

Text: Rev 9.1-21

The three-fold outline of Revelation (1.19):

1. The things you have seen (the vision of Christ) Rev 1
2. The things which are (the letters to the churches) Rev 2-3
3. The things which must come after these things (Rev 4-22)
 - a. The overture: the scene in heaven (Rev 4-5)
 - b. The seal judgements begin (Rev 6)
 - c. (Parenthesis): the believers of the Tribulation (Rev 7)
 - d. The seventh seal which reveals the seven trumpets (four in chapter 8)
 - e. The fifth and sixth trumpets

Things are not getting better!

I. The fifth trumpet: the bottomless pit is opened (1-12)**A. The terms of the judgement (1-6)****1. The star from heaven is given the key to the pit (1)****a. Obviously, this star is a person (angel)**

- 1) Probably represents Satan cast out of heaven at beginning of Tribulation (Rev 12.9) [Walvoord, *BKCNT*]
- 2) Could also just be another angel, fallen or unfallen

“Since this angelic being simply carries out God’s instructions faithfully, I tend to think he is an unfallen angel.”¹

b. Bottomless pit = “the well of the abyss” – the place where Satan is to be held during the millennium (20.1-3)

- 1) It is also the place where some demons are held and from which the beast will arise
- 2) Not their final abode (which is the lake of fire)

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Rev 9.1.

- c. Apparently at least some demons (called locusts, v. 3) are released at this time
2. Smoke out of the pit (2)
 - a. Smoke represents impending judgement in Revelation
 - b. Appearance heightens sense of foreboding and doom
3. Locusts out of the smoke with power as scorpions (3-5)
 - a. Nature: debated
 - 1) Literal locusts with some supernatural power?
 - 2) Demons?
 - 3) Something that appears like a locust, but is far worse
 - b. Power limited to 'unsealed men' only – vegetation protected (4)
 - c. Power limited to torture, no destruction of life (5)
 - d. Also note limitation of time: five months
4. Effect of the locusts: men wish to die (6)

"They long for death rather than repenting."²

B. The description of the locusts (7-11)

1. Like horses prepared for battle (7)
 - a. The description leads many to identify the locusts as some kind of human army
 - b. Grotesque appearance emphasizes their fearsomeness
 - c. Human-like appearance speaks of intelligence, not just beasts
2. Hair like women / teeth like lions (8)
 - a. Hair like women = wildness? Glory?
 - b. Teeth like lions = ferocity
3. Warlike presentation (9)

² Constable, Rev 9.6.

4. Torturing power in their tails (10)
 - a. Term of five months repeated
 - b. The time span refutes the idea that “all these judgments will occur in a brief span of time immediately before the second coming of Christ”³
5. King of the locusts (11)
 - a. The leading angel of the abyss
 - b. Abaddon / Apollyon = “destroyer”

Constable: “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.”⁴

Walvoord: “Though Satan is sometimes portrayed as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), here Satan and his demons are seen for what they really are, destroyers of people.”⁵ (Ryrie also identifies this angel as Satan.)

- C. The passing of the first woe is marked (12)
 1. This verse makes it clear that the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpets are the three woes
 2. “After these things” indicates these are consecutive

II. The sixth trumpet: an army from the east (13-21)

- A. The armies of the four angels (13-19)
 1. John hears a voice from the altar in heaven (13-15)
 - a. Commands the angel of the sixth trumpet to release four angels bound at the great river, Euphrates
 - 1) Must be fallen angels

³ John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 953.

⁴ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Rev 9.11.

⁵ Walvoord, “Revelation in BKCNT,” 953.

2) Unfallen angels are not bound

- b. Angels prepared for a specific time and purpose: the death of one third of the population (15)
- c. After this judgement, half of the population of the earth will have died (including all previous judgements)

“The fourth seal (Rev. 6:7–8) resulted in a fourth of the earth’s people being killed. Here a third of the remainder were put to death. These two judgments alone, disregarding all intervening judgments, would account for the death of half the earth’s population.”⁶

Dan 12.1 ¶ “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

Mt 24.21-22 “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.²² “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

2. Four angels are accompanied by a huge army (16-17)

- a. May be humans under the control of these evil angels or a demonic host
- b. The number should be taken literally, though it far outstrips any army today

- 1) Walvoord references an article in *Time*, May 21, 1963, where China claimed a militia of 200 million.

⁶ Walvoord, 953.

2) “Red China passed the word that its 200 million-man (and woman) militia had gone into serious training.”⁷

3) Note: despite the claim, the Brookings Institute says China’s active-duty army is 2.8 million strong today⁸

c. The appearance is fantastic, Constable takes this to mean a demonic (non-human) host – but could be John’s attempt at describing some futuristic army that would appear alien to him

3. Consequences of the release of the armies (18)

a. Three distinct plagues: the fire, the smoke, the brimstone

b. One third of remaining population dies (second mention of this figure)

4. Power of the horses: in the heads and in the tails (19)

a. Locusts only had power in their tails

b. Some think this is a description of modern (to us) weapons of war – can’t be definite on this

B. Refusal of repentance (20-21)

1. Rest of mankind refuses to repent of idolatries (anti-Christianity) (20)

2. Rest of mankind refuses to repent of wicked deeds (21)

Conclusion:

“These trumpet judgments, as the seals, will grow more intense as they proceed. Most people living on the earth during these days will be so hard of heart that they will not turn to God in repentance. Nevertheless some will become believers in Jesus Christ (ch. 7). Perhaps the salvation of most of them will take place in the earlier part of the Tribulation before these more severe judgments fall.”⁹

⁷ “Red China: Firecracker No. 2,” *Time*, May 21, 1965,

<https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,901693,00.html>.

⁸ Bates Gill and Michael E. O’Hanlon, “China’s Hollow Military,” *Brookings* (blog), November 30, 1AD, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/chinas-hollow-military/>.

⁹ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Rev 9.21.