



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Revelation

Chapter 9

His Grace Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- The preceding chapter contained the first four warnings, the trumpet judgments, which involved catastrophes to the physical earth and ended with an announcement of wretchedness that is about to come with the next three warnings
- Following these physical judgments in chapter 8, spiritual judgments take place in the 5th and 6th trumpets in chapter 9
- Fifth Trumpet: The Locusts from the Bottomless Pit 1-12
- Sixth Trumpet: The Angels from the Euphrates 13-21



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- *the fifth angel sounded*, The fifth of the seven angels mentioned in Revelation 8:2, to whom were given seven trumpets
- It denotes the beginning of a new period of calamities and miseries to the earth, or to the church
- "*A star*" sometimes signifies one high in position
- Therefore, some think that the fall of a star from heaven denotes the relapse of a person of great religious position, and consequently Satan works in the hearts of many



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- And some think it is an angel came down from heaven, with a key to open the *bottomless pit*
- This angel came down by the permission of the Divine Providence for those evil and calamitous events, which are described to follow from opening the bottomless pit
- These events could not have happened but by the permission of the Divine Providence, and according to the wise and holy orders of God



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- As if Satan and his angels had been securely locked up, and secured in safe prison; so that He sends an angel, His messenger, with the key of the bottomless pit, to open the prison and permit them to go out, to teach
- They can only act so far as they have permission, and can always be restrained and shut up again, at the good pleasure of the supreme Governor of the world, the Pantocrator, the Lord our God



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- It might be also a reference to the fall of Satan from his place as an angel in Paradise as we read in Isaiah 14:12-15,
- *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.”*



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- Jesus also spoke of Satan's fall from heaven in Luke 10:18 when He said, *"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."*
- This fallen star will also be identified as Satan in Revelation 9:11 *"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."*
- Just so we don't miss the identity of the person, St. John gives us both his Hebrew and Greek names
- *"Abaddon"* in Hebrew means "destruction" and *"Apollyon"* in the Greek is translated "destroyer"



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- The *bottomless pit*, In Greek *abyssos*, is the dwelling of demons and evil spirit according to Luke 8:31
- The Greek word is found seven times in Revelation, 9:1-2,11, 11:7, 17:8, 20:1,3
- The verse suggests the picture of a vast depth similar to a pit or shaft, whose top, or mouth, is covered



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- The first result of the opening of the pit is the diffusion of such a dense smoke to the extent that light and atmosphere were darkened
- The smoke arising from the opened well, comparable to the smoke of a great furnace was so thick that thereby the sun and moon were hidden
- It is surely the diffusion on earth of evil thoughts and ideas, the spirit of falsehood and hate, hostility to truth, and enmity against God and man
- The bright clear air is darkened; all forms that once appeared beautiful become dreadful



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- *the smoke of a great furnace*, Is also a representation of devastation
- Thus when Abraham beheld the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace, Genesis 19:28
- The great displeasure of God is represented by the same figurative expressions of smoke and fire as we read in Psalm 18:7-8, *“Then the earth shook and trembled; The foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken, Because He was angry. ⁸ Smoke went up from His nostrils, And devouring fire from His mouth; Coals were kindled by it.”*



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- The preceding four trumpets talked about general punishment, addressed by God to human beings at all times and in any age or era
- But this fifth trumpet, or the first woe, is a warning of the time before the Antichrist
- Before Satan puts his power and energy in a man, who makes a god of himself, calls for worshipping idols and carries away the world to disgrace, he permits himself to spread his thoughts and inclinations within some people, to prepare them to help the Antichrist at his rising



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- It is a metaphorical and imaginary language, revealing the dominion of a materialistic and apostate thought, which fills the world from east to west
- It hides the light of the heavenly knowledge from many hearts
- The air is filled with darkness, confusion, anxiety, doubt and spiritual dryness
- This influence of the devil darkened the sun of the gospel, and the whole church of that age, with ignorance, error, and awful superstition in the worship of God, attended with the lewdness and iniquity of men in their lives



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- There is a reference to the Egyptian plagues—this time to the locusts, “... *For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened ...*” Exodus 10:12-15
- Similarly, Joel describes the darkening of the land through the plague of locusts, Joel 2:3-10
- The locusts of this vision are armed with the power of scorpions, to sting and to torture, Revelation 9:5
- The scorpions are called scorpions of the earth
- The scorpion-like power seems to depict a malicious energy, as the locusts depict a devastating multitude



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- The idea seems to be, that the bottomless pit was filled with vapor and with those creatures, and that as soon as the gate was opened the whole contents expanded and burst forth upon the earth
- The sun was immediately darkened, and the air was full, but the smoke soon cleared away, so that the locusts became distinctly visible
- The appearance of these locusts is described in another part of the chapter, Revelation 9:7



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- From the influence which the devil thus let loose had upon the world, came forth a generation of men, that in their practices resembled locusts
- Because of their great number, locusts go in infinite numbers, *“The locusts...all advance in ranks”* (Proverbs 30:27); *“make yourself many like the locusts.”* (Nahum 3:15); *“without number”*, (Psalm 105:34)
- Locusts cause extreme devastation and can completely destroy every green thing to the end just as the work of evil
- *was given power*, They were given a permission; they can only act so far as they have permission



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- God ordered them by His providence
- This destruction has no power to harm *the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree*
- How sweet is the kindness of God, who shows compassion to the **weak grass** which emblems **the new in faith**, before the green thing, and to the **green thing** which represents **more mature believers** before the **trees** which is a symbol of those who are **strong and steadfast in the Lord**
- He keeps the children in faith, cares for the little ones (grass), and looks after the weak souls, because those are more in need of kindness and compassion



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- Whatever the plague be, it is one which cannot injure God's children; those who *have the seal of God on their foreheads* which is baptism
- Every soul that enjoyed the waters of the Holy Spirit, and lives growing in Him, should be reassured, even if it is still green grass, or became a bush, or a high tree
- *For He has given us the authority to tread on the serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy*



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- Neither the Antichrist nor thoughts or apostasy and heresies, are able to rule over such a soul
- This in regard to those who have the seal of God, who are anointed with the Lord's Spirit on their forehead
- Only those without the seal are subjected to the plague proceeding from the abyss



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- The devil and his agents have limited power committed to them; they are restrained within limits by the will of God
- Their power is to inflict torment, and not death
- The next verse tells us that men would consider death preferable to this torment; but the relief of the grave is denied them
- *five months*, Might be taken literally, denoting five months or one hundred and fifty days; or a short time
- Or the time of which God declared His anger on the world as in the days of the Flood, “*And the waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days.*” (Genesis 7:24)



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- Scorpions were a natural symbol for vicious and dangerous opponents, Luke 10:19, whose attacks were always painful and might be mortal
- Their stings give great pain, are very distressing, and are poisonous and mortal: it signifies how troublesome and afflictive those locusts were; to be among them was to live among scorpions, as in Ezekiel 2:6
- Those who accepted this thought are tormented, because what is not of the truth cannot give peace or joy
- The wicked are tormented by their wickedness; the torture may originate from outside, or from inside man's thought and behavior



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- The calamities of those days shall be so great, that men shall be weary of their lives
- This is a characteristic biblical method of expressing great anguish, *"Why is light given to him who is in misery, And life to the bitter of soul, Who long for death, but it does not come, And search for it more than hidden treasures; Who rejoice exceedingly, And are glad when they can find the grave?"* (Job 3:20-22)
- Also Jeremiah 8:3; Job 7:15; Luke 23:30



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- So distressing shall be their sufferings and torment that they shall long for death in any form, to be rescued from the evils of life
- But God does not allow it, so they do not die in their deviation
- He leaves them in their impatience and confusion, that they might return to God, asking Him for help



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- After John has described how he has seen the miraculous locusts rise from the abyss, and what plagues they are to bring, he proceeds to describe the extraordinary phenomenon in great detail and fully
- Out of His great love, God reveals to us the enemy's characteristics in order not to be deceived by him
- There are 9 descriptions and they carry spiritual meanings
- **First, *like horses prepared for battle***
- It is like horses prepared for war and its job is continuous destruction in the heart and mind



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- As the prophet says, *“A fire devours before them, And behind them a flame burns; The land is like the Garden of Eden before them, And behind them a desolate wilderness; Surely nothing shall escape them. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like swift steeds, so they run.”* (Joel 2:3-4)
- **Second**, They had *crowns of something like gold*, As a symbol of royal dignity, and as worn by kings
- They are deceiving, as they appear like kings to those who view them



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- In reality they are not crowns, nor golden, but they make themselves a halo of greatness to rule over the heart, denotes the temptation of the love of the world, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life
- **Third**, *their faces were like the faces of men*, It has the appearance of rationality and meekness, but their hearts are ferocious



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- **Fourth**, *They had hair like women's hair*, Which means that Satan in his wars against mankind uses all kinds of methods even to be soft and attractive like women
- By their softness, they attract, in order to bloodshed and devour
- **Fifth**, *their teeth were like lions' teeth*, Strong; suited to devour
- They would be starving angry violent and strong, and would spread terror and desolation like the lions of the desert



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- **Sixth**, *they had breastplates like breastplates of iron*, They have strong armors, denoting intensity, forcefulness and severity in fighting
- Note that he said *like breastplates of iron* which means that they may look strong but in reality they are not
- **Seventh**, *the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle*, The sound of their wings is fearful
- It refers to the severity of their deeds, and the speed of their spreading



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- **Eights**, *had tails like scorpions*, The tail is the end of things, although they have crowns on their heads, face of men and soft beautiful hair but they can sting with poison like scorpions
- Its way is similar to what was described by Solomon, "*There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*" (Proverbs 14:12)
- **Ninth**, *there were stings in their tails*, Deadly, they torture like scorpions but for a while, "*five months!*" limited amount of time



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- Their king's name is "*Abaddon,*" or "*Apollyon,*" which means the destroyer, or the deadly
- Just so we do not miss the identity of the personage John gives us both his Hebrew and Greek names
- "Abaddon" in Hebrew means "destruction" and "Apollyon" in the Greek is translated "destroyer "
- Hebrew is the language of Jews and Greek is the language of the Gentiles which means that this plague will strike everyone in the same way
- Satan will work with all his might during this time to deceive many



Fifth Trumpet: 9:1-12

- Here is the patience and faith of the saints
- One period of time is over, in which God has plagued the world with a very great judgment; but there are two more to come, which will be equally, if not more, catastrophic
- The troubles which pass only yield place to more, the rest and the victory are not yet; the powers of evil have not exhausted themselves
- *One woe is past*, This is added not only to distinguish the woes, and to mark more strongly each period, but also to suggest that some time will intervene between this first woe of the locusts and the next of the Euphrates



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- *the sixth angel sounded*, At the sounding of the sixth trumpet
- *the golden altar* Is the same altar mentioned in 8:3,5 where, an *angel ...was given much incense* and he *took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth*
- The allusion is to the altar of incense covered with gold and was a figure of the intercession of Christ; for on this altar incense was offered, which was typical of the prayers of the saints offered by Christ, through His mediation
- The altar form was foursquare and shows that Christ's intercession avails for all his people in the four parts of the world



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- The 'horn' in Scripture represents strength
- *four horns* which is the four corners of the altar and some think represent the four evangelists, or the Gospel sent into the four parts of the world which is the power of God unto salvation
- This verse may point at the large extent and fullness of Christ's intercession, for all his people, in the four corners of the earth, as well as His power to protect and defend them, and to scatter and destroy His and their enemies



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- *a voice*, Such a voice proceeding from *the four horns of the golden altar*, is a strong indication of the divine displeasure; and plainly suggests, that the sins of men must have been very great, when the altar, which was their sanctuary and protection, called aloud for punishment
- This voice being from the four horns denotes in one hand to its strength and its power and in the other to the fact that it will reach the whole world
- This voice was a divine order to *Release the four angels who are bound*



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- Some think that the these *four angels* where assigned by God to execute what was about to happen by this woe and they were controlled until they were thus commanded to go forth
- Others think that they are four demons who have incredible power and they were bound until God give them permission to be released to bring wars and evil events on people
- Either suggestion will not change the fact that everything is by permission from God the Almighty
- *river Euphrates*, The well-known river of that name commonly called in the Scriptures, "the great river," and, by way of importance, "the river," Exodus 23:31; Isaiah 8:7



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- This river was on the east of Palestine and passed through the kingdom of Babylon which was the symbol of evil in the Scriptures
- That lead us to believe that what is about to happen is immense and significant woe
- These *four angels* were at all times prepared and ready and now permitted to inflict evil on the people against whom they had received their commission



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- *for the hour and day and month and year*, that is for any time whatsoever God would have them move; or for that certain time which God had determined; it would take place at a definite period, the year, month, day and hour of which were known
- The expression corresponds somewhat with our Lord's words, "*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven*" (Matthew 24:36)
- *a third of mankind*, that is, a great part, though not the larger
- God in His mercy allows the punishment of the evil doers but not all so the two thirds have the chance for repentance



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- St. John heard, perhaps from some messenger angel or from one of the elders, who had before instructed him, the number of this vast army of horsemen
- He did not pretend to be able to estimate the number himself, but he heard it stated in these round numbers
- That indicates the source of John's knowledge
- Those who doubt John and what is written in the Revelation as to its truthfulness, do so out of absolute unbelief, not for lack of information



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- *two hundred million*, Perhaps it only means vast numbers, multitudes without number
- It is symbolic indicating a tremendous number and the it is taken from Psalm 68:17 *“The chariots of God are twenty thousand, Even thousands of thousands”*
- Apparently they are the destroying host under the direction of the four angels
- St. John saw these horses as he proceeds to describe them, for the word "thus" refers to what follows



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- The meaning, as it seems, is, that he fixed his attention on the appearance of the immense army - the horses and their riders, and proceeded to describe them as they struck him
- *had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow,*
The meaning is that these horsemen appeared to be dressed in a special kind of armor - armor that shone like fire, mingled with blue and yellow
- *the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions;* Resembled, in some respects, the heads of lions
- He does not say that they were the heads of lions, but only that they, in some respects, resembled the heads of lions



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- **The army of the horsemen:** Does this speak of a natural or a supernatural army? Is this an army of men or an army of demons?
- There are two opinions or directions in explaining this passage
- **The First: Literal Interpretation:** many have tried to associate the meaning of this scripture with weapons of war
- It describes a natural army of men, and the weird description may speak of modern, mechanized warfare



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- It may be St. John simply describes modern machinery in the only terms he can, and the result is this weird, bizarre, terrifying account
- But, a human army this size has never been seen
- Therefore, this claim was doubted by many
- Even if such an army was assembled, and marched towards the west, it is hard (but not impossible) to see such an army killing a billion or more people - **a third of mankind**



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- The Second: Spiritual Interpretation
- Our church tends to lean towards the spiritual meaning; it is the spiritual warfare which is lead by the kingdom of Satan and of course by God's permission
- A demonic army and this continues the idea of the demonic army like locusts described earlier in the chapter
- Horses have been often associated with warfare in scripture
- *breastplates of fiery red*, They devour with Satanic strength
- *Hyacinth*, For the breastplates appear as if they were heavenly and are by God's permission



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- *Brimstone*, For revenge, devouring, and demolishing
- The horses' heads are *like the heads of lions*, They do not stop devouring
- *fire, smoke, and brimstone*, Their purpose is to burn and to disperse



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- St. John saw three ways the demon horses killed their victims and all ways portray and show the violent and devastating fury of hell
- They burned them with fire, then suffocated with smoke and brimstone which proceeded *out of their mouths*
- This is a powerful picture of horror, destruction and demonic association
- *third of mankind was killed*, It is not a complete and total destruction



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- The locusts were forbidden to kill, ver. 5; these horsemen are permitted to do so
- The destructive power in this vision is in mouth and tail, in the last trumpet-vision it was in the tail only, Revelation 9:10
- The devastating power is increased; the enemies come swift as horsemen, strong as lions, poisonous and malicious as serpents, breathing forth elements that blind and burn with deadly power
- We have then forces which are mighty, malicious, and persistent, and which are commanded against mankind for their sins of worldliness, Revelation 9:20-21



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- These verses make one or two points clear
- They show us that, whatever the nature of the plagues might be, they were afflictions designed to bring about repentance, and to revive and provoke men, whether nominally Christian or not, from the exhaustion into which long indulged sin had plunged them
- Those terrible revolutions which are the growth of years, and which shocked men with their apparent suddenness and violence, are the great appeals of God, asking men to see the meaning of sin; they are the trumpet blasts calling to repentance



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- But the remainder of the godliness men did not repent
- *they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk, Heavy woes must inevitably await the society which tolerates such works*
- Under the influence of the massive demon forces that has been unleashed upon the world, false religion, murder, sexual perversion and crime will be unparalleled and incomparable in human history



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- The worst sign of the coming calamity is seen when society has lost the power to repent because it has lost the power to hate evil
- idolatry, mysticism, spiritism, satanism and all forms of false religion will become the norm as demons lead people into more wicked and vicious behaviors
- Such an incapacity is invariably significant of advanced moral decay
- It is the peak in the growth of sin which the Psalmist noticed where men lose the sacred abhorrence of evil, *“He devises wickedness on his bed; He sets himself in a way that is not good; He does not abhor evil”* (Psalm 36:4)



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- To such repentance is becoming impossible
- The sins of humanity are generally of two sorts, Luke 10:27
- Verse 20 focuses on sins directed against God—they do not love God supremely (the first four of the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:1-11)
- Verse 21 directs our attention to sins directed against one another they do not love their neighbors as themselves (the last six of the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:12-17)



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- One of the most amazing things about these two verses is that demons are worshipped
- Yet, demons are the instruments of man's destruction in the fifth and sixth trumpets
- Men worship the very things that destroy them
- Hard-core unbelief and stubborn, willful rebellion is the result of these plagues
- Just as Pharaoh's heart was hardened by the Egyptian plagues, so the hearts of these men and women are hardened by the plagues of the last days



Sixth Trumpet: 9:13-21

- People are leaning to believe satanic lies
- It is what St. Paul calls a “strong delusion” (2 Thessalonians 2:11), a lie from the Devil
- Since mankind believes this, many are rendered finally unable to repent
- It is because they have begun, unknowingly perhaps, and innocently, to worship demons

Discussion



- What happened when the fifth trumpet sounded? What do stars often represent? Where else do we read of something/someone falling from heaven?
- What power was given to the angel? What does a key represent?
- What is the *“bottomless pit”*?
- Describe the appearance of the locusts. Explain the symbols



Discussion

- What did John hear when the sixth angel sounded? Where have we read about the golden altar, and what is its significance here?
- Where are the four angels? Where else do we read of this river?
- Is the army of 9:16 human or demonic? What do you base your argument upon?
- Why are 9:20-21 two of the saddest in the entire Holy Bible? How does 2 Thessalonians 2:11 parallel these verses?