

THE REVELATION TO JOHN

THE THINGS FUTURE, REVELATION 4 - 22

THE SEVEN TRUMPET JUDGMENTS, REVELATION 8:1-11:19

INTRODUCTION

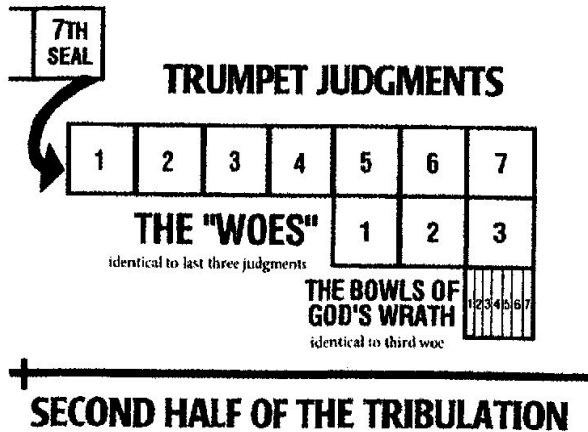
- The seventh seal in Revelation 8:1 introduces the trumpet judgments of 8:2-11:19. The new judgments increase in severity and draw the world ever closer to the return of Christ. These judgments are most probably centered in the second half of the tribulation if not beginning it.
- C. A. Blanchard, *The series of three sevens are really included in one series of seven, that is, the seven trumpets are included under the seventh seal and the seven bowls are included under the seventh trumpet, so that we have in fact a single series in three movements.*
- Charles Swindoll, *In the book of Revelation we foresee God using an intensifying series of judgments to capture the world's attention for the purpose of redemption. In fact, a major purpose of God's judgments in Revelation is to seize the world's attention when it refuses to listen. Swindoll gave note to C. S. Lewis, . . . pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.*
- Charles Ryrie, *Like arrows from a bow, the locusts of judgment of the first woe are discharged upon the earth.*

THE FIFTH AND SIXTH TRUMPETS: REVELATION 9:1-21

A. Introductory notes on Revelation chapter 9

- Charles Ryrie, *In this chapter there are more occurrences of the words 'as' and 'like' than in any other chapter in the Bible, which shows how difficult it was for John to describe the scene which he saw in the vision.*
- Warren Wiersbe, *Revelation 9 describes two frightening armies that are liberated at just the right time and permitted to judge mankind.*
- Kendell Easley, *A horrible part of the Great Tribulation will be a plague of painful misery that fierce and terrifying demons will unleash for a limited time . . . When the first four angels blew their trumpets, the impact on human life was indirect. When the fifth angel sounded his trumpet, the effect was focused directly on humans.*
- William Barclay, *The picture of terror mounts in its awful intensity. Now the terrors coming to the earth are beyond nature; they are demonic; the abyss is being opened, and superhuman terrors are being despatched on to the world.*

**THE TRIBULATION JUDGMENTS
(REVELATION 8-9, 16)**



B. The fifth trumpet (first woe) 1-11

1. The release of locusts (1-6)

a. The opening of the bottomless pit (1-2)

1) A star was given a key to the shaft (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.***

a) A star had already fallen to earth when John saw him.

- 1] Thomas Constable, *If fallen (Gr. peptokota) has theological connotations, the star may refer to Satan (vv. 2, 11; cf. 1:20; Job. 38:7; Luke 10:18). Or it may refer to some other fallen angel.* 588 *If, on the other hand, fallen simply describes his condition as having come to earth from heaven, an unfallen (good) angel is probably in view (cf. 20:1).*
- 2] Charles Ryrie, *Sometimes the word "star" refers to a heavenly body (as in 8:12). But the word is often used to refer to some kind of intelligent creature, usually an angel (cf. 1:20; Job 38:7) . . . In these verses the star is an intelligent creature who performs certain responsible actions . . . He is obviously a creature with great authority to be able to hold captive and then unleash these locusts. He apparently is the same creature who in verse 11 is called the "angel of the abyss."*
- 3] Charles Swindoll, *Some understand the star in this passage to be Satan falling from heaven. But it could simply be a high-ranking angel given authority over the abyss.*
- 4] Kendell Easley, *This time he sees a star that had fallen, obviously an angel. (In Rev. 1:20 stars are explicitly called angels.) He was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. The same angel with the same key will reappear to chain and lock up the devil inside the Abyss (20:1). In both instances, the "key angel" acts in obedience to the will of God.*
- 5] Grant Osborne, *If we understand the verb as "descending" rather than "falling," the action of the angel here would parallel that of the angel descending with the key of the Abyss in 20:1 to bind the dragon. I believe these are the same angel, which would mean the actions in 9:1 and 20:1 frame the period God has given to Satan and the antichrist to act at this final period of history. This end-time activity encompasses the period of the empire of the beast of chapter 13 and the 3 ½-year "great tribulation" period named in 7:14.*

b) *the bottomless pit*

- 1] Kendell Easley, *To follow John's imagery, you must imagine the Abyss as something like a huge underground cavern, perhaps like an old California gold mine. Then imagine a narrow shaft going up to the surface, with a locked door at the top. Finally, picture the cavern filled with choking blue smoke created by a sulfurous, crude-oil burning furnace.*
- 2] John Walvoord, *The "Abyss" (abyssos) is the home of demons (cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3; in Rom. 10:7 it is translated "deep"). Satan will be confined for a thousand years in the Abyss during the reign of Christ on earth (Rev. 20:1-3).*
- 3] William Barclay, *In Revelation, we read fairly often of the abyss or the bottomless pit. The abyss is the intermediate place of punishment of the fallen angels, the demons, the beast, the false prophet and of Satan (9:1-2, 9:11, 11:7, 20:1, 20:3). Their final place of punishment is the lake of burning fire and brimstone (20:10, 20:14-15).*
- 4] Thomas Constable, *The abyss is the abode of Satan (v. 11; 20:1-3), some demons (cf. Luke 8:31; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6), and the beast (11:7; 17:8). It is evidently a preliminary prison, not their final abode, which is the lake of fire (i.e., hell, 19:20; 20:10; cf. Matt. 25:41). It is from this abyss that this angel was about to release some of the demons temporarily.*
- 5] Charles Swindoll, *Apparently, the abyss is also the place where certain demons have been kept in prison until judgment (Luke 8:30-31; cf. 2 Peter 2:4). Given the context of the end-time judgments, it appears that the opening of the abyss in Revelation 9 forecasts a short-term release of demons prior to their final condemnation in the lake of fire (20:14-15; cf. Matt. 25:41).*

2) The sun was darkened by smoke from the opened shaft (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.***

a) Kendell Easley, *What would be the first thing to happen when the angel opened the Abyss with his key? Obviously, smoke would belch up from the shaft, like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. In this instance, the sun and sky were darkened by the smoke, an ominous precursor of the real terrors that come from the pit.*

b) Grant Osborne, *The smoke is so dense that it darkens the sun and the sky, echoing the fourth trumpet (8:12) and Joel 2:10, where the sun and moon are darkened at the Day of Yahweh.*

- c) Thomas Constable, *The smoke probably symbolizes the terribleness of the place from which the locusts (v. 3) emerge (cf. Eph. 2:2). In Revelation smoke usually relates to judgment, doom, and torment (vv. 17, 18; 18:9; 19:3), though it also has connections with holy things (8:4; 15:8). The context here obviously specifies a negative connotation (cf. Gen. 19:28; Exod. 19:18).*
 - d) Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus compared hell to a furnace of fire (Matt. 13:42, 50), an image that ought to make people stop and think before they jest about it. The smoke polluted the air and darkened the sun, which had already been darkened when the fourth trumpet sounded.*
- b. Destructive activity of the locusts (3-5)
- 1) The power of the locusts (3), ***Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth.***
 - a) *locusts on the earth*
 - 1] Mark Hitchcock, *As smoke billows forth from this prison house of wickedness, these locusts will ooze from the abyss . . . The locusts in Revelation 9 have been interpreted at different times in church history to symbolize heretics, the Goths, the Mohammedans, the mendicant orders, the Jesuits, the Protestants, the Saracens, and the Turks. However, the description in Revelation 9:25 reveals that these locusts are demonic beings in material, visible form. They are the uncanny denizens of the abyss, locusts of a hellish species animated with infernal powers.*
 - 2] Charles Ryrie, *These creatures are described as being very real, so we must not consider them as merely “symbolic representations of judgment. They are animal creatures, like locusts, though not ordinary locusts, for they are demonic in nature. Indeed, it would be better to describe them as demons who take the form of these unique locusts. Verse 11 make clear that this is the case.*
 - 3] John Walvoord, . . . *they might be demons who appeared in the form of locusts. This is confirmed by the fact that they came from the Abyss, the home of demons (Luke 8:31).*
 - 4] William Barclay, *All through the Old Testament, the locust is the symbol of destruction. The most vivid and terrible description of them and of their destructiveness is in the first two chapters of Joel, which are a description of an invasion of locusts; and it is from these two chapters that John takes much of his material . . . The two chapters of Joel should be read in full and set beside the description in Revelation.*
 - b) *like the power of scorpions of the earth*
 - 1] William Barclay, *There is nothing more destructive in the world than an invasion of locusts; and this is the terrible devastation which John sees, although the demonic locusts from the pit are different from any earthly insect.*
 - 2] Thomas Constable, *The Old Testament attests the destructive power of locusts (cf. Deut. 28:38; 2 Chron. 7:13; Joel 2:25). They often swarmed in apparently limitless numbers (cf. Ps. 105:34; Nah. 3:15). Joel likened what would come on the earth in the day of the Lord to a locust invasion (Joel 1–2). The locust is a symbol of destruction throughout the Old Testament (cf. 1 Kings 8:37; Ps. 78:46) . . . Yet the locusts that John saw had the power to hurt people to the degree that the scorpions can, which is an ability that normal locusts do not have.*
 - 3] Charles Ryrie, *In one locust plague it was estimated that 130 million locusts per square mile covered the ground! If there will be even one-hundredth as many in this judgment, with bites like scorpions, the intensity and pain of it is beyond imagination.*
 - 4] Charles Swindoll, . . . *note that their power will be “given” to them (9:3). The word “power” (exousia) means “authority” or “permission.” It may appear at first that this swarm is completely out of control, but we must remember that they can do nothing apart from God’s permission.*
 - 5] Kendell Easley, *The “locusts” that came out of the smoke from the unlocked shaft were unlike any that had ever appeared before. Clearly, they were supernatural, for they harmed only people, rather than plant life. Once more we see Christ’s people spared the brunt of the end-time judgments. These locusts harmed only those who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads (7:3).*

- 2) Restrictions on their activity (4-5)
- a) Limitations on who they could and could not harm (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.***
- 1] Charles Ryrie, *Horrible as the torment will be, God will place certain limitations on the activity of these demons. They will be limited as to what they may strike, how far they may go, and how long they may do what they do. They will not attack the vegetation of the earth (as common locusts do); they may attack only certain people, that is, those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (the 144,000; cf. 7:3-4). The wicked will persecute God's servants (the 144,000) but in turn they will be tormented by this plague that God allows.*
 - 2] Thomas Constable, *God commissioned these creatures to inflict severe pain on the earth-dwellers who did not have God's mark ("seal") of ownership and protection on their foreheads (cf. 7:3-8). Normally locusts eat only vegetation, but these diabolical creatures will only attack and afflict human beings.*
 - 3] Charles Swindoll, *These aren't your average hungry locusts! Their target will not be plants but people . . . though they will be told to harm humans, they can inflict their torment only on certain people—"men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads" (9:4). This recalls the remnant of Israel, sealed for protection in 7:2-3. Those saints will be spared from the suffering inflicted by the locusts.*
 - 4] Warren Wiersbe, *This demonic army is given the assignment of tormenting all who have not been protected by the seal of God. The 144,000 men from the tribes of Israel would therefore escape this painful judgment (Rev. 7:1-8). In fact, it is likely that all who have trusted the Lord will be sealed in some special way and protected from torment.*
 - 5] Grant Osborne, *God's people are protected from the outpouring of divine judgment (Rev 3:10; 7:1-8). Only those who have rejected his offer of repentance (9:20-21) are subjected to this divine retaliation for what they have done to God's people (6:9-11; 8:2-5; 16:5-6). They have the mark of the beast (13:16), not the seal of God.*
- b) Extent and duration of the torment (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.***
- 1] Charles Ryrie, *The demon-locusts will also be limited in that they may not kill people, just torment them. Further, the duration of this plague will be five months (cf. v. 10).*
 - 2] Robert Thomas, *The scorpion belongs to the largest and most malignant of all insect tribes . . . Its sting located near the 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).*
 - 3] Charles Swindoll, . . . *they will be given authority to torment, not to kill (9:5). This torment will be similar to the torment of a scorpion sting—excruciating, burning, even debilitating, but in this case, not deadly.*
 - 4] Kendell Easley, *Why will the supernatural hosts of evil be willing to inflict such agony that evil humans—also servants of the devil—will seek death, but will not find it? Evil always has a way of turning and devouring itself. The devil's kind take delight in hurting and destroying each other.*
- c. Despair of people on earth (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.***
- 1] Charles Swindoll, . . . *in that five months the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual agony these people will suffer will drive them mad. Some of the most haunting words in all of Scripture describe the desperate situation: "And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them" (9:6).*
 - 2] Charles Ryrie, *The effect of this torment is to drive people to suicide, but they will not be able to die. Although they will prefer death to the agony of living, death will not be possible. Bodies will not sink and drown; poisons and pills will have no effect; and somehow even bullets and knives will not do their intended job.*
 - 3] Kendell Easley, *Who can imagine the nightmare of the world's peoples all full of unspeakable physical agony, longing to die, yet remaining alive to experience even worse? Even more terrible, they refuse to repent of sin and turn to God (9:21), just like Pharaoh in the days of Moses.*

- 4] Thomas Constable, *Because of the influence of these scorpion-like locusts, people will seek death but will not be able to escape their pain. They will long for death rather than repenting . . . Since 4:1 John had been reporting what he saw, but now he spoke as a prophet and predicted the future . . . This is one of the indications that Revelation is also prophetic as well as apocalyptic in genre.*
- 5] Grant Osborne, *In the Gospels it is clear that demons possess people in order to torture and kill those who are made in the image of God, which is their way of getting back at God (Mark 5:1–20; 9:14–29). They do so again here; this is their true nature.*

2. A description of the locusts (7-11)

- a. They had the appearance of battle horses (7a), ***In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle:***
 - 1) Charles Ryrie, *Overall they are like horses prepared for battle (cf. Joel 2:4).*
 - 2) Charles Swindoll, *They will be warlike, brutal, and fierce. Unstoppable, they will pursue without flinching their purpose of torment.*
 - 3) Kendell Easley, *Battle horses are bred for strength and equipped with bridle and saddle. This was no slipshod host but was well prepared.*
- b. They wore crowns of gold (7b), ***on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold;***
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *Their crowns (Gr. stephanos) like gold probably symbolize their victory over the objects of their oppression. A variation of this interpretation is that the crowns imply invincibility.*
 - 2) Kendell Easley, *These symbolize victory. They will succeed completely in their appointed mission.*
 - 3) Grant Osborne, *For these demonic powers this is a pretentious crown, for they only rule their small earthly kingdom for a short time (12:12). They are usurpers who claim an authority they do not possess.*
- c. They had human faces (7c), ***their faces were like human faces,***
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *Their resemblance to humans suggests their intelligence, but clearly they are not ordinary people (cf. vv. 3–4).*
 - 2) Charles Swindoll, *They are intelligent creatures, perhaps even alluring, utilizing deception and persuasion to attract people. In the end, however, their goal will be to torture, to tear apart, and to destroy.*
 - 3) Kendell Easley, *There was cunning and intelligence in these creatures.*
- d. They had hair like women (8a), ***their hair like women's hair,***
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *Perhaps the reference to hair like women's, presumably long hair, is to convey their wildness . . . Long hair in biblical times was a sign of glory, so perhaps they have some glory.*
 - 2) Kendell Easley, *Some ancient warriors, particularly Parthians, wore long flowing hair as a symbol of fierceness (not effeminacy).*
 - 3) Grant Osborne, *Their faces are "like human faces," and this, combined with the following "hair like women's hair" (9:8), demonstrates the pretentious desire of these demonic beings to usurp humankind's place at the apex of God's creation.*
- e. They had teeth like lions (8b), ***and their teeth like lions' teeth;***
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *Lion-like teeth denote their ability to consume their prey.*
 - 2) Kendell Easley, *Such teeth tear apart their prey. Again, fierceness and strength come to mind with such an image.*
 - 3) Grant Osborne, *Their "teeth like lion's teeth" . . . This is also the point of 1 Peter 5:8, "the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." They want to destroy all human beings because humans are made in God's image. Therefore, to the demonic horde they are objects of contempt and hatred even if they have rejected God and become followers of Satan. Their war is against all humanity.*
- f. They had breastplates like those made of iron (9a), ***they had breastplates like breastplates of iron,***
 - 1) Mark Hitchcock, *They have coverings like breastplates of iron (like body armor) - this reveals that they are well protected; man is helpless against their onslaught.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *Iron breastplates, which covered both the chest and the back in John's day, gave these creatures the appearance of invulnerability (cf. v. 17).*

- 3) Kendell Easley, *This further specifies the military preparation of this evil horde. Ancient Roman breastplates were usually leather and bronze, so these were much stronger and much more invincible.*
 - 4) Grant Osborne, *The breastplate on the horse, as with soldiers, protected both the sides and back and rendered the horse unassailable in the midst of battle. This stresses the invincibility of these terrible creatures.*
- g. They had wings that made much noise (9b), ***and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle.***
- 1) Thomas Constable, *The sound of their activity will be terrifying, like the sound of chariots and many horses rushing into battle (cf. Joel 2:4–5; 2 Kings 7:6; Jer. 47:3). Indeed their sound signifies battle with earth-dwellers.*
 - 2) Kendell Easley, *The military imagery continues as John turns up the volume for us. In times of war, battle lines sometimes advance with as much noise as possible. This army is no exception.*
 - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *When they fly, the noise is like an army of chariots rushing by.*
 - 4) Grant Osborne, *The “sound of their wings” certainly describes the terrifying sound of a locust swarm. However, the picture is enhanced here, describing the even more terrifying sound of cavalry and war chariots as they hurl themselves into battle, alluding to Joel 2:5, “a noise like that of chariots.” Chariots were the single most important key to victory, both in the Old Testament (Judg 1:19; 1 Kgs 10:26; 1 Chr 19:7) and in the Roman world.*
- h. They had scorpion like tails with power to hurt people (10), ***They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails.***
- 1) Thomas Constable, *Their ability and their mission to hurt people with stings from the stingers in their tails also suggest abnormal characteristics. This verse restates verse 5. The repetition serves to stress the awfulness of their power to hurt people.*
 - 2) Kendell Easley, *Normal locusts do not attack humans, but these locust demons are supernatural.*
 - 3) Grant Osborne, *The final word picture returns to 9:5: these creatures have “tails with stingers, like scorpions” (9:10). The Greek word for “sting” (kentron) is used in 1 Corinthians 15:55 of “the sting of death,” and was used in the first century of the “sting” of the scourge, a vicious whip used to tear a back apart (like Jesus in Matt 27:26).*
- i. They had a leader (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.***
- 1) Thomas Constable, *Their king is the leading angel of the abyss. This is further confirmation that the locusts represent demons. The names Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek both mean Destroyer . . . Identifying him as Satan is tempting. But the text only calls him an angel. The appearance of Satan later (12:3, 9) is much more dramatic than the introduction of this angel.*
 - 2) Charles Ryrie, *In this judgment he, through demons, will attempt to destroy people’s bodies; he also destroys the souls of those who refuse to receive the Savior.*
 - 3) Charles Swindoll, *We cannot be dogmatic, but he’s probably a high-ranking lieutenant of Satan who will do his dark lord’s bidding.*
 - 4) Kendell Easley, *This is some other archdemon that appears here in Scripture and perhaps also in 11:7. If the angels in heaven have different ranks and orders, then we should expect the same of the hosts from the underworld . . . That they have a fierce leader demonstrates further that these are no ordinary locusts, for “locusts have no king, yet they advance together in ranks” (Prov. 30:27).*

SUMMARY

- Grant Osborne, . . . *the picture is complete, combining the imagery of the locust, the scorpion, and the warhorse to describe the torture caused by the war the demonic forces conduct against the very ones who worshiped them. This is a very important message; those who refuse to turn to God need to understand the true nature and intentions of the gods they have chosen to serve.*
- John Walvoord, *This judgment confirms what was already intimated in preceding judgments, that the Great Tribulation, as Christ described it, will be a time of “great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again” (Matt. 24:21).*