

OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

REVELATION

THE FIFTH TRUMPET

9:1-12

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Revelation 9:1-12

The Fifth Trumpet Judgment—The First Woe

Three angels are about to sound their trumpets and it is not going to be lighthearted music by any stretch of the imagination. The trumpet blasts will each signal the entrance of a judgment that is deemed a woe—each woe worse than the previous. The intensity of the judgments in Revelation continues to increase incrementally.

Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. Revelation 9:1

When the fifth angel blew his trumpet John saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth. Does it say that when the trumpet blew a star fell to the earth? Or does it say that when the fifth angel sounded John saw the key of the bottomless pit given to a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth? Careful observation has its benefits, doesn't it?

The star from heaven which had already fallen to the earth (past tense) is called a "him". Do you see it? The key was given to him—the star from heaven which had fallen to the earth.

Hmmm... we cannot assume any time the Bible uses the word "star" that is a "him" but we can know the star in Revelation 9:1 is a him. When can a star be a "him"? We need to let Scripture interpret Scripture instead of guessing about it ourselves. In this particular instance, it is Scripture itself which identifies the star as a being, rather than a celestial mass.

An example of a "star falling from heaven" being identified as a being (in fact, a fallen angel) found outside of the book of Revelation is in Isaiah 14:12-13 where it seems to show the demise of Satan, who was once a very important angel under God's command.

And inside of Revelation, itself, we also see stars which are identified as beings. Revelation 1:16, 20 and Revelation 2:1 show us stars which are actually angels. Revelation 12:4 shows us stars which are angels as well, although ones which followed Satan when he was thrown out of heaven for rebellion. And finally, Revelation 22:16 refers to the magnificent being of Jesus, Himself, as the bright morning star.

But I could take you to a great many other cross-references which show us that most stars are... well... simply stars. It might be easy to dismiss all the references to stars as being celestial bodies but that wouldn't be accurate. Some are celestial bodies and

some are celestial beings. And of the ones that are celestial beings—some are fallen angels, some are angels still faithfully employed by their Creator, and sometimes, it seems, a star might actually be the Creator, Himself, Jesus Christ! So my point is this: Scripture interprets Scripture—period! It is our job to observe it carefully and then believe what it says, not what we want to think!

Getting back to the text... It is interesting to think about that pit... It is bottomless... It is locked—not to keep things out, but to keep things in. (And wow! The things that are kept inside!) It is God Who holds the key and therefore, safe to assume it was God Who locked them up in the first place, (which, by the way, Jude 6 backs up). God gives the key to an angelic being in order for him to unlock it, which he does...

He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.
Revelation 9:2

The key of the bottomless pit is given to this fallen angelic being and he does with it exactly what God intended—he opens up the pit. Upon opening, smoke comes up out of the pit. And this smoke is like the smoke of a great furnace. It is heavy, thick, impenetrable smoke and it darkens the sun and the air. Wow... It sure makes you wonder what conditions are like deeper down in the pit, doesn't it? And remember, this particular pit is bottomless...

Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. Revelation 9:3

Smoke came out of the pit and locusts came out of the smoke to the earth—this is one eerie situation. If the smoke came from the pit, where had the locusts been previously—obviously they were in the pit, as well. Take note this is not a cloud of locusts, but rather the locusts came up out of the pit inside of the smoke and then emerged from the smoke and positioned themselves on the earth.

Whatever job description the locusts had inside of the pit, they are now given a raise or promotion. They are given power—power that is similar in some fashion to the scorpions of the earth. The most obvious technical change is from a simple devouring bug to a devouring bug with a poisonous stinging attachment.

They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.
Revelation 9:4

Think for a minute. These are locusts. What do locusts do in the Bible? Their normal job is to eat all the plants as a judgment for sin. It's not particularly surprising that God would continue to use locusts in His final judgments, then, is it? Attaching stingers to them is new, but a more interesting change is that they are told not to eat the things they love to eat—the grass of the earth or any green thing, and that includes trees. The

destruction they are about to cause for mankind will no longer be indirect—they will go straight to the humans—and the purpose will be to hurt them.

But... which men will they attack? This is beautiful—they will go after anyone and everyone who does not have the seal of God on their foreheads!

Ding! Ding! Ding! That rings a bell, doesn't it?

Who are the locusts instructed to leave alone? Those who have the seal of God on their foreheads. Who, exactly, has the seal of God on their foreheads? Do you remember the interlude about the 144,000 bond-servants of the tribes of Israel? Go back and read Revelation 7. Those bond-servants will be on the earth during the fifth trumpet judgment but the locusts will not be allowed to touch them!

That my, friends, in the process of aligning the events of prophecy, is called a given. The Bible just laid down a definite and clear given. It is a good thing to write down any givens you run across because these factual bits of information will help you piece together the timeline of events that will soon take place.

For example, you may later find some event (We'll call it Event B) that is attached to your first given (We'll call it Given A), and although you may not know what to do with it at the time, guard it safely and stay aware of it. Eventually you might find another given (We'll call it Given C) which connects to Event B.

What do you do? You connect them, of course. You can now know and understand how Given A and Given C are connected. You have three pieces of God's prophetic timeline which can be laid down in order. It's just like a jigsaw puzzle, only it's linear. The more pieces you connect, the closer you are to finishing the puzzle. And just like a jigsaw puzzle, each piece must fit perfectly—you cannot push any event into place—it must be an absolutely perfect fit.

Back to the book...

Many men are going to be hurt by these locusts from the bottomless pit, but not even one of the men who had the seal of God on their foreheads will be allowed to be hurt. The 144,000 Jews who are the bond-servants of God will be spared completely from these creatures. God's sovereignty is so amazing! He is *always* in complete control—of green things, bugs, demons, men and well... *everything*! He has kept these locusts bound inside of a fiery bottomless pit, of which He holds the key. When He lets them out, He changes their form and gives them poisonous stingers. Then He informs them they will not be allowed to eat their favorite food, and instead, will hurt men, but... He gives them specific boundaries of which men they may hurt and which men they may not. And that's not all the directions they will be required to obey!

And they were not permitted to kill anyone but to torment for five months, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. Revelation 9:5

The locusts were permitted to hurt, but not to kill. They were even given a time limit for their torment—five months and no longer. The torment is described as being like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man—and that’s not anything to sniff at.

And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them. Revelation 9:6

Just how bad will the torment be from the locusts? Well... men will long to die rather than endure it, but God’s sovereignty extends even to death and He will not allow them to die. They will seek death—in other words, they will try to kill themselves, but death, at God’s command, will flee from them.

God’s sovereignty cannot be overstated. He is the One Who gives the breath of life and He is the only One Who can take the breath of life. He is sovereign over *all* things! During the fifth trumpet God sends locusts and tells them they cannot eat what is natural to them. He gives them extra weapons on their little locust bodies and tells them to go after men, but He tells them which men they cannot touch and which men they can touch. He tells them just how they can touch them, and gives them exactly five months worth of poison—no more—to do so. The men are in such pain and agony that they try to commit suicide but God doesn’t allow them to die. They have others try to kill them but they continue to live. Why? Because God is sovereign over life as well as death.

The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. Revelation 9:7

Yes, they're just darling, aren't they?

They were locusts but they looked like horses prepared for battle. Their heads wore something that appeared to be crowns of something like gold. Because observation is so important, take special note of this information. These creatures are not *like* locusts, they *are* locusts. They are not horses, but they *look like* horses prepared for battle. Horses prepared for battle are very formidable—and so are these locusts. On their heads there *appeared* to be (not actually were) crowns, and whatever was on their heads *looked like* gold. Combining the image of battle headgear for war horses and the shiny reflective body of locusts brings to mind a possible picture. Their faces were not the faces of men, but *like* the faces of men.

I told you in the introduction to our observation of Revelation that we needed to understand figures of speech, especially metaphors and similes, which show how one

thing is “like” another thing. This is one of the passages where we can see the importance understanding these very common figures of speech.

Here is a quick review of similes and metaphors. Similes are expressed comparisons and will include the words “like” or “as”. But when it is just implied, when it is not expressed, then it's called a metaphor. This is how I remember the difference between the two. The word metaphor does not have an “L” in it while simile does have an “L”. Like starts with “L” so I remember that, because simile is an expressed comparison, it often uses the word like (Jesus’ hair was white like wool), which starts with “L”. Make sense?

It is also important to understand what information metaphors and similes are meant to convey. They tell us how one thing is like another in one attribute only. Jesus’ hair was white like wool—Jesus’ hair had no other characteristics of wool, only its whiteness. You cannot take the simile or the metaphor further than what it is intended for.

Now, back to the bugs...

They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.
Revelation 9:8-10

These demonic locusts had hair *like* the hair of women. Perhaps that meant it was long? Their teeth were *like* the teeth of lions. Perhaps able to tear its victim apart? They had breastplates *like* breastplates of iron—not actual iron, but perhaps strong enough to protect them from most enemies?

They had wings and when they flew to the earth out of the smoke it sounded *like* chariots pulled by many horses rushing to battle—a frightening sound to hear approaching, to say the least.

They had tails *just like* scorpions do, with pointy stingers coming out. And their stingers possessed the power to hurt men for five months. Imagine the pain of a sting (of any kind—much more a scorpion’s sting) which lasted for five months!

Just to make sure you understand—however demonic these locusts are, they will still be actual locusts—terrifying creatures which have been held captive by the LORD of hosts in a fiery bottomless pit. They are freed by God in order to torment those who dwell on the earth during the fifth trumpet of judgment.

They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon. Revelation 9:11

What can we know about Abaddon, or Apollyon, from this verse? He is the king over the demonic locusts and he is the angel of the abyss. Perhaps Satan? Some take this to believe he is the one who was given the key to unlock the pit. The word abyss and the word bottomless are the same Greek word “*abussos*”. Therefore we can be sure that the angel of the abyss is the same as the angel of the bottomless pit. He is known to the Jews as Abaddon and to the Gentiles as Apollyon. Both names mean “Destroyer”.

The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.
Revelation 9:12

The first woe is past. What is it? The entire locust event. The first woe is the same as the fifth trumpet and lasts five months. God will send two more woes—the sixth and the seventh trumpet judgments.

It doesn't seem like the judgments could get any worse... But they can... And they will...