

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 28TH-29TH, 2024 // REVELATION

THE ABYSS IS UNLOCKED (REVELATION 9:1-6)

- Seals 1-5 (Rev. 6:1-11): The tribulation begins; the 4 horsemen, the martyrs cry out for vengeance.
 - Seal 6 (Rev. 6:12-17): There's a cataclysmic earthquake and worldwide natural disasters.
 - INTERLUDE (Rev. 7; 144,000 and multitude)
 - Seal 7 (Rev. 8-16): The events of the "Great Tribulation," containing 7 trumpet and 7 bowl judgments; it encompasses all of God's final wrath up to the return of Christ.
- Chapter 9 is during the "Great Tribulation"-final period of God's 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 Jesus.
 - This is God purifying and cleansing the world of wickedness and depravity.
 - 7 angels were given 7 trumpets, and with each trumpet blast, judgment is poured out.
- The first four trumpet judgments of the Great Tribulation only impacted human life on Earth indirectly.
- But these next two judgments are focused directly on sinful and wicked humanity.
 - John sees the fifth angel blowing a trumpet and "a star that had fallen from heaven to earth. The key for the...abyss was given to him" (v. 1).
 - The "star" is most likely a fallen angel (Rev. 1:20).
- Some scholars believe this "fallen star" is a reference to Satan, leader of all the fallen angels (Isa. 14:12-15, Ezk. 28:12-16).
- This fallen angel was given the key to the "abussos" (a kind of prison for incarcerated demons). He opened the pit and released the inmates.
 - When this abyss was opened, smoke arose like that of a great furnace so that the sun and sky were darkened (v. 2).
- Out of this huge cloud of dark smoke, John witnessed a new terror filling the sky.
- Locusts swarmed out of the abyss to plague the earth (v. 3). However, these are very unusual locusts.
 - Unlike natural locusts, they don't eat or harm vegetation, they harm human beings (v. 4). They sting like scorpions, have an angelic king, and have an unusual appearance.
- These "locusts", with their uncountable numbers and massive destructive capabilities, appear to be a special class of demons that has remained under God's lock and key until this time.
- God will release them as an act of judgment.
 - They have the power to inflict severe (like a scorpion) but non-fatal pain on people for "five months" (v. 5).
- These demons are assigned to inflict pain specifically on those who "do not have God's seal on their foreheads" (nonbelievers).
- The pain will be so severe 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.
 - This is a tiny foretaste of the horrors of hell.

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 (the life span of locusts) as an opportunity to repent and embrace Christ.

- Remember the 144,000 who are marked and protected by God will be faithfully proclaiming the gospel during this time, giving people one last chance to repent and believe.

In the world right now, there are spiritual forces at work all around us we can't see physically, but that doesn't mean they aren't there.

- At the end of the world, during the time of God's judgment, the veil between the spiritual and physical will be removed, and the unseen world will be visible and unleashed.
- There's a spiritual war going on right now for the souls of humanity.

What's described in Revelation 9 is what demonic forces ultimately want and what will eventually come to those on Earth who refuse to trust Christ.

- We all have to serve someone and belong to someone. Either we serve and belong to Christ, or we serve and belong to Satan.
- The greatest deception of Satan is trying to get us to live lives thinking we're serving ourselves.

AN ARMY OF LOCUSTS (REVELATION 9:7-12)

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

"...like horses prepared for battle." (v. 7)

- Battle horses are bred for strength and equipped with bridle and saddle for battle.
- This is not a disorganized group of insects, but a well-prepared army.

"Something like golden crowns... on their heads"

- Crowns always symbolize victory, so these demons will succeed in their appointed mission.
- "...their faces were like human faces."

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

"...hair like women's hair"

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

"...teeth were like lions' teeth"

- Teeth to tear apart their prey; cruelty, brutality, violence, and strength come to mind with such an image.

"... chests like iron breastplates"

- 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 sound of many chariots with horses"

- This group of demons was so vast the sound of their wings sounded like an army.
- Unlike actual locusts, these demons had a king over them that John identifies as the angel of the abyss (v. 11).

- This angel is apparently a high-ranking demon in Satan's hierarchy. His name in Hebrew is "Abaddon" (destruction), and in Greek "Apollyon."
- After describing this first woe, we are reminded two more woes are still to come (v. 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 overtime to destroy in 3 main ways:
 1. Deception (John 8:44)
 2. Temptation (1 Thess. 3:5)
 3. Accusation (Rev. 12:10)

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

Like the fifth trumpet, the sounding of the sixth trumpet heralds another attack, but this one will bring death.

- 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" (v. 14).

The fact that the four angels are bound indicates they are most likely demons (2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6).

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

These four powerful fallen angels control a huge demonically influenced army set to wage war against fallen humanity when God releases them to do so.

- John saw a demonic army of twice 10,000 x 10,000 (ESV), or two hundred million, arising from the east to wage war against humanity.
- The largest military on earth at this point is China's, with 2.8 million soldiers.

An army this size would surely have to be an alliance of several different nations.

- The only "nation" currently that could come close to such a force is not a geographical nation, but a religious nation, Islam.
- Many studies seem to indicate that 8-10% of Islam is radical jihadists. Currently, there are over 1.9 billion Muslims (fastest growing).
- 10% would be 190,000,000 radicals.

When John sees this army released, it kills a third of mankind.

- The judgment from the fourth seal killed a quarter of the earth's population (6:8). This additional third brings the death toll from these judgments to more than half the world.
- John describes this demonically influenced army in very vivid, yet figurative language for his readers.

The tri-color breastplates of v. 17 seem to symbolize strength and three plagues of fire, smoke, and sulfur.

- The horses they ride have lion-like heads and spew out of their mouths fire, smoke, and sulfur (Tanks? Helicopters?).
- The horses of this demonic army have tails like snakes that inflict injury and devastation as they ride into battle to kill and destroy.

HARDENED (REVELATION 9:20-21)

At the end of time, God will lift His restraining hand off 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 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 things:

1. Idolatry and "worship of demons"
 - This could be physical idols and false gods.
 - In more developed countries, idols have been replaced by materialism and technology.
2. Murders
 - Unrestrained violence and hatred will be rampant, and people won't want to give it up.
3. "Sorceries" (pharmakon)
 - John sees that humanity will rely so much on drugs for pleasure and comfort that when it comes between choosing drugs or choosing eternal life with God, they'll choose drugs.
4. "Sexual immorality"
 - The Greek word is a general term that includes sexual sin (fornication, adultery, homosexuality, pornography, etc.).
5. Theft
 - Like morality, in these last days honesty and integrity will be non-existent, and people will refuse to stop stealing and turn to God.

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.
- Col. 1:13
- 1 Peter 5:8

SATAN HATES YOU AND WANTS TO DESTROY YOU.

- Satan and his demons do not have ultimate power in our universe—God does. And the terrors of hell are bound or loosed by His permission.
- Satan has been disarmed by the power of the cross (Col. 2:13-15) and as Believers, we have victory and authority in Christ.
- Satan does have tremendous power and sway in our world (1 John 5:19, Eph. 2:1-2).
- Satan seeks to destroy through deception:
 - Distorts and denies God's Word.
 - Peddles false doctrine and false teaching.
 - Distorts life's meaning and the reality of eternity.
 - Deceives us into trying to be our own god.
- We can stand against this attack by knowing, believing, and obeying the truth of God's Word.
- Satan seeks to destroy through temptation:
 - Hell will be populated through dishonest marketing! The hook is always hidden with bait.
 - Sexual sin, idolatry, theft, drug use/intoxication, and hatred/murders feel good to our flesh, but these things lead to death and judgment.
- We must open our eyes and recognize the end result!
- Satan seeks to destroy through accusation:
 - Satan's most insidious game is to downplay the destructive force of sin in temptation and to downplay God's grace to forgive and restore you.
 - Satan brings condemnation, shame, guilt, despair, discouragement, and hopelessness.
 - Satan attacks our identity as Children of God.
- Believe the gospel, submit to God, resist the devil.