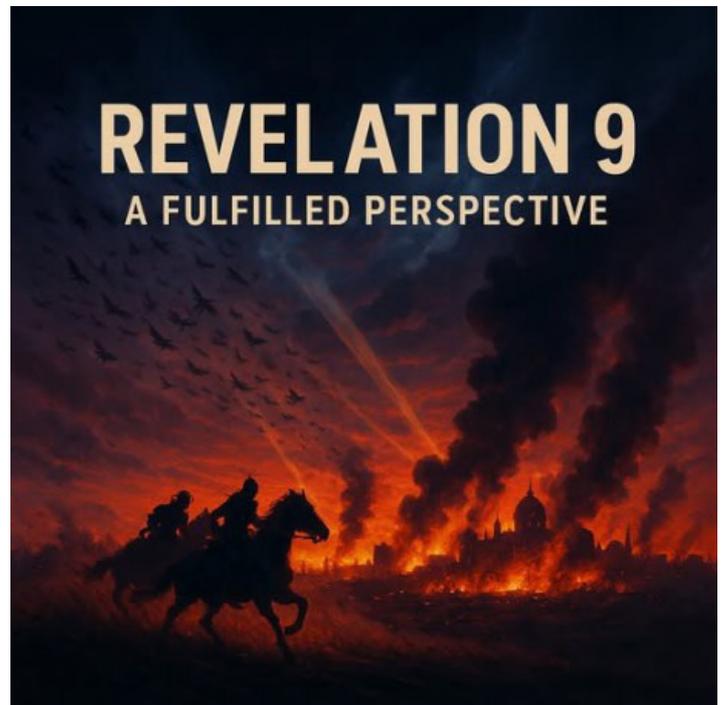


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REVELATION 9 - REVELATION 9, A FULFILLED PERSPECTIVE



By Dan Maines

REVELATION 9, A FULFILLED PERSPECTIVE

Revelation 9 continues the trumpet judgments, which in the fulfilled perspective are symbols of historical events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The visions describe God's covenantal judgments, using symbolic imagery that draws from Old Testament language.

Revelation 9:1

Scripture: Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth, and the key to the shaft of the abyss was given to him.

Commentary: In prophetic language, a "star" represents a ruler or leader (Isaiah 14:12, Daniel 8:10). This star is not falling at that moment, but had already fallen. The one given the key represents an authority permitted by God to unleash judgment. The "abyss" is the realm of demonic forces. This is similar to Luke 8:31, where demons begged Jesus not to send them into the abyss. Here, the judgment is about to be unleashed upon apostate Israel.

Revelation 9:2

Scripture: He opened the shaft of the abyss, and smoke ascended out of the shaft like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened from the

smoke of the shaft.

Commentary: Smoke darkening the sun and air is Old Testament judgment imagery (Joel 2:10, Isaiah 13:10). The darkness represents confusion, chaos, and the removal of God's light from the nation. The abyss is opened, showing that this is a divine judgment allowing spiritual forces of destruction to operate. Josephus describes Jerusalem at this time as plunged into chaos, filled with infighting, murder, and famine that darkened the city's spirit long before the final destruction (Wars 5.1.5).

Notes and sources:

Josephus: "The sedition at Jerusalem was revived, and parted into three factions, and that one faction fought against the other." Wars 5.1.

Revelation 9:3

Scripture: Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

Commentary: The locusts here are symbolic, not literal insects. In the Old Testament, locusts often represent invading armies (Joel 1:4-6, Nahum 3:15-17). These locusts are empowered to sting like scorpions, meaning they bring torment and misery rather than immediate destruction.

Revelation 9:4

Scripture: They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

Commentary: This is not a physical plague on vegetation but a targeted judgment on the unsealed, those who rejected Christ. The sealed are the faithful remnant, protected spiritually from God's wrath (Revelation 7:3). This judgment is focused on apostate Israel, not on the Gentile nations. Early church history, recorded by Eusebius, notes that believers fled the city before the final siege, leaving the unrepentant to face Rome's wrath.

Eusebius: "The people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation... to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella." (Church History 3.5.3)

Notes and sources:

Eusebius, Church History 3.5.3, early Christian flight to Pella.

Revelation 9:5

Scripture: And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a person.

Commentary: Five months is the typical lifespan of a locust swarm, symbolizing the completeness of this judgment. This represents a period of intense but limited torment, the sufferings leading up to the siege of Jerusalem. Historical accounts match this image. Josephus wrote, "There was no part of the city which did not partake of the miseries of the siege... the factions fought it out continually, and their rage was equal on both sides... they slew one another without fear of the Romans, and no regard was had to the sanctuary itself" (Wars 5.1.5).

Notes and sources:

Josephus: "There was no part of the city which did not partake of the miseries of the siege... they slew one another without fear of the Romans." Wars 5.1.5.

Revelation 9:6

Scripture: And in those days people will seek death and will not find it, they will long to die, and death will flee from them.

Commentary: This matches the horrors of the Jewish War. Josephus records, "Now the multitude of carcasses that lay in heaps one upon another was a horrible sight, and produced a pestilential stench... such as would infect those that were near them... so that many were ready to die with the stench, but the misery itself would not suffer them to die" (Wars 6.1.1).

Notes and sources:

Josephus: "The multitude of carcasses... produced a pestilential stench... an horrible sight." Wars 6.1.1.

Revelation 9:7-10

Scripture: The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle, and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like human faces. They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. They have tails like scorpions, and stings, and in their tails is their power to hurt people for five months.

Commentary: This is highly symbolic, describing a terrifying and unnatural force. "Horses prepared for battle" ties to cavalry imagery. Crowns "like" gold indicate authority given for judgment. Faces like men and hair like women may describe fierceness combined with deceptive beauty. Teeth like lions show their destructive nature. Their sound like chariots recalls the army of Joel 2. The scorpion tails indicate that their harm is in the aftermath of their passing, the lingering torment after attack. Josephus describes this Roman army: "The appearance of the Roman army was terrible, both to the eye and to the ear... the armor of the horsemen was remarkable, and the noise of their armor was very great... so that the whole place round about seemed, as it were, to quake" (Wars 3.5.2).

Notes and sources:

Josephus: "The trumpeters... sounded together, and the army made a terrible shout... the darts... intercepted the light." Wars 3.265–267.

Josephus: "Nor was there anything... so terrible to the enemy... the fineness of their arms, and the good order of their men." Wars 5.351–353.

Josephus: "Nor can one imagine anything either greater or more terrible than this noise..." Wars 6.271–273.

Revelation 9:11

Scripture: They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss, his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.

Commentary: "Abaddon" and "Apollyon" both mean "Destroyer." This is not Satan himself but a destroying power appointed by God to bring judgment. In the fulfilled perspective, this fits the leadership of Rome's military, which God used as an instrument to judge Jerusalem (cf. Isaiah 10:5-6). Josephus writes of Titus, "Titus... resolved to entirely demolish the city and temple... so that no one who came there afterward would believe it had ever been inhabited" (Wars 7.1.1).

Notes and sources:

Josephus: "The holy house... was burnt down, even against his consent." Wars 6.4.

Josephus: "Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple... leaving the great towers." Wars 7.1.1.

Revelation 9:12

Scripture: The first woe has passed, behold, two woes are still coming after these things.

Commentary: The fifth trumpet judgment is the first "woe." The scene will shift to even more severe judgments. The sequence is progressive, leading up to the total destruction in AD 70.

Revelation 9:13-14

Scripture: Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.

Commentary: The golden altar represents the prayers of the saints (Revelation 8:3-4). The answer to those prayers for justice is coming. The "four angels" at the Euphrates symbolize forces held back until God's appointed time. The Euphrates was the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire, beyond which were fierce armies

ready to move when God allowed.

Revelation 9:15

Scripture: And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind.

Commentary: This timing shows God's precision, the judgment is not random. A "third" is symbolic of a large but partial destruction (Zechariah 13:8-9). This was not worldwide but targeted toward the covenant people in the land. Josephus records, "The number of those that perished during the whole siege... was one million one hundred thousand... the rest were carried into captivity" (Wars 6.9.3).

Notes and sources:

Josephus: "Those that perished... eleven hundred thousand... and ninety-seven thousand captives." Wars 6.9.3.

Revelation 9:16-17

Scripture: The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire, of hyacinth, and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone.

Commentary: The massive number is symbolic of an overwhelming force. The colors, fire, hyacinth, and brimstone, represent judgment and destruction. The lion like heads and the fire from their mouths echo Old Testament imagery of divine wrath (Psalm 18:8). Josephus says, "The entire Roman army encompassed the city... their numbers were so great and their armor so bright that the sun's rays reflected off it... the spectacle was magnificent yet terrible" (Wars 5.1.6).

Notes and sources:

See also the sound and spectacle lines already cited for 3.265–267, 5.351–353, 6.271–273.

Revelation 9:18-19

Scripture: A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire, the smoke, and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, and have heads, and with them they do harm.

Commentary: Again, this destruction is covenantal. The "mouths" show that the destruction comes through commands and decrees of authority, while the serpent like tails indicate ongoing deception and harm.

Revelation 9:20-21

Scripture: The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons and the idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk, and they did not repent of their murders, nor of their witchcraft, nor of their sexual immorality, nor of their thefts.

Commentary: Despite the warnings and partial judgments, the survivors among apostate Israel did not repent. This stubbornness echoes Jeremiah 5:3 and mirrors what Jesus lamented in Matthew 23:37, they refused to turn from their sins. This is why the final destruction in AD 70 came without delay. Josephus confirms, "The seditious, although they saw themselves encompassed on all sides, and were in want of provisions, yet were they not disposed to yield... but did the same things they did before, as if the city had been in full peace" (Wars 6.2.1).

Notes and sources:

Josephus: "The seditious still shewed no inclinations of yielding." Wars 5.1.

Josephus: stubborn refusal even under famine and siege. Wars 6.2.1.

CONCLUSION

Revelation 9 is not about some future global apocalypse. It is a covenantal judgment on first century Israel, using symbolic prophetic language drawn from the Old Testament. The locusts, the armies, the plagues, all point to the horrors of the Jewish War and the siege of Jerusalem, culminating in the complete end of the Old Covenant age. God was faithful to His Word, fulfilling what He promised through the prophets and through His Son.

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