Revelation 9:1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

Revelation 9:2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

Revelation 9:3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

1-3 The fifth trumpet sounded. John witnesses a star fall from heaven unto the earth. Interestingly this star is a male star. That is correct. John said, “...to him was given...” We might remember that a star fell from heaven in 8:10. Dake said about that star,

“This mountain is evidently a large meteor ablaze with fire which falls into the sea. To John, it looked ‘as it were’ a mountain.”

John cannot tell the difference between a star falling and a meteor? Here Dake says,

“The ‘star’ that will fall to the earth from heaven is not a literal star, but an intelligent being, as is clear from the fact that personal pronouns and personal acts are ascribed to it....” (emphasis added)

According to Dake the star must be a star in Revelation 8:10, but in the very next chapter the star does not need to be a star. One more interesting quote from Dr. Gary G. Cohen. Concerning 8:10 Cohen says,

“The Greek word, aster, ‘star,’ refers to any heavenly light emitting body, and anything fitting this description could be meant. What is here described seems to be a burning falling meteor - but a fiery space ship descending or a parachuted illuminated bomb could also fit.”

Interesting is it not? Then concerning 9:1 Cohen says,

“Here at the fifth trumpet John sees a light descending rapidly from heaven. Apparently when the light reaches the ground John observes that this is not merely a burning meteor, but rather some personage to whom is given the key of the bottomless pit...”

Cohen noted that “star” was the Greek word aster in 8:10, but does not note that it is also aster in 9:1. It is the same word. Cohen makes it a “burning meteor” that becomes a person. Fascinating! The Dispensationalists say that those who use the “allegorical” method of interpretation “pervert” the Scriptures. 5

A relationship between the plagues upon Egypt and the plagues upon the land of Israel continues. This trumpet plague is likened to the plague of locusts (Exo 10:13-15). However, these are not locusts (9:3) any more than the star is a star. These locusts are demons.

We have continuously noted how the angel is a prophetic messenger of the Lord. In each of the Old Covenant plagues upon Egypt, the Lord used His prophetic messenger Moses to proclaim and bring the plague.

Also from Exodus, we make note that the scripture states, speaking of the locust plague, “for they covered the face of the whole earth...” (Exo 10:15). Yet, we know they only covered the land and region of Egypt (Exo 10:14). Here in the Revelation we have the same picture. The ge (Greek) is translated earth but means “soil and region.” It does not mean planet.

This angel messenger has a key which will open the bottomless pit. Note that the angel sounded and a star had the key to the bottomless pit. We acknowledge that the star was not a star, but a personage. We also know the Son of man said the seven stars in His hand were the seven angels (1:20). We recognize then that when John spoke about heavenly celestial bodies (sun, moon, stars), he was not truly meaning literal celestial bodies. The true seed of Abraham are as the stars of the sky. For any Biblical interpreter to say that a “star” in Scriptures must be a literal “star” shows that he does not know his Bible. In fact, stars probably are seldom really stars!

Bottomless pit is abussos phrear (Greek). It is also translated the abyss (abussos). Abussos means “depthless” and phrear means “a hole in the ground.” The point is the bottomless pit is as far from heaven as one can get. It is the opposite of

1 Rev. Finis Jennings Dake, Revelation Expounded, Tenth Printing July 1991, page 92
3 Dr. Gary G. Cohen, Revelation Visualized, page 148
4 Dr. Gary G. Cohen, Revelation Visualized, page 152
5 J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, page 5
The star opened hell upon the ge (soil and region). Just as Moses opened hell upon Egypt in the Old Testament, this angel (church leader or leaders) opened hell in the New Testament. Moses opened hell (abussos) upon that which hindered the advancement of the kingdom of God, i.e. Egypt. In the Revelation, hell opened on that which hindered the kingdom of God in the New Testament - Israel.

Some of our contemporary dispensational theologians, writers, and teachers say that in this passage locusts is referring to today’s helicopters used for war. As with all John writes in Revelation, there is a clear understanding obtained from the Old Testament if we will only follow the signs. Is there an allusion for this passage?

In Ezekiel 26, the messenger of God who is Ezekiel (angel) prophecies to Tyrus. Ezekiel is warning Tyrus that the Lord will “bring up” the deep upon Tyrus (Eze 26:19).

Eze 26:19 For thus saith the Lord GOD; When I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee; (emphasis added)

Prior to this statement, the Lord has stated how this will happen (Eze 26:7).

Eze 26:7 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people. (emphasis added)

Tyrus was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. This destruction is spoken of as bringing “up the deep” (tehowm Hebrew). In like manner, Jerusalem was destroyed. Hell is opened by the angel to do the work of God. Demons in the form of the Roman army came forth upon the land.

From this we can see how the Lord uses hell to accomplish His purposes. This chapter illustrates this fact. The use of hell to fulfill God’s will is a Biblical principle throughout Scriptures. We are taught that all events such as this are to be blamed on the “antichrist.” The thought of the abyss (deep) is given clearly in the Old Testament Scriptures. It was from the abyss, or deep, the flood came to destroy the wicked in the days of Noah (Gen 7:11). The abyss (deep) can be opened (Gen 7:11) or closed (Gen 8:2) by the Lord. It was from the depths that Pharaoh’s army was destroyed (Exo 15:5, 8). The depth (abyss) is the boiling place of leviathan (Job 41:31), and from the bottomless pit, the beasts of Revelation 11:7 came!

We will remember the deliverance Jesus gave to the demon possessed man of the Gadarenes (Luke 8:26-33). It is interesting to see how the word abussos is translated in this passage in the King James’ translation.

Luk 8:31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep. (emphasis added)

The demons besought Jesus that He would not command them to go into the deep. Other translations (NIV and NRS) translate it “abyss.” The Living Bible translates it “bottomless pit.”

The abyss was opened to do work. Jesus told the people of the generation to which He came that the land and people would be filled with demons. Notice at the end of the passage (Mat 12:42-45) are the words “Even so shall it be also unto THIS WICKED GENERATION.”

Mat 12:42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

Mat 12:43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

Mat 12:44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

Mat 12:45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. (emphasis added)

The abyss was opened. The depth poured out its deluge as in the days of Noah’s flood. Upon that generation a flood of demons came upon the land and unto them (demons) was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

Revelation 9:4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

Revelation 9:5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

Revelation 9:6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.
Revelation 9:7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.
Revelation 9:8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.
Revelation 9:9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.
Revelation 9:10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

4-6 John made certain we understand these are not actually locusts. Their targets were not the grass, the trees, or any green thing. Their targets were only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

Much is said and written concerning the mark of the beast, but little is said about the mark of the Lord. The mark of the Lord is much more powerful than any mark of any beast. Those that have the seal of God in their foreheads are protected from the demons. As we have already seen (7:2-3), the seal in the Scriptures points to authenticity (1Ki 21:8; Neh 9:28; Est 8:8; Rom 4:11; 1Co 9:2). That authenticity is preserved for a future date (Isa 8:16; Jer 32:44; Dan 9:24; 12:4). Believers are sealed - made authentic and preserved - by a sealing of the holy Spirit of promise (Eph 1:13).

The allusion used in Revelation 9 is from Ezekiel chapter 9. Revelation 9 is easily understood when interpreted by Ezekiel 9. The Lord God is instructing the marking (sealing) in Jerusalem in the foreheads of people. Those marked in their foreheads are those who see the abominations of religion done in Jerusalem. It is not the abominations of the antichrist government. It is the abomination of religion. Those not marked will be tormented (Eze 9:4-10).

John’s readers were assured that there was protection for them from the demons of hell released upon the land. However, this protection was only given to those marked. Also assured were that the people not sealed would wish for death. John records, “...in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.” This was exactly what Jesus said to those in Jerusalem as He was taken to Golgotha.

Luk 23:27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.
Luk 23:28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.
Luk 23:29 For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.
Luk 23:30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. (emphasis added)

Josephus records some very gruesome events that took place in Jerusalem during the time of the siege. A look at some of Josephus’ writings will follow shortly (also see War of A.D. 70).

Revelation 9:7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.
Revelation 9:8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.
Revelation 9:9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.
Revelation 9:10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

7-10 Again John assures us these are not literal locusts. Their targets were not green things, but rather those not sealed with the seal of God. John gave a description of those “locusts.” They are like horses prepared for battle. Obviously those locusts were experienced at war and the destruction of nations for they were prepared for battle. They were trained and experienced. This was not their first time out of the Abyss. Also, we note they had been successful. On their heads were crowns. They were conquerors. As they came, they have faces of men. Chilton notes the sound that comes from them.

“That is the same sound made by the wings of the angels in the Glory-Cloud (Eze 1:24; 3:13; 2 Kings 7:5-7); the difference here is that the noise is made by fallen angels.”

It is interesting how some translations speak of the fallen angels in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6. The fallen angels are not so much being kept to be judged, but kept and used for judgment. In the context of what we here see, they were used for judgment in that great day.

Jud 1:6 And the angels who did not keep their own position,

6 Chilton, The Days of Vengeance, page 247
The locusts had a king which means they had an order. This king is the angel of the bottomless pit. He is the angel which we recognize by now as the leader of the bottomless pit. No one argues that this was the devil himself released upon the land. John made positive we got his name which is given here as Abaddon in the Hebrew language and Apollyon in the Greek language. Looking at the words in both languages tells us the nature of this king. His nature is to destroy. From the Hebrew, ‘abaddown means “a perishing.” From the Greek, Apollon means “a destroyer.”

Obviously this king destroys. Those he attacks, perish. Again we note the Lord uses the powers of hell to fulfill His purposes. Hell is opened (and closed) at the word of the Lord. It has been opened, and even the king of the bottomless pit is allowed to come out and destroy.

Revelation 9:12 One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

Revelation 9:13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

Revelation 9:14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

Revelation 9:15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

Revelation 9:16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

Revelation 9:17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

Revelation 9:18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.
Revelation 9:19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

Revelation 9:20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

Revelation 9:21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

13 We must not forget that John is in the heavenly tabernacle within the cloud. This verse will not mean a thing to us unless we have some Old Testament understanding of the golden altar. The tabernacle of Moses consisted of six primary articles of furniture. These were the brazen altar, brazen laver, shewbread table, lampstand, golden altar, and the ark of the covenant. Each piece is full of meaning concerning our worship of God.

The brazen altar is the location where the blood was shed. The animal and meal sacrifices were offered here also. It refers to, first, Christ and His sacrifice, but also our presentation of ourselves as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1, 2). The laver was for washing of both the sacrifices and the priests. This refers to water baptism and the Word of God (Eph 5:26). The shewbread table refers to communion of the bread and the wine and also the digestion of the Word of God. Only the priests were to eat here. The lampstand was illuminated by oil and fire which refers to the Holy Spirit illumination in our lives. The ark of the covenant contained the tables of stone (law), the golden pot of manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded. The ark was in the deepest part of the tabernacle representing our heart and the covenant that is written upon the fleshy tables there. From our heart we will bow in submission to His authority, i.e. Aaron’s rod. We will also find God’s provision through faith, i.e. manna.

Prior to the entrance into the area of the ark called the Holy of Holies, we would pass the golden altar which had four horns, one on each corner. The only thing that happened here was the burning of incense (Exo 30:1-10). Every day, twice each day, the priest burned incense (Exo 30:7-10).

What is the significance of incense? Incense becomes a visual likeness of prayer (see discussion 8:3-5). It is not only a type of prayer. The teaching was that prayer ascended to God with the incense. We have already discussed this in Revelation 8:1-5. When the time of prayer approached, the people gathered in the outer court. As one priest poured the incense upon the golden altar, another priest outside relayed to the people that the incense was upon the coals of fire. The people, corporately, would begin to pray desperately. The incense and the prayers would ascend to God (See Luke 1:8-11). David understood that prayer was as incense and the lifting of hands was a sacrifice (Psa 141:2).

John said when the sixth angel sounded that he heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God. Horns speak of authority and power (Dan 7:24; Hab 3:4; Zec 1:21). Four is a number signifying the four corners of the earth (Isa 11:12; Jer 49:36; Rev 20:8).

Prayer is made upon the golden altar and reaches the four corners of the earth. Every year the High Priest was to make atonement for the sins of the nation. He was to rub blood upon the four horns of the golden altar purifying it for prayer. Israel could not only pray for itself. It could pray for all nations in the four quarters of the earth. It is from these four horns that John heard a voice.

Revelation 9:14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

Revelation 9:15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

Revelation 9:16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

14, 15 The voice or prayer from the golden altar said, “Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.” These four angels actually were an army that numbered two hundred thousand thousand. Other translations write this as two hundred million (NIV, NRS, Living). John said the number was announced. The point is the number of the army is innumerable. The resources of this army are more than enough.

The prayer from the golden altar (v.13) was that an army would be released from the north or from the Euphrates. Some questions are, “Who prayed...
the prayer? Who was the voice?” This was obviously an imprecatory prayer coming from the true Israel of God (Gal 6:16) to destroy through war that which hindered the kingdom of God.

Again, the primary enemy of the kingdom was Judaism and the religious system which Jesus proclaimed He would destroy (Mat 23:37-39).

The Lord Jesus was asked by his disciples to teach them to pray. The Lord said to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth” (ge, soil and region). This prayer is more than a repetitive prayer to teach children. It is imprecatory in nature. The coming of the kingdom means the destruction of the existing kingdom. The voice from the four horns of the golden altar was the prayer for the kingdom to come! The Roman army would have unlimited resources. It would come upon the ge and desolate that which Jesus said would be left desolate (Mat 23:38).

As we are learning, John used allusions to Old Testament Scriptures to convey the message of the Revelation. In this passage we see an allusion from Jeremiah 46:10.

Jer 46:10 For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates. (emphasis added)

The Euphrates is a reference to an invading army coming to destroy the land of Israel. The Euphrates was associated with the northern border of Israel (Deu 1:7; 11:24; Jos 1:4; 2Sa 8:3). When an army crossed that river, it was an invading army coming to destroy and take captives. The Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians all crossed the Euphrates and destroyed Jerusalem. The prayer from the golden altar was for this to again happen. There are several Old Testament scripture references of armies coming from the north (Euphrates) to lay Jerusalem desolate (Jer 6:1, 22-23; 10:22).

Wycliff Commentary says concerning this verse, “The judgment on Judah and All the Nations. 25:1-38. This important chapter, significantly dated in Nebuchadnezzar’s first year (Jehoiakim’s fourth; v. 1), predicts a seventy-year exile for Judah, and then goes on, in apocalyptic style, to call upon the nations to drink God’s cup of fury.”

The point is that from the north (Euphrates)

8 Wycliff Commentary

comes destruction by massive armies with innumerable resources. The four angels were loosed which are bound in the great river Euphrates. These angels are held for the specific purpose and released only when the Lord desired judgment to come. John said, “And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.” The Lord used these angels to judge Jerusalem.

Again note the third part principle that we have already projected from Revelation 8:8, 9. We saw that John is using the allusion from Ezekiel chapter 5 where Ezekiel was instructed by the Lord to shave his head and beard and divide the hair into third parts. These third parts would represent a third part of the nation of Israel, specifically Jerusalem, that would be affected by pestilence and famine, a third part that would die by war, and a third part that would be scattered (Eze 5:12-13). Here John shows us the third part that is to slay the third part of men.

There is no doubt that John continually links the invading army with the allusions in the Old Testament to the destruction of Jerusalem by foreign armies. They crossed the Euphrates from the north and all had armies with innumerable resources.

Revelation 9:17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

17 This passage has lent itself to all sorts of interpretations. Most of the interpretations are directly related to the day in which the interpreter lives. Hal Lindsey writes in his book The Late Great Planet Earth, released in 1970, that this is the Chinese army coming with modern weaponry.

“The original Greek words translated ‘east’ (Revelation 16:12) are literally anatoleis heliou, which mean, ‘the rising of the sun.’ This was the ancient designation of the Oriental races and nations. John describes the vast horde of soldiers assembled at the Euphrates River as ‘the kings of the sun rising’ and thus definitely predicts the movement of a vast Oriental army into a war with the Middle East.”

Here is Lindsey’s interpretation of Revelation 9.

9 Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth, page 70
“Another important detail involving this Oriental army is unlocked by the clue involving the Euphrates. The apostle John speaks of the releasing of four vicious, depraved angelic beings which have been kept bound by God at the Euphrates River (Rev 9:14-16). Immediately after their release an incredible army emerges from the Euphrates...They will wipe out a third of the earth’s population (Rev 9:18)...it numbers ‘200 million’ (Rev 9:16). The four demonic spirit-beings somehow incite this great army to invade the Middle East and apparently they are the ones who make the river dry up so that the army can quickly cross...The thought may have occurred to you that this is strikingly similar to the phenomena associated with thermonuclear warfare. In fact, many Bible expositors believe that this is an accurate first-century description of a twentieth-century thermonuclear war.”

Lindsey wrote this in 1970. This book became a best seller. Today the cover boasts of “15 Million Copies In Print.” In this book, Lindsey attributes the nation to the north as Gog. He says,

“You need only to take a globe to verify this exact geographical fix. There is only one nation to the ‘uttermost north’ of Israel - the U.S.S.R.”

The U.S.S.R. was the dreaded enemy. Lindsey wrote this in 1970. Today there is no U.S.S.R. In 1991 the Soviet Union came to an end. That particular wrong “antichrist usage” lasted 71 years (USSR). It cannot be used today because, like all the other dispensational “antichrists,” it fell. It fell because there is a kingdom in existence that will never end. It began at the ascension of the Lord (Dan 7:13-14). The dispensational writers will find a new “antichrist.”

Going a little further back before Lindsey, a leading interpreter named J. L. Martin lived. Martin lived in the days of war with the Sioux Indians. The lever action rifle was the weapon of the day. Martin writes,

“John is pointing to the modern mode of fighting on horseback, with the rider leaning forward, which, to his right, and to the sight of one looking on at a distance, would appear as the great mane of the lion; the man leaning on his horse’s neck. He would, in fighting with firearms, have to lean forward to discharge his piece, lest he might shoot down his own horse that he was riding...Now, I want to ask my friendly hearers if it is not as literally fulfilled before our eyes as anything can be? Are not all nations engaged in this mode of warfare? Do they not kill men with fire and smoke and brimstone?...Do you not know that this is just ignited gunpowder?...Could an uninspired man, in the last of the first century, have told of this matter?”

When we listen to modern translators, we hear about atomic weapons and laser “smart” bombs and tanks and helicopters that look like the faces of lions. The problem is this form of interpretation has nothing to do with Scriptures and nothing to do with an inability of John to describe today’s twenty-first century war weapons.

As John saw the vision, he noted that it reminded him of fire and brimstone. What does fire and brimstone remind us of scripturally? It reminds most of the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah by God (Gen 19:24). Interestingly enough, John will later unquestionably relate Sodom with Jerusalem (Rev 11:8).

Revelation 9:18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

18 Once again we see the third part mentioned (see verses 14, 15; 8:8, 9). We see the obvious link to Israel, and specifically Jerusalem, in judgment that would come from the Lord. John continues to emphasize this thought. The use of fire is well documented in the A.D. 70 war. The temple, Jerusalem, and the region were all destroyed by fire that issued from the Roman army. Being careful not to lose the prophetic allusion that John is maintaining, we remember that the Romans did use arrows as fire missiles and launchers hurling balls of fire (brimstone) into the walled cities throughout the region. However, what John is wanting his readers to see are the demonic forces that the Lord God uses to fulfill His purposes. The prayers coming from the golden altar, combined with the purposes of God, releases all things to fulfill the coming of His kingdom.

Revelation 9:19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

19 In verses 1-11, John told us of the demonic locusts with tails like scorpions released from the bottomless pit whose king is Abaddon. In verses 12-15 we read the prayer from the golden altar to release the four angels. These four were released who had been prepared to do the will of the Lord. John described an army of two hundred million horsemen in verses 17-19. John here links these
horsemen to the locusts. John returned to the allusion of Joel chapters 1 and 2 and the locusts’ invasion upon Jerusalem and the land (see discussion verse 10).

Josephus, in his historic book about the Jewish war, writes of a continuing army coming from the north. First came Cestius. Next came Vespasian. Finally came Titus. Each had armies that desolated the land. The Jewish revolt had spread to all cities throughout the region. Below is a quote from Josephus showing what the armies did as they came through cities marching toward Jerusalem. This particular event is told of Alexandria.

"Alexander Tiberius the procurator of Judea [An employee of the Roman emperor in civil affairs, especially in finance and taxes, in management of imperial estates and properties, and in governing minor provinces (definition American Heritage.)] sent out upon them those two Roman legions that were in the city, and together with them five thousand other soldiers, who, by chance, were come together out of Lybia, to the ruin of the Jews. They were also permitted not only to kill them, but to plunder them of what they had, and set fire to their houses. These soldiers rushed violently into that part of the city which was called Delta, where the Jewish people lived together, and did as they were bidden though not without bloodshed on their own side also...they [Jews] were destroyed unmercifully; and this their destruction was complete, some being caught in the open field, and others forced into their houses, which houses were first plundered of what was in them, and then set on fire by the Romans; wherein no mercy was shewn to the infants, and no regard had to the aged; but they went on in the slaughter of persons of every age, till all the place was overflowed with blood, and fifty thousand of them lay dead upon heaps; nor had the remainder been preserved, had they not taken themselves to supplantation."13

Another quote from Josephus says,

"And this was the miserable calamity which at this time befell the Jews at Alexandria. Hereupon Cestius thought it no longer to lie still, while the Jews were everywhere up in arms; so he took out of Antioch the twelfth legion entire, and out of each of the rest he selected two thousand, with six cohorts of footmen, and four troops of horsemen, besides those auxiliaries which were sent by the kings; of which Antiochus sent two thousand horsemen, and three thousand footmen, with so many archers; and Agrippa sent the same number of footmen, and one thousand horsemen; Sohemus also followed with four thousand, a third part whereof were horsemen, but most part were archers, and thus did he march to Ptolemais. There were also great numbers of auxiliaries gathered together from the cities, who indeed had not the same skill in martial affairs, but made up in their alacrity and in their hatred to the Jews what they wanted in skill...marched hastily to Zebulon, a strong city of Galilee, which was called the City of Men...this he found deserted by its men, the multitude having fled to the mountains, but full of all sorts of good things; those he gave leave to the soldiers to plunder, and set fire to the city, although it as of admirable beauty, and had its houses built like those in Tyre, and Sidon, and Berytus. After this he overran all the country, and seized upon whatsoever came in his way, and set fire to the villages that were round about them, and then returned to Ptolemais."14

This desolation by the armies were as a swarm of locusts invading the nation just as Joel prophesied.

It is also interesting that at this time there are four primary players who easily align with the four angels held for this very day in the Euphrates (v.14). We will give several quotes from Josephus to show the demonic activity prior to the desolation of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. There was a procurator named Florus Gessius. Josephus writes about this Florus.

"Now Gessius Florus, who was sent as successor to Albinus by Nero, filled Judea with abundance of miseries...Gessius Florus, as though he had been sent on purpose to shew his crimes to everybody, made a pompous ostentation of them to our nation, as never omitting any sort of violence, nor any unjust sort of punishment; for he was not to be moved by pity, and never was satisfied with any degree of gain that came in his way...it was this Florus who necessitated us to take up arms against the Romans, while we thought it better to be destroyed at once, than by little and little. Now this war began in the second year of the government of Florus, and the twelfth year of the reign of Nero."15

Another of the four would be Alexander Tiberius who succeeded Caspius Fadus as procurator of Judea. It was under his leadership that many cities were plundered and burned causing the death of many Jews. We noted some of his work above.

A third primary player was Cestius Gallus, at this time president of Syria, who gathered an army against the Jews.

"And now Cestius himself marched from Ptolemais, and came to Caesarea...took the city with ease; and as the inhabitants had made no provision aforesight for a flight, nor had gotten anything ready for fighting, the soldiers fell upon them, and slew them all, with their families, and then plundered and burnt the city. The number of the slain was eight thousand four hundred. In like manner Cestius sent also a considerable body of horsemen to the toparchy of Narbatene, that adjoined to Caesarea, who destroyed the country, and slew a great multitude of its people; they also plundered what they had, and burnt their villages."16

13 Josephus Complete Works, Wars of the Jews, Book II, chapter XVIII, 8
14 Josephus Complete Works, Wars of the Jews, Book II, chapter XVIII, 9
15 Josephus Complete Works, Antiquities Of The Jews, Book XIX, chapter XI, 1
16 Josephus Complete Works, Wars of the Jews, Book II, chapter XVIII, 9
A fourth primary player would be those who caused great division from within the nation itself. Instead of the people being unified against the enemy, the nation was divided in factions. Below are several quotes from Josephus speaking of many of these factions brought on by perhaps the fourth angel - factions - from the Euphrates.

“For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of whom are the Pharisees; the second the Sadducees; and the third sect, who pretends to a severer discipline, are called Essens.”17

“...there sprang up another sort of robbers in Jerusalem, which were called Sicarii, who slew men in the daytime, and in the midst of the city; this they did chiefly at the festivals, when they mingled themselves among the multitude, and concealed daggers under their garments, with which they stabbed those that were their enemies...”18

“There was also another body of wicked men gotten together, not so impure in their actions, but more wicked in their intentions, who laid waste the happy state of the city no less than did these murderers. These were such men as deceived and deluded the people under pretense of divine inspiration, but were for procuring innovations and changes of the government; and these prevailed with the multitude to act like madmen, and went before them into the wilderness, as pretending that God would there shew them the signal of liberty.”19

“But there was an Egyptian false prophet that did the Jews more mischief than the former; for he was a cheat, and pretended to be a prophet also, and got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him; these he led round about from the wilderness to the mount which is called the Mount of Olives, and was ready to break into Jerusalem by force from that place; and if he could but once conquer the Roman garrison and the people, he intended to domineer over them...”20

“Now when these were quieted, it happened, as it does in a diseased body, that another part was subject to an inflammation; for a company of deceivers and robbers got together, and persuaded the Jews to revolt, and exhorted them to assert their liberty, inflicting death on those that continued in obedience to the Roman government, and saying, that such as willingly chose slavery ought to be forced from such their desired inclinations; for they parted themselves into different bodies, and lay in wait up and down the country, and plundered the houses of the great men, and slew the men themselves, and set the villages on fire; and this till all Judea was filled with the effects of their madness. And thus the flame was every day more and more blown up, till it came to direct war.”21

“There was also another disturbance at Caesarea: those Jews who were mixed with the Syrians that lived there, raising a tumult against them. The Jews pretended that the city was theirs, and said that he who built it was a Jew; meaning king Herod...this contest increased so much, that it came at last to arms, and the bolder sort of them marched out to fight; for the elders of the Jews were not able to put a stop to their own people that were disposed to be tumultuous, and the Greeks thought it a shame for them to be overcome by the Jews.”22

We list all of these to show the demonic division in the entire land of the nation of Israel. The demons of the Euphrates were released and war came. We see the locusts coming upon the land. We see the works of the four angels held in the river Euphrates until this hour and for this time.

“And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.” This, in the realm of the spirit, is none other than Satan, the destroyer. In the natural, it would be Nero. If this is speaking of the Roman armies, then the king is Nero. Nero was at this time Caesar and was one of the vilest of all the Emperors of Rome.

“Now as to the many things in which Nero acted like a madman, out of the extravagant degree of the felicity and riches which he enjoyed, and by that means used his good fortune to the injury of others; and after what manner he slew his brother, and wife, and mother; from whom his barbarity spread itself to others that were most nearly related to him....”23

We have the locusts (Roman army), the king (Nero), and the four angels (Florus, Tiberius, Cestius, and the factions) clearly set the stage for the destruction of the nation.

Revelation 9:20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

Revelation 9:21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

20, 21 With the armies coming and with the great calamities (plagues) falling upon the nation from every side, they repented not. They continued in
their worship of devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and wood.

These elements would be the makings of the temple. Obviously, gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood would be used in and to construct the temple. The Scriptures say they also worshipped devils. We have already noted the Lord’s feelings in the Revelation about synagogue worship (see discussion Rev 2:9; 3:9).

Temple worship with its blood sacrifices would be a declaration of the rejection of the blood of Jesus Christ. Judaism is not an acceptable religion. Actually it is an antichrist religion. The Lord God has rejected that worship. Animal blood sacrifice is now associated with Satan, devil and idol worship. The Jews would not repent, but rather would continue in their antichrist worship. Repented (metanoeo - Greek) means “to think differently.” These would not think differently. In fact, they prepared for war.

Cestius, sent by Nero to destroy Jerusalem, marched toward Jerusalem bringing destruction to every city and village he encountered. At Jerusalem an amazing event happened. Cestius had the victory after a short siege, but for some unknown reason, retreated. Cestius’ army had gotten to the gate and was ready to set fire to it. The Jews were ready to surrender. Josephus writes,

“...had he but continued the siege a little longer, had certainly taken the city; but it was, I suppose, owing to the aversion God had already at the city and the sanctuary, that he was hindered from putting an end to the war that very day...without having received any disgrace, he retired from the city, without any reason in the world.”

As Cestius retired and set up camp, the Jews ambushed the Romans again and again from the flanks and from the back. This forced the Romans to withdraw and eventually to retreat.

“Indeed these things were come to such a pass, that the Jews had almost taken Cestius’s entire army prisoners, had not the night come on, when the Romans fled to Bethoron...”

John writes they would not repent. Of course not. Why would they repent if it seemed they had won the war? Cestius retreated, for some unknown reason, with the victory in his hand. The Jews followed and ambushed the Romans again and again. The Romans retreated out of the land. The Jews felt they had won. Yet, they knew the Romans would return. Immediately they began to prepare for that return.

The Romans would return with even more locusts. While some were deluded into actually believing they could defeat the Romans, “many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink...”

The region continued in its dilemma. The different sects continued to steal and murder. The false prophets continued to preach. They continued to fornicate their religion which is depicted as the harlot. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts. The Romans did come back.

Contemporary Theological View(s)

1. Revelation 9:1 ...and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth

We covered this sufficiently while discussing the passage. Most Dispensationalists change their position of the “star.” In 8:10 it is a literal star. Here in 9:1 the star is an angel or some person. From 8:10 Morris says,

“The third trumpet brought about the fall from heaven of a great star, blazing like a torch.”

In 9:1 Morris says,

“When the fifth angel sounded his trumpet John saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. Unlike the star in 8:10 this one was in some sense a person. Angels were sometimes called stars (cf. 1:20) and it seems likely that this star was an angel.”

The Greek word aster is used in both passages. In one verse they say it is a literal star. In another they say it is an angel or whatever they want it to be.

2. Revelation 9:7 And the shapes of the locusts were like

24 Josephus Complete Works, Wars of the Jews, Book II, chapter XIX, 5-7
25 Josephus Complete Works, Wars of the Jews, Book II, chapter XIX, 8
26 Josephus Complete Works, Wars of the Jews, Book II, chapter XX, 1
The Stone Cometh

Quoting from Cohen in *Revelation Visualized*,

“There are three chief hypotheses as to the exact nature of these locusts, viz., (1) they are a new species of the grasshopper family similar to the periodic appearing Seventeen Year Locusts; (2) they are some form of demon spirits which God permits loose and which enter the bodies of locusts - just as the demons entered the herd of swine in Luke 8:33; and (3) they are in reality a modern army described in a figurative manner. Wearing gas masks and perhaps in helicopters and with bayonets, John might well describe them in the terms used in verses 7-10.”

The Dispensationalists prides itself on its literal interpretation. The Revelation truly gives this form of interpretation a real test. Nonetheless, one never ceases to be amazed at the imagination of the dispensationalist. We learned that the Revelation was “sent and signified” (Rev 1:1). The Greek word *semaino* translated “signified” in 1:1 is found twenty-three times in the New Testament. Of these twenty-three uses, seventeen are translated “signs.”

To take these signs and make them a new species of locust, demon possessed locusts, or an army wearing gas masks that look like locusts is not what John intended. Let’s go to the Scriptures, as we did, and see what they are.

3. Revelation 9:13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

Revelation 9:14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

It is difficult to find a quote from contemporaries on the four-horned, golden altar. McGee does says, “That golden altar speaks of prayer; that is what it spoke of in the tabernacle here on earth. This is where the angel offered prayer at the beginning of the blowing of the trumpets (see Rev 8:3)...This angel receives in turn his orders from a voice that was there at the horns of the golden altar. It is the voice of Christ.”

None actually relate this to imprecatory prayer. Obviously it is.

4. Revelation 9:16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

Hal Lindsey says,

“We believe that China is the beginning of the formation of this great power called ‘the kings of the east’ by the apostle John. We live at a time in history when it is no longer incredible to think of the Orient with an army of 200 million soldiers. In fact, a recent television documentary on Red China, called ‘The Voice of the Dragon,’ quoted the boast of the Chinese themselves that they could field a ‘people’s army’ of 200 million militiamen. In their own boast they named the same number as the Biblical prediction.”

One will enjoy Hal Lindsey’s books. He is an excellent writer, easy and interesting to read. Remember also that Hal Lindsey wrote most of his eschatology in the 70’s. He was looking then for the immediate rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem and the rapture of the church. Concerning this belief, he warned readers in all sincerity. Many have been influenced greatly by Hal Lindsey’s books. According to his dispensational interpretation, Lindsey says the temple must be rebuilt prior to the rapture. Next the rapture was supposed to happen within the generation that came back and reestablished the nation of Israel in 1948. As all can see, Lindsey's interpretation did not happen. The 1948 generation terminated in 1988 (40 years Num 32:13; Deut 2:14; Psa 95:10).

By contrast, the generation of which Jesus spoke did experience the army of Rome. That army did cross the Euphrates and they consumed the land as would locusts. Today Hal Lindsey and other writers have “revised” their interpretation. They now say all their predictions will happen around the year 2,000 or 2,003. What will they do when nothing happens then either? We know what they will do. They will “revise” again and again and again.

Jimmy Swaggart’s comments are interesting:

“Others conclude that it is two hundred million soldiers that will come from China to fight in the Battle of Armageddon. However, this is just speculation at best and has no scriptural foundation at all.”

The Dispensationalists even know there is no Scriptural foundation to their doctrine.

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29 Dr. Gary G. Cohen, *Revelation Visualized*, page 157
31 Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, page 75
32 Jimmy Swaggart, *The Prophecies and Symbols of Revelation*, page 55