

## **Hell on Earth Revelation 9**

There are certain events and experiences in life that are so shocking that they leave an indelible impression on your memory. The first such event in my life occurred on November 22, 1963 when President John Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. I was a seven years old. I will never forget the look on Mrs. Turner's face when the principal walked into a told her that the president had been shot. School was dismissed shortly thereafter. I remember my older brother Jim who was 16 at the time asking me, "Do you know what has happened? Did they tell you that someone has shot President Kennedy?" It was a long, silent ride home on the school bus that day.

The second such event in my life took place just over eight years ago today. In September of 2001 nine of us from Providence were part of a tour group in the Holy Land. September 11 was to be our last day in Israel. Keith Carpenter and I had just emerged from a tour of the Rabbinical Tunnel in Jerusalem when we first heard some sketchy reports about a terrorist attack in the United States. I will never forget how tense our well armed Israeli escorts were as they quickly led us through the Arab quarter of Old Jerusalem back to the Temple Mount Plaza. I'm confident everyone here this morning can remember where you were and what you were doing when you first heard the news that a passenger plane had crashed into one of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. As horrifying as it was for you and me to watch the tragic events of that day unfold before our eyes on live television just imagine what it was like for those poor souls who were working in the Twin Towers that fateful day. It must have seemed like hell on earth for them.

Right after Phyllis shares her testimony in song we are going to carefully consider what the Word of God has to say about a day when hell will literally come upon the earth.

Please turn to Revelation chapter 9. The book of Revelation is a blessing to the saved. In fact, in both the opening and closing verses of Revelation God promises a special blessing to those believers who will read, study and obey the contents of this blessed book. But while the message of Revelation is a blessing to those of us who are saved, it is also a warning to all those who are lost. It is a warning that unless you accept God's gracious offer of redemption through faith in Jesus Christ you will experience God's terrible wrath.

When we come to chapter nine the first four trumpets of the Tribulation have already sounded. When the first trumpet sounds the vegetation is struck. One third of all the trees, the green grass, the wheat fields, the rice fields, the oat fields, and the barley fields on earth will be burned up. When the second trumpet sounds the seas are struck. A giant meteor will strike the earth somewhere in one of the great oceans with the explosive power of multiple atomic bombs and the results will be catastrophic. Marine life will die in record numbers. Huge tidal waves will destroy one third of all ocean going ships in the world. When the third trumpet sounds the fresh waters of the earth are struck. One third of all the springs and rivers and lakes on earth will become so bitter and polluted that many, many people will literally die from thirst. When the fourth trumpet sounds the heavens are struck. The entire earth will suffer a light shortage. The light of the sun, the moon, and the stars, will be darkened by one third.

In Revelation chapter nine the Apostle John describes for us what he saw when the fifth and sixth trumpets were sounded. So severe are the judgments we are going to read about here in chapter 9 that they are called the "woe trumpet judgments." When the final three trumpets sound there is going to be judgment on this earth like the world has never seen before. First of all, I want you to notice what John saw when the fifth trumpet sounded. When the angel blew the trumpet John saw...

## 1. A Dark Star

Look at verse 1. *"Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth."*

Already in our study of Revelation we have read about numerous falling stars, but this is no ordinary star. In fact, this is not a literal star at all. This fallen star is a person. John says that he saw *"a star fallen from heaven to the earth."* Now that immediately gives us a clue as to who this star is. Turn back to the book of Isaiah with me for a moment. Isaiah 14:12 says *"how you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!"* Now turn to Luke chapter 10. In verse 18 the Lord Jesus said to his disciples *"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."* The star fallen from heaven that John saw is none other than Satan himself.

John goes on to say in verse 1, *"to him was given the key to the bottomless pit."* The bible tells us in Revelation 1:18 that the Lord Jesus holds the *"keys of Hades and of death."* Jesus is also the keeper of the keys to *"the bottomless pit,"* or the great abyss.

What is the bottomless pit? The bottomless pit (literally "the pit of the abyss") is spoken of seven times in Revelation, always in reference to the abode of imprisoned demons (Rev. 9:2, 11; 11:7; 17:18). The bible tells us in Luke 8:31 that the pit of "the abyss" is a place God has specifically reserved for demons. In Revelation 20 we read that Satan himself will be bound in the bottomless pit for a thousand years following the second coming of Christ.

When the angel sounds the fifth trumpet the Lord Jesus is going to temporarily hand over the keys to the bottomless pit to Satan who will open the doors to...

## 2. A Demonic Invasion

Look at verse 2. *"And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth"* (Rev. 9:3).

John tells us that when the pit is opened smoke will come billowing out as if the doors of a great furnace had been opened, and out of the smoke will pour forth a horde of locusts. Now, there are three reasons why we know these are not literal locusts.

The first reason is found in verse 4. Notice what these locusts are commanded not to do. *"They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree."* Of course, that is exactly what literal locusts attack, isn't it? They attack anything that is green. But these locusts are different. Instead of attacking plant life they will attack people.

Verse 4 goes on to say, *“They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months”* (Rev. 9:4-5).

The second reason we can be certain these are not literal locusts is the way in which they are characterized. Notice how John describes these strange creatures. Look at verse 7. *“The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months”* (Rev. 9:7-10). Without delving into the details it is sufficient to say that this is clearly not a description of literal locusts.

The third reason why we know these are not literal locusts is the fact that they have a commander. Look at verse 11. *“And 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.”* Proverbs 30:27 tells us that *“locusts have no king,”* but this army follows the rule of Satan, the destroyer.

If these are not literal locusts then what are they? They are demons. What John is describing here is an invasion of demons.

When you study the Bible you will discover that the Bible teaches the existence of demons. I don't think we should go overboard about it or see a demon behind every bush as some do. However, the Bible makes it very clear that demons are real. There are demons on the earth today. Their primary desire is to possess the hearts, and minds, and souls of men. If you are saved you cannot be possessed by demons. You are already possessed; possessed by God. You belong to God. You have been bought and paid for with the blood of Jesus.

Not only are there demons on earth today but according to the Scriptures there are some demons that are bound in the pit of the abyss today. Turn to 2 Peter 2:4. *“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.”* At this very moment there are a host of demons imprisoned in the bottomless pit. When the fifth trumpet sounds the devil himself is going to unlock the doors to the bottomless pit and unleash a hellish horde of demons upon this earth.

Can you imagine what that will be like? What if the doors of all the prisons in the world were suddenly opened and the most vicious and violent criminals on earth were let loose on society? Think of the horror of it. Folks, that would be a picnic compared to the time when the Bible says that the demons of the abyss are going to be unleashed upon this earth.

For five long, excruciating months, which by the way is the normal lifespan of the locust, demons will torment every human being on earth with the exception of the 144,000 sealed saints from the tribes of Israel and *all those* who have trusted the Jesus as Lord and Savior. How bad will it be? Look at verse 6. *“In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.”*

The torment of these locust-like demons will be so terrible, the pain will be so unbearable that people will literally beg to die but they won't be able to. They will seek death but not find it. Men will lose the ability to exercise their will and take their own lives. They will be left with the horrible prospect of facing five months of painful affliction with no avenue of escape.

John Walvoord wrote, "It would be difficult to describe a more fearful spectacle than these instruments of divine justice, utterly wicked in themselves, and released from the pit of the abyss to accomplish this terrifying judgment." (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ* [The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1966; Chicago, IL], 163)

What a terrible time it's going to be when demons invade the world. It will truly be hell on earth. But it will get worse. When the sixth trumpet sounds there will be ...

### 3. A Deadly Plague

Look at verse 13. *"Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates'"* (Rev. 9:13-14).

The Euphrates is the longest and most important river in the Middle East. It was one of the four rivers into which the river that flowed out of the Garden of Eden divided. It was near the Euphrates River that sin began, the first lie was told, the first murder was committed, and the Tower of Babel was built. It was on the banks of the Euphrates that the nation Israel endured seventy long, bitter years of captivity. It will be this very same river that the enemies of God will cross at the end of the Great Tribulation to participate in the battle of Armageddon.

Now look at verse 15. *"So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them"* (Rev. 9:15-16).

John tells us that the army that will follow the four fallen angels who have been bound in the great river Euphrates will number two hundred million. Should we take this number literally? Absolutely! Notice, John says *"I heard the number of them."*

The next question is this; is this army of two hundred million an army of men? I don't believe so. Although some bible teachers associate this army with that great military force the Kings of the East will lead across the river Euphrates as described in Revelation 16 it is far more likely that this is an army of demons not men.

The Bible tells us that at the appointed hour, on the appointed day, in the appointed month of the appointed year a vast army of two hundred million demons are going to be let loose on the earth. Unlike the horde of locust like demons that will be released from the bottomless pit to torment men, these demons will be killers.

Look at verse 17. *"And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone."* Now notice, *"By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed--by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone*

*which came out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm” (Rev. 9:17-19).*

Mankind will experience death on a scale not seen since the flood in the days of Noah. One out of every three people on earth will die as a result of this demonic plague. And here is the astounding thing – still men will not repent.

Finally we see in God’s Word...

#### **4. A Defiant Response**

Look at verse 20. *“But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.” (Rev. 9:20-21)*

It is unimaginable that after years of indescribable suffering and unprecedented death and destruction under the terrible judgments of God’s wrath, coupled with the powerful preaching of the Gospel by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, and the witness of innumerable other believers that men will still refuse to bow to their knees in repentance and receive Christ as their Savior.

By the hardness of their hearts they will seal their fate. Having rejected all offers of grace and mercy men will choose for themselves a certain appointment with death and judgment.

Hebrews 4:7 says *“Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”* What about you? Where do you stand today? How is it with your heart today?

The Lord said to Israel, *“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life.” (Deut. 30:19)* God in His mercy offers you and me the very same choice today. To choose blessing or cursing, life or death, heaven or hell. My prayer for you is that you would seize this precious opportunity the Lord has given you today to trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.