

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 6-9-13 PM NOTES
"A WORLD GONE WILD"
REVELATION 9:1-21
#16 in Series, "Verse by Verse through Revelation"

"It is probable that, apart from the exact identification of Babylon in Revelation 17 and 18, the meaning of the two judgments in [chapter nine] represents the most difficult major problem in the book of Revelation."

- Dr. Wilbur Smith

Revelation 8:13 (NKJV) "And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, 'Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!'"

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (ESV) "16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord."

John 16:33 (NKJV) "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

There were more martyrs in the church in the 20th century than the previous 19 centuries!

I. The Fifth Trumpet Judgment – The Army From the Pit (V1-12)

God uses Satan to carry out His sovereign plans.

A. The Demonic Pit Is Unlocked (V1-2)

Luke 8:31 (NKJV) "And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss."

2 Peter 2:4 (NKJV) "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment".

Jude 1:6 (NKJV) "And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day".

Revelation 20:1-3 (NKJV) "1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while."

B. The Demonic Power Is Unleashed (V3-6)

Revelation 22:4 (NKJV) "They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads."

C. The Demonic Portrayal Is Unveiled (V7-10)

1 Timothy 4:1 (KJV) "...giving heed to seducing spirits..."

D. The Demonic Prince Is Unmasked (V11-12)

Ephesians 2:2 (NKJV) "...the prince of the power of the air..."

II. The Sixth Trumpet – The Army From the East (13-21)

A. Demons Are Released (V13-14)

The four world empires are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV) "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

Daniel 10:13 (ESV) "The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia".

Daniel 10:20 (ESV) "Then he said, 'Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come.'"

B. Devastation Reigns (V15-19)

C. Defiance Results (V20-21)

"The most freighting thing about Revelation 9 is not the judgments that God sends but the sins that men persist in committing *even while God is judging them.*"

- Warren Weirsbe

John 6:44a (NKJV) "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him..."

The Bible says in Matthew 13:42 that people in Hell are gnashing their teeth. That means they are snarling at God.

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"A WORLD GONE WILD"
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#16 in Series, "Verse by Verse through Revelation"

A great Bible scholar of the last generation, Dr. Wilbur Smith, made the book of Revelation the focus of his study. Here is what he said about the chapter we are looking at in this message. "It is probable that, apart from the exact identification of Babylon in Revelation 17 and 18, the meaning of the two judgments in [chapter nine] represents the most difficult major problem in the book of Revelation." [Quoted in Warren Weirsbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Page 594]. The judgments detailed in this chapter are especially horrible. It was these judgments that an angel warned us about in **Revelation 8:13 (NKJV)** "And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, 'Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!'" Chapter 9 details two of the remaining three blasts that the angel is referring to.

Let's be reminded of where we are in the book of Revelation. We are in that future time in history called the Tribulation Period. Those who believe in the premillennial approach to Revelation (the view that Jesus will return and set up an earthly kingdom on earth that will continue for 1,000 years during which time God will fulfill His as of yet unfulfilled promises to ethnic Israel) are not all in agreement as to where the church fits in to this 7 year tribulation – Daniel's 70th year. There are some who say that the church will be here on earth the entire 7 years and then be caught up to be with the Lord in the air as described in **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (ESV)** “¹⁶For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.” Other premillennialists say that the catching up of the church will be at the mid-point of that 7 years of tribulation. I think you can make a very good argument for both of those views, but I believe the correct view is that the church will be “caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” at the very beginning of the 7 years of tribulation. We spent a whole message explaining why I believe that this is the correct view. The other two views take away the imminence (can occur at any moment) of the return of Christ. I have heard some who reject this view say something like “Jesus said that the church will experience tribulation.” I agree with that! He said in **John 16:33 (NKJV)** “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Jesus is not saying that the church will go through the tribulation that precedes His return to the earth. The church has gone through tribulation! There were more martyrs in the church in the 20th century than the previous 19 centuries! Even today the church is going through all sorts of tribulation – from being discriminated against to being imprisoned or martyred. The tribulation that is detailed in Revelation 6-18 is the unprecedented judgment of God upon the earth before Christ returns to rule and to reign in His earthly Kingdom. As I have often stated, the faith fundamental that is a test of fellowship among Christians is the belief that Jesus Christ is going to bodily, literally return. The issue of a literal 1,000 year reign and the issue of whether Christ is coming at the beginning, middle, or end of the tribulation is not a test of fellowship. However I am not saying that it is unimportant. I strongly, I would even say passionately believe that the 1,000 year Kingdom is literal and that God is not through with the ethnic Jews, but I still love you and consider you a brother or sister in Christ if you don't agree with me on the details (as important as they are) of His return.

Thus far, we have looked at the 7 seal judgments poured out on the earth during this great tribulation. We saw that the 7th seal was 7 trumpet judgments. Last week we looked at the first 4 of the trumpet judgments. In this message we will look at the 5th and 6th of the trumpet judgments that will be poured out upon the earth during this 7 years of tribulation.

I. The Fifth Trumpet Judgment – The Army From the Pit (V1-12)

In this 5th trumpet judgment, we are going to see more evidence that God is always in control. Even when it seems that the world has gone wild, He is in control. In this message, we are going to see that God even uses Satan and demons to carry out His purposes. Martin Luther said, “The devil is God's lackey.” A lackey is usually considered a derogatory term that refers to a person who does another person's bidding. God uses Satan to carry out His sovereign plans. This will certainly be true in the tribulation period. Satan and the other fallen angels (demons) can only do what God allows and if God allows it, He is using it to fulfill His purposes.

A. The Demonic Pit Is Unlocked (V1-2)

As we saw earlier, the word translated star can be anything coming out of the heavens other than the sun or the moon. Here we see that the star is not an inanimate object, but is referred to as “him” in verse 1. There is something else important in verse 1 that is not obvious in the English translations. The word translated “fallen” is in the perfect tense. That means that it is something that took place in the past that has results in the present. This “star” is the fallen angel whose name was Lucifer, which means shining one. After his rebellion against God that is recounted for us in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 he came to be known as Satan or the devil. Notice that he does not open the pit on his own; he has to be given a key.

The obvious question is, “What is this bottomless pit?” The Greek word used is the one we get our word “abyss” from. It is not human beings that are incarcerated in this bottomless pit; it is demons, fallen angels who followed Lucifer in his rebellion and were put out of Heaven with him. It is a prison house only for certain demons. There are demons that roam the earth who fear the pit, but they are not in the bottomless pit. Let’s look at some references in other New Testament books to the pit. When Jesus cast the demons out of the man from Gadara, the demons made a plea to Jesus in **Luke 8:31 (NKJV)** “And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss.” That is the same place. **2 Peter 2:4 (NKJV)** “For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment”. This is a different word for hell than the word used elsewhere (tartarus) and is thought by most scholars to be referring to the abyss, the bottomless pit. **Jude 1:6 (NKJV)** “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day”. Again the word “pit” or “bottomless pit” isn’t used here but it is likely referring to the same place. This is also where Satan himself is going to be incarcerated during the millennial reign of Christ. **Revelation 20:1-3 (NKJV)** “¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ² He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.” When we look at all the evidence in Scripture, it seems that the bottomless pit is a place of incarceration that is reserved for the most powerful, the most diabolical, the vilest of the vile fallen angels. Demons are certainly not mythical little imps; they are real spiritual beings who are alive and active in the world operating under their commander in chief – Satan. While their activity seems to be more out in the open in other countries – especially where the Gospel has not been as accessible, they are just as active in the United States – even in the Bible belt. Their work is simply more underground and not as immediately obvious.

Let’s get back to our text. As a part of the 5th trumpet judgment, the covering for the bottomless pit is removed and the smoke that came out so darkened the air that the sun was hidden. This was a sign of horrible things to come. Let me illustrate how awful that judgment is. What would happen if today all of the prisons of the world were opened and the inmates were set free? Every rapist, child molester, every serial killer, every con-man, every thief is put out on the street. Can you imagine the chaos in the world? This will be even worse!

B. The Demonic Power Is Unleashed (V3-6)

There was no doubt mass panic as the smoke from the bottomless pit filled the sky and darkened the sun. Now we see emerging from the smoke these vile demon spirits who took a form resembling locusts and with the scorpion-like ability to sting men. One of the greatest dreads of the people of the Old Testament was a locust swarm. A locust swarm could be very large. The worst locust plague in modern times was in 1951-1952 in Iraq, Iran, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. Every green thing was devoured across hundreds of thousands of square miles. We know that these were not literal locusts because they were not permitted by God to harm the grass which had obviously grown back from the first trumpet judgment. Neither were they permitted to harm any tree or green thing. Again we see that God is sovereign over every demonic spirit. They can only do what God allows. These locusts didn’t attack the vegetation of the earth; they attacked mankind – those who did not have the seal of God on their forehead. That seal of God may only refer to the 144,000 special witness who will proclaim the Gospel across the world, but I believe that it refers to all those who have come to Christ in the tribulation. Revelation 22:4 speaks of all believers. **Revelation 22:4 (NKJV)** says “They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads.” The seal and the name on the forehead is a sign of ownership and Ephesians 1:13 tells us that every child of God is sealed by the Holy Spirit.

These demonic spirits that took a form similar to locusts could hurt mankind with their scorpion like stings, but not kill them. This was to last for 5 months – the lifespan of a real locust. The sting of a scorpion isn’t normally fatal, but is really painful. There are many kinds of scorpions and only a few

kinds are capable of killing human beings. Here is a description of the effect of a rather large scorpion's bite. "The scorpion's venom causes indescribable anguish for about 24 hours – not just at the site of the wound, but throughout the body. There is nothing you can take to relieve the pain. In fact, a pain killer would only exacerbate the effect of the venom making the pain worse. The pain, often accompanied temporary paralysis and fever, must simply be endured." [Ray Steadman, *God's Final Word – Understanding Revelation*, Page 200-201]. Even with the unsaved, the demons were limited in the effects their sting could have and the time they could inflict this pain. Over and over we are reminded that God is still sovereign. Yet the pain was so bad that people would want to die and they could not. Most run from death, but this torment was so bad that people ran for it and death eluded them. The earth they saw as home has been devastated by earthquakes, fires, volcanoes, and the seas have been filled with the rotting bodies of sea life. Much of the fresh water supply has been turned into poison and undrinkable. The atmosphere has been polluted, and now they are being tormented by vile demonic spirits with a pain that is beyond description. No wonder they wanted to die; their world has gone wild and all that they valued is now gone.

C. The Demonic Portrayal is Unveiled (V7-10)

Much of the language here is symbolic, but most of it is consistent with symbolism used elsewhere in the Scripture. John has a hard time describing the material form that these demonic spirits have taken. He uses words such as "like" (8 times in this passage). They were warlike much as horses prepared for battle. The crowns on their heads symbolize their ability to conquer (there is another word for crowns that recognize royalty). These crowns are conquerors' crowns. The face like men spoke of their intelligence. These were not like dumb animals driven by instinct. These were creatures of great intelligence though used for evil. The hair like women's hair probably focuses on their seductiveness. The Bible speaks in **1 Timothy 4:1b (KJV)** speaks of "...giving heed to seducing spirits..." These demonic spirits will seduce or lure people to their doom. Their teeth were like lions teeth speak of the fierceness of their attack as they rip their prey apart like a hungry lion. The armor in verse 9 speaks of the fact that they are unstoppable in their heinous activities. There is no escape for those on the earth. In wave after wave these demonic spirits will keep coming like many chariots with many horses. In verse 10 we see that their single aim is to hurt mankind. This has always been the goal of Satan and his demons.

D. The Demonic Prince Is Unmasked (V11-12)

This angel of the bottomless pit is sometimes identified as Satan himself and it may be. I tend to think that it is another high ranking demon. Satan is called in **Ephesians 2:2b (NKJV)** "...the prince of the power of the air..." He is not presented as the prince of the bottomless pit. Both of the names – Abaddon (Hebrew) and Apollyon (Greek) – mean destroyer. That is the best description of these demonic hoards.

The fifth trumpet is past; now it is time for the 6th trumpet judgment.

II. The Sixth Trumpet – The Army From the East (V13-21)

In these verses we are reminded again that God is the one who is sovereign. The demonic spirits cannot do anything that God does not allow.

A. Demons Are Released (V13-14)

The voice that John hears is likely the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. The four horns are protrusions on each corner of the golden altar – the altar of incense. This golden altar is the heavenly counterpoint of the altar of incense that was in the temple. This is the altar where the prayers rise to Heaven mixed with incense that is sweet smelling to God the Father. The words now coming from the golden altar are words of judgment. Who are the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates? They are fallen angels or demons (reminder: all demons are angels but not all angels are demons). No loyal angel of God is ever bound. The use of the definite article indicates that they form a specific group. I can't be dogmatic, but I believe that it is likely that they are high ranking demons that controlled the four world empires presented in the book of Daniel – Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. I believe that these are four of the most powerful demons. The Bible speaks in **Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)** "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers,

against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” In Daniel 10 we get some insight about these demonic powers and the battles that go on in the spiritual realm that we would not be aware of unless the Lord tells us. In Daniel 10:13 an angel tells Daniel why the answer to his prayer has been delayed. **Daniel 10:13 (ESV)** “The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia”. Then we read in **Daniel 10:20 (ESV)** “Then he said, ‘Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come.’” These princes are demons and whether that is who these four angels are at the Euphrates they are very powerful but they can do nothing – they are bound – until God looses them and lets them do their evil work. These powerful demon spirits think that they are doing the work of their Commander in Chief – the devil, but in reality they are fulfilling God’s plan.

B. Devastation Reigns (V15-19)

Notice again the sovereignty of God. These powerful demons had orders from Satan to wreck havoc on mankind, but as they are unbound we are told that God had them prepared for hour, the day, the month, and the year to do His bidding. Bible scholars really differ on the identity of this army of 200,000,000 in verse 16. That was more than the population of the world when John wrote the Revelation. The largest army ever formed prior to John’s time was the army of Xerxes the Persian ruler who massed an army of 12,000,000 to go to battle against the Greeks. In World War II, the largest number of soldiers the US had at any one time was 12,000,000. The question that the scholars cannot agree on is whether this is a human army or an army of demons. It could be either. Time Magazine reported in May 21, 1965 that China then claimed an army of 200,000,000. I lean toward this army being a demon army. I used to lean the other way. The problem with seeing them as a human army is the description John gives of the way they carry out their killing plans. It sounds more like supernatural beings. I realize however that it could be John – a first century man trying to describe perhaps 21st century instruments of war. This army is allowed by God to be instruments of His judgment to kill 1/3 of mankind.

C. Defiance Results (V20-21)

With the world gone wild, you would expect that great masses of people would be crying out in repentance to God. That will not be the case. Warren Weirsbe says it well. “The most freighting thing about Revelation 9 is not the judgments that God sends but the sins that men persist in committing *even while God is judging them.*” [Warren Weirsbe, Page 596]. The subjects of judgment “did not repent”. Instead of being horrified, they were hardened. Instead of being broken, they were blinded. What an affirmation of the truth of **John 6:44a (NKJV)** “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...” Unless God supernaturally opens your eyes, you will not be saved. Do you know what people are doing in Hell tonight? They are not pleading for God to give them another chance. The Bible says in Matthew 13:42 that they are gnashing their teeth. Do you know what that means? It means to snarl. They are snarling at God. John lists the sins that they are not willing to forsake. They would not forsake idolatry, murders, violence, sorceries (the word we get pharmacy from – drugs), sexual immorality (all sexual acts outside a covenant marriage between a man and a woman), and thefts (this often goes along with drug use). Probably these are the sins that stand out in the great tribulation.

CONCLUSION

Why do we study these chapters? If you have never been converted, you need to see that there is a time when it will be too late and your rebellion will be set and it will be too late. If you are saved, to see the wrath of God poured out gives us a greater capacity to worship Him for mercy, grace and love. May it also give us a passion and an urgency to go into the world with the Gospel.