

"The Fifth Trumpet Judgment"

Revelation 9:1-12

The Fifth Trumpet Judgment: *A Demonic Locust Plague*

Remember in 8:13 that an eagle warned of the last three trumpet judgments and that he referred to them as woes. "They are called woes because God's judgment of the ungodly is intensified. The punishments of the three woes or the last three trumpets are inflicted directly upon the human race rather than through the medium of nature."²⁸⁰ In other words, God's judgment more directly strikes mankind unlike the first four trumpets where His judgment was primarily focused upon the earth and some segment of nature (i.e. grass, trees, sea, sea life, rivers, springs etc.).

***The Unlocking of the Pit:* (9:1-2)**

It is here in 9:1 where John describes the 5th trumpet judgment. As the angel blows his trumpet, John sees a star from heaven, which had previously fallen to earth.

The Identity of the star: Unlike the use of the term *aster* (star) in previous verses, this term in the context here does not refer to a heavenly body or object other than the sun or moon. This is due to the personification given to the star here in these two verses. First in verse 1 the star has a key given to **him** and secondly, in verse 2 **he** opened the bottomless pit. The use of these two personal pronouns emphasizes that this star is more than an inanimate object. There are many different interpretations as to the identity of this star. There are two major views in which most commentators fall. These are:

1-The star refers to a fallen angel, likely Satan himself.

2-The star refers to one of God's angels used as His agent.

It must be recognized that good men fall on each side of this difficulty. However, when all the evidence is evaluated the most likely view is that of view 2. The star most likely refers to one of God's angels used as His agent.

Evidence that supports view 2:

1-The fact that this judgment is from God upon an unbelieving and rejecting world suggests that this star is an agent of God who is sent down to execute this particular judgment upon the faithless world.

2-Angels are sometimes called stars in the Scripture (i.e. Job 38:7) and are also referred to as "the host of heaven" (1 Kings 22:19, Ps. 148:2).

3-God frequently uses angels as recorded throughout the book of Revelation in executing His judgment {i.e. the angels who blow the 7 trumpet judgments (Rev. 8 & 9, the angels who pour out the 7 bowl judgments (Rev. 16), the angels who hold back the winds of judgment (Rev. 7:1), the angel who cries out for the earth not to be harmed until the sealed of God are sealed (Rev. 7:2), the angel who burns incense representing the prayers of the people (Rev. 8:3-5) etc....}.

Valley Bible Church – Book of Revelation

4-The term *peptokota* (fallen) is the participle form of the verb *pipto* which has the basic meaning "to fall, drop from a height or from an upright position; and of men to fall in battle."²⁸¹ It is most commonly found in Revelation (in 20 verses). It is used of John's bodily position in falling at Christ's feet (1:17) and falling at an angel's feet (19:10, 22:8); It is used of the 4 living beings and the 24 elders regarding their bodily position in falling before the throne usually in worship (4:10, 5:4, 5:8, 5:14, 7:11, 11:16, 19:4); It is used of celestial objects descending to the earth (6:13, 8:10); It is used in regards to the people of the earth crying out for the mountains and rocks to fall upon them (6:16); It is used of the sun not beating down on individuals(7:16); It is used of the fall of cities, kings or nations (11:13, 14:8, 16:19, 17:10, 18:2); It is used of the descent or degeneration of the Ephesian church (2:5). The overall usage of this term in the book of Revelation, the basic meaning of the term and the context of this passage would support that the term for fallen here in 9:1 has to do with the position of descent from one location to another, not to the moral character of the individual.

5-"Satan nowhere in Revelation appears as an agent employed by God to carry out divine ordering, such as the sending of this plague upon the world."²⁸²

Conclusion: While some try to make a case for this star to be identified as Satan the evidence best supports for the reasons above that this star is an unfallen angel in character (not a demon) who has been dispatched on the divine mission of unlocking the bottomless pit so that this 5th trumpet judgment can be carried out on the rebellious people of the earth.

The Opening of the Pit: First of all this angel is given the key to the bottomless pit. As mentioned in Revelation 3:7 regarding the term "key," it may not necessarily be a literal key as "key" is often used in the Scriptures to denote authority. Whether a literal key or not the angel received authority from God to open the bottomless pit. *Abusos* (bottomless) describes any deep dark well or any obscure place whose depth was unknown.²⁸³ "*Abusos* (bottomless) appears seven times in Revelation, always in reference to the abode of incarcerated demons (cf. 9:2, 11,; 11:7; 17:8)."²⁸⁴ It is the same place that Satan will be cast into, chained and locked up during the Millennial reign of Christ. 2 Peter 2:4 says, "*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment.*" This is likely a reference to this same bottomless pit in which these wicked fallen angels (demons) have been incarcerated. They are likely the most wicked and vile of the fallen angels since they have been relegated to this place. It is at this point that the angel opens the bottomless pit where these demons are incarcerated and a huge amount of smoke billows up out of the pit to the point where the sun and air were darkened. Smoke is usually associated with judgment especially in Revelation (cf. 9:17-18; 14:11; 18:9, 18; 19:3; Gen. 19:28; Isa. 34:10; Joel 2:30; Nah. 2:13).

The Impact of the Locusts: (9:3-6)

The Identity of these Locusts: John goes on to say that out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth. John MacArthur gives an excellent description of this in his commentary:

"Out of the vast, billowing, ominous cloud of smoke that darkened the sky and caused panic among earth's inhabitants John saw a new terror emerge. Vile demons, taking on a visible form resembling locusts, swarmed out of the abyss to plague the earth."²⁸⁵

Valley Bible Church – Book of Revelation

Henry Morris in his commentary gives a more detailed description of this event:

"As if this were not sufficiently terrifying, out of the smoke the inhabitants of the earth see emerging wave after wave of hideous flying creatures like locusts. John is the one who describes the scene for us, from his vantage point in the heavenly places, and his description breathes amazement. Never were such creatures seen before on earth, though the prophet Joel had apparently seen them in a vision (Joel 1:6; 2:25). John must call them locusts---there were no other comparable creatures in his vocabulary---but they were not locusts in the entomological sense. They swarmed and darkened the sky like locusts, they had emerged from the earth like locusts, and they left misery in their wake like locusts."²⁸⁶

It is apparent especially from the description that follows in verses 7-12 that these are merely, locust like and not literally locusts. These were the wicked demons of the bottomless pit taking on a physical form that could only be described as locusts.

The Assignment of these Locusts: First of all there was power given to them. This power is compared to that of the scorpion. Scorpions have venomous stingers on their tails, which in the deadly species are capable of producing severe convulsions and paralysis. These demonic beings have been given power to sting and inflict great harm on their victims. There were some strict limitations in the assignment of these demonic beings. These limitations included not hurting: 1-the grass of the earth, 2-any green thing, or 3-any tree. They were not allowed to harm the vegetation of the earth. 5-They were also restricted from harming those who had the seal of God on their foreheads (the 144,00 Jewish believers from Revelation 7). Some attempt has been made by most commentators to demonstrate that since this is a judgment of God on an unbelieving and rejecting world that true believers will be exempt from the torture of this particular judgment. It is important to notice however that the text of Scripture says that only one group of individuals will escape this judgment and that is the sealed of God (the 144,00 Jewish believers of Revelation 7). 6-An additional limitation on these demonic locusts is that they will not be permitted to kill anyone. They will only be allowed to torment their victims (likely by stinging them) and this will go on for a period of 5 months. 5 months is the normal life span of locusts as they usually thrive from May to September. During this 5 months the unsaved individuals are given time to repent and embrace Christ as their Lord and Savior. But due to this extreme torment, which is once again compared to the sting of a Scorpion, they will actually seek to kill themselves. In fact they will long to die but will they will not. The term *epithumeo* (long to) emphasizes a strong desire. These men will vehemently seek or long to die. The impact of these demonic locusts will be great as the people of the earth will be in intense pain and suffering. Their torment will be more than they can endure, yet they will be incapable of killing themselves. There will be great fear and torment, but the people of the earth will continue to reject and rebel against God. They will ignore the Gospel message preached by the 144,000 Jewish believers. Their hearts are hardened and they will refuse to repent.

The Description of the Locusts: (9:7-12)

After giving an account of the pain and suffering that these demonic locusts will cause, John gives a more detailed account of their description.

Valley Bible Church – Book of Revelation

Their Characteristics: {9:7-10} Here in these verses John seeks to describe the amazing sight of these demonic beings described as locusts. Here John likely struggles to describe these beings and uses natural terms with which he is familiar to describe their various characteristics. The consistent use of the terms "as, like, and appeared" signal that these were not the literal characteristics of these locusts, but an accurate representation of their characteristics. There exists a fine line here between the literal and the symbolic. They are not so symbolic that they represent something like modern day warriors or helicopters prepared for warfare, yet they also are not literal features. These beings simply had features that resembled the ones that John used. The description that John gives here is somewhat similar to the description given by Joel (Joel 2:1-10). Obviously from the description here, these are not ordinary natural locusts, but are truly something much more hideous and evil. They are as mentioned before most likely the demons from the pit, who have taken on a physical form that is similar to a locust. So what are the characteristics given by the Apostle John here in Revelation. He lists 8 different features of these creatures:

1-Their appearance was like horses prepared for battle: This is their overall general appearance. As they came up out of the pit, they looked like war horses preparing for battle. This likely emphasizes that these were strong, powerful, warlike beings ready to unleash their power upon the people of the world.

2-On their heads appeared to be crowns like gold: At the top of their heads was what **appeared** to be crowns. They were not literal crowns but likely the shape of the top of their heads or an appendage at the top of their heads had a crown like appearance, which was gold in color.

3-Their faces were like the faces of men: This means that they had similar features to the faces of men. It also indicates that these are intelligent and rational beings. They were capable of understanding their assignment and the limitations place upon them.

4-They had hair like the hair of women: Their hair somewhat resembled the hair of women. It was possibly long, flowing and beautiful. It indicates the attractiveness of these locusts and possibly that they will be able to lure people to them.

5-Their teeth were like the teeth of lions: Lions teeth are fierce, powerful and deadly. Lions are capable of ripping and tearing apart their victims.²⁸⁷ Likely these demonic beings will be capable of biting and tearing into their victims in addition to their great stinging power.

6-They had breastplates like breastplates of iron: Remember these are not literal iron breastplates, but they are some sort of protective appendage that has the appearance of an iron breastplate. This indicates that they will be immune to being destroyed as this appendage protects them and their vital organs.

7-The sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle: Obviously their wings produce a great amount of noise. The great and terrible sound of these creatures wings indicates their great speed and power. The sound will be so great and fierce that it will produce a sense of hopelessness in their victims, that they will be unable to outrun and hide from the worldwide onslaught of these demonic hordes.

Valley Bible Church – Book of Revelation

8-*They have tails like scorpions*: This was already implied in verse 3 in regards to their great power. They have literal tails and these tails resemble that of a scorpion. These tails also sting as those of a scorpion. It is from these tails that they are able to inflict great pain and suffering upon the mass of humanity for 5 months.

Their King: {9:11-12} It is at this point that John informs us that these locusts have a king over them. This king over them is also said to be the angel of the abyss. First of all this is not the same angel as the one described as a star in 9:1. This is an angel who is literally from the abyss (the bottomless pit that was unlocked in 9:2. For this reason this angel also cannot be identified as Satan, because Satan has not been locked and chained in the bottomless pit and he will not be until the millennial reign of Christ (20:1-3). This angel is likely a high-ranking demon in Satan's hierarchy of demons, who evidently was so wicked and vile that he was incarcerated in the pit and became the leader or king over the other demons in the pit. John also reveals the name of this demon. He gives the name in the Hebrew as Abaddon and the name in Greek as Apollyon. Both names have the same meaning in their respective languages, "destroyer", which is an appropriate name for the leader of this demonic plague upon mankind. What a time of terror and great suffering for the people of the world as this judgment from God is carried out for 5 months. The first woe (the 5th trumpet judgment) is complete, two more will follow.