

Revelation #26

February 5, 2023

Series Title: The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Behold I Am Coming Soon

Today's Message: The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets; Revelation 9:1-21

Before we move on into the sermon today it is important to remember that in our study of Revelation, our *eschatological*¹ position is rooted in the *literal futurist interpretation*, or *literal view* for short. In other words, we believe with certainty that the best way to interpret Revelation chapters 4-22 is to understand that the events described are future to us and can be understood literally, except where the Revelation makes clear that we are to understand a text or verse or word figuratively.

For example, in Revelation *literal*, but future judgments and events are often described using *figures* of speech, or figurative language. A case in point can be seen in Revelation 9. Here we see the description of literal creatures called locusts coming up out of the Abyss. But as John describes the "locusts" he uses figurative language to describe their physical attributes. Take note, however, these locusts would literally have power to torment and inflict pain through literal agonizing attacks upon literal human beings, yet not cause death.

This *literal view* is seemingly the most reliable and objective approach to understanding Revelation. The other views often lead the interpreter to develop a subjective interpretation of the signs and events. For instance, the *historicist interpretive view* overlays major events of history upon the descriptions of the signs and judgments revealed in Revelation. For an example, some *historicists* take this view to interpret the locusts of the fifth trumpet to be descriptive of "Muslim hordes that poured into the west between the sixth and eighth centuries, and the sixth trumpet of the four angels bound at the Euphrates" to be "the growth and spread of the Turkish Empire."² Other *historicists* have interpreted "Queen Elizabeth I as the first bowl, Martin Luther as the angel of Sardis, Adolf Hitler as the red horse."³

So, let's get to our study today.

At the end of chapter 8 we heard the eagle cry out, "Wow! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!" The three "woes" are three trumpets to come, which contain a terrible, never before experienced pouring out of judgment and wrath from God.

The **focus** of the first four trumpets, as you recall, were judgments affecting the ecosystems of the earth. But **focus** of the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets will be upon the spiritual realm and its unleashed fury upon the inhabitants of the earth in accordance with the will of God.

This week: (Revelation 9:1-12) The Fifth Trumpet: A Merciful Agony

Next week: (Revelation 9:13-21) The Sixth Trumpet: A Merciless Agony

¹ Eschatology is the study of end times. More broadly, it also can encompass biblically doctrinal issues related to final things such as Christ's resurrection and the effect of His resurrection on all things human including death, life, salvation, the Church, judgment, Heaven, Hell, etc.

² Garland, here, notes *Tenney's* commentary, *Interpreting Revelation*.

³ Garland, here, notes *E Hindson's* commentary, *Revelation: Unlocking the Future*.

I. (Revelation 9:1-12) The Fifth Trumpet: A Merciful Agony

- A. (9:1a) Sounding: The Fifth Trumpet is the first of the remaining 3 “Woes” of Revelation 8:13
 1. This trumpet blast follows close on heels of the terrible trumpet blasts upon the life sustaining ecosystems of earth
 - a) Land
 - b) Sea
 - c) Fresh water
 - d) Sky
- B. (9:1b-2) A Star **had fallen** from the sky to the earth
 1. John describes a “star”
 - a) But not a literal star, nor an asteroid or meteor, etc.
 - (1) Angelic beings are often times called stars in Scripture
 - (a) Job 38:7: “--while the morning stars sang together”
 - (b) Isaiah 14:13: “I will raise my throne above the stars of God;”
 - b) A “star” that “**had fallen**”
 - (1) The word not only means something that had previously fallen, but is now in a fallen state.
 - (a) This would suggest that this star is referring to Satan.
 - (i) John didn't see the star actually fall at that moment.
 - (ii) Satan's original fall from heaven:
 - (a) Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-16; Luke 10:18
 - (b) Satan remains in a fallen state
 - (2) Jesus said that He “saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven”. (Luke 10:18)
 - (a) He literally saw Satan confined to the **realm** of earth.
 - (i) Limited authority.
 - (b) Christ came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8)
 - (c) In Luke 10:17-18— Jesus may be saying that He saw the Apostles demonstrate the present reality of His continuing authority over the powers of Satan's earthly domain as they subdued demons in Jesus's Name while on their first mission.
 - (i) Satan's authority was subjected to Christ when he fell.
 - (ii) At the cross Satan's subjection to Christ was paraded universally for all to see!
 - (a) **See Colossians 1:13-20; 2:9-16**
 - (3) What John did recognize was Satan's authority being subject to Christ!
 - c) (9:1b-2) John describes a person or a being in subjection to Christ
 - (1) The “star” was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss

(2) (9:2) "When **he**..."

(3) "Opened the Abyss"

(a) Satan, under Christ's authority is given the key to the Abyss and therefore can let loose whomever He wants.

(b) He is furious. And filled with fury and wrath (Rev.12:12).

(4) "Smoke rose from it **like the smoke from a gigantic furnace**"

(a) "Smoke" here refers to judgment. And it's huge!

(b) Rev. 9:17-18; 14:11; 18:9,18: 19:3

C. (9:3-6) Locusts swarm out in darkening the sky and blocking the sun (9:2b)

1. (9:3) Demons taking on a visible form that looked like locusts

a) These demons were small, because John saw "locusts"

b) They had been given power like that of earthly scorpions

(1) Survivable stings, but extremely painful

2. (9:4-5) Strict limitations on their mayhem:

a) Under command to not harm grass, plants, or trees, but only people who **did not have the seal of God on their foreheads**

(1) The 144,000 Jewish missionaries would be kept safe!

b) Not to kill the unmarked people

c) But to torment them for 5 months.

(1) The agony will be like that of a familiar scorpion sting.

D. (9:7-10) John's Description of the insidious creatures (Figurative language)

1. John called them "locusts" in order for us to understand the widespread and unstoppable devastation of these creatures released from the Abyss.

2. John tries to describe these creatures released from the Abyss

a) (9:7) We shouldn't be surprised if these demons take on the shape and size of locusts. They very well may be the size of familiar locusts.

b) John said these "locusts **looked like** horses prepared for battle

(1) Warhorses; prepared for war. Undaunted by the terror of war

c) "**...something like** crowns of gold on there heads"

(1) Nearly everyone agrees that the crowns indicate invincibility

(a) Nothing people can do to kill them.

d) Their faces were **like** the faces of men

(1) Not normal locusts, but rather thinking, rational, calculating

e) (9:8) Their hair was **like** women's hair

(1) MacArthur sees this to indicate seductiveness. I don't know if I agree. It could just be that their hair is long.

f) Their teeth were **like** lions' teeth.

(1) Vicious. Intimidating. Terrifying appearance.

g) They had breastplates **like** breastplates of iron

h) The sound of their wings **like** the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle.

(1) Can you imagine the deafening, terrible sound of an innumerable horde of these destructive creatures/ demons?

(a) Think of the deafening sound of just one military helicopter.

i) (9:10) They had tails and stings **like** scorpions

(1) The sting of their tails had the power to torment people for five months! Not to kill. But to torment!

(a) To hurt and cause extreme misery!

(i) Like the description of the “sting of death” in 1 Corinthians 15:56. The “sting of death is sin”.

(a) Sin hurts. Sin torments. Sin’s torment is never satiated; never satisfied! NEVER!

(ii) And here, the scorpion’s sting torments 5 months

A testimony of the pain and torment of a sting from a particularly dangerous but not lethal scorpion sting: “There was a boy stung in the foot by a scorpion. He rolled on the ground, grinding his teeth, and foaming at the mouth. It was a long time before his complainings moderated, and even then he could make no use of his foot, which was greatly inflamed. And such is the nature of the torment which these locusts from the pit inflict.” (Garland: from J.A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, 206)

E. (9:11) The locusts/creatures/ demons had a high ranking leader over them

1. The king over them was the “angel of the Abyss

a) Not Satan

(1) One named “Abaddon (Hebrew) or Apollyon (Greek)”

(a) Why Hebrew and Greek?

(i) Perhaps to describe the lack of prejudice in who they torment. Tormenting both Jews and Gentiles.

(b) The name means, “Destroyer.”

(i) If the king from the Abyss is a destroyer, so is the army that follows his command.

F. (9:12) “The first “woe” is past; **Behold**, two other “woes” are yet to come.”

1. KJV uses the word, “Behold” at the announcement of the two more “woes”. Why?

a) Because as terrible as the first “woe” was, the next two are even worse!

(1) The first “woe” brought “torment” and some sense of mercy.

(2) The second “woe”, or the sixth trumpet will

- (a) Bring forth the release of a demonic force the likes of which the earth and the inhabitants of earth have never experienced or imagined.
 - (i) See Revelation 9:13-19; 11:14

(3) The third “woe”, or the seventh trumpet will

- (a) Bring forth the seven bowl judgments of God’s wrath.
 - (i) See Rev. 11:15; 15:7; 16:2-4,8,10,12,17
 - (ii) Trumpets five and six are accomplished in measure as God has allowed Satan a time to unleash his fury.

II. (9:6) A merciful agony

- A. Whereas the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments are a measure of wrath, meaning, God has put limits on the extent of pain, destruction and death of the trumpet judgments, we must remember that the Gospel comes revealing God’s immeasurable grace and mercy. And that is why we can say that there is a merciful agony being afforded to the inhabitants of the earth during the first two woes.

- 1. During this time the immeasurable grace of God is availed to all who repent.

- B. With the 144,000 missionaries preaching repentance and faith in Christ the sting of the torment and agony is not without hope.

- 1. Christ is preached. The Gospel is proclaimed!

- a) The vilest of sinners who truly believe are transferred from death to life!

- (1) I can’t help but recall Psalm 107. In this Psalm are many testimonies of sinners in torment, tormented by terrible circumstances who cried out to God in their torment, and God saved them!

- (a) For example: “Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains, for they had rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High. So He subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains. Let them give thanks to the Lord for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for men, for He breaks down gates of bronze and cuts through bars of iron.” (Psalm 107: 10-16)

- 2. But tragically, rather than seeking God, 9:6 says, “...men will seek death, but will not find it;”

- a) Sinful men are utterly sinful and corrupt.
 - b) If God does not intervene there is no hope.
 - c) Salvation is all of God!

3. Today, if you hear His voice do not harden your hearts! Call upon the Name of the Lord and be saved today

Next Week: (Revelation 9:13-21) The Sixth Trumpet: A Merciless Agony