

REVELATION – SERMON 40

HELL UNLEASHED ON EARTH

Revelation 9:1-12

INTRODUCTION

- The title of “Revelation” is a translation of the Greek word *apocalupsis* which means to unveil and manifest
- As the final book of the canon of Scripture, it is the culmination and completion of God’s progressive revelation that began with the book of Genesis
- This book is foremost a revelation of Jesus Christ, his glorious person, his sovereign works, and his universal dominion
- It is also a revelation of future events – “things which must shortly come to pass”
- Additionally, it unveils to us the spirit realm as no other book of the Bible does
- The veil of heaven is drawn back for us to see the very throne of the Almighty
- We learn much here of the holy angels, the various classes in the angelic hierarchy and the certain functions they perform at God’s bidding
- But Revelation also provides us with much information in the study of demonology
- From the opening chapters of the Bible we learn that there is a very powerful and malevolent being who is the arch-enemy of God and man

- There is a great spiritual battle being waged in heaven and earth, in which every person is a participant, whether he knows it or not (Ephesians 6:12)
- The events in this chapter take place close to the mid-point of the tribulation
- The first four trumpets in the previous chapter saw God raining down judgments upon earth from heaven.
- But here the judgment comes from underneath the earth
- The target this time is not nature, but man
- This fifth trumpet is also the first of the three “woes” (v.12)
- Woe indicates impending judgment and doom (Matthew 23:13-29)
- These woes are specifically upon “the inhabitants of the earth” (8:13) – a term that describes the ungodly on earth during the tribulation (Revelation 3:10)
- Chapter 9 begins with a demonic army from the *pit* (1-12), followed by a demonic army from the *east* (13-21)

I. THE DESCENDING ANGEL WHO UNLOCKS THE PIT (1-2)

A. A star

1. Stars are used both literally and representatively throughout Revelation
 - a. Celestial bodies such as asteroids or meteorites (8:10-12)
 - b. The twelve tribes of Israel (12:1)

- c. Church leaders (1:20)
 - d. Christ (2:28; 22:16)
 - e. Angels (12:4; cf. Job 38:7)
2. This star is obviously a person, referred to by “him/he” and having the ability to operate a key

B. Fallen from heaven

1. “Fallen” a perfect tense participle, indicating the star had previously fallen and was now in a fallen state
2. Lucifer, whose name means “light bearer”, was originally exalted to a high position in heaven as the “anointed cherub” (Ezekiel 28:14-15)
3. Because of his pride, God cast him out of exalted position in heaven, taking one-third of the angels with him in his rebellion (Isaiah 14:12-17; Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:4)
4. He presently still has access to God’s presence where he accuses the brethren (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; Revelation 12:10), and is called the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2)
5. During the tribulation he will be permanently banished from the heavenly realm and confined to the earth (Revelation 12:7-10)

C. Given the key

1. Jesus holds the keys to hell and death (Revelation 1:18)
2. God maintains sovereign authority over all things, and even Satan cannot operate without God’s permission

D. The bottomless pit

1. This term in Greek literally reads “the shaft of the abyss” (*phreatos tēs abyssou*)
2. Its location is in the earth (v.1)
3. At some point in the past, this infernal chamber was filled with demons and securely locked
4. Jude describes “angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6-7)
5. These sinning angels are referred to in Genesis 6:1-4, when the “sons of God came in unto the daughters of men” corrupting humanity, and precipitating the global flood (2 Peter 2:4-6)
6. They are said to be in *tartarus* (translated as “hell”) in 2 Peter 2:4, which may be another term for this bottomless pit
7. The Legion of devils that possessed the demoniac of Gadara begged the Lord Jesus that he would not cast them into that same place – *abusson* (Luke 8:30-31)
8. The “judgment of the great day” these fallen angels are reserved unto may refer not to their own judgment, but to God’s judgment on the world during the tribulation, during which they will become his instruments
9. The beast (antichrist) is also said to have his origin from this same pit (Revelation 11:7; 17:8)
10. Satan will himself be locked in this pit during Christ’s 1000 year reign (Revelation 20:1-3)

II. THE DEMONIC ARMY FROM THE UNDERWORLD PRISON (2-11)

A. Smoke and darkness

1. Smoke further indicates that the abyss is located deep in the nether regions of the earth, even a part of hell itself
2. Smoke is associated with God's fiery judgment (Genesis 19:28) and the day of the Lord (Joel 2:30)
3. Darkness also is frequently associated with the day of the Lord (Joel 2:2,10; Revelation 6:12; 8:12; 16:10)

B. God's sovereignty is displayed

1. As Creator and Lord of all, God has at his disposal all of his creation to fulfil his will
2. This includes the non-living creation; irrational beings; and rational beings
3. God uses both the good and evil to accomplish his purposes

C. The locusts from the pit

1. They resemble locusts in their swarming multitude
2. Yet they are clearly not natural locusts, differing in numerous ways
 - a. They understand and obey commands (4)
 - b. They do not attack vegetation, only humans (4)
 - c. They have a king over them (11; cf. Proverbs 30:27)
 - d. Their appearance is unlike natural locusts

3. John's description of the locusts (7-10)
 - a. As with other parts of Revelation, many interpreters abuse this description by vainly attempting to apply it to historical events and figures
 - b. Others erroneously regard John's description as his feeble efforts to describe modern mechanised warfare
 - c. But if John were using similes for modern war machines, he would have used the closest description at hand, such as chariots, engines of war (Ezekiel 26:9), etc.
 - d. We ought to interpret this description literally, however, the literalist interpretation allows for the use of figurative language when it is clearly indicated with such terms as "like unto", "as", and "as it were"
 - e. Horses prepared to battle
 - f. Golden crowns on their heads
 - g. Faces like those of men
 - h. Hair like a woman
 - i. Teeth like a lion
 - j. Breastplates of iron
 - k. Wings that sound like chariots
 - l. Stings in their tails
4. Their king
 - a. The angel of the bottomless pit

- b. Some think this may be Satan, yet this angel comes from the pit and Satan is not yet confined to the pit
- c. He is more likely a chief demon over the rest of the horde
- d. John characteristically gives both a Hebrew and Greek name for this angel (John 1:38,41; 6:1; 19:13, 17, 20; 20:16)
- e. *Abaddon* and *Apollyon* both have the same thought of destruction and perdition

III. THE DREADFUL AGONY OF THEIR UNGODLY PREY (4-6,10)

A. They are discriminate in their attack (4)

- 1. Those with God's seal are protected
 - a. This includes the 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel (7:3)
 - b. It may also include all believers in the tribulation (Revelation 22:4)
 - c. They are protected from God's judgments on the ungodly, but not from the persecution of man

B. They torment men for five months (5,10)

- 1. When God judged the world by the flood, the waters prevailed upon the earth for five months (Genesis 7:24)
- 2. "God allows them to experience a little direct fellowship with their future co-inhabitants in the lake of fire." (Henry Morris)

C. In their torment, men will seek death and not find it

1. Whether by means of the locusts, or by God's direct intervention, men will be prevented from killing themselves
2. This is a reminder that the power of life and death is ultimately in God's hands
3. The Christian rightly desires to depart this life in order to be with Christ (Philippians 1:21-23)
4. The unbeliever falsely thinks that death will be a release from his problems, yet he departs a life that has an opportunity of hope, to an eternal hell with no hope

CONCLUSION

1. This passage is a reminder of God's sovereignty over all his creation
2. It is a reminder of the misery that awaits the Christ-rejecter in this life and the next
3. It is a reminder that even now there are malevolent demonic forces seeking to blind, deceive, take captive, devour and destroy men
4. Satan desires to *sift* believers enticing us to doubt, deny, disobey, dishonour and depart from the Lord
5. Yet, "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4)
6. It is imperative that we put on the whole armour of God that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:11ff)