

Chapter 9

1 And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. 2 He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit (abyss), and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. 3 Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. 4 They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

After the fall of Imperial Rome in 476, Papal power increased to fill the void of leadership. Emperor Justinian ruled from Constantinople which would now be considered the Byzantine Empire. Justinian tried to unify the former Roman Empire, he issued decrees and edicts to rule the church, and declared himself to have religious authority on matters. In 438 this power was exercised, and is the starting point for the 1260 years of papal rule spoken of in Daniel and in chapter 11. The spring of 538 is thought of as the beginning of the Middle Ages. In the fall of 541, three and a half years later, the plague of Justinian would ravage the land. It is estimated to be between 25 and 100 million people over 2 centuries. The fifth head of the dragon (Rome, chapter 17 & 20) had a wound unto death, and was looking to be revived by Justinian. He called together the Second Council of Constantinople, and was considered a holy Roman Emperor by many. The following chapter is the woes announced to the papacy, the first two over the Byzantine empire, and the third woe, the bowl judgements, over the Holy Roman Empire as a head of the Roman Beast, and the Papal Catholic Church where the woman is seated, on the Papal States.

1-2) Looking carefully at this, the key didn't open the abyss, instead it was a *shaft* that was opened. Shaft is the Strong's word *phrear* which means: *Well, pit or cistern*. In John 7:37-39 it explains that the Holy Spirit is the spring of living water, so this is the well/cistern of evil water. Demons weren't released here, but their teaching was. In verse 2 it shows this teaching is as black as a great furnace, so very oppressive. The *air* that was darkened is the same word in Ephesians 2:2 and 1 Thessalonians 4:17 where it talks about Satan being the prince of the power of the air.

1) The phrase here is similar to the Wormwood prophecy in chapter 6. There fell a great star from heaven vs. a star fell from heaven to the earth. The star called Wormwood was Atilla, the Scourge of God. This is like the great hailstones that fell from heaven in Revelation 16:21. The form of the verb in verse 1, as fallen, is the same as Luke 10:18 where Jesus said he saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven, see also Isaiah 14:12. See Revelation 12:9 where Satan was hurled down.

There are many scholars who have interpreted this chapter with many historical examples. Here is one...(<https://sermons.logos.com/sermons/1052156-revelation-9>) *The fifth trumpet is blown and John sees a star fall from heaven, I did not read one commentator that believed that this a literal star, but a person, angel, or Satan the star referring to a high or prominent person like we call athletes and actors stars today. One historicist view is that this star is Mohammed, who was of princely pedigree but the previous generation of his family had lost its rule, and the locust plague he releases is the Saracens or Muslim Arabs and their campaigns against the Eastern Roman Empire. There was also mention that the Hebrew word for locust and Arab are very similar in sound, arbeh of the locusts, and arbi of an Arab. Unlike actual locust this plague was commanded not to harm the grass and all green things growing on the earth, this is in striking parallel to Mohammed's instructions in the Koran not to*

destroy the palm trees, nor any fields of corn and not to cut down any fruit trees. The Saracens were not able to kill papal Rome as a political body but did torment them "for a while". The five months that are given to the "locust" are seen as five prophetic months of 30 days each for a total of 150 days, if you take each day as a year this very closely lines up with time Mohammed adopted the policy of making converts by the sword in AD 612 to the time when the ceased from their ravages and moved their capital to Bagdad in AD 763. Quick math is 151 years but the months were not listed so it may be 150 and a few months. Even some of the pre-millennial commentators agree that this interpretation is well founded.

3) Of the earth shows that the Muslim influence will be known from Spain through Europe to Germany, and down in to the Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman Empire), and across northern Africa.

4) The seal of God at this point of the prophecy were on the tribes of Jews as shown in chapter 7. See this quote from Al-Baladhuri "The Battle of the Yarmuk (636) and after" "The people of Homs replied [to the Muslims], "We like your rule and justice far better than the state of oppression and tyranny in which we were. The army of Heraclius we shall indeed, with your 'amil's' help, repulse from the city." The Jews rose and said, "We swear by the Torah, no governor of Heraclius shall enter the city of Homs unless we are first vanquished and exhausted!" [...] When by Allah's help the "unbelievers" were defeated and the Muslims won, they opened the gates of their cities, went out with the singers and music players who began to play, and paid the kharaj." See also the Jewish Golden Age (of Spain).

history.net <https://www.historynet.com/muhammad-the-warrior-prophet/> - Muhammad's belief in Islam and his own role as the "Messenger of God" revolutionized Arabian warfare and resulted in the creation of the ancient world's first army motivated by a coherent system of ideological belief. The ideology of holy war (jihad) and martyrdom (shahada) for the faith was transmitted to the West during the wars between Muslims and Christians in Spain and France, where it changed traditional Christian pacifistic thinking on war, brought into being a coterie of Christian warrior saints, and provided the Catholic Church with its ideological justification for the Crusades. Ideology—whether religious or secular—has remained a primary component of military ventures ever since...Muhammad did not seek the defeat of a foreign enemy or invader; rather, he sought to replace the existing Arabian social order with a new one based upon a radically different ideological worldview.

Here is one of the motivating factors of the Islamist against the Byzantine church, found in the wikipedia page "Byzantine Iconoclasm" "The rise of Islam in the seventh century had also caused some consideration of the use of holy images. Early Islamic belief stressed the impropriety of iconic representation. Earlier scholarship tried to link Byzantine Iconoclasm directly to Islam by arguing that Byzantine emperors saw the success of the early Caliphate and decided that Byzantine use of images (as opposed to Islamic aniconism) had angered God. This does not seem entirely plausible however. The use of images had probably been increasing in the years leading up to the outbreak of iconoclasm. One notable change came in 695, when Justinian II put a full-faced image of Christ on the obverse of his gold coins. ..."The Iconoclast Controversy caused Papal-Imperial relations to plummet. Pope Gregory III declared an excommunication for all iconoclasts, and the Emperor sent an expedition to Rome which failed. In 754 the Emperor then seized the Papal properties in Sicily, Calabria and Illyria, and in the same year Pope Stephen II formed an alliance with the Frankish Kingdom, signalling the beginning of the end for Papal support of the Byzantine empire.[59] This in turn would set into motion, events like creation of the Carolingian empire through Pope Leo III's crowning of Charlemagne, invoking *translatio imperii* & the Great Schism." (The Great Schism was in 1054 breaking the Roman papacy from the Byzantine Empire)

HISTORICAL CONNECTION: Arab-Byzantine wars, Byzantine Iconoclasm

5 They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. 6 And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.

5) From biblehub's Topical "scorpion" *In 1 Kings 12:11 and 2 Chronicles 10:11, scorpions are used metaphorically to describe harsh treatment. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, uses the imagery of scorpions to convey the severity of his intended rule over the people of Israel: "My father scourged you with whips, but I will scourge you with scorpions."* This metaphor emphasizes the increased oppression and suffering that Rehoboam's reign would bring.

The torment of a scorpion causes much pain, but not necessarily death. The Mohammedans were not allowed to eradicate the apostate Christians. They gave them a choice, convert, be killed, or be a second-class citizen & pay tribute. Many chose not to seek death but became subservient to the Muslims, causing pain to their conscious and walk with God.

7 In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces (faces like men), 8 their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; 9 they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. 10 They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails.

7) From wikipedia Arab-Byzantine War, *the army was like a horde of locusts or "can only be likened to a human tsunami" described by scholar Howard-Johnston.*

7) *When we are introduced to the Islamic "army" they were bands of caravan raiders under Mohammed. They wore turbans with a tail flowing behind their head which would be used to cover their faces in the harsh weather. The bands of raiders under Mohammed had very little horses, so the phrase "like a horse" is referring to their many camels they used. In one of the earliest raids, the Raid on the Banu Mustaliq, Mohammed seized 2000 camels. In September of 629 the troops of Mohammed first appeared in battle against Rome just to the east of the Jordan River. In 632 Saint Maximos the Confessor wrote a contemporary reference to the barbarian ravages on the frontier that must have been about the Arabs: "What more unfortunate circumstances could there be here than these that hold the inhabited world in their grip? . . . What could be more lamentable and more terrible to those upon whom them fell? To see how a people, coming from the desert and barbaric, run through the land that is not theirs, as if it were their own; how they, who seem only to have simple human features, lay waste our sweet and organized country with their wild untamed beasts."*

11 They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon. 12 The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.

11) The Strong's definition of Abaddon is a destroying angel. In Islam, "Allah the Destroyer" is often associated with the name "Al-Mumeet" which translates to "The Inflictor of Death" or "The Bringer of Death."

12) *God used the most unlikely of people to conquer the Persians and the Eastern Roman Empire. In 659 a peace treaty was signed between the Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman Empire) and Rashishun Caliphate.*

13 Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, 14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” 15 So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind. 16 The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number.

13) The four horns of the alter are shown in Zechariah 1:21 to be the judgement against those that scattered Judah. The altar is the altar of incense where the prayers of the saints are as in Revelation 8:3.

15) The second woe is the final fall of the Byzantine Empire by the Ottomans, ending with the fall of Constantinople in 1453. From 4thewordofgod.com/revelation-9/ - *The Ottoman Empire under Malek Shaw meets the requirements of the text. Consider that it was divided among his four sons at his death. It was divided into four parts: 1) Persia, 2) Syria, 3) Asia Minor, and 4) India. (See Gibbon, 4, p. 169.) “Yet their progress was bounded by the Euphrates.” (Gibbon 6, p. 419) “Accompanied by his four brothers, he passed the Euphrates: the Turkish camp was soon seated in the neighborhood of Kutaieh in Phrygia; and his flying cavalry laid waste the country as far as the Hellingspont and the Black Sea.” (Gibbon, 6, p. 24) They marched out of Baghdad in 1057, crossed the river and the next century their conquest extended to the Hellingspont, and embraced all Turkey. Then came the mighty crusades. For a while, they beat back the Moslem power and recovered a portion of Turkey, between Europe and Asia. The contest lasted for two centuries. Europe weary of its fruitless struggle withdrew. The Turks reorganized and passed over into Europe. The eastern empire was shorn of all its territories and reduced to its city of Constantople.*

16) From Benson's commentary: *The Timariots, or horsemen, holding lands by serving in the wars, are the strength of the government; and are in all accounted between seven and eight hundred thousand fighting men. Some say they are a million; and besides these, there are Spahis and other horsemen in the emperor's pay.*

17 And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths. 18 By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. 19 For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound.

17) *The third of the empire of Rome (Byzantine) would fall at the hands of the Ottomans. The Byzantines declared themselves as Christian, and the Ottomans, as Muslims, saw it as their religious duty to conquer them. From Elliott “Horae Apocalypticae” - “From their first appearance the Ottomans have affected to wear warlike apparel of scarlet, blue and yellow: a descriptive trait the more marked from its contrast to the military appearance of Greeks, Franks or Saracens (Arabs) who were contemporary.”*

17) This version of brimstone is the only one used in the New Testament, but can be compared to the brimstone used against Sodom and Gomorrah. This coincides with the introduction of guns and artillery. One of the cannons built in 1464 was 27 feet long and could hurl a a 600 pound missile over a mile! As troops rode their horses, the gunfire would seem like fire, smoke and sulfur coming out the mouths. The cannons would also be pulled by horses, therefore the power of the horses is in their tail. "The chemists of China or Europe had found, by casual or elaborate experiments, that a mixture of saltpetre, sulphur, and charcoal produces, with a spark of fire, a tremendous explosion. It was soon observed that, if the expansive force were compressed in a strong tube, a ball of stone or iron might be expelled with irresistible and destructive velocity." Decline and Fall, vol. 7, chap. 65. pg 85.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION: Fall of Constantinople, Dardanelles Gun

20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, 21nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

20-21) The rest of mankind here is Europe in this context, where they were persecuting true Christians under the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman church did not repent and follow the One True God and his son Jesus. The popes thought they were the vicar of Christ - (pope Innocent III 1198) which means the substitute of Christ. Followers of the Roman Church were to follow the pope, not the word of God. Mass was conducted in Latin so the common people couldn't understand the prayers. They spoke incantations during their liturgical chants, and prayed the creeds created at the Ecumenical Councils. They prayed to idol statues that were renamed into saints, instead of the demonic entities they used to be (statue of Jupiter in the Vatican). They idolized gold, silver, stone & wood. They created an idea of purgatory so they could charge people money to get their departed loved ones into heaven, called the sale of indulgences. They confiscated the land of those they martyred in the name of God. Their churches are full of pagan symbolism, which is sexual immorality in the eyes of God. Google pagan symbols in the Catholic Church and have your eyes opened. The next two chapters deal directly with their exploits against true Christians.

