

## CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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<b>Series:</b>	<b>Revelation</b>	Pastor/Teacher
<b>Number:</b>	<b>36</b>	Gary L.W. Johnson
<b>Text:</b>	<b>Revelation 9:1-11</b>	
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### THE FIFTH TRUMPET: DEMONIC INVASION

The list of literary and movie genres is somewhat lengthy. There is *action/adventure* (James Bond, the super-heroes like Spiderman, Iron Man, and then, of course, Indiana Jones); *comedy*, which includes romantic comedy, dark comedy, slap-stick. There is an almost endless list for *crime* and *mystery* that includes detective and suspense. *Fantasy*, such as Star Wars and The Lord of the Rings and the Disney films. One of the most popular is *horror*, that is deliberately designed to scare or frighten people through suspense, extreme violence or shock. Examples include Jaws, monster movies like Frankenstein, Dracula, The Wolverine and the Mummy. Then there are what is called the slasher movies: Halloween, I Know What You Did Last Summer, Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, to mention only a few. I should mention the category of *Bible themes*, i.e., The Ten Commandments, Samson and Delilah, as well as a number of movies on The Passion of Christ theme. There is also a Biblical emphasis on horror that goes unnoticed. In Revelation 9, the theme of horror is most prominent. The picture of terror increases in its intensity as horror upon horror mounts. The first four trumpets announced judgments on earth in the form of tyranny, war, famine and bloodshed, as well as ecological destruction of vegetation, water and sky. The next three trumpets have their focus upon heaven and cosmic disturbances.

- I. **THE STAR.** “The one symbolized by the star has been variously identified. Some, interpreting the phrase *from heaven fallen* in a theological sense, take the star to be a fallen angel. This is strengthened by reference to the nefarious nature of his activity (unlocking the shaft of the abyss and releasing its demonic hordes). Perhaps he is one of the stars of heaven swept down to earth by the tail of the great red dragon (12:4). It is more likely, however, that the star-angel is simply one of the many divine agents who throughout the book of Revelation are pictured as carrying out the will of God. Charles shows that when applied to stars symbolizing angels, *to fall* means no more than *to descend*.”<sup>1</sup> We are told that this individual was given a key to open the bottomless pit. “The Greek word translated *bottomless pit* is *abyssos*, from which we get our word abyss. There cannot, of course, really be such a thing as a bottomless pit; one need only ask the question, How deep is the bottomless pit? The word *abyssos* is used in the Greek Old Testament of the deep waters (Gen. 1:2; 7:11; Ps. 107:26). It is also used of the depth of the earth (Ps. 71:20) and came to designate the realm of the dead. So Paul asks, *Who will descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)* (Rom. 10:7). It is the abode of the beast or Antichrist before he appears on earth (Rev. 11:7) and will be the temporary prison of Satan during the millennial reign of Christ (Rev. 20:3). It is also sometimes represented as the home or else the place of imprisonment of demons (Luke 8:31).”<sup>2</sup>

- II. **THE LOCUSTS.** “The locust army of the fifth trumpet symbolizes demonic torment inflicted on the minds and souls of *those who dwell on the earth*, who lack the seal of God’s name on their thoughts and lives. The destructive power of these locusts is great, and yet it is restricted by God. These locusts may not harm the earth’s vegetation or trees (Rev. 9:4). They harm only those who do not have the seal of God, so the pain of their sting will not touch the servants of God (cf. 7:3-8; 14:1-5). Therefore the anguish they inflict is not a physical affliction shared by believer and nonbeliever alike. These locusts may not kill their victims but only torment them, and that for a limited period, five months (9:5, 10). Their torture seems to their victims a fate worse than death, but the relief they seek in death eludes them as *death flees from them* (9:6). This vision discloses the tragic double irony of serving Satan. First, as the angel of the abyss, the fallen star releases these demonic hordes not to afflict his enemies, the servants of God (for he cannot touch those shielded by God’s seal), but rather to afflict his allies, *who dwell on the earth*, who receive the beast’s mark and worship his blasphemous image (14:14-17). The devil rewards his loyal subjects with cruel torture. Second, the relief that the tortured think they would attain through death is denied them, for the malevolent spirits that poison their minds are forbidden from taking their lives. Within the parameters permitted them, however, these demons have great power, as their visible characteristics indicate. They appear as locusts, symbolizing their power to destroy, turning an Eden-like land into a barren desert (Joel 2:3). Their king’s name is *Destroyer*, both in Hebrew (*Abaddon*) and in Greek (*Apollyon*; Rev. 9:11). They stink like scorpions, showing the intensity of unremitting pain they inflict (9:5, 10). Their crowns and human faces signify personal intelligence and authority to carry out their grisly mission (9:7). Though limited in duration and severity, this outbreak of demonic activity among the unbelieving carries the expression of God’s wrath in the course of history to a new level, a first woe. The terrors and anxieties during a civilization’s dissolution, such as Rome would undergo in the coming centuries, epitomize but do not exhaust the torments of heart and mind symbolized by the army of the fifth trumpet.”<sup>3</sup> “John describes the plague inflicted by these locust demons with the scorpion-like stings using intense language: **torture . . . agony they suffered . . . they will long to die.** Again, such a plague strikes from the jaws of the pit of hell and can have no natural origin. The words, **death will elude them**, are terrifying but unclear. John means either that suicide will somehow become impossible during these months or that people will live in such agony they will wish they were dead. Who can imagine the nightmare of the world’s peoples all full of unspeakable physical agony, longing to die, yet remaining alive to experience even worse? Even more terrible, they refuse to repent of sin and turn to God (9:21), just like Pharaoh in the days of Moses.”<sup>4</sup>
- III. **THE LEADER OF THE LOCUST.** “*The locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank* (Proverbs 30:27). Here they have as king over them the angel of the Abyss, probably not the same angel as in v. 1. In our language, *Destroyer*. Literally, *in Greek, he has the name Apolluôn*. Hebrew *Abaddon* and Greek *Apolluôn* both mean *Destroyer*.”<sup>5</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>R. H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation: The New International Commentary on The New Testament* (Eerdmans, 1977), p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>G. Ladd, *A Commentary on The Revelation of John* (Eerdmans, 1972), p. 130.

<sup>3</sup>D. Johnson, *Triumph of The Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation* (P&R, 2001), p. 148.

<sup>4</sup>K. Easley, *Revelation: Holman New Testament Commentary* (Holman, 1998), p. 157.

<sup>5</sup>D. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (JNTP, 1992), p. 816.