

REVELATION CHAPTER 9

GOD'S CONTINUAL WARNING TO REPENT

THROUGH THE SEVEN TRUMPETS OF JUDGMENT - continued

PART 1. Revelation 9:1-12. THE BLOWING OF THE FIFTH TRUMPET.

(1) Explanation of the symbols.

The fifth trumpet of judgement (the first woe, 9:12) describes the evil and destructive work of Satan and his demons and the terror they cause in the hearts and lives of non-Christians throughout the whole New Testament period. Satan and his demons torture people that are not sealed with the seal of God (9:4). This judgement affects everyone not living with the God of the Bible! Satan as the destroyer (9:11) desires to destroy their lives.

9:1 And the fifth (*Greek: pemptos*) angel sounded his trumpet (*Greek: salpizo*)(*ao*rist), and I saw (*Greek: horao, opsomai, eidon, heoraka*)(*ao*rist) a star (*Greek: aster*) lying fallen (*Greek: pipto, pesomai, epeson, peptokota*)(*perfect*) from the sky (*Greek: ouranos*) on the earth. The seven stars in Revelation 1:20 symbolised the seven angels or representatives of the seven congregations. This “star” also seems to indicate an angel of some kind. The word “fall” (*Greek: pipto, peptokota*) never means “sent from above”¹, but always “fallen from a higher position” (8:10; 2:5) or symbolically “destroyed” (14:8). In the Old Testament the fall of the king of Babylon is described in terms of the fall of Satan as the Morning Star (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-17). Satan is described in terms of “a star” due to his original high and holy creation and position. **The perfect tense emphasises an action in the past that resulted in a continued present reality.**

Satan does not descend from heaven (cf. 3:12; 10:1) and he is also not being hurled from heaven (8:7; 12:9). **The picture represents Satan's present condition, not as falling from the sky, but as already fallen and lying on the earth (peptokota) (perfect)(cf. Luke 10:18 (aorist)).** Therefore the translation should not be, “that had fallen from the sky to the earth”, but *lying fallen* from the sky on the earth”.

The fall of Satan happened *after* the completion of creation (Genesis 1:31) and *before* the fall of man into sin (Genesis 3:1). Satan had rebelled against God, lost his holiness, his position and splendour in heaven and his heavenly power (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-17). He dragged many other angels in his fall. We call these fallen angels “demons” today (12:4). But Revelation 9:1 does not refer to the fall of Satan after the creation (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-17). It refers to the binding (curbing, curtailment, restraining, limiting) of Satan's power at Christ's first coming (cf. 12:7-9).

The vision in Revelation chapter 9 describes Satan as lying fallen on the earth *after* Christ's first coming. During his first coming, Jesus Christ had bound (curbed, curtailed, restrained, limited) Satan (Matthew 12:29; Luke 10:18; John 12:31; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8) and had expelled him from coming into the presence of God (12:5-10). Revelation 9:1 is the picture of Satan between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming. During the whole New Testament period *the whole evil and antichristian world* is under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19), only because God gives him permission to do this (cf. Job 1:6-12). But this does not mean that Satan is the King of this world², because God is forever the King of everyone and everything in the universe (Psalm 9:7; Psalm 145:13; Psalm 146:10), including King of everyone and everything on this whole earth (Matthew 28:18; John 13:3). Satan has been given permission to have power only over non-Christians on earth (1 John 5:19; 2 Corinthians 4:4). Christians on earth are not under the power or control of Satan (1 John 5:18; Romans 8:31,38-39; Colossians 1:13)! Christians are attacked by Satan (Ephesians 6:10-18), but are never under Satan's rule!

and the star was given (by God's permissive will)(*Greek: didomi, doso, edoka, dedoka*)(*ao*rist) the key (*Greek: kleis*). “A key” is a symbol of authority and power to open and to close, to decide and to rule (1:18; 3:7). Only by God's permissive will does Satan receive power (the key) to open the Abyss in order to let the demons out. By God's permissive will, Satan is not prevented from carrying out his wicked plans in the hearts of people who have not been sealed with the seal of God (9:4), a wickedness for which the people themselves and Satan – and not God - are responsible. God's permissive will gives them over to demonic influences. Compare Romans 1:24,26,28, where God's permissive will gives them over to sexual impurity, shameful lusts and a depraved mind.

to the shaft (pit, well)(*Greek: phrear*) of the Abyss (*Greek: abussos*). The Abyss is generally contrasted with the sky and earth and refers to the depth of the sea (Ps 33:7; 107:26)³. It is commonly pictured as a place deep under the earth, connected to the surface of the earth by a shaft. It is the abode of the dead (Rom 10:7); the abode of demons (Lk 8:31); and the abode of the angel of the Abyss or the king of the demons (9:11). It is the dungeon where the devil is kept (20:3); and the abode of the beast, the final antichrist (11:7; 17:8). Symbolically the Abyss is capable of being closed with a lid that is locked and sealed (20:1,3). And symbolically it can only be opened with “the key” which God provides, that is, by God's permissive decree (9:1).

In Revelation 20:1-3 Satan is pictured as being shut up in the Abyss so that he could not deceive the nations for a symbolic period of one thousand years. Satan cannot keep the gospel away from the nations! However, in Revelation

¹ Larkin, Revelation pp. 73-74, Groenewald p. 106

² As the adherents of the futurist view interpret Luke 4:5-6.

³ A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, University of Chicago Press, 1952

9:1 Satan is pictured as having received the power (a key) over all those inside the Abyss. Satan can torture unbelievers on earth by means of his demons! Of course the authority which Satan receives is only insofar God permits him. The Abyss must be distinguished from Sheol (Hebrew) or Hades (Greek) in the sense of “the state of the dead” (Matthew 16:18; Revelation 1:18) or in the sense of “the grave, the place of the dead body” (Acts 2:27,31). But the Abyss is identical with Sheol or Hades in the sense of “the place of destruction” (Abaddon)(Job 26:6) or the hell, the place of the dead spirits of the wicked (Matthew 11:23; Luke 16:23-24). And the word Abyss must be distinguished from the word “Tartarus” (in Jewish apocalyptic literature, in Job 41:24 in the Greek Old Testament translation and in 2 Peter 2:4). The Greeks regarded Tartarus as lower than Hades (the abode of the dead); as a subterranean place where divine punishment was meted out.

Before the final judgement day hell is called “the Abyss” (9:2; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-3,7; Luke 8:31). After the final judgement day hell is called “the lake of burning sulphur” (19:18; 20:14,15; 21:8).

9:2 and (when) he opened (*Greek: anoigo*)(*ao*rist) the Abyss, smoke (*Greek: kapnos*) rose (*Greek: anabaino*)(*ao*rist) from it like the smoke from a gigantic (*Greek: megalos*) furnace (*Greek: kaminos*). The sun (*Greek: helios*) and sky (*Greek: aer*) were darkened (*Greek: skotizo*)(*ao*rist) by the smoke from the Abyss. When Satan opens the Abyss (hell), smoke rises from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. Satan fills the world with demons and their wicked influences! This is a trumpet of judgement. God uses even the work of the devil and his demons as a punishment and as a warning for the wicked so that they may repent (9:21). “The Lord works out everything for his own ends – even the wicked for a day of disaster” (Proverbs 16:4; cf. Isaiah 45:7). The smoke, like that bulging from a very dirty factory (Genesis 19:28), symbolises the deception, delusion and seduction of the demons causing general moral and spiritual darkness and degradation. It is a picture of all kinds of sin that takes away the spiritual light of God’s revelation and the spiritual clean air of Christian joy.⁴ Satan and his demons rob the wicked people of light, that is, of truth, righteousness and holiness, joy and peace, wisdom and understanding (even of the understanding of God’s revelation)(John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:4)⁵, but not of all light (John 1:4-9; cf. Romans 1:19-20; Romans 2:14-15; Romans 3:19-20).

9:3 and out of the smoke locusts (*Greek: akris*) came out (*Greek: exerchomai, eleusomai, elthon, elelutha*) (*ao*rist) to the earth and were given (*Greek: didomi, doso, edoka, dedoka*)(*ao*rist) capability (power, authority)(*Greek: exousia*) like the capability of scorpions (*Greek: skorpios*) on the earth. Out of the smoke came swarms of locusts like in a plague. A plague of locusts covers the ground so that it cannot be seen (Exodus 10:4-6). A more terrible plague than that of locusts is hardly conceivable (Joel 2:1-11). Throughout the Old Testament the locusts are a symbol of destruction. Bred in the desert, they invade cultivated areas in search of food. They may travel in a column of a hundred feet (30 metres) deep and up to four miles (6 kilometres) in length leaving the land stripped bare of all vegetation.⁶

However, here in the book of Revelation they are not literal locusts, but symbols of *evil spiritual powers*. They symbolise *demons* that spread over the whole earth in order to block out the spiritual light of God’s revelation. They cause unbelievers, even believers of other religions, not to see or to want to see the truth of the Bible. The demons are synonymous with paralysing terror and painful destruction. Nevertheless, the power of demons to destroy is not arbitrary, but is given to them (just as the sovereign God has determined). **The theological passive indicates that God is the one who gives.**

9:4 and they were told (*Greek: lego, ero, eipon, eireka*)(*ao*rist passive) not to harm (*Greek: adikeo*)(*future*) the grass (*Greek: chortos*) of the earth or any plant (greenery)(*Greek: chloros*) or tree (*Greek: dendron*), but only those people who did not have (*present*) the seal (*Greek: sphragis*) of God on their foreheads (*Greek: metopon*). Under the symbolism of a locust-plague John describes the powers and influences of hell operating in the hearts and lives of wicked people and unbelievers. In a sovereign way the demons are ordered not to harm the vegetation at all. This is not in contradiction to the destruction of vegetation under the first trumpet of judgement (8:7), because there it concerns a third of all *vegetation* which grows up again every year, but here under the fifth trumpet of judgement it concerns demons that torture non-Christians and unbelievers (e.g. nominal Christians) for five months. The trumpets of judgements are not necessarily in chronological order. In a sovereign way the demons are ordered to harm only *people* who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (cf. 7:3). The harm these demons cause is not calamities in nature or sicknesses, but *psychological and spiritual oppression*! Just like God’s people were not affected by the plagues of Egypt, so (born-again) Christians are protected against the attacks of demons due to the fact that they have been sealed. “To be sealed” means that Christians are owned by God, protected by God and assured that they are genuinely his (Romans 8:31,38-39).

9:5 They were not given (*ao*rist) (capability) to kill (*Greek: apokteino*)(*subjunctive, ao*rist) them, but only to torture (*Greek: basanizo*)(*future*) them for five (*Greek: pentos*) months (*Greek: men*). And the torturing (*Greek: basanismos*) (the agony they suffered) (was) like that of the torturing (sting) of a scorpion whenever (*Greek: hotan*) it strikes (*Greek: paio*)(*subjunctive, ao*rist) a man. The harm which demons cause is permitted, but also limited and controlled by God. Locusts are said to live for five months (thus not for ever). The duration of their torture is also limited to five months. We do not know what the number “five” symbolises, except that it is less than the number “six”, the number of man (13:18). The actual duration of this plague must be correlated with the other periods mentioned in the book of

⁴ Greijdanus p. 152

⁵ Hendriksen p. pp. 145-147

⁶ Rienecker p. 832

Revelation. “The forty-two months” (11:2-3; 12:6; 13:7) symbolises the whole period between Christ’s first coming and Christ’s second coming.

The non-Christians bring all kinds of sacrifices to demons (animal and human sacrifices, sexual immorality in brothels and night clubs, banquets of the gods of particular trades or businesses, money and bribes, etc.) and thus become participants with demons (1 Corinthians 10:20). They devise and fabricate their own gods and do not stop to worship demons (9:20). So God gives them over to the evil influence of demons who torture them (cf. Romans 1:18-32). And the non-Christians suffer agony like the sting of a scorpion.

The word “torture” includes things like being led into temptations (seductions) from which only the God of the Bible can deliver them (cf. Matthew 6:13). Satan and his demons make non-Christians slaves of fear (Rom 8:15) and blinds them so that they cannot see the truth (2 Corinthians 4:4). They inspire false apostles and false prophets who spread false religious messages to millions on earth (2 Corinthians 11:4,13-15). They own murderers of brothers, like Cain (1 John 3:12). They hold non-Christians in slavery by their fear of death and even cause them to die (Hebrews 2:14-15). Satan and his demons control the whole evil and antichristian world (1 John 5:19). They have great and terrible evil influence, for they sow doubt and unbelief in every country and multiply the number of unbelievers on earth who will all end up in hell (Matthew 13:38-39,42).

The activities of Satan and his demons during the whole New Testament period are part of God’s present judgements (punishments) of unbelievers and a serious warning to repent and turn to the God of the Bible (9:1-11). It is much harder to continue to be an unbeliever, than to repent and become a believer! Although God will hold unbelievers accountable for their sins and Satan and his demons accountable for the evil they do, God permits Satan and his demons to do these things in the following sense: God actively withholds or withdraws his grace from these people so that they are not protected against Satan and his demons. God gives his sovereign permission to Satan and his demons to be his instruments of judgement. Satan and his demons can do nothing without Gods permission or decision (Job 1:6-12; Luke 8:29-33).

9:6 and during those days men will seek (*Greek: zeteo*)(future) death, but will not find (*Greek: heurisko, heureso, heuron, heureka*)(future) it; and they will long (*Greek: epithumeo*)(future) to die, but death will keep on fleeing (*Greek: pheugo*)(a historical present in the future) from them. The non-Christians will seek death rather than face these evil powers. Yet they cannot escape from their attacks! The words “those days” point to a particular time in history, when these demonic attacks will be so painful that people will choose death above life. Nevertheless, people will fail in their quest. It seems that at that time people no longer believe in life after death, or in the judgement and punishment that follows death, because they think that when they die physically, all anxiety and suffering would be over. They are very wrong, because after physical death follows the final judgement (Hebrews 9:27)! The fifth trumpet judgement depicts how demonic attacks will be particularly painful towards the end of world history (cf. 10:7).

(2) The description of the locusts (demons).

The description of the locusts must be taken as a whole (9:7-10).

9:7 And the locusts (*Greek: akris*) looked like (*Greek: homoioma*) horses (*Greek: hippos*) prepared (*Greek: hetoimazo*) (*perfect*) for battle (*Greek: polemon*). (Joel 2:4). Horses are usually associated with war and battles. This symbol points to spiritual struggle for unbelievers and to spiritual warfare for believers. The horses are continually ready for battle! On their heads (*Greek: kephale*) (they wore) something like (*Greek: hos*) victors wreaths (*Greek: stephanos*) like (*Greek: homoios*) gold (*Greek: chrusos*). The crowns are wreaths for winners of a contest and this symbol refers to the victories they have won over unbelievers.

and their faces (*Greek: prosopon*) (resembled) like (*Greek: hos*) human faces. This symbol shows that they are not literal locusts, but personal beings, gifted with intelligence, reason and will. It points to their *cunningness*.

9:8 and having (*imperfect*) hair (*Greek: trix, trichas*) like woman’s hair. This reminds of the furies: the snake-haired goddesses of Greek mythology that are sent from Tartarus to punish crime. They figuratively represent avenging spirits that inspire *terror*. The long woman’s hair could also refer to their *devious attraction and seduction* for people who get involved in occultism, esoteric religion and Satan worship.

and their teeth (*Greek: odous, odontes*) were (*imperfect*) like (that of) a lion (*Greek: leon*). This symbol points to their ferocious *destructiveness*. People who are attracted to occultism and demonism will eventually get torn apart.

9:9 and having (*imperfect*) breastplates (*Greek: thorax*) like breastplates of iron (*Greek: siderous*). This symbol refers to their *invincibility*. People without Christ cannot successfully defeat them or penetrate their armour and destroy them. and the sound (*Greek: phone*) of their wings (*Greek: pterux*) was like the sound (thundering) of many horses and chariots (*Greek: arma*) rushing (running)(*Greek: trecho*)(present) into battle (*Greek: polemon*). This symbolises the utter *terror* they strike into the hearts of people.

9:10 and having (present) tails (*Greek: oura*) and stings (ox goad)(*Greek: kentron*) like scorpions and in their tails they had power to hurt (torment)(*Greek: adikeo*)(aorist) people for five (*Greek: pentos*) months (*Greek: men, menas*). This symbol points to the exceedingly *painful* yet not fatal harm they cause (9:5; 1 Kings 12:11,14).

People cannot overcome demons in their own power and they cannot keep them away, except they take refuge with the Lord Jesus Christ and receive him as their Saviour and Lord (9:4; Matthew 12:43-45; Ephesians 6:10-18). But in this vision in Revelation 9 the people refuse to repent (9:20-21).

9:11 and having (*present*) over them (as) king (*Greek: basileus*)(*accusative*) the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew (*Greek: hebraisti*) is Abaddon, and in Greek (*Greek: hellenike*) he has (*present*) the name Apollyon. Real *literal locusts* do not have a leader (Proverbs 30:27), but these *figurative locusts* (real demons) do have a leader. In the realm of the fallen angels (the demons or evil spirits) there is also a certain order. The fact that the leader or king of the demons is the angel of the Abyss (hell) proves that the picture deals with real demons from hell. This fallen angel of the Abyss is called Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek, which means “destroyer” (Job 26:6; 31:12). He and his whole army of demons have but one purpose and that is to sow lies, death and destruction (cf. John 8:44). His name is also “the devil”, which means the slanderer or false accuser of God and Christians, and “Satan” which means “the adversary” or “the enemy” of God and all who belong to God.

Christians must reckon with the fact that Satan and his demons or evil spirits really exist. All non-Christians run the risk of getting ensnared by demons. When they do, they will be tortured and their lives will be destroyed in a moral, spiritual and physical sense.

The fifth trumpet of judgement (the first woe, 9:12) describes the evil and destructive work of Satan and his demons and the terror they cause in the hearts and lives of the godless and wicked people throughout the whole New Testament period. Satan and his demons torture people that are not sealed with the seal of God (9:4) and destroy their lives in a moral, spiritual and physical sense (9:11).

9:12 The first woe (*Greek: ouai*) is past (*aorist*); look, still two woes to come (*present*). The first woe has once for all passed away (aorist tense). The other two are on their way (present tense). This does not mean that the trumpets of judgements are consecutive, but rather that there is a small pause in the description of the visions in Revelation 9:12 and 11:14 (cf. the pause in 8:13). These woes are not only *a warning*, but also *a call to repentance and conversion!*

(3) Different views about the star (9:1).

A futurist view. The star falling (descending) from the sky to the earth is the good angel that first opens the Abyss to let the evil spirits out *during the second half of the future tribulation period*. Later at the beginning of the millennium this good angel binds Satan and locks him in the Abyss (Larkin)⁷.

The correct explanation. The star lying fallen from heaven on the earth is the evil angel (the evil one), Satan himself, who is bound at the first coming of Christ, but nevertheless has received authority and power to torture non-Christians for a considerable time *throughout the whole New Testament period* (Hendriksen)⁸.

(4) Different views about the Abyss (9:1).

A futurist view. The Abyss is not Hades (Larkin)⁹.

The correct explanation. The Abyss is another word for Hades.¹⁰

(5) Different views about the fifth trumpet judgement (9:1-12).

A futurist view. The fifth trumpet judgement causes disembodied spirits of the pre-Adamite races to try and re-embody themselves in people *during the second half of the future tribulation period* (Larkin). This interpretation must be rejected.

A second futurist view. The fifth trumpet judgement brings a literal eruption of *embodied* demonic beings from the Abyss *during the second half of the future tribulation period* (Tenney)¹¹. This interpretation must also be rejected.

The correct explanation. The fifth trumpet judgement causes Satan and his demons to torture and destroy the lives of people that are not sealed with the seal of God for a considerable time *throughout the whole New Testament period*. Satan opening the shaft means that he fills the world with demons and with their wicked influences and operations. The demons strike terror in the hearts and lives of the godless and wicked people¹².

PART 2. Revelation 9:13-19. THE BLOWING OF THE SIXTH TRUMPET.

(1) Explanation of the symbols.

The sixth trumpet of judgement (the second woe, 11:14) describes the evil and destructive work of wars of the evil world empires that oppose Christ and his people and the terror of the war-machines they invent throughout the whole New Testament period. The same powers of darkness that carry on the work of destruction in the hearts of people (Satan and his demons) are also the powers of darkness (the four evil angels) that change people into devils destroying one another in terrible wars. Especially in times of war wicked people seem to become *like* incarnate demons (people

⁷ Larkin, Revelation p. 74

⁸ Hendriksen pp. 145-147

⁹ Larkin, Revelation p. 74

¹⁰ Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich p. 2

¹¹ Tenney p. 75

¹² Hendriksen p. 145

possessed by demons). The war loving people with their war-machines *inflict injury* on one another and finally *kill* one another (9:18).

9:13 and the sixth (*Greek: hektos*) angel sounded his trumpet (*Greek: salpizo*)(*ao*rist). I heard (*ao*rist) one (*Greek: mian*) voice (*Greek: phone*) (coming) from the (four) horns (*Greek: keras*) of the golden (*Greek: chrusous*) altar (*Greek: thusiasterion*) that is before (*Greek: enopion*) God. The voice comes from the incense altar in the temple in heaven. This symbolises that the sixth trumpet of judgement is in response to the prayers of Christians on earth, which are incensed with the merits of Christ's atonement and intercession (8:3-4). It is not said whose voice this is. While the first five angels only blew their trumpets, this sixth angel must also act personally.

9:14 saying (*present*) to the sixth angel who had (*present*) the trumpet, "Release (*Greek: luo*)(*imperative, aorist*) the four (*Greek: tessaros*) angels who are *continually* bound (*Greek: deo*)(*perfect, passive*). The number "four" (9:14). Note the four horns of the incense altar (9:13), the four evil angels (9:14), and the four words for time (9:15). In the biblical meaning of numbers, the number "four" symbolises the creation, the earth, the world and humanity.

The four evil angels are not the same as the four good angels (7:1). While the four evil angels are at the Euphrates River (9:14), the four good angels are at the four corners of the earth (7:1). While the four evil angels are bound (i.e. remain bound)¹³ (9:14), the four good angels are acting and holding back strong winds (7:1). While God's first and second trumpets of judgements allow the destruction of a third of all vegetation, land and sea (8:7-8), the good angels are preventing this from happening (7:1). In the sixth trumpet of judgement the four angels rather represent evil angels or demonic spirits that relish the idea of plunging mankind into destructive wars. They are *continually* "bound" so that they cannot act before God's given permission and before God's appointed time (cf. 20:3).

at the great river (*Greek: potamos*) Euphrates. The Euphrates is mentioned as the eastern border of the Promised Land (Genesis 15:18; Exodus 23:31; Joshua 1:4) or the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom and the centre of the world (Psalm 72:8). It symbolised the great World Empires of Assyria and Babylon, which were instrumental in destroying Israel and Judah in exile (Isaiah 8:7-8). In Revelation 9:14 "the river Euphrates" symbolises the wicked World Empire, that is in the centre of the earth and that is opposed to God and his kingdom.

9:15 And the four angels who had been kept ready (*Greek: hetoimazo*)(*perfect*) for this very hour (*Greek: hora*) and day (*Greek: hemera*) and month (*Greek: men*) and year (*Greek: eniautos*) were released (*Greek: luo*)(*aorist, passive*). These evil angels are continually ready. They are released and this symbolises the release of the powers of hell in order to move the whole world of mankind into terrible wars. God's sovereignty determines the very hour, day, month and year of every war in the history of mankind and his sovereignty permits the evil empires of the world to make war on one another, thus destroying one another. His sovereignty does not cause the evil empires of the world to make war on one another. The primary cause of war is the covetous desires that battle inside the hearts of people (James 4:1-2). God in his inscrutable wisdom allows (permits) wars in this world throughout the whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. The duration of wars can differ enormously. Some wars take an hour (cf. Matthew 5:21-22; James 4:1-2) and some wars will take years. From God's point of view, the release of these four evil angels is a judgment on the world's rejection of Christ and his Word and their persistence in godlessness and wickedness, in spite of all preceding warnings and discipline.

The sixth trumpet also depicts how wars will rage especially towards the last days before the end of world history (Matthew 24:6; cf. Revelation 10:7). The release of the four evil angels is *related to* (not the same as) the words in 2 Thessalonians: "taking *something* (the law) or *someone* (the upholder of the law) out of the way" who "is holding the man of lawlessness (the final antichrist) out of the way". The secret power of lawlessness is already at work. Probably when the law and the upholders of the law in the world are removed, the forceful advance of the evil powers, the terrible confusion and the mutual extermination of the nations will come about (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7).

In the book of Revelation, there is progress in revelation of God's principles concerning divine, human and demonic activity. The four evil angels are released whenever mankind with respect to its convictions, acts and relationships has become "lawless" and thus ripe for God's judgement.

to kill (*Greek: apokteino*)(*subjunctive, aorist*) a third (*Greek: tritos*) of the people (mankind). God's sovereignty also determines exactly who would be affected by his sixth trumpet of judgement. Christ holds the key of death, that is, the power and final authority over death (1:18), but permits Satan to infuse unbelievers with fear of death and to have the power to kill (Heb 2:14-15).

9:16 The number (*Greek: arithmos*) of the army (*Greek: strateuma*) of cavalry (*Greek: hippikos*) (mounted troops) was a double (*Greek: dis*) myriad (*Greek: murias*) (10 000) myriads (two hundred million)(incalculable number). I heard (*aorist*) their number. Toward the end of world-history, the numbers involved in these wars will be enormous: 200 000 000 (2 x 10 000 x 10 000) in the cavalry! The number simply means *uncountable*. John could not count the number. He only heard the number.

In biblical times, the cavalry (the horses and riders) was the instrument of war, because it could do much more damage than the infantry (the foot soldiers). The horses, often with chariots behind them, ploughed through the infantry like a tank bulldozing everything in its way.

¹³ δεδεμμενους > δεω (vprp). The perfect tense emphasises the state or condition.

9:17 and the horses I saw (*Greek: horao, opsomai, eidon, heoraka*)(*aorist*) in my vision (*Greek: orasis*) and those sitting (*Greek: kathizo*)(*present*) on them (the riders) looked like this (*Greek: houtos*). The horses and riders are seen in a vision. Because in reality, such horses and riders as described in this vision do not exist, the picture is *symbolical*. But the symbols represent literal realities that are of a higher order than the literal meaning of the symbol.

(2) The description of the war-machines.

The description of the horses and riders must be taken as a whole (9:17-19):

having (*present*) breastplates (*Greek: thorax*) fiery (red) (*Greek: purinos*), hyacinth-coloured (dark blue) (*Greek: huakinthinos*) and sulphur-coloured (yellow)(*Greek: theiodes*). The breastplates of the riders had three colours: whether they were of three colours each or whether each was of a single colour is difficult to determine. The fiery red colour represents *fire*, the dark blue colour represents *smoke* and the yellow (as sulphur) colour represents *brimstone, which is burning stone or lava*, symbolically the fuel of hell-fire. These are *the colours of destruction, death and perdition and the signs of God's wrath* (Genesis 19:24; Job 18:15; Psalm 11:6; Isaiah 34:9).

and the heads (*Greek: kephale*) of the horses (resembled) the heads of lions (*Greek: leon*).The horse is the instrument of war. Horses with lion heads are symbols of war machines that launch *undaunted attacks and cause ferocious destructiveness* (cf. Isaiah 31:4; Micah 5:8), just like the demons under fifth trumpet of judgement.

and out of their mouths (*Greek: stoma*) came (*Greek: ekporeuomai*)(*present*) fire, smoke (*Greek: kapnos*) and sulphur (*Greek: theion*). These represent three plagues killing one third of mankind. They indicate the perfect harmony between the horsemen and the horses (man and his war-machines). All their efforts are directed to the destruction and perdition of mankind.

9:18 A third (*Greek: tritos*) of the people (mankind) was killed (*Greek: apokteino*)(*aorist*) by the three (*Greek tris*) plagues (*Greek: plege*) of fire, smoke and sulphur that came out (*present*) of their mouths. This symbol points to great *world wars* and its horrifying annihilation of very many people.

9:19 The capability (power)(*Greek: exousia*) of the horses was (*present*) in their mouths and in their tails (*Greek: oura*); for their tails (were) like (*Greek: homoios*) snakes (*Greek: ophis*), having (*present*) heads and with these they inflict injury (*Greek: adikeo*)(*present*). Horses with lion-like mouths and snake-headed-like tails do not exist literally in reality, because horses fight by kicking with their feet and not by biting. The picture is symbolical. It symbolises *terrible war-machines of every description*, which have been invented and will be invented to cause such destruction among mankind. Think for example of technical sophisticated conventional weapons and of atomic, bacteriologic, chemical weapons. The horses and riders is a picture of the most terrible war-machines in the hands of people that are inspired and controlled by demons from hell.

The sixth trumpet of judgement (the second woe, 11:14) describes the evil and destructive work of wars of the evil world empires that oppose Christ and his people and the terror of the war-machines they invent throughout the whole New Testament period. The same powers of darkness (Satan and his demons) that carry on the work of destruction in the hearts and lives of people are also the powers of darkness (the four evil angels) that turn people into people possessed by demons who destroy one another in terrible wars. Especially in times of war wicked people seem to become like incarnate demons. The war loving people with their war-machines inflict injury on one another and finally kill one another (9:18).

Between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming the wars of the evil world empires are part of God's present judgements (punishments) with the purpose of warning people to repent.

(3) Different views about the sixth trumpet of judgement (9:13-19)

A futurist view. The sixth trumpet judgement brings about the gathering of invisible demonic forces for the purpose of weeding out the worst people on earth by means of war during the second half of the future tribulation period. The purpose is to preserve the better class of people for the future millennial kingdom (Larkin)¹⁴. This interpretation must be rejected.

A second futurist view. The sixth trumpet judgement brings about the literal gathering of Oriental peoples (kings of the East) against the God of the Bible and the rule of Christ during the second half of the future tribulation period (Tenney)¹⁵. Also this interpretation must be rejected.

The correct explanation. The sixth trumpet judgment represents the evil and destructive work of wars of the evil world empires that oppose Christ and his people and the terror of the war-machines they invent throughout the whole New Testament period. It especially refers to those most frightful wars that shall be waged toward the close of the New Testament period (Hendriksen)¹⁶.

PART 3. Revelation 9:20-21. THE RESPONSE OF IMPENITENT MANKIND.

¹⁴ Larkin, Revelation pp. 78-79

¹⁵ Tenney p.75-76

¹⁶ Hendriksen p. 147

The seals of oppression and persecution by people are followed by the trumpets of judgement of God. Throughout the entire period between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming, the exalted Lord Jesus Christ rules from his heavenly throne over everyone and everything in accordance with the seven-sealed scroll of God's eternal decree (5:1; 6:1-17; 8:1).

And throughout that same period, he warns mankind in accordance with the seven trumpets of judgement (8:2-13; 9:1-19; 11:15-19) - especially the people who oppose his messengers and oppress and persecute his people. From heaven, he sees the suffering and the tears of his people and hears their prayers and calling (8:3-5). The blood of the martyrs is precious in his sight (Psalm 116:15). This is a great comfort for Christians!

9:20 And the rest (*Greek: loipos*) of the people (mankind) that were not killed (*aorist*) by these plagues still did not (*Greek: oude*) repent (*Greek: metanoeo*)(*aorist*) of the work of their hands. In spite of all the trumpets of judgements people do not repent. Punishment by itself does not cause a broken-hearted attitude (a change of heart), repentance (a change of mind) or conversion (a change of action)! Although very many people are being destroyed, the rest of mankind, that is, the rest of mankind (that were not sealed with the seal of God) refuse to repent. They persist to cleave to the work of their hands: materialism, idolatry, atheism and their worldly philosophy concerning life.

with the result (*Greek hina+future*) that they did not (stop, not change their mind not to) worship (*Greek: proskuneo*) (*future expresses result rather than purpose*) demons (*Greek: daimon*), and idols (false gods) (*Greek: eidolon*) of gold (*Greek: chrusous*), silver (*Greek: argurous*), bronze (*Greek: chalkous*), stone (*Greek: lithinos*) and wood (*Greek: xulinos*) - (idols) that cannot (*Greek: dunamai*)(*present*) see (*Greek: blepo*)(*present*) or hear (*Greek: akouo*)(*present*) or walk (*Greek: peripateo*)(*present*). Some people of the evil world make literal visible idols that cannot see or hear or walk (Psalm 115). Other people of the evil world devise an invisible "god" for their religion, but that god functions like a demon. They persist in their false religions with their worthless concepts of spiritual life. Thus they transgress the first table of the Ten Commandments: they worship another "god" who is not the God of the Bible (violating the first commandment) and make their own "gods" (violating the second commandment) (Exodus 20:1-6).

9:21 and they did not repent (*Greek: metanoeo*)(*aorist*) of their murders (*Greek: phonos*), their magic arts (poison, drugs, magic potions, charms, spells that incite illicit lust)(*Greek: pharmakon*), their sexual immorality (*Greek: porneia*) or their thefts (*Greek: klemma*). They transgress the second table of the Ten Commandments: they continue to conduct wars and murder people (violating the sixth commandment), live in sexual immorality and rape innocent people (violating the seventh commandment); they steal and rob patent rights and copyrights (violating the eighth commandment) and get involved in magic arts, occultism and esoteric ideas and the lies of fortune telling by means of horoscopes or spiritists (violating the ninth commandment) (Ex 20:13-16). **Pliny describes the use of many superstitious and magical practices to bring about healing, one being that snake bites and scorpion stings are relieved by intercourse (Pliny, natural History, XXVIII.x.44).** These four cardinal sins against fellowmen represent impenitent humanity in the world.

Godlessness invariably leads to wickedness (Romans 1:18-32). Not serving the God of the Bible in Jesus Christ invariably leads to sexual and spiritual immorality and corruption of every kind. If the Living God of the Bible is not acknowledged and served, the neighbour is trampled. And whoever tramples his fellowman does not know the Living God of the Bible.

"The oppressing and persecuting world" (the 2nd and 3rd seal) in spite of the punishments and warnings (the trumpets of God's judgements), becomes in this way "the impenitent world". Finally the refusal to repent leads to the outpouring of the seven bowls of God's final wrath (chapters 15 and 16), including the culmination of God's wrath in the final judgement day (the 7th trumpet and the 7th bowl).

PART 4. Revelation 11:15-19. THE BLOWING OF THE SIXTH TRUMPET.

The seventh trumpet of judgement (the third woe, 11:14) introduces the final judgement day. The godless and wicked people who destroy the earth will be struck with God's final judgements of condemnations, because they remained impenitent in spite of God's trumpets of judgments (11:18b; Matthew 25:46a). But the servants of God and saints (the Christians) will be rewarded (with eternal life in the kingdom of God in its final phase)(11:15,18a; Matthew 25:34,46b). This closes the history of this present world.