

Bible Studies

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ANGELS—THEIR RANGE OF SERVICE AND ROLES OF RESPONSIBILITY, AS SHOWN IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

As we know from other scriptures, angelic beings are of a higher order in creation than human beings and are instrumental in carrying out the will of the triune God and what they do is nothing less than integral to the fulfilment of divine purpose.

The first indication of their presence and participation in our present study is found in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 1, where we see a specific angel being the intermediary in communicating God's word to His servant John. Shortly after this we have the fact recorded that some angels are described as particularly 'strong' in certain tasks and have exceedingly powerful voices that all heaven, and even earth apparently, can hear (5:2; 10:3).

Their number runs into the millions and they are able to speak eloquently and praise God in intelligible language and have the capacity to engage in flight and soar to

heavenly regions and areas underground (5:11-12; 8:13, 9:2).

They have control, as delegated by God, over the elements and determine what outcome their force might have upon earth and sea, and sky (7:2; 8:7,10,12). They also have the ability to produce orderly sounds from musical instruments (8:2,6). Likewise, they act as intermediaries in the prayers of saints that fragrantly ascend to the throne of deity and have authority from God to end lives that are fiercely independent of His ways and works and stand in firm resistance and rebellion to Him (8:3-4; 9:15; cp. Acts 12:23).

In what way do they prepare for war against their fellow-creatures who have sided with the Adversary of God and men and what weapons, if any, are used (12:7-9)? These are questions that we cannot answer, for they are not like us, creatures of flesh and blood (cp. Eph. 6:12).

R.B.F.

From Study Groups . . .

THE FIFTH AND SIXTH TRUMPETS OF THE SEVENTH SEAL (Revelation 9)

From Aberdeen: In the first eleven verses of Revelation 9 three angelic entities are distinguished. There is firstly God's angelic messenger, the 'fifth angel' who sounds the trumpet and heralds the first woe. Then there are two entities associated with the abyss: the 'star' who was given the key of the abyss; and lastly there is the 'angel of the abyss' named Apollyon, who is king over the locusts. The description of the locusts is so strange that the interpretation perhaps leans towards being partly symbolic [Comment 1]. On the other hand, what seems not symbolic is the instruction to hurt men without killing them during the defined timeframe of five months. No doubt the actual future experience of this event will explain the unusual situation by which these torments cause men to 'desire to die' and yet 'death shall flee from them' (Rev. 9:6 AV).

The latter part of Revelation 9 presents the 'sixth angel' which heralds the second woe. Again, the reference to a highly specific timeframe—the hour, day, month and year, mentioned in relation to the four angels bound at the Euphrates, would point to an actual event rather than a symbolic one. What have they been prepared for? Their purpose is to kill one third of the world's population. The severity of such coming judgements brings to our attention the awesomeness of God, the Judge of all, and helps us better understand His goodness and sovereign mercy towards us as sinners. When we consider such severe punishments, which are in store for an unrepentant world, we think of Peter's exhortation, 'what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness' (2 Pet. 3:11 RV). We look forward beyond these judgements to 'new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness' (v.13).

James Johnson

From Aberkenfig: We come now to the three woes, although only two are in this chapter. The fifth trumpet is sounded by the fifth angel. At the same time, John saw a star fall from heaven. The word 'star' is slightly misleading, clearly different from the star in 8:10 called 'Wormwood', and we know from other scriptures that 'star' is often used symbolically to refer to a person e.g. Numbers 24:17; or Isaiah 14:12-17 referring to Satan; Job 38:7—angelic being; Revelation 1:20; or indeed the wise men saying, 'We saw His star in the east' (Mat. 2:2).

The first woe—the locusts and their leader To this angel was given the key of the abyss from which, when he opened it, smoke issued as from a furnace. Out of the

smoke came forth a frightening swarm of what John describes as 'locusts', but he was using words and images with no direct parallels to his world. These were not allowed to kill, but rather inflict a severe torment that would last for five months. We see here the confirmation of what we read in Chapter 7 concerning the 144,000: the sealing protected those who were sealed from God's judgement. It would fall rather upon those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (9:4). They would seek death rather than face the affliction, but would be unable to die. Their leader was said to be the angel of the abyss. In Hebrew he is called Abaddon (or Destruction) and in Greek, Apollyon (or Destroyer); both words give us an insight into his terrifying character. We note in passing that the normal lifespan of locusts is reckoned to be around five months, an interesting coincidence! Verses 7-10 describe these 'insects' in greater detail: it makes a frightening read!

What is their function? We note the repetitive use of the word 'like', and that John was using words to describe the unknown. We suggest that we can view them in four different aspects, bearing in mind that the vision John was seeing relates to the Tribulation and that the rapture of believers will have already taken place, but there are lessons for us today. Firstly, it must be remembered that although they are invisible, demons are real and aggressive, pouncing at every opportunity. Paul could write in Ephesians 6:12 concerning 'the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places'. Secondly, the demons are highly organised and indeed committed to destruction. Thirdly, that although they are so powerful, they have limitations, and our God is in overall control. We can drop our guard today and attempt to go in our own strength. The results will be disaster for us. Fourthly, these aggressive and insidious creatures will flee at the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we can be victors through Christ over the evil forces [Comment 2].

The second woe The judgements of God are becoming more and more severe as we proceed to examine the vision of John. The first woe is past, but there must be two more. The second woe is the sounding of the sixth trumpet, and the voice from the golden altar is heard saying 'Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates'. We are not told at which point they have been bound on that great river: it is some 1,780 miles long, and in Genesis 15:18 this is shown as the boundary for Israel. We know that a plague much more terrible than that of the locusts is about to unfold. The deadly power of the horses is in their mouths and tails, not in their legs. The numbers are immense and one would think that the combination of torment (five months) then death (from fire, smoke and brimstone vv. 17-18) would bring about repentance, but this is not the case. Man still persists in his evil ways even while God is judging them. The judgements are not remedial, but retributive.

While we can rest in eternal life in Christ, our thoughts must be concerning those who would reject God's offer of mercy and will face His terrible judgements. Does it not spur us on to reach others with the message of redeeming love before our Master's return? Clearly God is a God of love, but He is also just, holy and righteous. Idolatry in its many forms is at the heart of rebellion and leads to greater sin despite His merciful calls to repentance. Many modern forms of idolatry can affect us. Humankind has already been warned. God will not always chide (Ps. 103:9).

Bill Paterson

From Buckhaven: Revelation 9 brings before us the trumpet judgements, God's judgements on the unrighteous. God is infinitely holy and must judge sin. He always separates the righteous from the unrighteous. Ezekiel 9 also describes God setting apart the righteous. Ezekiel was brought in spirit from Babylon to Jerusalem to view the abominations committed by the priests in the house of God and by the people of the land. A linen-robed scribe with an inkhorn placed a mark on those who had hated the sinful acts of their countrymen in order to preserve them from coming judgment. We see a similar separation in Revelation 9.

The three woes are the first occurrence of 'woes' in Revelation. The fifth trumpet signifies a unique event. By divine command an angel descends, having the key of the abyss. The abyss seems to be a chamber of unfathomable depth, which some suggest is funnel-necked, sealed until this time of its opening. The angel unlocks the abyss, the abode of evil and demonic forces. Locusts come forth in vast numbers, having breastplates like armoured scales. They are commanded not to harm the vegetation, but their scorpion-like tails sting and torment for five months all those who are not sealed and set apart by God (v.4). Such locusts have never been seen before: shaped like horses, heads apparently crowned with gold, with man-like faces and long hair like women. Fearsome in description, the noise of their wings is like rolling chariots, in number so vast the sky is darkened. Their leader / commander is a fallen creature of high rank, an associate of Satan having the name *Abaddon* (Heb.) and *Apollyon* (Gk.), meaning destroyer and destruction. This judgement is the beginning of humankind being physically hurt. They will seek death, but death will evade them: they must continue in their torment.

When the sixth trumpet sounds the second woe, we hear a voice from the horns of the golden altar. Horns signify power and strength. This is the altar of intercession where prayers seem to call for vindication. The four angels bound by the river Euphrates—for how long we do not know—rise at the summons of this trumpet. In the divine plan, they are prepared for this appointed time, to the very hour. These four lead a vast host of two hundred million horsemen and riders traversing the earth, having armoured breastplates, perhaps tri-coloured from their description (v.18). The horsemen have lion-like heads and mouths breathing fire,

smoke and sulphur and have vipers' tails. In the previous judgement, the locusts had scorpion-like tails to sting; these horsemen and riders have viper stings. As a result of these judgements one third of mankind will perish. Remarkably, in spite of these woes, the heart of man does not turn to God but persists in all forms of sin. This moral and spiritual landslide is well under way today, surely hastening these end-time judgements.

The judgments of Chapter 9 occur just prior to the Lord's coming as Son of Man to earth when He will judge the living nations (Joel 3:12) and usher in His millennial kingdom.

Martin Notman

From Cromer: The understanding of Revelation 9 raises many questions. In the words of John Miller, 'Many questions arise in one's mind as to this part of the Scriptures, which, possibly, cannot be cleared up in our time, but may be understood, when these events transpire, by those to whom they are revealed.'

John, in his vision, saw a 'star' that had fallen from the sky that was given the key. 'He' used the key to open the abyss inferring the personification of the star. Some consider this to be Satan, but it seems more likely that the star was an angel sent to perform God's bidding [Yes—*Eds*]. When the abyss was opened it released what John refers to as locusts.

In John's time, one of the most terrifying incidents that could occur would be a plague of locusts which would devastate the land and cause much suffering. In those days the words 'nuclear fallout' and 'pandemic' would have no meaning but the effects of locusts could be widespread and unassailable. The vision is of some universal terror which would not affect creation but would cause such suffering that the people involved would do anything to be released from it.

Do we find the purpose of this suffering in the last verses of the chapter? 'The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent.' Do we consider that suffering and hardship is placed upon man that they come to repent their pattern of life and come to an acknowledgement of God and His gift of salvation? [Comment 3]. If this tribulation causes men to become aware of the great sacrifice of Calvary, surely this is an action of a God of love who desires everyone to repent.

Does the present situation in the world today give us some insight into the way Revelation 9 will unfold? [This may well be the case—*Eds*].

David Hickling

From Greenock: 'This generation [age, dispensation] will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened' (Mat. 24:34 NIV). The state that the world is

in today with its wars, persecutions, famines, pestilences, etc. is a microcosm and a foreshadowing of the Tribulation when these events will be magnified to the greatest degree. Jesus foretold of ‘fearful events and great signs from heaven’ (Luke 21:11).

The coronavirus is the latest pandemic that has afflicted people world-wide and is a foreshadowing of the opening of the seals in chapter 6. There has been an infestation of locusts that have ravaged crops in East African countries which has led to famines. The virulent Covid 19 pandemic continues insidiously to afflict all strata of society. There is a recession looming as already bankrupt nations sink further into debt because of lower economic growth and tax revenues. This also is a foreshadowing of the Tribulation because Christians will have been translated to heaven and millions will be killed during that period—which may precipitate the greatest recession that the world has ever known.

The pestilences that will afflict men and women as described in the book of Revelation are natural phenomena, just as natural as the plagues in Egypt. There were locusts then, and there will be locusts in the Tribulation, although it is difficult to imagine locusts the size of horses as described in this chapter [Comment 4].

Legislation in religion, science, education, politics etc. promulgate godless policies which foreshadow those of the Antichrist and the False Prophet who will enforce them upon the people in the tribulation period. If they were not so foolish and so blind they would know that their futile attempts to sideline Almighty God can never succeed. The dynamic duo of the Antichrist and his henchman may be alive today waiting for God’s time for them to be revealed and unleashed on the world. God, as always, shall triumph over Satan who, when he is released from the bottomless pit at the end of the Millennium, still won’t have learned his lesson that he can never defeat God, and will try to usurp God’s powers once more. He will fail for the last time and will be cast into the lake of fire where he will be consigned forever.

It has been said that ‘the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church’. The two witnesses and the 144,000 will fearlessly proclaim their God-given and heaven-sent gospel message to those who dwell on the earth, ‘to every nation, tribe, language, and people’ (Rev. 14:6).

John Peddie

From Halifax: *The abyss* Already ‘prepared’ (Rev. 8:6), the fifth angel sounded the trumpet that had been assigned to him and John witnessed a star (9:1). ‘I saw a star’, he said, ‘fall from heaven unto the earth’ (KJV). However, the Greek word *pipto* literally means ‘fallen’ (see RV, ASV), and this verse construes the star with ‘from heaven’ instead of with ‘fallen’ (*Vincent’s Word Studies*). Smoke from the pit

of the abyss—the depthless pit—darkened the sun and the air (v.2). This is so reminiscent of the judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah, when Abraham saw the smoke of the land which went up as ‘the smoke of a furnace’ (Gen. 19:28). Of the locusts of Revelation 9:3, John Miller rightly points out that Solomon tells us that locusts have no king (Prov. 30:27), but these have (*Notes on the New Testament Scriptures*, p. 674). That king’s name in Hebrew is Abaddon. It denotes ‘destruction’, and appears only once in our English Bible and six times in the Hebrew Bible: Job 26:6, 28:22, 31:12; Psalm 88:11; Proverbs 15:11 and 27:20. The Greek form *Apollyon* means ‘the destroyer’, which according to Jack Van Impe ‘certainly describes Satan’ (*Revelation Revealed*, eighth printing, 1996, p.102) [Comment 5]. The first woe being past, there were two still to come (Rev. 9:12).

Three plagues When the sixth angel blew his trumpet a voice came from the golden altar, perhaps because so many had rejected the message of its four blood-stained horns—‘the humbling and exaltation of our Lord’ (*The Tabernacle or The Lord’s Dwelling Place*, G. Prasher, p.91). The voice gave command to the sixth trumpeter to ‘loose’ the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates, which flows in the region of Abel’s murder at the hand of Cain (Gen. 4:8). These four ‘had been prepared’ (9:15 RV) for the time fixed by God, when they should destroy a third of mankind by fire, and smoke, and brimstone (v.17). The rest of humanity repented not of their murders, their sorceries, their fornication, nor of their thefts; yet there remained a third woe!

Robert J. Butler

From Mount Forest: The abyss is mentioned in Revelation and only in two other places in the New Testament (Luke 8:31; Rom.10:7). The same Greek word (*abussos*) is used in the Septuagint, but apart from the general concept of ‘the deep’ the LXX may not be very helpful in determining the New Testament meaning. In Luke’s account the legion of demons appealed not to be sent by Christ into the abyss. This indicates the place is certainly one of confinement of spirits. This usage aligns also with all the references in Revelation 9:1,2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3, the context of which is confinement or release of evil beings including the Beast and the Devil himself [see Comment 1].

Here in chapter 9 it is clear that the location is envisaged as under the earth, and such an apparently physical aspect does not constrain God’s unending control over spirit beings. Even the Devil is capable of being confined there (20:3). None of the references to the abyss in Revelation actually evidence any normal human being descending into or returning from the abyss. Romans 10:7 corrects an inappropriate question, and it would seem risky to use that single reference to propose that the abyss was at the time of the crucifixion the place of all the dead, and thus equivalent to Sheol (though some think the abyss may be *part* of a wider

sphere labelled Sheol). 1 Peter 3:19 may be referring to the abyss as ‘location’ of imprisoned spirits (see Jude 6), and it may be that in the victory of Calvary Christ spiritually testified there (though other ways of understanding that difficult passage should also be considered) [Comment 6] [See also John Miller’s *Notes on the New Testament Scriptures*, pp. 368-369—Eds.].

The Romans 10:17 reference to the abyss may just be highlighting the lack of faith of one who thinks it necessary for God the Son hypothetically needing external help to bring the Christ, either from heaven’s heights or from the ultimate depths of the abyss.

If a legion of perhaps 2,000 demons (Mark 5:13) might indwell a single man, we should not think that the demonic locusts that emerge from their place of confinement are the size of normal horses, though they may have had such an appearance to John. John saw them as locusts, on the face of it insect-sized [Comment 7].

There is perhaps a tendency to consider the appearance of the forces of the evil one as like current weapons or military machines. John would have little option but to provide comparisons to what might be familiar to his readers. After the devastations of the period John perhaps foresaw a ‘de-teched’ world of hand-to-hand combat, so imagining current military equipment may be misplaced. However, we may wonder how Christ would cause biological warfare to appear in a vision to John. Tiny things, grotesque when magnified, inflicting the most painful attacks on human nervous systems; hundreds of millions of enemy attackers, that we might in our day be quite ready to believe could be confined even in a petri dish until released! In sum, God’s word will prove completely accurate.

Geoff Hydon

From Podagatlapalli: *The seventh seal* At the fifth trump 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. The light (star) that fell from heaven is a person. ‘Him’ (9:1) was evidently an angel acting as the custodian of the pit of the abyss, the prison house of the demons. Remember Jesus said ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth’ (Mat. 28:18 AV). Christ has the keys of death and Hades (Rev. 1:18). So here Christ gives the key of the abyss to an angel, and the bottomless pit is opened up. A star falls to the earth and this pit is opened, and the smoke of it is raised to fill the air of the earth (9:1). It was temporarily given to this other being who fell from heaven. This person is under God’s control and authority. There came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth, and power was given to them, such as scorpions on the earth possess. It was commanded that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green

thing, neither any tree, but only those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They would not be killed, but they would be tormented for five months and their torment was as the sting of a scorpion. They had a king over them, namely the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon but in the Greek tongue Apollyon. The prophet Joel described the plague of locusts as a foreshadowing of the day of the Lord, meaning God's coming judgment (Joel 2:1-10). In the Old Testament locusts were symbols of destruction because they destroyed vegetation. Here, however, they symbolize an invasion of demons called to torture people who do not believe in God. The limitations placed on the demons show that they are under God's authority.

Some interpreters think these locusts are demons—evil spirits ruled by Satan, who tempts people to sin. They were not created by Satan, because God is the creator of all: rather, they are fallen angels who joined Satan in his rebellion. God limits what they can do, for they can do nothing without His permission. Demons' main purpose on earth is to destroy, prevent or distort people's relationship with God. We must avoid any curiosity about or involvement with demonic forces.

The sixth trumpet follows with literal death to wicked men, following the spiritual torments announced under the fifth trumpet. A heavenly voice commands the sixth angel, 'loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates'. They are already there but cannot act until permission is given; then these four angels which are prepared for the day, the month and the year, are to 'slay' the third part of humankind (v.15).

B.V. Prasada Rao

From Ravulapalem: *Locusts' work and purpose* Locusts are mentioned first as a plague to change the mind of the pharaoh of Egypt by God (Ex.10:13). God commanded them to devour the land, to change the mind of the people from wicked ways (2 Chr. 7:13). The four types of locusts pictured by Joel 1 caused devastation by eating vegetation, and God led them like His army into a battle (2:11). In Matthew 3:4 they are used as food for John the Baptist.

But the locusts from the smoke of the abyss in Revelation 9 are demonic, with the strength of scorpions, having poison in their tails to torment people for five months not having a right to kill (cp. Job 1:12). God is initiating and controlling increasingly fearful judgements with this attack on people without His seal. These creatures are not allowed to harm vegetation. Nevertheless, they are kept ready for judgement, as were those of Egypt, and they would appear to symbolise a severe visitation.

The significance of their appearance The locusts of verses 3 to 10 are like monsters in grotesque body form and unearthly. Their terrifying appearance with enormous wings and the noise beating the air may be compared with the present-

day bio-weapons (acquired by some countries) which torment people with several diseases for months together. Abaddon, the destroyer, being the in charge of the abyss, is their king. Their teeth are like those of lions (v.8; see also Joel 1:6). That they had human faces, and women's hair suggests that they have personality and behaviour not unlike the wisdom of human beings. They had breastplates of iron and wore golden crowns on their horse-like heads, which show their power and authority. The sound of their wings, like thundering of chariots and horses in a battlefield, denotes their speed and force. The pain caused by the bites of their stings is so severe that people would prefer to die but cannot, as the keys of death are with the Lord This is the first woe, and two more woes are to come.

S.J.M. Edward

From Surulere: *Locusts from the abyss* The dreadful and unspeakable punishments incrementally unleashed in the Revelation against the wicked dwellers of the earth is sobering. It is of such frightening magnitude in its viciousness and novelty that believers of the present dispensation are compelled to recall the warning in Hebrews 10:30-31 NKJV: 'For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,"...and again, "The Lord will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' If the believer who shall not come into condemnation but has passed from death to life (John 5:24) still shudders, it is small wonder that unbelievers consider this seeming wanton display of judgement unsuitable for an avowed God of love. Who would worship or follow a God who apparently delights in such unbridled display of His sovereignty against hapless humanity? [Comment 8].

The locusts are extraordinary in appearance, bordering on unnatural; yet they are real. They are absolute instruments of torment for inflicting divine displeasure on those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (v. 4). They are divinely restrained from their natural disposition regarding the grass of the earth, trees and all green things (v.4) and are given unnatural powers pertaining to scorpions not to kill but to torment men (being a generic term inclusive of women, too) for a period of five months (v.5). The torment inflicted by these locusts is of such unprecedented intensity that humans will pray for death, but death itself will flee (v.6).

Indeed, there are fates worse than death, as was the case with Cain when accursed he walked the earth, fearing that anyone who found him would kill him. The mark on him ensured that that did not happen (Gen. 4:14-15). Judgement is, indeed, one of the strange acts of God (Is. 28:21). And of a truth, He does not willingly bring affliction upon the children of men: 'For the LORD will not cast off forever; though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies, for He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men' (Lam. 3:31-33). The Lord God is not whimsical in His judgements; He

remains the Judge of all the earth, who will always do right: 'Far be it from You, to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked so that the righteous should be like the wicked, far be it from You; shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' (Gen. 18:25). Job also declared: 'As for the Almighty, we cannot find Him; He is excellent in power, in judgement and abundant justice, He does not oppress' (Job 37:23).

Of a truth, God does not oppress. His prerogative, as if He ever required our approval, to judge the wicked in the manner we read in this chapter and other references to His judgements, is borne out of His unchanging holiness and righteousness. He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16), who came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3), sojourned on earth below (John 1:14), was tempted in all points like ourselves, yet sin apart (Heb. 4:15), was made sin for us on the cross at Calvary (2 Cor. 5:21), became a curse for us (Gal. 3:13), rose again for our justification (Rom. 4:25) and will be preached on in the world both now and prior to and during the Great Tribulation period (1 Tim. 3:16; Mat. 24:14; Rev.14:6). For those who scorn these lavish displays of His grace and mercy to be unpunished would be unjust and unholy.

Frederick F. Ntido

COMMENTS

1. (Aberdeen): There can be no reason to doubt that the locusts are literal creatures, though admittedly their appearance is frightening and the fact they have defensive body armour would indicate they are not immune to pain being inflicted on them. Is there some parallel with the serpent creature in Eden's paradise being the Adversary himself clothed in animal feature yet able to speak intelligently? In other words, these locusts are in all likelihood fallen angelic beings arising from their place of punishment (cp. Luke 8:31) in a very different guise from what we might expect, with the ability to cause unbearable suffering to human beings?
R.B.F.

2. Aberkenfig and others): While it seems reasonable to infer that these locusts are demons in the form of living creatures, since their king is 'the angel of the abyss', we are not told this categorically. If they are demons in the guise of locusts, what about the 200 million horse-creatures with tails that have serpent heads (v.19)? Are they also demons? 'They could be' is as far as I would go. What we do know is that John's descriptions are so specific that we incline to the view that these are literal creatures. (See Comments 1 and 4).
J.J.

3. (Cromer): The plagues brought upon Egypt as a direct result of their deplorable treatment of God's chosen nation of that day were signs and wonders designed to

lead to a change of heart and mind in Pharaoh towards Israel, which didn't happen, of course, though his advisers endeavoured to persuade him to repent and let God's people be free to leave the land of their captivity (Ex. 7:3-5; 10:7). The Philistine cities that housed the ark of God, treating it as on a par with their own false gods, met with God's fierce judgement and caused them to seek healing from God's hand (1 Sam. 5:2, 6, 9; 6:3; cp. 2 Pet. 3:9b). *R.B.F.*

4. (Greenock): Scripture says the locusts had the shape of horses, not that they were the size of horses. There is no doubt however that these malignant creatures are very different from any locusts seen before. *J.J.*

Like R.B.F. (Comment 1), I see the locusts of Revelation as quite possibly literal, and the more horrific for that. This, however, is quite different from being natural, for these monsters and the horses that follow are extremely unnatural. *M.A.*

5. (Halifax): We cannot be absolutely certain that Satan is the angel of the abyss. In the Scriptural references quoted, Abaddon is more a location than a personification, though the Adversary is the very essence of what destruction entails.

6. (Mount Forest): From scriptures already quoted in Halifax's paper, particularly Job 26:6 and the two in Proverbs, it is clear that Sheol and Abaddon / the abyss are distinct places. The former, with its New Testament equivalent Hades, comprises two compartments, what has been generally referred to as upper and lower Sheol, and was the location of those of faith inhabiting the first mentioned, the latter being occupied by those otherwise (see *B.S.* 2012, pp.122-124). The Lord in post-resurrection triumph 'visited' upper Sheol to release its captives (Ps. 68:18, Eph. 4:8-9) but did not in any way or at any time go to Abaddon, in which evil spirits and in all probability fallen angels also resided (Luke 8:31; Jude 6).

7. (Mount Forest): John must have good eyesight! It is extremely unlikely that such a terrifying sight as these locusts had could lead to the conclusion they were tiny. There is no reason to imagine them insect-sized. Demonic spirits which inhabit humans and animals can surely assume any shape or size as they so wish, under the direction of their master, the Devil. *R.B.F.*

8. (Surulere): This is the type of question which the natural mind asks. It betrays a woeful ignorance of the true nature of God, whose love is so much more magnificent than the shallow definitions that men attach to the word. If only the view of God's love you have expounded so clearly in the rest of your article were more widely understood, we would have less difficulty contending against the wrong ideas about God that are promoted so widely by unbelievers. *J.J.*



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