

Revelation 9:1–21

The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets: Judgment, Deception, and the Hardness of the Human Heart

Introduction: Judgment with a Redemptive Purpose

As we come to Revelation chapter 9, we are reminded once again that God’s judgments are not random acts of destruction. They are purposeful, measured, and restrained. Even here, in some of the darkest chapters of Scripture, we see that God remains sovereign, deliberate, and merciful—always giving humanity opportunity to repent.

This chapter introduces the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments, also known as the first and second woes. What unfolds is both terrifying and revealing—not only about the spiritual realm, but about the human heart.

I. The Fifth Trumpet: The Abyss Opened (Revelation 9:1–11)

“And the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit.”

The “star” John sees is not an inanimate object but a personal being—one who is given authority. The language points us to a fallen spiritual ruler, best understood as Satan himself. He is not sovereign; the key is *given* to him. Even here, God remains in control.

The Bottomless Pit

The “bottomless pit,” or abyss, is a place of confinement for fallen angels and demonic beings. Scripture shows us that some demons are already restrained there, awaiting a future release. When Jesus encountered the demon-possessed man in the region of the Gadarenes, the demons begged Him not to send them into the abyss prematurely.

When the pit is opened, smoke rises like that of a furnace, darkening the sun and air. Out of this darkness emerge demonic beings described symbolically as locusts—creatures of torment rather than consumption.

The Nature of the Torment

These beings are not allowed to kill. Instead, they are permitted to torment humanity for five months—specifically those without the seal of God. As with the plagues of Egypt, God clearly distinguishes between those who belong to Him and those who do not.

“And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.”

This is one of the most sobering statements in Scripture. For five months, death itself is restrained. Those who have rejected God are forced to experience life fully separated from His mercy, yet unable to escape through death.

A Word on Death

For the believer, death is not a curse—it is a release.

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”

But for those who reject God, death becomes something feared, delayed, and resisted. Revelation 9 reveals a moment when God withholds even that release, allowing humanity to experience the full weight of life without Him.

The King of the Abyss

These demonic beings are ruled by one called Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek—both meaning *Destroyer*. This is the character of Satan laid bare. He offers freedom but brings destruction. He promises power but delivers torment.

II. The Sixth Trumpet: Unleashed Destruction (Revelation 9:12–19)

“Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God...”

Four powerful fallen angels are released from restraint near the Euphrates River—beings that have been held back by God for thousands of years, reserved for this precise moment.

The timing is exact:

“Prepared for the hour and day and month and year...”

Nothing here is accidental. Judgment unfolds according to God’s perfect timing.

A Massive Army and Global Death

An army numbering two hundred million is released, resulting in the death of one-third of the remaining human population. The imagery John describes is terrifying—fire, smoke, brimstone, and death proceeding from these forces.

Yet the most disturbing detail is not the scale of death, but the response of those who survive.

III. The Tragic Reality: Humanity Refuses to Repent (Revelation 9:20–21)

“But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent...”

Even after overwhelming judgment, humanity persists in idolatry, immorality, violence, deception, and rebellion. The problem is not lack of evidence. It is hardness of heart.

This confirms a truth Scripture teaches repeatedly: judgment alone does not lead people to repentance.

“Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”

God's kindness, grace, and mercy draw hearts to Him. Judgment exposes rebellion, but grace transforms hearts.

Practical Application for Believers

1. Be thankful for God's mercy today.
We are living in a season of grace. The door is still open. The gospel is still being proclaimed.
2. Do not grow numb to sin.
Revelation reminds us where unchecked rebellion leads. Stay tender before the Lord.
3. Be bold in sharing Christ.
The future described here should compel us to love people enough to speak truth now.

A Challenge for Believers

Live as people of light in a dark world. The church is called to reflect God's goodness, truth, and compassion. Do not rely on fear to motivate others—point them to the grace found in Jesus Christ, who shed His blood on the cross for sinners and rose again, declaring Himself to be Savior and Lord.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

If you have not yet trusted Jesus Christ, do not delay.

These judgments are not written to frighten you into submission, but to lovingly warn you of where rejection leads. God does not desire that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Jesus took judgment upon Himself at the cross. He bore the wrath we deserved. His resurrection declares that He is alive, victorious, and able to save completely.

Today is the day of salvation.

Turn from sin. Trust in Jesus Christ. Give Him your life—and receive forgiveness, new life, and eternal hope.

“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

May the Lord keep you in His grace, establish you in truth, and use your life as a witness in these last days.