

Study 19: Revelation 9:1-12

1 The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss.

- There is a spiritual world where things are constantly in motion. We cannot see this world but it is as real as anything in the physical world. What happens in that world (the unseen) often determines what happens in the seen. That is why our eyes need to be opened to see the reality behind the reality: the spiritual behind the natural.

- Paul wrote,

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

- He also wrote,

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

- We need to take our directions and instructions from the unseen world. That is why faith is so important. It opens our eyes to a whole new world. Often my problem or enemy is not in this world; it is in the spiritual world.
- The star here appears to be a living being. This star falls from the sky to earth at the sounding of the fifth trumpet. This seems like a reference to the devil. He was given a key. Any authority the devil has was given him by God. The devil is God's devil and is under His authority.
- What problem are you facing that you were treating as a natural problem that may be a spiritual problem? What are you going to do about it this week?

2 When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss.

- Once again we see the writer employing apocalyptic language, words of graphic exaggeration. When he writes that the sun and sky were darkened by the smoke of the Abyss, I am sure they were in his vision, but that is not to be taken literally.

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- The opening of the Abyss, obviously a place of darkness and wickedness, will have tremendous impact on the earth and its inhabitants. Hell is a nasty place and it has the power to impact the earth.

3 And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth.

- This is a reference to demonic powers, who harass and trouble the people on earth, even the saints. Locusts devour what is alive and the sting of a scorpion can be deadly but at least bothersome.
- When I see a reference to scorpions, I think of two other passages:

And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house. You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious (Ezekiel 2:6-7).

- In Ezekiel, the reference to scorpions is really to the rebellious house of Israel, to whom Ezekiel was sent with a prophetic message. The demonic influence released in verse 3 can utilize and influence people, who can then become like scorpions. These people are to be avoided, for their sting is troublesome.

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you (Luke 10:19).

- In Luke, Jesus announced that he had given the believers authority to trample scorpions. This is a promise not just that the scorpions won't bite (a defensive posture), but that we will hurt them (an offensive posture).
- With the help of these two passages, we once again see that these images would only frighten those who don't know their God and His power to protect and maintain His people.

4 They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

- Aha, the first mention of the seal of God on the foreheads of the people. Is this a literal branding? I doubt it. In the Old Testament, Moses and the Jews put blood on their doorposts the night the avenging angel moved through Egypt to kill the firstborn males (see Exodus 12). That was a symbol of the blood of the Lamb of God that would be shed to protect God's people from eternal death.

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- There is no external marking on my house or me, but God protects and watches over me. God knows those who are His. He has marked them. I would imagine that the angels and demons “see” something when they behold a believer.
- This would be a good place to insert Psalm 91 in its entirety:

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling-- even the LORD, who is my refuge-- then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." (Psalm 91:1-16).

- These promises need to be remembered while you are reading the terrible events outlined in Revelation. Do you believe what the Lord has said concerning His protection for you? If so, then why are you afraid?

5 They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man.

- God is in control, even during times of trouble. These evil forces weren't free to do whatever they wanted for as long as they chose. They were on a leash, so to speak, and God was holding the leash. They could only go as far as He would let them.
- Remember, God allows trouble in the life of those who don't know Him so they will realize their need for Him. He allows trouble in the life of those who do know Him so they can increase their faith in His promises and eternal, unchanging faithful nature.

6 During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

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- Some men will try anything in their time of distress, except God. Death is in God's hands, and cannot and should not be chosen as an option by any man or woman.

7 The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces.

- These cannot be literal locusts, for they are too "human" in appearance. They were on horses (if Revelation was given today, do you think they would be riding tanks or motorcycles? My point is that Revelation was given in the culture of the day, with images that the people at that time could relate to.)
- Locusts were used several times in the Old Testament as instruments of God's judgment. God's judgment was likened to a swarm of locusts on many other occasions. A few include:
 1. Locusts were one of the plagues on Egypt – Exodus 10.
 2. Locusts were promised if Israel disobeyed – Deuteronomy 28:38.
 3. The Lord took credit for swarms of locusts – Amos 8:9.

8 Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth.

- These forces could be natural looking and feminine, but they could be fierce. They will do whatever it takes to overcome the people.
- There is definitely a human resemblance to these so-called locusts. A locust with teeth like a lion would be able to devour a lot of greenery! These locusts were destructive.

9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle.

- When you read graphic, unusual descriptions such as the one above, it certainly activates your imagination. What did all these traits look like in their totality? What did it all sound like? What did it smell like? I don't know, but I'm glad I don't have to deal with them directly. I have the seal of my God and therefore they don't attack me. That is the power of this apocalyptic language; it stirs you to see things that are out of the ordinary, that stir all your senses to meditate on the picture at hand.
- You may think you have problems, but just think of how bad things could be? Think about having problems and not knowing how to cry out to God for help. That would be terrible! Yet that is the plight of those who aren't sealed with the mark of God. They have no hope and little help. They can only "ride out the storm" until it passes, only to face another storm at some point in time.
- These locusts were able to make a lot of noise. I knew a pastor once who used to say, "Error is half way around the world before truth ever gets off the mark!" False doctrines have a way of appealing to the unregenerate mind and become the latest

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spiritual fad. In my lifetime, I have seen transcendental meditation, new age philosophies, and scientology and Sun Yung Moon take the world scene in a powerful way. Then they seem to subside and give way to another fad.

10 They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months.

- For some reason, this aspect of a five-month limit to their effectiveness is reasserted after we had already seen it in verse five.
- A scorpion introduces poison into its victims. These locust/scorpions have the ability to interject poison into the hearts and souls of mankind. But their effectiveness is limited to certain seasons and time frames.

11 They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.

- There is a hierarchy in the spirit world. These locusts had a king (and they themselves wore crowns as described in verse 7 above). This “world” seems to be ruling, but it is a false crown that cannot last.
- Abaddon and Apollyon refer to the word destroyer. That is what the kingdom of darkness does so effectively. It seeks to kill and destroy.

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

- Wickedness must exist for men to see the goodness God offers and is, and to have a choice between good and evil. The remarkable thing isn't that God allows evil; the remarkable thing is that men continue to choose evil over good and blame God for it!

The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him (John 1:5-11).

- Given a chance to choose light, men continue to choose darkness and its ramifications.

12 The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.

- There are two woes to come. The early church, to whom this was addressed, must have been living in quite an onslaught of wickedness, but they survived. If you and I

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have to go through the same, we will too! That is the message of Revelation. They made it, God is in control and we will make it, too! Amen. Thank you, Lord.