

Revelation Chapter 9

1) The 5th Trumpet (9:1-12)

- a) **1** And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. **2** He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. **3** Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. **4** They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. **5** They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. **6** And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them. **7** In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, **8** their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; **9** they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. **10** They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails. **11** They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon. **12** The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.
- b) A star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.
- i) The star is described as "he".
- (1) Rev. 9:11 gives him names
 - (a) Abaddon in Hebrew
 - (b) Apollyon in Greek – destroyer
 - (c) King over the locusts
 - (d) Angel of the bottomless pit
 - (2) Many scholars are reluctant to identify this star as Satan.
 - (a) Satan would be prone to pursue the ones who have the seal of God, but this "star" already has the ones who do not have the seal of God.
 - (b) Star is often used to indicate a ruler or another type of prominent leader.
 - (c) Rev. 12 introduces the dragon, Satan, who makes war on those who keep the commandments of God.

- (i) Rev. 12:17 - Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.
- (d) Instead, many scholars think this “star” is some kind of rottenness which brings up rottenness from within the earth.
 - (i) Symbolic of the internal corruption which became prevalent in Rome and contributed to its fall.
 - (ii) This is the view I recommend; it is symbolically showing the effect of sin and darkness.
 - (iii) Remember that the purpose of the first six trumpets is to sound a warning meant to bring about repentance (Rev. 9:20-21).
- (3) The Continuous-Historical approach proposes that this “star” is Muhammed, and the locusts are his destroying armies.
 - (a) Muhammed is more than 500 years in the future from the time of writing of Revelation.
 - (b) Noteworthy that Muhammed’s armies killed people; the locusts in this vision do not kill people.
- (4) The futurist, sensational premillennialist approach would probably assign this start to a later time, since there is seen, by those who hold this approach, symbols of Cobra helicopters which may launch missiles of nerve gas.
 - (a) Cobra helicopters are more than 1900 years in the future from the time of writing of Revelation.
 - (b) Noteworthy that Cobra helicopters kill people; the locusts in this vision do not kill people.
- ii) Contrasting stars
 - (1) The morning star brings light (Rev. 22:16)
 - (2) This star brings darkness (Rev. 9:2) - the sun and the air were darkened
 - (3) The morning star has the keys of Death and Hades (Rev. 1:17b-18)
 - (4) This star was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.
- iii) The “bottomless pit” or “abyss” has a shaft for an opening, and the shaft has a lock. Think of an access door or manhole cover with a padlock.
 - (1) Luke 8:31 - And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.
 - (a) Even demons did not want to be there.
 - (2) 2 Peter 2:4 - For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;

- (a) Some think the abyss to be like Hades where evil spirits are imprisoned until the judgment.
- (3) Luke 16:22-23 - [22](#) The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, [23](#) and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.
- (4) The abyss is used for other purposes, none of which is good in any sense.
 - (a) Rev. 11:7 - And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them,
 - (b) Rev. 17:8 – The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.
 - (c) Rev. 20:1-3 - [1](#) Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. [2](#) And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, [3](#) 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.
- c) 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.
 - i) May be symbolic of the darkness of the heart produced by sin.
 - (1) 2 Cor. 4:4 - In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
 - (2) Col. 1:13 - He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,
- d) Strange Locusts
 - i) Locusts came out of the smoke
 - ii) Exodus 10:1-20 – the eighth plague – Locusts
 - (1) they ate all the plants in the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Not a green thing remained, neither tree nor plant of the field, through all the land of Egypt.
 - iii) Literal locusts would strip the land of vegetation; the locusts from the bottomless pit were told to not harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree.

- (1) They were told to harm only those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (Rev. 7:2-3)
- (2) In other words, harm those who are disobedient to God but do not harm those who are obedient to God.
- (3) Who told them? The punishment is from God, designed to bring about repentance. (Rev. 9:20-21)
- e) Torment for five months, but do not kill
 - i) They were “allowed” to torment for five months.
 - ii) Literal locusts had a life-span of about five months.
 - iii) Five months is probably a symbol of the limitation placed by God on what these strange locusts could do.
 - iv) The locusts were not allowed to kill anyone.
- f) people will seek death and will not find it
 - i) Death might have brought temporary relief from this torment, but it was intended that they suffer the consequence of sin in order to bring repentance.
 - ii) If death had been found, how great would be the eternal torment which they would face if they did not repent - torment like the rich man of Luke 16:22-23.
 - iii) There are natural consequences of a sinful lifestyle.
 - (1) Ignore physical laws, like stepping off a cliff, and disaster follows.
 - (2) Ignore moral laws, and disaster follows just as surely.
- g) Description of the Locusts**
 - i) John describes what he was shown in some detail.
 - ii) But – it should be noted that the activity of the locusts is of greater importance than their appearance.
 - iii) The description may suggest that they are fully capable of the harm they can do.
 - iv) It should also be noted that these are not natural locusts.
 - (1) Natural locusts strip vegetation from the land
 - (2) Natural locusts do not harm humans directly.
 - (3) These locusts are instructed to not harm grass, green plants, or trees.
 - (4) These locusts harm people who are not sealed by God.
- h) Like horses prepared for battle
 - i) Joel 2:4-11 - Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like war horses they run. ...
 - ii) War horses have riders – no riders are shown in John’s vision.
- i) on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold;
 - i) Their crowns are stephanoi – but they had the appearance of gold.

- ii) They will be successful in their assigned mission – to torment all men who do not have the seal of God.
- j) their faces were like human faces,
 - i) Not expected on locusts – suggests that they worked with cunning intelligence.
- k) their hair like women’s hair,
 - i) Suggests that they looked deceptively nice.
- l) and their teeth like lions’ teeth;
 - i) But looks can be deceiving – they had power to harm.
- m) they had breastplates like breastplates of iron,
 - i) They appeared to be invincible, not easily to defeat.
 - ii) Some commentators have compared the breastplates of iron to sinful practices such as liquor, sexual immorality, abortion, etc. – things that are not illegal under civil government, and attempts to correct are deflected.
 - “*This is a free country, and I can do whatever I want!*”
 - iii) The sword of the Spirit is the only thing that can penetrate the breastplates.
- n) and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle.
 - i) Joel 2:5 - As with the rumbling of chariots, they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble, like a powerful army drawn up for battle.
- o) They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails.
 - i) Natural locusts were individually harmless; these locusts could sting and the sting is their power to hurt people.
 - ii) The sting is painful, so painful that some longed to die (Rev. 9:6).
- p) 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.
 - i) Proverbs 30:27 - the locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank;
 - ii) Abaddon and Apollyon mean destruction or the destroyer.
 - iii) Many assume the identity of the star/angel to be Satan, but, would Satan harm his own subjects?
 - iv) Some think John was taking an ironic jab at Domitian, who claimed to be the incarnation of the Greek god Apollo.
- q) Summary of the Locusts
 - i) They come up from within the earth – internal corruption.
 - ii) They don’t harm vegetation; they harm people who do not have the seal of God.
 - iii) Their time is limited; their purpose is not to annihilate men, but to torment enough to lead to repentance (Rev. 9:20-21).

iv) The first woe (5th trumpet) has passed, but two more woes are coming.

2) The 6th Trumpet – 9:13-21

- a) **13** Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, **14** saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” **15** So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind. **16** The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number. **17** And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions’ heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths. **18** By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. **19** For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound. **20** The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, **21** nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.
- b) I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God
- i) Rev. 8:1-5 - **3** And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, **4** and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.
(1) Prayers went up from the altar in Rev. 8.
- ii) Exodus 37:25-29 - **25** He made the altar of incense of acacia wood. Its length was a cubit, and its breadth was a cubit. It was square, and two cubits was its height. Its horns were of one piece with it.
- iii) Exodus 27:1-2 - **1** “You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits broad. The altar shall be square, and its height shall be three cubits. **2** And you shall make horns for it on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it, and you shall overlay it with bronze.
(1) Four horns, one at each corner.
- iv) Rev. 16:7 - And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!”
(1) In Rev. 16:7 the altar spoke.
(2) In these verses, a voice was heard but the speaker of those words is not identified.
- c) , “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”

- i) The Euphrates river has been used as a symbol of military power before.
 - (1) Isaiah 8:5-8 - **5** The Lord spoke to me again: **6** “Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and rejoice over Rezin and the son of Remaliah, **7** therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks, **8** and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.”
 - (2) Why the Euphrates?
 - (a) One suggestion is that the Euphrates was the western boundary of the Parthians.
 - (i) A feared enemy of Rome
 - (ii) Through several wars, Rome never defeated the Parthians.
 - (iii) Parthians were known for their cavalry – archers riding swift horses.
 - (b) Futurist views see an oriental army, such as China, as being the military power that was loosed by the four angels.
 - ii) The sounding of the first four trumpets brought natural calamity.
 - iii) The sounding of the fifth trumpet reveals internal corruption.
 - iv) The sounding of the sixth trumpet now reveals external invasion.
- d) 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.
 - i) Not the same four angels as in Rev. 7:1-3.
 - (1) The four angels in Rev. 7:1 were restraining.
 - (2) These four angels are themselves being restrained.
 - (3) The four angels in Rev. 7:1 were standing at the four corners of the earth.
 - (4) These four angels are bound at the Euphrates river.
 - (5) In both cases, they are under the control of God.
 - (6) The number four probably indicates that their actions would be directed toward the whole earth.
 - ii) The four angels were prepared for a definite time, which we should understand was set by God.
 - iii) For the martyrs who asked, “how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”, the answer is, “God has appointed a day”.
 - iv) A third of mankind is a substantial number, designed to be a warning to bring about repentance (Rev. 9:20-21).

- e) The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number.
- i) $2 \times 10,000 \times 10,000 = 200,000,000$ (two hundred million).
 - ii) It is symbolic of an overwhelming force, not to be taken literally.
 - (1) Imagine the logistics of supporting two hundred million horses and troops!!!
 - (2) The literal interpretation of the futurists would require that China be the invading force, because the population of China passed one billion about 1982 and is currently near 1.4 billion.
 - (3) Quoting John McKay: Following the 51–0 loss to Notre Dame in 1966, "I told my team it doesn't matter. There are 750 million people in China who don't even know this game was played. The next day, a guy called me from China and asked, 'What happened, Coach?'"
 - iii) John did not have to count the number of mounted troops he saw in this vision – he heard their number, probably from one of the angels.
- f) 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.
- i) This is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them
 - ii) They wore – not clear whether the horses, the riders, or both had such breastplates.
 - (1) NAS translators add “the riders”, but the original Greek does not contain “the riders”.
 - (2) John say the horses and those who rode them – indicating both the horses and the riders.
 - (3) These pictures do not show breastplates on the horses.



(a) THE GREAT ARMY (9:13-19)



(b)

iii) Neither picture has the colors of the breastplate as John saw them.

(1) the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur

(a) fire – red or orange



(i)

(b) sapphire – blue



(i)

(c) Sulfur – yellow



(i)

(d) Red, blue, and yellow are the three primary colors, combinations of which yield all other colors.

iv) the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths.

(1) Lion – power and strength

(2) Fire, smoke, and sulfur – punishment from the Lord

(a) Gen. 19:24 - Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven.

- (b) Psalm 11:6 - Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup
- (c) Isaiah 34:9-10 - **9** And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into sulfur; her land shall become burning pitch. **10** Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever.
- (d) Ezekiel 38:22 - With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur.
- (e) Rev. 20:10 - and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
- (f) Rev. 21:8 - But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”
- (3) None of these are pleasant to behold.
 - (a) Sulfur may chase chiggers, but you have to endure the smell.
 - (b) The effects of this warfare will be terrible for one-third of mankind.
 - (c) Maybe it should be called “Hell on Hooves”. (Third Armored Division, aka “Hell on Wheels”)
 - (d) And we haven’t even mentioned the serpent-tails of the horses.
- g) **18** By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. **19** For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound.
 - i) The horses had lethal power, coming from their mouths.
 - ii) The locusts from the first woe caused torment, but the horses of the second woe cause death.
 - iii) The riders of these horses seem to not matter – the horses have all the power.
 - iv) Tails *like* serpents
 - (1) Rev. 12:9 - 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.

- (2) It does not seem to me that the devil is behind the deadly power of the horses, for the whole invasion is a warning judgment from God to bring repentance.
 - (3) Rather it seems that the tails are another tool the horses use to bring harm to the one-third on whom this judgment falls.
 - (4) The serpent-like tails are said to wound; the fire, smoke, and sulfur are said to kill.
- h) **20** The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, **21** nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.
- i) The warning was not heeded – the other two-thirds did not repent.
 - ii) A list of specific sins from which they did not repent is given.
 - (1) Sins of the heart
 - (a) Idol worship – demon worship
 - (b) Rom. 1:25 - because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator,
 - (2) Sins of the flesh – when hearts are turned from God, vileness of the flesh ensues.
 - (a) Murders
 - (b) Sorceries
 - (i) pharmakōn – from which we get pharmacy, is here translated as sorceries.
 - (ii) Properly, a sorcerer; used of people using *drugs* and "religious incantations" to drug people into living by their *illusions* – like having magical (supernatural) powers to manipulate God into giving them more temporal possessions.
 - (c) Sexual immorality
 - (d) Theft
 - (3) For thousands of years, men have made the same mistakes without learning from them or repenting of their wicked deeds.
 - (a) Genesis 6:5 – The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
 - (b) Proverbs 4:23 - Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.
 - (c) Jeremiah 17:9 - The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

(d) Matt. 15:19 – For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

3) Observations on Chapter 9

a) Historical View

i) Internal corruption spread like invading locusts throughout the Roman Empire.

ii) External warfare is usually thought to be the Parthians, who rode swift horses and were able to fire volleys of arrows ahead of and behind them while their horses were running.

(1) Parthia was located east of the Euphrates river.

(2) Rome feared the Parthians and never defeated them.

iii) The saints have the seal of God's protection.

b) Futurist View

i) News events evoke a continual looking for signs of invading armies from Russia or China.

ii) Mechanized warfare using chemical weapons, flame throwers, and weapons of mass destruction is a common interpretation.

iii) Christians are to be "raptured" into heaven to escape the horrors to come.

c) Applied View

i) Sin has consequences – on the Roman Empire and on nations and individuals today.

ii) The consequences should lead to repentance, but seldom does repentance come.

iii) God is patient, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

iv) The first six trumpets have sounded, and warnings have been given to the oppressor, but the oppressor did not heed the warnings. Christians may be wondering about their plight, so chapters 10 and 11 give comfort before the seventh trumpet sounds in 11:15.