

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 25TH, 2018 // BOOK OF REVELATION

Revelation 9 records more of the events of the Great Tribulation as hell is unlocked and Satan attacks the earth. Demonic forces will torture unbelievers with pain, and other demonic forces actually kill a third of humanity.

TRUMPET FIVE: DEMONIC FORCES UNLEASHED (9:1-6)

John is receiving a vision about the end time of God's final judgment.

- This is in the midst of the "Great Tribulation"- the final period of judgment and wrath.
- God's wrath is being poured out on those who are unrepentant, hate Him, and have refused His free gift of salvation through Christ.
- Many Christians believe that the church isn't present during this time.

The first four judgments of the Great Tribulation on the earth (that were signified by trumpets) only impacted human life indirectly.

- But these next two judgments are focused directly on humans.
- John sees the fifth angel blowing a trumpet and "a star falling from heaven to earth being given the key to...the bottomless pit" (vs. 1).
- The "star" most likely is an angel (Rev. 1:20).

Some scholars believe that this "fallen star" is a reference to Satan, the leader of all of the fallen angels (Isa. 14:12-15, Ezk. 28:12-16).

- Satan was given the key to the "abussos"- which is a kind of prison for incarcerated demons- and he opened the pit and released the inmates.
- When the abyss was opened, smoke arose like that of a great furnace so that the sun and sky were darkened.

Out of this huge cloud of dark smoke, John witnessed a new terror filling the sky.

- Demons, taking on a visible form resembling locusts, swarmed out of the abyss to plague the earth.
- People in the Middle East are very familiar with locust swarms, so referring to this demonic horde as "locusts" would've invoked familiar imagery to its first readers.

John describes these demons as locusts because of their uncountable numbers and massive destructive capabilities.

- These demons appear to be a special class of evil spirits that has remained under God's lock and key until this time.
- They have the power to inflict severe (like a scorpion) but non-fatal pain on people for "five months" (vs. 5).

These demons are assigned to inflict pain specifically on those who "do not have the seal of God on their foreheads" (on nonbelievers).

- The pain will be so severe, that people will "long to die, but death will flee from them".
- Either suicide will become impossible or these people will live in such agony they'll wish they were dead.

Satan would want to kill all the unrepentant to keep them from repenting, but God in His mercy will give people those five months of torment as an opportunity to repent and embrace Christ.

- Remember- the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (and others) will be faithfully proclaiming the gospel during this time, giving people one last chance to repent and believe.

A DESCRIPTION OF DEMONS (9:7-12)

If you've ever wondered what demons look like, this is the most detailed description Scripture gives us, although it is all mostly figurative (John uses the word, "like" many times).

"...looked like horses prepared for battle."

- Battle horses are bred for strength and equipped with bridle and saddle for battle.
- There was not a disorganized group, but a well prepared army.

"...they wore something like crowns of gold."

- Crowns always symbolize victory, so these demons will succeed in their appointed mission.

"...their faces resembled human faces."

- There was a kind of intelligence and cunning in these creatures- they appear to know and understand humanity as rational beings- not insects.

"...hair like women's hair."

- Many ancient barbarian warriors (like Parthians) wore long flowing hair as symbol of fierceness, not effeminacy.

"...teeth like lions' teeth"

- Teeth to tear apart their prey- again, fierceness and strength comes to mind with such an image.

"...breastplates like breastplates of iron."

- This is military imagery that speaks of the organization and strength of this horde.
- Romans used leather and bronze for breastplates, so this was stronger and more invincible.

"...like the thundering of many horses"

- This group of demons was so vast in number the sound of their wings sounded like an army.

Unlike real locusts, these demons had a king over them that John identifies as the angel of the abyss.

- This angel is apparently a high-ranking demon in Satan's hierarchy and his name in Hebrew is "Abaddon" (destruction), and in the Greek, "Apollyon".
- Having described this first woe, we're reminded that two other woes are still to come (vs. 12).

"Abaddon" (Destruction)

- When the unseen spiritual world is finally seen and unleashed, Satan's work as a destroyer will be revealed.

In the meantime, Satan still works in the unseen world to destroy in 3 main ways.

- Deception. Temptation. Accusation.

TRUMPET SIX: AN EVIL ARMY (9:13-19)

Like the fifth trumpet, the sounding of the sixth trumpet heralds another demonic attack. When the sixth angel blew his trumpet, John "heard a voice" coming from the four horns of the golden altar before God.

- The voice coming from the surface of the altar commanded the sixth angel to "release the four angels bound at the Euphrates".

The fact that the four angels are bound indicates that they're most likely demons

- The use of the article "the" suggests that these four angels form a specific group.
- Their precise identity is not given, but they may be the demons that controlled the four major world empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Whoever they are, these four powerful fallen angels control a huge demonic army set to wage war against fallen humanity when God releases them to do so.

- What John saw was a huge demon army of "twice 10,000 x 10,000" (two hundred million) arising from the east to wage war against humanity.
- Some view this army as China's, but most likely this is a supernatural, not human army.

When this demon army is released, they will kill a third of mankind.

- Assuming a world population of six billion, this means two billion dead.
- Who can imagine the kind of anguish created by a sudden loss of two billion or more?
- John describes this demonic hoard in very vivid yet again, figurative language

The tricolor breastplates of vs. 17 seem to symbolize strength and three plagues of fire, smoke, and sulfur.

- Their horses have lion-like heads and spew out of their mouths fire, smoke, and sulfur.
- The horses of the demons have tails like snakes that inflict injury and devastation as they ride into battle to kill and destroy.

TRUMPET SIX: AN EVIL ARMY (9:13-19)

At the end of time, God will lift His restraining hand off of Satan and demons, and allow unrepentant humanity a small taste of what an eternity in hell will be like.

- These disasters, plagues, and judgments are ordained by God to give sinful humanity one last chance to repent before it's too late.
- But the saddest verses in the Bible just might be verses 20-21.

John sees that humanity didn't repent, because they didn't want to give up 5 specific things-

- 1. Idolatry and "worship of demons" 2. Murders. 3. "Sorceries" (pharmakon)
- 4. "Immorality" 5. Theft.

Under the influence of demonic forces, the world will decay into a place of materialism, murder, drug use, sexual perversion, and crime unparalleled in all of human history.

- This is what happens when humanity rejects God.

THE REALITY OF HELL STARTS NOW.

THE REALITY OF HEAVEN STARTS NOW.

- Have you accepted the rule and reign of God in your life?
- Or are you still living as though you are in charge- therefore serving Satan and giving him ownership over areas of your life?