

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION TO THE LAST THREE TRUMPETS

This chapter is a continuation of the series of seven trumpets. As discussed in 8:13, these last three trumpets or “woes” affect only those who follow Satan. This enables us to understand that we can avoid these last three woes by becoming a Christian and living a Christian life.

The fifth trumpet is the only one of the first six that does not refer to the symbolic “third part” of man. Therefore, it deals with events that affect man’s physical life. Since the sixth trumpet does deal with the “third part” of man, it is warning of events that will destroy the spiritual part of man. Since both of these trumpets affect only sinners, the fifth trumpet deals with the effects of sin on man’s physical life, and the sixth trumpet deals with the effects of sin on man’s spiritual life.

The seventh trumpet (11:15-19) describes events connected with Judgment and eternity. The final woe of the seventh trumpet is destruction in hell, which obviously will affect only sinners.

THE FIFTH TRUMPET: LOCUSTS FROM THE BOTTOMLESS PIT

Verse 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.

As this fifth angel sounds, a star falls from heaven, and he is given the key to the bottomless pit. Many commentators will emphatically state that this star represents the devil and that he was allowed to have the power to open the bottomless pit to release his wicked forces upon the inhabitants of the earth. This concept is being pictured in this verse, but to say that the star definitely represents the devil is a matter hard to prove. For instance, we saw a star fall from heaven in 8:10 as the third angel sounded his trumpet, which due to the meaning of the third trumpet must have represented those forces that corrupted the spiritual teachings of men.

The passage that comes closest to proving this star represents the devil, is 12:12. It says, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath." This passage is definitely referring to the devil; it is a "woe" and is directed against the "inhabitants of the earth." This is almost exactly how these last three trumpets are introduced in 8:13. Because of this, it seems safe to assume that this star which fell from heaven does represent the devil, or at least those forces upon the earth that cause people to follow the devil.

Also, 12:9 describes Satan as being "cast out into the earth." If we are to equate these two passages, we must first clearly understand the meaning of 12:9. (Refer to the interpretation of chapter 12.) Since Christ has cast Satan out into the earth, it may very well be true that this verse and 12:9 are describing the same event because chapter 9 describes many of the ways in which Satan will torment the people of the earth during this present Christian dispensation.

Another significant point in this verse is the fact that he was "given the key of the bottomless pit." God is in control of everything. Anything that happens in the world today happens because God allows it. God allows the forces of the devil to work on earth today, but provides a way of escape from any temptation we might encounter (1Cor. 10:13).

The "bottomless pit" represents the abode of the

followers of the devil. As it is opened in verses 2 and 3, locusts arise out of it and thus represent all people who practice sin and teach others to follow the ways of the devil.

Some also try to associate this fifth trumpet with the loosing of Satan for a little season in chapter 20. They do this because 20:3 speaks of Satan as being bound and shut up in the bottomless pit with a seal that he should not deceive the nations again until the “thousand years” are completed. There are some problems with this interpretation. For example, since Satan is bound in the bottomless pit, it would be impossible for him to be represented by the star falling from heaven in this verse. If that were the case, he would have to be both on the inside of the bottomless pit bound, and on the outside with the key to loose himself from the inside. We must be very careful when comparing symbolism in different visions. Even though the basic meaning of the symbols remain the same in all the visions, they may be used in different ways to explain events from a different perspective. This passage is a description of events that will take place all during this Christian dispensation. However, 20:3 shows that Satan’s power is limited and will remain so until he is loosed for a little season at the end of this Christian dispensation to gather his followers together (20:7). At that time, Christ will return and commit them to an eternal destruction in hell (20:10).

To properly interpret verse 1, we must keep in mind that the purpose of the seven trumpets is to warn of forces and events here on earth that will destroy our spirituality and cause man to be lost if he is unable to overcome them. The events explained in this fifth trumpet are present in the world today because sin is present. The forces of the devil are always at work. They have been released from the bottomless pit. The things pictured in these last 3 trumpets show how sin affects mankind.

Verse 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.

As the bottomless pit is opened, there arises a great smoke so thick that the sun and air are darkened. The smoke must represent the teachings and influence of the devil because it arises out of the bottomless pit, which according to 20:3 is the dwelling place of Satan. In 15:8, smoke is used to show the completeness of the glory and power of God as it completely fills his temple. The smoke in verse 2 represents the power of the devil and shows that his influences cover a tremendous territory. Just as a thick smoke would cover the sun, a thick smoke of false teachings would cover the spiritual light of the world – the gospel.

Verse 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.

From the smoke, or false teachings of the devil, came locusts that were given power to hurt those people who do not have the seal of God (v. 4). These locusts have power upon the earth, showing that these forces are at work in the world today. They represent all those forces of the devil that constantly work in the world today and cause people to follow the ways of the devil. These people will be “hurt” by the consequences of their sins.

The sting of these locusts is likened to the sting of scorpions, which is extremely painful but seldom deadly. As people follow the devil, many times they suffer painful consequences, both physical and mental, because of the sins they commit. Also, 1Cor. 15:56 says, “The sting of death is sin.”

There are many “locusts” in the world today that cause people to believe there is no God. They teach that man is the supreme being and that he must rely on his own abilities to have the pleasures of this world. They cause man to follow the devil.

Notice that this power was given unto the locusts. This indicates that God permits this to happen. All power lies with God, but he allows man to choose whom he will follow. If one chooses to follow Satan, he also receives these consequences of sin. The statement “power was given” is used repeatedly throughout Revelation showing that God is supreme.

Verse 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.

The powers of the locusts are limited to this verse. They are allowed to hurt only those men who do not have the seal of God in their foreheads. Rev. 7:3 defines those who have the seal of God in their foreheads as the servants of God. Therefore, in this verse the scorpions are allowed to hurt only the followers of the devil, not the servants of God.

With this in mind, it becomes obvious that the comparison being made here is not between plant life and disciples of Satan; it is between Christians and non-Christians. The scorpions are not allowed to hurt Christians. Therefore, trees, grass, and any green thing all represent Christians. For plant life to exist, it must be green in color. Therefore, green is the symbolic color of life and, in this case, represents spiritual life. The use of trees and grass as symbolic representations of men can be found in Judg. 9:7-15 and Isa. 40:6-8. Trees would represent those who are strong in the faith while grass represents those who are weaker. Grass is shallow-rooted and weaker than trees and, therefore, would be more easily overcome by trials and temptations than the deep-rooted trees. The key to this is the use of the phrase “any green thing.” This would represent all Christians from the weakest to the strongest. They all have spiritual life just as any plant that is alive and growing will be colored green.

Another important concept to gain from verse 4 is the type of torment the scorpions are allowed to inflict. We

know that Christians are susceptible to all types of physical happenings on this earth just as non-Christians are, so the torments pictured in this fifth trumpet must be a direct result of the sinful state of the non-Christians. Those who live in sin today bring many hardships upon themselves because of the type of lives they lead. Examples of this might include the pain and suffering that come to those who give their lives to alcohol, drugs, promiscuity, and every other type of sinful act. Christians should not have to deal with these sufferings because they no longer practice such things. They have put them aside to live their lives as Christ has directed (1Cor. 6:9-11). This fifth trumpet then warns us of the many types of pain and suffering that are associated with the practice of sin.

Verse 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.

Another limitation is placed upon the locusts that forbids them to kill their victims. They only have power to hurt or torment, but this torment could be severe because it was likened unto a scorpion striking a man. The locusts that came out of the bottomless pit represent all forms of evil that attack man, and they have the power to torment those who follow their sinful ways. If we look around us, we see many who fit this very picture. Because they have given sin the opportunity to rule in their lives, they suffer tremendously. As one example of this, think of the situation of our inner cities with all the problems of alcohol, drugs, prostitution, homosexuality, etc., and look at the pain and suffering, not only physical but mental, that results from these sins. As we know, the inner cities by no means have a monopoly on these sins. They can be found in almost every community, and Christians must avoid the practice of such activities.

These locusts have the power to torment sinful men for a period of five months. We should not interpret this time period as literal. The number "5" is being used as a

descriptive number, as is the case with most of the numbers throughout the book. The number “5” signifies incompleteness. It means that the locusts’ control over mankind is incomplete. If they had complete control, man would have no way of avoiding their torment, but this is not the case. Man can avoid the consequences and torments of sin by turning from them and leading a Christian life. Therefore, the time that sin is allowed to control a person’s life must be determined by that person himself. The devil can control only those people who allow him to do so. The time the devil is allowed to control a person’s life is incomplete. The moment a person renders obedience to God’s will, the devil loses his control and Christ becomes the focal point of his life.

Verse 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.

The torments of the locusts are so severe that men will seek death in order to avoid them. This takes place in our world today. We have hot lines and crisis centers to help those who believe that death would be preferable to continuing a life in shambles because of the practice of sin. We hear on the news almost daily of these who have taken their lives to avoid the miseries that they have brought upon themselves. The practice of sin can cause men to be so miserable that they had rather die than continue to live under the conditions they have created for themselves. As Christians we should realize that a righteous life will not only assure us of a heavenly reward, but it will also spare us from the many miseries in this world caused by sin.

Verse 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.

This verse begins a description of the locusts, or followers of Satan, who constantly battle against mankind to cause them to follow their evil ways. We should

remember that no locust has ever actually looked like the description given here, nor will there ever be one in the future. These descriptions are showing us the characteristics of those who spread the evil ways of Satan.

These locusts are described as being like horses prepared for battle. This simply indicates that Satan's followers are prepared to wage war upon mankind. The devil is not passive. He is very active in the world today as he seeks to destroy anyone who will follow him. He constantly wages war with man through his followers who advocate the pleasures of sin as being the answer to all of man's needs and desires.

On the heads of these locusts were objects that appeared to be crowns of gold. This indicates their deceptive nature. They appear to be figures of authority whose actions and leadership appear to be correct in every way; however, in reality they are leading men to the depths of torment.

The faces of the locusts are like the faces of men. This should warn us that these locusts are actually people of the world today who are following Satan and seeking to lead others along that same road of sin.

Verse 8. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

The locusts being described as having hair like women again points to the idea that these symbols are describing the characteristics of those who practice sin in the world today and lead others to do the same. It may be impossible to determine exactly what this symbol represents, but a reasonable explanation seems to be that it represents the promiscuous practice of all types of sexual sins such as prostitution and homosexuality. Many people today are living lives of torment and mental anguish because of the practice of such sins. Remember, Christians do not face this pain and anguish because they do not practice the things that cause these problems if they are truly following God.

These locusts also have the teeth of lions. In 1Pet. 5:8, the devil is described as a "roaring lion" who is walking about "seeking whom he may devour." Disciples of Satan

today are devouring all those who will follow them. This simply means to be overcome by the ways of sin. These locusts have the ability to devour anyone with whom they come in contact. If anyone listens to their false teachings and follows their ways, they will be devoured by sin.

Verse 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.

These locusts have breastplates of iron that represent their strong defense. Iron is extremely hard and very difficult to penetrate. Therefore, these forces of evil are extremely difficult to destroy. Christians are told in Eph. 6:14, to put on the “breastplate of righteousness,” which indicates that righteousness keeps sin out of our lives. By the same token, these locusts are well protected against anyone who might try to destroy them.

The sound of the wings of the locusts is likened unto the sound of many horses running to battle. As in verse 7 this indicates that the followers of Satan are vast in number and are constantly waging an aggressive war against mankind. We should remember that although the devil is constantly warring against everyone, we as Christians, according to Eph. 6:13-17, have an armor that is impossible to penetrate. If we wear our armor at all times, the devil cannot touch us, and we do not have the torments of sin in our lives as those do who follow the devil.

Verse 10. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

This verse is similar to verse 5 in that the locusts are likened unto scorpions, and they have power to hurt men five months. (Refer to v. 5 for comments on symbols that are identical in this verse.)

The stings, or pain caused by these locusts, are inflicted by their tails, which are like the tails of scorpions. Some significance seems to be placed on the fact that their stings are in their tails due to the fact that this symbolism is

repeated in verse 19. It is hard to know the exact meaning of this, but one possible explanation is that the torment inflicted by these locusts comes after a person has been overtaken by the influences of sin. A person is led into sin by the teachings of those already practicing those things. Therefore, they would be overtaken by the teachings that come out of the mouths of those people. This type of symbolism is used in verses 18 and 19 where fire, smoke, and brimstone coming out of the horses' mouths destroy the spiritual part of man. This must refer to the teachings of men that lead others to follow the ways of Satan. This type of symbolism is also used when referring to the teaching of the gospel. In Eph. 6:17, the gospel is referred to as the sword of the Spirit. Christ is pictured in 1:16 as having a sword proceeding out of his mouth. From the use of these symbols, it is evident that in Revelation, when the teachings of men are implied, it speaks of them as proceeding out of their mouths. Since the torment of these locusts are located in their tails, and we know that the torments of sin follow participation in these acts, it follows that the torments are located in their tails because the torment and agony that people suffer in their lives come after they are led into a life of sin by the teachings of others. The very sins that they enjoy and take pleasure in turn on them and sting or torment them.

Verse 11. 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.

As has been discussed all through this fifth trumpet, the king, leader, or master of those who teach and practice sin today is the devil. His identification is made positive in this verse as he is described in three different ways. First, he is referred to as the angel of the bottomless pit, and we know from 20:2-3 that this bottomless pit is the dwelling place of Satan. Second, he is referred to as Abaddon, which is the Hebrew word for destruction. The devil is responsible for the destruction of all who follow him. Third, he is referred

to as Apollyon, which means the destroyer. The devil is the ultimate destroyer. Christ offers us eternal life, but the devil has nothing to offer but eternal death and destruction.

This entire fifth trumpet has dealt with the effects the devil and his followers have upon mankind. Following the devil and his ways will cause many agonies in this present life and eternal destruction in the hereafter. It should be emphasized again that, according to verse 4, Christians are exempt from the torments of the devil and the agonies that sin causes in this life because they do not practice such things.

Therefore, the warning being sounded by this fifth trumpet is that the devil leads many well-armed followers into constant battle against the people of all nations. Those who are overcome by these sins are tormented because of them, even to the point of seeking death. God's people are not affected by these torments because they live righteous lives and do not participate in the sins that cause these torments.

Man has the power to choose whether to serve the devil or not because his control over man is incomplete. The devil controls only those people who choose to follow him. Anyone who seeks to avoid this woe can do so by becoming a Christian and leading a Christian life.

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

The fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets are referred to as three woes. The term "woe" seems to place special emphasis on the last three trumpets as being especially severe. This verse announces that one of the terrible woes is finished, but two more are yet to be described.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SIXTH TRUMPET

This sixth trumpet, the second woe, represents God's final releasing of forces that will destroy the spiritual part of man. The symbolism used in this sixth trumpet is similar to that of the fifth trumpet; so much so, that many

commentators call the sixth trumpet a continuation of the fifth. Even though they are similar, there is one major difference, and that is; the devil was given the power to inflict the torments in the fifth trumpet, but God releases the forces that act in the sixth trumpet.

This sixth trumpet pictures the final destruction of the “spiritual” part of man just as the sixth seal described the destruction of the “physical” part of man. The sixth plague will describe the final plague that will be poured out on those who oppose God. (See the introduction to chapter 9 for additional information.)

THE SIXTH TRUMPET: THE ARMY OF HORSEMEN

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

As the sixth angel sounded his trumpet, John heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar before God. In Ex. 29:12, the blood of a bullock, which was given as a sin offering, was put upon the horns of the altar. In 8:3 the golden altar is used symbolically to represent man’s ability to commune with God through prayer. In 6:10 martyred saints under the altar were asking, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” This sixth trumpet must be the beginning of the answer to that prayer. The altar symbolizes man’s prayers, and the horns of the altar symbolize the blood sacrifices many Christians have been required to make for the sake of their faith.

This sixth trumpet affects only those who are not Christians because they are the ones who indulge themselves in the practices of sin. As God turns them over to the ways of sin to follow the devil, they lose the spiritual part of their being and will eventually spend eternity in hell (2Thess. 2:11-12).

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

The use of the great Euphrates as a symbol is the subject of much discussion. One idea, which we might eliminate in the beginning, is that this is speaking of actual events that are to take place in the future in the area around the Euphrates River. We should not expect to see God leading forces of 200,000,000 horsemen, looking like the description given in verse 17, against the nations of this earth. Understanding the Bible and its teachings concerning the second coming of Christ makes this type of explanation border on the ridiculous. Therefore, we must look for the intended symbolic meaning.

The “great river Euphrates” is also used as a symbol in 16:12, which is the sixth plague. This is the well known passage dealing with Armageddon. A full explanation of the symbolic Euphrates River is given in that passage. (Refer to those comments.) For our purposes here, it represents the dividing line or boundary between the ways of righteousness and ungodliness. When God looses the forces symbolically bound in the great river Euphrates, they will overtake and destroy the spiritual part of any individual who is following the ways of the devil. (See 2Thess. 2:11-12.) The actual meaning of the word “Euphrates” is “that makes fruitful, or grows.” When people become so evil that they no longer desire to grow spiritually or become fruitful, God will turn them over to the ways of the devil.

Verse 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.

God gave the command to loose the four angels that were to slay the third part of man, or the spiritual part of his being. At first this seems to be a contradiction in our thinking because we do not expect God to allow the spiritual part of man to be destroyed; however, there are two passages in the New Testament that we need to keep in

mind in order to properly interpret this verse. The first passage is 2Thess. 2:11-12: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." This passage indicates that when a person reaches the point in his life where sin and unrighteousness is all he desires, God will send forces which will cause that individual to turn his face completely away from God, and he will be damned. The spiritual part of that person will be completely destroyed.

Second, Rom. 1:28, describing those who are filled with all types of sin and unrighteousness, says, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." This verse again points to the fact that there can come a time in a person's life when he becomes so engrossed in sin that God will turn him over to Satan. When this happens, the spiritual part of that person will no longer exist. It will be destroyed. This is the warning being sounded by this sixth trumpet.

This should by no means lead us to question the long-suffering and patience of God, but instead, it should make us realize that man can lower himself so deeply into sin that he will be completely overcome by the devil and his ways. When this happens, it is not because God wills it, but rather, because that person has chosen to serve the devil instead of God.

This enables us to conclude that the angel being "prepared for an hour and a day, and a month, and a year" refers to the time when an individual completely turns from God, and God turns him over to Satan to be damned. It can happen at any time. Some commentators take the view that this time refers to the second coming of Christ; however, verse 20 indicates that some were not killed by the plagues of this trumpet and continued in their sinful ways. This would eliminate the possibility of this "time" referring entirely to the second coming of Christ. Although this is true, the fact remains that those who are living a life of sin at Christ's second coming will be destroyed spiritually. The

ultimate spiritual destruction of those in sin will come when Christ returns, but it is also possible for man's "spiritual part" to be destroyed during his own lifetime because he completely forsakes God to follow the devil.

It might also be pointed out that this type of interpretation also corresponds with the fact that there are four angels. The number "4" is used to describe events that happen on this earth. They will destroy the spiritual part of those who are indulging themselves in a life of sin.

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

This army of 200,000,000 horses is similar to the symbol used in the fifth trumpet. There the locusts were described as being shaped "like unto horses prepared unto battle." Therefore, these horsemen would again refer to those forces of evil upon the earth who attack men and overcome them spiritually. The difference in the warnings of the fifth and sixth trumpets is: The locusts, which looked like horses in the fifth trumpet, were only allowed to torment the physical part of men, but in the sixth trumpet God allows these horsemen to destroy the spiritual part of men also.

These horsemen are not directed against Christians because they were not allowed to hurt Christians in the fifth trumpet (9:4). Those people who will be destroyed spiritually are those who have been attacked by the forces of the devil in the fifth trumpet and overcome by them. If a person remains faithful to the Lord, he will not suffer the torments of sin (fifth trumpet), neither will the spiritual part of his being be destroyed (sixth trumpet). His spiritual part will remain alive in service unto the Lord.

The number of these horsemen is "two hundred thousand thousand," which obviously represents a tremendous force. The number "1000" signifies completeness. Therefore, this number symbolizes the thorough job that will be done by these horsemen. The number "2" represents strength. Therefore, these horsemen are many in number and very strong. They are very capable of destroying the spiritual

part of men who have turned against God.

Verse 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.

Again, the description of the horses is similar, although not identical, to the description of the horses given in the fifth trumpet. We are again dealing with symbols describing the forces of evil, which God will allow to act upon those who reject him. The riders of these horses are described as having “breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone.” This shows just how indestructible these forces are. It would be virtually impossible to destroy them.

The heads of these horses were like the heads of lions. This illustrates the ability of these forces to devour anyone whom they attack.

Out of the mouths of these horses come fire, smoke, and brimstone. This is symbolic of the terrible false teachings that these forces use to overcome their prey. As men listen to the teachings of the devil, they will eventually be destroyed by them.

Notice that the angels bound in the great river Euphrates are not destroying the spiritual part of man. The horsemen, which represent the followers of the devil, are the ones who actually destroy the spiritual part of man. It is as if the long-suffering of God has finally ended, and he is allowing those people who oppose him to be completely overtaken by the devil. An example of this situation is Rom. 1:28: “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.”

Verse 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.

The fire, smoke, and brimstone, which represent the evil teachings that come out of the mouths of those who

practice such things, are responsible for destroying the third part of man, or his spiritual part. All we have to do to know that this situation exists is to observe the world today. There are many who have turned completely away from God and have absolutely no dealings with spiritual matters in their lives. The spiritual part of their being has been destroyed by sin.

Verse 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.

It is once again stated that the power of these horsemen, which God permits to destroy the spiritual part of evil men, is in their mouths. This further emphasizes the idea that the things that proceed out of their mouths are evil teachings, or all types of teachings and influences that originate with the devil. Even the tails of these horses were like unto serpents that had heads. This gives them the power to hurt people in the same manner as the tails of the scorpions have this power in verse 5. There is one major difference in the visions. The serpents have the power to “kill” the third part, the spiritual part, of men, but the scorpions can only torment men. This shows that these false teachings of Satan are capable not only of causing much physical and mental pain and anguish as described by the fifth trumpet, but they can also cause one to forsake God totally; thereby, causing the death of the spiritual part of his being.

Verse 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:

This verse is very important in helping to determine the meaning of the “third part of men.” Notice that those who were not killed, referring to their third part being killed (v. 18), continued to worship devils and idols of gold, silver, brass, and stone. The part of man that is being killed is that part which desires to worship a higher being – his spiritual

part. Those people, whose third part was not killed, continued to worship, but they were worshiping objects other than the true God. This enables us to draw the conclusion that the “third part of men” is referring to the spiritual part of man’s being that desires to worship a higher being, and that it is not referring to man’s saved or lost state. In other words, man is capable of having an active spiritual life, but can direct his worship toward something other than God and be lost.

It is not clear what the last phrase in this verse, “which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk,” is modifying. Some say it is a description of the idols that were being worshiped. We believe it refers to the state in which these people find themselves who worship these idols. Mt. 13:15 says, “For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed.” Col. 2:16 says, “As ye have therefore received Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” These people who are not killed spiritually still have a desire to worship a higher being. But they worship all manner of idols instead of the true God. Therefore, those who worship anything other than the true God cannot see, or hear, or walk. They cannot see the light of the gospel. They will not hear those who teach the truth, and they do not walk according to the ways of God.

Verse 21. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Not only do these people continue to worship idols, they also continue to do those physical acts that are contrary to God’s will such as murders, sorceries, fornication, and thefts. It should be clear that this sixth trumpet warns of the final destruction of man’s spiritual part. However, it is possible that man can retain some desire to worship spiritually, either correctly or incorrectly, and continue to do those deeds that are not pleasing to God. Just to worship God is not enough. It must be in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24).

¹Alexander Cruden, *Unabridged Concordance* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1968), p. 580.