

The Fifth Trumpet

A Series on Divine Judgment: Part 10

Just prior to the introduction of the fifth trumpet, the apostle John sees an eagle flying and crying out, “woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth.”

Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!” (Rev 8:13)

Unbeknownst to the apostle is that the remaining three trumpets will herald the release of God’s plagues which will bring torment and death upon all human beings on earth.

Throughout the book of Revelation, the English translation “plague” is used for the Greek noun “plēgē.” While the English definition conveys the meaning of disease or affliction, the Greek meaning includes supernatural events harmful to human beings (i.e. the plagues of Exodus) and “wound” as in a physical injury.

Jesus replied and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat (**plēgē**) him, and went away leaving him half dead. (Luke 10:30)

When they had struck them with many blows (**plēgē**), they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. (Acts 16:23-24)

Up until to the fifth trumpet, God’s wrath of judgment was not focused on causing physical injury (plēgē) upon human beings.

The first four seals caused social upheaval and death (Rev 6:1-8).

The first four trumpets caused harm upon the earth and seas (Rev 8:6-12).

Identified as a woe, the fifth trumpet heralds the start of God’s wrath being dispensed directly and physically upon human beings.

When the fifth trumpet sounds, an angel from heaven is sent to earth to open the “bottomless pit” with the key he was given. From the abyss comes “the smoke of a great furnace” which darkens the sun (Rev 9:1-2).

After opening the abyss, the angel from heaven does three things (Rev 9:3-5):

1. Gives the locusts a power like a scorpion such as a tail that stings and hurts people for five months (Rev 9:10).
2. Restricts the locusts from hurting the grass, any vegetation, or any tree.
3. Restricts the locusts from stinging any of the 144,000 sealed bond servants and causing any death of those they afflict.

The locusts appear to the apostle John as something he’s unfamiliar with, because he describes them using similes:

They appeared like horses prepared for battle

On their heads appeared to be crowns

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Their faces were like faces of men

They had hair like the hair of women

Their teeth were like the teeth of lions

They had breastplates like breastplates of iron

The sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots of many horses

They have tails like scorpions

Elsewhere in the Bible, the abyss is presented as a place of confinement and punishment for fallen angels who indulged in some form of gross immoral behavior (Luke 8:26-31; Matt 8:28-32; Jude 1:6-7). Thus the opening of the abyss marks the first time that God is using a demonic instrument to dispense His wrath upon mankind. The apostle John introduces the fallen angel and king over the abyss with his Hebrew and Greek names with the intention that all would have no doubt of who he is and what he does.

Abaddon (Hebrew): Used in several instances in the Old Testament, this Hebrew noun means “destruction” or “the place ruin.”

The realm of the dead is naked before God;
Destruction (**Abaddon**) lies uncovered. (Job 26:6 NIV)

Destruction (**Abaddon**) and Death say,
“Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.” (Job 28:22 NIV)

It is a fire that burns to Destruction (**Abaddon**);
it would have uprooted my harvest. (Job 31:12 NIV)

Is your love declared in the grave,
your faithfulness in Destruction (**Abaddon**)? (Ps 88:11 NIV)

Death and Destruction (**Abaddon**) lie open before the Lord—
how much more do human hearts! (Prov 15:11 NIV)

Death and Destruction (**Abaddon**) are never satisfied,
and neither are human eyes. (Prov 27:20 NIV)

Apollyon (Greek): Found only once in the Bible, this Greek noun means “exterminator” or “destroyer.”

The abyss is featured prominently as a place for fallen angels.

From the abyss comes a demonic angelic being that kills the Two Witnesses. Note: this being distinctive from the human individual known as the Beast from the Earth (Rev 13:11-17).

Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. (Rev 11:7)

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The abyss is the location that Satan is confined to for one thousand years and then release for a short time until he is thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev 20:7-10).

The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. (Rev 17:8)

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. (Rev 20:1-3)

The fifth trumpet is the first woe, which God intends as a means to torment human beings with pain such that they would seek death but not find it. And if death is unobtainable, it forces one to consider God.

References:

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