

EXPLANATION of REVELATION chapter 9

GOD'S CONTINUAL WARNING TO REPENT THROUGH THE SEVEN TRUMPETS OF JUDGEMENT - continued

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

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

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

a. Explanation of the symbols

The fifth trumpet 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 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 “The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star *lying fallen* from the sky on the earth”¹. 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’² never means ‘sent from above’³, 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). Satan is described in terms of a star due to his original high and holy creation and position. 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*⁴. 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). 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. It refers to the 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 world, because God is forever the King of everyone and everything in the universe (Psalm 9:7; 145:13; 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 his control (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 control!

¹ Και ο πεμπτος αγγελος εσαλπισεν (viaa). και ειδον (viaa) αστερα εκ του ουρανου πεπτοκοτα < πιπτω (vpra) εις την γην.
The perfect tense emphasises an action in the past that resulted in a continued present reality.

² πιπτω

³ Larkin, Revelation pp. 73-74, Groenewald p. 106

⁴ πεπτοκοτα < πιπτω (vpra) cf. Luke 10:18 πεσοντα (vpa)

“The star was given the key”⁵ 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 (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 of the Abyss.”⁶ The Abyss is generally contrasted with the sky and earth and refers to the depth of the sea (Psalm 33:7; 107:26)⁷. 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 (Romans 10:7); the abode of demons (Luke 8:31); and the abode of the angel or 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 Satan is pictured as being shut up in the Abyss with respect to his deceiving the nations. Satan cannot keep the gospel away from the nations! However, in Revelation 9:1 Satan is pictured as having received the power (the key) over all those inside the Abyss. Satan can torture unbelievers on earth with 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 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 “When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss.”⁸ 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 judgement: God uses even the work of the devil and his demons as a punishment and as a warning for the wicked (Proverbs 16:4; Isaiah 45:7) so that they may repent (9:21). 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.⁹ Satan and his demons rob the wicked people of all light, that is, of all 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).¹⁰

9:3 “And out of he smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of 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.¹¹

⁵ και εδοθη (vpra) αυτω η κλεις

⁶ του φρεατος της αβυσσου

⁷ A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, University of Chicago Press, 1952

⁸ και ανοιξεν (viaa) το φρεαρ της αβυσσου, και ανεβη > αναβαινω (viaa) καπνος εκ του φρεαρτος ως καπνος καμινου μεγαλης, και εσκοτωθη (viap) ο ηλιος και ο αηρ εκ του καπνου του φρεαρτος

⁹ Greijdanus p. 152

¹⁰ Hendriksen p. pp. 145-147

¹¹ Rienecker p. 832

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 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 determines).

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCUSTS (DEMONS).

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

9:7 "The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle" (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 battle¹²!

"On their heads they wore something like victors wreaths¹³ of gold". The crowns are wreaths for winners of a contest and this symbol refers to the *victories they have won over unbelievers*.

"and their faces resembled 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 "Their hair was 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 were like lions' teeth". This symbol points to their ferocious *destructiveness*. People who are attracted to occultism and demonism will eventually get torn apart.

9:9 "They had breastplates like breastplates of iron" This symbol refers to their *invincibility*. People without Christ cannot successfully defeat them or penetrate their armour and destroy them.

"and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle". This symbolises the utter *terror* they strike into the hearts of people.

9:10 "They had tails and stings like scorpions and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months." 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).

9:4 "They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads."¹⁴ 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 judgement (8:7), because there it concerns a third of all *vegetation* which grows up again every year, but here under the fifth trumpet judgement it concerns demons that torture non-Christians for five months. The trumpet 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 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).

¹² ἠτοιμασμενοις < ετοιμαζω (νρηρ) εις πολεμον

¹³ στεφανοι

¹⁴ και ερρεθη > λεγω (νιαρ) αυταις ινα μη αδικησουσιν > αδικω (νιφα) τον χορτον της γης ουδε παν χλωρον ουδε παν δενδρον, ει μη τους ανθρωπους οιτινες ουκ εχουσι (νιρα) την σφραγιδα του θεου επι των μετωπων

9:5 “They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man.”¹⁵ The harm which demons cause is permitted and controlled by God. Locusts are said to live for five months. The duration of their torture is also limited to five months. We do not know what the number 5 symbolises, except that it is less than the number 6, the number of man (13:18). The actual duration of this plague must be correlated with the other periods mentioned in the book of Revelation – forty-two months (11:2-3; 12:6; 13:7) - which 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 (Romans 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 for them 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 sense that he 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 unless God permits them (Job 1:6-12; Luke 8:29-33).

9:6 “During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them”¹⁶. 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).

9:7-10 See above.

9:11 “They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.”¹⁷ 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

¹⁵ και εδοθη (vīap) αυτοις ινα μη αποκτεινωσιν (vsaa) αυτους, αλλα ινα βασανισθησονται (vīfp) μηνας πεντε. και ο βασανισμος αυτων ως βασανισμος σκορπιου, οταν παιση > παιω (to strike)(vsaa) ανθρωπον

¹⁶ και εν ταις ημεραις εκειναις ζητησουσιν οι ανθρωποι τον θανατον και ου μη ευρησουσιν αυτον, και επιθυμησουσιν (vifa) αποθανειν (vnaa) και φευγει (vīpa--3s) ο θανατος απ αυτων. φευγω = a historical present in the future, i.e. ‘death keeps fleeing from them’, Rienecker

¹⁷ εχουσιν (vīpa) επ αυτων βασιλεα τον αγγελον της αβυσσου. ονομα αυτω Εβραϊστι Αβαδδων και εν τη Ελληνικη ονομα εχει (vīpa) Απολλυων

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 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 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 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 of the 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 is past; the other two woes are yet to come.” The first woe passed away¹⁸. The other two are yet to come¹⁹. This does not mean that the trumpet 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. 8:13). These woes are not only a warning, but also a call to repentance and conversion!

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

There are two views. See supplement 6 and the explanation of the symbols above.

First view. (The 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* and later at the beginning of the millennium binds Satan and locks him in the Abyss²⁰.

Second view. (The correct explanation) The star lying fallen from heaven on the earth is the evil angel (the evil one), Satan, 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*²¹.

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

There are two views. See supplement 6 and the explanation of the symbols above.

First view. (The futurist view) The Abyss is not Hades.²²

Second view. (The correct explanation) The Abyss is another word for Hades.²³

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

There are three views. See supplement 6 and the explanation of the symbols above.

First view. (The first 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*. This interpretation must be rejected.

Second view. (The 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*.²⁴ This interpretation must be rejected.

Third view. (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*

¹⁸ ἀπηλθεν (viaa)

¹⁹ ἐρχεται (vipn)

²⁰ Larkin, Revelation p. 74

²¹ Hendriksen pp. 145-147

²² Larkin, Revelation p. 74

²³ Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich p. 2

²⁴ Tenney p. 75

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 of the wicked people.²⁵

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

a. Explanation of the symbols

The sixth trumpet 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 (the destroyer and his locust-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. The war loving people with their war-machines *inflict injury* on one another and finally *kill* one another (9:18).

9:13 “The sixth angel sounded his trumpet. I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before 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 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 4 symbolises the creation, the earth, the world and humanity.

“It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are continually bound’”²⁶ They 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 bound²⁷ (9:14), the four good angels are acting and holding back strong winds (7:1). While God’s first and second trumpet judgements allows 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 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.

“at the great river Euphrates.”²⁸ 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 it can therefore serve as the symbol of 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 for this very hour and day and month and year were released.”²⁹ 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 world 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

²⁵ Hendriksen p. 145

²⁶ λεγοντα (vrpa) τω εκτω αγγελω, ο εχων (vrpa) την σαλπιγγα, λυσον (vmaa) τους τεσσαρας αγγελους τους δεδεμενους (vrpr)

²⁷ δεδεμενους > δεω (vrpr). The perfect tense emphasises the state or condition.

²⁸ επι τω ποταμω τω μεγαλω Ευφρατη

²⁹ και ελυθησαν (viar) οι τεσσαρες αγγελοι οι ητοιμασμενοι (vrpr) εις την ωραν και ημεραν και μηνα και ενιαυτον (year), ινα αποκτεινωσιν (vsaa) το τριτον των ανθρωπων

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 (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 a third of mankind." God's sovereignty also determines exactly who would be affected by his sixth trumpet 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 (Hebrews 2:14-15).

9:16 "The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number."³⁰ 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.

9:17 "The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this."³¹ 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.

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WAR-MACHINES.

The picture of their description must be taken as a whole:

"They had breastplates fiery (red), hyacinth-coloured (dark blue) and sulphur-coloured (yellow)"³² 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).

"The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions"³³ 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 that of the demons under the fifth trumpet.

"and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulphur"³⁴ These represent three plagues killing one third of mankind. They indicate the perfect harmony between the horsemen and the horses. All their efforts are directed to the destruction and perdition of mankind.

9:18 "A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulphur that came out of their mouths."³⁵ This symbol points to *great world wars* and its horrifying annihilation of very many people.

³⁰ και ο αριθμος των στρατευματων του ιππικου (mounted troops, cavalry) δισμυριαδες μυριαδων

³¹ και ουτως ειδον (viaa) τους ιππους εν τη ορασει (appearance, vision) και τους καθημενους επ αυτων

³² εχοντας (vnpa) θωρακας πυρινους και υακινθινους και θειωδεις

³³ και αι κεφαλαι των ιππων ως κεφαλαι λεοντων

³⁴ και εκ των στοματων αυτων εκπορευεται (vnpm) πυρ και καπνος και θειον (brimstone)

³⁵ απο των τριων πληγων τουτων απεκτανθησαν (viap) το τριτον των ανθρωπων,

“The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.”³⁶ Horses with lion-like mouths and snake-headed-like tails do not exist literally in reality, because horses kick with their feet. 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 atomic, bacteriologic, chemical and other devious 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 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 (the destroyer and his locust-demons) are also the powers of darkness (the four evil angels) that change people into acting like devils destroying 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.

b. Different views about the sixth trumpet judgement (9:13-19)

There are three views. See supplement 6 and the explanation of the symbols above.

First view. (The 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 *during the second half of the future tribulation period*. The purpose is to preserve the better class of people for the future millennial kingdom.³⁷ This interpretation must be rejected.

Second view. (The second futurist view) The sixth trumpet judgement brings about the literal gathering of Oriental peoples (kings of the East) against the people of God and the rule of Christ *during the second half of the future tribulation period*.³⁸ This interpretation must also be rejected.

Third view. (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 period³⁹.

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

9:20 The seals of persecution are followed by the trumpets of judgement. The general meaning of the trumpets is clear. Throughout the entire period between Christ’s first coming and Christ’s second coming, the exalted Lord Jesus Christ rules 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, especially those who persecute his people and oppose his messengers, in accordance with *the seven trumpets of judgement* (8:2-13; 9:1-19; 11:15-19). From heaven, he sees the suffering and the tears of his people and hears their prayers (8:3-5). The blood of the martyrs is precious in his sight (Psalm 116:15). This is a great comfort for Christians!

“The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands”⁴⁰ In spite of all the trumpet warnings, mankind in general does not repent. Punishment by itself does not cause

εκ του πυρος και του καπνου και του θειου του εκπορευομενου (vppm) εκ των στοματων αυτων

³⁶ η γαρ εξουσια των ιππων εν τω στοματι αυτων εστιν (vipa) και εν ταις ουραις (tails) αυτων.

αι γαρ ουραι αυτων ομοιαι οφεσιν, εχουσαι (vppa) κεφαλαις και εν αυταις αδικουσιν > αδικεω (to injure, harm)(vipa)

³⁷ Larkin, Revelation pp. 78-79

³⁸ Tenney p.75-76

³⁹ Hendriksen p. 147

⁴⁰ Και οι λοιποι των ανθρωπων, οι ουκ απεκτανθησαν (viap) εν ταις πληγαις ταυταις, ουδε μετενοησαν (viaa) εκ των εργαων των χειρων αυτων,

a brokenhearted 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, refuse to repent. They continue to cleave to the work of their hands, that is, materialism, idolatry or atheism and their philosophy concerning ordinary life.

“with the result that they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood – idols that cannot see or hear or walk.”⁴¹ 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 continue in their false and useless religions and their philosophy concerning spiritual life. Thus they transgress the first table of the Ten Commandments: they continue to worship other gods that are not the God of the Bible in violation of the first commandment and they continue to make visible idols and invisible gods in violation of the second commandment (Exodus 20:1-6).

9:21 “and they did not repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.”⁴² They transgress the second table of the Ten Commandments: they continue to murder in violation of the sixth commandment; to commit adultery in violation of the seventh commandment; to steal in violation of the eighth commandment; and to dabble in magic arts, including the lies of fortune telling, etc. in violation of the ninth commandment (Exodus 20:13-16). 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 is not acknowledged and served, the neighbour is trampled.

The persecuting world becomes the impenitent world. Thus, *the persecuting world* (the second and the third seal), in spite of punishment (the trumpet judgements), becomes *the impenitent world* (9:20-21). Impenitence brings upon the world the outpouring of the seven bowls of God’s final wrath (chapter 15 and 16), including the culmination of God’s wrath in the final judgement day (the seventh trumpet and the seventh bowl).

PART 4. THE BLOWING OF THE SEVENTH TRUMPET (11:15-19)

The seventh trumpet (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 judgement of condemnation*, because they remained impenitent in spite of the trumpet judgments (11:18b; Matthew 25:46a). And the servants of God and saints of God 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.

⁴¹ ινα μη (expresses result instead of purpose) προσκυνησουσιν (vifa) τα δαιμονια και τα ειδωλα τα χρυσα και τα χαλκα και τα λιθινα και τα ξυλινα, α ουτε βλεπειν (vnpa) δυνανται (vnpm--3p) ουτε ακουειν (vnpa) ουτε περιπατειν (vnpa)

⁴² και ου μετανοησαν (viaa) εκ των φονων αυτων ουτε εκ των φαρμακων αυτων ουτε εκ της πορνειας αυτων ουτε εκ των κλεμματαων αυτων