

Revelation 9 Commentary

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Revelation 9:1

The first two of the final three trumpets are sounded, releasing demonic judgments upon the earth. Unlike the previous four trumpet judgments, these target men rather than natural systems. Even in the face of “hell on earth,” the earth dwellers continue in their ways and refuse to repent.

Then the fifth angel sounded

This is the fifth angel of the seven which were given trumpets (Rev. 8:2⁺). When he sounds, it brings forth the first of the remaining three woes. See commentary on [Revelation 8:13](#). As we’ve seen, once one departs from a literal interpretation of the text, there is almost no end to the speculation concerning the meaning of the text which results. And the more unusual the description of the plague, as here, the more fanciful this speculation becomes. Although we describe the problems associated with the [Historicist Interpretation](#) elsewhere, we offer a small example of its fruits in interpreting this fifth trumpet—a demonstration of its inadequacies:

By this [the fifth trumpet] is predicted an event, from which the world still trembles,—the French Revolution. . . . A sketch [of the French Revolution], divested of the prejudices of both sides, shall now be given. . . . This sketch unquestionably contains the substance of the French Revolution. Yet it is the work of no living pen. It is seventeen hundred years old,—The Ninth Chapter of the Apocalypse.¹

Rather than attempting to “shoe-horn” what is related in this chapter into past historic events such as the French Revelation, how much more productive to recognize a description of something the likes of which has never yet occurred. The key to understanding the nature of the judgment associated with the fifth trumpet is found in a study of the *source* from whence the locust army, loosed by the fifth trumpet, comes and how they got there. Suffice it to say, it is not Frenchmen being held locked away in the bottomless pit! This entire passage describes something yet future to the experience of the earth:

I agree with Alford and De Burgh, that these *locusts from the abyss* refer to judgments about to fall on the ungodly immediately before Christ’s second advent. None of the interpretations which regard them as past, are satisfactory. Joel 1:2-7; 2:1-11, is strictly parallel and expressly refers (Joel 2:11) to THE DAY OF THE LORD GREAT AND VERY TERRIBLE: Joel 2:10 gives the portents accompanying the day of the Lord’s coming, *the earth quaking, the heavens trembling, the sun, moon, and stars, withdrawing their shining*: Joel 2:18, 31, 32, also point to the immediately succeeding deliverance of Jerusalem: compare also, the previous last conflict in the valley of Jehoshaphat, and the dwelling of God thenceforth in Zion, blessing Judah.²

a star fallen from heaven to the earth

As we previously observed, angelic beings are, at times, referred to as *stars* (Job 38:7; Isa. 14:13). That this star is not an astronomical body, but a person, can be seen by the reference to *him, he* (Rev. 9:1-2⁺), and by his personal action of opening the bottomless pit. *Fallen* is [πεπτωκότα](#) [peptōkota], a perfect tense participle, *having previously fallen and now being in a fallen state* John did not see the actual fall. At the time John saw the star, it had already fallen. Since the star had *previously* fallen, some suggest from the immediate context that it refers to the star of the third trumpet which fell from heaven and is called Wormwood (Rev. 8:10-11⁺):

In the last chapter we saw it in the course of its falling. The result was the bitterness of wormwood. We now see it fallen to the earth. . . . May it not be merely that the great star has lost much of his power and is now a fallen star? It is none other than Satan himself and we shall see the details of this coming to earth in the twelfth chapter [Rev. 12:9-10+].³

Whether this star fell in the events of the previous chapter (Rev. 8:10-11+) or in the events recorded in a subsequent chapter (Rev. 12:9-10+), the possibility exists that it could be Satan. If so, then the demonic locusts which he unleashes from the pit may be what is referred to, in part, when John records: “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” (Rev. 12:12+). It is interesting that John uses the term *woe* to describe the results of Satan’s fall while the star which falls here looses the first of three *woes*. Satan’s “tail” drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to earth (Rev. 12:4+), and he himself is cast out of heaven (Rev. 12:9+). When Jesus’ disciples reported their success at exorcising demons to Jesus, He said “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18)—referring to the authority which they demonstrated over the powers of Satan’s domain. The coming of God in the flesh to disable the accuser at the cross spelled the doom of Satan and the eventual overthrow of his rule in this world by God’s coming kingdom on earth. “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12:31). Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit had come, He would convict the world of judgment “because the ruler of this world is judged” (John 16:5-11). “Jesus was not speaking of Satan being cast out at that precise moment, but that his power had been broken and that he was subject to Jesus’ authority.”⁴ If the star that had previously fallen is Satan, then there is considerable irony in the fact that he now releases his demonic horde from the very region where he himself will be confined during the [Millennial Kingdom](#) (Rev. 20:1-3+).⁵

This we believe refers to Lucifer, or ‘Day-star’ (see Isa. 14:12 margin). The reference, we think, is not to his original fall, but to what is described in Rev. 12:9+. The fact that the key of the abyss is given to him is in keeping with the fact that during the tribulation period God allows him free rein and suffers him to do his worst.⁶

Satan’s expulsion from Heaven and his consequent casting down (confinement) to earth will happen in the second half of the tribulation, for Rev. 12:6+, 14+ require this as these verses indicate that Satan’s fall to earth will happen at the midpoint of the seven year tribulation.⁷

If the angel is Satan, then some see a further description of him as “the angel of the bottomless pit whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon” (Rev. 9:11+). See commentary on [Revelation 9:11](#). It is impossible to be dogmatic on this point, for it is also possible that the star which opens the pit is some lesser principality than Satan himself and “the angel of the bottomless pit” may be simply the highest ranking among the fallen angels *in the pit* prior to their having been loosed. It is no accident that at the conclusion of these, the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments, we read, “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**” [emphasis added] (Rev. 9:20+a). As we see in this book, God has a wry wit about His judgments, for example: “stoning” those who are guilty of blasphemy (Rev. 16:21+). Here he unleashes upon the world the very beings they worship in order that they may get a fill of their ways. Incredibly, they will still refuse to repent!

to him was given

He did not have the authority to open the pit himself, it was *given by God*. The horror which this fallen star is about to unleash is entirely subject to the sovereign permission of God. See commentary on [Revelation 6:2](#).

the key of the bottomless pit

The shaft of the abyss had been locked so that whatever or whoever was there could not escape. Now the star which had previously fallen is given the key to unlock whomever or whatever is held there! Later, an angel will be given the same key with which to lock Satan within the same compartment for the duration of the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:1-2+). Elsewhere, Jesus is said to “have the keys [plural] of Hades and of Death.” Since different regions of Hades are separated by a “great gulf” ([χάσμα μέγα](#) [chasma mega]) (Luke 16:26), perhaps the bottomless pit is also within Hades—even being the great chasm itself, although its shaft is normally sealed. Paul associated the bottomless pit (abyss) with the location of the dead (Rom. 10:7). If so, then there may be a relationship between the “keys of Hades” and this key. See commentary on [Revelation 1:18](#).

bottomless pit

[τ φρέατος τς βύσσου](#) [to phreatos tēs abyssou], *the shaft of the abyss*. *Shaft* is [φρέατος](#) [phreatos], a deep opening in the ground to a sealed-in well.⁸ It is “the pit of the abyss (because the nether world is thought to increase in size the further it extends from the surface of the earth and so resemble a cistern, the orifice of which is narrow).”⁹ In contrast with an underground spring, it is a *sealed* compartment, a “tank, cistern, reservoir.”¹⁰ Here, it stores a *reserve* of malevolent beings. The word is also translated *pit* (Luke 14:5) and *well* (John 4:11). The shaft leads to the *abyss* ([βύσσου](#) [abyssou]): “from a, intensive, and bussos, a depth; akin to bathus,

deep.”¹¹ The term is used to describe the invisible underworld which is contrasted with the sky and earth that are visible to the human eye. The abyss is discernible only by God.¹² It is said to describe “a very deep gulf or chasm in the lowest parts of the earth used as the common receptacle of the dead and especially as the abode of demons.”¹³

The word “abyss” comes from roots meaning “without depth” and so is properly translated “bottomless.” It is apparently at the very center of the earth and so, in truth, has no bottom. Its boundaries in all directions are all ceilings; one cannot do “down” in any direction.¹⁴

If the shaft to the abyss was previously locked, then how did this compartment come to have occupants? How did they get in? The abyss appears to be a prison of sorts for demons, as evidenced by the request of the demons which Jesus cast out of Legion. They “begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss” (Luke 8:30-31). “These demons preferred to be incarnate in swine, so deep was their horror and dread of the abyss to which some of their fellows were already confined.”¹⁵ It appears that the demonic forces which are about to be released from the abyss were supernaturally transported there by God—reserved for the day of judgment when they will *serve God’s purposes*. “Not only that they should be then judged, but that they should be the executors of God’s judgments also in that great day which we are now studying and learning about in the Apocalypse.”¹⁶ The locking away of these demons is described by Jude:

And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. (Jude 1:6-7)

The demons are fallen angels, some of which left their own abode and are reserved for the judgment of the *great day*. This is [The Day of the Lord](#). The angels themselves will not be judged at this time, but are “reserved for the judgment”—they will be used by God to torment the earth dwellers.¹⁷ Unlike other demons which were free to roam the earth, these particular fallen angels were guilty of an especially wicked act. Similarly to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, they had given themselves over to sexual immorality, [κτορνεύσασαι](#) [ekporneusasai], and “gone after strange flesh.” *Strange flesh* is [σαρκς τέρως](#) [sarkos heteras], *another [different] kind of flesh*. The flesh was not allos (similar), but heteros (different). This seems to point to the event prior to the flood when certain angels went after flesh of a different kind: “There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore *children* to them. Those *were* the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown” (Gen. 6:4). Some suggest that the *these* in Jude’s passage refers to *Sodom and Gomorrah*—that the cities *in a similar manner to Sodom and Gomorrah* went after strange flesh. But the grammar indicates that *these* (masculine plural) refers back to the angels (masculine plural). Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them gave themselves over to sexual immorality and went after strange flesh *in a similar manner to the angels*. The actions of the inhabitants of the cities is compared to that of the angels which preceded.¹⁸ Jude tells us that they did not keep their “proper domain,” [οχη](#) [archē], meaning: “rule, office, domain, sphere of influence.”¹⁹ “The idea is that certain angels acted improperly, going outside the bounds prescribed by God.”²⁰ The bounds which they exceeded involved their interaction with strange flesh—mingling with the daughters of men.²¹ Because of this grievous sin, they are “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness.” *Darkness* is [ζόφον](#) [zophon], which denotes “especially the darkness of the nether regions and these regions themselves.”²² Elsewhere, Peter uses a similar phrase to describe the situation of these same angels:

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell ([ταρταρώσας](#) [tartarōsas]) and delivered *them* into **chains of darkness** ([σειρας ζόφου](#) [seirais zophou]), to be reserved for judgment, and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly. (2Pe. 2:4-6) [emphasis added]

That these are a specific subset of sinning angels can be seen from the fact that many fallen angels remain free to roam the earth. These angels are guilty of the specific sin involving flesh of a different kind (Gen. 6:4). Those who were involved with exceedingly serious sins such as these are “bound” for subsequent release in God’s judgment (Rev. 9:14+).

The “spirits now in prison” in the abyss are those “who once were disobedient—in the days of Noah.” They are the demons who cohabited with human women in Satan’s failed attempt to corrupt the human race and make it irredeemable (Gen. 6:1-4). . . . The demons released by Satan at the fifth trumpet may not include those who sinned in Noah’s day (cf. Jude 1:6), since they are said to be in “eternal bonds” (Jude 1:6) until the final day when they are sent to the eternal Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10+; Jude 1:7). Other demons imprisoned in the abyss may be the ones released. So the pit is the preliminary place of incarceration for demons from which some are to be released under this judgment.²³

The beast who overcomes God's two witnesses "ascends out of the bottomless pit [abyss]" (Rev. 11:7+). The world is said to marvel at the beast "that was, and is not, and yet is" (Rev. 17:8+). Perhaps the abyss is his abode while he "is not"—after "one of his heads" was "mortally wounded," but before "the deadly wound was healed" (Rev. 13:3+). Perhaps the angels, some of which are in the abyss for having gone after strange flesh, will be involved in the origination of the beast. Or perhaps his ascent from the abyss merely indicates his empowerment by Satan (2Th. 2:9). See commentary on [Revelation 11:7](#). The demons which inhabit the abyss have a king, Abaddon or Apollyon: see commentary on [Revelation 9:11](#).

Revelation 9:2

he opened the bottomless pit

The *shaft* leading to the abyss was now opened allowing whatever was therein to escape.

Jehovah once said to Job: "Have the gates of Sheol been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?" (Job 37:17). There are worlds of being and of darkness upon which man has never looked. There is a tenanted abyss of which the demons know, and concerning which they besought the Saviour that He would not send them into it [Luke 8:27-31]. It is a dark and horrible prison, in which many, many strange and evil things are shut up. Satan knows of that world, and would fain bring forth its malignant inhabitants into the earth if he only dared. At last, however, he receives permission to bring them, and the fifth trumpet gives the result.²⁴

smoke arose . . . like the smoke of a great furnace

The plume of smoke that arose is probably one of the "pillars of smoke" which Joel described in the "awesome day of the Lord" (Joel 2:30). A similar plume of smoke attended the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire (Gen. 19:28). Here we see further evidence that the abyss is deep within the earth and probably of a great temperature due to subterranean activity below the earth's crust. That portions of Hades are of an elevated temperature is clear from Jesus' account of the rich man and Lazarus, where the rich man cried out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:24).

the sun and air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit

Here is another cosmic sign—the darkening of the sun. There will be numerous situations which result in the reduction of light from the sun during the Tribulation period. See commentary on [Revelation 6:12](#) and [Revelation 8:12](#).

Revelation 9:3

out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth

As the smoke arose, other creatures arose with it. They are said to be *locusts*. We encounter another similarity between the judgments sent upon the earth dwellers in the Tribulation and the plagues of Egypt (Ex. 10:12-15). Unlike the locusts which descended upon Egypt, these locusts are not allowed to "harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree" (Rev. 9:4+). Since the bottomless pit was previously locked and is evidently of a great temperature, natural locusts would neither find entry nor be able to survive in the pit. But these are not normal locusts, as other factors in this passage make plain. Isaiah describes a noise of tumult at which the people shall flee—in response to the Lord rousing Himself. His plunder is said to be "As the running to and fro of locusts, **He** shall run upon them" [emphasis added] (Isa. 33:4). Notice that the judgment of the people, compared to the ravaging of locusts, is said to be the work of God. In the same way in which a natural locust plague is under the control of God's sovereign will (Joel 2:25), so too is this demonic horde of locusts. Joel also saw this end-time locust-like army of the Lord.²⁵

The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The LORD gives voice before **His army**, for **His camp** is very great; for strong *is the One* who executes His word. For the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:10-11) [emphasis added]

Now in this second chapter, Joel is going to give a blending of the plague of locusts together with the threat of the Assyrian army and then look down the avenue of time into the future and the Day of the Lord. Of course the liberal theologian would say this refers simply to the locust plague and the local situation. He would like to dismiss a great deal of meaning from the Word of God. The other extreme view is to say this refers only to the Great Tribulation Period. I think we need to see that in Joel there is a marvelous blending. He moves right out of the locust plague to the Day of the Lord which is way out yonder in the future.²⁶

The prophet adopts the vantage point of the ultimate day of the Lord, and from that position he looks back to the present locust plague.²⁷

[Joel describes the] appearance . . . of horses—(Rev. 9:7⁺). Not literal, but figurative locusts. The fifth trumpet, or first woe, in the parallel passage [to Joel] (Rev. 9:1-11⁺).²⁸

In the context of Joel, the army of God arrives in concert with *The Day of the Lord* (Joel 1:15-2:11) and eventually gives way to the judgment of the nations (Joel 3:1-17). Then the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom (Joel 3:18-21). This matches the order of events in the book of Revelation. The demonic plagues of this chapter are the first of these three stages.

It is therefore with diffidence that we suggest, without being dogmatic, that they are, most likely, fallen angels now imprisoned in Tartarus. . . . these infernal locusts issue from ‘the well of the Pit,’ an expression occurring nowhere else in Scripture, and only the locusts are said to come from there. So also the term Tartarus is found nowhere but in 2Pe. 2:4. It seems likely, then, that the well of the Pit may be only another name for Tartarus (with which only fallen angels are connected), just as the Lake of Fire is only another name for Gehenna. . . . 2Pe. 2:4 simply says [fallen angels] are ‘reserved unto judgment,’ and we believe this means that God is holding them in Tartarus until His time comes for Him to use them as one of His instruments of judgment upon an ungodly world. The time when God will thus use them is stated in Jude 1:6 - it will be in ‘the judgment of the great day’ (compare Rev. 6:17⁺ for ‘the great day’). Confirmatory of this, observe that in Joel 2:11 the Lord calls the supernatural locusts ‘His army,’ then employed to inflict sore punishments on apostate Israel.²⁹

to them was given power

The ultimate source of their power is not Satan, but God. See commentary on [Revelation 6:2](#).

as the scorpions of the earth have power

Here is another hint that these are not normal locusts because they are given power *as the scorpions of the earth*. This phrase implies not only that these are not scorpions (being locusts), but that neither are they *of the earth*. Their origin is not of the earth. Originally, they were angels *of heaven*, but chose to follow Satan in his rebellion, and eventually committed the serious offense which led to their confinement. Now, they are *of the abyss* (Rev. 9:11⁺). Their similarity with earthly scorpions is found in their ability to inflict a painful sting (Rev. 9:5-6⁺). Jesus mentioned “serpents and scorpions” as representative of “the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19).

Revelation 9:4

they were commanded

Like the horseman of the third seal (Rev. 6:6⁺), the destructive abilities of the locusts is specifically limited by the permission of God. See commentary on [Revelation 6:2](#).

not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree

Here we see the reason why the last three woes—the last three trumpets—are separated from the previous four trumpets. The first four trumpets involve judgments on *natural systems*, including vegetation, whereas the judgments of the final three trumpets target *people*. In contrast to the previous trumpet judgments (Rev. 7:3⁺; 8:7-11⁺), the locusts are told *not* to harm the natural system, but to attack certain men. These are not natural locusts: “This is an unusual locust that will not attack anything green—that is all the normal locust would attack. They did not attack human beings.”³⁰ The natural locusts of the plagues of Egypt, although supernaturally provided, illustrate the normal activities of locusts:

For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. So there remained nothing green on the trees or on the plants of the field throughout all the land of Egypt. (Ex. 10:15)

The flight of locusts is thus described by M. Olivier (*Voyage dans l'Empire Ottoman*, ii.424): “With the burning south winds (of Syria) there come from the interior of Arabia and from the most southern parts of Persia clouds of locusts (*Acridium peregrinum*), whose ravages to these countries are as grievous and nearly as sudden as those of the heaviest hail in Europe. We witnessed them twice. It is difficult to express the effect produced on us by the sight of the whole atmosphere filled on all sides and to a great height by an innumerable quantity of these insects, whose flight was slow and uniform, and whose noise resembled that of rain: the sky was darkened, and the light of the sun considerably weakened. In a moment the terraces of the houses, the streets, and all the fields were covered by these insects, and in two days they had nearly devoured all the leaves of the plants. Happily they lived but a short time, and seemed to have migrated only to reproduce themselves and die; in fact, nearly all those we saw the next day had perished, and the day following the fields were covered with their dead bodies.”³¹

How different are these locusts from natural locusts, for they avoid the very things which natural locusts devastate. Some have

difficulty reconciling the instructions not to harm the green grass when in the first trumpet it was said that “all green grass was burned up” (Rev. 8:7[±]). This is readily explained:

The reference to the grass of the earth suggests that some time has passed since the first trumpet judgments scorched all the grass that was then in season (Rev. 8:7[±]). The damaged grass has grown again and is to remain untouched in this plague, indicating that enough time has elapsed for a partial recovery of the earth’s environment.³²

See commentary on [Revelation 8:7](#).

but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads

Here we see the chronological relationship in the visions related by John, for in order to be protected from these locusts, the men must have *already* been sealed. Indeed they were, in Revelation 7:4[±]. Thus, Revelation 9[±] must follow chronologically after Revelation 7[±]. These are the 144,000 of Israel who were sealed in Revelation 7:3[±] which [see](#). Their seal protected them in the midst of the judgments of the systems of nature (Rev. 7:3[±]; 8:7[±]) and now it provides protection from the judgment of the demonic locusts. Here is another indicator that these are not ordinary insects: they are able to differentiate between those who have God’s seal and those who do not. The seal may not be a visible mark (see commentary on [Revelation 7:4](#)), yet these locusts are able to detect those who are sealed. The answer lies in the fact that demons have great spiritual awareness. During Jesus’ ministry, demons frequently identified him as the “Son of God” or “Holy One of God,” a fact which was missed by His disciples and most of those whom He taught (Mat. 8:29; Mark 1:24; 3:11; Luke 4:33-34; 8:28). Mark informs us that Jesus “did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him” (Mark 1:34). Luke says “And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of God!’ And He, rebuking *them*, did not allow them to speak, for they knew He was the Christ” (Luke 4:41). Not only did the demons recognize Jesus, but they also recognized Paul—and that he had *spiritual authority* which the seven sons of Sceva lacked since they were presumably not born again (Acts 19:14-16). Thus, these demonic locusts will be able to readily identify those which have been marked for special protection by God, whether the mark is physical or spiritual in nature. If we are to understand the 144,000 sealed Jews in Revelation 7[±] to be the initial sealing of an evangelistic force and a signal of God’s redemptive focus returning upon Israel (Rom. 11:25-32), then from their initial witness, many more, both Jew and Gentile, will come to know God during the Tribulation. These are those who John saw which “came out” of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 7:14[±]). It would seem that these too will be protected from the demonic horde.³³

Those who have the seal of God include not only the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Rev. 7:3-4[±]; 14:1[±]), but also the rest of the redeemed (cf. Rev. 22:4[±]; 2Ti. 2:19). This seal marks them as personally belonging to God and as such protected from the forces of hell. Jesus promised the faithful members of the Philadelphia church that “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name” (Rev. 3:12[±]).³⁴

Revelation 9:5

they were not given *authority* to kill

Given is [δοθῆναι](#) [dothēnai], passive, it is divine permission which prevents them from killing their victims. It is God’s intention that their victims will be unable to escape the torment of the locusts through death. This is similar to the limitation which God put on Satan in Job’s testing (Job 2:6).³⁵ God ultimately desires to keep these people alive so that they have the opportunity to repent and turn to Him:

After millennia of captivity, the vile demons would no doubt want to give full vent to all of their pent-up evil by slaughtering people. Certainly Satan would want to kill all the unregenerate to keep them from repenting. But God, in His mercy, will give people torment for five months (the normal life span of locusts, usually from May to September), during which they cannot die but will be given the opportunity to repent and embrace the gospel.³⁶

This verse frustrates those who attempt to interpret the judgment as involving an army of human origin, for what army on earth has ever resisted killing the enemy?

to torment them for five months

In Revelation 9:10[±] we are told “Their power was to hurt men five months.” It is not clear whether the ministry of the locusts is limited to that period of time or whether the effects of their sting lasts for five months. Probably the former. The time period may be intended to convey the idea of God’s complete provision for their torment. Significantly, in the judgment of the flood, the waters prevailed upon the earth for the same period of time, five months (150 days, Gen. 7:24).³⁷ See [Five: Provision, Fullness, Grace](#).

The duration of the plague is fixed. It is to last “five months.” A similar fixed date is given in Numbers 11:19-20: “a whole month.” In 2 Samuel 24:13, also we have “seven years,” “three months,” and “three days,” as the fixed limit of certain judgments. These periods are always taken literally. Why not this? The time limit of these infernal locusts corresponds with that of ordinary locusts, which is five months (from May to September).³⁸

like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man

This would include both the pain of an initial sting and the subsequent pain due to an injected poison. “At least two general types of scorpion poison exist. One is a hemotoxin that causes mild to severe local effects such as edema, discoloration, and pain; the other is a dangerous neurotoxin (nerve poison) that may cause severe local and systemic effects such as convulsions, paralysis, cardiac irregularities, and death.”³⁹

Revelation 9:6

men will seek death

They will be gripped with incredible fear (Luke 23:30; Rev. 6:16⁺), experience intense pain (Joel 2:6), and wish to die (Jonah 4:8). Job described the anguish of those who suffer and long for death:

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)

So that my soul chooses strangling *And* death rather than my body. I loathe *my life*; I would not live forever. Let me alone, for my days *are but* a breath. (Job 7:15-16)

will not find it

Not is οὐ μὴ [ou mē], a double negative emphasizing the impossibility of death. This is perhaps the most puzzling verse in the chapter. “It would seem from the sixth verse that there is an intimation of suicide attempts which are frustrated by God.”⁴⁰

they will desire to die and death will flee

They will desire is πιθυμῆσουσιν [epithymēsousin], *an intense desire*, elsewhere translated by *lust*. *To die* is προθανεῖν [apothanein], present tense infinitive. The pain of the locusts is so intense that their *continual desire* will be to find release through death. But they will not find relief because death will *flee* (φεύγει [pheugei], present tense—continually flee). Joel was given a glimpse of this intense fear and pain: “Before them the people writhe in pain; All faces are drained of color” (Joel 2:6). We have record in the gospels of the degree to which demons *control* their victims:

Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” (Mark 9:20-22)

And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!” For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. (Luke 8:27-29)

Perhaps part of the tormenting assignment of the demons is not only to sting their victims, but to ensure they remain unable to take their own lives.

We are not told what will make man unable to commit suicide (Rev. 9:6⁺), but can speculate that these demonic creatures, anticipating a man’s actions, by simply stinging him at the crucial moment, will prevent him from suicide. What excruciating torture; driven to the point of suicide, but prevented from taking the final step by the very same torment that drives a man to the resolve to take his own life. Man will seek death by any means, even the tormenting locusts, yet they will not be permitted to kill (Rev. 9:5⁺).⁴¹

Revelation 9:7

The shape of the locusts was like

Up to this point, the creatures which come up out of the bottomless pit have been identified as “locusts” (Rev. 9:3⁺). Now, John

begins a series of descriptions which are similitudes—representations which approximate what he sees concerning the locusts. Comparative terms such as [μῑωμῑ](#) [homioōma] (likeness, image, form, appearance), ⁴² [μοῑος](#) [homoios] (like, similar), ⁴³ and [ἥς](#) [hōs] (as, like)⁴⁴ will occur frequently in the descriptions which follow. As elsewhere in this book, much of what John is shown exceeds anything he has seen before and so he struggles to relate the vision using similes which provide an approximation of what he is being shown. These comparative terms do not provide license for fanciful symbolism or allegorical interpretation—they represent the closest similarity which John knew for describing what he saw. If anything, they provide support for understanding John's description as closely accurate of the reality before him. Before continuing with our study of this passage, we feel it is important to discuss how we are to understand the seemingly fantastic⁴⁵ description of the locusts (and the horses and horsemen of the sixth trumpet) which follow in this chapter. Many find their description so unbelievable that they are driven to spiritualize the passage:

Many commentators interpret the plague as a condition of sinful life rather than an eschatological event. Hendricksen sees the description as “the operation of the powers of darkness in the soul of the wicked during this present age” (p. 147). For Hengstenberg it is the hellish spirit that penetrates the earth (I, pp. 429 ff), and for Dana, the forces of decay and corruption which God will use to undermine the Roman Empire (pp. 126 ff).⁴⁶

As we have observed in our discussion of [Interpreting Symbols](#), the decision to depart from a literal interpretation, which recognizes figures of speech, is a serious one for it places the interpreter upon a sea of subjectivity. Moreover, if all this chapter is meant to teach is general moral principles or even the depravity of men (Jer. 17:9), then how does one explain the excessive details of the vision? What possible purpose could they serve? Why not say the same thing with far fewer words? No, what is being described here is real, literal, and important to understand in detail else God would not have “wasted” words on it. We would ask the reader to keep in mind several considerations:

1. **Demonic Capabilities** - We know next to *nothing* concerning the demonic realm and especially the transformative capabilities of angels—be they elect or fallen. Scripture records that angels are “ministering spirits” (Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1:7, 14), yet they appear in numerous passages as anatomically accurate *human men*. When Isaiah, Ezekiel, and John are shown the seraphim and cherubim, there is considerable difficulty describing their appearance in a manner that we could possibly grasp (Isa. 6:2; Eze. 1:10; 10:14; Rev. 4:7+). The description of Satan, the “anointed cherub,” is equally fantastic (Eze. 28:12-14). Thus, we should not be surprised to find malevolent beings of immense spiritual and transformative powers with such fantastic descriptions. “They seem, from their description, to be a kind of *Infernal Cherubim*. The horse, the man, the lion, and the scorpion are combined in them [Rev. 4:7+].”⁴⁷
2. **Size of the Locusts** - We know nothing concerning the *size* of the demonic locusts. Depending upon their similarity to earthly locusts, they are likely between 0.5 to 7 inches (13 to 175 mm.).⁴⁸ In other words, these demon locusts *may be on the scale of insects*. The fact that they have a painful, and possibly poisonous sting, which does not kill their victims also points in this direction. For if the locusts were much larger than their largest earthly counterparts, then the sting alone could easily be a mortal wound.⁴⁹
3. **Fantastic Appearance of Natural Insects** - When asked to describe a simple spider or dragonfly when viewed under a magnifying glass or a flea under a microscope, how many of us would resort to similes like those of John (Rev. 9:7-10, 17-19+)? Most, if not all of us! The simple fact is that known insects of the natural world are almost equally bizarre—but lacking in demonic power—to those described here. Consider the following description. *The creature had four wings, each of which was covered with something like 250 thousand scales, and a tripartite body with a head as it were with six thousand eyes. Two long hair-like whips extended from its head with which it guided itself over immense distances. Its tongue was like a fire hose and one fourth the length of its body and it pranced upon six legs, the forelegs of which terminated in six needle-like spears.* A bizarre fantasy? Not at all! A female monarch butterfly.⁵⁰ A rather benign insect at that!

Once we trade in the Golden Rule of Interpretation for the fools gold of symbolism and allegory, we embark upon a sea of conjecture concerning the identification of this judgment. Bullinger and Seiss, in defense of a literal understanding, identify the mischief which results from jettisoning a literal interpretation:

The most common interpretation sees the fulfillment of this judgment in the Invasion of Europe by the Turks. In that case the “*star*” is seen to be Mahomet. His “fall from heaven” means that his family was once high and wealthy; he being an orphan and poor. “To him was given the key of the bottomless pit;” *i.e.*, “he *professed* to receive a key from God.” So that in his case profession was evidently possession! How he opened the pit the interpreters do not tell us, but the “smoke” was his false teaching. Out of the pit came the *locusts*. *Arbah* in Hebrew means a locust. That is quite near enough with them for *Arabians*, though there could hardly be Mahomedans before Mahomet. . . . The “*crowns like gold*” were the turbans of linen. “*Faces as men*” means *courage*. “They had *hair as women*.” this refers to the *horse tail* decorations worn by the Pashas on their heads.⁵¹

Many indeed, consider it mere fancy-work, fiction, and symbol, referring to events in the past history of the race and intended to describe quite other things than are thus literally depicted. But the account is given as an account of realities. There is no difficulty involved in the language employed. The grammatical sense is plain and obvious. Neither is there any intimation whatever of any other sense. And if any other sense was intended, there lives not a man who can tell, with any degree of certainty, what that other sense is. Many and great minds have laboured to make out an allegorical and historical interpretation of these locusts from the pit, but thus far, as Alford has justly remarked, only “an endless Babel” has been the result. Alford gives it up. Stuart gives it up. Hengstenberg gives it up. Vaughan gives it up. Others have given it up. And every candid man just give it up, on any scheme that will consistently interpret the Apocalypse as a whole, or preserve to the sacred records the credit and value which this book claims for its contents.⁵²

The text compares these creatures to *locusts*. Since most of us have probably never studied the appearance and capabilities of even the *household spider* in detail, let us be wary to take John’s description seriously knowing that God’s severe judgment at the time of the end will certainly call forth such a devilish reality. “What God says is plain enough. He does not ask us to understand it. He asks us to *believe* it; and this, by God’s help, we mean to do.”⁵³

horses

Joel used similar terminology to describe the locust plague of his day—and the demonic plague of this day.

Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like swift steeds, so they run. With a noise like chariots over mountaintops they leap, like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, like a strong people set in battle array. (Joel 2:4-5) [emphasis added]

We are not alone in understanding Joel’s vision of God’s locust army as depicting something far beyond his immediate event—this ultimate eschatological invading army released from the pit.

At the sight of this terrible army of God the nations tremble, so that their faces grow pale. ‘Ammīm means neither people (see at 1 Kings 22:28) nor the tribes of Israel, but nations generally. Joel is no doubt depicting something more here than the devastation caused by the locusts in his own day.⁵⁴

As will be seen by examining the many similarities between this passage and that of Joel, Joel saw both the local locust plague of his own day, but also understood it as a type (or model) of this demonic locust plague in the final [Day of the Lord](#). Both the natural locusts of Joel’s day and the demonic locusts here represent sovereign judgments of God.⁵⁵ Like John, he resorted to similitude in comparing the locusts with horses:⁵⁶

Such an association is facilitated by three facts: (1) The heads of locusts and horses are similar in appearance. The German and Italian words for “locust” literally mean “hay-horse” [*Heupferd*] and “little horse” [*cavalletta*], respectively (Wolff, Joel and Amos, p. 45, n. 46; cf. also Driver, *The Books of Joel and Amos*, p. 52). (2) Both locusts and human armies advance swiftly. (3) The locusts’ buzzing wings resemble the sound of chariot wheels (for accounts of the sounds made by locusts, see Driver, *The Books of Joel and Amos*, p. 52).⁵⁷

on their heads were crowns of something like gold

John does not use simile to describe the crowns, but only the material out of which they were made. The crowns they wear also differentiates them from natural locusts. These are from among the hierarchy and rank of fallen angels (Rom. 8:38; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10). “Alford understands it of the head of the locusts actually ending in a crown-shaped fillet which resembled gold in its material.”⁵⁸ “Not actual crowns, but AS crowns. Milligan remarks that any yellow brilliancy about the head of the insect is a sufficient foundation for the figure.”⁵⁹ More likely, the crowns are an indicator of the victory the locusts will enjoy over their prey. See [Crowns](#).

their faces *were* like the faces of men

This indicates they are intelligent rational beings and not normal locusts.

Revelation 9:8

they had hair like women’s hair

Jeremiah described horses that would “come up like the **bristling** locusts” [emphasis added] (Jer. 51:27). The word for *bristling* is [סַמָּר](#) [sāmār]: “Pertaining to a short, stiff, coarse hair or filament not soft to the touch, and possibly painful to very soft tissues as the

feature of an insect whisker.”⁶⁰ The participial form is used of a *nail* (Ecc. 12:11; Isa. 41:7). “Johnson suggests, ‘The comparison of their hair with that of women may refer (as in other ancient texts) to the locusts’ long antennae.’”⁶¹ “An Arabic proverb compares the antlers of locusts to the hair of girls.”⁶² However, these are not natural locusts, so the hair that John sees appears to be long, like that of a woman.

their teeth were like lion’s *teeth*

Joel describes the natural plague of locusts of his day as a “nation” with teeth of a lion:

For a nation has come up against My land, strong, and without number; **His teeth are the teeth of a lion**, and he has the fangs of a fierce lion. He has laid waste My vine, and ruined My fig tree; He has stripped it bare and thrown *it* away; its branches are made white. (Joel 1:6-7) [emphasis added]

In Joel’s description, the teeth are said to be lion-like because of their ability to consume and strip all vegetation bare. Here, the mention of teeth parallels Joel’s locust vision and is an indication of their rapaciousness. There is no indication that the demon locusts will utilize their teeth directly against their victims—it is their tails with which they strike.⁶³

Revelation 9:9

breastplates

[θώρακος](#) [thōrakas]. This word may denote an actual breastplate or “the part of the body covered by the breastplate, *the chest*.”⁶⁴ It is the word from which we get *thorax*. Interestingly, we use this word to describe insects. “Thorax: The second or middle region of the body of an arthropod, between the head and the abdomen, in insects bearing the true legs and wings.”⁶⁵ See commentary on [Revelation 9:7](#).

like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle

The sound of their flight is compared to chariots in battle, so great is their number. Once again, Joel and John agree: “With **a noise like chariots** Over mountaintops they leap, Like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, Like a strong people set in battle array.” [emphasis added] (Joel 2:5).

Revelation 9:10

tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails

Stings is [κέντρα](#) [kentra], used also of a pointed stick (Acts 9:5; 26:14) and figuratively to describe the power of death to hurt (1 Cor. 15:55). The sting denotes not only the ability to pierce, but possibly also the pain of a poisonous tip, or stinger.⁶⁶ See commentary on [Revelation 9:5](#). The sting of some natural scorpions is extremely painful:

Of a boy stung in the foot by a scorpion, Laborde relates that, although of a race which bears everything with remarkable patience, he rolled on the ground, grinding his teeth, and foaming at the mouth. It was a long time before his complainings moderated, and even then he could make no use of his foot, which was greatly inflamed. And such is the nature of the torment which these locusts from the pit inflict.⁶⁷

Revelation 9:11

they had a king over them

These locusts are to be contrasted with natural locusts which have no king: “The locusts have no king, yet they all advance in ranks” (Pr. 30:27). These demonic locusts *have* a king and advance like their natural counterparts:

They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks. They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down. (Joel 2:7-8)

In one of the translations of the [LXX](#), Amos is shown a king over a swarm of locusts: “Thus has the Lord [God] shewed me; and behold, a swarm of locusts coming from the east; and, behold, one caterpillar, king Gog” (Amos 7:1).⁶⁸ Perhaps because the plague of locusts was seen by Amos as a sign of God’s judgment (Deu. 28:38, 42; Amos 4:9; Joel 1:1-7), Gog—the archenemy of Israel—is pictured as their king (Eze. 38:2-3, 14, 16, 18, 21; 39:1, 11; Rev. 20:8+).

angel of the bottomless pit

Regarding the phrase *of the bottomless pit* ([τῆς βύσσου](#) [tēs abyssou]), Wallace suggests it emphasizes the *source* from whence the angel came.⁶⁹

Abaddon

[βαδδών](#) [Abaddōn], a transliteration of the related Hebrew term. The Hebrew term [אבדון](#) [ʾăḇaddôn] is derived from [אבד](#) [ʾbd] meaning “to perish, become lost, be ruined.” It is translated by “destruction” and associated with [שׂוֹל](#) [šʾôl] in Job 26:6 and Pr. 15:11, where it denotes a *place* which is seen by the omnipresence and omniscience of God. Abaddon is personified along with death ([מָוֶת](#) [māwē]) as having heard of the fame of elusivewisdom (Job 28:22). It is said to be the destination of a consuming fire (Job 31:12) and is associated with the grave ([קֶבֶר](#) [qəḇer]), but differentiated from it (Ps. 88:11). It is said that hell ([שׂוֹל](#) [šʾôl]) and Abaddon (“destruction”) are never full (Pr. 27:20). In all of these uses, it denotes a *location* which is associated with *Sheol* and the grave, but differs from them. “The rabbins have made Abaddon the nethermost of the two regions into which they divide the lower world.”⁷⁰ Some suppose him to be Satan:

The king of these locusts is named in both Hebrew and Greek. The name that God gives to him is Abaddon or Apollyon. . . . In it, of course, is one of the titles of Satan of which there are so many in the Bible. We are reminded of the two passages in Matthew’s Gospel where the Lord Himself speaks of the prince of the demons or rather where He comments on the Pharisee’s use of the name, Beelzebub, whom they call the prince of the demons. . . . The Lord said, commenting on the Pharisees’ thought, “If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself” (Mat. 12:26), thus linking the name of the one they called prince of demons to Satan himself.⁷¹

However, if Satan is taken as the fallen star to which the key is given to open the pit (presumably from the *outside*), and this angel is *from* the pit, it argues against his identification as Satan. Perhaps this angel is the highest ranking angel which has been confined within the pit for the duration of their demonic captivity? He is probably not related to the elect angel who eventually locks Satan in the pit (Rev. 20:2+).

John gives his title as the angel of the abyss. Some identify this angel as Satan, but his domain is the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12), where he is the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2). He is not associated with the abyss until he is cast into it (Rev. 20:1-3+). This angel is better viewed as a high-ranking demon in Satan’s hierarchy.⁷²

Others suppose this angel to be [Antichrist](#):

It is the Destroyer of the Gentiles of Jer. 4:7, translated ‘Spoiler’ in Isa. 16:4 and Jer. 6:24. Suitable name is this for the one who is the great opponent of the Saviour. ‘Destroyer’ is close akin to ‘Death’ in Rev. 6:8+. The reason why his name is given here in both Hebrew and Greek is because he will be connected with and be the destroyer of both Jews and Gentiles! But why give the Hebrew name first? Because the order in judgment, as in grace, is ‘the Jew first’ - see Rom. 2:9 and 1:16 for each, respectively.⁷³

The beast that makes war against the two witnesses is said to ascend out of the bottomless pit (Rev. 11:7+; 17:8+). His coming is “according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders” (2Th. 2:9). His ascent from the pit may speak of his physical origin, the source of his spiritual empowerment, or both. It appears his ascent from the pit takes place when his deadly wound is healed (Rev. 13:3+, 12+) for John implies the order of events: “The beast that you saw [1] was, and [2] is not, and [3] will ascend out of the bottomless pit and [4] go to perdition” (Rev. 17:8a+). It is unlikely that the Antichrist would be found in the pit at its initial opening, already having been imprisoned with demons for an extended period of time⁷⁴ or that he would be said to be a king *over demons*.⁷⁵ This king is an *angel*, but nowhere does Scripture refer to Antichrist as an angel. Instead, he is said to be a *man* (Dan. 7:8; 8:23; 11:37; 2Th. 2:3). Admittedly, there is considerable mystery associated with the Antichrist, especially regarding his origin, how he “is not, and will ascend” and the *means* by which his “deadly wound was healed” (Rev. 13:3+). Yet, it seems unlikely that this king who is an angel refers to Antichrist. See commentary on [Revelation 13](#) and [The Beast](#). This *angel* is probably neither Satan nor Antichrist, but a high-ranking fallen angel who has been king over the imprisoned demons for the duration of their time in the pit.

Apollyon

[πολλύων](#) [Apollyōn], the Greek translation of the Hebrew [אבדון](#) [ʾăḇaddôn]. The LXX usually translates Hebrew Abaddon as apōleia, “destruction.” Apollyon appears in the nominative case like a proper name would appear in quotes.⁷⁶ Providing the name in both Greek and Hebrew is characteristic of John. “This stylistic trait of giving information in bilingual terms is peculiar to Revelation and the fourth Gospel (John 6:1; 19:13, 17, 20; 20:16).”⁷⁷ It is another piece of evidence in favor of authorship by the Apostle John. See [Authorship](#). “John uses both names to emphasize his impact on both ungodly Jews and Gentiles.”⁷⁸

Revelation 9:12

One woe is past

This speaks of the first of the three woes (Rev. 8:13⁺), the judgment of the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:1-11⁺). See commentary on [Revelation 8:13](#).

Behold, still two more woes are coming

John writes *behold* because, as terrible as this first woe has been, the two remaining woes are still worse. This woe brought torment, but the second woe—the judgment of the sixth trumpet—brings the release of a demonic army the likes of which the earth has never seen (Rev. 9:13-19⁺, 11:14⁺) and the third woe—the judgments of the seventh trumpet—brings the seven bowls of God's wrath (Rev. 11:15⁺; 15:7⁺; 16:2-4⁺, 8⁺, 10⁺, 12⁺, 17⁺).

after these things

[μετ τα τα](#) [meta tauta], the familiar chronological indicator which partitions John's vision.

Revelation 9:13

the sixth angel sounded

This is the sixth angel of the seven which were given trumpets (Rev. 8:2⁺). When he sounds, the second of the three final woes is brought forth. See commentary on [Revelation 8:13](#).

Each time the trumpet sounds, the judgment which follows is more severe than the previous one. Long ago Isaiah had prophesied that "when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9). No doubt, therefore, each succeeding judgment will uncover a few reluctant "learners," but those that remain unconverted are still more stubborn and thus each visitation must increase in severity.⁷⁹

a voice from the four horns of the golden altar

The voice comes from the golden altar upon which the prayers of the saints were offered and from which they ascended before God (Rev. 8:3-4⁺). Mention is made of the altar to associate the judgment of the sixth trumpet with the petitions of the saints previously offered upon the altar. The voice could be that of the angel who offered the prayers of the saints upon the altar, but more likely, is the voice of the Father because that which is commanded requires the utmost in authority—the release of the bound angels.⁸⁰ The horns of the altar are intended to signify mercy, for by running to the temple and clinging to them a man could seek sanctuary (1K. 1:50-51; 2:20). But now, a voice of judgment comes from the horns of mercy.

Shockingly, from the altar associated with mercy came words of judgment. God is a merciful, gracious, compassionate God, yet His "Spirit shall not strive with man forever" (Gen. 6:3). When this trumpet judgment occurs, the time for mercy will have passed; the altar of mercy will become an altar of judgment.⁸¹

Revelation 9:14

saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet

The sixth angel is tasked with the release of the four bound angels. We are not told how they are bound nor how they are released. We can assume that both their binding and release involves the direct supernatural power of God and the sixth angel is merely the instrument by which this power is administered. Their binding is most likely similar to that which will be experienced by Satan during the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:1-3⁺) and their loosing like that of Satan at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7⁺).

release the four angels

These four angels have evidently been reserved in bondage for this special purpose of God. Since there are only four, it is likely that they are a specific group of especially malevolent or powerful angels. Even one angel, in a single night, killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians (2K. 19:35). It appears that these four angels will be assisted in their assignment by an additional demonic army. They probably serve as commanders. The number four speaks of the worldwide effect of their destruction. See [Four: the Entire World, the Earth](#).

The Four Angels Bound at the Euphrates

who are bound

[το ς δεδεμένους](#) [tous dedemenous], perfect tense passive participle, *the ones having been bound*. They were bound in the past and remain bound up to this point in preparation for their use in judgment by God. See commentary on [Revelation 9:2](#). Their binding at the Euphrates is similar to the locking away of other fallen angels in the abyss. “These four angels, we are distinctly told are ‘reserved unto judgment.’ The word is [ες](#) [eis] *unto, with a view to judgment* (not merely to being judged).”⁸³ See commentary on [Revelation 9:1](#). Barnhouse takes these to be supernatural powers who, while bound, have actively prevented “the passing of evil forces from the east to the west.”⁸⁴ When they are removed, then forces from beyond the Euphrates are allowed to come into the holy land. This seems unlikely on two counts:

1. Why would angels who are serving God on an ongoing basis by actively opposing evil be said to be *bound*? “That the four angels are bound indicates that they are demons (cf. Rev. 20:1⁺ff.; 2Pe. 2:4; Jude 1:6), since holy angels are nowhere in Scripture said to be bound. Because holy angels always perfectly carry out God’s will, there is no need for Him to restrain them from opposing His will.”⁸⁵
2. The description of the resulting invasion is so fantastic as to defy explanation as a natural army of men.⁸⁶

at the great river Euphrates

Later, in the sixth bowl judgment, the *Euphrates* is dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the east to gather to battle against God (Rev. 16:12-14⁺). The mention of the *Euphrates* both here and in Revelation 16:12⁺ provides further evidence that Babylon (Rev. 14:8⁺; 16:19⁺; 17:5⁺; 18:2⁺, 10⁺, 21⁺) is the literal, historical city on the banks of the Euphrates.⁸⁷

Exactly *how* they are bound there is a mystery, of course. How anything—particularly disembodied spirits—could be chained for four thousand years in a flowing river is unknown, to say the least. . . . No doubt God is equal to the needs of the occasion, however, and can bind them in some quite appropriate and effective manner. . . .⁸⁸

“The Euphrates is linked with the most important events in ancient history. On its banks stood the city of Babylon; the army of Necho was defeated on its banks by Nebuchadnezzar; Cyrus the Younger and Crassus perished after crossing it; Alexander crossed it, and Trajan and Severus descended it.”—*Appleton’s Cyclopaedia*⁸⁹

It was near the Euphrates that sin began, the first lie was told, the first murder was committed, and the tower of Babel (the origin of an entire complex of false religions that spread across the world) was built. The Euphrates was the eastern boundary of the Promised Land (Gen. 15:18; Ex. 23:31; Deu. 11:24), and Israel’s influence extended to the Euphrates during the reigns of David (1Chr. 18:3) and Solomon (2Chr. 9:26). The region near the Euphrates was the central location of three world powers that oppressed Israel: Assyria, Babylon, and Medo-Persia. It was on the banks of the Euphrates that Israel endured seventy long, bitter, wearisome years of captivity (cf. Ps. 137:1-4). It is the river over which the enemies of God will cross to engage in the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16⁺).⁹⁰

Attention has been abundantly called by commentators to the region of the Euphrates as that place where human sin began and also Satan’s empire over man; where the first murder was committed; where the first war confederacy was made (Genesis 14); and back of this it is where Nimrod began to be “a mighty one in the earth,” and where the vast system of Babylonian idolatry, with its trinity of evil—“father, mother and son” originated, to deceive the whole world by the Satanic fable of “the queen of heaven.” Here, moreover, as we saw in Zechariah 5, iniquity is to have its last stage on earth (see Revelation 18⁺ also).⁹¹

Revelation 9:15

who had been prepared

[ο τοιμασμένοι](#) [hoi hētoimasmenoi], perfect tense passive participle, *the ones having been prepared*. The preparation was not their own, but that of God. God had actively held them in reserve for this specific time. They are reserved for use *in* judgment (Isa. 24:21-22; 2Pe. 2:4; Jude 1:6). Indeed, God “works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11).

for the hour and day and month and year

“The one article and one preposition before the four times, unites them: . . . it denotes the appointed hour of the appointed day of the appointed month of the appointed year.”⁹² They were to be released at the “hour of His judgment” (Rev. 14:7⁺), a time known only to God (Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7).⁹³ *This very moment*, as we contemplate the text, these powerful angels and their related demonic horde

are pent up awaiting their eventual release whereupon they will rush out upon an unsuspecting world to unleash “hell on earth.” The intensity of their malevolent thoughts and intentions likely escalates as they endure the ongoing frustration of their present captivity. What a horrific and fearsome judgment that will pour forth upon the earth dwellers at the time of the end!

to kill a third of mankind

A third of the population of the earth would be killed by these four angels *and the army which they lead* (Rev. 9:16-18⁺). Death will come by three means: fire, smoke, and brimstone. See commentary on [Revelation 9:18](#). The trumpet judgments share a pattern of affecting one-third of what they target. In the first trumpet judgment, a *third* of the trees were burned up (Rev. 8:7⁺). In the second trumpet judgment, a *third* of the sea became blood, a *third* of the creatures in the sea perish, and a *third* of the ships were destroyed (Rev. 8:8-9⁺). In the third trumpet judgment, a *third* of the rivers and springs are poisoned (Rev. 8:10-11⁺). In the fourth trumpet judgment, a *third* of the sun, moon, and stars were struck so as to be darkened (Rev. 8:12⁺). In the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments, all men without the seal of God are tormented, and then a *third* of them are killed. When the second seal is opened, peace is taken from the earth and people kill one another (Rev. 6:4⁺). When the third seal is opened, there is great famine and presumably additional deaths occur (Rev. 6:5-6⁺). When the fourth seal is opened, Death and Hades kill “a fourth of the earth” (Rev. 6:8⁺). If the *fourth of the earth* describes a *region*, then we can’t be sure what proportion of the total population die—it would depend upon the region and the distribution of the population. If we assume that roughly one fourth of the *population* remaining alive at the time of the third horseman’s ride perish in the judgments of the third seal, then less than 75 percent of the original population prior to opening the first seal remains alive. (Some died during the judgments of the second and third seals.) Additional people die in the preceding trumpet judgments (ships are destroyed, men die from drinking poisoned waters, Rev. 8:9⁺, 11⁺). Here an additional *third of the remaining population* perish, or one-third of the less than 75 percent which remains. *After the first six seal and six trumpet judgments, the population of the earth has been reduced by more than half.* If the first seal were loosed today [December 2003], using the current world population of over 6 billion, and neglecting those who will be removed from the earth in the [Rapture](#) prior to this time,⁹⁴ more than 3 billion would have died by the end of the sixth trumpet in the judgments from God.⁹⁵ No wonder Jesus said, “For then there shall be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Mat. 24:21-22).

Revelation 9:16

two hundred million

[δισμυριάδες μυριάδων](#) [dismyriades myriadōn], *two myriads of myriads*, an essentially countless number. This is a similar phrase to that found in Revelation 5:11⁺ to describe the countless angelic host. Only here, the phrase is doubled for heightened effect.⁹⁶ The number should not be thought of as specifically denoting *two hundred million*, but a vast, essentially numberless host.⁹⁷ Joel saw this army in his vision: “A people *come*, great and strong, the like of whom has never been, nor will there ever be *anysuch* after them, even for many generations” (Joel 2:2). *Strong* is [רַב־צֶמֶד](#) [‘āṣûm], which can denote a “throng, multitude, i.e., pertaining to that which is a large number of countable persons (Ps 35:18).”⁹⁸ “As the morning light spreads itself over the mountains, so a people *numerous* [Maurer] and strong shall spread themselves.”⁹⁹ Some take the horses and horsemen as denoting a human army from east of the Euphrates:

Armies of this size and sophistication have only been a feasibility in recent times (indeed, the world’s population around 1600 A.D. is estimated to have been 500 million; so at the time Revelation was written the world population may well have only been 200 million—surely, only God could envisage armies of 200 million men in that day and age!). We have apocryphal prophecy of human destruction which makes World War II look insignificant.¹⁰⁰

But it would seem this multitude is neither from the east (Rev. 16:12⁺) nor human:

To summarize why these two hundred million are demons and not Chinese, four things should be noted: *first*, they are led by four fallen angels; *second*, the location of the army is stated to be the Euphrates, where Babylon is located (which in the future will be the headquarters of the counterfeit trinity); *third*, the description given in the text rules out this army’s being human; and *fourth*, the kings of the east [Rev. 16:12⁺] are not connected with this at all.¹⁰¹

Moreover, the practical aspects of mobilizing a *human* army of such size seem insurmountable. It is not simply an issue of manpower alone.¹⁰²

According to General William K. Harrison (an expert in military logistics), an army of 200 million could not be conscripted, supported, and moved to the Middle East without totally disrupting all societal needs and capabilities (“The War of Armageddon,” xerographic copy of unpublished, undated article). As General Harrison brings out on this aspect of Revelation, God has made men with certain

limitations; and the actual raising and transporting of an army of the size spoken of in v. 16 completely transcends human capability. All the Allied and Axis forces at their peak in World War II were only about 70 million (*The World Almanac, 1971*, ed. L. H. Long [New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, 1970], p. 355). Thus it seems better to understand the vast numbers and description of the horses as indicating demonic hordes.¹⁰³

Some have suggested that this is the human army referred to in Rev. 16:12⁺ and led by “the kings from the east,” noting that the Red Chinese army reportedly numbered 200 million during the 1970s. But no reference is made to the size of the army led by the kings of the East. Further, **that army arrives on the scene during the sixth bowl judgment, which takes place during the seventh trumpet, not the sixth.** [emphasis added]¹⁰⁴

I heard the number

John would have been unable to count their number, but was told there were *two myriads of myriads* so as to relate to his readers their essential numberless value. The vast number of the army is further evidence of the (fallen) angelic origin—for there are countless numbers of angels of which one-third fell (Rev. 7:4⁺; 12:4⁺).

Revelation 9:17

thus I saw the horses

The previous judgment involved demonic locusts whose appearance was “like horses”—they were not horses, but a similitude. Here, John says he saw *horses*, but doesn’t mention *like* or *as*, as in a similitude. These horses are not like normal horses for they breath fire out of their mouths and harm with “heads” on their tails. Yet, like horses, they are *ridden upon* by horsemen. “Perhaps they are like the fabled Centaurs—horses with human-like heads and upper bodies, in appearance like men riding horses except that the horses ridden by them are also their own bodies.”¹⁰⁵ Again, Joel describes what is before us:

Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like swift steeds, so they run. With a noise like chariots over mountaintops they leap, like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, like a strong people set in battle array. (Joel 2:4-5)

Note that when John uses simile, what he describes is *approximately* true to the vision that he is being shown. It is the *closest* thing he is familiar with to compare that which he sees. This precludes the notions of some that John was describing futuristic military weaponry with which he had no familiarity:

John was writing to addressees with no knowledge of mechanized warfare; to them cavalry was the most formidable military force, so naturally he described his vision in terms to which his readers could relate. The mounts John saw may well be advanced military equipment (which even we may not know how to describe), but which he described using the vocabulary and references of his readers.¹⁰⁶

Mills suggests that John saw something like tanks, helicopter gunships, and other modern mechanized equipment, realized that these represented some sort of unknown futuristic weaponry, and then *translated this down* in terms of cavalry images for his readers. We find this notion difficult to accept. When John uses simile, he uses the closest *object known to him* which approximates what he sees. If John had been shown modern military tanks, he would have undoubtedly mentioned something “like chariots with multiple wheels.” If helicopter gunships, then he would have mentioned flight, perhaps “like an eagle,” etc. He clearly saw some sort of *animals* which were mounted by *riders*. Understanding this army to be demonic in origin solves many of the conjectural problems posed by attempts to find natural fulfillments in modern warfare, recognizes their huge number, and explains how they are led by four malevolent angels.

hyacinth blue

[ἄκινθινος](#) [huakinthinos]: “Either dark sapphire blue or dark red, depending on which mineral or stone is used for comparison.”¹⁰⁷

The three words . . . translated fire, hyacinth and brimstone are found in no other place in the New Testament. The first of the words is used by Aristotle and Polybius in the sense of flaming or firing. Hyacinth is a translation of a word that is rendered by various authorities as “red color bordering on black” (Thayer), “violet or dark blue” (Bailly), while ancient writers described it as “purple and iron colored” (cit. in Liddell and Scott). In the last half of this same verse and in the following verse three plagues are further described as fire, smoke and brimstone. Each of these words is different from the three used in the description of the breastplate.¹⁰⁸

the heads of the horses *were* like the heads of lions

It is unclear whether John means that the head of each horse resembled the actual appearance of the head of a lion, or merely that they shared the ferocious characteristics of a lion (1Ch. 12:8). Probably the latter since he calls them “horses.”

out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone

They devour their enemies in much the same way as the two witnesses (Rev. 11:5+). Fire and brimstone are the result of God's overwhelming judgment (Gen. 19:24; Deu. 29:23; Job 18:15; Ps. 11:6; Isa. 30:33; 34:9; Eze. 38:22; Luke 17:29; Rev. 14:10+; 19:20+; 20:10+; 21:8+). "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" (Joel 2:3a).

No doubt this all sounds fantastic and impossible, so commentators have invented all sorts of figurative meanings to apply to these deadly horses. But these are not the first fire-breathing animals the earth has seen. Ancient nations everywhere describe fire-breathing dragons which formerly existed on earth, and the Bible describes at least one such creature, called leviathan (Job 41:19-21). There are many indications that these dragons were actually dinosaurs, and the fossil evidence does show structures on at least some dinosaurs that could well have served as mixing chambers for flammable chemicals [not to mention methane from digestive processes] that could be expelled in the form of fire and smoke.¹⁰⁹

Revelation 9:18

a third of mankind was killed

"The terrible slaughter will completely disrupt human society. The problem of disposing of the dead bodies alone will be inconceivable. The sickly stench of decaying corpses will permeate the world, and it will take an enormous effort on the part of the survivors to bury them in mass graves or burn them."¹¹⁰ See commentary on [Revelation 9:15](#).

Revelation 9:19

their power is in their mouth and in their tails

The nearest antecedent is the *horses* (Rev. 9:17+b) to which the [MT](#) and [NU](#) texts attest by including the phrase "of the horses" ([τῶν ἵππων](#) [tōn hippōn]).

their tails *are* like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm

The demonic locusts had tails with which they stung (Rev. 9:10+), but these demonic horses differ in that their tails are like *serpents* rather than *scorpions*—*having heads* and a mouth. The fierceness of this army can be seen in the lethal power which attends both ends of the horses. Approaching the horsemen from the rear is of little avail since their tails also harm. Some have suggested John is describing modern military weaponry, but the description and the *source* of the army (demonic, from the pit) is evidence to the contrary.

Revelation 9:20

But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues

The two-thirds left from the population prior to the sounding of the sixth trumpet (Rev. 9:13+), representing less than half of the original population of the earth. See commentary on [Revelation 9:15](#).

did not repent

The very reason that *only one-third* were killed was to provide a witness and opportunity for the remaining two-thirds to repent and turn to God. Like [Jezebel](#) of the church at Thyatira (Rev. 2:21+)—who is a type for the earth dwellers of the end—they fail to see God's gracious mercy in giving them additional time to repent.

"Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. (Joel 2:12-13)

But, as we shall see, the earth dwellers continue to harden their hearts with the result that stays of judgment which indicate God's mercy and forbearance are met with a continuance or even elevation of their sinful deeds (Rev. 16:8-11+). This is the purpose of what Jesus described to the church at Philadelphia: "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world **to test those who dwell on the earth.**" [emphasis added] Much like the testing of Jesus in the wilderness following His baptism by John (Mat. 4:1-11), this period is meant not so much to see how those being tested respond, but to demonstrate their unchanging character. The analogy of the Tribulation with its plagues to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt is found in the similarity of the character of the earth dwellers to Pharaoh: both refused to repent. In

Pharaoh's case, as the plagues continued to intensify, he continued to harden his heart (Ex. 7:13, 23; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:34). So will the hearts of the earth dwellers. And yet, through the mystery of God's sovereignty, the continued opposition of the unrepentant will be used to bring Him great glory (Ex. 11:9; Rev. 19:1⁺). The proverb writer captured the spirit of the unrepentant: "Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, *Yet* his foolishness will not depart from him" (Pr. 27:22). It is God's specific purpose in the midst of judgment to bring repentance. Yet often, as here, men fail to respond to His correction:

O LORD, *are* not Your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to return. Therefore I said, "Surely these *are* poor. They are foolish; for they do not know the way of the LORD, the judgment of their God." (Jer. 5:3-4)

"Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities. And lack of bread in all your places; yet you have not returned to Me," says the LORD. "I also withheld rain from you, when *there were* still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered. So two *or* three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me," says the LORD. "I blasted you with blight and mildew. When your gardens increased, your vineyards, your fig trees, and your olive trees, the locust devoured *them*; yet you have not returned to Me," says the LORD. "I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt; your young men I killed with a sword, along with your captive horses; I made the stench of your camps come up into your nostrils; yet you have not returned to Me," says the LORD. "I overthrew *some* of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a firebrand plucked from the burning; yet you have not returned to Me," says the LORD. "Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" For behold, He who forms mountains, and creates the wind, Who declares to man what his thought *is*, and makes the morning darkness, Who treads the high places of the earth—The LORD God of hosts *is* His name. (Amos 4:6-13)

Most frequently, men complain that if only they had more definite information, *then* they would repent and believe. Our experience has been that the needed information is more often a smokescreen for a rebellious and unrepentant heart which has no intention of submitting to God. For we have spent many an hour in discussions with such as these—providing information and answering objections—only to find that, having answered one objection, a new one quickly arises in its place! These stand in the place of the rich man who asked that someone from the dead be sent back with *more evidence* to his brothers so that they would accept the horrible truth of the judgment ahead:

Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' and he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' (Luke 16:27-31)

Abraham recognizes that the problem is not one of *evidence*, but a *hard heart*. They already have enough evidence to believe, but choose not to. "The fool has said in his *heart*, 'There is no God.' " (Ps. 14:1; 53:1). Paul catalogs the damning condition of the unregenerate man (Rom. 3:10-18). Even after this catastrophic intervention, men will continue to reject God because they desire independence from God:

The death of one-third of the earth's remaining population will be the most catastrophic disaster to strike the earth since the Flood. Yet in an amazing display of hardness of heart, the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent. It is unimaginable that after years of suffering and death under the terrifying judgments from God, coupled with the powerful preaching of the gospel by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Rev. 7:1-8⁺), the two witnesses (Rev. 11:1-14⁺), an angel in the sky (Rev. 14:6-7⁺), and other believers (Mat. 24:14), the survivors will still refuse to repent.¹¹¹

Man's basic sin is independence; it is not that he blatantly prefers Satan to God; it is just that he wishes not to be under God's authority. But deep down man chooses Satan because he promises independence. However, this section reveals that Satan will never deliver on his promise, but instead delivers the most vicious form of bondage.¹¹²

the works of their hands

The problem is not men's *hands*, but rather the *will* of men which motivates their hands. Their will is opposed to God and therefore what they produce by their *hands* does not glorify God, but rather reflects their own selfishness and sin. In the end, without God's Holy Spirit, men become creative perverts, dangerous geniuses (Gen. 11:6), bent on creating their own hell in pursuit of what they incorrectly perceive to be wisdom and intelligence. "Professing to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:22).¹¹³ The *works* of men's hands include the very gods they bow down to (Deu. 4:28; 2K. 19:18; Ps. 115:4; 135:15; Isa. 2:8; 17:8; 37:19; 44:10-20; Jer. 1:16; 10:3-5; 25:6; Acts 7:41; 19:26). This is the thrust of the meaning here—that men continue in idolatry—giving honor and attention to everything *except* their Creator. Worshiping the *creature* (Rom. 1:25) and that which men have produced in the place of the one true God. In the context of the Tribulation, the [image of the Beast](#) is the ultimate *work of their hands* since the [False Prophet](#) "deceives those who dwell on the earth . . . to make an image to the beast" (Rev. 13:14⁺). Thus, they themselves make the ultimate *idol* (icon)

of their own worship! In the delusion which God sends upon the earth (2Th. 2:11), men worship that which they themselves made rather than the God who made them.

worship demons

During the Tribulation, the ultimate devil and idol worship will take place. Men will worship the dragon (Satan) who gives authority to the beast, they will worship the beast, and even the *image* (idol) of the beast (Rev. 13:4+, 8+, 15+).¹¹⁴ Scripture indicates that although idols themselves are lifeless, the [inspiration](#) to make and worship them is demonic in origin. To worship or sacrifice to an idol is to worship or sacrifice to demons (Lev. 17:7; Deu. 32:17). Lest the reader assume sacrifice to demons is a thing of darkened cultures of the past, we only ask how many lives are being offered up in abortion clinics in worship of the “god of convenience” in our supposedly “modern” cultures today? Not only that, but the continuance and even increase of pagan practices around the world clearly show the tendency of men apart from God. In the time of the end, it will only be worse. History records the *descent* of man, not his *ascent*.

idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood

As one commentator entitled this section: “Stone Hearts and Stone Idols.”¹¹⁵ At the time of the end, men will worship idols made from the same basic materials as those praised by the men at Belshazzar’s feast (ca. 550 BC, Dan. 5:4, 23). Some readers will no doubt scoff at the notion of idol worship in the same sense as is recorded for ancient cultures. In reply we observe:

1. Scripture makes plain that when men turn from God, there is virtually no limit to the depravity and ignorance to which they descend (Rom. 1:21-23).
2. The vantage point of western “civilized” society, benefits from a strong Judeo-Christian foundation. Although that foundation is quickly eroding, we still enjoy benefits which lag behind the erosion. Our assessment of what is possible in false worship is limited by this perspective. God’s assessment is not.
3. The very idolatry described here—where inanimate items are worshiped—is taking place *today* in many pagan cultures across the globe.
4. Pagan belief is rapidly on the rise within our own culture, in the media, and on the Internet. With pagan belief will come pagan worship, a return to the darkness of the past.
5. It can take many generations for godliness to permeate a culture and reap its benefits. This can all be lost in only one or two generations. Consider that at two times in history *every person alive* knew God directly: (1) at the time of Adam and Eve and, (2) after the flood. Now stop and consider the many “lost peoples” and cultures which have no notion of God. They are “lost” in the truest sense of the word. At one time their forebears had *direct knowledge* of the God of the Bible, but intervening generations walked away from Him and darkness now prevails.
6. Worship of the *work of men’s hands* extends beyond basic idols of wood, stone, and precious metals. It includes everything that man produces which is not in the service of God. Items as diverse as weapons of war, computer technology, bioengineering and genetic tampering with the basic elements of life. It is not the items themselves that are so much the issue, but the way in which they are employed. In this regard, technology is a large mirror amplifying the fallen character of men. It can be used for good or for evil, but inevitably the evil use winds up dominating. Meanwhile, man persists in his refusal to recognize his depraved nature.
7. With the [rapture of the church](#), the descent into spiritual darkness will be hastened. “During the last century there has been a tremendous advance in what is called ‘spiritual’ but which is really spiritism or demonism. All this is to increase (until) after the believers have been removed at the rapture of the Church. It will be the predominating state of affairs after all the believers have been taken from the earth.”¹¹⁶

Commentators speak with one voice concerning the real possibility of demon-based worship becoming a reality for “modern man.”

Take Chicago: Arriving in this city at the close of 1893, (the former World’s Fair) I found nearly two pages of the Saturday issue of the newspaper were taken up with the announcement of services at the various churches, and the sermons were generally on solemn subjects by godly men. In 1935, four or five announcements, at most a half a dozen, invited to places where one’s soul would be safe to attend; while the announcements of Spiritualists, Theosophists, Christian Scientists, Unity followers, etc.—those cults that have direct traffic in Satan—ran into the scores. (Six orthodox, against 75 Satanic, in the *Chicago Daily News* of November 14, 1931.)¹¹⁷

Those sophisticates of western culture who had long deluded themselves in the unscientific sophistries of modern evolutionary humanism will quickly revert to more satisfying practices of ancient evolutionary polytheistic pantheism, acknowledging the demonic powers which operate in the earth and its atmosphere under “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). This acknowledgment will be even easier for those multitudes who had been devotees of Asian and African cultures, for these already were either pantheistic or animistic or both. For many years prior to Christ’s return for

His saints, there will have been a revival of occultism, astrology, spiritism, and kindred “doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:13), even in western cultures, preparing the minds of men everywhere for a worldwide return to pagan idolatry in the final days of the cosmic rebellion. Great worship centers will then be erected, with grotesque images of modern art depicting the various cosmic and terrestrial forces and processes presumably controlled by the principalities and powers of the wicked one (Ephesians 6:12; 1 John 5:19), and these will become objects of worship, with men and women in effect worshiping those evil spirits which they portray and represent.¹¹⁸

It may appear too disparaging to understand of this enlightened age, to entertain the possibility of a return to the ancient worship of images. People may feel insulted at the thought. But the way for it is opening, and the process to effect it is already going on. The minds of anti-Christian religionists everywhere are fast relapsing into the old heathenish philosophies, and I know not what is to hinder their acceptance of the religions with which those philosophies are conjoined. Modifications of them may be made, to conform them somewhat to the requirements of an altered condition of the public mind and taste; but idol-worship will again become, as it is even now becoming, the religion of some who claim to be among the most enlightened and the very illuminators of mankind. Socrates had his demon-guide.¹¹⁹

which can neither see nor hear nor walk

An intentional contrast is made between the lifeless idols which men worship (Ps. 115:7; Isa. 46:5-7) and the true living God.¹²⁰ During the Tribulation, Satan will empower the false prophet to produce an idol which comes as close to emulating life as is possible apart from God: “He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed” (Rev. 13:15⁺).¹²¹ Since history demonstrates the willingness of men to worship inanimate objects, this lifelike image will be irresistible to the earth dwellers—they will worship both the beast *and his image*. They will be all-the-more willing because *God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie*, for “they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2Th. 2:10-11). If you do not yet know God and believe it preposterous that you would worship an idol, animate or otherwise, beware! For Scripture records that aside from the protection of the Holy Spirit, those who do not know God will not be able to resist the delusion which is sent from God Himself! See commentary on [Revelation 13:15](#).

Revelation 9:21

they did not repent

See commentary on [Revelation 9:20](#).

murders

Murder has always been prevalent upon the earth. In “civilized” societies such as ours, it is often hidden out of direct view and under the control of policies related to population control: abortion, euthanasia, and genetic engineering. During the Tribulation, there will be increased murders as those who refuse to worship the beast are “purged” from society (Dan. 9:21, 25; Rev. 13:7⁺, 15⁺; 16:6⁺; 17:6⁺; 18:24⁺). Unrepentant murderers will have their place in the second death (Rev. 21:8⁺). See commentary on [Revelation 2:11](#) and [Revelation 20:14](#).

sorceries

[φάρμακων](#) [pharmakōn]: “Magic potion, charm,”¹²² related to [φάρμακεία](#) [pharmakeia], “employment of drugs for any purpose: sorcery, magic, enchantment.”¹²³ The term occurs in the list of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20) and is translated *sorcery* (*witchcraft*, KJV). It also describes the *sorcery* by which Babylon deceived all the nations (Isa. 47:9, 12; Rev. 18:23⁺). “Used in the Septuagint of the Egyptian sorceries (Ex. 7:22. Of Babylon, Isa. 47:9, 12).”¹²⁴ Sorcery was forbidden by the Law of Moses (Ex. 22:18; Deu. 18:10-11) as were all practices which involved communication with the dead such as conjuring spells (Deu. 18:11), consulting mediums (1S. 28:3-9), spiritism, or calling up the dead (really the demonic realm). This included all forms of magic (Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:31; Lev. 20:6, 27; 2Chr. 33:6; Mal. 3:5). God condemned all of these practices and was indignant that men would “*seek the dead on behalf of the living*” (Isa. 8:19). Instead, they were to seek the *living* God. One need only view modern cartoons on television or observe the recent Harry Potter phenomenon to observe how the foundation continues to be laid for subsequent generations who will have little reservation to participate in these forbidden practices.¹²⁵

That people are today [1983] being prepared for an irruption of demons, however, seems very probable. The plethora of movies, television programs, and books with demonic themes, along with the latter-day mushroom growth of occult religions and practices, are all surely conditioning men to a widespread belief in Satan and his demons. Furthermore, none of this is driving men to refuge in Christ, as one might at first suppose it would.¹²⁶

Drugs are used in association with sorcery because they place the practitioner into an altered state of consciousness whereby he or she becomes more open to contact with the demonic realm. The following account of a shaman from the Yanomamo tribe illustrates the connection between drug use and the demonic realm—a connection well-known even among “primitive” peoples:

I recently interviewed a man who had spent most of his life communing with spirit entities. There is no doubt as to his “authenticity.” He was a shaman, a medicine man and chief of his Yanomamo tribe, which resides deep in the Amazonian rain forest of Venezuela. At odds with the lie promoted in anthropological circles that the lives of primitive tribes-people are pure, natural and Eden-like and therefore best kept from outside influence —Chief Shoefoot and his peoples violent, fear-filled existence is documented in a book titled *The Spirit of the Rain Forest*, written by Mark Ritchie . . .

As a young boy, Shoefoot was singled out as one sensitive to the spirit realm and subsequently initiated into the sorcerers world. Again, a shaman is one who, through knowledge and power obtained from the spirits, heals and guides his people. Although the initial process of enabling him to contact the spirits was brutal, involving days of food and water deprivation and having someone force **hallucinogenic drugs** into his system by blowing them up his nose, the spirits he met were at first benign and curiously captivating. . . . Shoefoot increased his drug intake in order to go deeper into the spirit world to find more trustworthy and benevolent spirits. That led to even more wicked spirits (Luke 11:26), greater frustration, and intense despair.¹²⁷ [emphasis added]

Some, who deny the reality of the spiritual realm, believe experiences such as those of this shaman are brought on by natural causes, such as drug use:

I asked Shoefoot through interpreter Mike Dawson, Joe’s son, who grew up among the Yanomamo, how he would answer a skeptic who thought his experiences with the spirits were nothing more than hallucinations brought on by the drugs he took. Shoefoot’s 70-something-year-old eyes sparkled at the question; he enjoys responding to challenges by skeptics, especially when he speaks to university anthropology students. Its ironic that this “primitive” man considers the highly educated anthropologists who study his people naive at best, deceived at worst. He told me of knowing shamans who had many of the same spirits he had had, yet, unlike him, they did not come to know them as a result of taking drugs. Whether the contacts were made with a clear mind or in a drug-induced state, descriptions and details were nearly always identical they all communed with the same spirits.¹²⁸

During the awful days of the tribulation, the breakdown of law and order will mean that there will be no more restraints on drug use. Furthermore, the fearful judgments on the earth will drive many to drugs as a form of escapism. The merchants of the earth will gladly cooperate because of the great profits involved [Rev. 18:13⁺].¹²⁹

Interestingly, [Jezebel](#) of the church of Thyatira apparently taught believers to experience “the depths of Satan” (Rev. 2:24⁺), much like her namesake in the [OT](#) practiced witchcraft (2K. 9:23). As we discussed previously, Jezebel at Thyatira can be seen as a type for the church which enters the Great Tribulation (Rev. 2:22⁺) whereas those who overcome and reject her teaching will receive “the morning star” (Rev. 2:28⁺, which [see](#)). Those who practice sorcery will also have their part in the second death (Rev. 21:8⁺) and will never enter through the gates of the eternal city (Rev. 22:15⁺).

sexual immorality

[πορνείας](#) [porneias], from which we derive *pornography*. The word is used of “*prostitution, unchastity, fornication*, of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.”¹³⁰ Writing many years ago, Seiss uncannily identified the trend. One only wonders what he might say if he could see our day:

And interlinked with these sorceries, and reacting the one on the other, will also be the general subversion of marriage and its laws, and the deluging of society with the sins of fornication and adultery. The Apostle uses the word “fornication” alone, as embracing all forms of lewdness, but as if to intimate **that marriage will then be hardly recognized any more**. And already we hear the institution of legal wedlock denounced and condemned as tyrannical, and all rules, but those of affinity and desire, repudiated as unjust. Already, in some circles, we find the doctrines of *free love* put forth and defended in the name of right, a better religion, and a higher law. And it would be strange indeed, if the revival of the old heathen philosophies and religions, which justified, sanctioned, and sanctified promiscuous concubinage, did not also bring with it a revival of all these old heathen abominations. [emphasis added]¹³¹

The term for “sexual immorality” is also used to denote spiritual apostasy, that is, idolatry. “This usage was more easily understandable because some Semitic and Graeco-Roman cults were at times connected with sexual debauchery (cf. Hos 6:10; Jer 3:2, 9; 2K. 9:22).”¹³² This is the sense in which Babylon is condemned (Rev. 17:2⁺, 5⁺; 18:3⁺; 19:2⁺). Perhaps at the time of the end, there will also be a resurgence of idolatrous religious practices involving temple prostitution. In our own day, there is blatant disregard for the laws of marriage, even among those who take the name of Christ.

or their thefts

Theft is a broad sin which underwrites many other sins.

The last crime in this category is that of theft. This is “the statement or general and abounding dishonesty, the obliteration of moral distinctions, the disregard of others’ rights, and the practice of fraud, theft, and deceit wherever it is possible.” In our day corruption in high places gives the example to all classes. The only wrong consists in getting caught.¹³³

The conditions and judgments which John describes in this chapter are difficult for us to imagine. Yet if we understand the [inspired](#) pages of biblical history, we recognize the reality of the events attending the Genesis Flood and the tower of Babel. What man has had the capability of doing in the past can easily be repeated in the future. To those who suggest that “modern man” has thrown off such shackles, we answer with just a few words: *Chairman Mao, Stalin, Hitler, holocaust*. These were not isolated individuals, but entire *historical movements* supported by countless others. The capability of the same and worse lies before us in the pages of the book of Revelation.

I suppose many of us tend to regard this description as fanciful, as hyperbole, and to doubt that destruction on this unimaginable scale can come to pass. However, we should recognize that such a view uses our experience as its guide, and that Hiroshima’s population would doubtless have felt exactly the same if someone had prophesied the devastation one atomic bomb was about to wreak on them. But their opinion did not alter the fact one iota.¹³⁴

People are prone to persuade themselves that this world of sense and time is all that we need be concerned about, and hence have no fears of an unseen world of evil, and no decided or active desire for the blessings of an unseen world of good. They live only for earth, not dreaming that this brief life is only the vestibule to worlds of mightier and eternal moment. Their houses are built by the very margin of hell, and yet they rest and feast in them without a feeling of insecurity or of danger. The flames of perdition clamour after them beneath the pavements on which they walk, but they have no sense of fear or serious apprehension. God and angels are ever busy to win their attention to the ways of safety, but they turn a deaf ear and drift along as they list, crying, Peace! Peace! And so will the wicked and the unbelieving go on, until ignored and offended Omnipotence gives over the power to Satan to let loose upon them these horrid beings from the abyss, under whose torment they will wish they never had lived at all, and vainly attempt to make their escape from what they once considered their chief and only good.¹³⁵

For those who have not yet trusted in Jesus Christ for a way back to God, now is the time to be reconciled of your sin. For each day which passes brings us closer to the fearsome realities described in this chapter: the incredible scenes of hellish torture as demonic hordes are released upon an unsuspecting world. But more frightening than all is the *lack of any willingness to repent* on the part of those left alive who dwell on the earth! **How often must one harden his heart before he reaches the point of no return?** Will you still be able to consider God’s offer with an open heart tomorrow after having turned away one more time today?

Notes

¹George Croly, [The Apocalypse of St. John](#) (London, England: C. & J. Rivington, 1827), 123-126.

²A. R. Fausset, [“The Revelation of St. John the Divine.”](#) in Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, [A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments](#) (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, 1877), Rev. 9:12.

³Donald Grey Barnhouse, [Revelation](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 168.

⁴John A. Martin, [“Luke.”](#) in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#) (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983), Luke 10:18.

⁵ [Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), Rev. 9:1] suggests that the “fall” of the star merely describes the descent of an elect angel, as in “having come down” to do God’s will by opening the pit. But here, the angel is said to “fall” (root [πιπτω](#) [piptō]) whereas the elect angel which descends to bind Satan is said to “come down” (root, [καταβαινω](#) [katabainō]). Moreover, the former is perfect tense whereas the later is present tense.

⁶Arthur Walkington Pink, [The Antichrist](#) (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1999, 1923), s.v. “Antichrist in the Apocalypse.”

⁷Monty S. Mills, [Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John](#) (Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries, 1987), Rev. 9:1.

⁸Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 402.

⁹James Strong, [The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible](#) (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1996), G5421.

- ¹⁰Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, [*A Greek-English Lexicon. With a revised supplement, 1996.*](#) With a revised supplement, 1996 (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- ¹¹W. E. Vine, [*Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*](#) (Nashville, IL: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), #12.
- ¹²Frederick William Danker and Walter Bauer, [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
- ¹³Strong, [*The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*](#), G12.
- ¹⁴Henry Morris, [*The Revelation Record*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1983), Rev. 9:2.
- ¹⁵Barnhouse, [*Revelation*](#), 169.
- ¹⁶E. W. Bullinger, [*Commentary On Revelation*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1984, 1935), Rev. 9:15.
- ¹⁷Later, the demons will undergo their own judgment and suffer torment: Mat. 8:29.
- ¹⁸“And the [angels (masculine plural)] who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as [Sodom (neuter plural)] and [Gomorrhah (feminine singular)], and the [cities (feminine plural)] around them in a similar manner to [these (masculine plural)], [having given themselves over to sexual immorality (feminine plural)] and [gone after (feminine plural)] strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 1:6-7).
- ¹⁹Danker, [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) 112.
- ²⁰ [*New Electronic Translation : NET Bible*](#), electronic edition (Dallas, TX: Biblical Studies Press, 1998).
- ²¹We are unable to discuss the many arguments for and against this interpretation as it is beyond the scope of our current study. When all the various considerations and related passages are taken into account, it is our view that it is difficult to escape the plain teaching of Scripture concerning this unnatural event for which specific angels have been locked away.
- ²²Danker, [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) 339.
- ²³John MacArthur, [*Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), Rev. 9:3.
- ²⁴J. A. Seiss, [*The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), 205.
- ²⁵How different is the identification of Joel's “army” when related passages of Scripture are allowed to speak than that which is often promoted by those who hold to dominion theology who frequently identify Joel's army as the Church!
- ²⁶J. Vernon McGee, [*Thru The Bible Commentary*](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981), Joel 2:1.
- ²⁷Jerry Falwell, Edward D. Hindson, and Michael Woodrow Kroll, eds., [*KJV Bible Commentary*](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1994), Joel 2:1-2.
- ²⁸Fausset, [*The Revelation of St. John the Divine*](#), Joel 2:4.
- ²⁹Pink, [*The Antichrist*](#), s.v. “Antichrist in the Apocalypse.”
- ³⁰McGee, [*Thru The Bible Commentary*](#), Joel 2:7.
- ³¹William Smith, [*Smith's Bible Dictionary*](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), s.v. “Locust.”
- ³²MacArthur, [*Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*](#), Rev. 9:4.
- ³³Undoubtedly some will escape this demonic horde by having previously been martyred (Rev. 7:14⁺).
- ³⁴ibid.
- ³⁵Concerning God's use of evil for His own purposes: Jdg. 9:23; 1S. 18:10; 1K. 22:22; 2K. 19:7; 2Chr. 18:21; Job 1:12; 2:6; Isa. 37:7; Mat. 4:1; Luke 22:31; John 19:11; 1Cor. 5:5; 1Ti. 1:20; 2Cor. 12:7; Rev. 2:10⁺; 9:5⁺; 9:15⁺; 16:14⁺; 17:17⁺; 20:3⁺; 20:8⁺.

³⁶Ibid., Rev. 9:5.

³⁷Morris, [The Revelation Record](#), Rev. 9:5.

³⁸Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), Rev. 9:5.

³⁹Michael Levy, ed., [Britannica 2012 Deluxe Edition CDROM](#), s.v. "scorpion."

⁴⁰Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 171.

⁴¹Mills, [Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John](#) Rev. 9:6.

⁴²Danker, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#), 567.

⁴³Ibid., 566.

⁴⁴Ibid., 897.

⁴⁵[American Heritage Online Dictionary](#), Ver. 3.0A, 3rd ed (Houghton Mifflin, 1993), s.v. "Bizarre, as in form or appearance; strange.."

⁴⁶Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), Rev. 9:10.

⁴⁷Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), Rev. 9:3.

⁴⁸"Scorpions range in size from 13 to 175 mm (0.5 to 7 inches) and have six pairs of appendages. The chelicerae, the small first pair, are used to tear apart prey. The pedipalps, the second pair, are large and have strong, claw-like pincers, which are held horizontally in front and are used as feelers and for grasping prey. The last four pairs, each equipped with a pincer, are walking legs."—Levy, [Britannica 2012 Deluxe Edition CDROM](#), s.v. "scorpion."

⁴⁹Against this view, Mounce observes: "John apparently would have us understand the locusts to be of considerable size. Otherwise the description of hair, face, teeth, etc. would tend toward the comic."—Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), Rev. 9:7.

⁵⁰My description constructed from [Jules H. Poirier, [From Darkness to Light to Flight: Monarch—the Miracle Butterfly](#) (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, 1995)].

⁵¹Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), Rev. 9:12.

⁵²Seiss, [The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation](#), 207.

⁵³Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), Rev. 9:12.

⁵⁴Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, [Commentary on the Old Testament](#) (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), Joel 2:4-6.

⁵⁵"So among Mohammedans, 'Lord of the locusts' is a title of God."—Fausset, [The Revelation of St. John the Divine](#), Joel 2:11.

⁵⁶Job also compared the horse with the locust (Job 39:19-20).

⁵⁷Robert B. Chisholm, "[Joel.](#)" in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#) (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983), Joel 2:3.

⁵⁸Fausset, [The Revelation of St. John the Divine](#), Rev. 9:7.

⁵⁹M. R. Vincent, [Vincent's Word Studies](#) (Escondido, CA: Ephesians Four Group, 2002), Rev. 9:7.

⁶⁰James Swanson, [Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew \(Old Testament\)](#), electronic ed (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997).

⁶¹Mal Couch, "[Angelology in the Book of Revelation.](#)" in Mal Couch, ed., [A Bible Handbook to Revelation](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001), 159.

⁶²Fausset, [The Revelation of St. John the Divine](#), Rev. 9:8.

⁶³Those who suggest they will rip and tear their victims by way of their teeth are without scriptural support. That the victims are to be

refused death argues against such an understanding. It is better to see the teeth as a parallelism to the destructive abilities of lions as Joel utilizes in relation to rapacious natural locusts which devour every living thing.

⁶⁴Danker, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#), 367.

⁶⁵[American Heritage Online Dictionary](#), s.v. "thorax."

⁶⁶Friberg, [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#), 228.

⁶⁷Seiss, [The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation](#), 206.

⁶⁸Ὁ τως δεῖξεν μοι κύριος καὶ ὁ πῖγον κριδῶν ρχομένη ωθινή καὶ ὁ βροχος ες Γῶγ βασιλεύς[Houtōs edeixen moi kyrios kai idou epigonē akridōn erchomenē heōthinē kai idou brochos eis Gōg ho basileus].—[Septuaginta : With Morphology](#) (Stuttgart, Germany: German Bible Society, 1996, c1979), Amos 7:1.

⁶⁹"It is possible that this is an attributive or descriptive genitive, but genitive of source indicates origin more than character and hence seems more appropriate in this context."—Daniel B. Wallace, [Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House and Galaxie Software, 1999, 2002), 110. "Metonymy of the Adjunct. The name of the pit is given to the angel of the pit, by this figure, by which the abstract is put for the concrete."—Jerome Smith, [The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), Rev. 9:11.

⁷⁰Smith, [Smith's Bible Dictionary](#), s.v. "Apollyon."

⁷¹Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 172-173.

⁷²MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 9:11.

⁷³Pink, [The Antichrist](#), s.v. "Antichrist in the Apocalypse."

⁷⁴Unless we adopt the theory of some that Antichrist already walked the stage of history, was slain, and will be revived yet future. Some consider a revival of Judas as possible fulfillment, but the Antichrist's deadly wound is by the sword (Rev. 13:14+), whereas Judas committed suicide by hanging (Mat. 27:5).

⁷⁵The only *man* said to rule over demons is Jesus Christ (Col. 2:10).

⁷⁶"Although ancient Greek did not have the convention of quotation marks, it could express essentially the same idea with a nominative of appellation."—Wallace, [Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament](#), 60.

⁷⁷Alan F. Johnson, [Revelation: The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), Rev. 9:11.

⁷⁸MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 9:11.

⁷⁹Morris, [The Revelation Record](#), Rev. 9:13.

⁸⁰Barnhouse takes the voice to be a personification of the altar itself. [Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 174].

⁸¹MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 9:13.

⁸²Albrecht Durer (1471 - 1528). Image courtesy of the [Connecticut College Wetmore Print Collection](#).

⁸³Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), Rev. 9:15.

⁸⁴Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 175.

⁸⁵MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 9:14.

⁸⁶Unless we allow ourselves the luxury of departing from the text and imagining it to describe helicopter gunships and other modern weapons—thus falling into a trap similar to that of the [Historicist Interpretation](#).

⁸⁷"There is another intriguing possibility, of course. Maybe the Euphrates mentioned here is the antediluvian Euphrates rather than the Babylonian Euphrates. It is barely possible that, deep in the earth, remains the underground storage chamber which controlled the primeval flow into the garden of Eden. Though most of these caverns broke up with their fountains (controlled exit conduits)

erupted to help produce the Flood, or at least in the earth's isostatic readjustments after the Flood, it must be that the primeval source of Eden's rivers is still intact."—Morris, [The Revelation Record](#), Rev. 9:14.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Smith, [Smith's Bible Dictionary](#), s.v. "Euphrates."

⁹⁰MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 9:14.

⁹¹William R. Newell, [Revelation: Chapter by Chapter](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1994,c1935), Rev. 9:14.

⁹²Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), Rev. 9:15.

⁹³Morris takes the time designation collectively as denoting a *duration* of their ministry lasting 13 months.

⁹⁴All true believers will be taken at the [Rapture](#), but it is a difficult number to accurately estimate.

⁹⁵See the world population clock: [<http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/popclockw>].

⁹⁶A few manuscripts have the lesser [μυριάδες μυριάδων](#) [myriades myriadōn], *myriads of myriads*.

⁹⁷"Attempts to reduce this expression to arithmetic miss the point. A 'double myriad of myriads' is an indefinite number of incalculable immensity."—Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), Rev. 9:16.

⁹⁸Swanson, [Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew \(Old Testament\)](#), s.v. "#H6099."

⁹⁹Fausset, [The Revelation of St. John the Divine](#), Joel 2:2.

¹⁰⁰Mills, [Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John](#) Rev. 9:16.

¹⁰¹Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, [The Footsteps of Messiah](#), rev ed (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003), 231.

¹⁰²Bear in mind that the passage says "two myriads of myriads" which indicates a numberless multitude rather than precisely "200 million." But for the sake of argument, a 200 million man army is assumed.

¹⁰³Johnson, [Revelation: The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#), Rev. 9:13-19.

¹⁰⁴MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 9:16.

¹⁰⁵Morris, [The Revelation Record](#), Rev. 9:17.

¹⁰⁶Mills, [Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John](#) Rev. 9:17.

¹⁰⁷Friberg, [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#), 387.

¹⁰⁸Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 176.

¹⁰⁹Morris, [The Revelation Record](#), Rev. 9:18.

¹¹⁰MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 9:15.

¹¹¹Ibid., Rev. 9:20.

¹¹²Mills, [Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John](#) Rev. 9:6.

¹¹³This passage explains why some members of the "North American Man-Boy Love Association," which advocates sex between adult men and young boys, are among the academic elite.

¹¹⁴*Demons* is in the accusative, which Wallace believes may be an indication of an inability to have a true personal relationship with as a false deity. "It may be significant that usually in the NT, the dative direct object is used with [προσκυνέω](#) [proskyneō] when true Deity is the object of worship (cf. Mat. 14:33; 28:9; John 4:21; 1Cor. 14:25; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 4:10⁺; 7:11⁺; 11:16⁺; 19:10⁺; 22:9⁺). The implication, in part, may be that God is a true God—one with whom human beings can have a personal relation. And usually, when false deity is worshiped, the accusative direct object is used (cf. Rev. 9:20⁺; 13:8⁺, 12⁺; 14:9⁺, 11⁺; 20:4⁺)."—Wallace, [Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament](#), 172.

¹¹⁵Morris, [The Revelation Record](#), Rev. 9:20.

¹¹⁶Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 177.

¹¹⁷Newell, [Revelation: Chapter by Chapter](#), Rev. 9:20.

¹¹⁸Morris, [The Revelation Record](#), Rev. 9:20.

¹¹⁹Seiss, [The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation](#), 214.

¹²⁰Concerning God as living: Ex. 3:6; Deu. 5:26; Jos. 3:10; 1S. 17:26, 36; 2K. 19:4, 16; Ps. 42:2; 84:2; Isa. 37:4, 17; Jer. 10:10; 23:36; Dan. 6:20, 26; Hos. 1:10; Mat. 16:16; 22:32; 26:63; John 6:69; Acts 14:15; Rom. 9:26; 2Cor. 3:3; 6:16; 1Ti. 3:15; 4:10; 6:17; Heb. 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; Rev. 7:2+.

¹²¹It would appear that the ability to give life to that which is inanimate is essentially that of God alone: Gen. 2:7. Therefore, the breath given to the image of the beast must in some sense be a proximate duplication of that which God alone can do. A “lying wonder” (2Th. 2:9).

¹²²Danker, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) 854.

¹²³Wesley J. Perschbacher, [The New Analytical Greek Lexicon of the New Testament](#) (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 426.

¹²⁴Vincent, [Vincent's Word Studies](#), Rev. 9:21.

¹²⁵In response to those who believe that participating in activities such as reading the Harry Potter books is “harmless creativity” we respond with the simple question: Does it not grieve God that we will not train our children in the things of God, but readily expose them to the influence of magic? To believe otherwise is to demonstrate a lack of appreciation for our own tendencies as well as an ignorance of God’s word. Moreover, God knows that even if today’s train ride may seem “harmless” and not end in disaster, the eventual destination—given our dark hearts—is a *guaranteed train wreck!* His prohibitions against these practices are numerous and serious because He *alone* understands the nature of man. If we call ourselves *Christians*, then why would we participate in activities which are unbiblical and undoubtedly grieve our Lord?

¹²⁶Morris, [The Revelation Record](#), Rev. 9:6.

¹²⁷T. A. McMahon, “The Spirits of the Lie,” *The Berean Call*, November 2003. [www.TheBereanCall.org].

¹²⁸ McMahon continues: “Mike added that we of the sophisticated West have trouble relating to a culture in which spirits, i.e., demons, are a real, everyday part of life. However, that doesn’t mean they’re necessarily exclusive to the dense jungles of the Yanomamo. He said that on one autumn trip to the U.S. with Shoefoot, he was shocked as his friend, the former shaman, continually pointed out representations of spirits he had known being featured across America as it celebrated its most financially successful holiday: Halloween. Some time later, Shoefoot was given a sampling of TV’s Saturday-morning cartoon characters and power figures. It was more of the same. He was not aware of the worldwide popularity of the Harry Potter books, which introduce children to sorcery and encourage them in the practice of witchcraft. As Mike explained this series of books to him, he was grieved that so many young people were being set up for the suffering and bondage that had tormented his own people.”—T. A. McMahon, “The Spirits of the Lie,” *The Berean Call*, November 2003. [www.TheBereanCall.org].

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, Rev. 19:21.

¹³⁰Danker, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) 693.

¹³¹Seiss, [The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation](#), 216.

¹³²Danker, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) 693.

¹³³Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 178.

¹³⁴Mills, [Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John](#), Rev. 9:21.

¹³⁵Seiss, [The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation](#), 210.

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