

Revelation

11

Chapter 9

With the opening of the seventh seal, God's decreed events were being revealed and announced by the sounding of seven trumpets.

It even seems that the first four trumpets are announcing natural disasters on the earth that are decreed by God. These serve to weaken the power of the Roman empire.

Now the next 2 trumpets are sounded and God's judgment on the wicked of the earth continue.....

Revelation 9:1-2

The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. ² When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss.

Revelation 9:1-2

The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. ² When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss.

The fallen star is symbolic of an individual (Satan) as referenced below:

Luke 10:17-18

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” ¹⁸ He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”

Isaiah 14:12

How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!

(While this is addressed to the King of Babylon, it is comparing him to Satan.)

Revelation 9:11

They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer). 

He is called the angel of the Abyss

What is the Abyss?

2 Peter 2:4

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to Tartarus, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment;
(Tartarus means: “a sunless abyss” – darkness)

Luke 8:30-31

Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “Legion,” he replied, because many demons had gone into him. ³¹ And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

The Abyss is thought of as the deepest part of the sea or the center of the earth (Tartarus) where sinning angels (demons) are confined until judgment.

It seems that symbolically, Satan is allowed to release those confined demons for a time to cause problems and bring punishment on the wicked of the earth.



Revelation 9:3-6

And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. ⁴ They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵ They were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes. ⁶ During those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

Revelation 9:3-6

And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. ⁴ They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵ They were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes. ⁶ During those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

Locusts are like another of the plagues of Egypt, where locusts only affected the Egyptian's crops, not the Israelites.

But these locusts do not harm the plants, but only those people who were disobedient to God. (Perhaps against the Roman God Asklepius – god of plagues and healing)

They are allowed only 5 months (an incomplete, limited time) to torture their victims.

Revelation 9

⁵ They were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes. ⁶ During those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

These 'demon locusts' will cause the ones who do not have the mark of the protection of God on them to suffer. This is a time of suffering so intense that people wanted to die, but did not.

This could be referring to a time of plague. Historically, in the Roman empire, there was a series of 'plagues' - brought in on trading ships from around the world - that caused much suffering,– starting with the Antonine plague (measles) starting around 165 AD. It affected so many of the slave population (around ½ of the total population), that the crops could not be harvested, the Romans who depended so heavily on the slave labor for their day to day existence were devastated by the loss of their slave labor for a time.

There is also another possible reference:

Joel also describes an invading army in similar terms in:

Joel 1 Hear this, you elders; listen, all who live in the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your ancestors? ³ Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation. ⁴ What the locust swarm has left the great locusts have eaten; what the great locusts have left the young locusts have eaten; what the young locusts have left other locusts have eaten. ⁶ A nation has invaded my land, a mighty army without number; it has the teeth of a lion, the fangs of a lioness.

Historically this could also be referring to a time of rebellion and invasion by foreign powers. Historically this began about the same time with Germanic rebel tribes from the north and west invading the Roman controlled areas. The invaders, encouraged by the decline of Rome's military power, would plunder the wealthy Romans rather than killing the residents. Note the next few verses:

Revelation 9:7-12

The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. ⁸ Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. ⁹ They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. ¹⁰ They had tails with stingers, like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. ¹¹ They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer).

¹² The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come

Revelation 9:7-12

The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. ⁸ Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. ⁹



‘Something like crowns’ on their heads is symbolic of their claim to power but human faces indicates that their power was limited, the women’s hair is symbolic of their seeming harmlessness (did not kill), but the lion’s teeth is symbolic of their ferociousness.

Revelation 9:

9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. ***10 They had tails with stingers, like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months.***



The breastplates of iron and the noise like horses and chariots is symbolic of an invading army(s) coming against the Romans. Note: while '5' is symbolic of human incompleteness- 5 months is also the normal lifespan of a locust, and it was also the time the flood of Noah's day covered the earth before it began to recede. (God's judgment)

Revelation 9:

¹⁰ They had tails with stingers, like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. ¹¹ They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer). ¹² The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come

Note that they could inflict torment, but could not kill the people. They had the Destroyer (Satan) as their leader, but they were limited in what they could do by God.



Job 2:6 The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.”

The Roman empire is struck by plagues and also by invaders who were more interested in plundering the wealth than they were in killing.

God has always put limits on Satan and He continues to do so for us today.

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Revelation 9:13-19

The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God. ¹⁴ It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” ¹⁵ And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. ¹⁶ The number of the mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number....

Revelation 9:

17 ...The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. 18 A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. 19 The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.



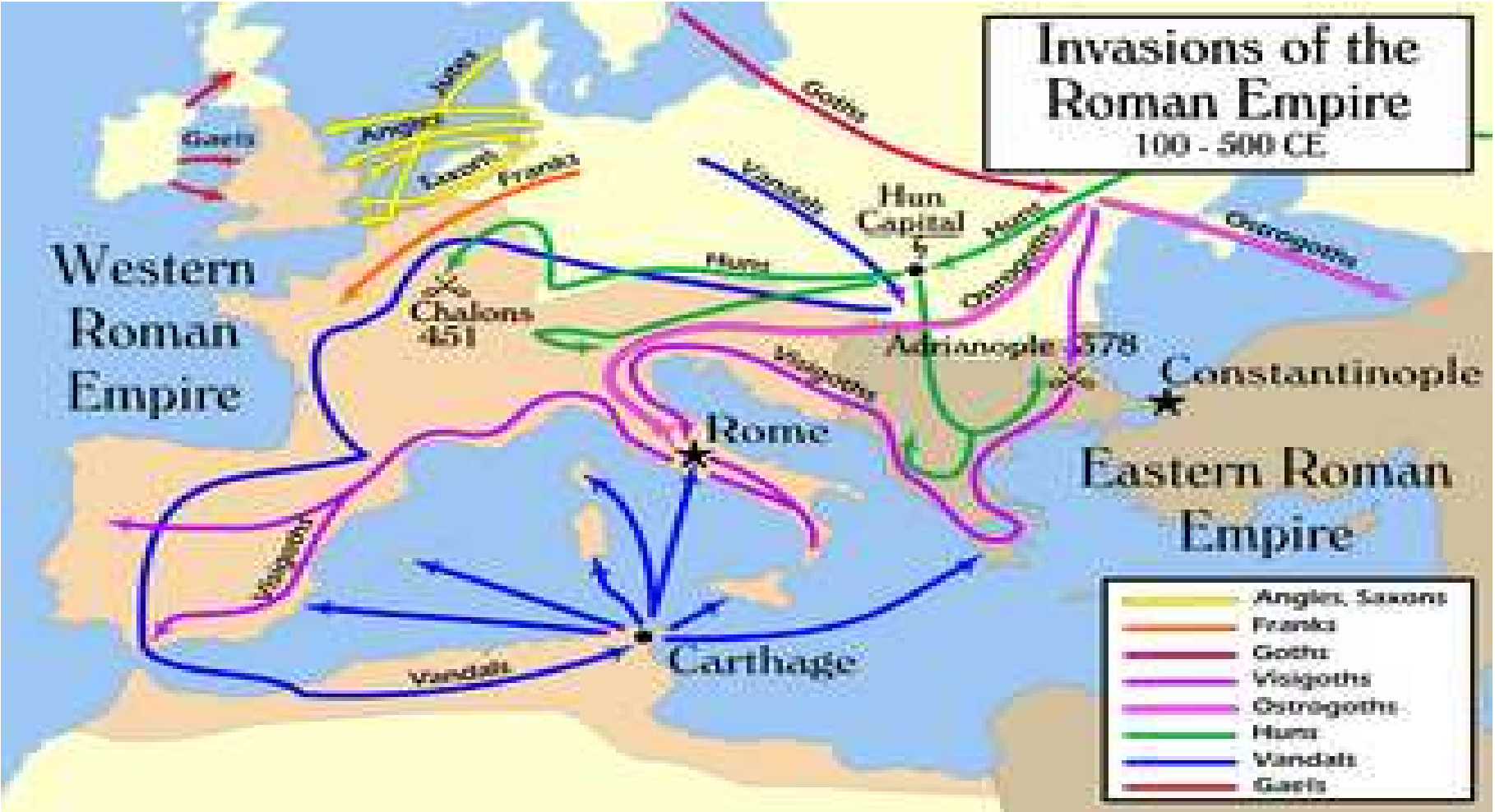
Revelation 9:13-19

The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God. ¹⁴ It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.**” ¹⁵ And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. ¹⁶ The number of the mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number.**

Note these ‘angels’ (messengers from God) – had mounted troops and could kill mankind, where the locust did not. They were keep behind the Euphrates River which was considered the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire (so these are invaders from the East of the empire)

The number of troops was twice 10,000 X 10,000 (symbolically a completely large amount – an uncountable number)

History tells us that there were several groups of Invaders from the East who invaded the Roman empire - the Parthians from the area of Iran, the Huns from the area of Mongolia, the Goths from the area of Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine north of the Black Sea, and the Vandals from the area of southern Poland. (4 major groups of invaders)



It appears that at first the plague and invaders, tormented and plundered the inhabitants, but did not kill them (the locusts), but then came others who conquered and killed. During this time in history, there was constant rebellion and a continuing series of plagues (a plague called the Cyprian plague caused the death of up to 40% or more) causing chaos and civil unrest in Rome itself. Different groups would gain power only to be replaced by others. Leaders would arise and claim to be a 'prophet' and incite their followers to rebellion.

The Roman rulers, looking for a scapegoat for these disasters, blamed the Christians for their problems (Time of tribulation)

17 The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur.

Some have said that this is describing warfare using gunpowder – fire, smoke, and sulfur smell. Those who say this are those who try to make Revelation be a description of all the events until the end of time. But the problem with this is twofold - how would knowing this help those persecuted Christians dealing with the Roman empire's demands – plus gunpowder was not invented until some 400 years AFTER the Roman empire had fallen ! So what is this symbolic of? Look at scripture references -

17 The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur.

The colors of red, blue, and yellow are symbolic for the judgment of God against evil.



Revelation 14:10-11 they, too, will drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever.

Sulfur is a yellow colored mineral, which turns red when heated, and burns with a blue flame which is impossible to extinguish until it burns itself out.



17 The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were *fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur.* The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came *fire, smoke and sulfur.*

The colors of red, blue, and yellow are symbolic for the judgment of God against evil.



Burning sulfur was used as punishment on the wicked people of Sodom, and as the description of hell (Rev 19:20)

Genesis 19:24

**Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—
from the LORD out of the heavens.**



17The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. ¹⁸ A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. ¹⁹ The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.

A third (a variation of the number 3) and the three plagues symbolize that this is the judgment of God.

The power being in their heads and tails is symbolic of their ability to kill whether coming or injure when going (leaving devastation behind them).

Historically, one of the first groups to invade the Roman empire from the East were the Parthians (from Iran) who fought the Romans until 224 AD. They were known as excellent horsemen, and had the unique ability to fire from their horses while retreating as well as attacking.

After them the other groups began invading the Roman empire – from Mongolia (Huns), from the Black Sea area (Goths), from Poland (Vandals), and several other lesser rebel groups pressed their attacks as the power of Rome faded.

Revelation 9:20-21

The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. ²¹ Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Even with all these things happening, the remaining people still refused to repent of their idolatry and wickedness. They refused to accept the truth of God, but continued blaming the Christians.



2 Thessalonians 2:9-11

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, ¹⁰ and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie

God requires each person to make a decision :

Joel 3:14

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

Joshua 24:15

But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

Some have commented on this chapter saying that the reason the people did not repent was that they had been robbed of the ability to choose. This is from Calvinism's teaching that some people are 'predestined' to be saved and others are 'predestined' to be lost and one cannot do anything about it. But compare that idea to:

1 Timothy 2:3-4 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Ephesians 1:5, 11 God predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— under Christ.

¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,



Mark 16:16

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

In my studies I have been struck by the similarities between the events preceding the fall of the Roman empire and the event happening today. It is said that history repeats itself and perhaps God in His compassion is warning us that without repentance – our nation will face the same end. Notice what was afflicting the Roman empire and compare to what is going on today:

- Famines – we also are facing shortages and being told that our world cannot sustain the current population
- Pestilences and plagues brought in from outside sources – we also have Covid and other diseases from outside sources as well as drugs coming in bringing death
- Wars – we are trying to fight wars on several fronts just as they were at that time

As the Roman government lost power, it became more oppressive – demanded higher taxes, and unquestioning obedience from its citizens. Those who opposed the Roman authorities were imprisoned or killed. (As today)

Rome was at first overrun by foreign invaders who, while they did not kill the Romans, plundered them and depleted the nations resources. Much as we are currently being invaded on our borders by those who are overwhelming our nations resources.

Finally, weakened Rome was attacked by several outside nations who did kill and destroy the Romans – this is the next step in the progression of events affecting our country.

And like those in Rome, we still see no repentance and turning to God.

**The final trumpet is about to be sounded
and the judgment of God brought to
completion on those who were
persecuting the Christians – (the Roman
empire is about to fall)**

Chapters 10 and 11