



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

The Fifth and Sixth Trumpet Judgments

Revelation 9

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"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. ² 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. ³ Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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. ⁶ In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.

⁷ 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. ⁸ They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months. 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.

¹² One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.

¹³ Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, ¹⁴ saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ 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. ²¹ And they

did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts."

Background Notes

In Revelation 8 the seventh seal on the Scroll of God's Judgment was opened, and that led to the sounding of the seven Trumpets. These Trumpets are further judgments of the future Tribulation Period. As we mentioned in our last Talk, we believe that the Trumpet Judgments are part of the "Great Tribulation," the last half (or the last three and half years) of the seven-year Tribulation Period. We studied the first four Trumpet Judgments in Revelation 8, and in the last verse of the chapter we read that the last three Trumpets are referred to as three "Woes" -- that is, intense judgments!

Revelation 9 describes two of these "Woes" -- the fifth and sixth Trumpet Judgments. The details of these judgments are not easy to interpret. Remember that the Book of Revelation is "apocalyptic literature." Apocalyptic literature has to do with visions of the future -- that's why the book of Revelation is sometimes called "The Apocalypse." Apocalyptic literature is highly symbolic. However, since not all of it is symbolic, where we should draw the line between literal and symbolic language is not easy.

For example: here in Revelation 9, under the fifth Trumpet Judgment, we read in verses 3-4 that locusts will come out of the bottomless pit and hurt men -- but they will not harm grass, green plants, or trees (or the 144,000 sealed Jewish evangelists). It seems that the grass, trees, and men are to be taken literally. What about the locusts? If the locusts are to be interpreted as literal locusts, then these are very unusual-looking locusts! They look like horses, have faces like men and hair like women, teeth like lions, and tails like scorpions. Are these locust creatures literal, or are they only symbolic of demonic forces? I think that we all can see from this example just how difficult it is to interpret apocalyptic literature -- not only because it concerns the future, so it hasn't happened yet, but because it can be highly symbolic as well.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Fifth Trumpet Judgment involves opening the abyss.

In verse 1 a star fell from heaven to the earth, and was given the key to the abyss or the bottomless pit. The fact that the star is called "he" and "him" would indicate that the star is symbolic of an angel. It is probably Satan himself, based on Revelation 12:12 - *"Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."*

Remember, at the present time Satan is not yet in hell, but has access to heavenly realms. In the Book of Job he even presented himself before God with the other angels! However, during the future Tribulation Period he will be cast out of heavenly realms. He will have the key to the bottomless pit, and he will be allowed to open this abyss to release the locusts.

During the Tribulation period, Satan will be the "angel" of the abyss. His name is *Abaddon in Hebrew, and in Greek he has the name Apollyon* (v11). Both names mean "destruction" or "destroyer." The abyss, or the bottomless pit, is the present home of the confined demons. It is **not** hell. Hell is the place in which Satan and all his evil angels, including all the demons, will eventually be consigned forever. Matthew 25:41 says, *"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...'"*

The abyss or the bottomless pit is not hell. Many demons are presently confined there, but not all demons are there. In Luke 8, the demons that were cast out of the demented man begged the Lord not to send them to the abyss, and He allowed them to enter the herd of pigs. The abyss, or bottomless pit, is the place where Satan will be bound for a 1000 years during our Lord's future Millennial Kingdom here on this earth.

Under the fifth Trumpet Judgment, John saw Satan open the abyss and out came great smoke and innumerable locusts over the face of the earth. Where is the abyss, this bottomless pit? Verses 2-3 sound like it could be in the center of the earth, but we can't be sure. And what about the locusts? It seems clear from the context that the locusts are demons that are under the control of Satan. But is their description in verses 7-10 literal or symbolic? Will they have this literal appearance in the future, or is this just the appearance that they had in John's vision, and thus the description is symbolic? If this description is to be taken in a literal way, then these demons are able to either manifest themselves with literal bodies, or they're able to possess the bodies of some presently unknown creatures.

In any case, the pain and torment the locusts inflict on mankind is real, and it will last for five months during the Tribulation period. Verses 5, 6 and 10 tell us that the pain and torment is so intense that people would rather die than live: *"In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them."* The Fifth Trumpet Judgment involves opening the abyss.

2. The Sixth Trumpet Judgment involves releasing a great army.

In verses 13-19 we are once again faced with a question: how much of this description is literal and how much is symbolic? We believe that the releasing of the great army east of the Euphrates River is literal. In Revelation 16:12 we read that the Euphrates River will dry up so that the way will be prepared for the kings of the east to come on stage for the last great battle of the Tribulation period. But is the number of horsemen – two million -- to be taken literally? It could be! A combined army of the nations east of the Euphrates River today could mount an army of at least two million.

But what about the fire-breathing horses with lion's heads and tails like serpents with heads? Is this to be taken literally -- or is it symbolic language for the flame-throwing tanks and weapons of war in the future? Will mankind run out of oil so that he is forced to go back to horses for battle? Once again, we can't be dogmatic now, but it will be obvious then.

Whatever the case, the resulting death toll of 1/3 of mankind seems to be literal. Combined with the death toll from the other judgments, at least 1/2 of the world's population will perish by this time in the Tribulation Period! The sixth Trumpet Judgment involves releasing a great army.

Practical Application

Don't think that pain will necessarily lead to repentance.

Verses 20-21: *"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. ²¹ And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts."*

We tend to think that if unbelievers experience enough pain they will turn to God, repent of their sins and become believers. Not necessarily! And certainly that will not happen in the Tribulation Period. At that future time there will be great pain, torment and fear -- and a lot of death.

Unfortunately, we see here that all this pain and death will not lead people to repentance. People will continue their worship of demons, their idolatry, their murders, and their sorceries (the Greek word used here is related to the use of drugs, by the way). They won't repent of their various immoralities, of stealing from others or of the murders they have committed.

Pain doesn't necessarily lead to repentance -- then or today! Don't think that pain will necessarily lead to repentance.