**“WOE, WOE, WOE!”**

**REVELATION CHAPTER 9**

I’ll be honest with you all – I don’t particularly like to teach on God’s judgment. But if you study Revelation this is a dominant theme throughout much of the book and so we can’t simply avoid it. Personally, I prefer teaching lessons from the Book of Ruth, the Christmas story, the Resurrection, Pentecost, the joys of being a Christian – things like that rather than about God’s wrath. But the Bible tells us about God’s wrath for a reason and so we need to read about it and heed its warnings as they apply to us, and then share the truths we learned about it with others.

We’ve just looked at the first four of the seven trumpet judgments of God that fell upon the earth during the Tribulation period. Between the fourth and the fifth trumpet judgment we observed as an eagle, God’s messenger, shouted, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!" As bad as things were back in Chapter 6, we saw that they only got worse in Chapter 8. And as bad as things were in Chapter 8 they appear to be even worse in Chapter 9!

1 And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.

2 He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.

3 Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth.

This star is not the same kind of star we saw falling from heaven back in Chapter 8. The star mentioned here is a person. How do we know that? Because the personal pronoun “he” is assigned to it. There is great debate and disagreement over who this person is. Some say it is an angel acting on God’s behalf while others say that it is most certainly the devil himself. Whoever it is, one thing is clear. God has granted this individual permission to release the demonic forces of darkness from the bottomless pit. Sometimes you will hear the bottomless pit referred to as the abyss or hell. Remember from Revelation 1:18 that Jesus is the One who has the keys to death and hell. So, whatever happens here at the beginning of Chapter 9 happens only because God allows it to happen. God gives this person the key to the pit and thereby the authority to open it up.

What emerges up out of the pit is described first as “smoke” and then as “locusts” and “scorpions.” Have you ever seen a large swarm of birds, bees, bugs or bats? At first glance from a distance they appear as a dark cloud or smoke. Then, as you get closer, you see them as individual creatures. I think that’s what John sees here – a large multitude of demons coming up from the very pit of hell. A physical description of these hideous creatures is given in verses 7 thru 11, which we’ll read in a minute.

The following Scriptures give us a better understanding of who these beings are that have been locked up in the pit and now are being released:

“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned [a reference to those angels who rebelled with Lucifer], but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment.” (2 Peter 2:4)

“And angels who did not keep their own domain [again a reference to the fallen angels], but abandoned their proper abode [heaven], He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.” (Jude 6)

There’s coming a time when the demonic pit will be opened as part of God’s judgment on the earth. Multitudes of demons and the powers of darkness will play a part in God’s judgment during the Tribulation.

4 They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. [Rev 7:3 – God’s mark on those who belong to Him]

5 They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone.

Demons are much more powerful than humans, but God has given these demons here in Rev 9 only limited power. They have the power to hurt, but they cannot kill anyone. Also, these demonic forces are not allowed to harm any of God’s children. God has always saved those who had His mark. In Egypt it was the blood over the doorpost. At Jericho it was the scarlet thread. For us it is the blood of Jesus Christ. And for those saved during the Tribulation it is the name of God on their forehead.

So, the forces of Satan and evil can only do what God permits them to do. They do NOT have unlimited power. Even in the Tribulation GOD STILL RULES and not Satan!

6 And in those days, people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.

The torment experienced is so great that the people being attacked want to die to get rest from their pain. Job describes the welcome rest in death this way: “[In death] the wicked cease from raging and there the weary are at rest.” (Job 3:17) Unfortunately during this time for these unfortunate souls who are apart from God, there is no escape. Death never comes.

Now let’s look now at a description of the demons themselves…

7 In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces,

8 their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth;

9 they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle.

10 They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails.

[slide showing artist’s renditions of what these demonic creatures look like – reminds me of creatures you see in a science fiction movie. But this is real! Here we have the unmasking of evil. A lot of people are skeptical of the spirit world and may even doubt if demons are real. Trust me, they’re very real. The Book of Revelation allows us to view the demonic world here in Chapter 9. If we could witness the spiritual warfare between the forces of light and darkness that occur all around us each day, it would shock us.

Here in these verses, demons appear as locusts, but are apparently much larger than ordinary locusts. They are “like horses prepared for battle,” an indication of their size, strength, lack of fear and determination.

“Crowns of gold” symbolizes their victories. They conquer everything in their path. Man is no match for them.

“Faces like human faces” represents their intelligence.

“Hair like women’s hair” I believe describes how seductive they are – seductive like a woman. In John’s day, not unlike our own day, a woman’s long hair was considered her glory, her most attractive asset.

“Teeth like lion’s teeth” shows that these demons are quite mean and cruel, like a lion.

“Breastplates like breastplates of iron” indicates their insensitivity. They are hardened, insensitive toward the suffering of man.

“Wings like the noise of many chariots,” means that they travel very rapidly. Nobody can escape them.

“Tails and stings like scorpions,” indicates that they have one purpose, which is, to injure people.

These are awful creatures!

11 They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.

The scorpion king’s Hebrew name is Abaddon and his Greek name is Apollyon – English translation: “A DESTROYER!” This is Satan’s head demon and he carries out his boss’s main objectives, to deceive (Rev 20:3) and to destroy (1 Peter 5:8).

So, why is God doing all of this? Is God mean by allowing all this torment? I don’t believe so and here’s why – right up to the very end and God’s desire is to save all people from eternal torment in hell. But first He has to get their attention.

Here in this chapter God allows five months of intense physical affliction of the lost, those who reject Christ. God is telling the lost people… “Repent while you still have time!” I think that is what is going on here in this chapter. This actually demonstrates God’s great love. If God didn’t care about mankind, our study in Revelation would have gone straight from Chapter 3 to Revelation 19. Instead, God gives the seven year Tribulation period – 15 chapters of grace giving the lost more opportunities to get right with Him and repent. But the window of opportunity is closing very quickly.

12 The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.

13 Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God,

14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

15 So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind.

16 The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number.

The sixth trumpet has sounded. More judgment is released. Many people die. It says the four angels are told to kill a third of mankind. I cannot fathom an event so awful as to destroy so many people in such a short time.

Who are these four angels? We don’t know for sure. A lot of conjecture by various commentaries. One that I read suggests that they are leaders of a vast army of evil soldiers – perhaps demons or demon-possessed people or some other form of supernatural beings. Whoever or whatever they are, their army is numbered in v 16 – 200 million strong.

17 And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths.

18 By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths.

19 For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound.

These evil soldiers ride on horse-like creatures and wear breastplates that are fiery red, bright blue and yellow like sulphur. They destroy by emitting fire, smoke and sulphur from their mouths. This sounds a lot like the description of dragons!

Question slide -- Are the lost who are left alive here in Ch 9 eager to repent? What do you think?

20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did NOT repent of the works of their hands NOR [did they] give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk,

21 NOR did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

So, the answer to my question is NO!! They remain unrepentant. There will be no more great revivals. Sin remains rampant. These verses tell us what some of their evil deeds are – idolatry, murder, sorcery, immorality and theft. This is mankind at their worst.

Despite all this death and destruction, God’s judgment, people will not repent. They’ve seen firsthand the wrath of God unleashed and still they continue to reject Christ. They stubbornly cling to their sinful passions.

Galatians 6:7 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” Well, the harvest time has arrived!

In closing, have you embraced God’s plan of redemption? For a limited time it’s available. God’s desire is for all to be saved. But He will not beg and He will not force anyone to be saved who doesn’t want to be. For those who will not accept His free gift of eternal life thru His Son, God will display His wrath on the Day of Judgment.

Application for us – our job is to warn people [The bridge is out! We must warn others!]