

The Release of Demons

📖 Revelation 9:1-12

👤 Pastor Jeremy Thomas

📅 May 21, 2017

🌐 fbgbible.org

📍 Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin Street

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

(830) 997-8834

In Revelation 6 we have the first six seals, these take place chronologically in the first half of the tribulation. At the sixth seal it has gotten so bad that the earthdwellers are asking "Who is able to stand?" meaning who is able to survive the judgments and at the last take their stand upon the earth and rule. In Revelation 7 that question is answered by the sealing of the 144,000 Jews, approximately 1 ½ years into the tribulation. This group is commissioned to go to all the nations with the gospel of the kingdom; a message which will include the death and resurrection of Christ as well as the nearness of the kingdom. Then John sees a great multitude from the nations who responded to this gospel by faith and were then killed during the great tribulation but are victorious in heaven and will at the last take their stand upon the earth and rule with the King. So the ultimate answer to the question, "Who is able to stand so as to rule the earth?" is, "Those whose garments are washed in the blood of the Lamb." The tribulation time is a very intense time as far as salvation is concerned. The people who live in that time are going to have to line up on one side or the other; it's either faith in Christ or faith in the rising anti-Christ, and by the end everyone will have chosen sides. Now in Revelation 8:1 we came to the seventh seal and once again the Lamb broke this seal. When He did that 8:2 reports that seven angels were given seven trumpets. In other words, the seventh seal is the seven trumpets. So that we learn that the seals, trumpets and bowls are chronological, one happening after another, as well as telescopic, the trumpets coming out of the seals and as we'll see later, the bowls coming out of the trumpets, so that ultimately all the trumpets and bowls are included in the seven sealed scroll. Now when those in heaven saw that seven more judgments were coming they were astonished and so they were silent for about half an hour. It is simply hard to digest that after so much death under the first seals, after so much desolation, there are now seven more judgments to come. In 8:3 John saw another angel who stood at the golden altar in the heavenly Temple. He was holding a golden censer, and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. No doubt this is a great collection of prayers offered down through history; prayers that relate to the coming of the kingdom of God from heaven to earth. That prayer that is offered by so many people, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven" is really a prayer for the destruction of the kingdoms of this world so that the kingdom of God can come in its place, and righteousness will reign. Throughout history this prayer has been asked countless billions of times, but it has never been answered. So it's

at this time that incense is added to them so that in 8:4 they ascend before God as a pleasing aroma. That means, in 8:5 that now this prayer is going to be answered. So the angel took the censer of incense mixed with prayers, filled it with fire, and threw it to the earth. The result; mass devastation on the earth. Hopefully you will never again doubt the truth that God answers prayer; because the trumpet judgments are God's answer to the prayers of all saints down through history for the kingdom of God to come. I sometimes think that most Christians have a very naïve view of history and what God is planning to accomplish. They think the whole thing is about going to heaven or hell. That is not it. That is such a short-sighted vision. And to say that is God's vision is to say God is pretty well short-sighted. It is much more than that. What God is trying to do is establish His kingdom on earth and have it ruled for His glory by man. And that involves a lot of aspects. That involves man, animals, science, mathematics, language, business, politics, economics, the environment, but all looked at and done in such a way that it reflects His glory and the design of man and the design features He built into creation. We're not just going to float off into heaven somewhere, sit on clouds and strum harps. This is a big deal, what you and I and all saints are being prepared for is a kingdom where we will rule with Christ over every area of life. So don't sell God short. People wonder, why is all this in the Book of Revelation? To tell us the measures God has to take to remove evil from the entire planet so His kingdom can come right down here on the planet. And He's very gracious, because He is giving men an opportunity to change sides and become a part of His plan and rule in the coming kingdom. He's a very good God, but things are going to be done His way. And yet in doing things His way He incorporates human prayers. Ok, so now in 8:6 the seven angels prepare to sound the trumpets. We said the first four of these trumpet judgments are distinct from the last three in that the first four are upon the creation and only affect man indirectly, whereas the last three are directly upon man. So we look at the first four and we see they affect the earth, the sea, the trees, the rivers and the sun, moon and stars. These are parts of creation that God has made for man's habitation, enjoyment and sustenance. Without them we would die, and yet ever since the Fall of man, men have been giving alternate explanations to their origin, alternate explanations of their place in our thinking. Men do not want to give God thanks for them, but instead man has worshipped them. Think of what the anti-theist Richard Dawkins is arguing. He's arguing that you don't need a Personal God to create all things because self-existence and self-sustenance is in the impersonal molecules themselves. Well, if self-existence and self-sustenance are in the molecules then we ought to worship the molecules and these molecules make up all the material world so logically God, if such a being exists, is all things. That's pantheism, the idea that God is in all. And you can go through these scenarios of what unbelievers believe and how they account for creation, but ultimately when it all comes down, they worship creation. That's idolatry, and with the first four trumpets God is destroying thirds of creation in order to show man that the creation is not self-existent, it's not self-sustaining, it's existence and sustenance depends upon Him. And so whenever we use anything in creation we owe thanks to Him. And when He starts to destroy them, it's going to be a very dismal year for Earth day. The earth, the sea, the trees, the green grass, at least 1/3 of them, and everything within them, will be totally destroyed. The only thing protected for sure during this will be the 144,000. So God is teaching the human race a lesson, that they need Him, and that their enjoyment of the blessings of creation depend upon Him. And His

purpose is so that they will believe in Jesus Christ so that when He comes they will be admitted into the kingdom. So in 8:7 the first angel sounded, and a fiery mix of blood and hail pelted the earth causing a third of the earth to burn up, a third of the trees to burn up and all the green grass to burn up. This will last for a few months. Then in 8:8 the second angel sounded and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea causing a third of the sea to become blood. This is something like the Exodus plague upon the Nile which turned to blood. It is the same lesson. The gods and goddesses of nature, so commonly worshipped in the religion of environmentalism, are figments of man's evil imagination. Only the living God exists and the sea belongs to Him and is His gift to everyone. But they don't give thanks. So He destroys it to teach this lesson. 8:9 says a third of the creatures in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships in the sea were destroyed. He has no obligation to keep providing these things for man. Man has an obligation to give thanks to Him. But they won't so He pulls back the blessing. In 8:10 the third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, like a burning torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and springs of waters, causing them to be poisoned. The name of the star is Wormwood. Is it an angel or is it a meteoroid? I don't know, but I do know that it strikes these waters and turns them into poison, so that many men die from the waters. In 8:12 the fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way. Another cosmic disturbance showing that this is all the hand of God. God has graciously provided these creation blessings but they are being torn away because man did the unthinkable, he exchanged the worship of the incorruptible God for the worship of the birds and animals and trees and the sun, moon and stars, things that neither speak, nor hear. Now that the first four trumpets have passed, all judgments on creation that indirectly affected man, he now says that the worst is yet to come in the last three trumpets which are directly upon man. In 8:13, John looked and he heard an eagle flying in mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe!" A triple pronouncement of woe is a pronouncement of unbearable pain, and that pain is specifically directed against those who dwell on the earth.

At this point I suggest that the world is about 2-3 years into the seven-year Tribulation. And the escalation of judgment is clearly seen fitting the OT term for the Tribulation as the birth pangs of the Messiah. As birth pangs begin they intensify until the Messiah comes in His kingdom. So there is an intensification as you move from the seals to the trumpets to the bowls. We are now at the fifth trumpet, which is the first of the three woes. This is Rev 9:1. I think if you evaluate the fifth and sixth trumpets you find in the commentary literature what we have found in several of these chapters; explanations of what is here, some being allegorical and others literal. But hardly anyone deals with why, but doing so actually helps inform us as to whether these symbols are to be understood literally or allegorically. Of course, I think the symbols are to be taken literally, as all prophecy. If you read the first one in 9:1-12 you see the release of tiny insect-like locusts with scorpion-like stings going out to cause torment to men for five months, a torment so terrible that men will seek death but not find it. These strange little creatures are mostly described in terms of insects, but also of the animal kingdom, and they are

vicious little critters unlike anything the world has ever seen. But what do they symbolize? And why are they released? I think if you study this passage carefully you will have to conclude with me that these are demons and that what is happening is God is permitting demons to go out and inflict torment on men. Now what I would argue is that at the cross Christ defeated all angels and principalities. He delivered a judgment that they can never recover from. But, the sentence that puts them away and out of commission forever, has not been enacted. That is why they are still loose and not locked away in the lake of fire. So they are still able to have activity, to go out and to deceive and tempt. But you also have to realize that the degree of their activity is limited at this time. Contrast what we see them doing here with what they are doing now. Right now demons are not permitted to inflict men in whatever way they want. They are limited. And the background of God's sovereignty over demons is the book of Job. Remember the day Satan came among the sons of God in heaven, meaning he came among the good angels, and he and God had a little conversation. In that conversation Satan told God he had been roaming around the earth and so God said, "Have you considered My servant Job?" For there is no one like him on the planet, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil. Then Satan suggested that the only reason Job feared God was because God kept feeding him goodies. So God permitted Satan to destroy all his possessions, but He said, you can't touch Job himself. God put a limitation on what Satan could do. Then Satan went out and caused all sorts of havoc in Job's life. Job lost all that he had, which was many possessions, because he was a rich man, and he even lost all ten of his children. That kind of pain caused by Satan was almost unbearable. But Job still worshipped God. Then another day Satan came and the same conversation took place and this time God permitted Satan to take Job's health, but He said, you can't kill Job. And so Satan went out and caused Job to break out with terrible boils from head to toe. And he was so miserable his wife said, "Just curse God and die!" But in all this Job did not sin with his lips. What is my point? My point is that demons can inflict tremendous pain upon a human being, but only if God permits it. When you realize this you realize that we live a rather tranquil life here. I would argue that it's only by the grace of God that what we see today in Rev 9 is not something we see every day in our world. God is literally holding back the demons from tormenting us beyond any war machine the world has ever seen. When I say this is all His grace I mean He's not obligated to hold them back. He is doing it out of His grace to give men opportunity to take out the gospel and men to think about it and receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and be spared the time when He will release demons, as He released Satan to do what he would to Job. So this is one reason this entire dispensation is called the dispensation of grace. He is not permitting demons to do what they would naturally do if turned loose, which is torment the human race in untold ways. The most they can do now is get invited in by a person to possess them, and the way a person does that is by using drugs and abusing alcohol, two things that are always used in Satan worship. Unless a person engages in those things they are basically off limits to serious demonic activity. But what we see in this passage is the dispensation of grace coming to a close and God releasing the demons. He's saying, "Go get 'em, and teach them the lesson that you are not nice, cute little creatures, you are hell on earth. Hurt and injure them that they might believe in Jesus Christ and be saved." So you and I have a lot to be thankful for every day, because if He were not gracious to us, what we read in the first

twelve verses would be every day life. Every single day we would be under the threat and dominion and torture of demons.

Let's see what it will be like. In 9:1, **Then 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.** Now some say this **star...which had fallen to the earth** is a normal star. It seems quite apparent to me that it is not a normal star because it was given a key and it's referred to as a **him**. So this is a fallen angel, he fell from heaven **to the earth**. And he was given a **key**. A **key** represents authority to open and close. He's given authority to open **the bottomless pit**. In 9:2, **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.** Now what is happening is authority is given to one demon to release all the demons to do what they would quite naturally do if they were not being restrained by God; which is torment men. You remember in the gospels there are a few instances of men being tormented by demons. One time Jesus came to the shores of the country of the Gadarenes and He met two men who were demon possessed. They were coming out from among the tombs. And they were so violent no one could even walk by. When Jesus approached the demons cried out saying, "What have we to do with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" Well, to make a long story short, Jesus cast those demons into a herd of swine and those two men were free of torment. That is what demons would do to all of us if they were released like this. They would torment us day and night. They would inflict terrible health problems on us. You think we have it bad in this world, we have it good, we have it really good, we complain about this and that, but friend, do you not see that the world is what it is only because of the grace of God. And that without the grace of God cancer and other diseases would be the least of our problems. We'd laugh at cancer, these demons would be our problem and people would only want to die all the time. They would yearn for death, every last one of us. And at this time that is what people will want; death, just kill me. In 9:3 here come the demons, **Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.** See that this **power was given them**, they are being permitted by God to use their wicked scorpion stings as often as they like on men. Now what I think is these demons are coming in the form of small locusts. Locusts are an insect type of creature, and if you study insects you see that a lot of them look like tiny soldiers with armor and weapons, they look strange and amazing and creepy. And here they come. They are about the size of a locust and they have a sting like a **scorpion**. I'm not sure which scorpion. We have bark scorpions around here, they are usually about 1 ½ to 2 ½ inches long and inflict a painful but bearable sting. I have yet to be bitten by one, but most of my family has been bitten. I am grateful I have not been bitten, but perhaps I will one day and then I will know firsthand. But there are other scorpions in this world that emit more dangerous neurotoxins, and some can kill you. These will not kill with the sting, as we will see. But they will be able to cause great torment with the sting. They will sting many, many times, day after day. And you see, the world would face this every day if God permitted it. Oh the grace of God, friend, you can't plumb its depths. You should thank Him for it.

Now I have often been asked, what is the purpose of insects, especially those like roaches and mosquitoes. I thought God made everything very good, what of these pests? Well, you see, before the Fall of man the insects were only good, they performed only the good functions that insects still provide for us today, such as pollination. So they still perform good things for us.

Einstein once remarked that if we didn't have bees mankind could only live for four years on earth. It is something like that, there are good functions of insects that we can't live without. Those good insects are a picture of the good angels. But what of the pests? The mosquitoes, the cockroaches, the scorpions? Well, they picture the demons. Every time you see one, every time you are stung by one, that is what you should think of; demons. God is reminding us that they are still around. And here they come, but in 9:4 God even places some limitations on them here, just as He put limitations on Satan with Job. **They were told not to 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.** In other words, here we have locusts. And what is the most natural thing for a locust to devour? **Grass, green things, and trees.** But they're not permitted to devour those things. Only **men**, and really only a subset of **men, the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.** And who are the men with **the seal of God**? The 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each tribe. They are carrying out their ministry to the nations, so they will not be encumbered by the stings of these demons, and the fact they are exempt will serve as witness to the truth of their message. And I imagine some who are not exempt and are stung will hear their message and respond with faith. But here we have a very unnatural thing; locusts who do not bother green things, only men. But then again, the very nature of demons is that they are unnatural, they are distortions of their true and original purpose as good angels, just as the insect world is distorted from its true and original purpose to only do good. And now they are vile and corrupt creatures. In 9:5 further limitations are given to them by God, **And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment them for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.** So just like Job, they can affect the health of men by stinging them hundreds of times, all over them, as many times as they like, which, can you imagine? This is what the world would be like today if it were not for the grace of God! You would be getting stung or tormented by demons in unfathomable ways every day. That is what they will be permitted to do then, but they will not be **permitted to kill anyone.** But if that's the case, what will that make existence? A living death. The people will be living a living hell. It will be worse than death. That is why in 9:6 it says, **And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them.** They will want to die. They will want the misery to be over. They will seek death. But they won't find it. It's one of the strangest verses in the Bible because if someone wants to die today all they have to do is commit suicide. But people at this time will not be allowed to. Maybe they will raise the knife to thrust into their chest but before they can use it their hand will be covered with stings so they can't hold the knife. But even that is the grace of God, is it not! Isn't God giving them time to repent? Because once you die, that's it, there is no other opportunity. So He's giving them more time to repent. What do I mean by repent? When I use repent in this context, I am using it in the sense of 9:20-21 where they refuse to repent of their works, which are worshipping the very demons that are inflicting them with horror. And

I believe that if they repent of that idolatry they will worship God, for there is no other. There are only two sides. Now, you think about this and you have to realize there is nothing like this that has ever happened on earth, which makes me laugh at some of the interpreters who said this is describing the historical French Revolution. Friend, I think you'll agree with me that no Frenchman ever stung like this. But for some reason if you are clergy you can get behind a pulpit and say whatever nonsense you want and people will even give money to that church. That is even more ludicrous than getting paid to predict the weather. I'm not going to tell you those silly ideas. I'm here to tell you the truth and the truth is this will be bad, bad pain, so bad men will seek death, but won't be permitted to find it. Death will flee them as they try to commit suicide.

Now let's go back to insects. In 9:7 we start to get a picture of what they look like. Remember, they are small locusts, creepy things, but if you looked at one up close, here it says, **The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.** These are all comparisons, they are **like** this. The first description **like a war...horse prepared for battle** is the general overall appearance of the insect. Then the description breaks into the three anatomical parts of an insect; the head, the thorax and the abdomen, and it describes each. As for the head, they are wearing something like a **crown** of gold color. These are victory crowns, signifying their victory over humans. And then their little faces look like **faces of men.** Talk about creepy. Then you come to their **hair** and **teeth** in verse 8. **They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions.** Can you imagine an insect with something like **hair**? These have long hair, long hair on an insect, and sharp **teeth, teeth like lions.** I don't think I'd want to meet one of these insects. Some of you who are artists ought to try to draw this. It would be interesting. It reminds me of all the symbols of death that the world glorifies today. They wear skulls on the shirts, their cars, it's all a glorification of death. Why they do that I have no idea. I just think it's creepy and weird. And I wonder what they will think when they see these creatures and get stung. Then they'll seek death. They may be small creatures but they are wickedly powerful. And I'm sure they are amazingly fast. In 9:9 we come to the thorax. **They had breastplates like breastplates of iron;** so a very hard exoskeleton in that region. **And the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle.** So their wings are just beating 90 to nothing and it's like the sound of many chariots, many horses. In 9:10 the tails. **They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.** That's the part you want to stay away from. They may have little teeth like a lion but they're not going to bite people, they're going to **sting people.** That's where **their power** is located; the **tail.** And that's what you want to stay away from on a scorpion as well. I see them in our house walking across the floor all ready to strike, but imagine one like this, flying through the air, better yet, imagine thousands of them swarming. And this is going to go on for **five months.** Isn't this strikingly similar to the Exodus plague of biting flies? It's just a million times worse. So that covers the appearance of the head, thorax and abdomen. John is giving us the best description he can from what he saw of these demons.

Now we come to 9:11 where we learn that they have a leader. **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.** The Hebrew name and Greek name have the same meaning. His name means “destroyer.” What do you think of someone with the name “Destroyer?” Well, that’s the name of the king of these locusts. He’s one bad demon.

And friends, in 9:12 we’re told that this is just the first woe, two more are coming. **The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.** So if **woe** one was unbearable pain, stings day after day for five months, no relief, no way to die, you try and you get bit where you can’t even commit suicide, and then it comes to an end and you find out two more woes coming. Talk about depressing. It’s going to be a terrible time. And again, I want to remind you that this is what demons would naturally do. This is what they would do if God’s grace was not restraining them right now. That is one reason this dispensation is often called the dispensation of grace. If this was not the dispensation of grace they would be causing unparalleled disaster to you, your health, your loved ones. Demons are destroyers, and yet the irony of this in the future tribulation is that their deception capability is so high that when they are released much of the world will continue to worship the very demons that destroy them. Perhaps their thinking is that because they have power over us, we must bow to and worship them.