

Revelation Chapter 9

Verses 1-3: Chapter 9 describes the first two woes, trumpets five and six. The “fifth” trumpet brings a five month period of torment on the unbelievers of the earth. The “star” is either an angel of God (compare 1:20; 20:1), or Satan, the one who has authority over the “pit” (compare verses 11; Isa. 14:12; Luke 10:18). The “bottomless pit” is the Abyss, the abode of evil spirits or demons (compare Luke 8:31). The “key” represents authority. “Smoke” from the “pit” indicates fires below. Locust like creatures come “out of the smoke”. That they are not literal “locusts” is indicated by their description which follows. In the Old Testament, locusts are symbols of destruction (compare Exodus 10:1-20; Deut. 28:42, 1 Kings 8:37; Psalm 78:46; Joel 1:2 – 2:11). Considering the identity of their king (verse 11), and the Abyss from which they come, these locusts probably represent demons. Like “scorpions”, they can hurt people.

In the first 12 verses, John employs the image of a pit seven times to describe hell. Each time the pit is closely associated with demons; it is also associated with the unsaved (Romans 10:7).

This image of hell may also imply darkness and imprisonment since pits were often used as prisons in ancient cultures. Obviously, the pit appears as a place of suffering.

If you have trouble believing God could ever make a hell, remember it was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). Those who go to hell, are in essence choosing to spend eternity with Satan rather than with Christ.

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."

“I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth”: Unlike the other stars that will have fallen (6:13; 8:8), this one will be an angelic being (compare verse 2), probably Satan himself (verse 4; 12:7; see notes on Isaiah 14:12-14; Luke 10:18).

We know that Jesus Christ holds the key to the bottomless pit. He took the key away from Satan when He (Jesus), went there, preached, and brought captivity captive out with Him, (Eph. 4:8, 1 Peter 3:14).

“Bottomless pit”: Literally “pit of the abyss”. Mentioned seven times in Revelation, it always refers to the prison where some of the demonic hordes are incarcerated, the place of severest torment and isolation (verses 1-2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3; see notes on 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6-7).

The Fifth Trumpet: The expulsion of Satan from heaven. The identification of Satan in this passage is not hard to make. Isaiah foresaw this development in exactly the same manner described by John. "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations!" (Isaiah 14:12).

Many people mistakenly believe that throughout human history, Satan has already been banished from heaven, or that he reigns in some kind of kingdom in hell. That isn't true. Satan has always had access to the Throne of God, where he serves as the principle accuser of the saints of God.

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them." (Job 1:6).

Satan's entry into God's presence changes here. Now he is kicked out of heaven, and he is furious. Note also that he carries with him the key to the bottomless pit (Rev. 9:1). He didn't have it before; it was given him by the One who holds the keys to heaven, hell and death.

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."

Here again we see great volcanoes erupting. Many natural disasters. From the spiritual standpoint, this could be a time when men's minds are darkened with false doctrines and evil thoughts. God commanded Satan to carry out the punishment here. This covers the spiritual and the physical. Jesus gave Satan the keys so that he could be released to carry out this punishment. Just as Satan had to have permission of God to afflict Job, Satan brings these terrible things on the earth and his people, by permission of God.

The physical smoke that comes up surely will obscure the sun and diminish the light. In the spiritual, it will diminish the Light, as well.

The abyss is the home of Satan and the demons. When Satan opens the abyss, here come the demons in force to deceive and destroy. They have such a vicious nature that God had to bind them to keep the human race from being annihilated before the appointed time, but now the restrains are off.

"And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And they were told that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

The appearance of these locusts is both frightening and repulsive (verses 7-10), and they do not act in an unorganized way. In fact, John says, "They had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon" (verse 11). Both names mean "Destroyer". This seems to be one of the plagues that God sends on the followers of Antichrist to hinder them from proselytizing among the uncommitted of the world. It may also give Tribulation saints some time to prepare themselves for the horrors of the soon to come Great Tribulation.

If any religious activity is still going on at this time, there will be a flood of false doctrine and defaming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It would be a kind of religion of the flesh, (anything goes religion). It sounds very much like what is going on today in many churches.

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."

These are not normal locusts, however, but specially prepared ones that are merely the outward form of demons, who, like locusts, will bring swarming desolation (see notes on Joel 2:2, 4). "Like" appears several times in John's description; he finds it difficult to describe what he sees in a way the reader can understand.

"Scorpions": An arachnid that inhabits warm, dry regions and has an erect tail tipped with a venomous stinger. A scorpion's victim often rolls on the ground in agony, foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth in pain. The demons in locust form are able to inflict the physical, and perhaps, spiritual, pain like the scorpion (verse 5).

The description of the locusts indicates that they are demons who are given physical forms in order to manifest their destruction and torment. Horses show their warlike character. Their crowns depict them as conquerors. Human faces show intelligence. Their feminine hair perhaps makes them seductive and attractive. The teeth of lions show them to be destructive and hurtful. Breastplates of iron make them indestructible. Wings symbolize swiftness. The stings in their tails give them the power to hurt. Fortunately for mankind, their period of torment is limited to five months. But the next judgment is even worse.

Notice, these have to be demons as they had no power in and of themselves. It was given unto them.

Verses 4-6: They do not harm the vegetation, as ordinary locusts would, but only "men" who do not belong to God. They are "not" allowed to "kill" anyone at this point. They only "torment" unbelievers for "five months". The pain will be like that of a "scorpion". The "torment" will be so great that they will "desire to die". But part of the judgment will be that men cannot die to escape it.

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."

"Men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads": Everyone on earth except the two groups mentioned in chapter 7, the 144,000 Jewish evangelists and their converts (see note on 7:4).

This is an attack on the person, which makes us take another look at it spiritually. They have orders not to hurt the vegetation or the 144,000 who have been sealed in their foreheads. Real locusts would eat every green thing that they could find, and they do. Looking at this from the spiritual standpoint, these locusts are demon spirits turned loose upon this earth. The devil, or his demons, cannot really hurt anyone covered in the blood of Jesus.

They were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man" (Rev. 9:3-5). God's instructions are in essence: "You may torment those who have the Antichrist's mark, but you may not kill them." Also, "you may not touch those who belong to Me." Satan's power is under strict control over those sealed by God, both now and in the Tribulation. Though this will be a period of great anguish, it is really the grace of GOD at work. I'm sure that the LORD is seeking to make mankind think because of this terrible torment and to decide to come to Him.

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."

“Five months”: The normal life cycle of locusts is 5 months, usually from May to September.

Here again, whether this is physical pain and torment from fallout causing sores and torture, or whether this is spiritual and terrible suffering, it is brought on by constant attack from the devil for five months. It is terrible. As at Hiroshima, those who survived the bomb, wished they were dead. Great sores, deformities and torment beyond our comprehension took place. In many cases, it took five months to die. A terrible burn would have the pain of a scorpion's sting.

At this point, let's look at something we've studied before. Remember the 144,000, where the four angels held back the winds until they had been sealed (in chapter 7:1)?

Not only were the 144,000 sealed but also those who turned to Christ during the Tribulation. Those are the Tribulation Saints and they too were sealed by God just as all true Christians of today have God's seal on them.

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."

“Seek death, and shall not find it”: The tormented will find no relief. Even their unimaginable attempts to end their misery in suicide will be unsuccessful.

Death would be a welcome relief to all this suffering. These forces of evil turned loose (unrestrained), upon the earth, whether physical or spiritual, will be so terrible that men will beg to die but will be unable to during this punishment.

This was the first of the three Woes!

Verses 7-10: The description of the “locusts” indicates that they are demons who are given physical forms in order to manifest their destruction and torment. “Horses” show their warlike character. Their “crowns” depict them as conquerors. Human “faces” show intelligence. Their feminine “hair” perhaps makes them seductive and attractive. The “teeth ... of lions” shows them to be destructive and hurtful. “Breastplates of iron” make them indestructible. “Wings”

symbolize swiftness. The “stings” in their “tails” give them the “power” to “hurt”. Fortunately for mankind, their period of torment is limited to “five months”. But the next judgment is even worse.

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."

Here John describes the locusts (demons), as he gives a detailed description of their appearance in his vision. They are described as locusts as they will bring massive and devastating judgment from God.

This demon host will be virtually unstoppable and man will have no weapon that can harm them or cure for the terrible torment they will inflict.

Their “faces of men” is probably a reference to these demonic creatures as rational, intelligent beings, not insects.

Revelation 9:8 "And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as [the teeth] of lions."

Having “hair as the hair of women” emphasizes their seductiveness. Perhaps to lure unsuspecting unbelievers to come close to them before striking them. (Jeremiah 51:27), refers to locusts having bristles like hair.

Having teeth like the teeth of lions means they will be more fierce, powerful and deadly than 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."

“Breastplates of iron”: Breastplates were designed to protect the vital organs and sustain the life of the warrior. These creatures are invulnerable.

“Breastplates of iron” symbolizes their invulnerability.

In short, they will be impossible to resist or to destroy. There will be no escaping their worldwide onslaught as there will be nowhere to run or hide from them.

In a metaphor drawn from a battlefield, John compares the sound of their wings to a moving army, noting that it was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. The sound alone will be enough to put fear into the hearts of the unbelievers.

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."

As these demons are compared to scorpions, it is clear that their mission is to hurt men. The very nature of this full scale demonic torment that drives men to seek death and not find it, or to pursue death and not catch it, is not described.

There are references in the bible where demons possessed people such as found (in Matthew 8:28; 4:23-24; 8:6; Mark 9:20-22).

These demons are given the power to torment unbelievers for 5 full months with no relief for the tormented (see note on verse 5). This stresses God's sovereign power over the timing of their assault. Eventually God will return them to the abyss with their evil master, then send them to the lake of fire (chapter 20).

Verses 11-12: The "king" over these demons is apparently Satan, who is given temporary authority over the Abyss. The name "Abaddon" is Hebrew for "Destruction" (compare Job 28:22; Prov. 15:11; 27:20). Its Greek equivalent is "Apollyon" meaning "Destroyer". Since the Roman emperor Domitian called himself Apollo incarnate, the mention of Satan as "Apollyon" (from the same root as Apollo), may be an intentional play on words. "Two" more "woes" are still coming. As the end approaches, the intensity and severity of the trumpet judgments increase dramatically.

Revelation 9:11 "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."

Abaddon ... Apollyon": Although locusts normally have no king (Prov. 30:27), these demonic creatures do. His name in both Hebrew and Greek means "destroyer". There is a hierarchy of power among the demons, just as among the holy angels.

You can call him any name you care to. This is Satan. Lucifer was one of the angels close to God in heaven. He was a very beautiful angel before his fall. All of the demons were angels in heaven until a third of the angels followed Lucifer and became demons.

Angels, as we have said before, are ministering spirits. These fallen angels (demons), are ministering pain and suffering. Their mission is to destroy. Their leader, Lucifer, is the epitome of evil. He has been their king since they were cast out of heaven by God. Their abode, when they are not on a mission of destruction, is in the abyss. This is where they were loosed from (in verse 2). They are continuously causing war, both spiritual and literal. Their mission is to destroy any way they can.

This "king" (in verse 11), is the star we saw (in verse 1), which was thrown out of heaven and has hell for an abode. Just as he led these angels out of heaven, he leads them in this mission of destruction. Satan, even though fallen, must do everything the Lord commands him.

Remember all of this happens because God's wrath is kindled. God alone can stop Satan. This

time God does not want to stop him. God allows, and even orders, this to happen. Satan, Apollyon, Abaddon, Lucifer, the devil, or whatever you care to call him, is still obedient to God. He, as we or any other being, or angel, are created and subject to the desires of the Creator. God alone could stop this destruction.

Jesus had and has many names. Satan is a counterfeiter, so he has many names as well. People throughout history have tried to put names of modern conquerors to these, but I do not believe that is intended here.

1. When the fifth angel sounded, what did John see?
2. What was given to him?
3. Who holds the key?
4. Is this a real star?
5. In verse 2, what did he do?
6. What came out of the pit?
7. What two things could the darkness indicate?
8. Who does Satan have to have permission from before he can afflict?
9. Where is the home of Satan and his demons?
10. What in the spirit realm are locusts?
11. These locusts were not to harm vegetation, who could they hurt?
12. What protects believers from the devil and his demons?
13. How long shall they torment?
14. Describe the torment?
15. What shall men seek in those days?
16. Will they find it?
17. What were the shapes of these locusts like?
18. What was on their heads?
19. What did their faces resemble?

20. The breastplates were as of iron and their wings were as the sound of what?
21. Give the two names their king was known by in different languages.
22. Who is he really?
23. How many angels followed Lucifer when God threw him out of heaven?
24. What is their mission?
25. Who is the only one who could stop all of this?