Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Hell on Earth
Scripture: Revelation 9:1-12
Code: 66-33

Well, now, we come to that wonderful time tonight when we look together at God's Word and what a treasure. In it God speaks His very truth to us.

Revelation chapter 9 is our chapter for tonight. As we approach this serious and terrifying passage, we need to remember that in a very real sense we are being taken back to the future, back to the book of Revelation written in the first century which takes us into the very future.

As we come in to chapter 9 we find ourselves arriving in a period of time yet to come, a future time called The Great Tribulation. More particularly we are not only in The Great Tribulation, a three and a half period of God's judgment, but we are seeing the very events that take place in the last part of The Great Tribulation known as the day of the Lord...the day when the Lord comes in final fury, destroying the ungodly and the work of Satan and his demons and setting up the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ where He will reign on the earth for a thousand years. That is followed by the new heavens and the new earth which is the eternal state.

We are then in the Great Tribulation, in the day of the Lord. And more particularly, we are going to be looking at what is the fifth trumpet judgment. You remember there are seven seals which unfold the seven-year period. Within that seventh seal there are seven trumpet judgments that come at the end of the Tribulation period. And then within that final seventh trumpet, there will be seven more judgments called the seven bowl judgments, we'll look at them later.

The Apostle John who is seeing these visions and receiving this revelation is on the island of Patmos, it's a rocky island in the Mediterranean. He has been sent there in exile for preaching Jesus Christ. And God is giving him some marvelous visions, glimpses of the future when the wrath of God will fall and the Lord Jesus Christ will take back His universe from Satan and from sin. From our vantage point the next event will be the Rapture of the church. The church of Jesus Christ will be caught away and then will come the seven-year Tribulation, and finally the last half of that, the Great Tribulation, culminating in the day of the Lord, and then the Kingdom.

Now as we have gone through this period known as the Tribulation which lasts for seven years, it has been described to us in these seven seals, actually there is one scroll sealed seven times and each time a seal is opened, another judgment event hits. When we hit the sixth seal, back in chapter 6, we entered into the day of the Lord. Then we came to the seventh seal in chapter 8 and in it are the

seven trumpets and in the final trumpet, the seven bowls.

Last time we looked at the first four trumpets in chapter 8 verses 6 to 13, we covered the first four judgments of the trumpets. And you'll remember that the first trumpet was judgment on the land. The second trumpet was judgment on the sea. The third trumpet was judgment on the fresh waters. And the fourth trumpet was judgment on the heavenly bodies, as verse 12 says, "The third of the sun, the third of the moon, the third of the stars were smitten and a third of them might be darkened, the day might not shine for a third of it and night in the same way."

As we come to the end of this great period of judgment then, the judgments are devastating, terrible. The judgment on the land was fierce and destroyed a third of the trees and shrubs and all of the green grass. The judgment on the sea was some great continent sized body catapulting out of space to hit the waters and devastated the sea, killing a third of what was in it and destroying a third of the ships. Then the judgment on the fresh water was a judgment that resulted in death because men can't live without fresh water. And then more collapsing sky.

As frightening as those were, as terrorizing as they were, they're only in a sense preliminary to the fearsome judgment that comes in the fifth trumpet. For millennia the heavens had declared the glory of God and has shown forth His handiwork. And now the heavens are declaring His wrath. When you come to the end of those first four trumpets, heaven is unfolding, unravelling. As you come in to chapter 9, the focus changes from heaven to hell. Whatever heaven could do to devastate the earth is nothing like what hell can do.

At the end of chapter 8, the last verse, provides a transition for us. "And I looked," says John, again in vision, "and I heard an angel...pardon me...I looked and I heard an eagle flying in mid heaven saying with a loud voice,`Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound.'"

Back in verse 2 of chapter 8 we met seven angels who stand before God, seven presence angels, the elite of the angelic company, standing with seven trumpets waiting to blast their judgment. We have already heard four and John looks again and here comes an eagle, an unusual eagle because it can speak. Eagles are birds of prey, eagles are killers and eagles are associated often in prophetic literature with judgment and with violence, such as Jeremiah 4:13, Hosea 8:1, Habakkuk 1:8. And this eagle comes associated again with judgment. And this eagle can speak. And he says with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe." That word means damnation, judgment, sentencing, execution, curse. Those are all in and around the synonyms of that word.

"Woe to those who dwell on the earth." That's a very important phrase. You might even want to underline it because you're going to see it repeatedly. It is used in chapter 3, chapter 6, chapter 8, chapter 11, chapter 13, chapter 17. It's a technical term for the unregenerate living on the earth. It's

a technical term for unbelieving people. Woe to those unbelievers on the earth because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound.

Why is this eagle flying through heaven saying this? I believe the warning is mercy. I believe God is warning people that they still have time to turn, to repent, to believe, to be saved before the next judgment comes, before hell opens up and billows out all over the world.

Ezekiel 33:11 says, "God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked." I suppose that's why there are over six hundred warnings in Scripture about hell. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. He is always eager to warn the lost about judgment to come and even in the midst of the activities of judgment in the day of the Lord itself, there is warning. The rising crescendo of judgment on the earth now introduces the final three woes that consummate the final seal, the final expression of God's wrath in part, yet to be followed by a sixth and a seventh, and seven bowl judgments before Christ takes the earth. There is till time, two more trumpets and the last one including all the bowls, there's still a little time.

But I remind you, that if people don't respond now, in chapter 9 verse 21 at the blowing of the sixth trumpet, they didn't repent. If they can make it through this one it seems as though they are affixed in their hardness. The first four trumpets, remember now, involved the devastation of physical nature. You can only imagine what that's going to be like and I was fascinated in the study of that, particularly against the backdrop of the environmental preoccupation, actually the environmental cult that exists today. People have had a false security in the law of uniformity, the idea that everything is always going to continue the same from the beginning. Peter talks about that foolish belief in 2 Peter. The day is coming, however, when the already unpredictable elements of nature will become earth's destroyer. And the theory of uniformity is going to yield to the fact of catastrophe, just like it did in the Flood. Men's hearts will fail them for fear, they will die of shock. What they take for granted about the stability of the universe is going to come apart.

But that's really nothing compared to the frightening reality of this fifth trumpet. Chapter 9 verse 1, "And the fifth angel sounded and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. And he opened the bottomless pit and smoke went up out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth and power was given them as the scorpions of the earth have power, and they were told that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not permitted to kill anyone but to torment for five months, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. And in those days men will seek death and will not find it, and they will long to die and death flees from them. And the appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle and on their heads, as it were, crowns like gold and their faces were like the faces of men. And they had hair like the hair of women and their teeth were

like the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots of many horses rushing to battle. And they have tails like scorpions and stings and in their tails is the power to hurt men for five months. They have as king over them the angel of the abyss, his name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon."

Here is the frightening fifth trumpet. Let's look at it. First there is the pit unlocked. And I'll give you several points as we go. There is the pit unlocked. Verse 1 says, "The fifth angel sounded and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him."

One of those elite presence angels who had been patiently waiting for his moment takes his trumpet and blows. "And I saw a star from heaven...note this...which had fallen to the earth." Now we've all seen our share of falling stars, we call them, those asteroids or comets or whatever they are that move through the sky. We've all seen our share of falling stars. The people living in this generation will have seen some the likes of which we have never seen. In fact, back in chapter 6 and verse 13, the stars of the sky are going to fall to the earth like a fig tree casts its unripe fruit when shaken by a great wind. It's going to appear as though there are falling stars catapulting at the earth all over the place.

In chapter 8 as we noted for you in verse 8, a great mountain burning with fire is going to fall into the sea. And in verse 11 another star called Wormwood is going to fall and into our atmosphere it will come and disintegrate and its fragments will fall on the fresh water.

But this is not a star like any of those stars. This is a different star because it says about this star that the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. This is a star like we think of a star, a movie star, an athletic star, a music star. This is some kind of person, some angelic person who could be identified in the terminology of Job 38:7 which talks about angels as stars. This star is from the spiritual dimension. This star, it says, which had fallen to the earth. This is a fallen star. Perfect tense, fallen already with ongoing results, the fall is in the past with continuing reality.

Who is the fallen star? Let me ask you. Satan, the day star, the sun of the morning who fell. Isaiah describes, I believe, the fall of Satan, Lucifer. It says in Isaiah 14, "How have you fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, sun of the dawn? You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations. Why? Because you said in your heart, `I will ascend to heaven, I will raise my throne above the stars of God, I will sit on the mount of the assembly in the recesses of the north, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.' Nevertheless, you will be thrust down to Sheol to the recesses of the pit." That's describing the fall of Satan. He is an already fallen star. In Luke 10:18 Jesus says, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning." Here is Satan, the fallen one identified.

There's another interesting note, look at chapter 12 verse 7. Here you have a picture of battle going on some time during the Tribulation. There is war in heaven. Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. We know who the dragon is because verse 9 tells us the dragon is the devil and Satan who deceives the whole world. But they're having war with the dragon and the dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down. The serpent of old who is called devil and Satan who deceives the whole world, he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

This is the second time because back in verse 4 it tells us about an earlier time when he was thrown down and with his tail he swept away a third of the stars of heaven. The first time Satan fell, a third of the demons went with him. Down in verses 7 to 9 we find him thrown down a second time. What does that mean? The first time he was thrown out of the presence of God, he was defiled, he had sinned and all those who sinned with him in the rebellion were thrown out of heaven. But since that time, mark this, Satan has had access to go back. If you question that you only need to remember Job chapter 1 where Satan comes before the throne of God to accuse saints, he's still doing it...still doing it.

Verse 10, "Now the salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down who accuses them before our God and night...day and night." Since Satan was thrown out as a permanent occupant, he has gone back as a visitor. And apparently so have his demons. And they've had some access to God. And here we find them thrown out of heaven again, this time Michael and his angels waging war and they are too strong for the dragon and his angels and the dragon and all the demons with him are now thrown down to the earth. And this, I believe, happens in the time of the Tribulation. It may be at the abomination of desolations at the midpoint, and it could be what triggers the second half terrors.

What that tells us is that not all the demons are on the earth. Satan isn't even on the earth all the time. And I remind you that people who are running around talking to Satan may not even be aware of the fact that Satan might not be around to hear them while they're binding him. He might be in India or he might be in Chicago or he might be in Rio de Janeiro or he might be in St. Petersburg, in Russia, or for that matter he might be in heaven. And if he's up there most of the time day and night accusing the brethren, and he's not omnipresent, he must be up there a lot. But the time is coming when all of that accusation of the brethren stuff ends and he and all of the demons who are in the air...now mind you, some are moving around on the earth, some are moving in the air warring with Michael and the other angels and Satan himself spends a lot of his time at the throne of God accusing the brethren. But at some point in the time of Tribulation, all those demons in the air engaged in the war with the holy angels and Satan himself are thrown to the earth so that the number of demons in the earth is multiplied massively.

So by the time Satan in chapter 9 is given the key, and this is important, by the time he is given the key, he's already been thrown to the earth and all of the demons who have occupied the territories in the heavens and warred with the holy angels at that level are also cast down and so there is a greater force of demon power in the world than ever. And that's what makes the Great Tribulation such a Great Tribulation. If we have to wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies, and the battle is as formidable as it is, what's it going to be like when the number of them is multiplied massively because they're thrown out of the heavens?

That's not enough for Satan. And God says...All right, you want to have your day in the world, you've got all the demons now on the earth and there are even more and I'm going to give you the key to let the rest of them out. And so the Lord gives him the key of the bottomless pit.

This is really amazing. Literally the pit of the abyss. One translates it the shaft of the abyss, as if there is some kind of a shaft that runs down to a fiery pit in the belly of the earth. Why? Because down in that pit there are more demons, more of them. The Greek term is abussos, it's used seven times in Revelation and it always refers to the abode of fallen spirits, the abode of demons, the prison where demons are kept incarcerated.

God at His own discretion has chosen through history to incarcerate certain demons. I don't know all the criteria for that. We have some references to it. Second Peter chapter 2 verse 4 says that God did not spare angels when they sinned, fallen angels, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness. Some angels move in the heavens, in conflict with holy angels. Some demons move in the heavens in conflict with holy angels. Some demons move in the earth among men. And some demons are incarcerated in the pit, imprisoned.

The word that Peter uses, very interesting, in 2 Peter 2:4. God, he says, cast them into hell. The word is Tartarus, tartarosos(?), aorist participle. That word is interesting because it comes from Greek mythology. When...when the Holy Spirit wanted to express hell, He chose words out of the vernacular. When Jesus spoke about hell He used the word gehennabecause that was the word for the ever burning city dump in Jerusalem, an unending flame filled with garbage and filth, worms and all of that vivid stuff. The word tartarososas it appears here came from Greek mythology. And in Greek mythology that word referred to a subterranean place lower than the grave where the most wicked and rebellious beings were sent to receive the worst and the most severe punishment. So Jesus plucked the word out of the Jewish mind and culture and here Peter plucks a word out of Gentile comprehension to describe the most terrible lowest pit of torment and punishment and incarceration, the lowest hell.

He also refers to this place as "pits of darkness reserved for judgment." The word "pits," seiros, it means a storage place. They used to store the grain in pits in the ground. And they were called pits of blackness, zophos, because it was dark down there. And so what Peter tells us is that there have been fallen angels and because of the nature of their iniquity and their wickedness and their sin, the Lord has taken them and plunged them down, incarcerating them in chains in this pit down below the lowest hell, the place of severest torment and isolation. And they're there reserved for judgment.

What does that mean? Well their final sentencing will come in Revelation chapter 20 and verse 10, that's when they're finally sentenced. They're thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone.

Now you ask the question...what kind of demons get thrown in that place? Well all I can say it must be the worst. It must be the worst. Look at Jude, the little epistle of Jude right before Revelation. Verse 6 and 7, "And angels who didn't keep their own domain...didn't stay in their own realm...but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day." Now we know that some of the beings that have been sent down there are there for good, the chains are eternal, unbreakable. But what did they do? Well they abandoned their proper domain. They stepped out of their proper realm.

Well what would it be like? Well verse 7, it would be like Sodom and Gomorrah. Well what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah? Homosexuality where men left their proper realm and domain of relationships with women and went after men. And somehow there were some angels that left the domain of fallen angels, demons, and entered into another domain. And it says in verse 7, "In the same way like Sodom and Gomorrah and the perversion of homosexuality, these demons indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh."

You know what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah? Men tried to have sex with angels. Remember that? The angels came and men tried to have sex with them. Do you know what Jude is saying? There was a time when angels, demons, tried to have sex with women. When was that? I believe that's described in Genesis 6 when the sons of God went after the daughters of men, the result was monsters in the world that God had to drown in a universal flood. And I believe that those are some of the demons that the Lord said of sin so vilely that He put them in the pit.

Look at 1 Peter 3 and I want you to understand this, so i just take a moment to digress...and we're not going to finish this tonight, so don't worry about that. In 1 Peter 3:18 it talks about Christ dying and though His body was death...His body was dead, verse 18 says, that He was put to death in the flesh, that is His body had died, but His Spirit was alive. So when His Spirit was alive, look at this, He went and made a proclamation to the spirits now...where?...in prison. Oh how interesting.

You know all those demons down there, the ones that got put there because they sinned in Genesis 6 and assorted and accumulated other demons that have been sent down there? You say, "Well how

do you know there are more?" Well I know there are more sent down there because in Luke chapter 8 verse 31 when Jesus cast all those demons, you remember, out of the maniac in Gadara, all the demons kept saying, and saying, and saying and saying, "Please don't send us to the pit," abussos, please." Even the demons don't want to go there, they want to be free to do their wickedness.

So they must have known that God was in the habit of sending demons down there, that it isn't just those who sinned in Genesis 6 in that perversion where they tried to cohabitate with women and produce an unredeemable race of demon men for whom the God/Man could not atone. It was not just them, but others that God at His own will and discretion would through the ages send into that pit as a holding place to keep them there because they were so filthy and so vile until the final day of judgment when they're thrown into the lake of fire.

Now you can imagine when Jesus was on the cross that somebody got the information to them. I don't know how that works, or how their communication method works, but I would imagine they were fairly happy that Jesus was being killed. And in the middle of their glee, He showed up. His body was dead, His Spirit was alive, He went to the spirits in prison. Which ones were they? The ones who were disobedient during the days of Noah. And that takes us right back to Genesis 6 and those fallen spirits that were cohabitating with women to produce that demon race, they were the ones incarcerated there along with others and they were the ones to whom Christ appeared and announced His triumph over sin and death and hell on the cross and then left.

So, to sum up. You have demons in the air and you have demons on the earth and you have this mass of demons, however many there may be, that have been added to from the original group, perhaps in Genesis 6 and they're down in the pit.

Now you have a little bit of understanding of what's going to happen in the world in Revelation chapter 9. Let's go back to it. When it says the angel who had fallen, the star from heaven who had fallen, who was Satan, was given the key to the abussos, to do what with it? To open the shaft and let all the demons out. Sin is going to run its final course. Satan is going to be able to have his entire force amassed with the exception, perhaps, of those bound in everlasting chains. Some say, "Well those everlasting chains will be released for that moment," other says, "Since they're everlasting, they are bound permanently and only the ones who are temporarily bound will be released." It is not unbiblical and not unreasonable to assume that even those bound in everlasting chains may also be released for a time so that the entire force of demon power in total is running rampant all over the earth.

Now the key is authority. Anytime you see a key, it's authority. If you have a key, you have the authority cause you can open and close. The key doesn't belong to this angel. Who does it belong to? Christ says, "I am the One who lives forevermore and I have the keys of death and Hades." But He takes off His key chain, the key to tartarosos, and He has given to this fallen angel, Satan, temporary authority to open the pit and let all the demons loose. That's why we say chapter 9 is hell

on earth.

Let's look at verse 2. "And he opened the bottomless pit." One can only imagine what John must have been experiencing as he saw this vision. "And smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace. And the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth and power was given them as the scorpions of the earth have power."

One writer says, quote: "Picture what the world would be like if we were to open the doors of all the penitentiaries of earth and set free the world's most vicious and violent criminals, giving them full reign to practice their infamies upon mankind. Something worse than that lies in store for the world. Satan cast out of heaven is now permitted to summon to his aid the most diabolical fiends in the abyss to act as his agents in bringing mankind to the footstool of the beast," end quote.

The verse says that when the pit was opened smoke went up out of the pit. Now remember, this is graphic language, this is meant to express things that are really inexpressible. You say, "Is it a real smoke?" To John he saw smoke. If it's in the center of the earth in some way certainly the center of the earth is molten lava, we could understand it. I don't know how physical it is as to how spiritual it is and what combination of both of those is reality. I do know that the image here is that out of this pit comes ugly black pollution. And I think the spiritual tone of it is what is most important, it is hell belching out its corruption. It is the vile filth of the worst of the demons incarcerated in the pit let loose, demonic, satanic oppression comes roaring out of the heart of the earth, pushed out by infernal heat and pressure. John writes that it is like the smoke of a great furnace, billowing smoke. The furnace of the pit of hell is opened and the blackness and the heat start billowing out to such a degree that the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. Again, I'm sure the clean air people are going to be very distressed by all of this and the Air Quality Management District is going to be utter chaos.

This is going to be pollution that makes the largest fire and the deepest smog and the worst kind of pollution in the oil fires of Kuwait seem like nothing. Everything now, the "save the earth" crowd is concerned about has been effected. The land has been effected and the plants have been effected. The animals have been effected and the sea has been effected and the sky has been effected, and now the air, polluted beyond anybody's wildest imagination, with the soot of the deepest hell billowing up.

That's the scene in the first two verses of the pit unlocked. Let's at least look at a second point, the power unleashed...the power unleashed. In the very heart of that belching black smoke, verse 3 says, out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth and power was given them as the scorpions of the earth have power.

Like the plague of locusts in Egypt, Exodus 10 verse 5, only far worse. Something...it must be something like the cloud of a worldwide atomic blast, have you ever seen the billow cloud that comes from an atomic blast? Or something like a volcanic eruption that covers the whole world. A strange and panic generating blackness that fills the sky and stifles the world's breathing. And it blots out whatever is left of the sun and the moon and the stars and the sky. And then in the middle of it come something like locusts. And again that imagery is so profound because ordinary locusts plagues are unimaginable. You can read about them in the encyclopedias and books. Locusts descend to the earth in such thick masses that they can literally make it look like night in the middle of day. They can blot out the sky. The worst locust plague in modern times struck the Middle East in 1951 and 1952 in Iran, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia and they tell us every green and growing thing was devoured across hundreds of thousands of square miles. And they ate it right down to the bare ground. But as bad as that is with real insects, these are not real insects. We know that because real locusts don't have a scorpion sting and real locusts don't have heads with crowns and faces like the face of men and hair like the hair of women and teeth like the teeth of lions and breastplates like breastplates of iron. These are some kind of special locusts. What is fascinating about this is that that concept of locusts is, of course, taken from the blackness of the cloud and the devastation. These are demons. And God must create for them some form. Since Satan can't create anything, when they're finally released as spirit beings, God must give them some form, at least in the vision they had a form. And what they do is supernatural and it's just swarming, comprehensive desolation. These are locusts from hell and they're not insects.

The power was given to them, like the scorpions of the earth have power. That's repeated, by the way, at the end of verse 5 and again down in verse 10. They have the ability to create pain, swarming demons, supernatural power. And you remember now, they've been pent up, they've been wanting to get at God and get at Christ and get at men for a long time. And they have the power to inflict excruciating pain on the inhabitants of the world. I don't know what kind of pain it is, it's called torment here. Suffering caused by these demons is compared to that of a scorpion sting. This insect as one writer says is one of the most irascible and malignant that lives and its sting is perhaps the most agonizing that any animal can inflict on the human body. In tropical countries small children frequently die from the sting of the scorpion. Interestingly the physiological response to a scorpion sting is similar to that which has been observed in many cases of demon possession.

They say, and I looked this up, that when someone is stung by a scorpion and gets the full blast of their poison, they will roll on the ground in agony, foam at the mouth and grind their teeth in pain. Not unlike some demon-possessed people that we read about in the gospels, remember? These are worse than any physical locusts or any physical scorpions. They're going to fly wherever they want. They're going to dart through the air. They're going to dwell in the darkness. They're going to be swarming demons from hell and they're going to come in to the very bodies of people and they're going to torment them, perhaps to the degree that they agonize, foam at the mouth, grind their teeth.

They're going to keep it up for five months without relief.

Now remember, by this time the world has experienced a lot. The church has been raptured and gone to heaven. By now they figured out that a lot of folks were missing in a big hurry and they've been told by people who know what happened. By now they will have known the Tribulation believers have preached the gospel all over the world and died as martyrs for it and some are still alive preaching. They will know that among the Jews there are an invincible indestructible hundred and forty-four evangelists and there are two mighty miracle working preachers and there is a heavenly angel preaching the gospel. They will have heard the gospel perhaps repeatedly. They will then have been coerced into believing it by having experienced the fierce judgment of God's wrath. They will have seen the collapse of the false world peace, the devastations of war, natural disasters, famines, plagues, the reign of terror by Antichrist, the collapse of the heavens, the devastation of the earth and now this massive worldwide demon oppression possession and torment.

Henry Morris writes, "God allows them to experience a little direct fellowship with their future coinhabitants in the lake of fire." You would think in the midst of this they would cry out for redemption.

Verse 4 says that this power that is unleashed is limited. They were told they shouldn't hurt the grass of the earth or any green thing or any tree. Well what does that tell us? First of all it tells us the grass has grown back cause the grass was all destroyed over in chapter 8. There's been some time. And there's a little recovery in the world. But these locusts are told you don't eat grass, you go after people. Real locusts feed on green things, these are demons. So they leave the grass alone and the two thirds of the trees that are left, the Bible is so precise about that, and they only go after the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They go after people. And whatever they do to them is horrifyingly painful, the torment is terrorizing. And I'll show you how we know it's terrorizing. But they can't touch people who have the seal of God on their foreheads who are marked out as God's.

You say, "Is that the hundred and forty-four thousand?" Sure...sure. They're sealed back in chapter 7. They bear the seal of the living God. It obviously refers to them as those who possess that seal. But it is not unreasonable either to believe that those who belong to the Lord would also be included in this group. Do you remember 2 Timothy 2:19? "Nevertheless the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, the Lord knows those who are His." And I don't think it's stretching the point to assume that God's not going to allow these demons to terrorize believers. So I think we would want to extend this to those who belong to God. Back in chapter 3 of Revelation in verse 12, it tells us that the overcomer, the true believer is going to have the name of His God written on him. Certainly that's the seal that indicates that He belongs to God. And over in Revelation chapter 22 verse 4 they shall see His face and His name shall be on their foreheads.

So I believe that even though that's talking about heaven, the Lord already knows who are His heavenly throng, they've already come and embraced Him. He identifies them. They're marked out and these demons can't touch them. So God puts very clear limitations on what they are allowed to do...on rather who they are allowed to attack.

You remember in Ezekiel 9, just an illustration, the Lord said, "Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed." In other words, mark out the righteous so when judgment comes they don't get hit. And I think God's going to do that for those who still are alive, many saints will have been killed by then, martyred, died in some of the natural disasters. But God's not about to assault them with demons out of the pit. They'll be marked.

And so, the extent of their damage is limited. And it says that they will only be able to deal with those who don't have God's seal. Then notice verse 5, what they can do is even limited. They were not permitted to kill anyone. That means that demons can kill if God doesn't prevent them. It shouldn't surprise you since Satan is the one who has the power of death, doesn't he? I shouldn't be surprised that demons can kill, people can kill and demons are more mighty than people. They would kill, I think they'd come out of the pit and kill everybody if they could. Satan is a killer, he's a murderer from the beginning. He'd kill everybody if he could and send them all to hell immediately. And one thing he wanted to do to Job was kill him, that's the one thing God told him he couldn't do. They can't kill him. And again I see mercy here because during the five months of torment there's opportunity to...what?...to repent. They can't kill anybody, they can just torment them for five months. People are going to wish they were dead. They won't be able to die.

We have people now who aren't being tormented like this and they're trying to kill themselves. God extends more opportunity for them to believe. What amazing grace. What astounding patience.

Five months, interesting. Five months is the normal life of a locust. They live from May to September. They can devastate a land in minutes. These demon locusts are going to have the career of insect locusts. And for five months, 150 days, by the way that's the very duration of the rising flood waters in the day of Noah. God going to give them five months to repent. They're going to be tormented. And they're torment, it says here, is like the sting of a scorpion when it stings a man. It's like that, it isn't that, it's like that. And you're going to see the word "like" a lot. Boy, you go down to verse 7 and following and you see like over and over and over and over and over. It's a spiritual pain, not a physical one. It's demon infestation. It's all the filth and vileness of a demon unleashed within a man. And not just a demon but maybe like the man who swept out one and got seven back, worse condition, a severe domination by vile demons. And it's so bad, verse 6 says, that in those days men will seek death and will not find it and they will long to die and death flees from them.

Death takes a holiday. And again this is judgment with mercy. It's also severe judgment to those who don't repent. There's no relief, there's no way out. During the five months people will attempt suicide, it says that. It will be a massive effort on the part of people. They will seek death. They'll be devising all kinds of means and ways. There will be Dr. Deaths all over the place offering themselves. Every imaginable attempt. But bodies won't drown. They'll jump into rivers and not sink. They'll drink poison but it won't kill them. Bullets won't be fatal. Falls won't crush them. They just won't die.

This again has a tone of grace, doesn't it? All the while gospel preaching is going on. Will it drive some to Christ? Surely, but those who can make it through this, according to the next trumpet as I read to you, indicates they're not going to repent at all.

You know, the world's going to know it's over...it's over. There's no tomorrow for them. No hope. All they want is suicide, let me out of here. Their earth has been devastated. The earth they love, the earth they worship, Mother Nature, the seas are gone, the fresh waters gone, the grass is gone, the trees are gone, the animals are gone, the sky is falling, pollution from the pit of hell blackens everything. Everybody on the face of the earth is in excruciating agony. They're filled with demons. Their thoughts are as vile and wicked and wretched as they can be. And only by the sovereign grace of God could anybody repent in that condition. There's nothing good left. And worst of all, they know there is no future...no hope, and they just want to die.

It's so hard for people to survive with no hope. It reminds me of that very poignant song from the musical version of Victor Hugo's Les Meserables. What happens to someone when the hope is gone? You remember the song, "I dreamed a dream in time gone by when hope was high and life worth living. I dreamed that love would never die. I dreamed that God would be forgiving. Then I was young and unafraid and dreams were made and used and wasted. There was no ransom to be paid, no song unsung, no wine untasted. But the locusts come at night with their voices soft as thunder as they tear your hope apart, as they turn your dream to shame. I had a dream my life would be so different from this hell I'm living, so different from what it seems. Now life has killed the dream I dreamed."

Boy, that's poignant, isn't it? Can't live without hope and here hope dies and people want death. Surely those are lyrics for the fifth trumpet.

Well, let's look at the third point, I think we can run through it very quickly. The appearance unveiled. Just in the couple of minutes because there's really not much to say. Here's the appearance. "The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle." These are exaggerated features of these locusts and they describe not any kind of locust that anybody ever saw, but John in his vision sees them as some kind of formidable spiritual army. By the way, you'll want to compare such a

description as this with the first five verses of Joel chapter 2 where the destruction army is introduced there as well. You'll notice like or as used nine times, so this is a description that is an attempt to describe them as if they were like locusts. Their appearance was like horses prepared for battle. They are warlike. They are defiant. They are armed. They're powerful. They're bent on destruction. Their heads are crowned like gold, that is shining and sovereign. They have the crown, the stephanos, the victor's crown. They are invincible, there's no cure for the sting. They are dominant. They are sovereign. They are victorious. Their faces are like the faces of men. What does that mean? They are intelligent beings. They are rational beings.

Their hair like women, perhaps their seduction, their attractiveness, their luring ability. And some of these things paralyze the way...parallel the way a locust looks. For example, Jeremiah 51:27 refers to locusts as having bristles kind of like hair. But their teeth are like the teeth of lions, fierce and powerful and deadly. Their breastplates are invulnerable and sensitive and they are formidable like iron. The sound of their wings is like chariots, many horses rushing to battle. They are inescapable. There is no place for refuge. They're fast, they're mobile, nothing stops them.

And then in verse 10, they have tails like scorpions again and stings and in their tails is the power to hurt men for five months. It's like the Holy Spirit wants to say that again just so everybody remembers it. It's the third time He said it. They have one purpose, give pain, give pain, hordes of demonic spirits in the millions with forms prepared somehow by God in this vision to show John what a frightening and horrible and terrorizing this is as demons possess the bodies of the unregenerate and work in them the wretched wickedness that they've been brewing in the pit.

They do it just for five months. I believe that five months takes us right up near the end. You say, "Then what happens to them?" Revelation 20 says, "The angel, the one who had the key to the abyss comes down from heaven." This time another angel has the key. He's got a chain. H"e gets Satan, the devil, binds him for a thousand years and throws him in the pit." And I believe with him goes all his forces. And finally at the very end of the Millennium they are cast into the lake of fire.

The pit unlocked, the power unleashed, the appearance unveiled, one very brief point, the prince unmasked, verse 11. Not much to say. This is interesting, they have a king over them. They have a king. That's fascinating. You say, "Why is that so fascinating?" Because Proverbs 30:27 says, "The locusts have no king." The point being, you can't wipe out a locust swarm by killing the king, they don't have one. Nobody can figure out where the brain power is in a locust swarm. So when it says here they have a king, that's the Spirit's way of saying these aren't insects. This not describing some historical event in the past. These locusts have a king. It even tells us his name, he's the angel of the abyss. He's head over the pit. Some people think it's Satan, it could be. But Satan is the prince of the power of the air, not the king of the pit. Satan's running loose all over everywhere. He's up in heaven at the throne of God, not managing affairs in the pit. It well could be some exalted angel who from being in the very presence of God has now become the guy in charge of the pit, the chief of the

imprisoned demons. It tells us his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, in Greek, Apollyon and both of them mean destroyer...destroyer. That's who he is. He is a destroyer and that's his name.

Job 26 verse 6 says, "Naked is Sheol before Him and Abaddon has no covering." There again, Abaddon is associated with Sheol, the grave, hell, Hades, the pit.

So it perhaps is best to see this is as some fallen demon in charge of the pit who leads his troops out. His name is destroyer. The devastating destruction is unthinkable. But this is what awaits man who rejects Christ.

You say again, "Why would men do this? Why would they go through this and continue to reject?" And the answer comes back as clearly as it was written originally in the gospel of John, it is because men love darkness rather than light for their deeds are evil. They love their sin even to the death. And God mercifully keeps saying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die?"

Verse 12 says the first woe is passed. Behold, two woes are still coming after these things.

Father, we have been led to see things that create fear and a shaking in our hearts, frightening, terrible, horrible things, prepared for those who reject You, who are alive in the day when You bring judgment. And this is but a taste on earth of hell. If it's this bad on earth, what must it be like in hell where men and women go who reject Christ? Open the hearts, Lord, of those who do not know the Savior that they may escape the terrors of Your just judgment. And, Lord, help us understanding the terror of the Lord as Paul said to persuade men. May we preach the judgment that men may know how desperately they need to escape. Give us opportunity, Lord. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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