

A Fallen Star

Last Things

By Bob Vincent

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Revelation 9; Ezekiel 9
Preached on: Sunday, October 29, 2023

Trinity Presbyterian Church
2623 N Robison Road
Texarkana, TX 75501

Website: www.rbvincent.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/rbvincent

Our Scripture lesson is taken from Revelation 9 as we work our way through this book. Revelation 9, I won't read the entire chapter, page 1,922 and verse 1.

1 The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. 2 When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. 3 And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. 4 They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

The word of the Lord.

May we pray.

Heavenly Father, grant me to be clear and concise and practical. Lord, enable me not to go rambling off on this rabbit trail or that rabbit trail, but to stick to the points so that, Lord, what is clear in this passage of Scripture would be clear to us, and also, Lord, as I examine various viewpoints on this chapter, that you would give people to take material that's been distributed and ponder it at home and not let me get bogged down in it. Lord, I need your help because left to myself, I simply ramble and go on and on and on, on things that are not pressing. And also, I need the anointing of your Spirit,

for it's only, Lord, as you anoint your written word by your Holy Spirit that it becomes for us living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). So do us good and profitable this day, for the Lord Jesus' sake we pray, amen.

Now let me ask you as we look at Revelation 9, what is clear in this chapter because there are things that are clear that no one can deny unless that person is denying what's there.

Notice, first of all, this star that's fallen from the sky and immediately you think, what a minute, okay, this is an actual star, you know, that what we see in the sky, the stars we see are actually suns, some of which are bigger than our own sun, in fact, most of them are bigger than our own sun. But we then might think of something like an asteroid hitting and coming through. We call those shooting stars, but they're not really shooting stars, they're asteroids that burn when they get in our atmosphere. But we don't have to sit here and speculate. What is this? Well, it's very plain what it is if you look at verse 11. Revelation 9 and 11, that's Satan himself. He says,

11 They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.
(Revelation 9:11)

[I plan to deal with these names for Satan in another sermon. Abaddon (Abaddōn, Ἀβαδδών) is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew, 'abaddōn, אַבַּדְדֹן. It comes from the Hebrew verb, 'abad, אָבַד and means to go astray, be lost, perish, or be destroyed, a fitting title for Satan. Apollyon (Apollúōn, Ἀπολλύων is the present participle of the Greek verb apolluō, ἀπολλύω). It means to destroy or be lost. In the Greek Septuagint it is used for Saul's father's lost donkeys (1 Samuel 9:3), and in the New Testament it refers to being killed by snakes (1 Corinthians 10:9-10) or perishing forever, especially eternal death (Matthew 5:29-30; 10:28; John 3:16; 6:39; 10:10, 28; 17:12).]

Now that's not insignificant because that's exactly what we see here that the stars given in verse 1, the second sentence, the star was given the key to the shaft of the abyss. What is the abyss?

The abyss throughout Scripture is a reference to Sheol (shē'ôl, שְׁאוֹל) of the Old Testament, which is called in Greek Hades (hadēs, ᾍδης). And that is

where the righteous dead and the unrighteous dead lived until Jesus conquered death, and on the cross, he descended into the abyss (abussos, ἄβυσσος) (t^hôm, אָבוּסוֹס).

I won't go and re-preach those sermons, but he descended into the abyss, and he led captivity captive (Psalm 16:10; 68:18; Ephesians 4:8-10; Romans 10:7). When Jesus rose from the dead, his body was not buried. Remember that his body was not buried. It did not descend; his body was simply placed on a slab in a rock-hewn tomb. So where did Christ descend?

Christ descended into the abyss, into the place that was the holding tank of the righteous and unrighteous dead (Luke 16:22-31), and also the holding tank for the unrighteous angels who did not keep their own estate (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). And so when Jesus rose from the dead, when he ascended on high, he gave gifts to men, and so there's no doubt here what's in view.

It's Satan himself who is loosening an army out of hell. That's a good way to put it. It's Satan himself who is loosening an army out of hell, out of the abyss, out of Hades, out of Sheol, not out of Gehenna. Gehenna is the final destination of the unrighteous, the lake of fire (géenna, γέεννα, from the Hebrew, גֵּי הַיָּהוֹנָן), so we're not talking about that. But it's proper to speak of hell, and so what? Satan releases the forces of hell on this earth, and that's very clear.

Now there's something else I think that's very clear here. If you look over at verse 13, and that's page 1,923, Revelation 9:13.

13 The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. 14 It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.' (Revelation 9:13-14)

Okay, let's think about that for a moment: Four angels bound at the great river Euphrates. In verse 15,

15 And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. (Revelation 9:15)

Look at verse 16.

16 The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million.
I heard their number. (Revelation 9:16)

Now I want you to think about this for a moment. I'd like you to hold your hand there because we're going to come back there in a minute and turn to the book of Judges 7. Judges 7 and look at verse 12. Judges 7:12, and here's what we have. We'll start on page 383 where Gideon goes down into the camp and that is in verse 8.

8 So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites to their tents but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others. Now the camp of Midian lay below him in the valley. 9 During that night the LORD said to Gideon, 'Get up, go down against the camp, because I am going to give it into your hands. 10 If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah 11 and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp.' So he and Purah his servant went down to the outposts of the camp. (Judges 7:8-11)

Now look at verse 12. This is very striking.

12 The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, (Judges 7:12)

Now who are these people? Well, these are descendants of Abraham, by and large, through other wives. Remember that he took another wife after Sarah. Hagar was a concubine who gave him Ishmael, and then Sarah gave birth to the son of promise, Isaac, but then after the death of Sarah, he took concubines, and he had other children. And so what you're reading here in verse 12 are the children of Abraham. Not the children of Isaac, but the children of Abraham through his other women.

Now, I want you to look at the next verse because it's striking:

The Midianites (midyān, מִדְיָן, the son of Abraham by Keturah),
the Amalekites ('amālēq, אֲמָלֵק, the son of Esau's son Eliphaz

and his concubine Timnah) and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley. (Judges 7:12)

What is the next phrase? “Thick as,” what? “Thick as locusts.”

Isn't it locusts that we're reading about being released from the bottomless pit, from the abyss, from the shaft, that Satan is releasing these forces from Sheol, these forces from hell? And notice how they're described. Thick as locust, and then look at the next sentence:

“Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.”

Let that sink in for a moment. Do you see a parallel here with Judges 7 and verse 12 with the children of Abraham coming against the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Do you see that? Do you see the parallel?

Two hundred million? (Revelation 9:16) He says, “Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.” (Judges 9:12)

Now if you go to the seashore and you try to count the grains of sand, I bet you'll get more than 200 million. I just want that to sink in for a moment, because so often as we approach the book of Revelation, we approach it as if we've never ever read any of the other parts of the Bible. And remember the quote that I gave you over a month ago, and that is that professor at Oxford who said that we should look at the book not so much in terms of numbers and this and that but see it as a symphony. It's a symphony. And in a symphony, you take a theme from here. Take Pachelbel's Canon and how many pieces of music have taken Pachelbel's Canon and used it in various ways in musical themes? And you go through, and you think of Greensleeves, for example, and all of how people do that. And then you get fugues where this theme is up against that theme. If you look at the book of Revelation as it's a great symphony that is composed of musical themes taken from the very beginning of Genesis all the way through Zechariah and Malachi and the teachings of Jesus, and so you see that God has summed up all of the Scriptures in the book of Revelation as a magnificent symphony not only of defeat, but of triumph, and if we miss that note, we've really missed it.

The unity of John's book, then, is neither chronological nor arithmetical, but artistic, like that of a musical theme with variations, each variation adding something new to the significance of the whole composition. This is the only view

which does adequate justice to the double fact that each new series of visions both recapitulates and develops the themes already stated in what has gone before. (G. B. Caird (1966), *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (London: Black), p. 106)

So again, as we look at Revelation 9, we know exactly who the star is, the star of the show is Mr. Egomaniac himself, none other than Satan. And you know how he's described over three chapters later in Revelation 12, we see him described as the ancient snake, the serpent, and so on. And that's striking, isn't it? In verse 9, Revelation 12:9, "The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient snake called the devil or Satan."

So those are all titles of the evil one, and in the Lord's prayer we should never forget Jesus is teaching us to pray a prayer of, I won't say exorcism, but a prayer of deliverance from the evil one, that is, Satan (Matthew 6:13; John 17:15).

And remember there's only one Satan, but he has under him a vast horde of evil spirits. And how do you recognize those evil spirits? You recognize those evil spirits because the whole kingdom of Satan is the inversion of the kingdom of Christ.

In the kingdom of Christ, the servants of the Lord Jesus, the angels that remain loyal to the Son of God, do so out of love, devotion, and affection for him and affection for his kingdom and cause in this world; whereas, the minions under Satan do so out of craven fear, jealousy of each other, backbiting, conflict (Daniel 10). So Satan's kingdom is like the kingdom of the Lord God, but it's a perverse form of it.

So again, it's Satan. He's releasing these forces. You see how they are, what they are like, and they're like the sand of the sea and they're like scorpions. They're like locusts that are mixed with a stinger of a snake, as it were, a scorpion. (I've never been bitten by a snake, and I don't ever want to be; even non-poisonous snakes can really hurt you and sting. And scorpions, thank the Lord, I've never been stung by a scorpion. I don't want to know things. There are a lot of things I don't want to know.) So there you see this.

Now I want you to see something else here. If you look at Revelation 9:4,

They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (Revelation 9:4)

Now, where does that take us back to?

That particular musical theme, if you hold your hand there, takes you back to the book of Ezekiel and as God curses Israel, as God curses the Jewish people, as God curses his own temple and declares he's going to destroy it in the book of Ezekiel, as he's leaving the temple there in Ezekiel, and this is before the temple is literally destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC, this is what we read in Ezekiel 9. And it's because of the idolatry, the witchcraft, the worshiping of other gods that is going on in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, the temple that had been built by Solomon. All of this idolatry is going on there and they never learned from God's divorce of the northern kingdom, which was destroyed in 722 BC, they never learned the lesson, and they continue on in their idolatrous path. And so look at Ezekiel 9, beginning at verse 1, page 1,295.

Then I heard him call out in a loud voice, "Bring the guards of the city here, each with a weapon in his hand." (Ezekiel 9:1)

These are destroying angels. These are angels sent by God, just like what the Jews call the *malakh ha-mavet* (מַלְאֲכֵי הַמָּוֶת), that is the angel of death who went through Egypt killing the firstborn, but not touching anyone who had the blood on the doorpost and lintel of the house. And so notice what's said here. And he said, and I saw six men, verse 2, and again angels look like humans,

2 And I saw six men coming from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with a deadly weapon in his hand. With them was a man clothed in linen who had a writing kit at his side. They came in and stood beside the bronze altar. 3 Now the glory of the God of Israel went up from above the cherubim, where it had been, and moved to the threshold of the temple. Then the LORD called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side 4 and said to him, "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it." (Ezekiel 9:2-4)

That's an interesting thing. Who are God's people? God's people, **God's people grieve and lament over wickedness that happens in places that have been dedicated to God.** Who's spared in this destruction? When God sends destroying angels against his own chosen city, Zion, Jerusalem, as he leaves Jerusalem and abandons his temple, as his glory is lifted up above the temple and is headed out, on his way out, he's turning the city over to destroying angels just as he turned the Egyptians over to destroying angels when he delivered his people out of Egypt.

So notice again what he says. He says, again that statement found there where he said in verse 4, "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it." Verse 5,

5 As I listened, he said to the others, "Follow him through the city and kill, without showing pity or compassion. 6 Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark." (Ezekiel 9:5)

Where do you begin? Begin at my sanctuary. So they began with the elders who were in front of the temple. In verse 7,

7 Then he said to them, "Defile the temple and fill the courts with the slain. Go!" So they went out and began killing throughout the city. 8 While they were killing and I was left alone, I fell facedown, crying out, "Ah, Sovereign LORD! [Literally in Hebrew, Ah, Lord Yahweh, אֲהִי יְהוָה] Are you going to destroy the entire remnant of Israel in this outpouring of your wrath on Jerusalem?" 9 He answered me, "The sin of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city is full of injustice. They say, 'The LORD has forsaken the land; the LORD does not see.' 10 So I will not look on them with pity or spare them, but I will bring down on their own heads what they have done." 11 Then the man in linen with the writing kit at his side brought back word, saying, "I have done as you commanded." (Ezekiel 9:7-11)

And then if you can look at chapter 10, you can see the glory departs from the temple.

Then I looked, and behold, in the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim something like a sapphire stone, in appearance in the likeness of a throne, appeared above them. 2 And He spoke to the man clothed in linen and said, “Enter between the whirling wheels under the cherubim and fill your hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter them over the city.” And he entered in my sight. Then the glory of Yahweh rose up from the cherub to the threshold of the house, and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of Yahweh. (Ezekiel 10:1-2, 4)

Now it happened that when He commanded the man clothed in linen, saying, “Take fire from between the whirling wheels, from between the cherubim,” he entered and stood beside a wheel. 7 Then the cherub sent forth his hand from between the cherubim to the fire which was between the cherubim, took some up, and put it into the hands of the one clothed in linen, who took it and went out. 8 And the cherubim appeared to have the form of a man’s hand under their wings. (Ezekiel 10:6-8)

Then the glory of Yahweh departed from the threshold of the house and stood over the cherubim. 19 When the cherubim departed, they lifted their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight with the wheels beside them; and they stood still at the entrance of the east gate of the house of Yahweh, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them. (Ezekiel 10:18-19)

Now it’s an amazing thing as we read that, and going back to Revelation 9, it’s an amazing thing to understand that God’s Holy Spirit left the temple of God that had been built by Solomon.

What’s interesting is that the Babylonian captivity has two overlapping 70-year periods. One, when Israel came under the control of foreign powers, roughly 609 when Josiah is killed in battle, until 539 when Cyrus the Persian issued his decree that the Jewish people could return. But the other 70-year period begins in 586 when the temple is destroyed and ends when the temple is rebuilt during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah in 516. So two 70-year periods.

So the temple is rebuilt. Now here's something that most people don't know and that is the temple that was rebuilt beginning there and completed in 516 BC, was remodeled under the reign of Herod the Great beginning in the year 19 BC, which helps us date the time of Christ.

Christ was crucified in AD 30 because the temple began to be rebuilt in 19 BC under Herod the Great. He didn't rebuild the temple, he just took the temple that had been built in the days of Haggai and Zechariah and Ezra and Nehemiah, he took that, and he entered in an extensive remodeling program and he made the Temple Mount much larger. He brought in gigantic stones to support the temple. And so there you have it. And the temple that had been rebuilt, following the return from exile, covered over a spot that according to tradition is where Abraham was going to offer up Isaac.

Now here's an interesting piece of tidbit. I was talking to a Muslim just this week and I showed him out of the al-Hadith the statement where Muhammad is told that there will be a Jewish person hiding behind a rock and come and kill him:

Allah's Messenger said, "The Hour will not be established until you fight against the Jews, and the stone behind which a Jew will be hiding will say, 'O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him'" (Al Bukhari, Imam Muhammad bin Ismail bin Al Mughirah, (1997) *The English translation of Sahih al Bukhari with the Arabic text*, Vol. 1-9. Translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam Publishers and Distributors), 4:113).

And so he said to me, that's referring to the rock under the Dome of the Rock. I said, wow, that's an interesting thought. I never thought of that before. The Dome of the Rock.

What is the Dome of the Rock? When the Jewish temple was destroyed by the Romans, in literal fulfillment of Jesus' words, not one stone was left standing on another (Cf. Matthew 23:36-39; Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:6). The entire temple was destroyed. And what was laid bare was the rock. And in Islamic teaching, the third holiest site in Islam is that rock, because in Islamic teaching, Muhammad's horse, Lightning, al-Buraq, took him on a night journey to heaven, and the horse decided to stop on his way

to take Mohammed to heaven and put a hoof print there in the rock under the Dome of the Rock (AD 621).

Now that's an important piece of information and remember this, the important thing about Israel's returning to the land is control of the Temple Mount, and they still don't have control of it. Not to this day. And so there's the Dome of the Rock, Muhammad's horse, al-Buraq, supposedly put a footprint there. That's an interesting thought.

That's why Jerusalem is to the entire Muslim world the third holiest place in the world. Mecca being the holiest, then the city of the prophet, Medina, where Islam actually began, because Islam, remember, is a political movement with a religious base. That's why they date everything before the Hijra and after the Hijra (AD 621 is 1 BH). So the third holiest place is in Jerusalem. And so this is not insignificant in our own time, but getting back to where we were, I want to say what happens is the temple is destroyed. Not one stone is left on another. In literal fulfillment of Jesus' words, all that's left are the foundation stones there.

Now, here's an interesting thing. Were you to read the really only reliable witness of what happened in those days, because you remember when these zealots fled the city of Jerusalem, they traveled to Masada, and they captured Herod's fortress and they held out till 79 AD, AD 79 when they committed suicide at Masada.

Who is the one and only witness to this who tells us what happened? He's a Jewish General who realized he was so greatly outnumbered by the Romans that he surrendered his army, which were the armies of the Galilee, went over to the Roman side and tried to persuade his own people, "Surrender, you can't beat these people!" And so Josephus is a witness.

Nor, indeed, when they came to the work itself, did their courage fail them, as one might imagine it would have done, but they then held fast the same resolution, without wavering, which they had upon the hearing of Eleazar's speech, while yet every one of them still retained the natural passion of love to themselves and their families, because the reasoning they went upon appeared to them to be very just, even with regard to those that were dearest to them; (391) for the husbands tenderly embraced their wives, and took their children into their arms,

and gave the longest parting kisses to them, with tears in their eyes. (392) Yet at the same time did they complete what they had resolved on, as if they had been executed by the hands of strangers, and they had nothing else for their comfort but the necessity they were in of doing this execution to avoid that prospect they had of the miseries they were to suffer from their enemies. (393) Nor was there at length any one of these men found that scrupled to act their part in this terrible execution, but every one of them dispatched his dearest relations. Miserable men indeed were they, whose distress forced them to slay their own wives and children with their own hands, as the lightest of those evils that were before them. (394) So they being not able to bear the grief they were under for what they had done any longer, and esteeming it an injury to those they had slain to live even the shortest space of time after them, — they presently laid all they had in a heap, and set fire to it. (395) They then chose ten men by lot out of them, to slay all the rest; every one of whom laid himself down by his wife and children on the ground, and threw his arms about them, and they offered their necks to the stroke of those who by lot executed that melancholy office; (396) and when these ten had, without fear, slain them all, they made the same rule for casting lots for themselves, that he whose lot it was should first kill the other nine, and after all, should kill himself. Accordingly, all these had courage sufficient to be no way behind one another in doing or suffering; (397) so, for a conclusion, the nine offered their necks to the executioner, and he who was the last of all took a view of all the other bodies, lest perchance some or other among so many that were slain should want his assistance to be quite dispatched; and when he perceived that they were all slain, he set fire to the palace, and with the great force of his hands ran his sword entirely through himself, and fell down dead near to his own relations. (398) So these people died with this intention, that they would leave not so much as one soul among them all alive to be subject to the Romans. (399) Yet there was an ancient woman, and another who was of kin to Eleazar, and superior to most women in prudence and learning, with five children, who had concealed themselves in caverns under ground, and had carried water thither for their drink, and were hidden there when the rest were intent upon the slaughter

of one another. (400) Those others were nine hundred and sixty in number, the women and children being withal included in that computation. (401) This calamitous slaughter was made on the fifteenth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan]. (Flavius Josephus (1970), *The Wars of the Jews*, Book 7, Chapter 9, *Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications), p. 603)

Now this is something that is truly amazing. Just before the Romans entered the city and destroyed the Jewish temple, people saw visions. They saw people leaving. They saw like horses and others in the sky leaving the city of Jerusalem.

War 6:288 (6.5.3) Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers, and such as belied God himself; while they did not attend, nor give credit, to the signs that were so evident and did so plainly foretell their future desolation; but, like men infatuated, without either eyes to see, or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them. 289 (6.5.3) **Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year.** 290 (6.5.3) Thus also, before the Jews' rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan], and **at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which light lasted for half an hour.** 291 (6.5.3) This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it. 292 (6.5.3) **At the same festival also, a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple.** 293 (6.5.3) Moreover, **the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple**, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, **was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night.** 294 (6.5.3) Now, those that kept watch in the temple

came hereupon running to the captain of the temple, and told him of it: who then came up thither, and not without great difficulty, was able to shut the gate again. 295 (6.5.3) This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy prodigy, as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness. **But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies.** 296 (6.5.3) So these publicly declared, that this signal foreshowed the desolation that was coming upon them. Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the twenty-first day of the month Artemisius [Jyar], 297 (6.5.3) a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, 298 (6.5.3) and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, **before sunsetting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen 299 (6.5.3) running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. Moreover at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, 300 (6.5.3) and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence."** But, what is still more terrible there was one Jesus, the son of Ananus, a plebeian and a husbandman, who, four years before the war began, and at a time when the city was in very great peace and prosperity, came to that feast whereon it is our custom for everyone to make tabernacles to God in the temple, 301 (6.5.3) began on a sudden cry aloud, **"A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!" This was his cry, as he went about by day and by night, in all the lanes of the city.** 302 (6.5.3) However, certain of the most eminent among the populace had great indignation at this dire cry of his, and took up the man, and gave him a great number of severe stripes; yet did not he either say anything for himself, or anything peculiar to those that chastised him, but still he went on with the same

words which he cried before. 303 (6.5.3) Hereupon our rulers supposing, as the case proved to be, that this was a sort of divine fury in the man, brought him to the Roman procurator; 304 (6.5.3) where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare; yet did he not make any supplication for himself, nor shed any tears, but turning his voice to the most lamentable tone possible, at every stroke of the whip his answer was, “Woe, woe to Jerusalem!” 305 (6.5.3) And when Albinus (for he was then our procurator) asked him who he was, and whence he came, and why he uttered such words; he made no manner of reply to what he said, but still did not leave off his melancholy ditty, till Albinus took him to be a madman, and dismissed him. 306 (6.5.3) Now, during all the time that passed before the war began, this man did not go near any of the citizens, nor was seen by them while he said so; but he every day uttered these lamentable words, as if it were his premeditated vow, “Woe, woe, to Jerusalem!” 307 (6.5.3) Nor did he give ill words to any of those that beat him every day, nor good words to those that gave him food; but this was his reply to all men, and indeed no other than a melancholy presage of what was to come. 308 (6.5.3) **This cry of his was the loudest at the festivals; and he continued this ditty for seven years and five months, without growing hoarse, or being tired therewith, until the very time that he saw his presage in earnest fulfilled in our siege, when it ceased; 309 (6.5.3) for as he was going round upon the wall, he cried out with his utmost force, “Woe, woe, to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house!” And just as he added at the last,—“Woe, woe, to myself also!” there came a stone out of one of the engines, and smote him, and killed him immediately; and as he was uttering the very same presages, he gave up the ghost.** War 6:310 (6.5.4) Now, if any one consider these things, he will find that God takes care of mankind, and by all ways possible foreshows to our race what is for their preservation; but that men perish by those miseries which they madly and voluntarily bring upon themselves; 311 (6.5.4) for the Jews by demolishing the tower of Antonia, had made their temple foursquare, while at the same time they had it written in their sacred oracles,—“That then should their city be taken, as well as their holy house, when once their temple should become

foursquare.” 312 (6.5.4) But now, what did most elevate them in undertaking this war, was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, “about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth.” 313 (6.5.4) The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now, this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea. 314 (6.5.4) However, it is not possible for men to avoid fate, although they see it beforehand. 315 (6.5.4) But these men interpreted some of these signals according to their own pleasure; and some of them they utterly despised, until their madness was demonstrated, both by the taking of their city, and their own destruction. (Josephus, *op. cit.*, Book 6, Chapter 5, pp. 582-83, emphases mine)

In other words, exactly what you see in Ezekiel is repeated just before the temple is destroyed by the Romans in AD 70 —the only eyewitness of these things. And so, what I’m getting at here is, as we look at this chapter, we see striking parallels. God always sealed his own people. What did God do for the Christian Jews who were living in Jerusalem?

Something truly amazing happened. Jesus had told them in Luke 21, “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, get out. Get out. Don’t go back in your homes. Don’t go down to get anything. Jump from rooftop to rooftop. Get out of the city.” (Luke 21:20-24) And here’s what happened. The Roman General Cestius Gallus, has the city of Jerusalem surrounded, and guess what happened? For some bizarre unknown reason, I know the real reason, it was the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ, he retreated!

Even though the city was on the verge of complete surrender and collapse, two things happened when Cestius Gallus retreated his army back into Syria (Josephus, *op. cit.*, Book 2, Chapter 19, pp. 496-97). Two things happened.

One, the Christian Jewish people, the Jewish people who believe the word of God, the Jewish people who worshiped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Jewish people who believed that the Lord Jesus Christ is their Messiah, they realized this is the sign that the Lord Jesus gave us, and they left Jerusalem, and they fled, and they got away, and they were preserved because God will preserve his people.

Moreover, the people of the church at Jerusalem, in accordance with a certain oracle that was vouchsafed by way of revelation to the approved men there (*i.e.* Luke 21:20-24), had been commanded to depart from the city before the war, and to inhabit a certain city of Peraea. They called it Pella. And when those who believed in Christ had removed from Jerusalem, as if holy men had utterly deserted both the royal metropolis of the Jews itself and the whole land of Judaea, the Justice of God then visited upon them all their acts of violence to Christ and his apostles, by destroying that generation of wicked persons root and branch from among men. (Eusebius, *History* III, 5. 3., J. Stevenson (1968), *A New Eusebius, Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church to A.D. 337*. (London: S. P. C. K.), pp. 6-7)

But what was the other thing that happened? When Cestius Gallus sounded his retreat, the unbelieving Jews, the Jews who had rejected Israel's Messiah, became emboldened, and particularly the zealots.

The zealots took things over and controlled things. And just before Jerusalem is finally destroyed by the Romans, they're calling all the shots. They're ruling everything. And it was a terrifying place to be. In the year AD 70, there was no place more dangerous to be than the city of Jerusalem that had fallen to the control of the zealots who were killing other Jews right and left and who were replacing the high priest and all these things (Josephus, *op. cit.*, Book 4-6, Chapters 3-9, pp. 526-588).

“The whole multitude of the Jews that were destroyed during the entire seven years before this time amounts to 1,337,490” (Josephus, *op. cit.*, Book 6, Chapter 9, footnote, p. 587).

It was a terrifying place to be and remained under their control until they escaped as the Romans took the city in AD 70 on the exact same day of the exact same month of the Jewish calendar that the Babylonians had destroyed the temple of Solomon (This is the ninth day of Av, corresponding to our July-August. It is a terrible day in the history of Israel, *Tisha B'Av*, תשעה באב). Not only were both Temples destroyed on that day, but in the second century of the Christian Era, when the Jewish people returned to their homeland

under Simon bar Kokhba, over one half million Jewish people were slaughtered by the Romans.

God's word is true. We should believe that word and, God willing, next week we will look at the historicist view that's presented there in Matthew Henry's commentary. Just this word, Matthew Henry's commentary was the dominant commentary among English-speaking Protestants until well into the twentieth century. And so what you read there, a man named Tong, who was English and not Asian, a man named Tong took Matthew Henry's notes, because Matthew Henry died before he could complete his entire commentary series, and he put them there.

And then you will also note somewhere when you read it, and I pray you will read it and study it, there's a reference to Mede, M-e-d-e. That is to a man who was a professor in Cambridge and who wrote a book, a commentary on the book of Revelation that is profoundly revealing (Joseph Mede (1627/1833), *The key of the Revelation searched and demonstrated out of the naturall and proper characters of the visions with a comment thereupon, according to the rule of the same key Clavis Apocalyptica*).

So, God willing, more on that next week and one final appeal to those who may be watching this by way of the internet.

Each week, as we've been doing this series, we've seen our world plunged into greater and greater chaos. I do not know when the Lord Jesus Christ is going to return. I do believe that the things in the book of Revelation had an essential and fundamental reference to what happened to the Jewish people 40 years after Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem. I believe that.

But it doesn't exhaust it because what you find in the book of Revelation is what you find elsewhere that prophecies that had an initial fulfillment are recapitulated throughout time. Now that's overly technical. Let me just bore down this way.

Our world is about to explode! It is about to explode. China and Russia lining up with Iran. Our military already on the ground, the US, and enforcing what's happening in the Gaza Strip, which is annihilating a group of people. And Lebanon with Hezbollah. And all I'm saying is this.

If ever there were a time to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, it's now because if there isn't peace there, we may be on the verge of something unbelievably horrible happening. And what am I saying to you?

If ever there were a time to make sure that you know the Lord Jesus Christ personally, that you've repented of your sins and cast yourself on his mercy, it is now. It is now, the 29th day of October in the year of our Lord 2023. Won't you come to Jesus? Won't you come to Jesus? Won't you turn to him and join me in praying for Abraham's warring children descended through Isaac and Jacob, as well as through Abraham's other wives, all of whom are fighting each other with ferocious hatred and a desire to annihilate the other.

Isn't that an amazing thing? After all these millennia that Abraham's warring children are still fighting and fighting over something that's essentially worthless because nothing in this world and this life is worth really dying for (Judges 7:12).

It's heaven. It's the heavenly Jerusalem. That's where my citizenship is, and I'm looking forward to being there because one day heaven is going to come down to this earth (Revelation 21:2; 21:9-22:5; Galatians 4:21-31; Hebrews 12:22-24).

When is peace going to happen between Abraham's warring children? When the world embraces the Prince of Peace, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is still reigning at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again, and he will take us to himself. Oh, turn to him while it's still time.

In Jesus' name. Amen.