

**UNDERSTANDING END TIMES PROPHECY
FOCUS #6—THE TRIBULATION PERIOD
REVELATION 6:1-18:24**

“When the trees stand lifeless and the atmosphere is heavy with humidity, tension builds in the air. The old dog, usually sprawled on the grass in the front yard, stands with his ears quivering. Overhead, the sky is gray, foreboding. Suddenly, the spell is broken as lightning streaks across the sky and thunder shakes the windowpanes. Before the next series of plagues is described, there is a dramatic pause...there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”

David Jeremiah, *Escape the Coming Night*

Keep in mind that the church has been raptured, has gone or is going through the judgment seat of Christ and is in the presence of God in worship before the throne (cf. Revelation 4-5). While the church is in the presence of God in heaven, the world is facing the outpouring of God's divine wrath upon the world. This outpouring will take place by the breaking of the seven seals on the scroll.

The Lamb has broken the first six seals and the following judgment has been poured out upon the earth:

The First Seal Judgment: The Rise of False Messiahs, The Antichrist & Apparent Peace (Matthew 24:5; Revelation 6:1-2)

The Second Seal Judgment: War (Matthew 24:6-7; Revelation 6:3-4)

The Third Seal Judgment: Famine (Matthew 24:7; Revelation 6:5-6)

The Fourth Seal Judgment: Death (Matthew 24:7-9; Revelation 6:7-8)

The Fifth Seal Judgment: Martyrdom (Revelation 6:9-11)

The Sixth Seal Judgment: Various Natural Disasters (Revelation 6:12-17)

- *A Great Earthquake*
- *The Sun Darkened/The Moon Like Blood*
- *The Stars of the Sky Fell to the Earth*
- *The Sky Will Be Split Apart*
- *Mountains & Islands Moved Out of Place*
- *The Reaction of Earth's Residents*

The first 4 seals are the "beginning of birth pangs" (Matthew 24:8). The first four seals

will make up the first 3 ½ years of the tribulation. The fifth seal will begin in the first half and carry into the second half, while the sixth seal seems to be initiated at the mid-point of the tribulation (Matthew 24:15-6, Revelation 6:15-17).

The seventh seal reveals the trumpet and bowl judgments, which are considered to be the outpouring of God's wrath during the second half of the tribulation often termed the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21).

The Seventh Seal Judgment: Revelation 8:1-5 (Preparation for The Trumpets)

(1) When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. (2) And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. (3) Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. (4) And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. (5) Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

This chapter opens with the announcement that the seventh seal is opened. This is the last of the seven seals marking the prophetic judgments of God. With the opening of the seventh seal the narrative is resumed from the close of chapter 6. Though simply introduced, the seventh seal is obviously the most important development up to this point. Contained in the seventh seal are all the subsequent developments leading to the second coming of Christ, including the seven trumpet judgments and the seven bowls of the wrath of God.

The Silence: (Revelation 8:1)

The first aspect of the opening of the seventh seal is that of silence. And when He broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. After the tremendous sounds of worship in chapters 4 and 5, and the frightening sounds of judgment from the first six seals in chapter 6, the seventh seal begins with an unusual period of silence.

Most commentators see this silence as a dramatic pause, one of hushed expectation as the last seal is removed. It has been compared to the calm before the storm, and probably signifies the awe and dread with which the heavenly hosts await the events about to happen. This short period of silence is not quietness of rest or peace, but the quietness of intense expectation as God's final wrath is about to be poured out upon the world.

The Seven Angels: (Revelation 8:2)

At this point John sees the seven angels who stand before God. These are angels who had been specifically set apart to participate in God's judgment. These are the seven angels who will blow the seven trumpets associated with the trumpet judgments. They are likely angels of a high rank due to the use of the definite article and the fact that they participate in God's judgment.

In this vision these seven angels are given seven trumpets. Josephus (a Jewish Historian) says that such trumpets were narrow tubes about a cubit in length, with a mouthpiece wide enough to admit breath and a bell-shaped extremity.

Trumpets were used throughout both the Old and New Testaments to summon the congregation of Israel (Numbers 10:2), to sound the alarm and gather Israel for war (Numbers 10:9, 2 Chronicles 13:12, Ezekiel 33:3), to announce news (1 Samuel 13:3), to acclaim new kings (1 Kings 1:34,39), in ceremonial processions (Joshua 6:1, 1 Chronicles 15:24), in worship (1 Chronicles 16:6, 42; 2 Chronicles 5:12-13), at religious feasts (Numbers 10:10, Psalm 81:3), and in announcing the new year (Numbers 29:1).

Zephaniah 1:14-16 associates trumpets with the coming Day of the LORD, while the New Testament teaches that a trumpet will announce the Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16). These trumpets were simply given to the seven angels at this point. They must wait for the appropriate time to sound them.

The Supplication: (Revelation 8:3-4)

John now sees an additional angel who came and stood at the altar in heaven. There has been some disagreement as to the identity of this angel. Some have suggested that due to the priestly activity of this angel that it must be none other than Jesus Christ.

There are problems with this view as noted by John MacArthur in his commentary on Revelation 1-11:

- First, Christ is already identified in the heavenly scene as the Lamb (5:6; 6:1; 7:17), distinguishing Him from this angel.
- Second, while the pre-incarnate Christ appeared as the Angel of the LORD in the Old Testament, Jesus is nowhere identified as an angel in the New Testament.
- Third, the reference in verse 2 to the seven actual angels defines the meaning of the term in this context. The angel in verse 3 is described as another (allos; another of the same kind; cf. 7:2) angel like those in verse 2.
- Finally everywhere He appears in Revelation, Jesus is clearly identified.

So it seems clear that this angel is another of the same kind of angel as those who received the seven trumpets. He is an angel of high rank who is set apart for this special ministry. He is not an angelic form of Jesus Christ.

This angel came and stood at the altar. "That altar is the heavenly counterpart to the altar of incense in the temple, which also was made with gold (Exodus 30:3). It was the same golden incense altar seen by Isaiah in his vision (Isaiah 6:6) and by Ezekiel (cf. Ezekiel 10:2). So the angel has come and stood at the altar before the throne of God.

He is seen holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him. The burning of incense was common in the Old Testament as priests would take the hot coals from the brazen altar into the Holy Place to the incense altar, where they burned incense, which symbolized the prayers of the people (cf. Exodus 30:7, 8; 2 Chronicles 29:11; 1 Kings 7:50; 2 Kings 25:15; Jeremiah 52:18-19).

In the New Testament this is illustrated in Luke 1:8-10 as Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist is performing this priestly duty and an angel of the Lord appears to him. The much incense symbolizes the multiplied prayers of God's people (Revelation 5:8; 6:9-11), who call on God's justice to be poured out upon an unbelieving and rejecting world.

Here in Revelation 8:3-4 the angel burns the incense adding it to the prayers of all the saints and these went up before God. The point in these verses is that God hears the prayers of the saints and the coming judgment is an answer to their prayers. The answer to the saints question in Revelation 6:10, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" is about to be answered.

The Storm: (Revelation 8:5)

Heaven's half hour of silence is abruptly shattered and judgment resumes as a divine firestorm bursts upon this planet. The angel standing before the golden incense altar took his censer and, removing the coals from the altar, filled it with the fire of the altar.

Then in an act that must have stunned John and the assembled multitude in heaven, the angel threw it to the earth. The results are catastrophic, as God's judgment falls upon the earth like a massive fireball from the sky. The clear implication is that the censer is here used as a symbol of judgment, apparently in response to the intercession and prayers of the suffering saints in the midst of the great tribulation.

The result is that of peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake. This is a direct contrast with the half an hour of silence previously mentioned. The stage is now set, the preparations have been made, as the severity and intensity of God's wrath will follow with the beginning of the trumpet judgments.

The Beginning of the Trumpet Judgments: Revelation 8:6-13

(6) And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them. (7) The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. (8) The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, (9) and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed. (10) The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters.

(11) The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter. (12) The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way. (13) Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

In verse 6 the angels prepare themselves for the sounding of their trumpets. The preparatory activity here heightens the expectancy of the trumpet judgments. Keep in mind that these judgments are going to be hitting just as the people are coming out of the caves and rocks when they attempted to hide from God's wrath during the sixth seal judgment. They also have been through about 3 ½ years of devastating wars, famines, death, earthquakes, celestial objects crashing to the earth, and the worldwide reign of the antichrist.

The trumpet judgments will be more severe than the seal judgments were. Like the seal judgments the first four trumpets are distinct from the last three. The first four are briefly described, while the last three are much more detailed. The first four deal directly with the earth, while the last three concern human life, in particular the godless inhabitants of the earth. There also seems to be some similarity or recollection of the plagues of Egypt seen in the trumpet judgments.

The First Trumpet Judgment: (Revelation 8:7)

It is best to take this judgment as literally as possible. The first trumpet judgment is the raining of hail and fire mixed with blood upon the earth. Hail is frequently associated in Scripture with divine judgment (cf. Exodus 9:13-25; Job 38:22-23; Psalm 105:32; Isaiah 28:2; Haggai 2:17), as is fire (cf. Genesis 19:24; Psalm 11:6; Ezekiel 38:22).

Many struggle with the mixing of hail and fire with blood. Some want to see the blood as a symbolic reference. Others believe that it is not really blood but a blood red

appearance possibly from a volcanic eruption associated with the earthquake in Revelation 8:5. Others see it as the blood of men or animals that are killed and then mingled with the hailstones.

The reference to blood is quite literal here in this text and is best understood as hail and fire mixed with real literal blood and being thrown down on the earth. This is a supernatural judgment from God. It does not have to be explained scientifically. Large hailstones will pummel the earth as they fall in a shower of blood and fire creating quite a storm upon the earth.

The impact of such a storm will come primarily from the fire as 1/3 of the earth will be burned up. This destruction will not simply effect a portion of the earth while the rest will remain untouched, but it will be a judgment upon the whole of the earth in which 1/3 of the surface of the earth will be burned up including 1/3 of all trees resulting in the destruction of much fruit.

In addition all of the green grass will be burned up. It is best to understand that all means all here in verse 7. Some have suggested that there is a problem here since in Revelation 9:4 there is the obvious existence of grass. There is no problem between the two verses. In Revelation 8:7 is the destruction of all the green grass. By the time of Revelation 9:4 and the fifth trumpet judgment some of the grass will have surely grown back.

The result of this judgment will be catastrophic as widespread fires will destroy crops, kill animals, destroy massive amounts of wood and drastically reduce the quality of breathable air.

The Second Trumpet Judgment: (Revelation 8:8-9)

The second trumpet judgment falls right on the heels of the first. While the first trumpet judgment brought destruction to the land, the second brings destruction to the sea. This second judgment was so great and terrifying that John could only describe it as looking like a great burning mountain.

Most commentators believe that it is probably a huge meteor or asteroid, which is set ablaze by the friction of the earth's atmosphere. It is a massive fireball falling from the sky and it strikes the earth somewhere in the oceans. The result will be catastrophic as 1/3 of the sea will be turned to blood, 1/3 of all sea creatures will die, and 1/3 of the ships in the ocean will be destroyed.

There is once again a question as to the use of the term blood here. Some have determined that it might just have a blood red appearance. This cannot be the case since the text does not say it will look as blood. The text goes out of the way to say that 1/3 of the sea became blood. Whether this blood is a direct supernatural result of the

impact of this meteor or whether it is from 1/3 of sea life being killed is not explained.

The impact of such a meteor or asteroid falling into the sea will create huge tidal waves which will destroy 1/3 of the ships disrupting transportation and creating economic chaos. This second trumpet judgment will have an equally devastating effect on the sea as the first had on the land.

The Third Trumpet Judgment: (Revelation 8:10-11)

The third trumpet judgment is another object falling to the earth. The term used for star here is the Greek [ASTER], which we have said before can refer to any celestial body other than the sun or moon. It is likely either a meteor or comet due to its description burning like a torch. The Greek [Lampas], torch, was used in ancient times to describe meteors and comets. This fiery object appeared as a burning torch falling to the earth.

Unlike the previous judgment this one evidently breaks up as it falls upon fresh water rivers and springs. 1/3 of the rivers and springs are affected by this judgment. These rivers and springs become wormwood, which is also the name of the meteor or comet.

"Wormwood translates [APSINTHOS], a word used only here in the New Testament. Wormwood is a shrub whose leaves are used in the manufacture of absinthe, a liqueur so toxic that its manufacture is banned in many countries. This bitter herb is found in alcoholic beverages in France and several varieties of the plant are found in Israel.

The term means bitter and 1/3 of the fresh water supply is poisoned by this bitter herb from the meteor or comet that falls to the earth. As a result many men die from the poisoned waters as a significant portion of the fresh water supply will be affected by this poison.

The Fourth Trumpet Judgment: (Revelation 8:12-13)

In this fourth trumpet judgment once again the focus changes this time from the earth to the heavens. At this point 1/3 of the earth and trees will be burned up, all the green grass will have been burned up, 1/3 of the sea will become blood, 1/3 of the sea life killed, 1/3 of the ships destroyed, and 1/3 of the fresh water rivers and springs will have been contaminated by a bitter poison.

Immediately upon this destruction comes another strange atmospheric disturbance as 1/3 of the sun, moon, and stars are darkened. These heavenly bodies are hit with a plague from God so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way. This partial eclipse, reminiscent of the ninth Egyptian plague (Exodus 10:21-22), is temporary, as God will later increase the amount of heat coming from the sun (cf. 16:8-9).

At this point, however, the loss of heat from the sun will cause temperatures to plunge drastically all over the world. That will severely disrupt the earth's weather patterns and the seas' tides, leading to violent, unpredictable storms and tides, the destruction of crops, and further loss of animal and human lives.

These first four trumpet judgments will be severe creating widespread destruction and wreaking havoc across the world. As chapter 8 closes, there comes an ominous warning. John looks and sees an eagle flying in mid-heaven, which is about the height of the midday sun and would be visible to all upon the earth.

The warning is a series of three woes pronounced upon the unbelievers on the earth. The series of three woes is an emphatic way to announce the coming judgments of the last three trumpets. The seals and the first four trumpets have been severe and devastating, but it can only get worse as God's judgment will continue to be poured out upon the earth.

Up until this point, the great devastations from the trumpet judgments that have rocked the earth seem directed against the physical world itself, affecting man only indirectly.

The Fifth Trumpet Judgment: (Revelation 9:1-12)

(1) Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven, which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. (2) He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. (3) Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. (4) They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (5) And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. (6) And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them. (7) The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. (8) They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions. (9) They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. (10) They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. (11) They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon. (12) The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.

Remember in Revelation 8:13 that an eagle warned of the last three trumpet judgments, and that he referred to them as woes. "They are called woes because God's judgment of the ungodly is intensified. The punishments of the three woes or the last three trumpets are inflicted directly upon the human race rather than through the medium of nature. In other words, God's judgment more directly strikes mankind unlike the first four trumpets where His judgment was primarily focused upon the earth and some segment of nature (i.e. grass, trees, sea, sea life, rivers, springs etc.).

The Unlocking of the Pit: (9:1-2)

It is here in 9:1 where John describes the 5th trumpet judgment. As the angel blows his trumpet, John sees a star from heaven, which had previously fallen to earth.

The Identity of the star. Unlike the use of the term ASTER (star) in previous verses, this term in the context here does not refer to a heavenly body or object other than the sun or moon. This is due to the personification given to the star here in these two verses.

First in verse 1 the star has a key given to him and secondly, in verse 2 he opened the bottomless pit. The use of these two personal pronouns emphasizes that this star is more than an inanimate object. There are many different interpretations as to the identity of this star.

There are two major views in which most commentators fall. These are:

- 1-The star refers to a fallen angel, likely Satan himself.
- 2-The star refers to one of God's angels used as His agent.

It must be recognized that good men fall on each side of this difficulty. However, when all the evidence is evaluated the most likely view is that of view 2. The star most likely refers to one of God's angels used as His agent.

Evidence that supports view 2:

1-The fact that this judgment is from God upon an unbelieving and rejecting world suggests that this star is an agent of God who is sent down to execute this particular judgment upon the faithless world.

2-Angels are sometimes called stars in the Scripture (i.e. Job 38:7) and are also referred to as "the host of heaven" (1 Kings 22:19, Psalm 148:2).

3-God frequently uses angels as recorded throughout the book of Revelation in executing His judgment {i.e. the angels who blow the 7 trumpet judgments (Rev. 8 & 9, the angels who pour out the 7 bowl judgments (Rev. 16), the angels who hold back the winds of judgment (Rev. 7:1), the angel who cries out for the earth not to be harmed

until the sealed of God are sealed (Rev. 7:2), the angel who burns incense representing the prayers of the people (Rev. 8:3-5) etc....}.

4-The term PEPTOKOTA (fallen) is the participle form of the verb PIPTO, which has the basic meaning "to fall, drop from a height or from an upright position; and of men to fall in battle.²⁸¹ It is most commonly found in Revelation (in 20 verses). It is used of John's bodily position in falling at Christ's feet (1:17) and falling at an angel's feet (19:10, 22:8); It is used of the 4 living beings and the 24 elders regarding their bodily position in falling before the throne usually in worship (4:10, 5:4, 5:8, 5:14, 7:11, 11:16, 19:4); It is used of celestial objects descending to the earth (6:13, 8:10); It is used in regards to the people of the earth crying out for the mountains and rocks to fall upon them (6:16); It is used of the sun not beating down on individuals(7:16); It is used of the fall of cities, kings or nations (11:13, 14:8, 16:19, 17:10, 18:2); It is used of the descent or degeneration of the Ephesian church (2:5). The overall usage of this term in the book of Revelation, the basic meaning of the term and the context of this passage would support that the term for fallen here in 9:1 has to do with the position of descent from one location to another, not to the moral character of the individual.

5-"Satan nowhere in Revelation appears as an agent employed by God to carry out divine ordering, such as the sending of this plague upon the world."

Conclusion: While some try to make a case for this star to be identified as Satan the evidence best supports for the reasons above that this star is an unfallen angel in character (not a demon) who has been dispatched on the divine mission of unlocking the bottomless pit so that this 5th trumpet judgment can be carried out on the rebellious people of the earth.

The Opening of the Pit: First of all this angel is given the key to the bottomless pit. As mentioned in Revelation 3:7 regarding the term "key," it may not necessarily be a literal key as "key" is often used in the Scriptures to denote authority. Whether a literal key or not the angel received authority from God to open the bottomless pit.

ABUSOS (bottomless) describes any deep dark well or any obscure place whose depth was unknown. ABUSOS (bottomless) appears seven times in Revelation, always in reference to the abode of incarcerated demons (cf. 9:2, 11; 11:7; 17:8). It is the same place that Satan will be cast into, chained and locked up during the millennial reign of Christ.

2 Peter 2:4 says, "*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment.*" This is likely a reference to this same bottomless pit in which these wicked fallen angels (demons) have been incarcerated. They are likely the most wicked and vile of the fallen angels since they have been relegated to this place.

It is at this point that the angel opens the bottomless pit where these demons are incarcerated and a huge amount of smoke billows up out of the pit to the point where the sun and air were darkened. Smoke is usually associated with judgment especially in Revelation (cf. 9:17-18; 14:11; 18:9, 18; 19:3; Genesis 19:28; Isaiah 34:10; Joel 2:30; Nahum 2:13).

The Impact of the Locusts: (9:3-6)

The Identity of these Locusts: John goes on to say that out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth. John MacArthur gives an excellent description of this in his commentary: “Out of the vast, billowing, ominous cloud of smoke that darkened the sky and caused panic among earth’s inhabitants John saw a new terror emerge. Vile demons, taking on a visible form resembling locusts, swarmed out of the abyss to plague the earth.”

Henry Morris in his commentary gives a more detailed description of this event: “As if this were not sufficiently terrifying, out of the smoke the inhabitants of the earth see emerging wave after wave of hideous flying creatures like locusts. John is the one who describes the scene for us, from his vantage point in the heavenly places, and his description breathes amazement. Never were such creatures seen before on earth, though the prophet Joel had apparently seen them in a vision (Joel 1:6; 2:25). John must call them locusts---there were no other comparable creatures in his vocabulary---but they were not locusts in the entomological sense. They swarmed and darkened the sky like locusts, they had emerged from the earth like locusts, and they left misery in their wake like locusts.”

It is apparent especially from the description that follows in verses 7-12 that these are merely, locust like and not literally locusts. These were the wicked demons of the bottomless pit taking on a physical form that could only be described as locusts.

The Assignment of these Locusts: First of all there was power given to them. This power is compared to that of the scorpion. Scorpions have venomous stingers on their tails, which in the deadly species are capable of producing severe convulsions and paralysis. These demonic beings have been given power to sting and inflict great harm on their victims.

There were some strict limitations in the assignment of these demonic beings. These limitations included not hurting:

- 1-the grass of the earth,
- 2-any green thing, or
- 3-any tree.
- 4-They were not allowed to harm the vegetation of the earth.

5-They were also restricted from harming those who had the seal of God on their foreheads (the 144,00 Jewish believers from Revelation 7).

It is important to notice however that it says only one group of individuals will escape this judgment and that is the sealed of God. Is this just the 144,00 Jewish believers of Revelation 7 or all Christians living at the time?

Those who interpret in light of the context of the book of Revelation only hold to the sealed of God as referring to the 144,000 only.

However those that rely on the context of the New Testament as a whole see it as all Christians living at the time. It is important to note the distinction that those who have the seal of God on their foreheads are the 144,000 Jewish believers.

6-An additional limitation on these demonic locusts is that they will not be permitted to kill anyone. They will only be allowed to torment their victims (likely by stinging them) and this will go on for a period of 5 months.

5 months is the normal life span of locusts as they usually thrive from May to September. During this 5 months the unsaved individuals are given time to repent and embrace Christ as their Lord and Savior.

But due to this extreme torment, which is once again compared to the sting of a Scorpion, they will actually seek to kill themselves. In fact they will long to die but will they will not.

The term EPITHUMEO (long to) emphasizes a strong desire. These men will vehemently seek or long to die.

The impact of these demonic locusts will be great as the people of the earth will be in intense pain and suffering. Their torment will be more than they can endure, yet they will be incapable of killing themselves. There will be great fear and torment, but the people of the earth will continue to reject and rebel against God. They will ignore the Gospel message preached by the 144,000 Jewish believers. Their hearts are hardened and they will refuse to repent.

The Description of the Locusts: (9:7-12)

After giving an account of the pain and suffering that these demonic locusts will cause, John gives a more detailed account of their description.

Their Characteristics: {9:7-10} Here in these verses John seeks to describe the amazing sight of these demonic beings described as locusts. Here John likely struggles to

describe these beings and uses natural terms with which he is familiar to describe their various characteristics. The consistent use of the terms "as, like, and appeared" signal that these were not the literal characteristics of these locusts, but an accurate representation of their characteristics.

There exists a fine line here between the literal and the symbolic. They are not so symbolic that they represent something like modern day warriors or helicopters prepared for warfare, yet they also are not literal features. These beings simply had features that resembled the ones that John used. The description that John gives here is somewhat similar to the description given by Joel (Joel 2:1-10).

Obviously from the description here, these are not ordinary natural locusts, but are truly something much more hideous and evil. They are as mentioned before, most likely the demons from the pit, who have taken on a physical form that is similar to a locust.

So what are the characteristics that John mentions in the book of Revelation? He lists 8 different features of these creatures:

1-Their appearance was like horses prepared for battle: This is their overall general appearance. As they came up out of the pit, they looked like war horses preparing for battle. This likely emphasizes that these were strong, powerful, and warlike beings ready to unleash their power upon the people of the world.

2-On their heads appeared to be crowns like gold: At the top of their heads was what appeared to be crowns. They were not literal crowns but likely the shape of the top of their heads or an appendage at the top of their heads had a crown like appearance, which was gold in color.

3-Their faces were like the faces of men: This means that they had similar features to the faces of men. It also indicates that these are intelligent and rational beings. They were capable of understanding their assignment and the limitations placed upon them.

4-They had hair like the hair of women: Their hair somewhat resembled the hair of women. It was possibly long, flowing and beautiful. It indicates the attractiveness of these locusts and possibly that they will be able to lure people to them.

5-Their teeth were like the teeth of lions: Lions teeth are fierce, powerful and deadly. Lions are capable of ripping and tearing apart their victims.²⁸⁷ Likely these demonic beings will be capable of biting and tearing into their victims in addition to their great stinging power.

6-They had breastplates like breastplates of iron: Remember these are not literal iron breastplates, but they are some sort of protective appendage that has the appearance of an iron breastplate. This indicates that they will be immune to being destroyed as this appendage protects them and their vital organs.

7-The sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle: Obviously their wings produce a great amount of noise. The great and terrible sound of these creatures' wings indicates their great speed and power. The sound will be so great and fierce that it will produce a sense of hopelessness in their victims that they will be unable to outrun and hide from the worldwide onslaught of these demonic hordes.

8-They have tails like scorpions: This was already implied in verse 3 in regards to their great power. They have literal tails and these tails resemble that of a scorpion. These tails also sting as those of a scorpion. It is from these tails that they are able to inflict great pain and suffering upon the mass of humanity for 5 months.

Their King: {9:11-12} It is at this point that John informs us that these locusts have a king over them. This king over them is also said to be the angel of the abyss. First of all this is not the same angel as the one described as a star in 9:1. This is an angel who is literally from the abyss (the bottomless pit that was unlocked in 9:2. For this reason this angel also cannot be identified as Satan, because Satan has not been locked and chained in the bottomless pit and he will not be until the millennial reign of Christ (20:1-3).

This angel is likely a high-ranking demon in Satan's hierarchy of demons, who evidently was so wicked and vile that he was incarcerated in the pit and became the leader or king over the other demons in the pit. John also reveals the name of this demon. He gives the name in the Hebrew as Abaddon and the name in Greek as Apollyon.

Both names have the same meaning in their respective languages, "destroyer", which is an appropriate name for the leader of this demonic plague upon mankind. What a time of terror and great suffering for the people of the world as this judgment from God is carried out for 5 months. The first woe (the 5th trumpet judgment) is complete, two more will follow.

**UNDERSTANDING END TIMES PROPHECY
FOCUS #6—THE TRIBULATION PERIOD
REVELATION 6:1-18:24**

THE TRUMPET JUDGMENTS CONTINUED:

The trumpet judgments up to this point have been quite devastating:

- In the 1st trumpet judgment, we have seen fire and hail mixed with blood thrown to the earth and burning up 1/3 of the land and trees and all the green grass, which caused widespread fires, destruction of crops, the death of many animals, the destruction of massive amounts of wood and a drastic reduction of air quality.
- In the 2nd trumpet judgment, we have seen a huge meteor or asteroid the size of a mountain fall into the ocean turning 1/3 of the sea water to blood, killing 1/3 of the sea life, and destroying 1/3 of the ships.
- In the 3rd trumpet judgment, we have seen another meteor or comet, which breaks up over the earth's fresh water supply poisoning 1/3 of the drinking water with a deadly poison by which many men died.
- In the 4th trumpet judgment, we have seen a strange atmospheric condition, which caused 1/3 of the sun, moon and stars to be darkened. As a result the temperatures would plummet severely disrupting the earth's weather patterns and sea tides, leading to violent unpredictable storms, tides, the destruction of crops, and further deaths.
- In the 5th trumpet judgment, we have seen the unlocking of the abyss and the release of a demonic locust plague. This plague will wreak widespread pain and suffering upon the inhabitants of the earth to the point that men will vehemently seek to kill themselves, but they will be unable to.

These previous 5 trumpet judgments have brought pain, much suffering, destruction to the earth's ecology and death to a good part of the earth's population. Now we move on to the 6th trumpet (the 2nd woe).

The Sixth Trumpet Judgment: (Revelation 9:13-21)

(13) Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before God, (14) one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." (15) And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind. (16) The number of the armies of the

horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. (17) And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone. (18) A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths. (19) For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm. (20) The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; (21) and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

The Release of Demons: (Revelation 9:13-15)

The Voice: After the sixth angel sounds his trumpet, John hears a voice. This voice comes from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before God. The Greek text specifically states, “I heard one voice.” John is emphasizing one single/solitary voice was heard. The text, however does not tell us the identity of the voice.

Many views have been offered, but none can be held dogmatically. Since the voice issues forth a command, some believe that this is a command issued by Christ the Lamb, because He has broken the seals on the scroll unleashing these judgments upon the world (6:1). Others believe that this voice could be that of the angel, who stood before the altar offering up the incense, which represented the prayers of the tribulation martyrs (8:3). Whatever the case, it is clear that the mention of the altar here, connects this 6th trumpet judgment with the prayers of the martyrs as part of God’s continued answer to their prayers.

The Command: Notice, who this command is directed toward. It is a specific command directed to the 6th trumpet angel. This 6th trumpet angel was commanded to release four bound angels. Since these angels are bound, it seems evident that they like the locusts of the 5th trumpet are also fallen angels/demons.

Unfallen angels are nowhere mentioned in Scripture as bound. The Scripture does not go into any further detail, such as why they have been bound there. God in some prior time had them bound and had planned their release for the purpose of using them as instruments of judgment upon sinful mankind.

The location of these four bound angels is that of the great Euphrates River. In Genesis 2:4, the Euphrates river was one of the four that flowed out of the Garden of Eden. After the flood the Euphrates River flowed from sources near Mount Ararat in Turkey. The Euphrates River flows about 1700 miles until emptying into the Persian Gulf. The Euphrates was the eastern boundary of the Promised Land (Genesis 15:18; Exodus

23:31; Deuteronomy 11:24), and Israel's influence extended to the Euphrates during the reigns of David (1 Chronicles 18:3) and Solomon (2 Chronicles 9:26).

The Release: In verse 15 these four demons, who had been bound for that very time were released. These demons are likely very evil beings, who seek to kill mankind. They had been bound by God and kept from doing so until the precise moment that God has predetermined to use them as instruments of His judgment.

The purpose for releasing these 4 evil beings was that they would kill 1/3 of mankind. The 4th seal judgment resulted in 1/4 of Earth's population being killed. Now an additional 1/3 of the remaining inhabitants will be killed. Based on our current population levels of 6 billion people, the result would be 1.5 billion during the 4th seal will die and an additional 1.5 billion will die during the 6th trumpet for a total of half of the earth's population or 3 billion people. Obviously if the LORD tarries and the world's population continues to grow, the numbers could be even more devastating.

The Regiment of Horsemen: (Revelation 9:16-19)

The Number of the Horsemen: John moves on to mention a large number of horsemen in connection with these four demons. These four demons are likely of high rank and will gather together a large number of demons for the purpose of launching a full assault upon mankind for the purpose of killing them. John mentions the number of these demonic hordes who have taken on the form of horsemen. He gives an amazing statistic of 200 million horsemen.

In previous generations an army of this size was unfathomable and certainly unnecessary to kill 1/3 of mankind. However due to recent rapid population growth, it not only is becoming a reasonable number, but also a necessary number of horsemen for the purpose of killing 1/3 of all mankind. Many have mistakenly identified these horsemen as the army from the East in Revelation 16:12, but it is important to note that Revelation 16:12 falls under the events of the sixth bowl judgment. Therefore, the army from the East of Revelation 16 cannot be identified as the horsemen here in Revelation 9.

The Description of the Riders: John moves on to give a brief description of the riders. He mentions their breastplates as being the color of fire, hyacinth, and brimstone. The color of fire is red, that of hyacinth, dark blue or black like smoke; that of brimstone, a sulfurous yellow. So these breastplates will be the colors of red, bluish black, and yellow.

The Description of the Horses: The first description that John gives here is that they have heads like that of lions. We must remember that this is figurative language that John is using here. It is the best description that he can give using the terms of his day.

These horses have lion like heads, not literal lion heads, which obviously implies that these are not natural horses just like the locusts were not natural locusts. These are demonic beings taking on a horse like form with what looked like riders on them. A further description is that fire, smoke and brimstone came forth from these horses' mouths, which further demonstrate that these are demons taking on an unusual physical form. The terminology and context does not lend itself to identifying these as a human army using modern military capabilities.

The Plagues of the Horsemen: These horsemen kill 1/3 of mankind through three different plagues. These plagues are the fire, smoke, and brimstone that come forth from the mouths of these horse-like creatures. 1/3 of mankind will be incinerated with fire and asphyxiated by smoke and brimstone (the term used for brimstone indicates a possible sulfur-like smell).

The Power of the Horses: These horses will not only have this awesome power of fire, smoke and brimstone coming forth from their mouths, but they will also have power in their tails. John describes their tails as being like that of serpent heads and that they can inflict harm. There is likely an implication of the venomous and deadly nature of a poisonous serpent/snake. These demonic hordes will be warlike, vicious, and have deadly power. These images describe the supernatural deadliness of this demon force in terms that are commonly understood in the natural realm. Unlike the scorpion stings inflicted during the previous demonic assault (Revelation 9:5), the snakebites inflicted by this host will be fatal.

The Response of Mankind: (Revelation 9:20-21)

John informs us that the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues from these demonic horse-like creatures refused to repent. It is unbelievable that people would refuse to repent in light of what is obviously severe judgment and wrath from God. They will be unaffected by these devastating judgments and the witness of believers. Instead of turning toward God in repentance and worship, these wicked individuals continue in their sin. John lists 5 specific sins that people will refuse to repent from:

Idolatry: The first is the area of idolatry. The phrase the works of their hands is used in Scripture to refer to idols (cf. Deuteronomy 27:15; 31:29; 2 Kings 19:18; 22:17; 2 Chronicles 32:19; 34:25; Psalm 135:15; Isaiah 2:8; 17:8; 37:19; Jeremiah 1:16; 25:6-7, 14; 32:30; 44:8; Hosea 14:3; Micah 5:13; Haggai 2:14; Acts 7:41). These idols were made of gold, silver, brass, stone or of wood. John informs us that in worshipping idols (things made with our hands) the people were in fact worshipping demons.

Psalm 96:5 and 106:37-38 informs us the same that worshipping idols is equivalent to worshipping demons. Paul also alludes to this in 1 Corinthians 10:20. John MacArthur says, "At that future point in world history, idolatry, mysticism, spiritism, satanism, and

all other forms of false religion will become pandemic, as demons lead people into more wicked and vicious behavior.”

Murders: Not only will there be a great deal of death resulting from God’s wrath being poured out on the world, but people will also be killing other people. Violent crime and murders will increase at rapid rates as evil and immorality will be rampant during this future period.

Sorceries: The Greek word PHARMAKEION (sorceries) is the word from which we get the English word pharmacy. This term is used to denote poisons, amulets, charms, drugs, magic spells, or any such object. It is also used in regards to the practice of witchcraft, séances, incantations or sorceries. It is closely tied to pagan idolatry and some have suggested that it can be connected to drugs used in abortion and infanticide. Such demonic activity will be at an all time high during this future period.

Immorality: The Greek term here is PORNEIA, which is a broad term for any sexual sin and is best identified as sexual immorality in general and thus incorporating adultery, fornication, rape, homosexuality etc... Such sexual perversions will run rampant at this future time.

Thefts: Obviously as morality goes on the decline, so does honesty. Robbery will be a rule for the day. The people of the world will be wicked and immoral, and they will refuse to repent of this evil activity even in the face of God’s wrath being unleashed upon the earth.

The Seventh Trumpet Judgment: (Revelation 11:15-19)

(15) Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.” (16) And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, (17) saying, “We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. (18) “And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.” (19) And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

The sounding of the seventh trumpet marks a significant milestone in the book of Revelation. It sets in motion the final events leading up to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the establishment of His earthly millennial kingdom. It includes the final

outpouring of God's wrath as seen in the seven bowl judgments. Although the 7th trumpet is sounded here in chapter 11 the resulting judgments as seen in the pouring out of the seven bowls is not described until chapters 15 and 16. The intervening chapters (Rev. 12-14) serve as an interlude for the purpose of explanation of other related material.

The Heavenly Exclamation: (Revelation 11:15)

After the sounding of the 7th trumpet there is a heavenly exclamation. John hears the sound of loud voices. These loud voices are not specifically identified, but could possibly refer to all of the host of heaven.

The content of their exclamation is that, "The kingdom of the world has become [the kingdom] of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." First of all the form of the verb EGENETO (has become) is called a proleptic aorist. A proleptic aorist speaks of a future event that will most certainly take place as if it has already happened. The event that is being exclaimed is not taking place chronologically at this point, but the heavenly host recognizes that the period of God's final wrath is about to be poured out and are overjoyed to the point that they speak of it as if it has already taken place.

The kingdom of the world is a reference to all of the world's kingdoms seen as being under one king. This king is none other than Satan, who is often identified in the Scriptures in this role (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and will be the driving force behind the ruler of the one world government.

The image here suggests the transference of the world as one empire from the dominion of the enemy into the hands of the rightful owner. This wicked worldly kingdom will be replaced by the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. This kingdom ruled by Christ is not only a reference to His future 1,000 year reign on the earth, but also refers to His reign over the new heaven and earth for all eternity. The Scriptures consistently speak of the future rule of Christ over the earth. (cf. Exodus 15:18; Psalm 2:6-9; Isaiah 2:2-3; Daniel 2:44-45; 7:13-14; Micah 4:1-3; Zechariah 14:9; Luke 1:31-33)

The Hymn of Thanksgiving: (Revelation 11:16-18)

It is at this point that the 24 elders, earlier identified as representatives of the glorified, raptured church (see Ch. 4) ring in with a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. The phrase "who sit on their thrones before God" simply identifies them as the same 24 elders previously mentioned in chapter 4. Their first action is that of falling on their faces before God. This is not uncommon as they fall on their faces in an act of worship throughout the book of Revelation (cf. 4:10; 5:8, 14; 19:4). The act of falling on one's face is an act of humility and emphasizes the extreme reverence they have for God. Not only do they show reverence to God by falling on their faces, but they also worship God.

The term PROSKYNEO (worship) has a basic meaning "to kiss." It has come to be a more technical term for adoration, meaning "to fall down, prostrate oneself, or adore on one's knees." It carries the corresponding inward attitude of reverence and humility. In the book of Revelation this term is specifically used of adoration directed toward God or Christ and is specifically focused on worshiping God for His being or for His works. In fact here in verses 17 and 18 we see just that. The 24 elders worship God by giving Him thanks. They thank God for who He is and for what He does (or will do).

Thanksgiving to God for who He is: Two aspects of who God is are highlighted here by the 24 elders in this hymn of thanksgiving.

The first is described by the term PANTOKRATOR (almighty). This word carries the thought that none can resist His all-embracing sovereign power. It describes God's sovereign, omnipotent, irresistible power. Nine of its ten uses are in Revelation (cf. 1:8; 4:8; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22). It has the sense of God exercising His all-embracing, all encompassing will by means of His irresistible power. The second aspect is highlighted by the phrase, "who are and who were." This phrase emphasizes the eternity of God. God had no beginning and will have no end. He was in that He has existed from eternity past; He is in that He exists now and for all eternity future.

The phrase, "who is to come" is not included at this point (although some manuscripts do) because as this hymn looks forward, His coming would have already taken place. Remember that the context of this passage is proleptic, speaking of a future event as if it had already happened. God is the Almighty God and He is the eternal God.

Thanksgiving to God for what He does: Several aspects of what God does are highlighted here by the 24 elders in their hymn of thanksgiving. It is important to note that this section is anticipating future events as if they had already happened. As we continue through the book of Revelation we see that the 7th trumpet is the beginning of these actions. Three works of God are specifically highlighted:

1-His Sovereign Rule: This is described by the phrase, "You have taken Your great power and reigned." The perfect tense of the verb signifies the permanence of God's sovereign rule. The "power" is the supreme and final authority of God over all things and points to the final great conflict through which God overcomes His enemies and sets up His reign on earth. The reign is speaking of the installment of Christ's millennial kingdom on earth (Revelation 20:4-6. Although His physical reign only lasts 1,000 years on our present earth, He will have supreme rule and authority over the new heavens and new earth for all eternity.

2-His Coming Wrath: At the point of the end of the Great Tribulation the people of the world will no longer be terrified, but they will be filled with rage. The term for enraged suggests a deep-seated, ongoing hostility, not a momentary emotional fit of temper, but

a settled burning resentment against God. This is the wrath of men as opposed to the wrath of God. The wrath of men is impotent, while the wrath of God is omnipotent. The wrath of men is wicked, while the wrath of God is holy. This rage of the nations is manifested in their gathering together to fight against God (cf. Revelation 16:14, 16; 19:19-21). In the phrase and Thy wrath came, the verb EILTHEN (came) is another proleptic aorist. It is pointing to the future display of God's wrath against the nations at His coming (cf. Revelation 19:11-21). Here it is describing the event as if it is an already accomplished fact.

3-His Certain Judgment: This is highlighted by the phrase, "and the time [came] for the dead to be judged." Time translates KAIROS, which refers to a season, era, occasion, or event. The establishing of Christ's Kingdom will be a fitting time for the dead to be judged. The Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) is not in view in this passage, as some argue, since that judgment explicitly involves only unbelievers. It is best to see the reference to judgment here as a general reference to all future judgments.

The elders are simply singing of future judgments as though they were one event, in the same way that other passages do not distinguish future judgments from each other (cf. John 5:25, 28-29; Acts 17:31; 24:21). There is an emphasis on two aspects of future judgment:

1-A Time of Reward: This time of reward has two groups of people in view. The first group are "Your bond-servants the prophets." This phrase encompasses all who have proclaimed God's truth throughout redemptive history, from the time of Moses to the two witnesses. Scripture frequently designates prophets as the Lord's servants (cf., 2 Kings 9:7; Ezra 9:11; Jeremiah 7:25; Ezekiel 38:17; Daniel 9:6; Amos 3:7; Zechariah 1:6).

The second group of people in view are "the saints." The term *saints* is a reference to the redeemed of both the Old and New Testaments. This is a reference to Old Testament saints, the raptured church, and Tribulation saints. The saints are described by the phrase, "those who fear Thy name." "They are distinguished from the prophets in that their service to God consists of reverencing His name rather than prophesying.

All of God's saints are in view from the small to the great. This is just a general reference to a future reward for God's people. Believers are often promised crowns in the New Testament as a reward:

1 Corinthians 9:25: An incorruptible crown for those who keep the old nature in subjection. 1 Thessalonians 2:19: A crown of rejoicing for those who bring others to Christ. 2 Timothy 4:8: A crown of righteousness for those who love Christ's appearing. James 1:12 & Revelation 2:10: A crown of life for those who maintain their love for the Lord in the midst of trials. 1 Peter 5:4: A crown of glory for those who are good

shepherds of God's flock.

2-A Time of Condemnation: This is described by the last phrase of verse 18, "to destroy those who destroy the earth." Those who destroy the earth are contrasted with the receivers of reward in the preceding phrases. This could be a general reference to all unbelievers, but it might be best explained in the context of chapter 12-14 and specifically identified as Antichrist, his followers and Satan who is the ultimate destroyer. These will ultimately be condemned and cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10).

The Heavenly Temple: (Revelation 11:19)

Verse 19 brings this section to a conclusion. It is here where John is given another view of the heavenly scene. Earlier in chapters 4 and 5 is recorded his view of the throne of God and the altar. Now he is given a further vision of the temple of God in heaven opening up to reveal the ark of His covenant. This verse is a response to the hymn of the 24 elders. The ark of the covenant corresponds to the rewarding of the faithful, and the cosmic disturbances to the outpouring of God's wrath. Most commentators note that the ark of the covenant symbolizes God's communion with the redeemed. "Some also see that it is a heavenly sign of God's compact with His people being fulfilled. They see it as a symbol of God's faithfulness in bestowing grace on His people and inflicting vengeance on His people's enemies. This ark pictured here in the heavenly temple is not the earthly ark. Jewish tradition holds that Jeremiah hid the earthly ark in a cave on Mount Sinai until the restoration of Israel.

Along with this vision of the heavenly ark, John sees flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder as well as an earthquake and a great hailstorm. Lightning and thunder are similarly associated with the vision of God's throne in Revelation 4:5.

These are additionally accompanied by an earthquake in connection with God's judgment in Revelation 8:5 and 16:17-18. The earthquake cannot be part of the heavenly scene, so it must be part of the 7th trumpet judgment upon the earth. A likely result of this 7th trumpet is a great storm upon the earth in which there will be lightning, thunder, an earthquake (world-wide) and a great hailstorm. The final outpouring of God's wrath upon an evil and wicked world is coming in the pouring out of the 7 bowl judgments.