

# Love Community Baptist Church

## Wednesday Night Virtual Bible Study

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## Revelation – Chapter 9

### THE FIFTH AND SIXTH TRUMPETS

The fifth trumpet brings demonic locusts from the bottomless pit.  
(Revelation 9:1) A star fallen from heaven.

*Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit.*

This is the fifth angel that sounded a trumpet. There were seven seals, followed — thematically if not chronologically — by seven trumpets. In their arranged order, they are similar.

- The first four seals and trumpets presented judgments directed against the earth. In the first four seals, these were the “four horsemen” bringing tyranny, war, famine, and death on the earth. In the first four trumpets, these were the ecological destruction of the vegetation, seas, fresh waters, and sky.
- The last three seals focused upon heaven: the cry of the martyrs, cosmic disturbances, and the heavenly prelude to the seven trumpets. The last three trumpets will speak of hell, in terms of the demonic.

The text clearly shows us that this star is a person (to him), not a literal star. The verb tense (fallen) indicates that he already had fallen.

**But who is this star?** Suggestions have included Nero, a fallen angel, an evil spirit, Satan, the Word of God, a good angel, or even Jesus Himself.

In the context, this star is best seen as an angel; whether he is a good or bad angel depends on his relation to the angel of the bottomless pit in Revelation 9:11. If the angel of Revelation 9:1 is the same as the angel of Revelation 9:11, it is an evil angel — perhaps Satan himself. If it is a different angel, it may be a good angel sent by God to open up this bottomless pit for the purpose of judgment.

That this star is fallen makes us associate him with Satan, or another high-ranking evil angelic being. But the fact that he is given the key to the bottomless pit makes us not want to associate him with Satan. The idea that Satan is the master of hell is foreign to the rest of Scripture. He will be hell’s victim, not ruler.

- At the same time, we notice that the key is given to this being, and that it is given at a specific time and for a specific purpose that furthers God’s plan. This angel — evil or good — serves God’s purpose, even if he does not intend to.

**The bottomless pit:** Some wonder where this is. The most straightforward answer is that it is in the center of the earth, because there, one might say that all is “top” and nothing is “bottom.” However, some think that the bottomless nature of the pit is symbolic.

- Revelation 9:1 is a good example of how the Book of Revelation is sometimes wrongly spiritualized in its interpretation. Some commentators say that the star is the word of God, the pit

is human nature, and the lesson is that if the gospel is rejected, horrors are unleashed. But this is far from the plain meaning of Revelation 9:1.

### **(Revelation 9:2-6) Locusts from the bottomless pit.**

*And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.*

**Out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth:** These are obviously not natural locusts. They avoid plants and attack men like scorpions attack. They are “A visual representation of the hordes of demons loosed upon the earth.” (Walvoord)

The idea is simply that as part of the judgment of the great tribulation, God will allow demonic hordes, previously imprisoned, to descend upon the earth like a swarm of destructive locusts. They are not, as some have suggested, heretics, Muslims, Turks, Saracens, Jesuits, monks, or Protestants!

Those who have the seal of God on their foreheads (the 144,000 and perhaps more) are protected, but none other are. This is an inescapable judgment of God.

**They were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months:** Their purpose and period is expressly governed by God, and the purpose of all this is to bring repentance (Revelation 9:20-21).

**In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them:** Death will offer no escape from this prolonged torture. Their power is described like the power of scorpions, and the bite of a scorpion, though extremely painful, is rarely fatal.

- The tormented ones want to die as Paul did in Philippians 1:21-23, but for a completely different reason and result than Paul. For Paul, death led to eternal blessing, but for these tormented ones, death is a leap from the frying pan of present torment into eternal fire.

### **(Revelation 9:7-10) The appearance of these locusts.**

*The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months.*

Many attempts have been made to show that this is an accurate (though poetic) description of natural locusts. This approach misses the obvious demonic connection.

- Why would God call them locusts if they are not literal locusts, but demonic spirits who swarm and destroy like locusts? Among other reasons, because locusts are agents of God's judgment. This is a consistent Old Testament figure in passages like Exodus 10:4-14, Deuteronomy 28:38, 1 Kings 8:37, 2 Chronicles 7:13, Joel 1:4, and Amos 4:9.

**Like horses... like gold... like the faces of men... like women's hair... like lion's teeth:** The repetition of like indicates something other than a literal description is intended. The total impact of this picture is one of unnatural and awesome cruelty

**(Revelation 9:11) The leader of these locusts.**

***And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.***

This is another indication that these creatures are not literal locusts. The Bible tells us that literal locusts have no king: The locusts have no king, yet they all advance in ranks (Proverbs 30:27). Yet these particular locusts do have a king.

**Whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon:** Their king is given a name. Abaddon and Apollyon both have the same thought of destruction or torment (perdition).

Since this is the king of these locusts, and since he has the name Abaddon or Apollyon, this is obviously Satan himself or another high-ranking leader of demons.

**(Revelation 9:12) The worst is yet to come.**

***One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.***

**The sixth trumpet: an army of destruction.**

**(Revelation 9:13) A voice from the altar.**

***Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,***

In the tabernacle and temple of Israel, the golden altar was the altar of incense, which was a representation of the prayers of God's people.

**The four horns of the golden altar:** These stood at each corner of the altar. Atoning blood was applied to the horns. From these horns, John heard a voice. In this, John recalled a repeated theme: the prayers of God's people play a large role in the end-times drama.

**(Revelation 9:14-15) The angels and their mission.**

***Saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.***

These four angels have no necessary connection with the four angels of Revelation 7:1. They may be the same four angels or they may not be. Whoever they are, they are prepared for the hour and day and month and year of the unleashing of this judgment.

This assumes these are "bad" angels; they may or may not be, but they probably are evil angels. No matter what, they are servants of the divine purpose.

**Were released to kill a third of mankind:** The demonic locusts described earlier in the chapter were restricted to tormenting mankind. But these four angels have the authority to kill on a massive scale.

These angels have a specific sphere of activity (a third of mankind), and are only activated in God's timing. They execute God's will in God's timing.

**The great river Euphrates:** These angels were connected with the Euphrates River because the Euphrates was a landmark of ancient Babylon. It was the frontier of Israel's land as fully promised by God (Genesis 15:17-21). It was also the boundary of the old Roman Empire, which will be revived under the Antichrist.

The Euphrates is also associated with the first sin (Genesis 2:10-14), the first murder (Genesis 4:16), the first organized revolt against God (Genesis 11:1-9), the first war confederation (Genesis 14:1), and the first dictatorship (Genesis 10:8-10).

**(Revelation 9:16-19) Description of the army led by these angels.**

*Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed — by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.*

**The number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million:** Is this number literal or symbolic? "It is possible that the number is not to be taken literally, but simply suggests an army that is impossible to count and is greater than anything mankind has ever seen." (Hocking)

These horsemen are described in weird, grotesque terms. This is a powerful picture of horror, destruction and demonic association.

If this describes a natural army of men, then the weird description may speak of modern, mechanized warfare. It may be John simply describes modern machinery in the only terms he can, and the result is this weird, grotesque, terrifying account.

Therefore, perhaps the safest interpretation is to see this as a literal 200 million strong army, but a demonic army invading earth. This continues the idea of the demonic army like locusts described earlier in the chapter.

**(Revelation 9:20-21) The response of man.**

*But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.*

**But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent:** In general, mankind showed no repentance, despite the presence of some pretty overwhelming signs and wonders.

**That they should not worship demons, and idols:** Instead, man continued with his idol worship in a business as usual sort of way. They continued in their worship of demons, whether their worship is witting or unwitting.

It is amazing to see how quickly things return to what is thought to be normal after some calamity such as an earthquake. We are quick to forget God's lessons, even the lessons that come in judgment.

**And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts:** This list of sins is a striking accusation against our present age. Certainly, our modern world is characterized by murders, sorceries (associated with the taking of drugs), sexual immorality and thefts.

### **NO MORE DELAY**

The mighty angel.

**(Revelation 10:1) A mighty angel comes down from heaven.**

***I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.***

Revelation 9 left off with the sounding of the sixth of seven trumpets, which ushered in the end of all things. Now, instead of the seventh trumpet, we have another interlude until Revelation 11:15.

- These interludes serve a dramatic purpose, but also show mercy in allowing more opportunity for repentance. It is as if God brought things to the brink, then pulled back a little to grant mankind more time to repent.

**Another mighty angel coming down from heaven:** Many have identified this mighty angel, this messenger, as Jesus because some of the imagery also applies to Him. Revelation 1:15-16 also describes Jesus with His countenance... like the sun shining in its strength.

- Yet angels are never clearly identified with Jesus in the Book of Revelation or in the New Testament, though He is clearly associated with the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament. A better identification is with the angel known as Michael because there are also similarities to this mighty angel and to Michael as he is described in Daniel 12:1 and 12:6-7.

Not only is the rainbow a reminder of God's promise to man, but it is also a natural result when the sun shines through a cloud.

**(Revelation 10:2-3) The angel cries out, and seven thunders utter their voices.**

***He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.***

Is this little book the same as the scroll no one except Jesus could open in Revelation 5:1-7? If one takes the mighty angel to be Jesus, then it very well could be. But John used different words to describe the scroll of Revelation 5:1 and the little book written of here. It is probably best to see them as different, yet probably closely related. The little book is perhaps an short version of the disposition of all things, the portion that John himself will see and write about.

The angel's stance projects his authority over both land and sea. His authority is either direct (if the mighty angel is Jesus), or indirect (if this is indeed an angelic being as a messenger of God)

**When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices:** This relates the same idea of the thunderous voice of God as described in Psalm 29, seven times repeating the phrase the voice of the Lord.

- The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is over many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, yes, the Lord splinters the cedars of Lebanon. He makes them also skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of

the Lord makes the deer give birth, and strips the forests bare; and in His temple everyone says, "Glory!" (Psalm 29:3-9)

**(Revelation 10:4) John is commanded not to write what the thunders said.**

*Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them."*

**I was about to write... do not write them:** Of course, this irritates many commentators and sets speculation running wild. What did they say that John must not tell us?

If John was not permitted to tell us what they said, why should he even record the incident? One result of it should be to let us know there are secrets in the prophetic scenario, mysteries that should keep our exposition and prediction humble.

**(Revelation 10:5-7) No more delay.**

*The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.*

The mighty angel gave a solemn oath declaring that the end is irrevocably set in motion, that there should be delay no longer. There was absolutely no turning back.

What mystery? One important aspect of this mystery is that it has been declared to His servants the prophets.

- In Biblical vocabulary, a mystery isn't something no one knows. A mystery is something no one could know unless it was revealed to him. If you could know it by intuition or personal investigation, it isn't a mystery, because mysteries must be revealed. Therefore, something can be known and still be a mystery in the Biblical sense.

It's hard to say what this precise mystery of God is, because the phrase — or its equivalent — is used for a many different aspects of God's plan.

The ultimate conversion of the Jewish people is called a mystery (Romans 11:25).

God's purpose for the church is called a mystery (Ephesians 3:3-11).

The bringing in of the fullness of the Gentiles is called a mystery (Romans 11:25).

The living presence of Jesus in the believer is called the mystery of God (Colossians 1:27-2:3).

The gospel itself is called the mystery of Christ (Colossians 4:3).

d. The mystery of God: In this context, the mystery of God probably refers to the unfolding of His resolution of all things, the finishing of His plan of the ages.

Possibly, the mystery also regards the great question "Why does God allow Satan and man to rebel and go their own way?" The idea may be that this question, this unanswered mystery, is coming to an end under rule of Jesus. God is beginning the end, the resolution of all things, the gathering together (resolution, summing up) of all things in one in Jesus (Ephesians 1:10).

**John is commissioned to preach.**

**(Revelation 10:8-9) Curious instructions.**

*Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth." So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth."*

John was commanded to take the little book from the mighty angel and actually eat it.

Because John was invited to take the little book, some take this to say that God never forces His revelation on anyone, and we always must be willing to take what He has offered. That may often be the case, but it was not the case with Paul on the road to Damascus.

**(Revelation 10:10-11) A book both sweet and bitter.**

*Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."*

In Ezekiel 3:1-3, the prophet was also commanded to eat a scroll, the revelation of God to Israel. "This figure of eating the book is familiar, and suggests the feeding of the soul on the Word of God." (Morgan)

Any effective communicator of God's Word has experienced both the sweetness and bitterness that is associated with His Word.

Those who believe the church is raptured after the great tribulation argue that the scroll is bitter because the lot of the faithful is bitter in the last days. Mounce is an example of this approach: "The sweet scroll which turns bitter is a message for the church. Before the final triumph believers are going to pass through a formidable ordeal."

**You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings:** Whatever the content of the scroll, it is connected to John's command to prophesy to all men. This is not a message just focused to the church.

John's prophecy spoke of the fate of the entire world, not just one nation, empire or emperor, such as the Roman Empire.