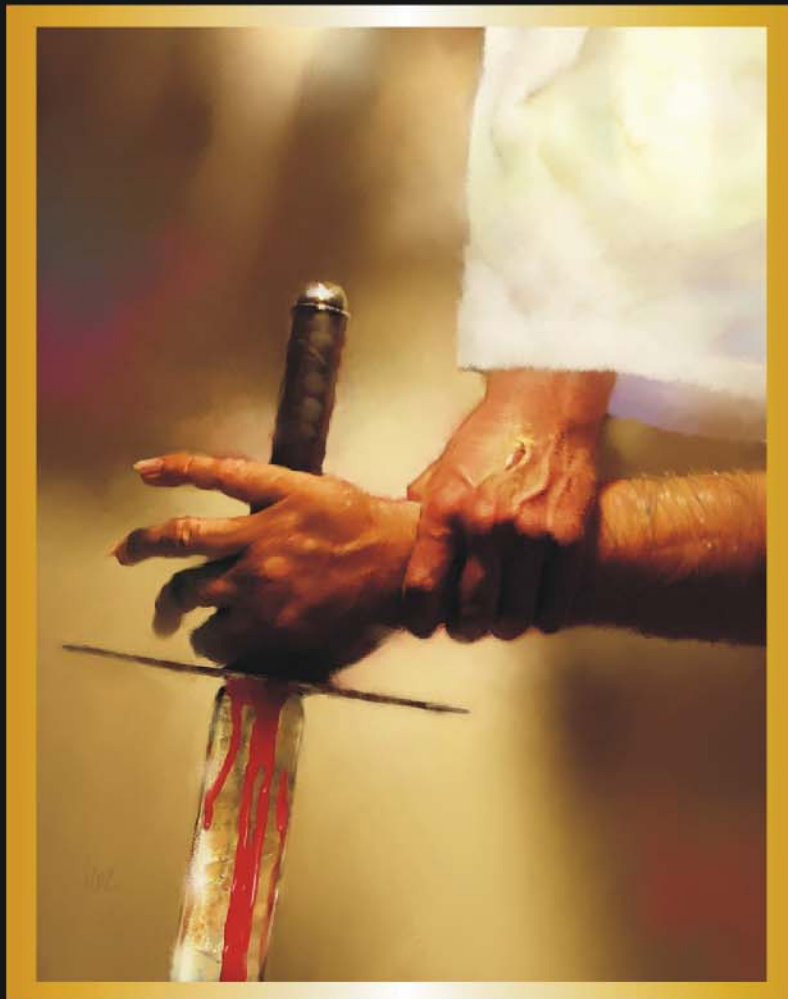


The Revelation



Chapter 9



REVELATION 9

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 of 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.

The Greek in this passage makes it clear that this is an individual not an actual star - the star falls and then is called "he." This is the same use of the term as occurs in Revelation 1:20 where the seven stars in Jesus' hand were symbolic of seven angels.

This messenger who arrives streaking across the sky to earth like another meteor opens the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rises smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air are darkened with the smoke from the shaft.

The ancient's view of what lay beneath the earth's crust was surprisingly accurate considering the evidence which they had at their disposal. They had experienced volcanic eruptions firsthand; they bathed in mineral pools and springs bubbling up from below which were warmed by geothermal energy; there were many who had seen smoking fumarols firsthand and had written about it so they had a pretty good idea that somewhere down below, in what appeared to be a bottomless pit was a great furnace which periodically darkened the planet with smoke and debris when its chimney shaft was opened.

Now volcanic eruptions begin to occur all over the earth. This world which Satan claims as his own begins to react to the assault of debris from the heavens and the cosmic forces generated by the approach of God. The earth's liquid core begins to boil hotter and hotter and the mantle in places starts to crack and break apart as

continents begin to shift, sending smoke up into the atmosphere to mix with the dust created by the meteor strikes.

The place where all of this originates is the place where fallen angels begged Jesus not to send them when he threw them out of the Gadarene's they possessed.³⁰² Paul describes it in terms of the place of the dead where Jesus went when he was crucified. It is the place from which "the beast" is believed to ascend when he comes to make war on the saints, to conquer and kill them."³⁰³ It is also the place where Satan is bound for a thousand years during the Millennium.³⁰⁴

The identity of the abyss, or the bottomless pit, has been the subject of debate in Christianity for at least two thousand years. It is also referred to as the chaotic deep. The Septuagint³⁰⁵, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses the term to denote a deep mass of waters, and was associated with the water which God created with the earth. Darkness is said to have been on the face of the deep or abyss³⁰⁶

Those who favor the traditional Greek idea that hell is a literal, constantly burning place, an administrative center where Satan rules supreme and where his rebel angels live when not involved in activities on this earth, believe that it is some nether place under the earth, closer to it's core than where we exist.

Those who prefer to accept the Bible's picture of hell as an event at the final end of earth's history where all evidence of Satan's rule on this earth is obliterated once and for all by nuclear fire would see this place as symbolic of earth and particularly the inner core of the earth. Whatever it is, it is a different place from the surface of the earth because that is where the demons were when they begged Jesus not to send them to the pit.

In no setting is this place every synonymous with hades or sheol.

302 Luke 8:31

303 Revelation 11:7; 17:8

304 Revelation 20:1-3

305 Literally, "The Seventy" refers to the 50 Greel/Hebrew scholars who translated the Hebrew Bible into Koine Greek.

306 Genesis 1:2; Psalm 24:2

The context is descriptive of a place where there is tremendous fiery heat and is a place where Satan and his minions wish to avoid at all cost - obviously not their normal habitat. Most probably it is describing the inner core of the earth where there is tremendous heat, pressure, and nuclear forces which we are only now discovering.

It is interesting to note that it is in this place where Satan is bound for a thousand years - not on the surface of the earth as is so often pictured.³⁰⁷

The Septuagint also used the Greek word for the bottomless abyss as the equivalent for the huge subterranean ocean sometimes described as the “water under the earth.”³⁰⁸ The early Hebrews believed that the earth was supposed to rest on a vast body of water which was the source of all springs of water and rivers.³⁰⁹ According to Job 41:32 it is the home of the leviathan in which he ploughs his hoary path of foam.

Because the Kingdom of Light was pictured as above in the heavens, it was only natural for the Bible writers to picture the Beast power ascending from below to persecute God’s loyal followers.³¹⁰

Revelation 9:3-12 - Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth; they were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green growth or any tree, but only those of mankind who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads; they were allowed to torture them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torture was like the torture of a scorpion, when it stings a man. And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them.

In appearance the locusts were like horses arrayed 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 scales like iron breastplates, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rush-

307 Revelation 20:1-3

308 Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 5:8

309 Deuteronomy 8:7; Psalm 24:2; 136:6

310 Revelation 11:7; 17:8

ing into battle. They have tails like scorpions, and stings, and their power of hurting men for five months lies in their tails. They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abad'don, and in Greek he is called Apol'lyon.

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

There are several aspects of this trumpet which will only be clearly understood when we get here to that time. Any attempt to incontestably define the identity of these locusts and their activities under the rule of Abaddon quickly degenerates into blatant speculation - something you can quickly discover in any well stocked Christian book store. There is nothing wrong with speculation as long as you make it very clear that that is what you are doing and don't become too dogmatic.

In this case, one must be honest with themselves and others about the fact that we have precious little solid evidence upon which to base any definitive basis for what is occurring in this passage. Among the conundrums one must face in this long passage are:

1. The time period covered by the rapacious attack of the locusts - is it literal or figurative. In a book where most commentators agree that at least some of the time periods are based on the day/year principle, one must be cautious before making the five month period a literal one. On the other hand, 300 years of rampage against rebellious humanity by these horrific creatures is more than we care to anticipate. Time and experience will only reveal what is intended here.

2. These creatures are under the control of Abaddon, the ruler of the abyss, yet they only are allowed to attack those who are not followers of God.. Something is happening here that we don't understand.

3. Their torture is directed against humans only, not the flora of earth. And it doesn't kill them, it just causes them unbelievable pain and distress - like a scorpions sting.

There is little problem in considering the appearance of these creatures as symbolic - after all most of the rest of the creatures of Daniel and Revelation are symbolic - such as 12 headed dragons, two-headed leopards, lop-sided bears, horns which talk and the like. It is not unreasonable to see the activities of these creatures as sym-

bolic as well - but symbolic of what will probably not be seen until it happens.

One thing that can be known is that whatever this means, it occurs at the very end as part of a cascading series of events heralding, like trumpets, the travel of God to this earth for the final battle between the Kingdoms of Darkness and Light. And one can say with certainty that it, and the two trumpets which follow, take whatever horrors the rebellious inhabitants of earth experience at his approach to a whole new height. Only these last three trumpets are also described as “woes” - something full of dread. (Revelation 8:13; 9:12)

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

Revelation 9:13-19 - 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.” So the four angels were released, who had been held ready for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, to kill a third of mankind. The number of the troops of cavalry was twice ten thousand times ten thousand;⁶ I heard their number. And this was how I saw the horses in my vision: the riders wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulphur, and the heads of the horses were like lions’ heads, and fire and smoke and sulphur issued from their mouths. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulphur issuing from their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; their tails are like serpents, with heads, and by means of them they wound.

The next woeful messenger, signaling terrible, dreadful things on earth, blows his trumpet and a voice from between the four horns of the golden altar before God tells the angel holding the trumpet to release the four messengers who have been bound at the great river Euphrates until the appropriate hour and day and month and year.

At least two possible explanations exist for the identity of these four angels. One is that they are four angels who have been waiting at the Euphrates river, waiting to do their job until they were released to proceed. In that scenario, their “binding” is that they are in place to do a job but are held in check waiting orders from headquarters. As gruesome as it is, they, are like the destroying angel in Egypt at the beginning of the Exodus who killed all of the first born of Egypt not covered by the blood on the

doorposts of the homes. They set out to kill one half of the remaining rebel humans on earth.

The other explanation for the identity of these four messengers is that they are warriors of the King of the Dark literally confined at the area of the river Euphrates, kept from doing damage to humanity that has been ordered by their demonic commander, Satan, who are finally released. In his Satanic fury at the inability of his human and demonic subjects to defeat the invasion of the Kingdom of Light. he begins to slaughter his loyal subjects on earth.

Once again, the Bible does not give us enough details to make any explanation definitive. It galls not to be able to assert that we know everything, but there are some things we will have to wait to see and which will be much more clearly understood in experience and retrospect than in anticipation.

Having said that, there are several things that we can know about the events of this sixth trumpet time period.

These angelic powers which we cannot yet say are led by the King of Light or the King of Darkness work their woeful task through other means - called Cavalry in Revelation 9.

In one case, it would be through 200,000,000 heavenly messengers who scatter across the globe to carry out their commission; in the other it would be 200,000,000 demonic warriors set loose to vent their fury on humankind.³¹¹

These messengers have been held ready for this particular year and month and day and hour and their mission is to kill a third of humanity. Within a very short period of time at least 33% of this planet's population is decimated. Once again as in the Fifth Trumpet, the description of these angelic cavalymen is vivid and colorful, very memorable, and inscrutable. We will have to await the transpiration of the events of this trumpet to understand this word picture.

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

311 Revelation 9:16

gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot either see or hear or walk; nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their immorality or their thefts.

Visualize in your mind's eye, for a moment, conditions on planet earth: Within a very short space of time tortuously painful physical maladies have struck every rebel against God on earth.³¹² They are so horrible that people want to die, but death eludes them;³¹³ then a third of humanity is killed mysteriously and quickly. Yet, every rebel who refuses to accept the authority and rule of God will be so deeply and irrevocably committed to their rebellion that they refuse to surrender to God. They have chosen their path and are following their king to the bitter end and nothing will deter or dissuade them

Before we leave these horrific events, we need to be reminded of God's purpose in sharing them with us. He wants to let us know that he is aware of what will be happening and is making provision to support and protect us through it. He has a plan to be there through the very worst this world experiences as his Spirit is withdrawn and we experience the full reality of what it means to live in a planet under Satan's rule. So, he gave us a gift. It is a Psalm written specifically for God's people as they go through this tribulation at the end of earth-time.

“Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. This I declare of the LORD: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I am trusting him. For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from the fatal plague. He will shield you with his wings. He will shelter you with his feathers. His faithful promises are your armor and protection. Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night, nor fear the dangers of the day, nor dread the plague that stalks in darkness, nor the disaster that strikes at midday. Though a thousand fall at your side, though ten thousand are dying around you, these evils will not touch you. But you will see it with your eyes; you will see how the wicked are punished.

312 Revelation 9:4

313 Revelation 9:6

If you make the LORD your refuge, if you make the Most High your shelter,
no evil will conquer you; no plague will come near your dwelling. For he
orders his angels to protect you wherever you go. They will hold you with
their hands to keep you from striking your foot on a stone. You will trample
down lions and poisonous snakes; you will crush fierce lions and serpents
under your feet!

The LORD says, "I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who
trust in my name. When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them
in trouble. I will rescue them and honor them. I will satisfy them with a long
life and give them my salvation."³¹⁴

NLT

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