

Charts: *The Trumpets: #11 and The Fifth Trumpet: #12*

## PREFACE

During Pastor Jeremy's recent sermon series on Habakkuk, there has been a focus on God's method of judging the sins of one group by His employing a second group guilty of even *more* egregious transgressions—in the context of Habakkuk, it is Judah (Yahweh's chosen people) being scourged by Yahweh for their faithless rebellion by means of the arguably *more* sinful Chaldean's (i.e., Babylonians).

### Look at Chart #11.

We have a similar situation before us as we now consider the fifth trumpet in Revelation 9. The rebellious people on earth—those who have still rejected Christ Jesus as Savior and the true Messiah—are about to be scourged—not yet destroyed, but punished and tormented just short of death. This they are surely due, but, just as in the time of Habakkuk, the Lord God will punish their rebellion by means of beings even more egregiously evil than them: demons from the abyss.

We have so far examined the first four trumpets ([Revelation 8:6-12](#)), all of which have done violence to the natural world of earth (trumpets one to three), and the celestial objects in the sky overhead (trumpet four). Now with the next two trumpets the violence will be aimed directly at *people* on earth: the events of the fifth trumpet (9:1-11) will torment people to the point that they will seek death, but not find it; the sixth trumpet (9:13-21) will kill one third of mankind. Both of these trumpet judgments will be directed at those who are *not* in Christ—thus *not* directed at the 144,000 who had previously been sealed in Him ([Revelation 7:4-8](#)), and possibly including others who have become believers during the Tribulation.

But first the flow of the narrative is interrupted by an announcement of what is about to occur—delivered by an avian narrator much as the Prologue in *Romeo and Juliet*: there, “Two households, both alike in dignity / In fair Verona, where we lay our scene” but here, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth.”

## THE EAGLE (REVELATION 8:13)

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!”

As mentioned in class last week, there is no good reason not to take God's word for what it says. The KJVs alone (as far as I can find) have “angel” instead of “eagle”—even the NKJV and M[odern]KJV.

I get it that when Thomas Nelson decided to update the KJV in 1975 (NT published in 1979; entire Bible in 1982) they purposely wanted to “preserve the accuracy and poetry of the King James Version,” but every scholar—I mean *everyone*—agrees that it should be “eagle.”

**Sidebar:** The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Alexandrinus, and the Codex Vaticanus, the very best and most reliable authorities on the true reading of the New Testament, have ἄετος, eagle, instead of ἄγγελος, angel. The Syriac has eagle. Griesbach, Scholz, Lachman, Van Ess, Hengstenberg, Stuart, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Wordsworth, Ewald, Alford, and the best critics in general, accept eagle as the proper and original reading. (J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: A Series of Special Lectures on the Revelation of Jesus Christ with Revised Text*, Eighth Edition., vol. 2 (New York: Charles C. Cook, 1901), 66.)

And why *not* a speaking bird! Just ask Balaam (bi-lahm) if the Lord God can make animals speak (Numbers 22:28). There is no reason at all to make this metaphorical—or, as Alan F. Johnson puts it, “This must be taken symbolically.”

No, here we have a bird flying into the scene overhead to announce to everyone—not with a squawk, but in a clear, loud voice presumably so that those of any language can comprehend the message—“Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth...!”

**Note:** “an eagle,” literally, *one* eagle (*henos*), suggests that there are more messenger eagles like this one in God’s economy.

**Look at Chart #12.**

#### THE FIFTH TRUMPET (REVELATION 9:1-11—THE FIRST WOE: DEMONS FROM THE PIT)

*v1: Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth;*

So far we have seen a “star” that “fell from heaven, burning like a torch,” (8:10) and a “star” called Wormwood that poisons a third of earth’s fresh water, and we concluded that they probably referred in both instances to some sort of meteoroid. Now we have a “star” of a different sort, one that seems to be a person rather than a chunk of rock, for the text says a key was given “to *him*,” and that “*He* opened the bottomless pit.” So who is this “star” that has “fallen to the earth.”

Note first of all—and this is of critical importance in our identification of the star—the tense of the verb: in the NASB, “had fallen”; only the original KJV has “I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth.”

But the verb is in the perfect active tense, which means that this is already accomplished—the “star” (probably an angel) is already down. John did not witness the fall of this angel, but identifies him as an angel that fell earlier.

*...and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him.*

Who is this angel? As always, there have been some very imaginative conjectures on the part of our faithful interpreters; on those we will not dwell. The options seem to logically whittle down to three possibilities: either Christ Jesus, a nameless angel, or Satan, two of which are problematic. Let’s consider these in turn.

### *Christ Jesus*

The book of the Revelation opens with Jesus the Christ, revealing Himself in His glorified state to John, and declaring in 1:18, “...and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.” Oliver Greene (*Bible Prophecy*, 1970) cites this as evidence that the individual spoken of in 9:1 cannot be anyone other than the Christ. But 9:1 states that this “fallen” one is handed the key to the pit by someone else. If this “star” is Christ Himself, He already has possession of the key. However, Christ Jesus could indeed be the one who is giving the key to this star.

Then there is the word “fallen” (*peptokota*, from the Greek *pipto*); the associate Hebrew word in the Septuagint means, “fall, collapse; be inferior to, drop; bring to ruin; cast, throw down; let drop, abandon.” Where else in Scripture do we read of the son of God being so described? Nowhere. The Son of God was *sent* from heaven to earth, He *came* from heaven to earth, but He did not *fall* from heaven to earth—not to mention the fact that He is not on earth during the Tribulation, and it would be inappropriate to refer to the glorified Christ in the Revelation as a “star” or “an angel.”

I conclude that while Christ may be the one *giving* the key, He is not the one receiving the key, and thus not the individual who opens the bottomless pit.

### *Satan*

I agree with Walvoord that this *may* be Satan. This option, too, is problematic, but most objections can be answered. If this is indeed the case, this demonstrates once again how the Revelation narrative shifts back and forth in time, and cannot be read in a linear fashion with one event occurring after the other. If this *is* Satan, in this passage, he has already fallen to earth; in Revelation 12:7-13 we have the narrative for the great war *in heaven* between Michael and his angels and “the dragon” (Satan) and his angels. Verse 9 of that passage describes the result of that war:

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Thus the events of Chapter Twelve—in the package of parenthetical visions just prior to the first Bowl of Wrath that most commentators place at the midpoint of the Tribulation—these events occur *prior to* the events of Chapter Nine, but are also prophesied back in the OT and in the gospels, to which Jesus Himself refers in Luke 10:18 (on the surface at least, in the past tense):

And He said to them, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.”

**Sidebar:** The verb *Etheoroun* (I was watching, or I beheld) is in the imperfect tense, which means it is what we would call the *past* tense, yet is continuous or ongoing, which muddies the water a bit when referring to Satan’s fall from heaven. Further muddying the water is that the Son of God ultimately dwells outside of time (Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” [John 8:58]), so it is almost impossible to know the precise time frame for His reference.

### Read Isaiah 14:12-15.

This raises one of the primary objections to Satan being the one given the key—i.e., the authority—to open the pit. It is pointed out that Satan will be an *inmate* of the pit during the Millennium, not its “king.” True, but that does not prevent God from using him to orchestrate this judgment against those who reject Christ. Many a leader has later found himself an inmate of the prison to which he once consigned others. Besides, it is possible that the “king”—“the angel of the abyss” (9:11) is an angel other than the one given the key in 9:1.

A more tenacious problem with Satan being the one given the key, in my opinion, is the restriction to the horde’s victims, found in v4:

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.** (emphasis added)

For me this raises the point: If he is indeed the one who unlocks the pit to set loose the horde of locusts, *why would Satan want to be a party to the torment of only his own followers?* One possible answer to this might be that, since he has been booted out of heaven by this point, he is even more bound to obey the commands of Christ or the Father. After all, even while he was still in heaven, Satan was restricted by God in his inflictions on Job (Job 1:6-2:7). Neither Walvoord nor Seiss speak to this.

On the other hand, what are the odds that Whomever gives the key to Satan is pulling a fast one on him. Note the action sequence of the first five verses:

1. The key to the bottomless pit is given to someone.
2. This individual uses the key to open the pit.
3. Locusts are released upon the earth; power is given them.
4. Then—and only then—are the locusts told not to hurt nature, but “only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads”—i.e., unbelievers.
5. Further, they may not kill anyone, but only torment for five months.

Is it possible that Satan was hoodwinked?

### *A Nameless Angel*

This is certainly possible; there is nothing in the text that would preclude this individual being (for the next ten verses at least) an anonymous angel. This is also the easiest of the three options to embrace. Other angels besides Satan have fallen from (been kicked out of) heaven. Most assume that whoever this is in v1 is also the one designated king over the demons of the abyss, and whose “name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.” Both of these appellations mean the same: “Destroyer.” So if this is the case, we can readily assume that this individual is an *evil* angel, in cahoots with Satan. However, these could be different angels: the first to open the gates of the abyss, the second to rule it.

### *Conclusion*

**Seiss** concludes that the fallen angel given the key in 9:1 is Satan, but that he is *not* the king over the locusts and angel of the abyss (9:11). Seiss concludes that this is one of Satan’s archangels, named Abaddon/Apollyon.

**Walvoord**, albeit less conclusively, *leans* toward Satan being the angel given the key, and because of the name “Destroyer,” concludes that the king of v11 is Satan as well.

**For myself**, I conclude that the angel *given* the key is *not* Christ, but Christ very well could be the one *giving* the key to him. With Walvoord I *lean* toward Satan being the fallen angel in v1 (but it would be much easier to accept that it is just a generic messenger). However, because the angel of v11 is given a name different—although of the same character—from other appellations for Satan, I conclude, with Seiss, that he is one of Satan’s archangels. As to this question of why Satan would inflict torment on his own followers, there are too many unknowns in that equation to sway my decision in either direction. And I seem to be the only one troubled by it.

*v2: He opened the bottomless pit,*

Before we close this session, I'd like to just begin v2 and discuss the "bottomless pit" (literally, shaft of the abyss [NIVs]), later, in v11, called "the abyss." (I will touch on this lightly here; in our next session I will include a handout that discusses and compares the various words used in the Bible for the underworld: e.g., abyss or pit, Hades or sheol, Gehenna or hell, lake of fire.)

From our passage here, along with Luke 8:31 and Romans 10:7, but especially Revelation 20 we learn that the abyss is the secured prison for demons; it will be Satan's residence during the Millennium.

**Read Revelation 20:1-3.**

# THE TRIBULATION

The Fifth Trumpet

Revelation 9:1-11



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. 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.

Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 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. 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.

And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them. 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. They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions. 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. They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.

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.

## Footnotes

Revelation 9:1-2  
Revelation 1:18  
Revelation 12:7-13  
Luke 10:18  
Luke 8:26-33  
Isaiah 14:12-15

Revelation 9:3-5  
Exodus 10:4-20  
Joel 1:4-7  
Joel 2:2, 10  
Revelation 7:4-8  
Revelation 14:1-5  
Ezekiel 9:1-10

Revelation 9:6-10  
Revelation 6:15-17

Joel 2:4-9

Revelation 9:11  
Luke 8:26-33  
Job 26:5-6  
Job 28:20-22  
Psalm 88: 10-12  
Proverbs 15:11

