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DEMONS OF THE ABYSS

Revelation 9:1-11

“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,” vv. 1-2.

1. The word “fallen” in v. 1 is in the perf. tense, indicating completed action. This had already occurred when John hears the fifth trumpet, and observes what’s about to take place.
2. At times, the Bible uses “stars” as a figure of speech for angels, but it speaks of only one “star from heaven” which falls to the earth-- Satan.
 - A. This is his physical fall, and it occurs at the mid-point of the Tribulation. His fall from heaven was prophesied by our Lord in Luke 10:18, and is recorded in Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:16; and Revelation 12:7-9.
 - B. This act from the justice of God, of casting Satan out of Heaven forever, terminates his ability to accuse and malign believers before the Throne of Grace as he has been doing in every dispensation. Satan has accused and maligned believers before the Throne of God since time immemorial.
3. The “key” which “was given to him” signifies authority to open the “bottomless pit.” The Greek word is abussos, ‘the Abyss.’ The opening v. of this section of Scripture presents Satan as having the key to the Abyss, and with that key the power to release those who are confined there.

Right now the “bottomless pit,” or the Abyss, serves as a temporary prison, a holding cell where demons who violate the rules of warfare in the Angelic Conflict are incarcerated until the middle of the Tribulation. We don’t know the exact nature of these “rules of engagement,” but we can see from a study of the ‘Angelic Infiltration’ of Genesis 6, and the first two chapters of the Book of Job, that they most definitely exist.

4. The “smoke of the pit,” which John say’s, “darkened” the sun and the air, indicates tremendous spiritual corruption. It identifies the character of the fifth trumpet judgment as that of demonic and satanic oppression.

“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,” vv. 3-6.

1. In v. 3 these demonic creatures are identified with “locusts” that swarm “upon the earth,” and with the venomous sting of the “scorpion.”

A. The question arises then, of-- Why locusts and scorpions?

1) Because locusts represent awesome destructive power. Listen to this vivid description of locusts. It comes from p. 74 of Unger’s Bible Dictionary, and he quotes it from a book entitled “Biblical Archaeology.”

“Vast bodies of migrating locusts, called by the Orientals the ‘armies of God,’ lay waste the country. They observe as regular” an “order when they march, as an army. At evening they descend from their flight, and form, as it were, their camps. In the morning, when the sun has risen considerably, they ascend again if they do not find food, and fly in the direction of the wind.”

Proverbs 30:27 say’s, “The locusts have no king, yet all of them go out in ranks.” Nahum was the OT prophet who prophesied against Assyria, predicting her eventual destruction as a major world power and the utter devastation that the coalition of Medes, Scythians, and Babylonians would wreak upon her. In vv. 15-17 of ch. 3 he wrote, “There fire will consume you, the sword will cut you down; it will consume you as the locust {does.} Multiply yourself like the creeping locust, multiply yourself like the swarming locust. You have increased your traders more than the stars of heaven-- the creeping locust strips and flies away. Your guardsmen are like the swarming locust. Your marshals are like hordes of grasshoppers settling in the stone walls on a cold day. The sun rises and they flee, and the place where they are is not known.”

Quote continued-- “They go in immense numbers, and occupy a space of ten or twelve miles in length, and four or five in breadth, and are so deep that the sun cannot penetrate through them; so that they convert day into night, and bring a temporary darkness on the land. The sound of their wings is terrible. When they descend upon the earth, they cover a vast track a foot and half high. If the air is cold and moist, or if they be wet with the dew, they remain... til they are dried and warmed by the sun. Nothing stops them. They fill the ditches which are dug to stop them with their bodies, and extinguish by their numbers the fires which are kindled. They pass over walls and enter the doors and

windows of houses. They devour everything which is green, strip off the bark of trees, and even break them to pieces by their weight.”

2) Scorpions, because they have the power to sting. Here that power speaks of extreme pain and sickness, agony of such a magnitude and intensity that “men will seek death and will not find it; and they will long to die” but death, physical death as a release from this torment will “flee from them.”

John say’s that their torment lasts for “five months.” This was the ordinary time during the course of a year for locusts to wreak their havoc and destruction.

C. The “power” that is “given” to them is a divinely delegated amount of authority.

2. Vv. 4-5 underscore a principle which is crucial for understanding the events of human history from divine viewpoint-- Jesus Christ controls history.

A. We have noted the principle many times in our past studies of the Word, that Jesus Christ controls history in at least three ways.

1) Directly-- through the exercise of His sovereign will. Sovereignty, as one of the characteristics of divine essence, means that Jesus Christ the Creator and Supreme Being of the universe-- should He so choose-- has the right and the prerogative of directly intervening in the lives of His creatures, or in the events of human history.

a. In Deuteronomy 4:39, Moses said to the nation of Israel, “Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.”

b. King David praised God with these words in 1 Chronicles 29:11-12, “Thine, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Thine is the dominion, O LORD, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all. Both riches and honor {come} from Thee, and Thou dost rule over all, and in Thy hand is power and might; and it lies in Thy hand to make great, and to strengthen everyone.”

c. Psalm 115:3 say’s, “...our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.”

2) Indirectly-- through the Laws of Divine Establishment. Under the Laws of Divine Establishment there are four basic institutions established by God for the protection, survival and perpetuation of the human race inside this spiritual battle.

a. Freedom-- which centers around the exercise of man’s volition. Volition is the capacity to choose good or evil, positive or negative, for God or against God. Freewill means that it’s your choice, and that is the very basis of all human liberty. Lest we get a little overzealous in the exercise of our freedom, understand this governing principle: Your freedom ends where mine begins. Likewise, my freedom ends where yours begins. Illustrate.

b. Marriage-- which is, regardless of what the liberal, the hedonist, or the feminazis have to say, a stabilizer of the human race. The Biblical principle of heterosexual monogamy in marriage has always been both a stabilizing factor for the nation-- any nation-- and a source of protection for the individual.

c. Family-- Family is the basis for an orderly society, a society that exists on the rule of law. Because family is the institution used by God to teach children humility-- humility which comes through submission to the authority of the parents. Get these two principles down.

i. When a child learns submission to authority at home, he or she can use that in every area of life. That's not a guarantee that he'll use it, it's just an inculcation of the standard.

But, at least now they know what is expected to survive and succeed in a free society-- orientation to authority.

ii. When a child does not learn submission to authority at home, he or she will take that into every area of life. That's not just a mere possibility, it is a fact! The child who never learns how to orient to authority, or who is maladjusted to authority, will grow up to be a maladjusted adult-- never satisfied with their career, never satisfied with their marriage, and never satisfied with the plan of God. Why? Because they cannot, or they will not, tolerate the system of authority under which these things function. They refuse to submit to authority.

d. Nationalism-- which includes that most inspiring phenomenon we call patriotism. God established the institution of nationalism with the confusion of the languages at the Tower of Babel. Since the Tower of Babel the separation of tribes and peoples according to their cultural, geographical, and linguistic boundaries has formed the basis for the protection of rights, of privacy, and of freedom.

3) Permissively-- by allowing the AC to simply run its course. Through His permissive will He allows the drama of the AC to unfold on the stage of human history.

B. Jesus Christ controls history and therefore allows-- that's the key word-- these demonic creatures to torture those "who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads," but does not permit them to harm the "grass of the earth, nor anything green, nor any tree;" He allows them to torment unbelievers, but not to kill them. Even through the excruciating pain and suffering of this awesome judgment we can still see clearly just Who is in control!

The description of these creatures in vv. 7-11 is just another indication that they are demonic.

"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 their 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,” Rev. 9:7-11.

1. Several unique characteristics are mentioned here. V. 7 tells us at least eight things about these demons. It say’s, that “the appearance of the locusts was like:”

A. One-- “horses prepared for battle.” The prophet Joel wrote these words in 2:4-10, “Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like war horses, so they run [Greek war horses were known for their speed and power]. With a noise as of chariots they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble, like a mighty people arranged for battle. Before them the people are in anguish; all faces turn pale. They run like mighty men; they climb the wall like soldiers; and they each march in line, nor do they deviate from their paths.

They do not crowd each other; they march everyone in his path. When they burst through the defenses, they do not break ranks. They rush on the city, they run on the wall; they climb into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief. Before them the earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark, and the stars lose their brightness.”

Joel’s prophecy concerns an invading army during the Tribulation. Look at what he say’s in vv. 1-3, “...Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; surely it is near. A day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, {so} there is a great and mighty people; there has never been {anything} like it, nor will there be again after it to the years of many generations. A fire consumes before them, and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them, but a desolate wilderness behind them, and nothing at all escapes them.” This may be an eschatological reference to the demon-locusts of our passage, or it could refer to the invasion of the “king of the North.” Whichever one it is, the land of Palestine is reduced to a wilderness, a wasteland after they depart.

B. Two-- crowns like gold on their heads. If this is a picture of authority, which crowns in Scripture often represent, it’s simply the authority divinely delegated to them to torment unbelievers.

C. Three-- their faces are “like the faces of men.”

D. Four-- they have hair like women. You can begin to see what a horrific sight this is going to be. They have the appearance of horses prepared for battle, faces like men, with long, flowing hair. This is definitely not your grandfather’s locust.

E. Five-- teeth like lions; which pictures their ferocity. You can imagine that after having been imprisoned in the Abyss and finally let loose, they've been waiting for this opportunity to wreak havoc on planet Earth, the same battleground the prehistoric angelic revolt centered around.

F. Six-- continuing in v. 9, they have armored "breastplates of iron." This armor provides them with an immunity to destruction by human power.

G. Seven-- "wings" which sound like the "chariots... of many horses rushing to battle." If you listen close, you can almost hear the ominous rumbling of the iron-rimmed chariot wheels racing toward the enemy in John's description. His description of their wings implies two things-- [1] great speed; and [2] the impossibility of escape. There are no evasive tactics which will defend the unbeliever from this particular judgment.

H. Finally-- "they have tails like scorpions, ...and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months." The time frame is repeated in v. 10 in order to stress the incredible suffering which comes from being stung by their tails. It drags on and on for five agonizing months.

2. V. 11 say's, "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."

A. Avaddon }ODabA) is a transliteration from the Hebrew, meaning- destruction. Apollyon is the Greek translation of "Abaddon;" it means- the Destroyer.

B. In our 'modern' world, which is so in tune with the temporal, and so oblivious to the eternal, Satan and his forces often appear as "angels of light" promoting human good and religion in every corner of the globe, but here in this title, in this one little v., the mask is stripped away. Satan is seen in his true nature, as the destroyer of men's souls; as one who, in opposition to the life, the light and the love which Christ brings, brings only death and destruction.

Principle: Whenever divine restraint is removed, the true character of evil is manifested immediately. This principle is an absolute, whether we're talking about an evil person, an evil nation, or the "evil one."