God's outpouring of wrath on earth dwellers (Cf. Job 2:6).

[OT reference: Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Ps 88:11; Prov 15:11]

(vii) Remaining trumpets (9:12)

12 The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.

12 The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.

12 The first catastrophe is over. After these things, there are still two more catastrophes to come.

12 One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

- This is probably a parenthetic mention by John, but it could be a continuation of the eagle's announcement from 8:13

— Mankind will welcome the passing of the first "woe" but there is no rest for the weary as there are two more "woes" to come...

- "...first woe" - 5th Trumpet judgment (demon locusts)

- "...has passed" - John is referring to the future time of fulfillment; the first "woe" had not passed at the time of John's vision or writing
- "...two woes" - 6th & 7th Trumpet judgments:
 - The 6th Trumpet will result in the death of one-third of the world's population
 - The 7th Trumpet is simply a pause in the action in preparation for the seven Bowl judgments; the 7th Trumpet is the worst judgment in the Trumpet series because it will unleash the 7 Bowl judgments
- "...still coming" - erchetai, the second "woe" commences with the conclusion of this announcement (9:13) and continues until 11:14 (with an intervening parenthesis (10:1—11:13).
- "...after these things" - indicates that the "woes" (not just the visions) are consecutive, not simultaneous. Woe #2 and #3 both come after woe #1.

(g) 6th Trumpet - one-third of humanity killed (9:13-21)

It's important to note the distinction between the 5th Trumpet judgment (demon locusts out of the abyss, who torment the earth dwellers for five months but don't touch the sealed 144,000), and this judgment, brought about by mankind, coming from the east (powered of course by demons).

Transitions	5th Trumpet	6th Trumpet
Scripture:	Rev 9:1-12	Rev 9:13-21
Source:	Abyss	East
Kind of army:	Demonic	Human

(i) Army released (9:13-15)

13 Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

13 Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

13 When the sixth angel blew his trumpet, I heard a voice from the four horns of the gold altar in front of God.

13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

- "...a voice" - whose voice? Many views but only two that stand up to any kind of rationale scrutiny:

- God the Father - this view has merit in that the altar is in the vicinity of the throne, and God certainly has the authority to set the second woe into action.
- The angel of the altar in 8:3 captures the strong points of other views, but eliminates their weaknesses. The stated connection of this angel with the golden altar and with the altar-requests of the saints for this judgment is ample reason to understand him to be the one giving direction to the sixth angel. In addition, the triple use of the article "the" (*ho*) with the identical phrase in 8:3 supplies corroboration for this conclusion. This is "the altar, the golden one, the one before God" in both verses. [Robert Thomas]

14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are **bound** at the great river **Euphrates**."

14 one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

14 It told the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are held at the great Euphrates River."

14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

- The 6th angel blew his trumpet (v13), then John heard a voice from the four horns of the gold altar (v13) that instruct the 6th angel (who had just blown the trumpet, v13) to release the four angels who are bound at the Euphrates River.

- The 6th Trumpet judgment should be understood in concert with the 6th Bowl judgment
— The 6th Trumpet judgment will take place in the first half of the Tribulation; the 6th Bowl judgment will take place in the second half of the Tribulation

— The two judgments are related to each other, even though they take place at different times

— In this judgment, an army is being assembled in the east; by the time you get to Rev 16 (6th Bowl judgment), the Euphrates River is supernaturally dried up (Cf. 16:12) to prepare the way for this giant army to march into northern Israel for the final battle (Armageddon).

- Many good commentators believe that this massive army from the "east" refers to China. However, "east" in the Bible always refers to the area around Babylon, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (Gen 2:8; 11:2; Matt 2:2).

- Not all of the 200 million (v16) troops will come from that area, but the Antichrist's headquarters will be in Babylon, and it will be him who marshals these troops against Israel for battle
- "...bound" - these must be fallen angels since holy angels are never bound in Scripture (Cf. 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Rev 20:1ff)
- These are four fallen angels/demons who are kept "bound" until the divinely appointed time for them to perform as agents of God's wrath
- "...Euphrates" - the eastern boundary of Israel (Gen 15:18; Cf. Deut 1:7; Joshua 1:4; 1 Kings 4:21,24)
- References to this river dates from Eden: sin began here (Gen 2:14-15; 3:6-7); the first murder (Gen 4:8); the first world rebellion (Nimrod, Gen 10-11); Tower of Babel = Babylon: the fountainhead of idolatry and false worship
[OT reference: Gen 15:18; Deut 1:7; Joshua 1:4]

15 And the **four angels**, who had been **prepared** for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so **that they would kill a third of mankind**.

15 And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind.

15 So the four angels who were ready for that hour, day, month, and year were released to kill one-third of humanity.

15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

- "...the four angels" - the four angels (demons) who had been bound at the Euphrates Rivers (v14)

- "...prepared" - the four angels are in a state of readiness, awaiting their appointed time to swing into action

— Even though these angels had fallen from divine favor, they were still divinely prepared for their nefarious task. Other instances of divine preparation, in both a positive and negative sense, occur in Matt 25:34,41; Mark 10:40; Luke 2:31; 1 Cor 2:9; Rev 12:6; 16:12.

- "...the" - the definite article governing all four nouns (hour, day, month, year) does not denote duration, but that the occasion of each one of the time designations is one and the same: the appointed hour occurs on the appointed day, in the appointed month, and in the appointed year.

- "...hour and day and month and year" - these four angels are bound and present today, waiting for God's command at the specific time

— Another indication in Revelation of God's divine providence. God's actions are not accidental, but meticulously planned and precise in time, to the point of a fixed hour of a fixed day of a fixed month of a fixed year.

- All the forces of history are under God's sovereign control
- "...that" - expresses the goal of the mission (Cf. v5)
- "...they would kill a third of mankind" - this army is so large and powerful that as they are being summoned from Iraq/Babylon to gather in northern Israel, they kill one-third of mankind
- Physical death has already plagued the world under the 4th Seal (6:7-8) and the 3rd Trumpet (8:10-11), but not to the same extent as this
- Since one-quarter were killed as a result of the 4th Seal judgment (6:8), with another one-third killed here, over half of the world's population will be dead after the 6th Trumpet. Many more died as martyrs for their belief in Christ (Cf. Dan 12:1; Matt 24:21-22).
- There are many passages in Scripture that tell us about the unsurpassed destruction and calamity that will come upon the world during the Tribulation (Joel 2:2; Dan 12:1; Jer 30:7; Matt 24:21-22). However it is only the earth dwellers, those in rebellion against God, who will suffer death as a result of this "Woe."

(ii) Army's number (9:16)

16 The number of the armies of the horsemen was **two hundred million**; I heard the number of them.

16 The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.

16 The number of cavalry troops was 200,000,000. I heard how many there were.

16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

- The four fallen angels/demons stationed at the Euphrates led an innumerable army (200,000,000?) of fallen angels/demons to begin to wage war against the earth dwellers
- "...two hundred million" - literally "twice ten thousand times ten thousand"
- This is a puzzling number because the Greek language did not have a number that high; they had no words to communicate the number "two hundred million"
- If you look at the original Greek expression, it's the same form used to describe the number of angels in 5:11: "myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands"
- The reference John makes is not to a specific number, but to an astonishingly high number; an incalculable total
- If you take the 200 million number as literal, you're on good ground, but that's not what the Greek text actually says
- When John received this vision on the island of Patmos, there weren't even 200 million people on the earth at the time

(iii) Army's description (9:17)

17 And this is how I saw in my vision the horses and those who sat on them: *the riders had breastplates the color of fire, of hyacinth, and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths *came fire and smoke and brimstone.*

17 And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: *the riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone.*

17 This was how I saw the horses in my vision: The riders wore breastplates that had the color of fire, sapphire, and sulfur. The heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire, smoke, and sulfur came out of their mouths.

17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

- John may be attempting to describe some type of advanced weaponry here, or he may be viewing what is going on in the spiritual/angelic realm, but behind the scenes a demonic realm is motivating this human army

- John describes the appearance of the horses in his vision...

- "...breastplates *the color of fire, of hyacinth, and of brimstone*" - the horsemen wear brightly colored breastplates of red, blue, and yellow, suggesting demonic riders

- The Greek construction indicates that the breastplate described covered both rider and horse

- This is the only detail given about the riders, who wore only defensive armor according to their subordinate role compared to the horses

- "...the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions" - suggests that the army combines swiftness of horses with the majestic bearing of lions

- Lions elsewhere in Revelation symbolize terror (10:3), ferocity (9:8), and destructiveness (13:2)

- "...out of their mouths *came fire and smoke and brimstone" - the most destructive facet of the horses was their mouths, which emit fire, smoke, and brimstone

- "mouth" appears 3x in v17-19, as it does in connection with the 6th Bowl judgment (16:13)

(iv) Army's destruction (9:18-19)

18 **A third of mankind was killed** by these three **plagues**, by **thefire, thesmoke, and thebrimstone** which came out of their mouths.

18 A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths.

18 By these three plagues—the fire, the smoke, and the sulfur that came out of their mouths—one-third of humanity was killed.

18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

- "A third of mankind was killed" - Cf. v15

- "...plagues" - *plēgē*, same word used [LXX] to describe the plagues of Egypt (Cf. Ex 11:1)

- "...the" [3x] - the repetition of the definite article indicates that these are three distinct plagues. Together they will be responsible for the largest death toll in human history (so far).

- "...fire...smoke...brimstone" - natural elements that God has used in the past to bring judgment during similar conditions (Cf. Gen 19:24,28)

— He may use them again here, or they may be John's best description of other, more modern, agents of destruction

19 For **the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails**; for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them **they do harm**.

19 For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm.

19 For the power of these horses is in their mouths and their tails. Their tails have heads like snakes, which they use to inflict pain.

19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

- "...the power of the horses is in their mouths" - elaborated in v18

- "...and in their tails" - the tails of these demonic horses resemble snakes and have heads

- "...they do harm" - the power in the tails enables the horses to hurt/harm people physically

— The horse's tails torture with the pain of a snake-bite as the locusts of the previous (5th) Trumpet did with a scorpion sting. While the sting was the extent of the damage from the locusts, the demonic horses not only inflict comparable or worse pain, they also kill.

- The power of this demonic army, military machines, or whatever they are, are in both their mouths and their tails, with something like a serpent coming out of their tails

- The locusts (5th Trumpet) had the power to injure "like scorpions" with their tails (v10), but these horses (6th Trumpet) have power to kill (v15) "like serpents" with their "mouths and...tails" which is even worse.

We see that as these judgments from God proceed, the severity of the judgments increase exponentially. God is gradually turning up the "heat" of these judgments, showing His mercy, but also allowing room for repentance. For example, in the 5th Trumpet judgment,

the demon locusts (v4) were not allowed to hurt the grass trees or to kill anyone (v5). And the judgment had a time limit of five months.

Now in the 6th Trumpet judgment, one-third of the world's population is killed. This is God dialing up the severity of the judgments as the earth dwellers persist in their sin and unbelief. In Rev 8:8, one-third of the ocean is turned to blood; in Rev 16:3 all of the ocean is turned to blood.

This is how God works...His pattern is to start with small judgments to get our attention, then gradually "turn up the heat" if we persist in our sin or lack of faith. In the Egyptian plagues, Pharaoh's magicians were able to replicate the plagues early on under Satanic power, but when the fourth plague (gnats) came, they weren't able to replicate them any longer and finally admitted that these plagues were from the hand of God. Finally you get to the 10th plague in Egypt where all the firstborn were killed, and Pharaoh had a change of heart and let the Israelites leave.

God works the same way in our lives...you have a problem, you try to fix it, and it doesn't get fixed. You try to fix it again, it doesn't get fixed and in fact it gets worse. And finally you ask God what He is doing in all of this, and God says that's the response I wanted from you from day one. God often knocks us down so that we will look up.

(v) Humanity's non-repentance (9:20-21)

20 The **rest of mankind**, who were not killed by **these plagues, did not repent** of the **works of their hands** so as not to **worship demons** and the **idols** of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk;

20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk;

20 The rest of the people who survived these plagues did not repent from their evil actions or stop worshiping demons and idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which cannot see, hear, or walk.

20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

- "...rest of mankind" - those not killed by the 6th Trumpet, two-thirds of the world's population

- "...these plagues" - refers to the three instruments of death in the 6th Trumpet: fire, smoke, brimstone (v18)

- "...did not repent" - *oude metanoeō*, you would think that after all of these extremely severe judgments that people would repent...but they don't

- Repentance in Revelation denotes a change of mind in rejection of something that is anti-God (Cf. 2:21,22; 9:21; 16:11). What the earth dwellers fail to change their mind/turn away from here was "the works of their hands."
- "did not" - *oude*, intensifies the negating of *metanoeō*, and the tragic statement about those who remained alive
- These severe judgments do not move the remaining unbelievers, as a whole, to repent
- This is the first mention of the (non)repentance of the earth dwellers in the apocalyptic portion of Revelation (4:1—19:21); the only remaining mentions of repentance are 9:21; 16:9,11
- Even the kings and rulers of the earth hid in caves while recognizing that the judgments are coming from God (Cf. 6:15-16)...yet they still did not repent
- "...works of their hands" - elsewhere in Scripture, this phrase refers to idolatry (Cf. Deut 4:28; 27:15; 31:29; 2 Kings 19:18; 22:17; 2 Chr 32:19; 34:25; Ps 115:4; 135:15; Is 2:8; 17:8; 37:19; Jer 1:16; 10:3,9; 25:6-7,14; 32:30; 44:8; Hosea 14:3; Micah 5:13; Haggai 2:14; Acts 7:41)
- "...worship demons" - tapping into a spiritual power source that does not originate with God
- Throughout the Bible, worship given to idols is ultimately worship of demons (Cf. Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37; 1 Cor 10:21)
- It is ironic that the earth dwellers will not stop worshipping demons, the very beings responsible for their misery under the 5th & 6th Trumpet judgments
- Even something so great as the deaths of a significant portion of the world's people will still be insufficient to deter men from this practice,
- "...idols" - the outward form that demons assume in order to receive worship
- The utter foolishness of worshiping things instead of God is described in Is 46:1-4

21 and they did not repent of their **murders**, nor of their **witchcraft**, nor of their **sexualimmorality**, nor of their **thefts**.

21 and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

21 They did not repent from their murders, their witchcraft, their sexual immorality, or their thefts.

21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

- Mankind is no less willing to repent of their moral sins than they are of their idolatry
- "...murders" - not only murders (and abortion), but the celebration and jubilance around them, including late-term abortion and even infanticide

- "...witchcraft" - *pharmakeia*, sorceries, drug use, over the counter and recently legalized; marijuana legalization has desensitized us to the horrors of drug use
 - Prescription drugs are prevalent and growing...
 - Denotes any object or practice that makes someone susceptible to sin (Cf. Ex 22:18; Lev 20:27; Deut 18:10-12; 1 Sam 28:7; Acts 8:9; 13:8; 19:13-15)
- "...sexual immorality" - every form of sexuality is being promoted today except for the biblical standard for sexuality: one man with one woman for one lifetime
- "...thefts" - white collar and blue collar; the approach of socialism, which is government theft from the productive and given to the unproductive. "You work, I eat."
- All four sins listed in v21 are in lists of those excluded from the New Jerusalem (21:8; 22:15)