

The Twitter Commentary on Revelation
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Revelation Chapter 9

Rev 9 (Introduction)—

In trumpets five and six the focus shifts from things of the natural world to human beings along with images of the demonic. Trumpets five and six are much more extensive than the first four.

Rev 8:13 is a transition passage between the first four and the last three trumpets. But it also has a strong leaning forward in it, it speaks about the three angels who are “about to blow their trumpets.”

Rev 9:1-11 (Introduction)--

The big question with the fifth trumpet: Where is Jesus Christ in this horror show? To be continued.

The most detailed parallel to the fifth trumpet in the OT is Joel 2:1-11. A locust plague is portrayed as the consequence of Israel’s failure to obey the covenant.

Besides Joel 2, some strong OT parallels are the burning of Sodom (Gen 19:28), the Exodus (Exod 19:18), two of the plagues of Egypt, and the experience of Job (Job 3:21).

The clearest NT parallel to the fifth trumpet is Luke 10:17-20. The passage describes God’s protection from demonic harassment. That also seems to be the major theme of the fifth trumpet (Rev 9:4).

While stars represent angels or church leaders in Rev 1:20, the star here is clearly negative rather than positive. That is in contrast to Rev 20:1 and in harmony with Rev 9:11 and Luke 10:17-20.

Rev 9:1--

The star falling from heaven recalls Lucifer in Isa 14 and Satan in Luke 10 and Rev 12. This is the first clue that there is a demonic element in this trumpet. It is Satan who is the Destroyer, not God.

The star in this trumpet is not being viewed as it falls, the reference is to a previous fall, likely that of the star in the third trumpet. This connects the third and fifth trumpets in some way.

A key gives a person power to open and shut. Since the key “was given” to the fallen star, the angel of the Abyss, it appears to be divine permission to allow Satan opportunity to show what his character is truly like.

The “was given” is a divine passive, indicating that God is not the author of the destruction in this trumpet, but that He is acting to limit and restrain it, much as we find in Rev 7:1-3.

The “pit” or “shaft” of the Abyss translates a typical Greek word for “well,” as in “Jacob’s well.” In this passage it suggests a well-like shaft leading down from the earth’s

surface to an unfathomable depth or chamber below.

The Abyss is the place where demons are confined or restricted (symbolic imagery). God limits the activity of demons while respecting their freedom. The fifth trumpet is a time of relative freedom for the demonic realm.

Rev 9:2—

The language of a “great furnace” recalls the Sodom story (Gen 19:28) and God’s presence on Mount Sinai (Exod 19:18). The smoke represents the “wrath” of God (Psa 18:7-8), which fits the divine passives in this text.

The word for “darkened” is singular rather than plural, referring to the sun. The air itself is not a source of light that can be darkened. But the smoke does cause the darkness by obscuring the sun.

In the fourth trumpet, the darkness was caused by a smiting (Greek: *eplēgē*) of the sun, moon and stars. The cause of the darkening here, on the other hand, is external to these heavenly bodies. It lies in the smoke.

The partial darkness of the fourth trumpet only affects a third of the heavenly bodies at a time, but the darkness has become total in the fifth.

Rev 9:2 (Spiritual Lesson)—

A cosmic conflict approach to reality recognizes that God is at work in every religion, nation and political party. Even Christianity itself is a battle-ground between good and evil.

Rev 9:3—

Locusts normally feed on plants, but in this context they are preying on human beings who do not have the seal of God (Rev 9:4-6). Locusts in the OT are a symbol of divine judgment.

Locusts in the ancient world represented great quantity and irresistible destruction. They were often used to symbolize large advancing armies, as in Joel 1 and 2.

The passive “were given” implies either God or the fallen star as the agent of this permission. Likely God, as verses one and four are clearly referring to divine permission.

Literal scorpions have a great deal of power to hurt people, but literal locusts do not. So scorpions function here as an analogy for the psychological harm that the locusts do to people in Revelation 9:5-6.

Rev 9:4 (Introduction)—

The locusts in this text have divine discernment to distinguish between those who are inwardly faithful to God and those who are not. Whatever this plague is, it does not harm the faithful people of God.

The plague in the fifth trumpet distinguishes between true and false believers in Jesus, it doesn't simply harm Christians or non-Christians in general. This is critical for interpretation of the passage.

Rev 9:4—

This is another divine passive. God is the one who permits the locust plague but limits it

to those who do not have the seal. In other words, the plague is more of a spiritual matter than a political, economic or military one.

“Not hurt the grass of the earth or any green thing or any tree” confirms that this plague is not one of natural locusts, which prey upon plants rather than people. The natural instinct of the locust is here supernaturally restrained.

Grass, green things and trees together represent the faithful people of God, His faithful remnant. I understand this verse to be expressing God’s spiritual protection at a time of demonic deception and confusion.

Two types of “sealing” (certification and protection) are connected in the idea that both reflect settling into the truth about God’s character to the place one cannot be moved, like Job.

The similarity in meaning between sealing here and in 7:1-3 does not mean they are at the same point in history. Best parallel to 7:1-3 is 9:16, which is after the fifth trumpet.

Rev 9:5-6 (Introduction)--

The torture described herein is not political or economic but spiritual, psychological, and self-inflicted. In seeking to escape the control of God, people place themselves in a much worse situation.

In Joel 2 the imagery of locusts is used for an invading army (Joel 1:4-6; 2:1-11). But armies are not normally designed to torment, but rather to wound and kill physically. The outcome of the locust attack is psychological, suicidal anguish.

Rev 9:5—

This passage echoes Job 2:6 and Luke 10:17-20, where Satan’s ability to harass and torment is limited by God.

A strong possibility is an allusion to the Flood story, where a five-month period is mentioned twice (Gen 7:24; 8:3). Noah and his family were protected during the Flood.

Historicist commentators have frequently applied the five months to periods of 150 years in the history of Islam’s wars with the armies of Christendom, periods such as 632-782 (begin with death of Muhammad) and 1299-1449 (end with fall of Constantinople).

In my view, the imagery of the fifth trumpet as a whole fits best with the secular age we live in now rather than either Islamic period. The rise to dominance of secularism could be the period from 1789-1939.

Rev 9:5-- “And their torment was like the torment of a scorpion, when it stings a man.” While the scorpions are introduced in verse three as very powerful, the nature of their power is not spelled out until verse five. The power of the scorpion is in its sting, and this can inflict great pain on human beings. But it is only in verse ten that we are told what the ancient readers must have known by experience, the power of the scorpion’s sting is located in the tail. The opponents of the prophet Ezekiel are compared to scorpions (Ezek 2:6), so there is a history in the Bible of using scorpions as a metaphor for spiritual abuse or mockery. In the words of Ellicott, the scorpion represents “the malicious cruelty of the merciless.”

T Rev 9:5-- The scorpions are introduced in 9:3 as very powerful. Here we learn the power of the scorpion is in its sting, and this can inflict great pain on human beings. We learn in verse

ten that the power of the scorpion's sting is located in the tail.

Rev 9:6—“And in those days men will seek death but they will not find it. They will long to die, yet death flees away from them.” The concept of longing for a death that does not come recalls Job 3:20-21 (see also Job 7:15, see also Luke 23:30 and Revelation 6:15-17). The loss of Job’s family combines with his physical suffering to drive him to the place of suicidal anguish. During this dark time, Job was many times tempted to see God as the source of his suffering. But he does not know what the reader of the book of Job knows, that the source of his anguish was Satan, not God (Job 1:12; 2:6). This must be kept in mind in the fifth trumpet as well. While the trumpets are portrayed as judgments from the heavenly temple (Rev 6:9-10; 8:2-6), the destroyer of the fifth trumpet is not God, it is the fallen star, Satan (Rev 9:11). During the Exile to Babylon, many of the people of Judah went through a similar experience (Jer 8:3).

T Rev 9:6-- The concept of longing for a death that does not come recalls Job 3:20-21. The loss of Job’s family combines with his physical suffering to drive him to the place of suicidal anguish.

Rev 9:6—“In those days men will seek death.” This refers forward to the time in history when the events of Revelation 9:3-5 actually occur. It is, therefore, followed by the future tense “men will seek” (Greek: *zētēsousin hoi anthrōpoi*), taking on the prophetic standpoint of John. The “men” here are the people on earth who are not sealed (Rev 9:4), those who are tormented for five months in the previous verse.

There have been many periods of history where circumstances were so distressing that death looked like a relief, a deliverance from suffering. So the language of this clause could apply to a number of points in history. A more specific interpretation would have to take into account the larger context of the passage.

The Holocaust in World War II was such a time of horror. Though the Nazis often cloaked their actions in Christian rhetoric, the main driving force was the godless philosophy of Nietzsche and others. The horrors of the Holocaust were not the actions of God, punishing those whose ancestors may have contributed to the death of Christ, they were the product of human beings inspired by demons and an extremely godless philosophy. The Holocaust is one example of what the world would be like if Satan’s actions were fully unrestrained (Rev 9:11).

T Rev 9:6—The “will seek” indicates that the suicidal anguish of the unsealed occurs at some future time from John’s day.

Rev 9:6-- “They will long to die, yet death flees away from them.” There is an interesting textual variant in the last clause of this verse. The full manuscript evidence supports the future tense for the first three verbs of this verse (“will seek,” “will not find,” “will long”). The majority text of the Greek tradition maintains that the “fleeing” is also in the future tense (“will flee”). But in the earlier, and usually superior, manuscripts the fourth verb switches to a present tense (“flees”). Since this is the more difficult and unexpected reading, it is more likely to be original.

Reading the fleeing as present tense gives graphic force to the description. The fleeing away of death is an immediate and gripping experience. The Greek word translated “long” (*epithumēsousin*) expresses extreme or vehement desire. It is a passionate longing to be no

more. This graphic combination of images is reminiscent of a nightmare, where someone chases after a person or an object, but the desired goal is always just out of reach. Under normal circumstances, people fear and even hate death, but in circumstances like these, even death is to be preferred to the anguish being experienced.

T Rev 9:6—The best manuscript evidence supports that the first three verbs of this verse are future and the last is present. This gives graphic and immediate force to the description.

Rev 9:7-9 (Introduction)-- “And the locusts were like horses prepared for war in appearance, and on their heads was something like golden crowns, and their faces were like the faces of men. Their hair was like the hair of women, and their teeth were like lions’ teeth. And their breastplates were like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of horse-drawn chariots rushing into battle.” The imagery here is built, to a considerable degree, on Joel 2:1-11. The locust/scorpions referred to here were introduced in verses 3-6, but here we get a detailed description of them. The imagery seems almost overkill. Horrific images are piled one on top of the other to represent the intensity and awesomeness of the demonic attack in the fifth trumpet. I have no doubt that John intended us to take every detail seriously and yet this piling on of images seems to resist clarity of understanding.

Perhaps the best way to handle this passage is to see these torments as coming from human beings inspired by Satan. This appears to be an exercise in hyperbole for effect. Human beings and circumstances appear strong as horses, powerful as kings, cunning as the wildest man, and at the same time seductive as a beautiful woman. It is all flavored throughout with military imagery. This demonic army causes pain like that of scorpions. This plague is absolutely awesome and no one would want to experience it. We will look a little more closely at these images.

T Rev 9:7-9 (Intro)—The imagery in this passage is largely built on Joel 2:1-11. The torments on the unsealed are described in overkill fashion. They are the product of Satan’s work, not God’s.

Rev 9:7-- “And the locusts were **like** horses prepared for **war** in appearance, and on their heads was something **like** golden crowns, and their faces were **like** the faces of men.” The comparison of locusts to horses is a common one in the Arabian context. This similarity is brought out in Joel 2:4 and alluded to in Job 39:20. That this passage is to be taken figuratively is evident from the repeated use of “like” (Greek: *homoiōmata, homoia, homoiou*). The locusts are “like” horses wearing something “like” golden crowns, and they had faces “like” the faces of men. While natural locusts can look somewhat like horses, they have nothing on their heads that looks like a crown. This is figurative imagery. There is also a clear military reference in the use of “war” (Greek: *polemon*). This term is generally used literally (Gen 14:2, 8; Exod 13:17, Josh 4:13, etc.) in the Old Testament, but is used both literally (Luke 14:31; 1 Cor 14:8) and figuratively (2 Cor 10:3-5; Jam 4:1; 1 Pet 2:11) in the New Testament.

T Rev 9:7—The three-fold use of Greek words for “like” or “as” indicates that this is a figurative description rather than a literal one.

Rev 9:7—“. . . on their heads was something like **golden crowns** . . .” Many commentators have seen these “crowns” as polished military helmets. But a closer look at the biblical context may point in a different direction. The crowns the locusts wear (Greek: *stephanoi*) are victory crowns rather than royal ones (Greek: *diadēma*). “Victory crowns” normally apply spiritually and positively in Revelation. The twenty-four elders wear *stephanos* crowns (Rev 4:4, 10). Christ Himself wears a *stephanos* crown in Revelation 14:14. This same crown is the reward given to the overcomers in Revelation 2:10 and 3:11. The reference here is the one place in Revelation where the victory crown is clearly associated with something demonic or spiritually negative.

T Rev 9:7—These are not kingly crowns, but victory crowns, the kind given to winners at the Olympic games. In Rev these are normally reserved for Christ and His people.

Rev 9:7-- “. . . on their heads was something like **golden crowns** . . .” There is one use of *stephanos* that is ambiguous for our understanding of the fifth trumpet. That is the victory crown worn by the rider on the white horse in Revelation 6:2. But we have concluded for multiple reasons that the rider on the white horse represents Jesus and the conquests of the gospel. See details in the comments on Rev 6:2. In that case the image here is the reverse of the usual usage in Revelation. Something reserved for Christ and his faithful ones is here applied to the demonic forces from the Abyss. So an element of deception seems embedded here. Satan can appear as an “angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14-15). As we will see, the “tail” in verse ten is also symbol of deception. In the book of Revelation, Satan operates by both force and deception. The surface imagery of Revelation 9:7-9 suggests force, but a deeper look into these images suggests deception as the primary intent of the passage.

Rev 9:7—Victory crowns are normally reserved for Christ and his faithful ones in Rev. But here they are applied to the demonic forces from the Abyss. So an element of deception seems embedded in this image.

Rev 9:7—“. . . and their faces were like **the faces of men**.” Some have suggested that behind this image is the fact that the head of the locust bears a vague resemblance to a human head. Since the face expresses human intelligence, this image supports the overall sense that the plague of the fifth trumpet is not literal, but has to do with the destructive consequences of secular ideology. While the word “men” here (Greek: *anthrōpōn*) implies a general reference to human beings as a whole, it can also be used in contrast with women. The mention of women in the next verse gives this word a more masculine impression. Benson suggests that “faces of men” may refer to beards, while women’s hair (next verse) tends to be long and flowing. Hair has often been the distinguishing mark between men and women. Something more than ordinary locusts is in view here. Since their faces were “like” the faces of men, these are not human, but since locusts do not sting either, these are not locusts. The sense of a supernatural enemy flows through this cascade of images.

Rev 9:8-- “Their hair was like the hair of women, and their teeth were like lions’ teeth.” Some commentators have tried to connect “like the hair of women” (Greek: *hōs trichas gunaikōn*)

with the antennae of locusts, but the expression is generally taken to mean long and flowing hair. In ancient times women generally wore their hair longer than men did (biblical evidence for this is in 1 Corinthians 11:14-15), there is some ancient evidence that the Arabians and Persians were known for longer hair. If men did not commonly wear long hair in John's day it is not surprising that this would be a distinguishing feature of these terrifying locusts. It is not clear whether this image was designed to express beauty and seductiveness or terror. To this day Muslims consider the hair of women to be seductive and thus it should be covered in public. On the other hand, the weight of imagery in the larger context is intended to evoke terror, so that is probably the intent with this image.

In Joel 1:4-6 locusts describe an enemy nation with teeth like lions' teeth attacking Yahweh's land, so this image is part of a larger structural parallel between the fifth trumpet and the book of Joel. The jaws and teeth of lions are designed to crush, tear and devour. In both Joel and the fifth trumpet this image points to the terrible destructiveness of the locusts.

Rev 9:9-- "And their breastplates were like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of horse-drawn chariots rushing into battle." Many commentators note that this is military imagery, yet also a fair description of the desert locust. Many locusts have a chest structure like the plates of armor on a battle horse and, of course, wings.

The text is not saying that John is seeing horses drawing chariots and rushing into battle. He is seeing locust-like creatures that make a sound with their wings that is similar to the sound of horse-drawn chariots rolling into battle. One locust by itself may not be very loud, but a vast multitude of them gathered together can produce quite a racket. This part of the description is clearly based on the locust-army of Joel 2:5 (NIV): "With a noise like that of chariots . . . like a mighty army drawn up for battle." The word translated "battle" (Greek: *polemon*) in this verse is the typical word for military conflict that can also be used for arguments or ideological conflicts (note the English word "polemics").

There are many things going on at once here. The structural parallel to Joel 2:4-7 heightens the sense that the locusts of Revelation 9:7-9 represent an army. Yet the overall picture of the fifth trumpet is not a military plague, but an ideological one, utilizing both insects and human armies as images to represent something larger and less tangible that will occur in John's future.

T Rev 9:9-- This is military imagery, yet also a fair description of the desert locust. Many locusts have a chest structure like the plates of armor on a battle horse and, of course, wings.

Rev 9:7-9 (Conclusion)—Building on the imagery of Joel 2:1-11, this horrific piling up of images recalls particularly two things. First, the plagues of locusts that the ancients would have been familiar with and very much dreaded. And second, military images that would also be familiar to John's readers. In light of the fifth trumpet as a whole and Luke 10:17-20, however, these images are not to be taken literally, but represent the spiritual and emotional anguish that people experience in the absence of Christ and the gospel. In the New Testament, military imagery is often used to describe the internal conflict that occurs when the gospel counters our sinful human inclinations (prime examples would be 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and Ephesians 6:10-17). Revelation is a New Testament book and needs to be read with Christ and the gospel

in mind.

T Rev 9:7-9 (Concl.)—The locusts and military imagery here need to be read in the light of the larger NT witness (Luke 10:17-20; 2 Cor 10:3-5; Eph 6:10-17). The fifth trumpet portrays an earthly spiritual battle which is part of the larger cosmic war.

Rev 9:10 (Introduction)— “They had tails like scorpions and stingers. And with their tails they had the authority to harm the human race for five months.” The locusts of the fifth trumpet are three times compared with scorpions, in verses three, five and now here in verse ten. In this verse it becomes clear that the instrument of the torment in the previous verses is in the tail of the locust/scorpions. It is the action of the tail that leads to the psychological torment of verses five and six. The five months is a second reference to the period of time mentioned first in verse five. This recalls the 150 days when the Flood covered the whole earth in Genesis 7:24 and 8:3. The faithful people of God are protected during this plague just as Noah and his family were during the Flood.

T Rev 9:10—The five months recalls the Flood story, another situation in which the people of God are protected in a time of judgment.

Rev 9:10—“They had tails like scorpions and stingers. . .” Once again there is a signal of figurative language, the Greek word for “like” (*homoias*). Similar expressions occur in 2 Sam 22:34 and Psa 18:33 (in both cases: “He made my feet like the feet of a deer”). The images in this passage, and in most of the book of Revelation, cannot be visualized in any literal sense. The purpose of the imagery is other than a literal description. It would be unwise to put too much emphasis on the details, particularly in the fifth trumpet. This clause is not saying that the tails of the locusts looked like scorpions’ tails, but that the locust tails had stingers in them, like a scorpion’s does.

T Rev 9:10-- Once again there is a signal of figurative language, the Greek word for “like” (*homoias*). The images in this passage, and in most of the book of Revelation, cannot be visualized in any literal sense.

Rev 9:10—“And with their tails they had the authority to harm the human race for five months.” What does the stinging tail of the locust/scorpions, the instrument with which they torment the unsealed, represent? The most helpful parallel is found in Isaiah 9:15: ". . . the elders and prominent men are the head, the prophets who teach lies are the tail.” What causes the suicidal anguish of the unsealed is believing lies regarding the ultimate reality of the universe and the government of God. Although the language is a combination of military language with the description of a locust plague; it is false doctrine, rather than a military or insect scourge that causes the anguish. It is the deeper meaning, not the surface meaning, of the text which counts. The tail, which is the instrument of the attack, is false doctrine. Only those who buy into the false doctrine are plagued, God's genuine followers are not affected by it. In the larger context of this trumpet, the prophetic lies being referred to here are something like the secular assumptions of Western society today.

The text does not say that the lifespan of these locusts was five months, but that their power to torment was granted for five months.

T Rev 9:10—In Isa 9:15 the tail represents prophets who teach lies, underscoring the spiritual dimension of the military/locust imagery. The five months is not the lifespan of these locusts, but the time when they have the power to torment.

They had a king over them, the Angel of the Abyss. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek his name is Apollyon.

Rev 9:11-- “They had a king over them, the Angel of the Abyss. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek his name is Apollyon.” The reference to a king (Greek: *basilea*) further underscores that these locusts are not literal. In the Old Testament it was observed that locusts have no “king” (Prov 30:27); the actions of a swarm of locusts are co-ordinated by a herd instinct rather than a specific leader. On the other hand, the Septuagint (LXX—Greek OT) offers a strange reading of Amos 7:1 saying that a particular locust was “Gog the king.” Coming back to this verse, the “king” is further defined as the “Angel of the Abyss” (Greek: *ton angellon tēs abussou*). Some commentators connect the Angel of the Abyss with the strong angel of Revelation 20:1-3 and thus see the angel of this verse as an agent of God’s judgment. That angel binds Satan in the Abyss with a great chain. But in the context of the fifth trumpet, the Angel of the Abyss oversees the torments of the unsealed and should rather be connected to the star which had fallen from heaven and unlocked these torments (see comments on Rev 9:1). That star “was given” the key to the shaft of the Abyss, a divine passive. So the Angel of the Abyss is under God’s control or restraint. Seeing the Angel of the Abyss here as Satan fits the context best. God withdraws His restraint in the fifth trumpet, allowing Satan a freedom of action that he has not had in the past. As the world approaches the End, Satan is given opportunity to manifest his true character as never before. Those who do not accept the lordship of Christ will end up suffering under the lordship of Satan (see 2 Thess 2:8-12).

T Rev 9:11—The Angel of the Abyss is best connected with the star that fell from heaven (Rev 9:1) and unlocked the locust/scorpions to torment the unsealed.

Rev 9:11-- “His name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek his name is Apollyon.” The word Abaddon (Greek: *abaddōn*) is a Greek rendering of the Hebrew word *abaddon*. In that form it is normally an abstract noun meaning “destruction” (see various English translations of Proverbs 15:11). *Abaddon* is based on the root Hebrew verb *abad*, which means “to perish” or “to destroy.” Forms of this verb are frequent in the Old Testament. As a name or title it represents “the one who destroys.” In Jewish literature of the time *Abaddon* was one of the compartments of hell or *gehenna*, the place of burning (see Job 26:6; 31:12 [ESV] for early versions of this). The Septuagint frequently translates Abaddon as *apôleia* (Deut 4:26; Job 26:6; 28:22, etc.). In the Greek, *Apollyon* (transliterated from the Greek *apolluōn*) is a participle form based on the root verb *apoluō/apollumi* which means “to destroy.” So Apollyon would mean “the one who destroys” or “the Destroyer.” It is the personification of “destruction.”

T Rev 9:11—Apollyon and Abaddon are the Greek and Hebrew words for destruction or “The Destroyer.”

Rev 9:11-- The sense of destruction is heightened here by the use of words for destruction in two different languages. While the words and their contexts are very different, they mean the same thing. “Abaddon” (Hebrew) is the one who destroys, and “Apollyon” (Greek) is also the one who destroys. The essence of these two names is destruction--the angel of the Abyss is the destroying one who ruins those who follow him and the earth on which they dwell. The Gospel of John contains frequent examples of double naming, which could be seen as evidence for common authorship of the Gospel and Revelation (John 1:38: rabbi and teacher; 1:42: Simon and Cephas; 4:25: Messiah and Christ; 9:7: Siloam and “sent”; 19:13: Stone Pavement and Gabbatha; 19:17: Place of a Skull and Golgotha).

Rev 9:11—The literary strategy here is to pair two words in different languages that mean essentially the same thing, Apollyon and Abaddon. There are a number of similar pairings in the Gospel of John (1:38, 42; 4:25; 9:7; 19:13, 17).

Rev 9:11 (Spiritual Lesson)— The angel of the Abyss is Satan, the leader of the demonic forces in view here. Satan attracts people with temptations of something better than they now have. But when they buy in to those promises, he rewards them in the end with torment. That torment can be physical, mental, social or emotional. An analogy in contemporary experience is recreational drugs. Life is hard and often very broken. Recreational drugs have a powerful effect on the feelings and may seem a harmless escape from the challenges of life. But over time the addiction gets stronger and stronger and the payoff is less and less. A person ends up in a horrific cycle of needing the drug just to feel slightly normal. That kind of destructive cycle is triggered whenever people embrace sin as core to their identity. At first it seems a better way of life, but at the end it leads to anguish and destruction. While God is the giver of life, Satan’s core identity is summed up in the term “destroyer.” Those who abandon God find themselves in slavery to sin and Satan and the result is a “tortured” existence.

T Rev 9:11 (Spiritual Lesson)— Satan attracts people with temptations of something better than they now have. But when they buy in to those promises, he rewards them in the end with torment. That torment can be physical, mental, social or emotional.

Rev 9:1-11 (Conclusion)— We conclude where we began. Where do you find Christ in the horror show that is the fifth trumpet? The basic theme of this trumpet seems clear; it concerns a time in history when God permits demonic forces to plague the earth, but the plague is not allowed to affect the righteous, it is limited to the unsealed (Rev 9:4). Because of the nature of the demonic attack, the genuine followers of Jesus are not hurt by them (Luke 10:17-20).

In the New Testament, “light and darkness” have to do with the gospel. Christ is light and darkness is the taking away or blotting out of the gospel. While there was partial darkness in the fourth trumpet, in the fifth trumpet, there is an intensification of that darkness. The absence of the gospel and the pervasive presence of its opposite, atheism and secularism, is in my view, the central theme of the fifth trumpet.

T Rev 9:1-11 (Concl.)— The fifth trumpet concerns a time in history when God permits demonic forces to plague the earth, but the plague is not allowed to affect the righteous. It is the absence of the gospel and the pervasive presence of its opposite, atheism and secularism.

Rev 9:1-11 (Conclusion 2)— "The triumph of secularism" is one way that I have summarized the fifth trumpet. While religion in various forms is fighting back, today the dominant philosophy of the Western world, at least, is to seek truth through science and secular philosophy. The presence of God in public life is no longer assumed and it is often mocked should anyone dare to bring the subject up. Through the media and the entertainment industry, secularism has spread beyond the Western world and is increasingly found even in the developing world. There has been a corresponding increase drug abuse, addictions of various kinds and a general sense of anxiety. The world we live in today seems very well represented by a contextual understanding of the fifth trumpet. In other words, the fifth trumpet speaks to our present experience.

T Rev 9:1-11 (Concl.)— The imagery of the fifth trumpet reflects the kind of secularism increasingly pervasive in the world over the last several hundred years.

Rev 9:1-11 (Conclusion 3)— In what sense is it true that God's faithful people are not hurt by secularism? Secularism would seem to be tremendously damaging to Christian faith and witness. It claims that it doesn't matter if there is a God or not. What matters is what you can detect with your five senses--what you see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. Anything beyond that is a figment of one's imagination. While the products of secular culture are more and more amazing all the time, they serve as a distraction to spiritual life and can lead to a sense of emptiness and even suicidal anguish. But secularism cannot distract you from God when you know and walk with Him. This is well illustrated by the saying: "God is not dead; I talked to Him last night." Secularism cannot hurt the spiritual walk of anyone who truly knows and experiences God.

T Rev 9:1-11 (Concl.)— While the products of secular culture are more and more amazing, they often distract away from spiritual life and can lead to a sense of emptiness and even suicidal anguish. But secularism cannot distract you from God when you know and walk with Him.

Rev 9:1-11 (Conclusion 4)— There is a sense in which secularism is a blessing to people of faith. The atheism of the Soviet Union led to a great hunger for the gospel after the fall of Communism. The secular overthrow of coercive government led history for the first time to a respect for religious liberty and freedom of conscience. Open societies have offered golden opportunities to spread the gospel. At the same time, there is a sense that secularism is a curse. The prevailing culture does not support faith, and a walk with God seems an increasingly isolated experience. One is tempted to ignore abundant evidence of God's presence and gracious care for those willing to invite Him into their lives. But the prevailing culture need not affect genuine followers of Jesus who see through the "clouds" to the "sun, moon, and stars." So secularism is both a blessing and a curse to faith.

T Rev 9:1-11 (Concl.)— Secularism has been both a blessing and a curse to people of faith.

Rev 9:1-11 (Conclusion 5)— If I have rightly understood the seven trumpets, and their difficulty suggests a strong element of caution in their interpretation, the rise and dominance of secularism in the Western world is related to the failure of the Christian church to bear a clear witness of the gospel. This failure of the church was anticipated by the imagery of the third trumpet. The same star that fell in the third trumpet is cited as the precipitating factor in the fifth. People looked to Christianity for life and often did not find it there. Secularism and atheism may not have reached their present state if the church had remained true to its mission. The excesses of the Dark Ages were a precipitating factor in the philosophical developments that led to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, as well as the atheism of the French Revolution and eventually the Communist revolution. So the imagery of the fifth trumpet fits reasonably well with the philosophical developments in the Western world today.

T Rev 9:1-11 (Concl.)— The rise and dominance of secularism in the Western world is related to the failure of the Christian church to bear a clear witness to the gospel.

Rev 9:1-11 (Conclusion 6)— As we will see, the imagery of the sixth trumpet seems to represent a pendulum swing away from secularism back toward distortions of genuine Christian faith that we have seen before. The vision moves from the language of Egypt and its avoidance of God back to the language of Babylon and its embrace of forms of religion that oppose God. If the third trumpet depicted the rise of religious opposition to the gospel, the fourth depicted the rise of secularism, the absence of the gospel. In the fifth trumpet we have seen the dominance of secular philosophy as the world moves toward the End. The sixth trumpeter portrays the end-time revival and dominance of Babylon, the religious alternative to the gospel. These two opponents of the gospel are seen again in Revelation 16 and 17, interacting with each other to blot out faith from the earth. The final outcome of the end time battle (Armageddon) is more clearly laid out there.

T Rev 9:1-11 (Concl.)— The imagery of the sixth trumpet seems to represent a pendulum swing away from secularism back toward distortions of genuine Christian faith that we have seen before in the course of history.

Rev 9:1-11 (Conclusion 7)— The interaction of the fifth and sixth trumpets seems to me parallel to the last portion of Daniel 11 in the Old Testament. I will quote Daniel 11:40-45 in the New International Version: “At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission. But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch his royal tents

between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him."

T Rev 9:1-11 (Concl.)—Rev 9 contains a strong thematic parallel to Dan 11:40-45.

Rev 9:1-11 (Conclusion 8)—The final events of earth's history are portrayed in Daniel 11 as a battle between the kings of the north and south. It is an apocalyptic passage that is as obscure and difficult as the trumpets. The King of the South is Egypt (a nation south of Israel) and the King of the North is Babylon (a nation that was reached by traveling north of Israel and around the Fertile Crescent to the east). The battle of Daniel 11 ultimately affects the people of God on His mountain. The early victories in the battle go to the King of the South. But later the King of the North comes roaring back to overwhelm the King of the South, after which the entire world under Babylon's control turns on the people of God. The fifth and sixth trumpets similarly portray the move from the dominance of secularism/atheism (the King of the South/atheism) to the dominance of institutional religion (the King of the North/Babylon). In other words, before the End, secularism will create a spiritual longing that demons will rush in to fill.

So if we have correctly understood the fifth trumpet, secularism will not last forever. With the rise of New Age thinking and eastern religions in the West, and a resurgence of Islam in Africa and Asia, we may detect a transition between the secularism of the Twentieth Century to a more religiously-oriented world, a foretaste of end-time Babylon.

T Rev 9:1-11 (Concl.)— If we have correctly understood the fifth trumpet, secularism will not last forever. Between New Age, eastern religions the resurgence of Islam, we may detect a transition to a more religiously-oriented world, a foretaste of end-time Babylon.

Rev 9:1-11 (Spiritual Lessons A)—1) Beware of secular drift. No one suddenly wakes up one morning and chooses to become a secular person. Secularism among believers is the result of a slackening of attention to the daily pursuit of relationship with God through prayer, Bible study, communal worship, and active participation in the work of the church. When the river of our culture flows strongly downstream, it requires effort to swim against the tide and maintain a connection with God. See the analysis in my book *Present Truth in the Real World*.

2) The fifth trumpet is a warning to those who toy with evil. There is no joy in rejecting God because secular life has its own torments and anguish. To live a life in the absence of God is not the solution to our problems. There is no grand and glorious conclusion to secular life but rather an emptiness that will often be filled by the powers of the abyss.

T Rev 9:1-11 (Spiritual Lessons)—Secularization is not usually chosen, it is something a believer drifts into. The fifth trumpet is a warning to those who toy with evil or allow themselves to drift into secularism.

Rev 9:1-11 (Spiritual Lessons B)— 3) In the midst of a secular culture, there is comfort offered to those who seek to remain faithful to God. When error and evil seem to have triumphed, there is perfect security in Christ (Rev 9:4). The demons have no power over the redeemed (Luke 10:17-20). While a life of faith in a secular culture may be hard, the rewards far exceed

the challenges. This theme reminds me of Romans 8:35-39 (NIV): "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:35-39. In my view, that is the theme of the fifth trumpet.

T Rev 9:1-11 (Spiritual Lessons)— In the midst of a secular culture, there is comfort offered to the faithful. The demons have no power over the redeemed (Luke 10:17-20). While a life of faith in a secular culture may be hard, the rewards far exceed the challenges (Rom 8:35-39).

Rev 9:12—“The first woe has gone away. Behold, two more woes are coming after this.” The original has a cardinal number (“one”—Greek: *mia*) rather than an ordinal number (“first”), but that cardinal number clearly plays the role of an ordinal number in this context (for other NT examples see Matt 28:1; 1 Cor 16:2; Tit 3:10). Most translate that the first woe is “past,” but the Greek is literally “gone away” (*apēlthen*). From the standpoint of the interlude between the fifth and sixth trumpets, two more woes are yet in the future (“are coming”—Greek: *erchetai*).

“After this” (Greek: *meta tauta*) occurs frequently in Revelation for things that will happen in the future with reference to something else. For example, in Revelation 1:19, the book of Revelation consists of “things which are” (Greek: *eisin*) and “things which will happen after this” (*meta tauta*). The “after this” or “after these things” begins with Revelation 4:1. See comments on Rev 1:19 and 4:1. In this verse the “after these things” means after the completion of the fifth trumpet.

T Rev 9:12—The Greek here uses a cardinal number like an ordinal (“one” = “first”). “After these things” (see Rev 1:19 and 4:1) means after the fifth trumpet.

Rev 9:12-- Three woes were anticipated in Revelation 8:13. It was not clear there what relationship the three woes would have to the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpets. The words here, however, are not the words of the vulture in Revelation 8:13, they are a parenthetical remark by the author. The relationship of the woes and the trumpets, however, are somewhat clarified here. The end of the fifth trumpet is also the end of the first woe. The first woe is fulfilled and, accordingly, in the past. The second and third come after the first. The second begins with the onset of the sixth trumpet. Revelation 11:14 clarifies that each of the three woes is equated with one of the last three trumpets. The second woe is the sixth trumpet, the third woe is the seventh.

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Rev 9:13-21 (Introduction)-- The “horror show” of the fifth trumpet continues in the sixth. In the fifth trumpet, conditions reached the stage where a great number of people seek death. A third of humanity is granted that wish in the sixth trumpet. There are several key structural parallels to the sixth trumpet in Revelation that help us understand the passage.

"After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: 'Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.' Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel." Revelation 7:1-4, NIV.

In both passages, there are four angels, divine restraint, and the comment, "I heard the number". Also, notice the exact opposite of the sealed in Revelation: the two-hundred-million man army of Revelation 9:16 is the alter-ego of God's end-time people, the 144,000. So both passages are located at the same time in history; the final years or even months before the End.

T Rev 9:13-21 (Intro)—In the fifth trumpet many people were in a condition where they sought death. In the sixth trumpet a third of humanity was granted that wish.

T Rev 9:13-21 (Intro)— A strong parallel to the sixth trumpet is Rev 7:1-4. Both passages contain a numbered group along with the phrase, "I heard the number." The 200,000,000 of this passage is the evil counterpart of the 144,000.

Rev 9:13-21 (Introduction 2)--Another structural parallel to the sixth trumpet in Revelation is found in chapter 20. "When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them." Revelation 20:7-9, NIV.

The gathering of people in this passage is against the New Jerusalem at the end of the millennium. There is a strong parallel between the sixth trumpet and the end of the millennium in terms of world-wide military imagery, but the two events are not at the same time in history. The parallel affirms that the army of the sixth trumpet is made up of opponents of God and His people.

T Rev 9:13-21 (Intro)—Another strong parallel to the sixth trumpet is Rev 20:7-9. While occurring at a different point in history, it confirms that the army of the sixth trumpet is made up of opponents of God and His people.

Rev 9:13-21 (Introduction 3)--A third major parallel between the sixth trumpet and other parts of Revelation is found in the sixth bowl plague. "The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the

dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.

"Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon." Revelation 16:12-16.

The sixth bowl plague introduces the battle of Armageddon, which is completed in the seventh bowl and elaborated in chapters 17 and 18. We learn from this parallel that the gathering of the sixth trumpet is the marshaling of satanic forces for the battle of Armageddon. The sixth trumpet and the sixth bowl are parallel. Like Revelation 9, the sixth bowl combines military language, demons, and the Euphrates River. As the counterpart of the sealing of the 144,000 the gathering of the sixth trumpet may actually cover an extended period of time in the world of the end-time.

T Rev 9:13-21 (Intro)— Like Revelation 9, the sixth bowl (Rev 16:12-16) combines military language, demons, and the Euphrates River. We learn from this parallel that the gathering of the sixth trumpet is the marshaling of satanic forces for the battle of Armageddon.

Rev 9:13—“The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God. . . .” Except for the last two verses of the sixth trumpet, there are no major Old Testament allusions in this trumpet. There are a number of echoes, and we will point them out as we go through.

John “heard” (Greek: *ēkousa*—a narrative aorist—the vision is described as a past event in the writer’s experience) a voice, which is described in verse 14. In verse 17 and following he describes what he saw (Greek: *eidon*). It is not simply “a voice” in the Greek, but “one voice” (*phōnēn mian*). Most translations (ESV, KJV, NASB, NIV, RSV, NRSV) ignore this since an exact translation (“one voice”) would be awkward in English. But the New English Translations expresses this beautifully: “I heard a single voice.” I have chosen to follow the crowd on this one as there seems little impact on meaning to do so. It is not clear whose voice is the one coming from the horns of the altar, Christian readers of Revelation would likely have assumed this was the voice of Christ, who both offers mercy and declares the consequences of rebellion against God.

T Rev 9:13—The Greek says that a “single voice,” not identified, spoke from the horns of the altar. John hears verses 14-16 and sees 17-19.

Rev 9:13— “I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God. . . .” The manuscript tradition is unusually divided regarding the four horns of the altar, even in the Byzantine tradition, which is usually fairly united. These variations do not affect the meaning of the sixth trumpet greatly, but they are quite interesting. I have chosen to follow most translators in the reading “from the four horns” (Greek: *ek tōn tessarōn keratōn*), which has wide support among manuscripts in both quantity and quality. But almost as strong in quality and quantity is the reading that drops the word “four” (Greek: *tessarōn*), reading simply “from

the horns of the . . . altar.” Since one voice from four horns is an awkward concept, this is likely a scribal “correction” to smooth out the reading. In addition, since the number four is significant in this part of Revelation (Rev 7:1-2, 11; 9:14-15, note also the four sins listed in 9:21), the standard reading is the most likely. There are also a number of unique readings. One early Coptic translation of this verse reads “from the horn (singular)” (Greek: *ek tou keratos*). The original reading of Sinaiticus leaves out “one from the four horns” (Greek: *mian ek tōn tessarōn keratōn*), reading simply “a voice from the golden altar.” And, finally, an Armenian translation reads quite differently: “from the four living creatures, which are before the altar of God” (Greek: *ek tōn tessarōn zōōn ha ἐν enōpion tou thusiasteriou tou theou*. In the standard reading, the single voice proceeds “out from” (Greek: “*ek*”), not just the golden altar, but from its four horns.

T Rev 9:13—The manuscript tradition has a variety of readings for “the four horns of the altar” here. The most likely reading is the familiar one: “A voice from the four horns of the golden altar.”

Rev 9:13—The Altar of Incense, which was before the veil in the Holy Place of the Hebrew tabernacle (Exod 30:6; 40:26), clearly came with horns, but that there were four of them is not mentioned (Exod 30:1-3). Of the Altar of Burnt Offering, on the other hand, it is clearly stated that there would be horns on the “four corners” of the altar (Exod 27:2-- Hebrew: *ârbâ pinnôtaw*), so one can presume the same for the Altar of Incense. Blood from the sacrifices in the outer court would be placed there (Exod 29:12). The altar in view here must be the same as that mentioned in Revelation 8:3—the golden altar which is before the throne. There it is the place where the incense mingled with the prayers of the saints is brought in the golden censer and offered to God (Rev 8:4). As in 8:5, this ministry results in negative outcomes (Rev 9:14-21), but the mention of the horns of the altar here implies that probation is still open for the human race, mercy is still being extended. The response to the cries of the souls under the altar (Rev 6-10), reaches its climax in the sixth trumpet. But, unlike the seven bowl-plagues, the judgment here is not without mercy. From a Christian perspective, this altar represents the intercession of Christ, which continues even in the midst of judgment.

T Rev 9:13—The altar in view here is the same mentioned in Rev 8:3-4. The mention of the horns of the altar implies that probation is still open for the human race.

T Rev 9:13—The Altar of Burnt Offering had horns on its four corners (Exod 27:2), the number of horns is not mentioned regarding the Altar of Incense (Exod 30:1-3), it was likely also four.

Rev 9:13—“The four horns of the golden altar. . . .” In the Solomon narratives of Second Kings, two of his opponents sought mercy by entering the tabernacle compound and grabbing hold of the horns of the altar. As David became advanced in age and feeble, palace intrigue broke out as to which of his sons would succeed him. Adonijah was a son of David by Haggith, one of David’s less-known wives. When he went public with his desire to be king, David did not rebuke him, so with the support of Joab and Abiathar, he moved to declare himself successor to David (1 Kings 1:1-7). When Nathan and Bathsheba convinced David that Solomon should be king

after him, David declared Solomon king (1 Kings 1:8-40). When Adonijah's supporters heard this they scattered and Adonijah realized his life was in danger and he took hold of the horns of the altar to beg mercy from Solomon (I Kings 1:50-52). After this David charged Solomon to deal also with Joab (1 Kings 2:1-6). When Joab heard of this and of the execution of Adonijah, he also entered the tabernacle complex and took hold of the horns of the alter (1 Kings 2:28). It is not clear which of the altars is in view in these passages, but it is most likely to have been the Altar of Burnt Offering, as only priests were generally allowed into the tabernacle itself. But in principle the horns seem to have serve as a symbol of mercy.

As horrible as the sixth trumpet is, it is still possible for people to be saved because the golden altar of intercession is still in view. The voice from the center of the horns of the altar would be that of Christ and it is still possible to hear His voice and repent.

T Rev 9:13—The horns of the altar seem to have been been as a place for mercy in the eyes of OT Israelites (1 Kings 1:50-52; 2:28).

Rev 9:14—“ . . . saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound upon the great river Euphrates.” The one being commanded to release the four angels would be the angel of the sixth trumpet. This command would come to the angel from a superior, presumably Christ or a representative of Christ. In contrast to the four angels restraining the four winds in Revelation 7, the angels here are bound to the Euphrates River and when released, they go to the extremities of the earth. In both cases, the working of evil is restrained until the moment of release. This is what I call a thematic parallel. There is a strong correlation in the actions that take place at the beginning of Revelation 7 and the beginning of the sixth trumpet. But a different word is used for binding or restraining. In Revelation 7 the four angels “hold back” (Greek: *kratountas*) the four winds of destruction. In this passage the angels themselves are “bound” (Greek: *dedemenous*) until the moment of release by the command from the voice of the altar.

T Rev 9:14-- In contrast to the four angels restraining the four winds in Revelation 7, the angels here are bound to the Euphrates River, and when released, they go to the extremities of the earth. In both cases, the working of evil is restrained until the moment of release.

Rev 9:14—While the words and imagery of Revelation 7 and 9 are different, these two events have much in common. If the angels of this passage correspond to the winds of Revelation 7, we would be viewing a later stage of earth's history, when the forces of destruction sweep across the earth. In my view, the four angels of both Revelation 7 and Revelation 9 are demonic (whether or not they are the same four angels). The fact that the four angels are commissioned to kill a third of the human race and that the outcome of the army that follows is the death of a third of humanity demonstrates that the four angels and the army are parallel destructive images. The overall image in both Revelation 7 and the sixth trumpet is one of God's restraint on the outworking of evil being removed toward the End, so that Satan will have an opportunity to demonstrate to the universe what things would be like if he were in charge. The destructive winds of Revelation 7 correspondence to the 200,000,000 man army of Revelation 9:16-19. Such a demonstration of Satan's leadership style (force and deception) is

critical to a successful conclusion of the cosmic conflict. The sixth trumpet, therefore, likely portrays the gathering and execution of satanic activity just before the End.

T Rev 9:14—The four angels here are demonic destructive parallels to the four winds of Rev 7. They are also parallel to the 200,000,000 man army, since both destroy a third of the human race. This is a demonstration of what would happen to the universe if Satan were in charge.

Rev 9:14—The full extent of the Promised Land was from the River of Egypt in the south to the Euphrates River in the north-east (Gen 15:18; Josh 1:4). While such an extent may only have been only achieved briefly in the reigns of David and Solomon (2 Sam 8:3; 1 Kings 4:21; 1 Chr 5:9), the Euphrates River was considered the natural border of Israel, according to the promise. In the Old Testament, the Euphrates River was sometimes considered the origin of threat to the land of Israel. ". . . . therefore the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty flood waters of the River—the king of Assyria with all his pomp. It will overflow all its channels, run over all its banks and sweep on into Judah, swirling over it, passing through it and reaching up to the neck. Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, O Immanuel!" Isaiah 8:7-8, NIV (see also Isaiah 7:20). The waters rising up to "the neck" represented the Assyrian invasion that took over the whole land of Judah with the exception of the capital at Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:1 – 19:37). So waters can represent invading armies, as appears to be the case also here (Rev 9:16-19). The imagery here is drawn from Israel's national and geographic experience in the Old Testament. In the Christian context of Revelation, this attack would be a spiritual one seeking to intimidate or deserve the followers of Jesus from their mission. The River Euphrates would represent the "border" between spiritual Babylon and spiritual Israel (see Jeremiah 51:63-64).

T Rev 9:14-- The River Euphrates represents the "border" between spiritual Babylon and spiritual Israel (see Jeremiah 51:63-64). Overflowing its banks, it can represent invading armies from the north as well (Isa 8:7-8).

Rev 9:14—Water as a symbol is used in three different ways in the book of Revelation. First of all, water can represent nourishment, as in drinking the water of life freely (Rev 21:6; 22:1; 22:17). Second, there is the theme of cleansing, water can be used for washing, although in Revelation this metaphor is often combined with the "blood of the Lamb" concept (Rev 1:5 [in some manuscripts]; 7:14). The third type of water imagery is destructive flooding. The dragon releases a flood of water from his mouth to destroy the woman, but the earth (desert) soaks up the flood and delivers her (Rev 12:14-16). It is the flooding and destructive side of water that is in view in the sixth trumpet. Releasing of the four angels releases the destructive army that threatens the people of God, much as the Assyrians once threatened Israel in the time of Hezekiah.

The sixth trumpet is modeled on the attacks that took place in the Old Testament. Just as the Abyss was the source of the demons in the fifth trumpet, now the Euphrates is the source of the demonic hoards that are restrained there and who will kill a third of mankind when let loose. Another divine passive.

T Rev 9:14—Water is used in three different ways in Rev: 1) as nourishment, 2) a means of washing, and 3) flooding destruction. It is the third way that is in view here.

Rev 9:15—“And the four angels (by the great River Euphrates), who were prepared for that very hour, day, month, and year, were released in order to kill a third of the human race.” The four angels were released (Greek: *eluthēsan*—aorist passive indicative) to accomplish their mission (“in order to kill”—Greek: *hina apokteinōsin*). How they do this is described in Revelation 9:17-18. Their release (Greek: *eluthēsan*) is a “visionary aorist,” the vision is described as past, in John’s past. The Greek purpose clause (“in order to kill”) indicates that the release has a purpose. This does not mean that God is directing the killing, but that the demonic forces are freed to do what they have always wanted to do. The vision represents a time in earth’s history when God’s restraint of evil begins to be lessened so that Satan’s character and government can be fully seen and understood. The divine passive indicates that these angels are not operating of their own volition, but were under the restraint of a higher power, namely God.

T Rev 9:15—The four angels “were released,” not at some time in John’s past, but it is the vision itself that is past in John’s experience. God lessens His restraint of evil so the character of evil can be clearly seen.

Rev 9:15—The fact that there are four angels does not seem directly related to the four units of time, the “hour, day, month, and year.” The word for “prepared” (Greek: *hētoimasmenoi*) means making ready, suiting up, arranging for, something. The word is used for food preparation (Matt 22:4), preparation of the rewards for both the blessed (Matt 25:34) and the cursed (Matt 25:41) ones in Jesus’ eschatological parable, the “making ready” of the way of the Lord in Mark 1:3, the arrangements for the final Passover of Jesus’ ministry (Luke 22:13), Jesus’ preparation of the heavenly reward for His disciples (John 14:2-3), the adorning of a bride for her wedding (Rev 21:2), and reserving a place to stay for the night (Luke 9:52). The four angels in this verse are ready and willing for the task they will do after their release. It has been anticipated and prepared for. Whatever was needed for this task is already done, they are fully prepared.

T Rev 9:15—The word translated “prepared” is used for food preparation, preparing the way for the Messiah, preparing rewards for the end-time, and reserving a place to stay for the night. The four angels are similarly “prepared” for their task in this trumpet.

Rev 9:15—In the Jewish eschatology of that time, the idea of destructive angels may also play a role. In Slavonic Enoch 10:1-3 there is a vivid description of the tortures of the wicked at the End. These tortures are supervised by “the angels fearful and merciless, bearing angry weapons, merciless torture. . . .” 2 Enoch (also known as Slavonic Enoch and The Book of the Secrets of Enoch) 10:1. It is not clear in this description if these tormentors are angels of God or demonic beings. There is also some scholarly question whether the medieval manuscripts of 2 Enoch (in the Slavonic language) fully reflect the presumed ancient original.

In Ethiopic Enoch 76 there is a description of the twelve winds of heaven, four of which bring peace and blessing and eight of which bring punishment. 1 Enoch (also known as Ethiopic Enoch) 76:4. While angels are not mentioned in this chapter of Enoch, the association of angels and destructive winds is made in Revelation 7:1-3.

T Rev 9:15—The concept of destructive angels is found also in the Jewish eschatology of the time when Rev was written.

Rev 9:15—“The hour, day, month, and year” (Greek: *tēn hōran kai hēmeran kai mēna kai eniauton*) have often been interpreted as a period of time, roughly thirteen months long, or its equivalent in terms of the year-day principle (391 years and two weeks). But such a reading would be more likely if the time periods were reversed (“a year, month, day and hour”) and/or if the article was dropped or added to each time period (“the hour and the day and the month and the year”). But the Greek of this time period (*tēn hōran kai hēmeran kai mēna kai eniauton*) has a single article at the beginning, governing the whole phrase. This unites all four time periods into a single entity, hence my translation “that very hour, day, . . .” This is a Greek way of expressing a point in time rather than a period of time. The preposition (translated “for”—Greek: *eis*) at the beginning of the series of time elements can signify extent, when combined with duration of time. In combination with a point in time, it signifies the goal of the preparation, a particular point in time when the angels would be released to do what they had prepared for. The four angels were prepared for a specific point in history, presumably the same moment as the declaration of Revelation 10:6, “Time will be no more.”

T Rev 9:15—The single article governing the whole phrase indicates that the time elements express a point in time rather than a period of time.

Rev 9:15—That the order of these time periods represents a point in time can be illustrated from experience. If I were to ask a married person WHEN he or she got married, they would start with the smallest time period and move to the greatest: “Two o’clock in the afternoon on the 23rd of June, 1977.” The wedding is a point in time and the delineation of that point moves from hour to day to month to year. But if I were to ask how long the couple had been married, the order would be reversed: “Forty two years, one month, fifteen days and three hours.” So the order of the time periods in Revelation 9:15, combined with the use of the article, means a point in time is in view here. An analogy in the Greek is found in Matthew 24:36, where Jesus speaks of the moment of His return as “that day and hour” (Greek: *tēs hēmeras ekeinēs kai hōras*). He is not saying that His return will last 25 hours, but is referring to it as a point in time in the future.

T Rev 9:15—When describing a period of time, one naturally starts with the longest element (years) not the shortest (hours).

Rev 9:15—This (point in time) is a challenging observation for Seventh-day Adventists, who are accustomed to reading this time period as a 391+ year period because of the mention of this passage in Ellen White’s book *The Great Controversy*, page 343. There Ellen White described

how this passage played an important role in the Millerite movement. Josiah Litch used this time period to predict the span of the Ottoman Empire and declared that it would come to an end on August 11, 1840. A major diplomatic concession to the western allies by the Ottoman Empire reported on that day caused a great deal of interest in the Millerite principles of prophetic interpretation. So that interpretation played a major role in developments that led ultimately to the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

T Rev 9:15—Ellen White in GC reports a different take on Rev 9:15. Josiah Litch used the assumed time period of 391+ years to predict the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. The seeming fulfillment fueled interest in prophetic study in America.

Rev 9:15—Since I am a Seventh-day Adventist and believe in the prophetic inspiration of Ellen G. White, many have wondered why I differ from the above account of Revelation 9:15. This question deserves a more detailed response than would be appropriate in the context of a commentary. But let me give you the main points in a nutshell. First of all, Ellen White did not claim to be an expert in either history or biblical exegesis. She rarely does exegesis (and is not doing it in GC 343) and when she does, she is usually drawing her exegesis from a particular source. She brings Litch's prediction into the story of the Millerite movement, because that story couldn't be told without it. Second, Litch himself later on repudiated his interpretation of Revelation and history and no one has ever been able to duplicate his work successfully, although a number have tried. The Ottoman Empire did not fall in 1840, it fell in 1922-1924. The Greek of the text does not support a period of time and Ellen White herself encouraged people to base their conclusions about the Bible on their direct study of the Bible rather than her comments about the Bible.

T Rev 9:15—Ellen White in GC reports a different take on Rev 9:15. Josiah Litch used the assumed time period of 391+ years to predict the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. The seeming fulfillment fueled interest in prophetic study in America.

Rev 9:15—If “Litch’s prediction” (Ellen White’s own cautious wording) was not based on the Bible, why did it seem to be fulfilled in the events of August, 1840? God will one day make it all plain to us, but I suspect that Litch’s confidence in his specific and detailed interpretation put the whole movement in jeopardy. Rather than see all the progress of the first nine years (Miller’s preaching from 1831-1840) go for naught, God intervened in such a way that the general populace felt Miller’s principles of prophetic interpretation were confirmed by current events and, as a result, they were willing to give the Millerite message a chance. In the long run, the events of 1840 do not seem as significant as Litch portrayed them, but at a crucial moment God arranged events in such a way that the movement survived and spawned a denomination that has grown into a world-wide movement today.

T Rev 9:15—“Litch’s prediction” has not been successfully grounded in either the text of Rev 9 or the history of Turkey (and its predecessor, the Ottoman Empire), so should be supported with caution, if at all.

Rev 9:16— “And the number of the mounted soldiers was two hundred million. I heard the number of them.” This is the numbering of Satan’s army which can only be fully numbered at the very end of time. The army is described in verses 17-19. The phrase “the mounted soldiers” (Greek: *tōn strateumatōn tou hippikou*) translates the word for “armies” or “troops” (*strateumatōn*-- plural) and the word for “horseman” (*hippikou*-- singular). Since “armies” is plural and “horseman” is single, a better interpretation of “horseman” might be the English collective “cavalry.” The Byzantine Greek text has “horse” (*hippou*) rather than “horseman” (*hippikou*), hence literally “horse armies.” The description in verses 17-19, in fact, focuses more on the horses than on those who ride them. This army is the way that the four angels kill a third of the human race.

T Rev 9:16—This verse introduces the gathering of Satan’s spiritual army in preparation for Armageddon.

Rev 9:16—In Greek, the two hundred million is stated as $2 \times 10,000 \times 10,000$ (Greek: *dismuriades muriadōn*—literally twenty thousands of ten thousands). The army is organized into 20,000 brigades or divisions of 10,000 each. The number may be an expansion of Psalm 68:17 where the chariots of God are “twenty thousand (Hebrew: *ribbithayim*—the dual form of 10,000) thousands” (Hebrew: *alephay*-- plural). A similar figure is the ten thousands times ten thousands in Daniel 7 and Revelation 5 (see also Hebrews 12:22 and Jude 14). The number should not be taken literally, since there probably were not as many people in the whole earth in John’s day as the number of this army. Even today, large armies number in hundreds of thousands rather than hundreds of millions. What is clear is that this army is an exceedingly great multitude. The numbers and their appearance suggests a demonic horde rather than a human army.

T Rev 9:16—The 200,000,000 is stated in Greek as $2 \times 10,000 \times 10,000$. The figure is reminiscent of Psalm 68:17, Daniel 7 and Rev 5.

Rev 9:16—The phrase, “I heard the number, . . .” (Greek: *ēkousa ton arithmon*) recalls the identical phrase in Revelation 7:4 (Greek: *ēkousa ton arithmon*). The only appearance of this phrase in the entire book of Revelation is in 7:4 and 9:16, so they are deliberately connected. This means that the 144,000 sealed ones are somehow parallel to the 200,000,000 destroyers in the sixth trumpet. Since both passages portray end-time events (or the preparation for end-time events), these two “armies” are contrasting parallels. The 144,000 represents the end-time army of God and the 200,000,000 represent the end-time army of God’s opponents (or the demonic powers that drive them). The army of the sixth trumpet is the counterpart of God’s end-time people. The sixth trumpet portrays the gathering of the enemy forces for the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:16).

T Rev 9:16—“I heard the number” is echoed only in Rev 7:4. The two numbered groups are deliberately connected in the Greek. The two sides in the final conflict are gathering for Armageddon.

Rev 9:16—As we work our way through the book of Revelation, we see a series of parallels between the people of God and those who oppose God and His people, the “wicked.” The wicked called for the rocks and mountains to fall on them in the sixth seal (Rev 6:15-16) and, by contrast, the righteous were symbolized by the 144,000 and the great multitude (Revelation 7). So Revelation 7 is a contrasting parallel to the sixth seal. As we have just seen, the 144,000 are parallel to the 200,000,000 of the sixth trumpet. So Revelation 7 is parallel to the sixth trumpet as well as the sixth seal. But the two-hundred million that surge out under the sixth trumpet are also in parallel contrast with the righteous, symbolized by the two witnesses that must prophecy to the world again (Revelation 10-11). These same righteous in chapter 11 are paralleled by the description of the beast from the sea in Revelation 13. That beast is also parallel with the remnant, the 144,000, and the three angels and their messages in Revelation 14). So, over and again in the book of Revelation, there are parallels and contrasts between the righteous and the wicked, which can be instructive both ways.

There is a sense in which, therefore, there are no sharp distinctions between good and evil in the book of Revelation. Sometimes parallels can be drawn between the forces of God and the forces of evil. I suggest that the reason for this is that deception and counterfeit is such a central part of this book. The message that communicates is how easy it will be to accept the deceptions of the End-time.

T Rev 9:16—Multiple parallels between the forces of God and the forces of evil in Rev underline the theme of deception and counterfeit as the world moves toward the End-time.

Rev 9:17—“And this is the way I saw the horses and the ones sitting on them in the vision: They had breastplates the color of fire, hyacinth and sulphur. The heads of the horses were like the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulphurous fumes.” With this verse John moves from hearing to seeing. We get a visual description of the destruction that was promised when the four angels were released from the Euphrates River. The description of the horsemen in 9:17-19 is quite similar to the description of the locusts/scorpions in the fifth trumpet. As it turns out, the sixth trumpet is an extension and expansion of the plagues in the fifth.

In a literal sense, the passage opens in the Greek with “and thus” or “and in this manner” (Greek: *kai houtos*). Hence I translated “this is the way I saw. . . .” *Houtos* (“thus”) refers here to what follows. John’s attention from here on is fixed on the visual description of this massive cavalry horde. The appearance of the horses and riders was unusual enough to garner his full attention.

T Rev 9:17-- With this verse John moves from hearing to seeing. It is a visual description of the destruction promised when the four angels were released from the Euphrates River. John’s attention from here on is fixed on the visual description of this massive cavalry horde.

Rev 9:17—The word translated “vision” (Greek: *orasei*) is used only one other time in Revelation (4:3), but for a different purpose there (translated “appearance”). The word appears several times in Ezekiel (LXX: 8:3; 11:24; 40:2) for a prophetic vision and is used similarly in Daniel 9:21 (LXX) to translate one of the Hebrew words for prophetic vision (*chazôn*—referring back to Daniel 8:3-12).

In Revelation 9:9 it is the horses that are wearing breastplates (Greek: *thôraikas*, 2x). Here it is not entirely clear whether it is the horses or the riders that are wearing the breastplates (*thôraikas*), but if it is one or the other, it would be referring to the riders, as they are the nearest antecedent. Later on in Greek the word for “breastplate” came to be used for defensive armor as a whole, but at the time of John, just the breastplate was in mind. The Greek is literally “having (Greek: *echontas*) breastplates the color of. . . .” Since “having” (Greek present participle) is plural, the breastplates probably refer to both the horses and their riders.

T Rev 9:17—The word for “vision” here is typically used in the Greek OT for prophetic visions (Ezek 8:3; 11:24; 40:2; Dan 9:21). The breastplates probably refer to both the horses and their riders.

Rev 9:17—“They had breastplates the color of fire, hyacinth and sulphur. . . .” The breastplates of the horsemen anticipate the lake of fire with three adjectives; fiery (Greek: *purinous*), hyacinth-colored (Greek: *huakinthinous*), and something like sulphur (Greek: *theiôdeis*). All three terms are adjectives, modifying “breastplates.” These weren’t breastplates of fire, they were “fiery.” The breastplates are not made of hyacinth-stone (*huakinthos*—see Revelation 21:20), they are a dark, bluish-purple like the stone or the flower of the corresponding name. Neither are they made of sulphur or brimstone, rather they are “sulphurous,” like sulphur in appearance). The passage makes the most sense if these three descriptives refer to color only. The breastplates are fiery red, smoky blue, and sulphurous yellow. It is not clear whether all the horsemen wear three-colored uniforms, or if the horsemen have three divisions, each represented by one of the three colors. What comes out of their mouths later in this verse (fire, smoke and sulphur, Greek: *pur, kapnos, theon*) corresponds to the three earlier colors, respectively. A number of commentators compare the overall description of these horsemen to the Babylonians in Habakkuk 1:6-10.

T Rev 9:17—The breastplates of the horsemen anticipate the materials of the lake of fire (Rev 19:20).

Rev 9:17—There are a couple of potential thematic parallels here to other parts of Revelation. The fire, smoke and brimstone coming out of the mouths of these horses anticipates the demons coming out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet (Rev 16:13). This parallel enhances the demonic nature of the description here. On the other hand, it is blasphemous words that come out of the mouth of the sea beast in Revelation 13 (13:6). If the sea beast is part of end-time Babylon (see Revelation 16:13, 19), the description here could

anticipate the spiritual nature of the battle of Armageddon (see comments on Revelation 16:15).

T Rev 9:17—The mention of “mouths” is paralleled by the mouth of the sea beast (Rev 13:6) and the mouths of the dragon, beast and false prophet (Rev 16:13, 19).

Rev 9:18—“A third of the human race was killed by these three plagues: by the fire, the smoke and the sulphurous fumes that came out of their mouths.” Fire, smoke and sulphur in combination are consistently linked with negative judgments on the wicked in the Bible (Gen 19:24, 28; Psa 11:6; Isa 34:9-10; Ezek 38:22; Luke 17:29; Rev 14:10-11; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8). This verse essentially repeats what has been said earlier, as a point of emphasis. Killing a third of the human race recalls verse 15, where that task is performed by the four angels released from the Euphrates River. Fire, smoke and sulphurous fumes recalls the fire, smoke and sulphurous fumes coming out of the mouths of the horses of verse 17. The one thing added by this verse is the fact that the fire, smoke and sulphurous fumes are, in fact, the agents that cause the death of a third of the human race. In this they are equated with the four angels released from the Euphrates. They appear to be two vastly different images symbolizing essentially the same thing, the gathering power of evil toward the end of human history. In the battle of Armageddon passage (Rev 16:12-16), the forces of evil are a combination of the demonic (the three frogs), institutional religion (the unholy trinity) and the civil and secular powers of the world (kings of the earth). The locusts of the fifth trumpet were forbidden to kill (Rev 9:5), the horsemen of the sixth are ordered to kill. The restraint of God is decreasing as the trumpets go on.

T Rev 9:18— Fire, smoke and sulphur together are consistently linked with judgments on the wicked in the Bible (Gen 19:24, 28; Isa 34:9-10; Rev 19:20; 20:10; 21:8). The locusts of the fifth trumpet were forbidden to kill (Rev 9:5), the horsemen of the sixth are ordered to kill.

Rev 9:18—The prepositions in this verse are rather interesting, rather difficult to translate into English. In my translation “a third of the human race was killed BY (Greek: *apo*) these three plagues.” The Greek word *apo* is the first word of the Greek sentence, implying considerable importance for the writer. It can mean out of, away from, with, or by. It is not clear if the plagues are the place “from which” the killings come or “by which” the killing come. The use of *apo* here instead of other options would normally favor a directional interpretation; the human deaths came from that direction. Then in my translation “BY (Greek: *ek*) the fire . . . that came out of their mouths.” The Greek word *ek* also has a strong sense of source: out from or away from (the Majority Greek text reads *apo* here as well, probably attempting to smooth out the reading of the text), but it is odd that John uses two different prepositions in the same clause to mean roughly the same thing. So the Greek does not seem to imply what my English translation implies. People are not killed “by” the fire, smoke and sulphur, but these are the direction from which the destruction comes. “From” might be closer to the Greek, but sounds awkward in this English context. Perhaps it is the army itself that does the killing. The fire, smoke and sulphurous fumes accompany that army in its mission.

T Rev 19:18—The first word of this verse is “from” (Greek: *apo*), indicating the importance of the fact that fire, smoke and sulphur are the agents of destruction in this plague.

Rev 9:17-18—Stefanovic, in his commentary on Revelation, notes a hidden chiasm embedded in the Greek language of this passage; beginning with verse 17c and ending at the conclusion of verse 18. The chiasm begins and ends with the phrase “out of their mouths” (Greek: *ek tōn stomatōn autōn*). Second, and next to last, is a word for “coming out” (Greek: *ekporeuetai, ekporeuomenou*). Third, and third from last, are the words for fire, smoke and sulphur (Greek: *pur, kapnos, theion; puros, kapnou, theiou*). The middle of the chiasm, and the key point of the passage, is the sentence: “A third of the human race was killed by these three plagues.” This sentence is bracketed, fore and aft, by the same words in reverse order. The full chiasm is laid out here:

A from their mouths

B were coming out

C fire and smoke and brimstone

D From these three plagues were killed. . . .

C' fire and smoke and brimstone

B' were coming out

A' from their mouths

T Rev 9:17-18—There is a seven-point chiasm (a pyramid-shaped literary structure) in these verses centered on the phrase “from these three plagues were killed. . . .

Rev 9:19—“For the authority of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails. For their tails were like snakes, having heads, and with them they did harm.” The word “authority” (Greek: *exousia*) plays a significant role in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 6:8 Death and Hades have authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts (Rev 6:8). The locusts that came out of the smoke of the pit were given authority like that of scorpions (Rev 9:3). The locust/scorpions had authority to harm human beings with their tails (Rev 9:10). Jesus Christ has authority over the Kingdom of God as Messiah (Rev 12:10). The beast from the sea is given authority over every tribe and people and language and nation (Rev 13:5, 7). And, finally, those who have washed their robes have authority to eat of the Tree of Life and enter into the gates of the New Jerusalem (Rev 22:14). So authority can be both positive and negative in Revelation. In Genesis 1, the human race in the person of Adam is given authority over the beasts. In the fifth and sixth trumpets and in Revelation 13, the beasts are given authority over the human race. This fits the ongoing theme in the trumpets of the undoing or reversal of creation. That theme occurs first in the Bible in the Flood story (see my book *What the Bible Says About the End-Time*, 44-46). God's creation is turned on its head as a result of human sin.

T Rev 9:19—The word “authority” can be used both positively (Rev 12:10; 22:14) and negatively (Rev 6:8; 9:3, 10; 13:5, 7) in the book of Revelation.

Rev 9:19—But the authority to harm and destroy “was given” (Greek: *edothē*) to the forces of evil (Rev 6:8; 9:3; 13:5, 7). They are not able to destroy unless God allows it. They have no inherent authority of their own. While “was given” is not attached to “authority” in this verse, the same idea is implied in the releasing of the four angels in 9:14-15. The language of permission is not used in the positive instances of “authority” (Rev 12:10; 22:14). But it is, in these instances, contingent. The salvation and authority of Jesus Christ was contingent upon God’s victory in the heavenly conflict and the casting down of Satan (Rev 12:7-10). The authority to eat of the Tree of Life was contingent on the washing of robes, an image of applying the gift of the gospel to the lives of believers (Rev 22:14). So that authority has a beginning point in each case. It is contingent upon the character of God and events on earth.

T Rev 9:19—Negative authority “was given” to the forces of evil in the release of the four angels in verses 14 and 15. They are not ordered by God to destroy, but their activities are permitted.

Rev 9:19—“For the authority of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails.” The “authority” of the locust/scorpions in the fifth trumpet was in their tails (Rev 9:3, 10). The “authority” of the 200,000,000 man army was in the fire, smoke and sulphur that came out of the mouths of the cavalry in 9:17-18. As noted by Stefanovic, the “mouth” (Greek: *stomatōn*) in Revelation is generally a weapon in the spiritual battle between good and evil. Christ makes war against the unrepentant with the sword that comes out of His mouth (Rev 1:16; 2:16, 19:15, 21). Fire comes out of the mouths of the two witnesses to kill their enemies (Rev 11:5). The mouth of the dragon pours out water to destroy the woman, who represents the church (see comments on Rev 12:6, 14-16). The sea beast uses its mouth to speak great things and blasphemies against God and against the inhabitants of heaven (13:5-6). The dragon, beast and false prophet produce frogs out of their mouths to persuade the kings of the whole world to gather for Armageddon (16:13-14). While the context in Revelation is often military, the mouth as a weapon is more verbal than physical. As we will see, when we come to Armageddon in chapter 16, the final battle centers more on the spiritual issues in the cosmic conflict than on the political and military conflicts of this earth.

T Rev 9:19— The “authority” of the locust/scorpions was in their tails (Rev 9:3, 10). The “authority” of the 200,000,000 man army was in the fire, smoke and sulphur that came out of their mouths. The “mouth” in Rev is a weapon in the spiritual battle between good and evil.

Rev 9:19—In this verse the two images, the mouth and the tail, are combined. The horsemen have the authority of both the mouth and the tail (neither of which is natural for horses—the power of horses is in their hooves, not their mouths or tails). This means that whatever is implied by the locust/scorpions in the fifth trumpet, that power or authority is continued in the sixth trumpet and combined with the new menace arising out of the Euphrates River. The forces of evil introduced in the fifth and sixth trumpets are combined in the destructions of Armageddon. A similar image is carried out in more plain language in the sixth bowl-plague (Rev 16:12-16). The religious powers of the world (dragon, beast and false prophet) gather the secular, political and military forces of the world in service of their final attack on God’s faithful

ones (see comments on Rev 16:12-16 and elaboration in comments on Rev 17:16 and context). In the sixth trumpet we see the gathering of enemy forces for the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:16).

T Rev 9:19—In this verse the images of mouth and tail are combined. The evil forces of both fifth and sixth trumpets are combined in the sixth. This alliance parallels the build-up to the sixth bowl (Rev 16:13-16).

Rev 9:19—The imagery in 9:17-19 is not to be taken literally. Horses don't belch literal fire, smoke and brimstone out of their mouths, although on a cold day their breath can seem like smoke. Horses don't wield their tails as a weapon. Further evidence for this is the fact that in Isaiah 9:15, tails are used to represent prophetic lies: "The elder and honored man is the head, and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail." The tail is a symbol of deception and false teaching. See also the concept of the "false prophet" in Revelation 13:11-18 and 16:13-14. As so often in Revelation, behind the military and destructive imagery of evil are lies about reality and about the character of God. Evil is attractive because it seems to be for our good, but proves in the end to be a lie. While human existence is full of literal and military conflict, there are deeper issues that lie behind the conflicts of this earth. These are spelled out in more detail in Revelation 12, where the curtain is drawn back and they great controversy over the character and government of God is exposed. The images of Revelation may be bewildering at times, but there is a common thread running through all grounded in the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan.

T Rev 9:19—The images in verses 17-19 are not to be taken literally. Horses in real life do not wield either their mouths or their tails as weapons, they defend themselves with their hooves.

T Rev 9:19— Behind the military and destructive imagery of evil are lies about reality and about the character of God. While human existence is full of literal and military conflict, there are deeper issues that lie behind the conflicts of this earth.

Rev 9:19—“For their tails were like snakes, having heads, and with them they did harm.” The text does not say that each tail has a head, but uses the plural “heads” (Greek: *kephalas*), as if each tail has multiple heads. The ancient Greeks describe a two-headed snake they called *amphisbaena*. The tail was shaped like a head but didn't function as one. The comparison with snakes anticipates the “ancient serpent” of Revelation 12:9 and 20:3, otherwise known as the devil or Satan. This further underscores the cosmic and demonic dimension of the plagues unleashed in the sixth trumpet. In a literal sense, snakes as a class have dual abilities to harm. The first is through the mouth, as with a cobra, which can bite and inject paralyzing poison, in many instances. But other kinds of snakes, such as the python, can harm with their bodies, squeezing the life out of the victim. But the combination of images clearly is not intended to be taken literally. The great conflict in the universe is portrayed in Revelation as a war of words rather than physical force (see comments on Rev 12:4, 9-11, see also comments on the battle of Armageddon—Rev 16:16). Paul has a similar kind of warfare in mind in 1 Corinthians 10:3-5 and Ephesians 6:10-17.

T Rev 9:19—The text uses the plural “heads” as if each tail has multiple heads. Each tail was shaped like a head(s) but didn’t function as one. The reference to snakes here anticipates reference to the “ancient serpent” later on (Rev 12:9; 20:3).

Rev 9:17-19 (Conclusion)--The power of secularism in the fifth trumpet, modeled on ancient Egypt, was in the power of the tail. As we will see, the imagery of the sixth trumpet points more in the direction of ancient Babylon as a model. Here, the powers in both the mouth and the tail are in action against the people of God, making this plague the worst of both worlds. If I have understood this prophecy correctly, secularism, or something similar, will last until the End and will be used by the more-religious powers of the sixth trumpet for their own ends (in Revelation 16-17, we will see that even more clearly). God will permit Satan to bring out all the powers of hell and manifest them on the earth in the events leading up to the close of history. In so doing, Satan will fully demonstrate what the universe would be like were he in charge. And in so doing, he will bring the character of God into sharp relief.

T Rev 9:17-19 (Conclusion)—The power of the evil army is in both the mouth and the tail, combining the secular power of the fifth trumpet with the religious bent of the sixth. This end-time combination is paralleled in Rev 16-17.

Rev 9:20-21 (Introduction)—“And the rest of the human race, those who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands in order that they might not worship demons or idols of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood. Such idols are not able to see, hear, or walk. And the rest of the human race did not repent of their murders, their magic arts, their acts of fornication, or their thefts.” There is a fascinating quadruple negative in these two verses. Those who were NOT killed by the plagues did NOT repent . . . in order than they might NOT worship demons . . . and did NOT repent of their murders. . . . The lack of repentance is mentioned twice. The first mention (9:20) concerns violations of the first table of the Ten Commandments, those related to the worship of God. They did not repent of worshiping demons instead of God or of idolatry. The second mention of non-repentance (9:21) concerns violations of the second table of the Ten Commandments, they continued in murder, adultery and theft.

T Rev 9:20-21 (Intro)— There is a quadrupal negative in these verses, two of which underline the lack of repentance on the part of those who survive the plagues of the sixth trumpet.

T Rev 9:20-21 (Intro)— Verse 20 involves violations of the first table of the Ten Commandments. Verse 21 involves violations of the second table.

Rev 9:20-21 (Introduction 2)—While there have been few Old Testament allusions in verses 13-19, there are several in this passage, two of which I will mention in this introduction. The purpose of these allusions is to compare the evil forces of the sixth trumpet with the stories of ancient Babylon and its fall. Just as ancient Babylon rose to great power and dominated God’s people for a time and then fell in the attack by Cyrus, the sixth trumpet portrays end-time

Babylon's rise to power (Rev 9:13-21, see also 16:13-16; 17:1-5), followed by the sufferings of God's people (Rev 10:1 – 11:13, see also 17:6), followed by the fall of Babylon at the drying up of the Euphrates River (Rev 16:12; 17:15). So the sixth trumpet describes end-time Babylon in its ascending phase, while Babylon's defeat is left to Revelation 17 and 18.

T Rev 9:20-21 (Intro)— Rev portrays end-time Babylon's rise to power (Rev 9:13-21, see also 16:13-16; 17:1-5), followed by the sufferings of God's people (Rev 10:1 – 11:13, see also 17:6), followed by the fall of Babylon at the drying up of the Euphrates River (Rev 16:12; 17:15).

Rev 9:20-21 (Introduction 3)— The language of idolatry in these verses recalls Daniel 5, where Babylon is described just before the drying up of the River Euphrates. At Belshazzar's feast, Daniel speaks repeatedly of the idols of gold and silver, wood, and stone (Dan 5:4, 23). Isaiah 47 also focused on the character and fall of ancient Babylon. The language of sorcery in verse 21 echoes the language of Isaiah 47:9 and 12, NIV: "Both of these will overtake you in a moment, on a single day: loss of children and widowhood. They will come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and all your potent spells. . . . Keep on, then, with your magic spells and with your many sorceries, which you have labored at since childhood. Perhaps you will succeed, perhaps you will cause terror." So the rise and fall of ancient Babylon is very much in John's mind as he writes out the vision he has received. The sorcerers remind us of ancient Babylon also. In spite of all the efforts of God (outlined in more detail in Revelation 10 and 11), the people refuse to repent (Rev 9:20-21). Therefore, they mark themselves as on the outside.

T Rev 9:20-21 (Intro)— The idolatry in these verses recalls Belshazzar's feast in Dan 5 and Babylon's fall in Isa 47.

Rev 9:20— "And the rest of the human race, those who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands in order that they might not worship demons or idols of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood. Such idols are not able to see, hear, or walk." This verse indicates the purpose of the plagues described in the previous three verses. Whether taken literally or spiritually, they are designed to provoke repentance. They serve as an appeal from God to the human race to recognize the consequences of sin and rebellion, but they do not have the effect that might reasonably have been expected, they bring about no repentance in two-thirds of humanity (Rev 9:18) who survive them. The rest of the human race continue worshiping demons and idols.

T Rev 9:20— According to this verse, the purpose of the plagues in verses 17-19 was to provoke repentance.

Rev 9:20— "And the rest of the human race, those who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands. . . ." The main sentence here is: "The rest of the human race did not repent" (Greek: *hoi loipoi tōn anthrōpōn . . . oude metenoēsan*). The "rest of the human race" refers to the two-thirds who were not killed by the plagues in the previous verses. The word for "rest" (Greek: *loipoi*) is the same as is often translated "remnant" in Revelation

12:17 (Greek: *tōn loipōn*). This word occurs eight times in the book of Revelation. Three of these designate the people of God in a positive way (Rev 2:24; 11:13; 12:17). Three other references designate opponents of God and His people (Rev 9:20; 19:21; 20:5). The other two references (Rev 3:2; 8:13) refer to things rather than people. This is one of the negative people references. See comments on Rev 12:17 for further details.

T Rev 9:20— The word for “rest” (Greek: *loipoi*) is the same as is often translated “remnant” in Revelation 12:17 (Greek: *tōn loipōn*). This word occurs eight times in the book of Revelation.

Rev 9:20—The “remnant” here is defined by the subordinate clause: “Those who were not killed by these plagues” (the plagues of verses 17-19 rather than the plagues of all previous trumpets). This remnant did not repent “out of” (Greek: *ek*) the works of their hands. Whenever the Greek word for repentance (*metanoeō*) is followed by “out of” (*ek*) it means a moral change involving the abandonment of sinful works. In this case the “rest” of humanity did not take that course. They chose instead to continue breaking the commandments of God in their worship of other gods and acts of murder, sorcery, adultery and theft. The purview of this trumpet is not the fate of the righteous. Only the unrepentant are in view here. The view of the righteous occurs in chapters 10 and 11.

T Rev 9:20— Whenever the Greek word for repentance (*metanoeō*) is followed by “out of” (*ek*) it means a moral change involving the abandonment of sinful works. In this case the “rest” of humanity did not take that course.

Rev 9:20— “The works of their hands” (*ek tōn ergōn tōn cheirōn autōn*) is a neutral concept in itself, but here the phrase is defined by what follows. In the narrow sense of the context, it refers to the construction of idols (Psa 115:4; 135:15; Isa 2:8; Ezek 22:1-4; Hos 13:2), a futile task mocked in detail by Isaiah (44:9-20). But in the broader sense, “the works of their hands” is the equivalent of sin; the attempt to perform for oneself what only God can or should do. The “rest” of humanity did not repent of their sins. They did not repent of demon-worship, idolatry, murder, magical arts, fornication or theft. The “works of their hands” here is clearly the equivalent of sin, defined further, from the examples in this passage, as breaking the commandments of God. So the repentance anticipated as a result of this plague is a turning away from sin and a turning toward God. But this repentance does not occur as a result of the plagues in the sixth trumpet.

T Rev 9:20— “The works of their hands” represents sin in the larger sense and the construction of idols in the narrow sense (as in Psa 115:4; 135:15, etc.).

Rev 9:20— “In order that they might not worship demons or idols of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood. . . .” The “not repenting” (Greek: *oude metenoēsan*) had a purpose; “in order that they might not worship demons or idols” (Greek: *hina mē proskunēsousin ta daimonia kai ta eidōla*). This somewhat awkward expression means that they intended to continue in their worship of counterfeit gods. In context this is a brazen determination to continue in rebellion against God. The word for “demons” (Greek: *daimonia*) is used in the LXX (Greek Old

Testament) for the gods of paganism as well the demonic spirits or fallen angels. If it is the former here, the two expressions (“demons and idols”) mean essentially the same thing. If the latter, the worship of idols serves the interests of God’s primeval enemy, the Devil or Satan, a point made previously by the apostle Paul (1 Cor 10:20).

T Rev 9:20— The “not repenting” had a purpose; “in order that they might not worship demons or idols.” This somewhat awkward expression means that they intended to continue in their worship of counterfeit gods.

Rev 9:20— “Such idols are not able to see, hear, or walk.” Idols that cannot see, hear or walk seems to directly allude to Daniel 5:23: “You have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know. . . .” A religion whose god does not see, hear or know is a futile religion. A common polemic against idol-worship, therefore, was to point out the absurdity of worshiping an object that the worshiper has shaped and created (Isa 44:9-20).

In Romans 1:18-32 Paul argues that it is rebellion against God that leads to idolatry and it is idolatry that leads to all kinds of sins and perversions. In the sixth trumpet that rebellion has hardened into settled commitment to that rebellion. The sixth trumpet portrays a hardening of humanity in rebellion that ultimately leads to the close of human probation (see Rev 10:7) and exclusion from the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:8; 22:15). That close of probation is not portrayed as an arbitrary decree on the part of God, but as the natural progression of human rebellion. In contrast, the 144,000 (Rev 7:1-8) represent those whose sealing is the culmination of a growing commitment to the gospel and the God of Jesus Christ.

T Rev 9:20— In Romans 1:18-32 Paul argues that it is rebellion against God that leads to idolatry and it is idolatry that leads to all kinds of sins and perversions. In the sixth trumpet that rebellion has hardened into settled commitment to that rebellion.

T Rev 9:20— The close of human probation is not portrayed as an arbitrary decree on the part of God, but as the natural progression of human rebellion.

Rev 9:21— “And the rest of the human race did not repent of their murders, their magic arts, their acts of fornication, or their thefts.” This verse begins with a repeat of verse 20, but now adds sins related to the second table of the Ten Commandments (the sixth, seventh and eighth commandments) with the addition of “magic arts” (Greek: *pharmakōn*) or sorcery (ESV, KJV, NASB, RSV, NRSV). This would appear to be a listing of the chief sins of paganism. The sorcery reference is parallel to the worshiping of demons in the previous verse. Sorcery (LXX: *pharmakeia*) was the means by which the magicians of Egypt counterfeited the early plagues of the Exodus. It is also one of the sins for which Babylon came under judgment in the Septuagint (Isa 47:9, 12). Idolatry and sorcery (Greek: *pharmakeia*) are also associated together in Galatians 5:20, Revelation 21:8 and 22:15.

T Rev 9:21— Verse 20 lists sins related to the first table of the 10 Commandments, verse 21 adds sins related to the second table of the Law.

Rev 9:21-- “And the rest of the human race did not repent of their murders, their magic arts, their acts of fornication, or their thefts.” The murders referred to here may have a general meaning, but in Revelation it is likely that it is referring to the martyrdom of the saints. The judgments of the trumpets are, after all, a response to the prayers of the souls under the altar for vengeance (see comments on Rev 8:2 [The Role of the Trumpets in Revelation]).

The fundamental meaning of the word translated “sorcery” (Greek: *pharmakôn*) is a drug, this is where the English word “pharmacy” comes from. But ancient drugs were closely related to poisons, which harm people like enchantment and spells do. Hence the word *pharmakon* developed the extended meaning of sorcery or magic arts.

T Rev 9:21-- The murders referred to here likely refer to the martyrdom of the saints. The root meaning of the word translated “sorcery” (Greek: *pharmakôn*) is a drug, this is where the English word “pharmacy” comes from.

Rev 9:13-21 (Conclusion)-- The sixth trumpet portrays the gathering for the battle of Armageddon, as seen in the multiple verbal parallels to the sixth bowl-plague (Rev 16:13-16). Satan gathers his forces for the final confrontation with the forces of the Lamb (Rev 17:14). Lurking behind the 200,000,000 man army is Babylon, with its religious power having co-opted the secular/demonic forces that dominated the world in the era of the fifth trumpet. In the final crisis of earth’s history, the atheists are “born again” and the secularists have a change of heart. The sixth trumpet suggests a world-wide revival of religion tying together people of every imaginable faith as we approach the End (see comments on Rev 16:13-16 and 17:1-6). The final Babylon will be a blend of truth and error, oppression, skepticism, ecumenism, and secularism in a great world-wide religious/secular unity. We live in a secular-dominated world today, but we are already seeing a movement back toward a more spiritual world, but not necessarily grounded in the Bible or the gospel. The sixth trumpet suggests that there will be an intensification of demonic activity toward the End, which will be perceived by much of the world as a spiritual revival. Those who do not have the seal of God are unprotected against deceptive doctrines and their consequences as Satan demonstrates what the universe would be like if he were in charge.

T Rev 9:13-21 (Concl)—The sixth trumpet portrays the gathering of Babylon and its allies for the battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 16:13-16).

Rev 9:13-21 (Conclusion 2)--What will God's faithful, gospel-oriented people be doing at that time? Here is where the parallel between the 200,000,000 and the 144,000 is significant. The sixth trumpet is not only the gathering of the opposition for Armageddon, it is the counterpart of the sealing work in Revelation 7:1-8. In both cases the binding and the loosing are related to four angels. In both sections the people are being numbered. And these are the only two places in Revelation where you have the phrase “I heard the number” (*êkousa ton arithmon*). If human probation remains open in the sixth trumpet and then closes with the sounding of the seventh (Rev 10:7), the sixth trumpet is the exact historical counterpart of Revelation 7:1-8. They are both in the context of the last proclamation of the gospel. There is further elaboration

on that in 11:11-13 and 14:6-12. If the sixth trumpet is a view of the approaching end-time failure of rebellious humanity to repent, Revelation 10 and 11 portray the world-wide gathering of the righteous at the same general time. To those chapters we will now turn.

T Rev 9:13-21 (Concl)—There is a strong parallel between the sixth trumpet and Rev 7:1-4. These passages represent the gathering of the “remnant” and “Babylon,” the two main opposing forces at the end of time.

Rev 9:13-21 (Relation to the Seventh Trumpet)-- The sixth and seventh trumpets are separated by an interlude, which focuses on the fate of God's people during the sixth trumpet. The time location is signaled by Revelation 10:5-7. That text alludes to Daniel 8-12 in general and 12:7 in particular. The sixth trumpet arrives when the time prophecies of Daniel have run their course (“time no more”—Rev 10:6). Both the sixth trumpet and chapters 10 and 11 focus on a time when the book of Daniel is being studied and “unsealed” (Dan 12:4). Seventh-day Adventists understand the time prophecies of Daniel to have run out in the year 1844 (based on calculations related to Daniel 8:13-14 and 9:24-27). The early Adventists figured that the coming of Jesus was near because the time prophecies had run out. But, the end did not come. The disappointment they experienced in 1844, however, was already reflected in Revelation 10:8-10. Prophetic time would be no more (Rev 10:6), “but” the close of gospel proclamation would wait until the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Rev 10:7). See comments on Rev 10:7 for more detail. The seventh trumpet ushers in the final moments of earth's history, after the close of gospel proclamation and human probation.

T Rev 9:13-21 (Relation to 7th Trump)-- The sixth and seventh trumpets are separated by an interlude, which focuses on the fate of God's people during the sixth trumpet (Rev 10:1 – 11:13).

Rev 9:13-21 (Relation to the Seventh Trumpet)--As I understand it, Revelation 10:7 foreshadows a great final proclamation of the gospel just before the blowing of the seventh trumpet. God's people are proclaiming the gospel one great and final time just at the close of the sixth trumpet as the wicked are preparing for Armageddon. The final proclamation corresponds to the first angel flying in heaven proclaiming the everlasting gospel (Revelation 14:6-7). It will be made in the light of the time prophecies in the book of Daniel. The proclamation draws to a close just before the seventh angel sounds his trumpet. That means that the blowing of the seventh trumpet signals the close of human probation and the irreversible onset of the final events of earth's history.

The gospel has been presented through "His servants the prophets" (Rev 10:7-- see also Amos 3:7-8, etc.) for two thousand years, but in the last days of earth's history, the New Testament gospel is combined with the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. Bible prophecy gives special urgency and relevance to the final gospel call. That's why it matters to study Revelation and that should be why you are reading these words.

T Rev 9:13-21 (Relation to 7th Trump)--Rev 10:7 portrays the final proclamation of the gospel just before the close of probation (blowing of the seventh trumpet).

Rev 9:13-21 (Relation to the Seventh Trumpet)--The seventh trumpet (Rev 11:15-18) is the consummation of all things. It is the coming of the kingdom for which God's people have prayed for centuries: "Thy kingdom come" (Matt 6:10). There is a period of time between the close of probation and the end, between the final proclamation of the gospel and the second coming of Jesus--a horrific period of trouble. The nations are angry, God's wrath and His judgment are seen, and those who have been destroying the earth are destroyed themselves (Rev 11:18). See comments on Rev 11:15-18. The seventh trumpet gives a summary of the final victory of God, including everything yet to come in the book of Revelation (chapters 12-22). We will deal with that in detail when we come to the concluding verses of chapter 11.

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Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Conclusion)-- Some of the Bible's most difficult and spiritually dry material is found in Revelation 6-9. It focuses on the negatives more than on the positives. It focuses on the great trends and movements of nations rather than the individual spiritual struggle like Revelation 2-3 did. If you have stayed with me through the seven trumpets, you will not want to miss the material that follows.

Where do I think our place in history is located within the seven trumpets? In my Seventh-day Adventist tradition there is a tendency to want to locate everything exactly, and there are times when prophecy allows for this, such as the time prophecies of Daniel. But more often prophecy is a general picture with a lot of flexibility that allows God to interact with real situations and real people whose choices change the course of history. That is how I see the trumpets.

T Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Concl)--Prophecy in the Bible is often a general picture with a lot of flexibility that allows God to interact with real situations and real people whose choices change the course of history. That is how I see the trumpets.

Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Conclusion 2)--There are several markers in the biblical text that give us clues regarding our location in prophecy. First, Revelation 10:7 indicates that the sixth trumpet includes the final proclamation of the gospel leading up to the close of human probation. So it leans very much toward the end, but the gospel is still being proclaimed (Rev 9:13; 10:7; 11:11-12). This is compatible with where we are today. Second, the fifth and sixth trumpets may come in chronological order, but the fifth is incorporated into the sixth by the use of the tail (Rev 9:10, 19). So the two run concurrently toward the End. A neat distinction between the two (as might be suspected from what is said about the three woes—Rev 8:13; 9:12; 11:14), is not indicated. While the fifth trumpet comes first, in the end the two plagues are joined together, anticipating the woman riding the beast in Revelation 17. So elements of the fifth trumpet linger on after the sixth begins.

T Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Concl)—Rev 10:7 indicates the sixth trumpet leans toward the end but is prior to the close of probation.

T Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Concl)—Rev 9:19 (“the mouth and the tail”) connects the plagues of the fifth and sixth trumpets. The sixth intensifies the plague by included the fifth.

Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Conclusion 3)-- Third, the overwhelming focus in the fifth trumpet is a time in history when secular, non-religious forces dominate, which well describes the Twentieth Century, at least in the western countries. From the time of the Renaissance and Enlightenment through recently; scientific, secular thinking has increasingly affected the world, even non-western parts of the world. Fourth, but that dominance is fading as we experience a world-wide resurgence of religion today, not necessarily committed Christianity, but spirituality, God-talk, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism are all on the rise in today's world. This is the picture I see in the sixth trumpet. End-time Babylon does not dominate today's world, but there are signs of a rise of religious expression and a strong pushback against Western materialism and secularism. So I would see elements of both the fifth and the sixth trumpets in today's world.

T Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Concl)-- The focus in the fifth trumpet is a time in history when secular, non-religious forces dominate, but that dominance is fading today as we experience a world-wide resurgence of religion (sixth trumpet).

Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Conclusion 4)-- Fifth, the beginning point of the sixth trumpet is likely the close of Daniel's time prophecies signaled in Revelation 10:6-7 and referenced by the point in time of 9:15 (see comments on the time language of Rev 9:15). So the sixth trumpet runs from the close of Daniel's time prophecies (1844 in Adventist understanding) to the close of human probation. The parallel between the 200,000,000 (9:16) and the 144,000 (7:1-4) fits with this. And this picture will become even clearer when we get to chapters 16 and 17 of Revelation, where the woman and the beast seem to represent something similar to the fifth and sixth trumpets in the very last days of earth's history. So I would conclude that the sixth trumpet, in particular, focuses on Daniel's Time of the End, the period of history from the close of Daniel's time prophecies to the end of the final proclamation of the gospel (Matt 24:14; Rev 10:7; 14:6-12). That means that in a general sense we live in the final era of earth's history, but the duration of that final era is not given in prophecy.

T Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Concl)-- The sixth trumpet, in particular, focuses on Daniel's Time of the End, the period of history from the close of Daniel's time prophecies to the end of the final proclamation of the gospel (Matt 24:14; Rev 10:7; 14:6-12).

Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Spiritual Lessons)—Can one find useful spiritual lessons in the violence and destruction that fills the first six trumpets of Revelation? If we have rightly understood the symbolism of the first, third and sixth trumpets, we have learned that just because something is religious doesn't mean it's right, beneficial, or honors God. A symbolic reading of Revelation sees judgment on the religious leadership that crucified Christ (Rev 8:7), the rise of opposition

to God and His faithful people from within the church (Rev 8:10-11), and a great final outburst of counterfeit religion in the final days of earth's history. Just because a religion claims to be following God, or just because it once followed God does not mean that in its current form, it will be right, beneficial, or an honor to God. "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess 5:21, KJV).

T Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Spiritual Lessons)—One thing we learn from the trumpets: Just because a religion claims to be following God, or just because it once followed God does not mean that in its current form, it will be right, beneficial, or an honor to God.

Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Spiritual Lessons)—We have just seen that the gospel won't be available forever. The day is coming when probation will close for the entire earth, not as the result of some arbitrary decree on the part of God, but because the whole earth has polarized into two opposing camps. One side is more and more settled into the truth about God (sealing) and the other side is more and more settled into believing Satan's lies (the mark). Nevertheless, those who pass through that time may not know exactly when probation closes. It is more a matter of the inner life and commitments than something that is obvious to human observation. Given that reality, the psalm that says, "Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart" (Psa 95:7-8), is particularly relevant. It is unwise to feel conviction and do nothing about it.

T Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Spiritual Lessons)—The larger context of the sixth trumpet is that one side is more and more settled into the truth about God (sealing) and the other side is more and more settled into believing Satan's lies (the mark).

Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Spiritual Lessons 3)—The time of reward is coming that is both positive and negative. Knowing this can make all the difference. I remember a scholar friend speaking at a conference where most of the listeners had studied their Bibles professionally but had lost their faith in the Bible as the answer to the great problems of life. They accused him of talking like a "neo-fundamentalist." My scholar friend protested that no matter how you paint it, we live in an unjust world. If this life is all there is, there is no justice in the universe. He said, "If there is no such thing as resurrection or judgment, there is no justice in this world." We are to live life in light of the judgment. Someday, God will set everything right. Those who have suffered and remained faithful will be compensated. Those who have oppressed others will be allowed to discover what it feels like to be on the receiving end. God will set everything right in the end.

The seven trumpets portray a God making down payments on His determination to bring justice to the universe. That justice may not always be visible to human eyes. His counteracting of the oppressor may seem ineffective and powerless. But the seven trumpets assure us that God has already launched into that activity. He is setting everything right and He **will** set everything right.

T Rev 8:2 – 9:21 (Spiritual Lessons)—The seven trumpets assure us that God is already acting to counter the oppressor and set things right in the world, even if we cannot yet see it. Our suffering is not meaningless.