



## OPENBARING HOOFSTUK 9

### Skriflesing – Openbaring 9 (Die Boodskap – vertaling)

#### Die vyfde trompet: God waarsku, maar die mense luister nie

**1** Die vyfde engel se trompet weerklink toe. Juis toe val my oog op iemand wat soos 'n ster van bo af op die aarde afkom. **2** Hy het die sleutel gekry wat die ingang na die onder-aardse dieptes oop- en toesluit. Toe hy die ingang oopsluit, borrel daar 'n digte rookmassa uit hierdie onderaardse diepte uit. **3** Die rookmassa was so dik dat die lug heeltemal swart geword het, sodat 'n mens nie eens die son kon sien nie. Uit hierdie wolke rook kruip daar toe sprinkane uit, die wêreld vol! Aan die sprinkane is buitengewone mag gegee. Hulle was gevaarlik soos skerpioene. **4** Daar is mooi vir hulle gesê wat hulle moes doen. Die plante, bome en gras moes hulle met rus laat, maar die mense moes hulle tref, hoewel nie almal nie. Daardie mense wat die merk van God op hulle voorkop gehad het, was veilig, maar die mense sonder daardie merk moes deurloop. **5** Die sprinkane moes nie die mense doodmaak nie, maar net vyf maande lank seermaak. Dit sal wees soos skerpioene wat hulle die hele tyd steek en dit gaan so seer wees dat die mense allerhande planne sal maak om hulleself dood te maak. **6** Maar hulle planne sal nie uitwerk nie. Hoe hard hulle ook al probeer, die dood sal soos wind deur hulle grypende vingers glip.

**7** Die sprinkane het soos perde gelyk wat spesiaal vir oorlog reggemaak is. Hulle gesigte het soos dié van mense gelyk. Op hulle koppe was iets wat gelyk het soos die goue kroon wat mense kry wat 'n kompetisie gewen het. **8** Onder die kroon het 'n pragtige haardos uitgehang, soos 'n vrou s'n. Hulle tandé het soos leeus s'n gelyk.

**9** Ysterplate het hulle bors beskerm. Hulle het 'n groot lawaai gemaak, net soos die gedreun van 'n massa perde en waens wat in 'n oorlog instorm. **10** Hulle sterte het nes dié van skerpioene gelyk, en kón dit steek! Vyf maande aanmekaar moes die mense onder daardie sterte deurloop. Glo my, dit was seer! **11** Hulle het 'n leier gehad, die engel van die onderwêreld. Sy Hebreeuse naam was Abaddon - dit beteken: die een wat alles verwoes. **12** Hoe verskriklik is dit nie, hè? Wag maar, daar is nog twee sulke skrikwekkende dinge op pad.

## **Die sesde trompet: vernietigende oordeel**

**13** Toe weerklink die sesde engel se trompet. Ek hoor toe 'n stem uit die rigting van die vier horings op die vier hoeke van die goue altaar. Die altaar het voor God gestaan.

**14** Die stem praat toe met hierdie sesde engel: "Laat daardie vier engele losbreek wat net heeltyd by die groot Eufraattrivier moes bly." **15** Toe breek die vier engele los, want hulle was reg daarvoor. Hiervoor het hulle gewag. Nou maar waarvoor het hulle gewag? Om 'n derde van die mense van kant te maak. **16** Hulle was nie alleen nie. Hulle het 'n massa soldate op perde gehad. Ek het ook gehoor hoe baie daar was: twee maal 10 000 en dit nog weer met 10 000 vermenigvuldig.

**17** Ek kon die perde en hulle ruiters duidelik in 'n gesig voor my sien. Elke ruiter het ysterplate oor sy bors en maag gedra, reg vir oorlog. Die plate het soos vuur gelyk met blou en geel vlekke. Elke perd se kop het gelyk soos dié van 'n leeu wat alles wil verskeur. Vuur met rook en swaelwolke het uit hulle monde geborrel. **18** Alles voor hulle is verskroei, saam met 'n derde van die mense op die aarde.

**19** Kyk, hierdie perde het nie met hulle laat speel nie! Hulle was baie sterk. Hulle krag het veral in hulle sterre gelê en in hulle monde wat so vuur spoeg. Hulle sterre was soos slange met die verskriklikste koppe. Waar hulle jou raak pik, is daar 'n gapende wond.

**20** Die mense wat hierdie plae oorleef het, het jou werklikwaar niks daaruit geleer nie. Hulle het maar net so verkeerd en sondig bly leef. Hulle het hulle nie aan God gesteur nie en glad nie belanggestel om Hom te begin dien nie. Hulle het maar aangehou om allerhande demone te aanbid. Hulle het vir hulle beelde van goud of brons gemaak. As hulle nie goud of sulke dinge gehad het nie, het hulle dit van klip of hout gemaak. Hierdie dooie beelde wat nie eens kon sien of hoor of praat nie, het hulle dan vurig aanbid. **21** Daar was by hulle geen teken te bespeur dat hulle enige plan het om God te dien nie. Hulle het maar met hulle moord en toordery, hulle swak seksuele gedrag en agterbakse bedrog aangegaan asof niks gebeur het nie.

## **Kort film**

Kyk eers Openbaring Hoofstuk 9 – ds. Roedlof Botha –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vqed5pAhMTY&list=PLQ6A1hVGGhiHdPluNHwwnqxH11dRmdz2a&index=10>

## **Reformation Study Bible Notes (2016), NKJV**

**9:1-12** The trumpet blast sets in motion a horrific army of locusts, energized by demonic sources (vv. 1, 2). The imagery derives from Ex. 10:13-15 and Joel 2:1-11, where a literal locust plague foreshadows even more devastating judgment coming from a divinely commissioned army (Joel 2:11). Their terrorizing powers compare only to those of the beast (13:1-10). These infernal monsters attack only the wicked, not the saints (v. 4).

The wicked sometimes suffer even in this life as a preview of their final punishment (20:11-15). According to idealist interpreters (Introduction: History of Interpretation), the vision depicts the self-defeating and tormenting nature of demonic wickedness that affects the human soul. Powers from the abyss attack not the saints but only the wicked. Historicists have generally seen the vision as a depiction of Islamic conquest of a degenerate Western Europe (a.d. 612-762), but such an application would be only one very faint and vague embodiment of the principle. Futurists understand the vision as a supernatural plague of demonic spirits, to be loosed on the earth shortly before the second coming. The fundamental principle is the same in all these interpretations, and multiple applications of the principle are possible.

**9:5** five months. A normal locust swarm would move on after a few days. This demonic swarm stays for the whole period during which locusts might be seen.

**9:11** Apollyon. See text note. There may be an ironic allusion to Nero or Domitian, both of whom saw themselves as similar to the god Apollo.

**9:13-21** The Roman Empire feared an attack of the Parthians from beyond the Euphrates (v. 14), the eastern border of the empire. But all such fears are dwarfed by what Revelation pictures. Outside threats experienced by the Roman Empire presage the final day of cosmic battle (16:14). The events of these verses are similar to those of 16:14, but the consequences are less severe, leaving time for repentance (vv. 18-21).

## **IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament**

**9:1-2.** Many Jewish traditions spoke of evil angels imprisoned in dungeons or rivers, awaiting their time to come out and wreak havoc. Some ancient writers assumed that

the “abyss” (NIV, TEV; “bottomless pit”- NASB, KJV, NRSV) was a real geographical place that could be found on earth (1 Enoch); angels were assigned over such sites and given keys. The Dead Sea Scrolls also spoke of the wicked as “men of” or “sons of the pit” (probably meaning those destined for death in the grave). Most pagans held stars to be divinities, and many Jews held them to be angels; stars could naturally symbolize angels in Jewish texts, as in this case. John exploits the standard imagery to make his point.

**9:3.** This plague recalls the eighth plague in Exodus 10:12, the locusts; but maintaining the imagery characteristic of much apocalyptic and prophetic revelation, John’s vision transmutes these locusts into something far more terrifying. Joel describes an imminent locust plague in terms of the armies of the final war (1:4-2:27) and also describes the final war (3:9-17). John borrows Joel’s imagery here to amplify the imagery of a locust plague into a terrible invasion.

**9:4.** see comment on 7:3. Ordinary locusts would have feasted on the vegetation and left the people alone.

**9:5.** Scorpions’ stings were among the most intense pains (1 Kings 12:11; 2 Chron 10:14); but a pain lasting five months (9:10, unless this is simply the duration of the plague; one commentator says that five months fits the approximate lifespan of a normal kind of locust) was unheard-of. Jewish texts often included scorpions as one of God’s means of judgment.

**9:6.** Only the severest sufferings prompted a preference for death over life (Jer 8:3); but even death will be withheld during this plague.

**9:7.** An invasion of locusts could be described as warhorses (Joel 2:4), and horses could be described as being as numerous as locusts (Jer 51:27; cf. 51:14). The crowns might reflect prior military exploits. The image of human-faced scorpions derived from nightmarish traditions from the East, and Mediterranean zodiacs eventually applied it to Sagittarius, who was often portrayed with long hair (see comment on 9:8). Although the image is not meant literally, it draws on the most terrible, repressed images of that culture’s unconscious fears to evoke horror at the impending judgments.

**9:8.** Joel 1:6 described locusts with “teeth like lions” to emphasize their destructiveness to the crops and everything else. In Joel, the image would terrify an agrarian society; in Revelation, it would remind readers of the lion’s proverbial ferocity. The “hair like women” would be a more obvious allusion to most of John’s readers: everyone in the Roman Empire knew that “barbarians” outside the Empire, unlike most people in Greco-Roman society, had long hair. In the context of a military invasion, the readers would immediately think of the Parthians (or, in apocalyptic terms, perhaps the evil spiritual realities behind them). By way of illustration, the reigning emperor Domitian’s father was reported—perhaps fictitiously—to have joked about the Parthians’ long hair in view of a long-tailed comet portending his death.

**9:9.** The “noise of chariots” is borrowed from the military imagery for locusts in Joel 2:5; the swarms would be so intense that they would sound like an invading army, a sound great enough to make a land quake (Jer 8:16). The scales of a kind of locust’s thorax are compared with scaled armor in a later Jewish text; here John uses a more updated armor image.

**9:10.** Their tails may be mentioned simply because that was the weapon of scorpions (9:5), but the reverse could also be true; scorpions could be mentioned because of the tails. It may be of interest that the Parthians (9:8) had become famous for their rearward archery: they had retreated up hills mounted on horseback, and when unwary Roman legions had followed them, the Parthians had released a backward hail of arrows, wiping out several legions before the Romans learned not to follow them up hills.

**9:11.** “Abaddon” is a Hebrew name for the lowest depths of the earth, the realm of the dead (cf. Job 31:12; Ps 88:11; Prov 27:20); the Dead Sea Scrolls also linked the “spirit of Abaddon” with the “angel of the pit.” “Apollyon” means “destruction” in Greek. (Some scholars have secondarily connected the name to Apollo, a Greek deity one of whose totems was the locust, and whose incarnation the emperor claimed to be; cf. Rev 2:18. Because Apollyon as a name is otherwise unattested, it is not impossible that readers in Asia could have suspected this allusion; in this case, the emperor’s supposed patron deity is in reality an evil angel who, in the sovereignty of God, will be used against him; cf. Ex 12:12; Num 33:4. But the allusion is not altogether clear.) The

final, terrifying touch to this description of an army with elements from Joel's locusts, from Parthians and from scorpions is that these are the armies of hell, sent by death itself to fill its bowels.

### **9:12-21**

#### The Sixth Trumpet Plague

Parthians were Rome's most feared enemies in this period. They were portrayed as untrustworthy, and the authority of their monarchs was absolute. Older Greek prophecies about an eastern invasion of the Roman Empire still made some Romans nervous, and the Jewish Sibylline Oracles prophesied that Nero would return, leading Parthian hordes in vengeance on Rome. (Many Jewish people lived in Parthian territory, and many Jews in the Roman Empire felt no more allegiance to Rome than they would have to Parthia; in the Jewish-Roman war of 66-70 many Jews expected Parthia to intervene on their behalf, but their hopes were disappointed.)

**9:14.** Ancient literature indicates that it was common knowledge that the river Euphrates (16:12) was, above all else, the traditional boundary between the Roman and Parthian empires. Some other Jewish texts speak of fallen angels being bound in the depths of various seas, able to be released only at the command of God or one of his angels.

**9:15.** For all their recognition of demonic forces in this age, apocalyptic writers recognized also the standard Jewish doctrine that God ultimately rules all of history. Casualty statistics like this one are also familiar in Jewish judgment oracles (see the Sibylline Oracles).

**9:16.** Parthians were noted horsemen; in contrast to Rome, whose only cavalry contingents were drawn from its auxiliary (non-Roman) units, the Parthians were renowned for their cavalry. "Two hundred million" would be a huge standing army even today (nearly the entire population of the United States, almost four times that of Great Britain, over twice that of Nigeria, and eight times that of Canada); in the first century it may have represented more than the population of the entire world.

**9:17-18.** The "dark blue" (NIV; "hyacinth"- NASB; or "sapphire"- NRSV) might allude to the color of the smoke of sulfur's flame. Cf. 9:7-8 for the source of the image of horses

and lions; lions were considered the most ferocious and regal of beasts, which no one cared to meet. In a widely read Jewish wisdom book, a writer had declared that God could have punished idolatry by sending lions or newly created, fire-breathing and smoke-belching monsters (Wisdom of Solomon 11:17-20). But again this imagery may be mixed with the threat of a Parthian invasion: Parthian archers often used flaming arrows.

**9:19.** The power “in their tails” may allude to scorpions or to the Parthian cavalry’s rearward archery (see comment on 9:10).

**9:20-21.** Jewish people commonly regarded the unrepentance of the world in the face of obvious judgments (e.g., Ex 7:22-23) as a sign of stupidity. (Even some pagan philosophers pointed out that divine judgments were acts of mercy, to bring the wicked to repentance, as well as acts of justice; in this view they agreed with the Old Testament -e.g., Ex 8:10; 9:14, 29; 10:2; 14:4; Amos 4:6-11.) Old Testament prophets and later Jewish writers frequently ridiculed the worship of idols (cf. Rev 2:14, 20) that were less powerful than those who made them (e.g., Ps 135:15-18; Is 46:6-7). That pagans worshiped demons was also widely accepted in Jewish circles (e.g., 1 Enoch; 1 Cor 10:20). Idolatry and immorality were standard parts of Greco-Roman culture; thieves and sorcerers were, however, considered dangerous by common consent.