

**"REVELATION MADE RELEVANT"**

*A verse by verse exposition of the Bible's most controversial book*

*Notes are Fr. Ward's personal observations with the exception of the historical background information*

**\*\*\*Brief Review of Revelation 8 (see last study notes!)**

**III. Worship, Wrath and Witness (Revelation 4-9)**

In chapter 8, the first four trumpets sound which represent judgments on the earth (land), the sea (oceans), the rivers (fresh water) and the sun, moon, and stars (atmosphere). Now the fifth and sixth trumpets are sounded. They will be worse than the first four and will affect the bodies and spirits of those who have rebelled against God and have not repented of their sin.

**D. The Seven Trumpets (Rev. 8-9) – God's Wrath Continues**

**8. The Fifth Trumpet Is Sounded – the First Woe Revealed (Rev. 9:1-11):**

- a) The star, the bottomless pit, and the locusts (vv. 1-6) - "Then 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. 2He 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. 3Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4They were told not to 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. 5And 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. 6And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them."

When the fifth angel sounds the fifth trumpet, John sees a star from heaven fall to the earth. This is not a star in the literal sense, but an angel, since the star is identified with the personal pronoun "him" in verse 1. Jesus said in **Lk. 10:18** that he saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning. The prophet Isaiah declared the same in **Is. 14:12**. Later in **Rev. 12:9**, John will see the "dragon" who he identifies as Satan cast down from heaven. Thus, many scholars believe this angel is none other than Satan, himself. Others contend it is an angel of the Lord since God would never give a "key" to Satan. But this view loses sight of the reality that Satan cannot do anything unless God allows him (recall the book of Job) to do it. God is granting Satan the authority to unleash "locusts" from the *Abyss* or "bottomless pit" to afflict the sons of "men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads." A locust invasion was a community's worst nightmare. Locusts could strip the land of all its vegetation in a matter of days, resulting in severe famine. The most recent example occurred in Algiers in 1866, where 200,000 died of famine following a locust plague. Such locusts invoke memories of the 8<sup>th</sup> plague in Egypt (**Ex. 10:14-15**) and were part of the imagery the prophet Joel used to describe the great Day of the Lord in **Joel 2:1-10**. But these are not your typical locusts as they don't eat grass or vegetation. Their role is that of torment. They arise not from the earth but from the *Abyss*! The *Abyss* (Greek word - *Abyssos*) or "bottomless pit" was the term the ancients used to denote the place of demonic spirits. In the Bible, the word is used to refer to the place

from which the “beast” arises in **Rev. 11:7 & 17:8**. It is a prison for certain demons (**Lk. 8:31; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6**) and even the realm of the dead (**Rom. 10:7**). Since Satan is the “locusts” king (see v. 11), it is clear that these locusts are in reality, demons. These demons will torment those on earth who are not born again and sealed by the Holy Spirit for five months. Why five months? The typical life cycle of a natural locust is five months during the dry season (May-September) so this reference may not mean a literally time period but rather that there will be a specific time within the Great Tribulation that demonic possession will increase greatly. Recall that when one is demon possessed they cannot control their bodies. Even if one wishes to kill oneself, he will not be able to because the demonic spirit will be in control of his spirit, and therefore, the body. Cornelius Gallus, a Roman poet living in the first century B.C., wrote, “*Worse than any wound is the wish to die and yet not be able to do so.*”

- b) **The appearance of the locusts and the angel of the abyss (vv. 7-11)** - *“The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. 8They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions. 9They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. 10They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. 11They 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.”*

Some interpreters have tried to figure out the symbolism of the description John gives of these locusts but it is probably better not to focus so much on what each descriptive term means but rather on the fact that these creatures are not of this world and are terrible in their fallen nature and intention to afflict and torment their victims. Their king, an angel, is identified by name as “Abaddan” which in the Hebrew means “destruction” or “ruin.” In the Greek the word is “Apollyon” which means “destroyer” or “exterminator.” While some scholars believe this is another fallen angel, there is no reason to believe that it is not in reality, Satan, himself. Recall Jesus words in **John 10:10**: *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”* Who is that thief? Satan.

It is important to note the habit of John the Apostle to give the reader certain terms in both the Hebrew and the Greek. He does so in his gospel (c.f. **John 6:1; 19:13, 17, 20; 20:16**) and again in **Rev. 12:9** where he identifies *Satan* (Hebrew) as also the *Devil* (Greek). This linguistic approach was probably to help his Gentile readers who were not as familiar with the Hebrew language.

**v.12** – *“The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.”* This is a transitional verse highlighting the passing of the first woe and the fact that two even worse woes are coming!

**9. The Sixth Trumpet Is Sounded – the Second Woe Revealed (Rev. 9:12-19)**: - *“Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, 14one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” 15And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind. 16The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. 17And 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. 18A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths. 19For 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.***

The four horns of the golden altar refer to the horns at the corner of the altar which the Lord decreed were to be part of the bronze altar for burnt offerings (Ex. 27:2). They also had significance for the consecration of the priests (Ex. 29:12). The blood put on the horns represented the mercy of God and the priests were to put blood on all four corners to signify God's mercy extending through the entire sanctuary and not just the place where the sacrifice was laid for the sin offering (Lev. 4:7). According to **1 Kings 1:50**, Adonijah ran and held onto the horns of the altar in the temple when he begged for mercy for his life before King Solomon. His life was spared. However, now we see that the time for God's mercy is over. Four angels bound at the great river Euphrates are released. Many believe these are "fallen angels" sent to inflict destruction upon the inhabitants of the earth. The Euphrates River makes up the boundaries of Iraq and Syria where some of the worst fighting is going on today, ironically! It made up the far Eastern boundary of the Roman Empire. At one point, in Rome's history (during the last part of the first century – John's time) there was fear that the Parthians would invade from across the Euphrates.

There are three main views as to the identification of the 200 million horsemen. First, some view them as demons that influence mankind to continue down its self-destructive course. It is a continuation of the judgment from the "locusts" and highlights the role of the demonic in the war, plagues, famine and pestilence that will overtake much of our world. A second view, is that through demonic influence the world armies converge on the Holy Land for Armageddon as part of a larger global conflict that involves either a literal 200 million men under arms or the figure, which in the Greek is literally *two myriads of myriads* or 2 x 10,000 x 10,000, is really not a literal figure but one which just means a great incalculable number. Finally, there is the view that this is an army from the East made up of primarily Far and Near Eastern nations (China and India) that will fight against the Western armies of the Antichrist ("*Beast from the Sea*" in Rev. 13:1-10) at Armageddon.

We can see the parallel in Rev. 16:12-16: "***The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east. 13And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; 14for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. 15("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.") 16And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.***

Certainly, the imagery seen by John invokes imagery of modern warfare with "fire, smoke, and brimstone." That such things proceed from the mouths of the members of this army also suggest battle and the destruction that follows it. As a result of this final conflict, one-third of the earth will be killed.

**10. Why Such Judgments? – Man's Wickedness and His Refusal to Repent! (Rev. 9:20-21):** "***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; 21and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.***

## ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY #13 with Fr. Ward - 4/07/17

Even with all the signs of man's evil and God's wrath, the "rest of mankind" refuses to repent and turn to the Lord. They ***did not repent of the works of their hands***. Man has a tendency to trust in what he can make and what he can do, rather than in God, Himself. The first commandment is to have no other gods but God. When we trust in what we have made, we are making that which has been made more important than God, and ultimately, ourselves, as greater than God. That is why idolatry is the most common sin mentioned in the Old Testament. Idolatry is worshipping or placing your trust in anyone or anything other than God. We either worship the creation or the Creator (**Rom.1:25**). There is no middle ground. The second commandment says, "*Don't make any idols to worship or bow down.*" When we ignore our Father, such sins ultimately will lead to others like murder, adultery and other sexual sins, and stealing (c.f., **Rom. 1:26-32**). "*Sorceries*" (*pharmakon* in the Greek) is a reference to witchcraft or the magic arts. Usually this occult worship would involve the use of mind-altering drugs. Ultimately, all such worship and sin is bowing down to Satan and his demonic hosts. God does not want anyone to perish (**Lk. 13:3, 5; 2 Pet. 3:9**) but when His works and words are persistently rejected, only judgment remains (**Eph. 5:6; Heb. 10:26-31**).

**NOTES:**