



Fifth Trumpet - Star and Abyss

verse 1-12: 2000. The 5th trumpet sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky. He lit up a portion of the sky, and he was thrown into the abyss. The sun and the moon were darkened for the space of three days. (1) And all of the waters turned into blood. (2) And I saw a pale green star, and he was given power like that of scorpions of the earth. (3) They were told not to harm the grass of the earth in any place, or any man, or any beast, or any tree, or any man who does not have the mark of the beast. (4) He was given power to kill a fifth of the earth. (5) And the signs of the star were seen in the sky and in the earth, and the signs of the star were seen in the sky and in the earth. (6) And the signs of the star were seen in the sky and in the earth. (7) And the signs of the star were seen in the sky and in the earth. (8) And the signs of the star were seen in the sky and in the earth. (9) And the signs of the star were seen in the sky and in the earth. (10) And the signs of the star were seen in the sky and in the earth. (11) And the signs of the star were seen in the sky and in the earth. (12) And the signs of the star were seen in the sky and in the earth.

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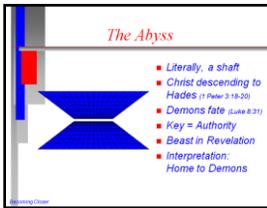


Some interpreters at this point have been misled by the expression that the star "had fallen." They feel this must refer to the star mentioned in the third trumpet. However, if this were the case, John would have used the definite article and said "the star which had fallen."

It brings up a point, however. "Star" -- as we have been interpreting it -- means some form of political and/or spiritual leader. And despite previous suggestions of meteors, all interpreters agree on this. Some futurists suggest that it may be Satan; I think not, as Satan is often enough identified by name. It does, however, fit: Satan is a fallen spirit. We have here an earthly leader of some sort; since he is associated with the heavens, he is at least partly a spiritual leader -- and he is fallen, somehow, at the *beginning* of this trumpet.

Because of his association with the Abyss (of which more later) we connect him with some great apostasy, or false doctrine. So we have a fallen apostate, and a great leader.

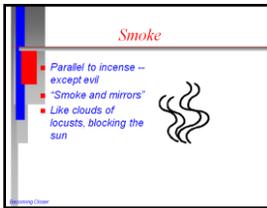
I should note in passing that the futurists and amillennialists both have a very difficult time with this passage. They are often speculative as to what this particular trumpet means.



The Abyss is a concept of the New Testament. The word literally means a shaft, rather than a canyon. There are some references elsewhere in the New Testament:

- Christ is referred to as preaching to the lost who are dead -- 1 Peter 3:18-20, and some hold that this is a trip to the Abyss.
- The demons whom Christ allows to go into the pigs (Luke 8:31) beg Him not to send them to the Abyss, from which many conclude that it is the Hell of Revelation - the holding tank of the rebellious angels and fallen men which will eventually be cast into the Lake of Fire.
- Most significantly, it is symbolic as a source of evil -- for it is from there that the Beast (Revelation 11:7) comes; it is there in which Satan is bound for the Millennium.

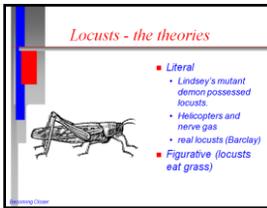
There is no question about it: we are dealing here with great moral evil.



I find no other passage which interprets smoke in a symbolic way, but I do not think this one too hard. The smoke proceeds from the Abyss -- and nothing but evil comes from there. If incense symbolizes the prayers of the saints (and incense is a type of smoke) -- is it not most likely that this is spiritual fog?

We still use the expression today -- "smoke and mirrors" -- to indicate someone who is attempting to deceive us.

One other interesting parallel comes from the locusts. Like smoke, they block the light of the sun. And light is almost always a figure for the truth of God.



As I mentioned, everyone but the historicists has a lot of trouble with this one. A representative thought can be found in Hal Lindsey's work. Ever the literalist, he states that these must be some form of mutant locust -- but demon possessed.

A comment here on the method of the futurist, particularly the more literal breed: the books must be kept constantly up to date, for the technology changes too. The passage is made obscure by the insistence upon literalism.

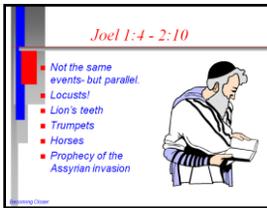
Lindsey recognizes this. In a rare display of the possibility that his interpretation may not be exactly right on, he tells the story of a friend who suggested that these locusts are in fact Huey Cobra helicopters -- spraying nerve gas out of their tails.

There is a point in there: if -- from the same author and interpretation -- these locusts can be either mutant, demon-possessed insects or helicopters with nerve gas, what else might they be????

Barclay (the quintessential liberal interpreter) also thinks they are literal locusts -- because the life cycle of the locust is about five months.

It seems more probable to me that we have not yet reached the end of the symbolic possibilities here. If these are not literal locusts, we can at least say:

- they are some sort of physical being -- this is not intended to be a "spiritual only" symbol.
- there is a great deal of description given them, and whatever theory we adopt must match up to this description.
- they are called locusts, and it is for that word that we must seek an explanation. We will find it in the prophet Joel.

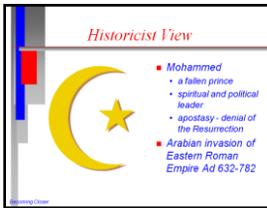


It is always best to look to the Old Testament for clues in interpretation of Revelation; the book is steeped in its imagery, and we need to remember that these images would have been very obvious to John the Apostle.

In the book of Joel, one of the minor prophets, we have a prophetic picture of an invasion. Most scholars (but not all) hold that this portrays the taking of Jerusalem by the Assyrian empire -- certainly in chapter 2. Those who hold to the futurist opinion often claim that chapter 1 (which describes the locusts) is a completely separate prophecy. However, the conjunction is such that many scholars take the "locust" for a metaphor of an invading army. Note the similarities:

- teeth of a lion
- trumpets
- horses.

We have here some slight clue as to what John was talking about: an invading army. Given the difficulty commentators have in agreeing on the meaning of this phrase, I submit it as the best of many possible solutions.

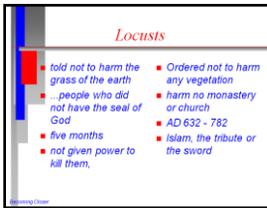


This is one place where the historicist view has a lot of detail. We begin it on this slide.

Mohammed -- if ever there was an apostate leader, this is it.

- He was born into a royal family at Medina -- destined to become the ruler of Medina. But his family was deposed, and he wound up taking a job as a servant. Later, he became a shepherd (in the desert he saw his visions). A fallen star.
- He was not only a spiritual leader -- he was a political leader, consolidating the Arab (Saracen) power before he died.
- His major apostasy was to say that Christ is only a prophet -- that he did not die on the cross nor was there a resurrection.

As we shall see on the next slide, there are several other parallels too which indicate the Saracen / Arab invasion. One is timing; it is the next great event after the ones identified with the first four trumpets. How closely the locusts match may be seen on the next slides.



Amazingly enough, we have the marching orders given by Mohammed's successors to the troops which conducted these invasions:

- They were strictly forbidden to harm any vegetation or tree, any farm animal, etc.. These were booty; a scorched earth policy (like that of the Goths) was forbidden.
- The devoutly religious -- especially those in monasteries, at a high point at that time -- were to be left entirely alone as long as they were peaceful. There are still monasteries in these lands which date from these times.
- The wars started in AD 632, just after the death of Mohammed. They ended with the start of peace negotiation in AD 782 -- exactly 150 years, or five prophetic months.
- The power to torment, but not to kill, was best expressed in the policy of "Islam, the tribute, or the sword." When they approached a fortified city, the occupants were given three options:

They could join the faith of Islam, and the armies of Allah

They could pay a heavy tax, or

They could be put to the sword.

The majority joined Islam. Some did pay the tax, but the sword was indeed rare for such a military campaign.

You might want to note one other thing, before we pass on to the Arab warrior. Locusts (Exodus 10:13) in the Bible came from "east of Egypt" -- that is, Arabia.



Between the mutant, demon possessed locusts and the nerve gas spraying helicopters we have a lot of room for descriptive maneuver. The historicist position is that these locusts were in fact the armies of Islam, coming out of Arabia, from the Sassassid empire (known to the ancients as Sabea -- Ezekiel describes such people in Ezekiel 23:42, which makes an interesting, though very old, comparison).

I must apologize for the picture. Several hours of surfing the world wide web yielded only one image of the Saracen warrior. This one is a picture of a military model in a collection held by a young man in Australia. It's the best I could do.

The parallels are interesting:

- The Arabs of this time had long hair (like a woman) but also beards (so they would be seen, in vision, as men)
- The crowns of gold were probably the yellow silk turbans
- The warriors rode horseback; there was virtually no infantry. At this time, the horse mounted warrior was almost exclusively associated with Arabia.
- The warriors rode with breastplates of iron.

The next key question is: what is this “sling in the tail?” Again, we must look to the Old Testament for a clue:

(Isa 9:14-15 NIV) So the LORD will cut off from Israel both head and tail, both palm branch and reed in a single day; {15} the elders and prominent men are the head, **the prophets who teach lies are the tail.**

This is the only prophetic, figurative or symbolic reference I could find outside Revelation to a “tail.” I think it describes these warriors very well. Without Islam, they would have been just one more border incursion. With Islam, they are deadly.

The Sixth Trumpet

Rev 9:13-21 (NIV) The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. (14) It said to the sixth angel, "Go and lead the trumpet." Then as the four angels who had been ready for the great hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. (15) The number of the mounted troops was the hundred and four thousand. I heard their number. (16) The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their heads were like lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and sulfur. (17) A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. (18) The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails were like snakes, with heads with which they struck people. (19) 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 worshiping demons, idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood, and idols that cannot see or hear or walk. (21) Nor did they repent of their murders, their magicians, their sexual immorality or their thefts.





The Euphrates is a familiar river to us today; Baghdad, the capital of Saddam Hussein, is still on its banks. A glance at the map will assist us.

Note first that the angels are “bound” at the Euphrates. This would seem to imply that these forces are being held back until the time arrives (we’ll discuss the time on a later slide). The Euphrates is an historic boundary marker:

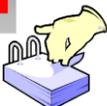
- Abraham’s land (Gen. 18:15) was said to be bounded by it -- though the ancient Israelites were given less than this. (Interesting possibilities in that!)
- It was considered the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire. Beyond it, barbarians.
- It is mentioned again in Revelation 16; indeed, some scholars view this as merely a preliminary to that.

How do we interpret this?

- Four angels === four kingdoms (see Daniel’s discussion of how the angel was held by the “Prince of Persia”).
- These kingdoms were held in check at the Euphrates river, heading toward the land John knows -- the Roman Empire.

The historicist view is that the empire in question is that of the Turks, held at the Euphrates in the person of Malek Shah, for 60 years until his four sons, in their four kingdoms, launched a campaign of conquest in January of 1057. This would follow along after the interpretation of the fifth trumpet in sequence.

hour and day and month and year



- **Historicist: time elapsed**
 - Greek *eniatos*, the 365 1/4 day year
 - = 396 years, 4 months
 - January 1057 through 29 May 1453
- **Futurist = literal time held**







One thing all agree on: this is a large army, invading from the East. Most amillennialists take the number to be something other than literal; most futurists take it literally. The reason is relatively simple: there are now armies of that size possible.

This brings up a point about being a futurist. You have to keep revising your predictions. The essence of the matter is that Jesus could come any time, and all the predictions of Revelation from Chapter 4 forward must then be dealt with in terms of the next seven years. The rule of thumb is that, whenever possible, they are to be taken as literally as possible. One reason for that is that the futurist view is very prevalent among fundamentalist churches, and particularly strong with those who see everything in black and white.

Thus, those who see the Second Coming as immediately imminent see the 200 million in terms of the Chinese. Those who take the poetic interpretation think otherwise. The language seems to favor the literal; why else "200?"

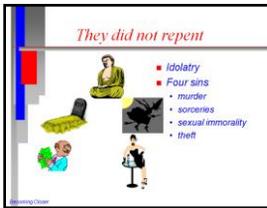
The historicist has a different explanation, one based on the original Greek. The word used for a regiment of Turkish cavalry at this time is "myriad." The Greek word for "thousand" is also "myriad." A corps of cavalry was also called a "myriad of myriads." Thus, *if you strictly follow the historicist interpretation*, you could translate this section as "two hundred myriads of myriads" (i.e., two hundred cavalry corps -- still a large number of riders, but nowhere near 200 million men). To avoid favoring one interpretation over another, the translators have chosen (wisely, I think) to translate literally. But it remains a good possibility, and it distinctly passes the "literal" test. It seems to fit in with John "hearing their number."

Other Historicist Details	
1/3 of mankind	1/3 of Roman Empire
Colors	Turkish Army colors
Lion	Arp Arslan
Fire, smoke and sulfur	First use of cannon and sidearms
Power in tails	Badge of rank

The historicist has a lot of other explanations to make. (Remember, in this section, the burden of proof *must* be on the historicist. He says it happened at a specific date).

- The concept of “one third” is consistently interpreted by the historicist to mean *a third of the old Roman Empire*. Thus, we have a consistency here -- this is one of the recognized thirds which is falling.
- The colors of the horsemen are distinctly those of the Turkish Army up until the 19th century.
- The reference to a “lion” could be a reference to the commanding general who crossed the Euphrates: Arp Arslan. His last name is an earlier version of the Turkish word *Aslan*. Readers of C. S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia* series will not be surprised to hear the meaning of the word: “lion.”
- The reference to fire, smoke and sulfur (taken as nuclear war by current futurists) could refer to the use of firearms, which were first used extensively in the territory of the old Roman Empire by these Turks.
- The power in their mouths would certainly also refer to firearms (consider looking at a cavalryman taking aim with a pistol, head on). The power in the tails could be a reference to Islam and the Prophet (as we mentioned in the Fifth Trumpet); it is also possible that it is a reference to the fact that Turkish generals of this time displayed horse’s tails on a lance as a *badge of rank*.

If in fact the historicist view is correct, some of the details here are indeed astounding. No one of any of these interpretations should be surprised at that.



Whichever view you take of these two trumpets, there is an infinitely sad point: “they did not repent.” If, like the futurists, you see this as a current diagnosis, then you must ask:

- Do we practice idolatry today (of course, we call it something else; after all, it doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you’re sincere.)
- Murder? (Name it abortion)
- Sorcery? (The Greek word is *pharmakia*, from which we get our word pharmacy -- which clearly indicates the drug connection).
- Sexual immorality (the Greek is *porneia*, from which we get pornography).
- Theft? In particular, theft by sleight of hand?

The world of 1453 new this well. All these sins were rampant. There is nothing new under the sun. But hear it well: the story is not yet finished -- but the ending is known.