Revelation 8-9

The Seventh Seal—The Great Tribulation Begins

Silence in Heaven

Revelation 8:1— And when He broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

- The events of Revelation 8:1 are a continuation of the seal series from Revelation 6:12 . . . the opening of the sixth seal. But with the breaking of the seventh seal God's judgments on the earth intensify significantly. We see a foreshadowing of this judgment in Zechariah 2:13

Zechariah 2:13— "Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord; for He is aroused from His holy habitation."

Note: With the breaking of the seventh seal the scroll is now fully opened, signifying full possession authority to take back the earth from the earth dwellers and Satan.

- Significantly, **the 7th seal is actually comprised of 7 trumpets, with the 7th trumpet actually begin comprised of 7 bowl judgements. So, in all, the 7th seal is actually comprised of 13 distinct judgment events, all of which occur in the second half of the Tribulation.**

- As previously noted, chapter 7 is a parenthetical passage which did not advance the timeline. Its purpose is to show the preparation of God's people before the Great Tribulation and the great multitude which has already come out from the first half of the tribulation.

    - The scene in verse 1 is **the throne room**, where the breaking of the 7th seal brings an unprecedented result….silence in heaven.

- There are various interpretations of the phrase, ***"there was silence in heaven for about half an hour."***

    1. This is silence **before the millennial reign**. The problem with this view is that this ***silence*** is ***in heaven*** and not on the earth . This view would picture the seventh seal as a blessing and not God's wrath.

    2. It's **not a literal silence, but a brief cessation in judgment**. The problem with this view is the same as view #1 in failing to recognize that the first six seals are judgments. To have the seventh seal picture a cessation of judgment is inconsistent and not acceptable.

    3. This view is that this is **a temporary pause in the revelation** given to John. The problem with view is that the silence, itself, is part of the revelatory process and not a suspension of it.

    4. Some view this as **a pause in the heavenly praise** to allow the prayers of the saints to be heard before the throne. The argument in favor of this view is that approximately half an hour is the time that was needed for the priest to perform the offering of incense required by law. But the problem with this view is that the prayers of the saints come after the period of silence not during it. (cf. Rev 8:3)

5. Some view this ***silenced in heaven*** as **a dramatic pause** to symbolize the awe and dread with which the heavenly hosts await the events about to happen. **This is considered the best interpretation** in that it is most consistent with the immediate context of chapter 8.

- Robert Thomas states, "It is a hushed expectancy that make the judgments about to begin more impressive."

- The silence corresponds to Old Testament occurrences of the same, in conjunction with reverence for God and awesome expectation of His judgment. (See Zephaniah 1:7-8, 15, 17-18)

- The silence is limited to, ***about half an hour***. The length of time is not the point, but rather the preparatory nature of what is to come. This silence is preparing for the events of the seventh seal.

  - Robert Thomas writes, "the silence of vs. 1 purposes to prepare for the awful consequences of the seven trumpet judgments that will commence shortly."

The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets

Revelation 8:2— And I saw the seven angels who stand before God; and seven trumpets were given to them.

- In v. 2 the phrase, "***And I saw…***" marks a new phase of John's seventh seal vision.

  - **What did John see?** He saw ***the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them***.

  - ***angels*** (Gr. *angelos*) has the definite article marking these angels as a special group with a special function. Their position, **standing before God**, marks their readiness for service.

- In the phrase, ***and seven trumpets were given to them,*** the trumpets are significant for the role they play in national Israel. They were used in the following ways:

  - ceremonial processions Joshua 6:1; 1 Chron15:24
  - assembling for war, journeys and special feasts Nu 10:9-10
  - warning of the coming Day of the Lord Joel 2:1
  - as a signal for war; they are associated with judgment in the Day of the Lord (Zeph. 1:14-16)

The Golden Censer

Revelation 8:3-5— 3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

- In the phrase, ***and another angel came***, the term ***another*** (Gr. *allos*) means "another of the same kind." In other words, this angel is of the same class as those in 8:2 with the trumpets.

- In the phrase, ***and stood at the altar***, the best view is to see this as the altar of incense in 6:9- the souls ***under the altar*** crying out for vengeance.

- In the phrase, ***holding a golden censer and much incense was given to him***, the ***golden censer*** (Gr. *libanoton chrysour*) is sometimes referred to as a "fire pan" and was used as an implement in Soloman's temple. (1Ki 7:50; 2Ki 25:15; 2 Chron 4:22; Jer 52:18-19)

- **Why was the incense given to him?** Answer: ***that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne***."

    - The incense was given to this angel. The phrase ***was given*** indicates the source to be God. (cf. 6:2, 4, 8, 11; 7:2; 9:1, 3, 5; 11:1, 2; 13:5, 7, 14, 15; 16:8; 19:8; 20:4)

- **Note:** God, Himself, is giving the incense to be added to the prayers in Revelation 6:10. The picture is that God is guaranteeing the acceptability of the prayers. These prayers conform to His will and the giving of the incense, by God, is the certainty that He hears their prayers and will act.

- Robert Thomas writes, "Incense had a prominent place in Old Testament worship (Exodus 30:34-38) and serves as a reminder that intercessory prayer is like sweet perfume before the Lord. In the temple ritual, the priest poured the saucer of incense over the burning coals on the altar of incense. At the same time, the Israelites bowed in prayer as the fragrant cloud of smoke ascended heavenward. A similar connection between the incense and the prayers of the saints occurs in Revelation 5:8, except the incense and the prayers are one and the same."

  Psalm 141:2— "May my prayers be counted as incense before Thee. The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering."

  Luke 1:10— "And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of incense offering."

    - **Note:** In Revelation 8:3, ***much incense*** is either the same or distinct from the prayers of the saints. Grammatically, ***the prayers*** can mean "consisting of the prayers of the saints".

    - The preferable meaning is that the purpose of giving incense to the angel is to help make the prayers of the saints more acceptable to God. Therefore, the prayers are not the incense as in Revelation 5:8. The destination of their prayers is the golden altar before God's throne, the place of power and the source of the trumpet judgments about to be initiated. The context identifies "the saints" as tribulation saints not saints from all ages. God is about to answer their imprecatory prayer of "how long…"

8:4 "And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints went up before God out of the angel's hand."

- The smoke is the result of the burning of incense; the combination of the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints guarantees divine acceptance of the prayers for God to act in vengeance. Prayers that have gone unanswered, until now, become welcome and receive an immediate reply.

- **The major point is that the judgment of God that's going to fall on the earth, in the second half of the Tribulation, will fall in direct response to the prayers of God's people**.

Revelation 8:5a— "And the angel took the censer and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to earth."

- The picture here is of this angel taking coals (fire) from the golden altar of incense, filling the censer and hurling it towards the earth.

    - Fire is a frequent symbol for divine torment and signals that the answer to the saints' prayers is coming in the trumpet judgments to be visited upon the earth (specifically the seventh trumpet).

Revelation 8:5b— "and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake."

- This is the second occurrence of the storm theophany, as we previously saw in Rev. 4:5.

    - Here we see a strong contrast from the silence in 8:1. Note that the earthquake is added to the storm theophany, adding to the magnitude of what John was witnessing.

- **Note:** Because all the judgments of God in the Tribulation increase in intensity, it is probable that the ***earthquake*** in Revelation 8:5 is even more intense and devastating that the previous one, in Revelation 6:12.

In 8:6 the preamble comes to a close with the reappearance of the seven trumpet angels.

Revelation 8:6— "And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them."

    - The judgments now begin and are those which were held back in 7:3 until the sealing of the 144,00.

- The first four trumpets afflict nature, the earth, trees, grass, sea, etc. and parallel 7:1 with the holding back of the four winds.

- The first four trumpets are separated from the fifth and sixth trumpet by an eagle flying in mid heaven. The fifth and sixth trumpets have men as their objects. The seventh trumpet opens the seven bowls.

The First Trumpet — Burning of 1/3 of the earth's vegetation

Revelation 8:7— And the first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

- In Revelation 8:7-12 note the use of the words ***a third*** occur **12 times**. While God is pouring out His judgment on the earth and ***those who dwell on the earth***, He is not trying to destroy all life on the earth.

    - Note the similarity of this judgement to those spoken of in Psalm 105 and Joel 2:30 . . .

    Psalm 105:32— "He gave them hail for rain and flaming fire in their land."

    Joel 2:30— "And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth. Blood, fire, and columns of smoke."

- With this first trumpet judgment we see that ***there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth***. What is being described here?

    - It is very possible that what we see described here is the aftermath of massive volcanic activity. **Molten ash**, mixed with hail from massive thunderstorm would certainly appear to be ***hail and fire***.
    - And the fact that the ***hail and fire are mixed with blood*** can, as Tom Pennington states, "be the blood of men and animals mingles with condensed water vapor in the death that's brought on the planet."

- As a result of this trumpet judgment ***hail and fire, mixed with blood*** being ***thrown to the earth,*** there comes a threefold result:

    1. ***a third of the earth was burned up***. This would include the cultivated soil on the earth's surface.

    2. ***a third of the trees were burned up***, to include fruit and food bearing trees

    3. ***all the green grass was burned up***.

    - Note that in Revelation 9:4 grass is present at the fifth trumpet and leads to two considerations:

        1. enough time has lapsed between the first and fifth trumpets for the grass to have grown back

        2. seasonal dormancy- not all grass is green year round; some is dormant. By the sounding of the fifth trumpet the once dormant grass is now green and is not harmed.

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The Second Trumpet – Destruction of 1/3 of sea life

Revelation 8:8-9— 8 And the second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood; 9 and a third of the creatures, which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

- In v. 8 the description of a ***great mountain burning with fire*** is most likely a large meteor, which is "mountain-like" and falls into the category of falling stars under the sixth seal.

- We then learn that this ***great mountain was thrown into the sea***, leading to a threefold result:

  1. ***and third of the sea became blood***.

  - This hearkens back to Ex 7:20 with Moses striking the Nile in the presence of Pharaoh and his court and the Nile turned to blood in the first of the nine plagues.

  - The reason for **the sea becoming blood** is either by supernatural cause or the result of sea life dying in the poisonous water.

  2. ***a third of the creatures, which were in the sea and had life, died***

  - One-third of the animals and fish in the blood filled environment die!

  3. ***and a third of the ships were destroyed***. Consider that if a giant meteor were to hit the sea, tsunamis would be generated which would then be able to capsize/destroy ocean going vessels, thereby disrupting commerce and transportation leading to economic chaos.

The Third Trumpet — poisoning of 1/3 of the fresh water

Revelation 8:10-11— 10 And the third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters; 11 and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.

- The term ***great star*** (Gr. *aster megas*) is ***burning like a torch*** (Gr. *lampas*). This is possibly a second meteor or a comet.

- ***and it fell on a third of the rivers and in the springs of water***. Again, this recalls the first Egyptian plague with its contamination of the drinking water supply. The meteor/comet lands on and pollutes one third of the rivers and fresh water springs. (cf Ex7: 21, 24)

- In v. 11 John states the effect of this second meteor falling into the rivers and springs of water . . . ***and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters;***

  - ***Wormwood*** is a shrub whose leaves are used in the manufacturing of absinthe, a liquor so toxic that its manufacture is banned in many countries.

- The term ***Wormwood*** (Gr: *apsinthos*) is used once in the NT but found 8 times in the OT, where it is associated with bitterness, poison, and death (Dt 29:18; Proverbs 5:4; Jer 9:15, 23:15; Lam 3:15,19; Amos 5:7, 6:12). In three of the uses ***Wormwood*** is connected with poisoned water.

- In Jeremiah 9:15 we see God speaking of rebellious Israel, ***Behold, I will feed them this people with wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink.***

- The result of the third trumpet judgment reveals the effects on ***a third*** of the world's fresh water and those who rely on it . . .

  - ***and a third of the waters became wormwood***

  - ***and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter***.

  - **Note**: Not all who drank the water died from it. Consider at this point the physical state of the world's population already devastated by famine and disease. Perhaps the weakest of them, make up the "***many***".

The Fourth Trumpet — the darkening of a third of the heavenly bodies.

- Where the first three trumpet judgments afflicted the earth, the fourth trumpet judgment now strikes the earth's atmosphere.

Revelation 8:12— And the fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were smitten so that a third of them might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.

- The term ***smitten*** (Gr. *plesso*) is a verb form meaning **plague**. This verb occurs in the LXX to describe the devastating effects of the hail on the crops. (cf. Ex 9:31-32)

- **The result of this trumpet is *that a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it and the night in the same way.***

  - The term ***darkened*** (Gr. *skotisthe*) is a symbol of judgment throughout the OT (cf. the ninth Egyptian plague, Ex 10: 21-22); the day of the Lord is described as a day of darkness (Amos 5:18; Is 13:10; Joel 2:2; Mark 13:24) - signs in the sun, moon and stars.

  - John Walvoord writes, "The literal understanding of an actual reduction of light serves as a warning of more severe judgments to come."

  - The result of the darkening would be a partial eclipse leading to cold temperatures (so much for global warming) leading to further crop destruction, unpredictable storms resulting in drastic weather changes and worldwide panic and further famine.

A New Scene in Heaven

A transition from the first four trumpets (8:7-12) to the fifth and sixth trumpets (9:1-21)

Revelation 8:13— And I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in mid- heaven saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe, to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

- In Revelation 8:13 we have a brief pause in the judgments as John describes seeing ***an eagle flying in mid-heaven.***
    - The term ***eagle*** (Greek: *aetos*) refers to a great bird, either an ***eagle*** or **a vulture.** While vultures eat carrion, eagles have also been known to.
    - In the Old Testament the ***eagle*** is a symbol that pictures a strong bird rushing to its prey, in this case referring to the rapid approach of God's remaining vengeance

      Deuteronomy 28:49— "The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand

      Hosea 8:1— Put the trumpet to your lips! Like an eagle the enemy comes against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed My covenant, and rebelled against My law.

      Habakkuk 1:8— "Their horses are swifter than leopards and keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen come galloping, their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swooping down to devour.
        - Note: In the KJV *aetos* is translated ***angel***, but most manuscripts support the term ***eagle***.
- Here in Revelation 8:13 the position of the ***eagle*** is in ***midheaven*** (Gr. *mesouranemati*), the position of the sun at noon; a place/position where all can see him.
- Significantly, though the term *aetos* is generally used to identify a great bird, this bird speaks human language . . . ***saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe, to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"***
    - And with his ***loud voice*** (Gr. *phone megale*) it is intended that all will hear him.
- Throughout Scripture the word ***woe!*** is used to express **dismay in the face of God's judgment**, in the face of devastation, in the face of God's condemnation pronouncing.
    - ***Woe*** (Gr. *ouai*) signifies that which is especially grievous; refers to great calamity that these last three trumpets represent. Each woe represents a trumpet judgment (9:1,12; 11:14) that will affect people.
    - Here in Revelation 8:13 the great ***eagle*** pronounces **three woes . . .** ***woe, woe, woe . . .*** and then states those to whom these three calamities will fall upon . . . ***to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound.***

- As stated, the objects of the ***woes*** is ***those who dwell on the earth***, who will be judged in response to the martyrs whose prayers are now being answered. The last three woes are specific to ***earth dwellers*** . . . unbelievers.

- Where the first four trumpets inflicted God's judgment upon the earth and nature, **the final three trumpet judgments will be directed upon *those who dwell upon the earth.***

The Fifth Trumpet—Demonic Locust Plague

Revelation 9:1-2— 1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. 2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.

- In the phrase, ***I saw a star from heaven***, the term ***star*** (Gr. *astera*) is not a <u>celestial</u> star, but rather <u>a being</u>. The fact that in the next sentence the ***star*** is identified by the personal pronoun, ***him***, clarifies that this is a person and has the characteristics of an angel.

- This angel is further described as having ***fallen to earth***. The term ***fallen*** (Gr. *peptokota*) can mean "to be cast down." But it can also mean, in the perfect tense (as here) ***having descended***.

  - Because of the translation, ***fallen***, some hold this to be a "fallen angel" (i.e, demon), perhaps even Satan himself. But the stronger interpretation views this as <u>an elect angel</u> sent to earth to advance the next stage of God's judgment.

    - In Revelation 20:1 the ***angel from heaven having the key of the abyss*** is quite possibly the same angel.

  - ***Fallen***, then, has to do **not with the character** of this being, but rather **his purpose** in descending to earth, to unlock the ***bottomless pit***.

    - The fact that this angel is described as ***a star*** may be identifying the speed with which he descended to the earth.

- In reference to ***the bottomless pit*** in v. 1 the term ***bottomless*** (Gr. *abussos*) means "an immeasurable depth, the underworld; abyss."

  - The term ***pit*** (Gr. *phrear*) means "the shaft leading down to the subterranean cavern- the abyss.

  - The fact that there is ***a key*** to this ***bottomless pit*** indicates that the opening has a secured lid of some type and its inhabitants include the demonic king over them in 9:11 and the beast in 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3.

- **But the interpretive question is, what is the bottomless pit?**

  - Answer: It is a preliminary place of incarceration for fallen angels from which some are about to be released under this trumpet judgment.

  - In Luke 8:26-31 we see a similar picture as the Geresenes demoniac ("Legion") is seen pleading . . . ***and they were entreating Him not to command them to depart into the abyss*** (the bottomless pit).

- Then in Revelation 9:2 the angel proceeds with his mission . . . ***and he opened the bottomless pit; and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.***

  - The angel uses the key to given to him to unlock the shaft leading to the underground chamber.

  - **Ponder this thought**: somewhere on this earth God has placed an opening that leads to a pit deep within the earth!

- When the ***bottomless pit*** is opened John describes how ***smoke went up from the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace…***

  - This is literal smoke that John sees, signifying, judgment, doom, and torment. (cf. Rev 9:17,8; 18:9; 19:3)

  - The volume of the smoke compares it to that produced by a ***great*** smelting ***furnace*** usually used for purifying metals. **In other words, it is HOT in this abyss**!

- Then, when the pit is opened we see the effect that it's opening has on the earth . . . ***and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.***

  - Remember, under the fourth trumpet, ***a third*** of the sun, moon, and stars were darkened. This judgment only **adds to and intensifies** this previous effect. The effects of the trumpets are cumulative.

Revelation 9:3— And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

- Then, with the atmospheric damage we then see in v. 3 a parallel to the eighth Egyptian plague of Exodus 10:12-20 . . . ***locusts.***
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  - But these are not natural, earthly ***locusts***. They are supernatural and demonic in origin.

  - Where locusts that occur in nature are a pest that consume crops, here in Revelation 9 we learn that these supernatural locusts possess the sting similar to that of a scorpion.

  - Most likely these ***locust-like*** creatures are demons/fallen angels who are given this **locust-like form.**

- But though these are demonic forces, they are given strict, inviolable instructions regarding how far they may go, much as Satan is give permission to afflict Job, but was prohibited from killing him.

- In Revelation 9:3-11 we learn the characteristics of these ***locusts***

  1. They come from the ***abyss*** where evil spirits are imprisoned (cf. Luke 8:26-31).

  2. They have a leader over them. (Rev 9:11)

  3. They attack men rather than vegetation. (Rev 9:4)

  4. Their form is that which has never been seen. (Rev 9:7-10)

  5. Demons can assume other material forms further illustrated in Rev 16:13, where three demons appear as frogs.

  - Note: Satan took the form of a serpent in the garden of Eden. It was either a direct possession or assuming the form (Gen. 3:1).

  - These may also be the angels of Genesis 6 who are currently imprisoned (see 2 Peter 2:4) released to judge fallen mankind.

- In v. 3 we learn that ***power was given to them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.***

  - Divine permission allows them the stinging power of scorpions in their tails (Rev 9:5,10)

  - Scorpions are the largest and most malignant of all insects. They rank with the snake in their hostility toward human beings (Luke 10:19; 11:12).

    1 Kings 12:11— " Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips but I will discipline you with scorpions."

- In Revelation 9:4 we see the divine limitations placed on them . . .

Revelation 9:4-5— 4 And they were told that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man.

- Theirs was a very specific mission:

  1. There were <u>commanded</u> ***not to hurt the grass of the earth*** (i.e. that which locusts do naturally, they were not to do.)

  - The grass in the first trumpet has since regrown, but is to remain untouched.

2. They were <u>not</u> permitted to harm ***any green thing nor any tree***

3. The thing they <u>were</u> specifically commanded to harm was ***only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads*** (i.e. the 144,000 of Rev 7:3-8).

- Those who ***have the seal of God on their foreheads*** were supernaturally protected from the attack of these creatures.

- Ironically, it is those in rebellion against God who are the objects of the locust's sting…demons, who themselves, are in rebellion against God.

- This demonstrates the confusion and irrationality of the forces of evil which should have allied together with one another.

4. ***They were not permitted to kill anyone***, but only ***to torment.***

- The term ***torment*** (Gr. *basanizo*) means to inflict acute pain. In the context of this verse this refers to <u>physical</u> pain.

- The pain of their sting is described as being ***like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man.*** A scorpion sting typically feels like intense burning, sharp pain, or an electric shock, often followed by numbness and tingling and lasts for days.

- Because these are not natural creatures, it is apparent from Revelation 9:6 that the ***torment*** of their sting is so painful . . .

  Revelation 9:6— And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; and they will long to die and death flees from them.

5. They were permitted to carry out their affliction of men for only ***five months***

- Once again, sadly, men would rather die than repent. As Revelation 9:6 states, ***men will seek death and will not find it . . .*** They fail to realize this torment portends what their eternal condition will be like. They desire death but will not have it granted.

  - In the phrase, ***they will long to die***, the term ***long*** (Gr. *epithymesousin*) signifies "a vehement desire." The implication of "vehement desire" is death does not come.

  - In the phrase, ***and death flees from them***, the term ***flees*** (Gr. *pheugei*) is a futuristic present tense that emphasizes the elusiveness of death.

Characteristics of the Locusts Rev 9:7-12

- Then, having described the tormenting effect they inflict on ***those who dwell on the earth***, in Revelation 9:7-12 John describes the characteristics of these locust creatures.

Revelation 9:7— And the appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads, as it were, crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.

- John begins his description with the head and moves towards the tail.
    - In describing them as having ***the appearance like horses***, John is not saying they <u>looked</u> like horses, but rather, they were warlike, eager to charge, as we see also in Joel 2:4.

      Joel 2:4— Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like war horses, so they run.

- ***and on their heads, as it were, crowns like gold…***
    - ***Crowns*** (Gr. *stephanoi*) signify "victors crowns" indicating that these locusts are unstoppable; they will achieve their mission.
    - **Note:** these are crowns worn by demons/fallen angels versus the 24 elders (elect angels) wearing crowns Rev. 4:4 and serve as additional scriptural support for the 24 elders being angels of a higher order rather than men.
- The further description of these demons having ***the faces were like faces of men*** carries the idea that these creatures have intelligence and are rational beings and are not actual locusts.

Revelation 9:8— And they had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions.

- Having ***hair like the hair of women*** means that it is long and thus adds to their gruesome appearance
- ***and their teeth were like the teeth of lions*** denotes voracity, yet ironically, their teeth are not used to torment, it is their tails!

Revelation 9:9— And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle.

- ***breastplates*** are thorax-armor covering the chest and back
    - That these breastplates were made of iron, connotes the invincibility of these demonic locusts.
- ***and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle.***
    - This would create a great psychological problem for mankind. The prophet Joel compares the noise of locust's wings to the clatter and clangor of chariot wheels and the hoof beat of horses moving swiftly into battle. (cf. Joel 2:4-5; 2Kings 7:6; Jer. 47:3)

9:10— Description of the source of the pain

Revelation 9:10— And they have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.

- ***And they have tails like scorpions, and stings, and in their tails is the power to hurt men for five months."-*** this is an elaboration of 9:5.
    - ***Stings*** (Gr. *kentra*) was a term for a goad used for oxen; spur, quill or sting of an insect.
        - What was torment in 9:5, in 9:10 becomes a power to hurt for five months.
    - ***hurt*** (Gr. *adikesai*) means "to do wrong, to hurt"

The demonic locusts have a leader

Revelation 9:11— They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.

- Note: the fact that they have a named leader is another indication these are demonic in nature.
- **Their leader's *name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon."***
    - The use of both the Hebrew and Greek names signifies the impact of this trumpet on both ungodly Jews and ungodly Gentiles.
    - ***Abaddon*** (Hebrew term) means "destroyer."
    - ***Apollyon*** (Greek term) also means "destroyer."
    - This is **<u>not</u> a reference to Satan** whose domain is the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12) nor the lower regions of the earth.
    - Satan's only connection with the abyss is when he is cast into it for the millennium (Rev. 20:1-3)
    - Therefore, this is an angel in a subordinate position in demonic hierarchy, whose domain is the abyss.

Revelation 9:12— The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.

- This shows a consecutive fulfillment. Two ***woes*** are still to come after the first. This announcement is likely from John but may also be a continuation of the eagle's announcement in 8:13.

The Sixth Trumpet— Revelation 9:13-21

- Beginning in ***Revelation 9:13*** we see the 6th trumpet judgment . . .

Revelation 9:13— And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God

- Revelation 9:13 describes an event in the Tabernacle, located in front of the veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place.
    - This voice is most likely the voice of the angel of the altar seen in Revelation 8:3. Recall that the angel of the altar in 8:3 had a golden censer with incense added to the prayers of the saints seeking vengeance in 6:9-11. This altar is the same altar.

Instruction to the sixth angel

Revelation 9:14— one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates"

- **Who are the four angels?**
    - The definite article signifies these are a specific group of angels. Perhaps these are demons over the four major empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome (see Daniel 10:13-20).
    - They are not the same four as in 7:1, holding back the four winds. These angels are bound, therefore, they must be fallen angels; no where do we see elect angels, in scripture. (cf. Rev 7:1)
- The verb ***bound*** (Gr. *dedemenous*) is in the perfect tense, meaning that they were bound in the past with continuing results into the future. In other words, they are ***bound*** until the divinely determined time at which they would be released.
- The term ***the great river*** is used in the Old Testament to signify the Euphrates River (Gen 15:18; Dt 1:7; Joshua 1:4 and in the NT Rev 16:12).
    - The Euphrates is one of the four rivers running through the Garden of Eden. (Gen 2:14) The other three were, the Pishon, Gihon and Tigris.
        - The Euphrates is also one of the rivers that borders the land promised to Abraham in Gen 15:18.
        - Its headwaters are in the mountains of Turkish Armenia and joins the Tigris in lower Babylon, (modern day Iraq) leading to the Persian Gulf.
        - The Euphrates and Tigris combine to form a single river, 1800 miles long.
        - It separated Israel from her two enemies, Assyria and Babylon
        - The name refers not just to the river, but to the whole region drained by the river.

- The area beyond the Euphrates, to the east, is traditionally the source from which the enemy attacks Israel (Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India).

- This same river will be crossed by ***the kings from the east*** in Revelation 16:12.

Their mission

Revelation 9:15— And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they might kill a third of mankind.

- The term ***prepared*** (Gr. *hetoismasmenoi*) means "a state of readiness."

  - Other passages of Scripture that teach of divine readiness include: Mt 10:40; Luke2:31; 1Cor 2:9; Rev 12:6

- The phrase ***the hour, day, month and year*** means that the appointed hour occurs on the appointed day in the appointed month in the appointed year.

  - These angels await the signal that the hour has arrived. God's timing is fixed and precise- not accidental- all forces of history are under His sovereign control.

- And in Revelation 9:15 we are told the purpose these four fallen angels serve ***. . . so that they might kill 1/3 of mankind"***

  - Note: 1/4 of the earth's population has already perished in the fourth seal judgment and there would be around 9 billion people in the world at the beginning of the Tribulation. 1/4 of the remaining 6-7 billion would be about 2 billion killed leaving 4-5 billion people remaining! This means that half of the world's population will be killed by the sixth trumpet, assuming about 9 billion when the tribulation begins.

  - What is of significance is that ***mankind*** in this verse seems to be specific to the "**earth dwellers**" (i.e unbelievers) and not those who are tribulation saints, ***Rev 9:20 " and the rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues did not repent…"*** The locust torture, no doubt would have brought many to repentance, but those unbelievers that have remained, would be inflicted with the sixth trumpet judgment, resulting in the death of 1/3 of mankind.

Revelation 9:16— and the number of armies of the horsemen were 200 million, I heard the number of them."

- This army is used to kill the large remaining portion of humanity that remains in unbelief. The "freeing" of these angels brings this **massive demonic army** on to the world scene. No explanation tells us the source of these armies. Some commentators equate this army with the 200 million standing army of China and cites Rev 16:12 ***the kings of the east***. But Rev 16:12 is the sixth bowl judgment and not the sixth trumpet, therefore this army is from an undisclosed source. Further description will show this army to be a demonic army. It is only by implication that their origination has something to do with the bound angels at the Euphrates. Perhaps each angel represents a leader, but this is not verifiable by the text.

- What is the identity of the armies?
    - In the use of the term ***armies*** (Gr. *strateumaton*) there are two possible meanings:

      1. men- Rev 16:12 are armies from the east gathered at the Euphrates. God's use of human armies by pagan nations to fulfill His purposes is seen in the OT. Cf Is 10: 6,7,25,26; 44:27-45:7; Hab 1:6-11; Jer 51:11,28

      2. demons- the horses, not the horsemen, are the active members of this group. Fire, smoke, and brimstone come from their mouths, cf 9:17

    - Robert Thomas writes, "The determining aspect in favor of these <u>being demons</u> is the description of the horses, that these horses must be of another order. Couple with this, the association with the four demonic angels in 9:14, the fire, smoke, and brimstone proceeding from their mouths, and the nature of the visiting locust hordes under the fifth trumpet, and a case strongly favorable to <u>seeing these as angels(demons) emerges</u>."

    - Contrast this with the heavenly army seen by Elisha and his servant in 2King 6:15-17.

    - Remember: This is a time of unprecedented supernatural activity!

- **Their number**— Note that by the time of the sixth trumpet, Satan and his demons have been cast to earth (Rev 12:9), the 200 million may be part of the total demonic host that is cast from heaven.

- ***two hundred million, and I heard the number of them***. This is <u>not</u> symbolic, hyperbolic, etc. This is an exact number. John indicates that the number came to him as part of the vision.

Their appearance

Revelation 9:17— And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone.

- The mention of horses in scripture is usually in connection with warfare.
    - Note: In the NASB "***the riders***" is italicized, meaning that the translator inserted the words.

- The term ***had breastplates*** (Gr. *echontas*) grammatically could modify horses <u>and</u> riders or the riders <u>alone</u>, assigning the breastplates to <u>both</u>, or to the riders <u>only</u>.
    - The stronger probability is that it applies to <u>both</u> the riders <u>and</u> their horses because the horses are the main subject of the rest of the description.

- The ***breastplate*** is the only description of the rider, showing that this is defensive armor and that they (the riders) play a subordinate role.

The description of the breastplate

- Note that the breastplates are described as ***the color***, which, too, is in italics, signifying that the translators wanted to convey that the breastplates <u>appear</u> to be but are <u>not actually</u> made of fire, hyacinth, and brimstone… ***the breastplates are the color of fire, hyacinth, and brimstone.***

    - The term ***fire*** (Gr. *purinous*) means "a fiery red."

    - The term ***hyacinth*** (Gr. *hyakinthinos*) is the color of blue smoke; that of sulphurous smoke, while the term ***brimstone*** (Gr. *theiodeis*) describes something made of sulphur and with a sulphurous hue or a light yellow.

    - The three colors recall the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24,28).

    - It is also associated with the lake of fire (Rev. 14:10,11; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8).

The description of the horses

- The description of the horses as having ***the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions*** suggests that the army combines the swiftness of horses with the majestic bearing of lions; eminence is in view here.

Their destructive ability

- In the phrase, ***and out of their mouths proceed fire, smoke, and brimstone***, note that the color of the breastplates matches the breath of the horses.

    - Those killed would be incinerated with fire and asphyxiated with smoke and brimstone.

    - Brimstone describes a rock which when ignited, produces a burning flame and suffocating gas.

Interpretive question: Do 1/3 of the horses have fire; 1/3 smoke; 1/3 brimstone, or do all the horses have the three plagues?

- While not stated, the probability is that each horse has all three plagues coming from their mouths.

Their effect

Revelation 9:18— "A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths."

- The term ***plague*** (Gr. *plēgē*) is a term applied to the three fold destructive capacity of the horses.

    - Note the repeated article, ***the***, with the description of each element: ***<u>the</u> fire, <u>the</u> smoke, and <u>the</u> brimstone***, indicating that each is a separate agency of destruction. The three together, will kill 1/3 of mankind (unbelievers) that are alive during the sixth trumpet.

The power of the horses

Revelation 9:19— "For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm."

- Recall that 9:17-18 have already described the power of the horse's mouths. Revelation 9:19 is the first mention of the power of their tails.

- In the phrase, ***for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm***, the term ***like*** (Gr. *homoiai*) indicates that a figurative (simile), not a literal understanding to the tails. The power of the tails enables the horses to harm.

- The term ***they do harm*** (Gr. *adikeō*) means "to hurt unjustly" or "to do wrong, morally." This is analogous to the fifth trumpet scorpion sting except **this is the pain of a venom filled snakebite which doesn't just inflict pain, it kills!**

The response of mankind

Revelation 9:20— The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk;

- Amazingly, despite all that has occurred, the survivors of the three plagues refuse to repent. This shows the hardness of the human heart…total depravity on display. This is the first mention of repentance since Revelation 3:19.

- The term ***repent*** (Gr. *metenoesan*) means "a change of mind; to perceive afterwards." It is always used in the New Testament to mean "involving a change for the better; an amendment."

The first of 5 sins they refused to repent of

1. ***the works of their hands***— throughout scripture the works of man's hands stands for **idolatry** (Dt 4:28; 27:15; 2Ki 19:18; 22:17; 2Chron 32:19, 34:25; Ps 115:4, 135:14; Is 2:8, 17:8; Jer 1:16, 10:3,9; 25:6,7,14; Hos 14:3; Mic 5:13; Haggai 2:14; Acts 7:41).

  - The "works of their hands" constitutes a violation of the first four commandments of the Decalogue. It denotes idol worship, which is actually the worshipping of demons (Dt 32:17; Ps 106:37; 1Cor 10:21).

  - ***so as to not worship demons***— (Is 44:9-17 w/Ps 115:1-8; Jer. 10:3-5)

What the idols are made of:

- The word ***idol*** (Gr. eidolon) means any image that represents a pagan god.

  - As a side note, the seven churches to whom this was written, would have been very familiar with pagan deities. These idols were fashioned by the hands of men and "were made of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood…"

- Ironically, the demons, who were agents in inflicting the deaths of 1/3 of the world's unbelieving population, continue to be the objects of worship for the remaining 2/3!

The folly of idol worship

- ***which can neither see nor hear, nor walk…***"
  - Having violated the first half of the Decalogue, 9:21 describes violations of three commandments in the second half… sins against men (Ex 20:13-15).

The remaining 4 sins they refused to repent of

Revelation 9:21— and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

2. ***their murders***— their targets would undoubtedly have been believers, but will also include unbelievers as man's depravity is displayed to the uttermost.

3. ***nor of their sorceries*** (Gr. *pharmakon*) can refer to poisons, amulets, charms, drugs, magic, spells or any object that is supposed to possess holiness, elicit lust, or be otherwise enchanting.

- It can refer to witchcraft too. Usually drugs were involved in such practices.

4. ***nor of their immortality*** (Gr. *porneia*)- general term describing sexual sin of every variety including fornication, adultery, rape and homosexuality.

- It is typically associated with idolatry (recall the church at Thyatira).

5. ***nor of their thefts*** (Gr. *klemma*) a thing stolen, such as food, shelter, clothing etc.

- As goods become more scarce and anarchy breaks out, this is the result.

- John MacArthur writes, "Under the influence of the massive demon forces, the world will descend into a morass of false religion, murder, sexual perversion, and crime unparalleled in human history."

- Their destiny is clearly stated in Rev 21:8 ***"But the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."***

- In His wrath, mixed with mercy, God had given unrepentant mankind a preview of the lake of fire with the opportunity to repent, while this side of eternity. In this sixth trumpet judgment, we see the ever-increasing hardness of mankind's hearts that can only be broken by the grace of God.