

Revelation Chapter 9

An Interpretation

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Introduction:

The Fifth Trumpet takes more writing space than the first four trumpets combined. Something very important is about to take place:

THE FIFTH ANGEL

THE RISE OF ISLAM UNDER THE ARABS

(1) 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.

- John saw a **star** that had already **fallen**. Some great leader had the key of the **bottomless pit given to him**.
- We have witnessed the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West and the map on page 8 shows the area under discussion.
- Here we turn to the collapse of the Empire in the East.
- **Fred Miller:**

The time is right. After the fall of Rome to the barbarians, the next significant event in history is the *rise of Islam* under the Arabs. The second one-third of the Roman world did indeed fall to them.

(2) He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went 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.

- **Fred Miller:**
The symbol of a star from heaven matches the claim of the prophet (Mohammed) to have received his message from heaven, though the source is pictured as the **bottomless pit**. This is not to suggest that the Islamic false prophecy is more demonic than any other false doctrine, but to indicate the source of all false teaching. This false teaching has been more far reaching than any other and is very extensive,

however. It is pictured as **smoke** that **darkens** the implied one third part of the world, and of the air, and of the **sun**, marking the locations of land boundaries, and of ideas, and the source of enlightenment, respectively. This could not be a better picture of this difficult and disturbingly tenacious doctrine. It is a false doctrine, and those under it have great difficulty seeing the light.

- **Gibbon:**

"The sword," says Mahomet, "is the key of heaven and of hell; a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months of fasting or prayer: whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven: at the day of judgment his wounds shall be resplendent as vermilion, and odoriferous as musk; and the loss of his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim."

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

- **Johnson:**

The destroying **locusts** symbolize destroying armies. See Nahum 3:15; Exodus 10:12. Observe that they come out of the **smoke**. To the **smoke** their origin is due. Power to hurt is implied, since they are compared to **scorpions**.

- **Fred Miller:**

Locusts are a symbol that as a result of Bible study, would lead one to Arabia. The **locusts** of the ten plagues (of Egypt) indicate the **locusts** came from the direction of Arabia, as in Exodus 10:13, "**in the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day, ... and the east wind brought the locusts.**" The source would be Arabia which is east of Egypt.

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

- **Johnson:**

The locusts usually devour every **green thing**. These, however, shall seek to preserve **trees** and vegetation. Their special hurt shall be directed against **men** who are not **sealed** as God's own.

- The Historical School of interpretation has trouble with the phrase **do not have the seal of God on their foreheads**. We could not locate a clear statement from any commentator explaining this in a satisfactory manner. However, it may be that the oncoming Arab armies did make special allowances for those who were not part of a decadent, Romanist Christianity with its idolatry. The main-line church was practicing idolatry and that was a special target of the Muslim religion.

(5) 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.

- **Johnson:**

This either implies that the armies symbolized by the locusts should seek not to destroy the races they attacked, or that they should not destroy the empire assailed.

- **Fred Miller:**

The duration of their torment is given as **five months** or five times thirty days or one hundred and fifty prophetic day-years. It is noted by many that from the rise of Islam in Arabia in 622 until the founding of Baghdad when the Islamic commonwealth settled down from its life of conquest is 150 years. From that time when they began to develop science and arts, the Mohammedan Arabs would occupy their third of the world until a new invader would come in the eleventh century and adopt their religion and spread it with the fanaticism of new converts and blot out the remaining one third of the Roman Empire.

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

- The torment will be so terrible, that **death** will be preferred by those conquered.

(7) 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.

- **Johnson:**

There was an appearance **like golden crowns**. An array of men wearing yellow turbans would have such an appearance. **Faces** covered with beard. Roman soldiers wore no beard, hence the beards would be a striking feature.

(8) They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions.

- **Johnson:**

Wearing long, flowing **hair**. **Teeth** as the **teeth** of **lions** probably signifies fierceness.

(9) 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.

- These warriors could also be *heard* as they invaded.

(10) They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. (11) 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.

- The real **king** was not the star of verse 1, but the **angel** of the bottomless pit.
- **Apollyon**. The destroyer; either the devil or one of his angels.
- Here is a summary of the symbols and possible meaning:

SYMBOLS	INTERPRETATION
9:1 Star fallen to earth uses key to open bottomless pit.	Mohammad opens false prophecy upon the world.
9:2 Smoke from pit darkens sun and air.	Muslim influence darkens the ruling powers of the world.
9:3 Locusts with power of Scorpions	Muslim Arabian hoards swarm over Asia, North Africa and Spain.
9:4 Not hurt earth or green thing but only those who do not have the seal of God.	Muslims were told not to harm the land or growing things. Their main focus was against idolatry and image veneration.
9:5,10 Torment them five months	Arab domination was about 150 years. (5 x 30=150 days=150 prophetic years.)
9:6 Men should seek death.	Plunder, slavery, fear, suffering produced desperation of wishing for death.
9:7 Locusts like horses going to battle. Crowns of gold on heads, faces like men.	Arabs fought on horseback. They wore gold turbans. While they came like a plague of locusts, they were men.
9:8 Hair like women, teeth like lions.	Arab men wore their hair long. They were fierce as lions.
9:9 Breastplates of iron. Sound of many chariots.	They wore chain armor in battle and came in great numbers.
9:11 Angels of the bottomless pit.	They were being directed by the messenger of Satan.

(12) The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.

THE SIXTH TRUMPET

THE TURKS

(13) Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, (14) one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

- The **four angels** who had been restrained earlier (Revelation 7:1) are now freed to perform.

(15) And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind.

- The **four angels** brought death to one-third of mankind.

(16) The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.

- The armies are so large they are nearly beyond counting.
- A heavenly voice told John the **number**.

(17) And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone.

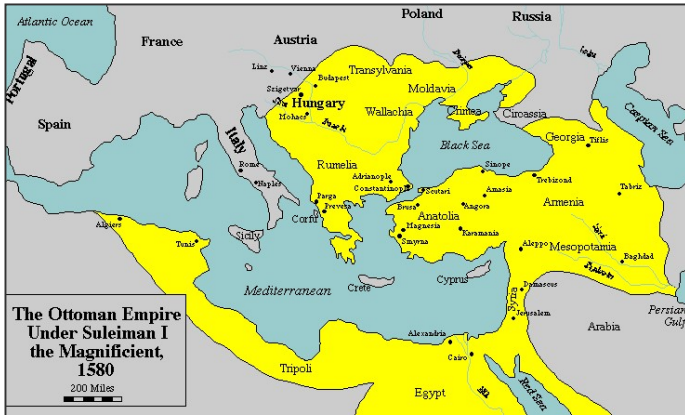
- **Johnson:**

A few years before the thousandth year of the Christian era, a fierce *Tartar* race, formidable by numbers and bravery, left their seats east of the Caspian Sea, and moved southwestward, until they rested upon the river Euphrates. A vast region of country east of that river fell before their arms.

Persia became one of their provinces, and India, as far as the ocean, was subjected to their sway. But for two generations they "were bound by the river Euphrates" [Revelation 9:14] and lying upon its eastern banks, their armies were restrained by the river from ravaging the countries that lie to the west.

For more than half a century, in some mysterious way, they were restrained at that river. At last, in the year 1057, sixty years after their appearance upon the east bank of that stream, after being bound for two generations, they crossed the Euphrates and marched upon the eastern Roman Empire. This people were called the Turkomans or Turkmans; we call them *Turks*.

(18) A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths.



- **Johnson:**

These agencies slay the **third** part of **men**. We have before found that the Old Roman world was divided into three parts. **One third** part had been destroyed by the first four trumpet invasions. A **second third** part was taken by the Saracens. If now the **third part** was taken and destroyed by these three plagues, the symbolism would be fulfilled.

(19) For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm.

- **Hinds:**

If the fire, smoke, and brimstone that, in the vision, seemed to pour out of the horses' mouths represent the use of firearms in taking a city, thus it is easy to see how the power appeared in their mouths. The smoke from exploding gunpowder bursting from their guns would appear as if coming from the horses' heads. . . . The text says the power of this army was in the horses' mouths.

(20) The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to

worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; (21) and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

- **Johnson:**

It is implied that these woes were sent as judgments. The Christianity of the East overthrown by the Saracens and Turks had become utterly corrupt. The rest, that is, those in other countries not conquered by Turks, continued their sins.

The worship of dead is what is meant by demon worship in the Scriptures.

- **Idols:** Images had now been introduced into the churches everywhere and were worshiped.

SYMBOLS	INTERPRETATION
9:14 Angels loosed at the Euphrates.	Turks invade Asia across the Euphrates.
9:15 Prepared for an hour, month and year. (391 "days")	About 391 years from the time the Turkish power embarked on conquest (1053) to the fall of Constantinople and the Eastern Roman Empire in 1453.
9:16 Vast numbers of horsemen.	The Arabians were well known for their powerful use of horsemanship in battle.
9:17-18 Horses with faces like lions breathing fire and brimstone.	They were fierce fighters. They introduced gunfire in their charges.
9:19 Tails of horses have power to hurt.	Rank was shown in tails of horses?
9:20-21 Idolaters, murders, sorceries, fornication, thefts not repented of.	Terrible conditions of the world and the church in this period.

- An objection to the historical method of interpretation that we have used here is that it leaves out the development of Christianity in Asia, focusing only on Europe and the west. That objection is answered here. In the east, Christianity was heavily mixed with idolatry and was obliterated by Islam with its total opposition to idolatry.

B.W. Johnson:

We have now followed the opening of the seals and the blowing of the trumpets to the sixth trumpet under the seventh seal. These have been followed in their order, then history has been consulted and, following in chronological order, have been found great epochal events in history which corresponded surprisingly to the symbolism of the visions. The American Editor of Lange on Revelation says: "The writer must acknowledge that, after a careful consideration of the principal views that had been presented, he has been constrained to the conclusion that the scheme of interpretation advocated by Elliot and Barnes (Substantially that which I have followed.--B.W.J.) is in most respects correct.

The points of resemblance between the symbols and the events of history, especially as portrayed by the infidel Gibbon, are too many, too striking and too exact, to allow the thought that they are merely fortuitous. It would seem as though God had raised up the great historian just mentioned to perform a work for the Bible and the Church, which could not have been so effectively performed by a friend. At times it seems as though he was writing history expressly to elucidate prophecy."
 --Lange on Revelation, p. 213.

