

INTRODUCTORY NOTES:

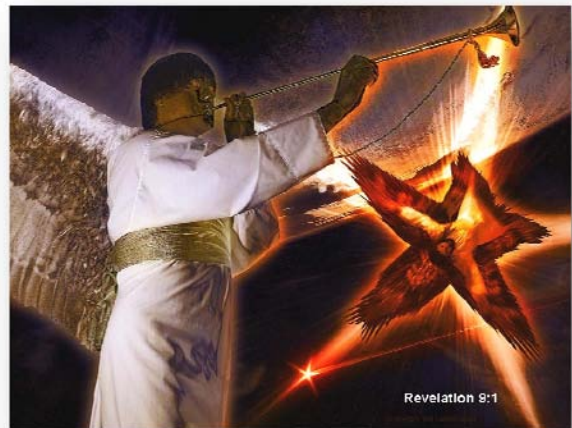
- Chapter 8 contained the first four trumpet judgments. These were on the “natural” world. These next two trumpets herald the 5th and 6th trumpet judgments, which are demonic in nature.
- The 7th trumpet contains the 7 bowl judgments. These last 3 trumpets are the “three woes” of chapter 8. What has already been unleashed is horrible, but the woes indicate that what is coming is even worse.
- These last three woes are generally thought to be the last half, or last 3 ½ years of the tribulation, what Jesus referenced as the “Great Tribulation.” It is no wonder. With the introduction of these demonic forces, the trouble is indeed great.



5th TRUMPET: Fallen Star, Bottomless Pit Opened, Sun and Air Darkened, Locusts Torment

¹“Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit.”

- We don’t have to speculate too much about this star – it is supernatural. We are told immediately it is a “him.” It is a personage of sorts. This star has fallen from heaven, so our first guess might be satan himself. Isaiah 14:12-15 contains information about this age-old enemy: *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.”* (Keep this verse in mind later also as we explore the goals of the antichrist.) We know this is satan, and we know he has fallen from heaven. However, we also see that this “star” has been given the key to the bottomless pit, which we see in the hands of a “good” angel in Chapter 20, so it is possible this is merely one of God’s messengers making a spectacular entrance, doing the will of God. Could be a fallen angel other than satan. We don’t know his exact identity, but it really doesn’t matter. We need to focus on the results.



- We know that fallen angels are referred to as “wandering stars” in Jude: *“...wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”* (Jude 13) The fallen star here joins others who have fallen, and together they unleash the first two “woes.”
- The word for pit here is *abouosso* meaning **bottomless pit, and it is not hell or Hades**. It is found 9 times in the New Testament (7 in Rev.) and 30 times in the Old Testament. Angels that have sinned are sent here (See Genesis 6:2, 4; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6), Demons beg to avoid the abouosso (See Luke 8:31), after “many days” the *abouosso* will be visited (See Isaiah 24:21-22) and Satan is imprisoned there in Revelation 20:10.

²*“And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit.”*

- This is the home of the forces of evil. The smoke may be literal, and literally darken the skies, but it symbolizes spiritual darkness and pollution unlike anything we can imagine. *Here comes the first “woe.”*

³*Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.* ⁴*They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.* ⁵*And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.* ⁶*In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.*

- It is quite obvious from these passages that we are in the realm of the supernatural here. There is no natural locust on earth like these. The word says “locusts” and we must keep in mind that John was trying to describe what he was seeing, which was like nothing else he had ever seen. So he used the word “like” a lot, but not here. This is interesting. He doesn’t say they were *like* locusts. He says they WERE locusts.
- Many people **speculate that these could be military hardware**, like certain helicopters or other weapons of war. This is possible, and perhaps John assumed they were locusts because of their appearance. But it is also possible these ARE locusts, but unlike any locust found on earth. Locusts are used in scripture as tools of destruction and judgment. They were a literal plague in Egypt, and they are referenced as both literal and symbolic of judgment in Joel: *“What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.”* (Joel 1:4) Joel is lamenting over a devastating locust plague that was very real. Yet, later in this chapter and book, he associates the locust destruction with punishment, discipline and judgment. These locusts in Revelation 9 may be real locusts, but they are demonic locusts sent by God to bring suffering, not destruction. They are one more way to drive men either to God, or by their choice, away from Him. Their description in the coming verses indicates these are not normal locusts!
- Natural locusts can do amazing damage. In 1866 in Algiers there was a locust plague from which 200,000 people died from starvation from the resulting famine. Imagine what demonic, supernatural locusts can do to ravage a person’s body and soul, like they normally ravage vegetation?

- Notice the phrase **“and to them was given power...”** These locusts have been given power to do what God has ordained for them to do. Locusts don’t normally bite like this, but these supernatural creatures are given power, a supernatural ability, to sting like a scorpion. And also notice **“and they were commanded...”** God has granted, and limited, their power, as He does EVERYTHING and everyone. They were allowed to cause pain and suffering, but not death.
- These evil creatures are allowed to **afflict only those without the mark of God on their foreheads**. This is one passage that often leads people to believe that all believers will have this mark, not just the 144,000 of chapter 8. We do not know, but it would seem likely.
- These locusts bring on a **5-month period of time** in which people who are stung will suffer so much they wish they were dead, but death will not come. Natural scorpions can cause incredible physical pain, paralysis and fever, even death. We cannot imagine this kind of pain (not natural), but again, as with other judgments, it is intended to drive people to the One who can save them. Many will, and many will not come to him. Some believe that this torment will not really be a physical pain, but a spiritual torment and emotional pain. We don’t know, it could even be both. We have no reason to believe these 5 months are not a literal period of time, which once again indicates a limited judgment (both in scope and duration).

“⁷ The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. ⁸ They had hair like women’s hair, and their teeth were like lions’ teeth. ⁹ And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. ¹⁰ They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months. ¹¹ And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.”

- **Natural locusts** actually have heads that look like horses, and bodies that appear to be armored. The German term for locusts is *heupferd* meaning “hay-horse” and the Italian term *cavaletta* means “little horse”. In Hebrew the locust has been called the “lopper, shearer, swarmer, finisher, annihilator, galloper, and creaker.”
- These locusts in chapter 9 are getting weirder and weirder! Now we hear that their **shape is like a horse, they are wearing crowns like gold, and they had faces like men, with hair like women, and teeth like lions**. And, they are wearing breastplates *like* iron, they have wings that sound *like* chariots running into battle, and tails *like* scorpions with stingers. Whoa! Have you ever seen anything like that before? Neither had John. Notice all the “likes” – John is struggling to provide a written description of what he saw. It would be very difficult for us to attempt to picture this locust, or whatever it is. When you carefully consider each of these descriptors, it is easy to see how some believe these are some sort of warship like a bomber, helicopter, tank or other such monstrosity. B29s sting from their tail. Rotors make a sound like chariots. Armor plating would look like iron breastplates. The face may be the pilot or someone viewed through the cockpit.



- We can certainly see how this might be an attempt to describe military hardware of some sort millennia after John first saw them. Some disagree, and believe these look exactly like John described, since they are not something manmade, but come from the pit. In Tim LaHaye's Left Behind series, he describes them just as John did, as demonic locusts. In other words, locusts, but locusts from hell, quite literally. This is a true picture of evil – dark, terrible, destructive.
- The locusts in the **8th plague of Egypt** were after herbs and plants, not to be repeated again. (See Exodus 10:14-15), those in Egypt were natural locusts, they had no “king” (See Proverbs 30:27). These do have a king (v11), so they are demonic, not natural.
- The name of this “king” is Apollyon (Greek) and Abaddon in Hebrew, and **literally means “destroyer”** or destruction (See John 10:10). It is found six times in the Old Testament (See Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Psalms 88:11; Proverbs 15:11; 27:30). We do not know definitively if this is satan. It may be, but it may also be a powerful destructive angel in the hierarchy of fallen angels (similar to the hierarchy among God's angels, like Michael, Gabriel who are called archangels.)
- It is very interesting to note that Proverbs tells us that natural locusts *do not have a king*: ***“The locusts have no king, Yet they all advance in ranks;”*** (30:27). Seems like an odd thing to put in scripture, unless it is to make us aware that these are not natural locusts. (Everything is in scripture for a reason, and not just for a pithy proverb!)

¹²***“One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.”***

- This is just ONE woe. This apparently lasts for 5 months. There should be a harvest of souls during this time as the torment drives some people to God. Those 144,000 witnesses, and other people who have made personal decisions for Him, will be busy witnesses, and praying with those tormented.



6th TRUMPET: Four Angels Released to Kill a Third of Mankind, 200,000,000 Horsemen

¹³***“Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, ¹⁴saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.’ ¹⁵So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.”***

- This is the sixth trumpet judgment, and the second woe.
- **Four seems to be the number associated with creation:** 4 elements = earth, air, fire, water; 4 directions = north, south, east, west (4 corners of earth); 4 seasons = Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter; 4 divisions of the day = Morning, Noon, Evening, Midnight. There are 4 living creatures in this book.
- These are apparently **wicked angels** since they are bound and must be loosed. These may even be those who corrupted the human gene pool in Genesis 6. In Jude, we read ***“And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”*** (v. 6) Those “who did not keep their proper domain” may be those “sons of God” (always angels!) in Genesis 6.

- Perhaps these angels are the ones who are being loosed here that God will use to bring terror on the earth. Again, we don't know for sure. This is speculation. But consider the words of Jesus: *“But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”* (Matthew 24:37). The days of Noah saw incredible wickedness, the appearance of the Nephilim (fallen ones), AND they were also caught off guard by God's judgment. Seems the same will be true here.
- *“...the golden altar”* - the altar of incense inside the Holy Place, immediately before the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (where the Ark of the Covenant rested). It is always symbolic for the prayers of the saints. This is the altar we saw in Revelation 8:3-5. The “Avenger of Blood” will answer the prayers of all the saints. (See chapter 8 notes)
- **The river Euphrates is significant.** It separates the east from the west. It is the site of the first murder, the first war, and the Tower of Babel. It is the greatest river of boundaries in scripture (Garden of Eden, Israel, Egypt, Persian Empire, and it is often symbolic of Israel's enemies (from the north). Judgment often comes from across the Euphrates River in scripture.
- *“...the hour and day and month and year...”* another indication of the incredible eternal plan of God which has, is and will be perfectly fulfilled, down to the very minutest detail (including hour and day and month and year).
- *“...kill a third of mankind...”* Remember we have already seen ¼ of mankind killed in previous judgments. With another third added, we know have fatalities numbering over ½ of the original world population. With these large numbers, it is possible God is purging the earth of unregenerate mankind, those whom God knows will never receive His gift. Those remaining alive on earth will eventually go into the Millennial Kingdom at the end of the tribulation. Unbelievers will not be left alive to enter this 1000 year kingdom. Perhaps in this sixth trumpet God is “housecleaning” after the 5th trumpet (locusts). These would be unbelievers who, even after the torment of the locusts, still refused God's gift of forgiveness, grace and salvation.

¹⁶ *“Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.”*

- John actually hears the number of this **supernatural army**. It is 200 million. Many have speculated that since China can now field an army this size, this might refer to China. Traditionally, Israel's enemies come from the north, and with the reference to the Euphrates River, the northern God-ordained boundary of the covenant land of Israel, some believe these are the army of the “kings of the East” (referenced in chapter 16), most likely from China. The enormous population of China is one of its most powerful weapons. Russia is terrified of the growing emigration jeopardizing its eastern border. However, the description given of these horsemen seem to put them in the realm of the demonic rather than the natural.
- These horsemen here in Revelation **appear to be demons (not people)**. We do not yet know the significance of this very large number, but in a literal interpretation (always the best), we can assume it is a real number, and not figurative.

¹⁷ *And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone.”*



- **Supernatural armies** have previously appeared in the scriptures: 1) Horses and a chariot of fire separated Elijah from Elisha when Elijah was taken up into heaven (2 Kings 2:11) 2) When Dothan was besieged by the army of Syria, God opened the eyes of Elisha's servant and he saw the horses and chariots of fire (2 Kings 6:13-17).
- The description of these armies defies comprehension. The **colors are as striking** as the creatures are unnatural: fiery red, orange, dark blue, bright yellow. Some have speculated that perhaps the colors represent some flag of a nation or a coalition of nations. Notice that the colors are also those seen in fire. If you stare into a fire you will see all of these colors.
- Once again, because of the very unusual description of this horse and rider hoard, many have speculated that this is a **first century description of modern war weapons** (tanks, missiles, helicopters, etc.) like the locusts of the first woe. (Notice the use of the word "like" in the descriptions.)
- At the very least, we know these horsemen are **destructive**, like the locusts.
- The **best mode of interpretation is literal**. **These are demonic, not natural**. Some have difficulty accepting the supernatural nature of such forces, but we have testimony in the word of God of heavenly armies. These can be good, and they can be bad forces. We know there is warfare in the heavenlies, ongoing. We will hear of some of that in chapter 12. Daniel 10 carries a very interesting passage about a high-ranking angel that was sent to Daniel, but was delayed because of such warfare: *"But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come."* (Daniel 10:13-14). The "prince of the kingdom of Persia" is a demonic force. Michael here is the archangel Michael, who is charged with the protection of God's people, Israel.
- Because we cannot "see" the supernatural forces, **there is a tendency not to believe they exist**. Years ago, people could not "see" viruses and bacteria, but nonetheless they were real, and caused them to die. The spiritual is a far more real domain than our physical realm. The Bible is full of discussions about the warfare that is currently being waged in this domain. Here in Revelation 9, that warfare is apparently sent to fight openly on earth. Don't let personal unbelief in the supernatural keep you from understanding these passages.

¹⁸ *"By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. ¹⁹ For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm."*

- These judgments are not remedial (to correct behavior), but **retributive** (punishment). Men persist in their sins, despite the efforts and extent of God's work in this time. (See Romans 3:11).

- These “plagues” are literal, not symbolic. By them **a third of the earth’s population will be destroyed**. See note above on verse 15. There are less than half as many people left on earth now as when this all began.
- Again, the beyond comprehension description of these horsemen utilizes the word “**like**.” We do not know what they are, because they are not like anything we have ever seen. The abyss has been opened now, releasing demonic forces never seen before on earth.

²⁰ *“But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.²¹ And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”*

- These are perhaps some of the saddest verses in the Bible. God has gone to amazing extents to get mankind’s attention—very dramatic displays of His power, and also of His grace. Yet despite all this, unbelievers, unregenerate man, continue to run from Him and practice abominations.
- This brings to mind the verse from Jeremiah 17:9 *“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?”* The world at this point in Revelation KNOWS what is happening, and WHO is doing it. Yet, they still run from Him. This is the height of foolishness, and the height of outright rebellion. *“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* (1 Corinthians 2:14) God has made Himself clear, but people do not want to turn to Him.
- **The remaining half of the world’s population continues in their unrepentant state.** Now we are told exactly what those sins were, as they are listed here: 1) pride in their own power and accomplishments, 2) occult activities (idol worship; idolatry is anything placed higher in priority over God), false religions 3) murders, 4) sorceries 5) sexual immorality 6) thefts. Notice there are SIX sins listed. Six is the number of man, incomplete without God.
- **Verse 20 is about worshipping the occult, demon or satan worship.** Worshipping the work of our own hands can fall into this category, as God should be getting the glory for accomplishments (we put ourselves on the throne, instead of God). Instead we give it to ourselves. Most people don’t actually intend to worship demons (although some do). All it takes, however, is a little “innocent” cracking open of the door with such things as wearing lucky charms, reading horoscopes, using a Ouija board, an interest in the paranormal, etc. All of these things are forbidden by God, yet so many people unknowingly bring the influence of the enemy into their lives in this way. It is not unusual to see well-educated, intelligent people involved in these things and eventually believing whole-heartedly in rituals, rites and other pagan thoughts that have been now repackaged for our current culture. It is alarming to note also that paganism, the outright worship of demons of ancient cultures, is very much on the rise, openly.
- Sadly, we note that **even today we have subsidized murders** of people prior to their births. When this verse speaks of “murders” we should consider how mankind is murdering through their own laws and acceptable behavior, not necessarily with a gun or other weapon.

- It is interesting to note that the word for “sorceries” in the Greek is *pharmakeia*, which literally means potions, spells, drugs (as they are used in witchcraft, occultic practices). These include drugs of all kinds. We have created a drug culture, whether to achieve a “high,” or to effect healing. Some drugs are miracles of healing, others are ways to make billions of dollars from a population that believes what it sees on TV. Some drugs are intended to bring a state of consciousness OTHER than what God intended. The use of this word may indicate a regular, accepted drug culture, where people turn to drugs to endure these judgments, or as today, to endure life itself. Again, it indicates man’s attempt to survive and achieve apart from God. That is impossible. It is one of the characteristics of this time of tribulation. It is ALREADY a characteristic of our population.

▪ **COMMENTARY:** “The Bible tells us the “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9) The book of Revelation certainly answers the oft-stated suggestion of individuals that “what man needs is a second chance after death.” During the tribulation man will have unprecedented opportunity to see the omnipotent hand of God working in the affairs of men, yet he will stubbornly persist in his rebellion against God and his rejection of Jesus Christ. That is seen by the fact that, in spite of the destruction of half of the world’s population and one-third of the world’s vegetation, light, and water supply, man will not repent of his stubborn heart and sinful practices...The tribulation population instead will embrace the pleasure of sin for a season and damn their immortal souls in the process.” (LaHaye)

- In one of the Left Behind books (“Apollyon”), authors Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins have one of their characters make a profound statement about this time: **“This was no longer about ignorance. It was about choice.”**
- Deception in the time of the tribulation will also be on the rise. 2 Timothy 3:13 states **“But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”** Because they have turned from God, many will be deceived in this time, even more so than today. Consider these verses in 2 Thessalonians: **“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”** (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). These are chilling verses, and indicate that when people run away from God too long His grace runs its course until there is no more. At that point, these people will be under “strong delusion” to believe the lies of the enemy. What is the greatest lie? That we can be gods ourselves, and do whatever we want, like petulant children in defiance and rebellion. This is the same lie that was told in the garden. It leads to death and ultimate separate from God. Another verse to consider: **“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”** (Proverbs 16:25) Just as many will come to our Lord in this time, many also will defiantly turn away, sealing their doom.



- The judgments and warnings in these chapters are frightening. They are supposed to be! They should humble us, sober us, correct us, and hopefully SAVE us! Yet in all this, they are still evidence of a merciful God who desires that NONE should perish, suffering eternal separation from Him.
- Two woes are now past. The third is still to come, but before this, we will experience another interlude in chapter 10, before the blowing of the 7th trumpet which releases the 7 bowl judgments.