

# Introduction to Revelation Chapter 9

Revelation chapter 9 continues the unfolding trumpet judgments and reveals some of the most intense and terrifying scenes in the entire book. After the first four trumpets in chapter 8 bring devastation to parts of the earth, sea, rivers, and heavens, the fifth and sixth trumpets introduce judgments that directly torment humanity. These are described as the first and second “woes,” signaling a dramatic escalation in severity.

The fifth trumpet opens the abyss, releasing a swarm of demonic locust-like creatures that are permitted to torment those who do not bear the seal of God. Their power is not to kill but to inflict unbearable suffering for a limited time. The imagery is symbolic and apocalyptic, portraying the terrifying reality of spiritual forces unleashed under divine permission. The king over this demonic host is called Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek, both meaning “Destroyer,” emphasizing the destructive nature of this judgment.

The sixth trumpet intensifies the devastation. Four powerful angels bound at the great river Euphrates are released, leading an immense army that brings death to a third of humanity. The imagery of the army is overwhelming and terrifying, illustrating the scale of the judgment and the global consequences of human rebellion against God.

Despite these catastrophic events, the chapter ends with a sobering observation: humanity largely refuses to repent. Even after witnessing divine warnings and experiencing severe judgment, many continue in idolatry, violence, immorality, and theft. This highlights the depth of human sin and the stubborn resistance of the human heart apart from repentance.

Revelation 9 reveals that the judgments of God are both acts of justice and calls to repentance. The chapter exposes the destructive consequences of rebellion against God and demonstrates that spiritual warfare and divine judgment are real forces at work in the unfolding of history. It prepares the reader for the continued escalation of events as God’s final purposes move closer to completion.

Heavenly Father,

As we come to Revelation chapter 9, we approach Your Word with humility and reverence. The judgments we read about remind us of the seriousness of sin and the reality of spiritual warfare. Help us not to read these things with fear alone, but with a deeper understanding of Your holiness and justice.

Guard our hearts from hardness and rebellion. Teach us to repent quickly, to seek Your mercy, and to walk in obedience. Strengthen our faith so that we trust in Christ, who rescues us from wrath and gives us eternal hope.

Give us wisdom as we study Your Word and help us remain faithful in a world that often turns away from You.

In Jesus’ name,  
Amen.

# Revelation 9:1–2

“(1) The fifth angel blew 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 Context:

This is the **First Woe** that the eagle warned us about in the previous chapter. We are moving from "natural" disasters (hail, fire, bitter water) into **spiritual warfare**.

John sees a "star" that had already fallen. In the language of Revelation, stars often represent angels. This is a fallen angel—likely a high-ranking demonic power. He isn't the owner of the "Abyss" (the bottomless pit), but he is **given the key**. This is a crucial detail: even the gates of hell only open when God allows it for His purposes.

## The Meaning of "The Fallen Star," "The Key," and "The Abyss":

In simple American English, we might say, "A dark spiritual leader was given permission to unlock a prison of pure evil, and the resulting spiritual 'smog' choked out the light of the world." John uses three specific descriptions:

- **"A Star that had Fallen":** This signifies **A Rebellion already in progress**. This isn't a star "falling" in the moment; it's one that has *already* fallen (past tense). It represents a spiritual being who rejected God's authority and is now being used to execute a specific judgment.
- **"The Key to the Shaft of the Abyss":** This signifies **Permission and Release**. The "Abyss" is described in the Bible as a prison for fallen spirits or demons. By "opening" it, God is allowing the hidden, dark influences of the spiritual world to become visible and felt on earth.
- **"Smoke like a Gigantic Furnace":** This signifies **Confusion and Obscurity**. When the pit is opened, the first thing that comes out isn't a monster, but **smoke**. This represents spiritual blindness, lies, and the "fog" of evil that makes it impossible for people to see the Truth (the Sun).

## The Core Lesson:

**Evil is a "fume" before it is a "force."** Before the "locusts" (which appear in the next verses) can attack, the atmosphere has to be darkened. This teaches us that **the enemy's primary weapon is confusion**. When a society rejects God, the "pit" is opened, and the resulting "smoke" of bad ideas and dark spirits makes it hard for anyone to find their way back to the light.

## The Illustration: The Prison Break

Imagine a high-security prison built deep underground. Inside are the most dangerous, chaotic influencers in history. For years, the doors have been locked, and the world above has lived in relative peace.

Suddenly, a "fallen" guard is given the key. He doesn't just open the doors; he sets a fire in the basement. Thick, black, oily smoke starts pouring out of the vents and into the streets of the city. People can't see the sun anymore. They are coughing, confused, and terrified. They don't even see the prisoners coming out yet—they are just overwhelmed by the "atmosphere" of the prison. That is the opening of the Abyss. It is the release of **spiritual darkness** into the human world.

## The "Glory" Reflection:

- **The "Atmosphere" Check:** Do I feel like the "smoke" of the world (lies, confusion, fear) is darkening my view of God today?
- **The "Key" Check:** Am I comforted by the fact that even the "Abyss" can't be opened without a key? God is still in control of the boundaries of evil.
- **The "Light" Check:** When the "smoke" rises, am I staying close to the Word of God—the only light that can pierce through the darkness of the Abyss?

## Revelation 9:3–4

“(3) 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.”

## The Context:

The "smoke" of confusion from the previous verses now takes a physical, terrifying shape. John describes them as "locusts," but these aren't your typical garden pests. Normal locusts are a nightmare for farmers because they eat every green thing in sight. These spiritual locusts, however, have a completely different "diet."

They are **supernatural predators**. They don't want your crops; they want your peace. They are given a specific "operating license" by God: they can only touch people who are not protected by **the Seal of God** (which we saw back in Chapter 7).

## The Meaning of "Locusts with Scorpion Power" and "The Target":

In simple American English, we might say, "A swarm of spiritual tormentors was released, but they were strictly forbidden from touching God's children. Their only target was the hearts of those who had rejected the King." John uses three specific descriptions:

- **"Power like Scorpions":** This signifies **Torment, not Death**. A scorpion's sting is famous for being incredibly painful but rarely fatal. These "locusts" represent demonic influences that bring mental and spiritual agony—**anxiety, despair, and a "stinging" conscience**—without actually killing the person.
- **"Not to Harm the Grass or Trees":** This signifies **A Shift in Judgment**. Usually, locusts are an environmental disaster. By forbidding them from eating plants, God is showing that this 5th Trumpet is a **Psychological Judgment**. It's an attack on the human soul, not the food supply.
- **"Only those without the Seal":** This signifies **Divine Immunity**. This is the most beautiful part of the verse for a believer. If you belong to the Lamb, you are "off-limits" to this swarm. You might see the "smoke" and hear the "buzzing," but the sting cannot land on you. You are wearing the King's armor.

### **The Core Lesson:**

**The safest place to be in a crisis is "under the Seal."** We often spend a lot of time trying to "bug-proof" our lives with money, insurance, or walls. But Revelation shows us that the only true protection against spiritual "stings" is a relationship with God. This teaches us that **grace is our ultimate shield**. When the world is feeling the "sting" of despair, the people of God can stand firm because they are marked as "private property" of the Throne.

### **The Illustration: The Bug Zapper and the Screen Porch**

Imagine a humid summer night where the air is thick with mosquitoes and stinging flies. Everyone outside is getting bitten and miserable. They are swatting at the air, but the swarm is too big.

Now, imagine you are sitting on a porch with a fine-mesh screen. You can hear the buzzing. You can see the bugs hitting the screen right in front of your face. But they can't get through. You have a "seal"—the screen—that defines who is "inside" and who is "outside." The people outside are "those without the seal." They are exposed to the sting. But because you are inside the King's protection, you can watch the swarm without being hurt by it.

### **The "Glory" Reflection:**

- **The "Seal" Check:** Do I wake up every day remembering that I am "sealed" and "off-limits" to the enemy's ultimate sting? How does that change my level of anxiety?
- **The "Target" Check:** When I see people in the world acting out of extreme despair or "spiritual agony," do I see them with compassion, knowing they are feeling the "sting" because they don't have the Shepherd?
- **The "Green" Check:** God protected the "grass and trees" during this woe. Do I trust that God can protect the "basics" of my life even when spiritual warfare is raging around me?

# Revelation 9:5–6

“(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.”

## The Context:

This is the psychological peak of the **First Woe**. The "Locusts" have arrived, and their mission is specific: **Pain without a way out**.

In most disasters, "death" is the worst-case scenario. But here, the situation is flipped. The mental and spiritual agony caused by these demonic influences is so heavy that people view death as a "rescue" or an "escape." However, God puts a temporary "lock" on the exit. For five months—the typical lifespan of a literal locust—humanity is forced to face the internal consequences of living without God.

## The Meaning of "Five Months" and "Seeking Death":

In simple American English, we might say, "The spiritual pressure was so high that people wanted to check out of life, but they were forced to stay and feel the full weight of their choices." John uses two specific descriptions:

- **"Five Months":** This signifies **A Limited Season**. Even in this intense judgment, there is a "boundary." Five months is the exact time a locust swarm usually lasts in nature (from May to September). It shows that God is still in control of the **clock**. The "torture" isn't forever; it's a specific window of time meant to break human pride.
- **"Death Will Elude Them":** This signifies **The Failure of Escapism**. Humans are experts at "numbing" pain or running away from reality. But during this trumpet, all the "exit doors" are jammed. You can't hide from the "sting" of a guilty conscience or the "venom" of demonic despair. It's a moment of absolute accountability where you have to look at the "smoke" you've allowed into your soul.

## The Core Lesson:

**Hell is wanting to be away from God and getting exactly what you asked for.** These people have rejected the "Living Water" and the "Seal of God," and now they are experiencing a world where God's "restraining grace" is pulled back. This teaches us that **the "Sting" of sin is worse than the "Sting" of death**. Without God, even existence itself becomes a burden. The goal of this pain is to make people stop running *away* from God and start running *to* Him.

## The Illustration: The Heavy Backpack

Imagine you are hiking up a steep, jagged mountain. You decided to fill your backpack with heavy, sharp rocks (representing pride, bitterness, and rebellion). You thought the rocks made you look "tough."

Suddenly, the "Locusts" arrive. They don't take your backpack; they just make the straps tighter and the rocks sharper. The pain in your shoulders is unbearable. You want to just "throw yourself off the cliff" to make the pain stop, but every time you jump, you land safely back on the trail. You are forced to keep walking with those rocks.

The only way the pain stops is not by "dying," but by **emptying the backpack**—confessing the sin and asking the Shepherd for help. The Fifth Trumpet is God making the "backpack of sin" so heavy that people finally want to get rid of it.

## The "Glory" Reflection:

- **The "Exit" Check:** Do I try to "escape" my problems through distractions or numbing behaviors, or do I bring them to the Throne where there is actual healing?
- **The "Window" Check:** Am I thankful that God puts a "time limit" on the trials I face? Even the "Five Months" had an end date.
- **The "Value" Check:** Do I realize how precious life is when it's connected to God? To the believer, life is a gift; to those under the "sting," it's a prison.

The description of the "Locusts" is about to get even weirder.

## Revelation 9:7–8

“(7) The appearance of the locusts was 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.”

## The Context:

John is now struggling to find words for what he is seeing. This is not a biology report; it is a **vision of spiritual warfare**. He uses "like" and "resembled" over and over because these creatures are unnatural.

If the previous verses focused on the *effect* of these creatures (the sting), these verses focus on their **intimidation**. They are designed to look like a nightmare mash-up of everything people fear: the speed of a warhorse, the authority of a king, the intelligence of a human, and the ferocity of a predator.

## The Meaning of the "Horses," "Faces," and "Hair":

In simple American English, we might say, "These weren't just bugs; they were an organized, intelligent, and terrifying army that looked like they couldn't be stopped." John uses four specific descriptions:

- **"Like Horses Prepared for Battle":** This signifies **Power and Momentum**. In the ancient world, a charging horse was the most terrifying thing on a battlefield. It means these spiritual forces aren't "wandering" around; they have a mission, a direction, and a terrifying speed.
- **"Something like Crowns of Gold":** This signifies **False Authority**. Notice it says *something like* crowns. They aren't real kings, but they act like they are. This represents the way evil "claims" to have power over your life, trying to boss you around with fear and lies.
- **"Faces Resembled Human Faces":** This signifies **Intelligence and Personhood**. These aren't mindless insects. They are "personal" spirits. They know how to manipulate human thoughts. They aren't just "accidents"; they are calculating.
- **"Hair like Women... Teeth like Lions":** This signifies **Allure and Destruction**. In many ancient cultures, long hair represented beauty or "glory," while lion's teeth represented the power to tear things apart. This is a picture of **Seduction followed by Slaughter**. Evil often looks "attractive" or interesting at first, but it ends with a "bite" that destroys.

## The Core Lesson:

**The Enemy is an "Imposter King."** These creatures wear "crowns" and have "human faces," but they are actually destructive locusts. This teaches us that **evil always tries to look more "official" and "powerful" than it actually is**. It uses "Lion's teeth" (threats) to make you forget that you are protected by the "Lion of Judah." When you see through the "costume," you realize they are just fallen spirits on a short leash.

## The Illustration: The "Bullies" in Masks

Imagine a group of people who want to take over a neighborhood. They don't just walk in; they put on high-end tactical gear, fake police badges, and terrifying masks that look like monsters. They drive fast cars and shout through megaphones.

If you didn't know better, you'd think they were the actual government. You'd be terrified. But then you realize: **They don't have a warrant, and they don't have the keys to your house.** They are just "imposters" using scary costumes to get you to surrender. The 5th Trumpet locusts are "mask-wearers." They look like "Gold Crowns" and "Warhorses," but they can't touch the person who knows the True King.

## The "Glory" Reflection:

- **The "Crown" Check:** Is there a "fear" in my life that is wearing a "fake crown"—acting like it's the boss of me?
- **The "Teeth" Check:** When I feel "bitten" by anxiety or depression, do I remember that the "Lion of Judah" (Jesus) has already pulled the teeth of the enemy?
- **The "Face" Check:** Do I recognize the "intelligence" behind the temptations I face? Am I staying alert to the "mind games" the enemy tries to play?

The description gets even more "military" in the next few verses.

## Revelation 9:9–10

“(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 Context:

John continues his "war report" from the spiritual front lines. If the previous verses described their faces and hair (their identity), these verses describe their **defenses** and their **sound**.

They aren't just scary to look at; they are "armored up." To a 1st-century person like John, "iron breastplates" represented the peak of military technology—nearly impossible to pierce with a standard sword. The "sound" he describes is the overwhelming, deafening roar of a massive army. It's designed to create **psychological shock**.

### The Meaning of "Iron Breastplates" and "The Thundering of Wings":

In simple American English, we might say, "They were bulletproof, they were loud enough to shake the ground, and they carried a weapon that could paralyze a person's spirit for an entire season." John uses three specific descriptions:

- **"Breastplates of Iron":** This signifies **Emotional Hardness**. These spiritual forces have no "heart." You can't reason with them, you can't pity them, and you can't hurt their feelings. It also suggests that human arguments and "logic" can't pierce through the darkness they bring. Only spiritual weapons work against iron-clad spirits.
- **"The Thundering of Many Chariots":** This signifies **Overwhelming Anxiety**. Have you ever felt a "buzzing" in your mind when you're stressed? Now imagine that multiplied by a thousand war-chariots. This represents the "noise" of the enemy—the constant accusations, the "what-ifs," and the loud lies that try to drown out the "still, small voice" of God.

- **"Tails with Stingers":** This signifies **The "Sting" in the Tail**. In literature, a "sting in the tail" is an unexpected, unpleasant end to something. These creatures might look like horses or humans in the front, but their real damage comes from behind. It represents how sin or dark influences often look "noble" or "powerful" at first, but they leave a poisonous "after-effect" that lingers.

### **The Core Lesson:**

**The Enemy's "Volume" is not the same as his "Victory."** The locusts make a lot of noise (thundering wings) and look impenetrable (iron), but they are still on a **five-month** timer. This teaches us that **fear is often a "sound effect" designed to make us surrender**. When the world gets loud and the "shaking" starts, the believer remembers that the "Lion of Judah" doesn't need iron breastplates—He has already won the war.

### **The Illustration: The "Bluff" of the Armored Tank**

Imagine you are standing in a field and a massive, iron-plated tank comes roaring toward you. The engine is deafening, the ground is vibrating, and it looks like nothing can stop it. You feel small and helpless.

But then you look at your hand and realize you have the **remote control** for that tank. The "Owner" of the field (God) has given you the frequency. You press a button, and the engine cuts out. The "thundering" stops. The iron is still there, but the power is gone.

The 5th Trumpet locusts are "tanks" that only have power over those who don't have the "Remote Control" (the Name of Jesus and the Seal of God). They are loud, but they are **limited**.

### **The "Glory" Reflection:**

- **The "Noise" Check:** Is the "thundering" of the world's problems keeping me from hearing God's peace today? How can I "mute" the noise of the enemy?
- **The "Armor" Check:** Do I try to fight spiritual battles with my own "iron" (my strength, my smarts), or do I put on the "Armor of God" (Ephesians 6)?
- **The "After-Effect" Check:** Am I chasing things that look "human" or "royal" but have a "sting in the tail"?

**We are about to meet the "General" of this nightmare army.**

## **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).”

## The Context:

In the natural world, King Solomon once wrote that "locusts have no king" (Proverbs 30:27). They usually move as a mindless, chaotic swarm. But these **Supernatural Locusts** are different. They are organized. They are a literal "army of darkness" with a clear chain of command.

John identifies their leader not as a human, but as the **Angel of the Abyss**. This is the "Star" who was given the key in verse 1. By giving his name in both Hebrew and Greek, John is making sure *everyone*—no matter their background—understands exactly who this is. He is the personification of **unmaking** everything God has made.

## The Meaning of "Abaddon" and "Apollyon":

In simple American English, we might say, "The boss of this nightmare is a high-ranking spirit whose entire job description is 'The One Who Tears Things Down.'" John uses these two names to define the enemy's character:

- **Abaddon (Hebrew):** This signifies **A Place of Ruin**. In the Old Testament, "Abaddon" was often used to describe the depths of the grave or a place of utter lostness. It's the "Black Hole" of the spiritual world.
- **Apollyon (Greek):** This signifies **The Exterminator or Destroyer**. This name was a clever "slap in the face" to the Greek god Apollo, who was often represented by a locust and worshipped by the Romans. John is saying, "The 'gods' you worship are actually just high-ranking demons whose only goal is your destruction."
- **"King over Them":** This signifies **Totalitarian Control**. Unlike the Kingdom of God, which is built on freedom and love, this kingdom is built on **slavery to a tyrant**. These locusts don't follow him because they love him; they follow him because they are made of the same "smoke" he is.

## The Core Lesson:

**God creates; the Enemy destroys.** This is the simplest way to tell whose side you are on. God is a Gardener who plants, builds, and brings life. Abaddon is a "Wrecking Ball" who only knows how to ruin. This teaches us that **anything in our lives that leads to "destruction" (of our peace, our families, or our joy) is from the Abyss**. The good news? The "Destroyer" is still a created being who is on a leash held by the Creator.

## The Illustration: The Architect vs. The Arsonist

Imagine a beautiful city with parks, schools, and homes. An **Architect** spent years designing it so people could thrive. He knows every brick and every wire.

One night, an **Arsonist** (Abaddon) shows up. He didn't build a single house. He doesn't know how to fix a leaky faucet or plant a tree. All he has is a match. He wants to turn the "City of Life" into a "Pile of Ash."

He thinks he's powerful because fire is scary, but he can only burn what the Architect allows. The 5th Trumpet shows the Arsonist being let loose for a moment, but it also reminds us that the **Architect** is the one who ultimately owns the land and will rebuild it better than before.

### **The "Glory" Reflection:**

- **The "Name" Check:** When I feel "destroyed" or "ruined" by life's circumstances, do I recognize that as the "signature" of the enemy, not the hand of God?
- **The "Leader" Check:** Am I following the "Destroyer" by tearing others down with my words, or am I following the "Creator" by building them up?
- **The "Authority" Check:** Do I live in fear of "Apollyon," or do I live in the peace of the "King of Kings" who has already defeated the Angel of the Abyss?

**The "First Woe" is now passing, but the "Eagle" has two more to go.**

## **Revelation 9:12–13**

“(12) The first woe is past; two other woes are still to come. (13) The sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God.”

### **The Context:**

The "First Woe" (the scorpion-locusts led by the Destroyer) has ended. But John doesn't give us a break; he immediately warns that two more are waiting in the wings.

The **Sixth Trumpet** starts with a sound—a voice coming from the **Golden Altar**. This is the same altar where the prayers of the saints were offered in Chapter 8. This is a crucial detail: the judgment of the Sixth Trumpet is a direct response to the cries of God's people who are suffering under injustice. God is saying, "I have heard you, and I am answering."

### **The Meaning of "The First Woe is Past" and "The Voice from the Altar":**

In simple American English, we might say, "The first round of hellish torment is over, but the second act is beginning, and it's being triggered by the prayers of the righteous." John uses these descriptions to set the stage:

- **"The First Woe is Past":** This signifies **A Staged Escalation**. God doesn't release everything at once. He unfolds His plan in phases. It shows that even in judgment, there is a "method to the madness"—God is pacing history to give humanity every possible chance to wake up.

- **"The Four Horns of the Golden Altar":** This signifies **The Source of Justice**. In the Old Testament, the "horns" of the altar were the most sacred points of protection and prayer. When a voice comes from the horns, it means the authority for this judgment is **God's holiness**. It isn't random or cruel; it is a righteous response to the "incense" (the prayers) that hit the altar earlier.

### **The Core Lesson:**

**Your prayers are "active duty" in the spiritual war.** We often think of prayer as "passive"—something we do while we wait for things to get better. But here, the judgment of the entire world is literally being commanded by a voice from the Altar of Prayer. This teaches us that **when you pray, you are initiating events in the heavenly realm**. Your prayers are not just "words"; they are the instructions that move the angels of God.

### **The Illustration: The Architect's Blueprint and the Control Room**

Imagine a massive city where the Architect (God) has placed a "Control Room." Inside, there is a golden panel with four dials (the horns of the altar).

The people who love the Architect go to this panel and "check in" (pray). Their voices are recorded and turned into commands. When the voices reach a certain volume, the "Sixth Trumpet" switch is flipped. The command doesn't come from a random place; it comes from the panel of the people who are suffering. God isn't a heartless judge; He is a Responding Father who listens to His children's cries for justice and then "sets things right."

### **The "Glory" Reflection:**

- **The "Justice" Check:** Do I believe that God hears my prayers for justice and peace? Do I trust that He is keeping a record of every "cry" from the altar?
- **The "Preparation" Check:** If I knew my prayers could "trigger" the next move in God's plan, would I pray differently?
- **The "Woe" Check:** Can I remain calm in a world of "Woes," knowing that the One who sits on the throne is listening to the Altar of Prayer?

**We are about to see what the voice from the altar commands.**

## **Revelation 9:14–16**

“(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 two hundred million. I heard their number.”

## The Context:

This is the second major **Woe**. We are shifting from the locusts (which caused pain) to a massive, militarized force (which causes death).

The **Euphrates River** is a historically loaded location. It was the eastern border of the Roman Empire and the place where Babylon—the ancient enemy of God's people—was located. In the Bible, the Euphrates is where evil armies usually come from to invade God's people. By "releasing" four angels bound *at* the river, God is removing the "dam" that has been holding back a massive surge of conflict.

## The Meaning of "The Four Bound Angels," "The Euphrates," and "Two Hundred Million":

In simple American English, we might say, "The borders of protection were removed, a massive hidden army was set loose, and for the first time, this judgment moves from 'torment' to 'destruction.'" John uses these details to set the scene:

- **"The Four Angels Bound at the Euphrates":** This signifies **A Held-Back Threat**. These angels were specifically "kept ready for this very hour." It shows that history isn't spinning out of control—it's moving exactly according to God's calendar. God has been holding back this "flood" of evil, and now He is letting it run its course.
- **"The Great River Euphrates":** This signifies **The Dividing Line**. The Euphrates separated the "known world" from the "unknown threats." By using this symbol, John is telling his readers that the "threat" they feared most (the powerful, brutal armies of the East) is now being turned into an instrument of divine judgment.
- **"Two Hundred Million":** This signifies **An Uncountable Horde**. In the 1st century, 200 million was a number that didn't even exist in terms of real armies (the entire Roman Empire was a fraction of that). It represents a force so massive that no human alliance could ever stop it. It emphasizes the total helplessness of humanity when God withdraws His restraint.

## The Core Lesson:

**God's "leash" is the only thing keeping the world from total chaos.** We often think we live in a world governed by human treaties, diplomacy, and police forces. But the Sixth Trumpet shows that those are just "paper walls." If God chooses to "release" the forces He has been holding back, human institutions will be swept away like they aren't even there. This teaches us that **our true security is not in the "walls" we build, but in the God who holds back the flood.**

## The Illustration: The Dam and the Flood

Imagine a massive dam that holds back a river the size of the Mississippi. For generations, the people downstream have built their houses, planted their crops, and lived their lives, completely forgetting that a wall of water is held back just a few miles away.

The "Four Angels" are the floodgates. When the Sixth Trumpet sounds, the operator of the dam (God) doesn't just open a door; He removes the entire structure. The flood is "kept ready for this very hour." The people are shocked, but the water was always there—it was only the "gate" that kept them safe. The Sixth Trumpet is the moment God says, "I have been protecting you from the consequences of your own rebellion; now, you will see what happens when the protection is removed."

### The "Glory" Reflection:

- **The "Restraint" Check:** Do I realize how much "restraining grace" God uses every day to keep the world from spiraling? Do I thank Him for the "quiet" days?
- **The "Fear" Check:** When I hear about massive global conflicts, do I react with fear, or do I remember that God is the only one who holds the "leash" on the nations?
- **The "Urgency" Check:** Since this army was kept ready for a "specific hour, day, month, and year," do I realize that God is in charge of the timeline? Am I living like someone who knows the End is in His hands?

**The army is released, and the scale is terrifying.**

## Revelation 9:17–19

“(17) The horses I saw in my vision and their riders looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and sulfur-yellow. 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 these three plagues—by the fire, the smoke, and the 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.”

### The Context:

John is describing the **Sixth Trumpet**—the "Second Woe." If the Fifth Trumpet (the locusts) was a psychological "sting," this is a massive military invasion.

The riders are dressed in **fiery red, dark blue, and sulfur-yellow**. These colors symbolize the fire, smoke, and sulfur that pour out of the horses' mouths. John is describing a force that is completely "out of this world." It's an unstoppable war machine that kills "a third of mankind." This is the deadliest event described in all of Revelation so far.

### The Meaning of "Fire, Smoke, and Sulfur" and "Snakes for Tails":

In simple American English, we might say, "The war machine was a terrifying, multidimensional threat that killed from the front and the back." John uses these descriptions:

- **"Fire, Smoke, and Sulfur":** This signifies **Total Annihilation**. This "trinity" of destruction (fire, smoke, sulfur) is exactly how the Bible describes the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

It represents a judgment so absolute that nothing is left standing. It shows that human strength is like paper against the power of God's judgment.

- **"Heads like Lions":** This signifies **Ferocity and Authority**. A lion is the king of the jungle—the ultimate predator. These horses don't just trample; they "devour" everything in their path. It creates an image of a force that is loud, hungry, and relentless.
- **"Tails like Snakes":** This signifies **Deception and Hidden Danger**. A horse usually hurts with its hooves or teeth, but these "horses" have tails that act like snakes. It means the danger is **everywhere**. You have to watch the front (the fire) *and* the back (the snake-tails). It's a picture of an enemy that is impossible to escape because it strikes from every direction.

### **The Core Lesson:**

**The Enemy is a "Master of Multiple Fronts."** Often, we focus on the "fire" in front of us (our obvious problems), forgetting that the enemy also has "snakes in the tail" (the hidden, subtle ways he tries to trip us up). The Sixth Trumpet shows us that **the world without God is a place of total, unpredictable danger**. The only way to survive a "lion-headed, snake-tailed" enemy is to stay close to the Lamb, who is the real Lion and the true Conqueror.

### **The Illustration: The Two-Faced Warrior**

Imagine a soldier on a battlefield who is completely surrounded. He has his shield up to block the fire coming from the front, but he's forgotten about the poison snake hiding in the grass behind him. He feels safe because he blocked the "fire," but he's still in danger from the "tail."

The Sixth Trumpet army is like that soldier's worst nightmare: a force that attacks your front *and* your back. It's meant to show us that human resources are completely inadequate to stop the tide of evil once God steps back and lets the "Euphrates" overflow.

### **The "Glory" Reflection:**

- **The "Front/Back" Check:** Am I so focused on the "fire" (the big, loud problems) that I'm ignoring the "snake" (the small, subtle temptations) in my life?
- **The "Armor" Check:** If these "horses" were real, my best suit of armor would be useless. Do I realize how much I need the "full armor of God" (the only armor that works against spiritual forces)?
- **The "Third of Mankind" Check:** The scale of this is massive. Does it move me to pray for those who don't know the Lord, so that they might find the "Seal of God" before the final chapters close?

**The destruction is absolute, but even now, there is a final, tragic detail.**

# Revelation 9:20–21

“(20) 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 worshipping 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 theft.”

## The Context:

This is the most heartbreaking conclusion in the entire book of Revelation. You would expect that after the "Fifth Trumpet" (the stings) and the "Sixth Trumpet" (the death of one-third of the world), people would drop to their knees and cry out to God.

Instead, they **double down**. They don't just stay the same; they continue to worship the very things that are destroying them. This reveals the terrifying power of **hardened hearts**. Even when the world is burning, people will often cling to their "idols" rather than submit to the Creator.

## The Meaning of "The Work of Their Hands" and "The Four Sins":

In simple American English, we might say, "Even after the world fell apart, people stayed addicted to their fake gods and their destructive habits." John points out two tragic realities:

- **"They did not stop worshipping... idols that cannot see or hear or walk":** This signifies **Spiritual Insanity**. It is illogical to worship a statue that cannot save you. It shows that **idolatry is not a mistake of the mind; it is a rebellion of the heart**. They *know* the idols are dead, but they prefer a "god" they can control over the living God who controls them.
- **"Their murders, magic arts, sexual immorality, or theft":** This signifies **The "Fruit" of a Godless Life**. These four sins represent the breakdown of human society:
  1. **Murder:** Violence against life.
  2. **Magic Arts (*pharmakeia*):** The misuse of drugs, occultism, and manipulation.
  3. **Sexual Immorality:** The breakdown of intimacy and marriage.
  4. **Theft:** The breakdown of property and trust. When a society reaches this point, they have officially swapped the "Creator" for the "Destroyer."

## The Core Lesson:

**Pain alone does not lead to repentance.** We often assume that if God would just show people a "miracle" or send a "warning," everyone would believe. But these verses prove that **you can be standing in the middle of a war zone and still choose your idols over God**. This teaches us that

repentance is not just a reaction to pain—it is a **gift of the heart** that comes when we see our need for a Savior.

### **The Illustration: The Addicted Captive**

Imagine a person who is addicted to a substance that is slowly killing them. They have been to the hospital twice, they have lost their job, and their family has left. Their body is in agony.

A friend comes to them and offers them a way out. But the person chooses to reach for their stash instead. They know it's killing them, but the addiction has become their "god." The "Sixth Trumpet" is the ultimate version of this. The world is in agony, but the "addiction" to their own independence is so strong that they would rather face the fire than bow to the King.

### **The "Glory" Reflection:**

- **The "Idol" Check:** Is there something in my life—a comfort, a hobby, or a habit—that I am holding onto so tightly that I would choose it over God's path for me?
- **The "Hardened Heart" Check:** Do I listen to God's nudges in my life, or do I find myself "doubling down" when He tells me to change?
- **The "Prayer" Check:** Since the world is clearly struggling to "repent," should I be praying more for the hearts of the people around me, so that they might see the Truth before the "Woe" is finished?

**That concludes the Sixth Trumpet.** The "Woes" have been terrible, and the world is still refusing to change. Now, in **Chapter 10**, we have a short, beautiful "intermission" before the final, loudest trumpet of all.

Heavenly Father,

As we close our study of Revelation chapter 9, we are reminded of the seriousness of Your judgment and the depth of human rebellion. Guard our hearts from becoming hardened, and keep us sensitive to Your truth and Your call to repentance.

Thank You for the mercy found in Jesus Christ, who rescues us from judgment and gives us hope beyond the darkness of this world. Help us live with wisdom, humility, and faithfulness, trusting in Your sovereign control over all things.

Strengthen us to stand firm, to share the truth with others, and to remain faithful until the day when Your kingdom is fully revealed.

In Jesus' name,  
Amen.