

Hell on Earth, part 1

Revelation 9:1-12

(preached Pine Grove 2/26/17; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Many of you heard stories about my grandmother who kept me as a child along with a number of other children..

And she had plenty of rules for us as kids...

But none of her rules were as important as our use of words..

One day when I got a choked on a meatball, Mimi picked me and upside down and bounced me until the meatball rolled out under the table..

However, the sight of me being picked up by my feet caused one of the kids to scream out “God Almighty,” so as Mimi was lowering me to the floor, she was lifting him out of his seat giving him a spanking for taking the Lord’s name in vain..

On another occasion, on my friends had overheard his parents spell the word by saying “H - E - Double Hockey Sticks.”

Well he taught us how to do that, but when Mimi found out and heard us do it, she gave us a switching...

You just didn't use those words with her or around her..

And it didn't matter if you didn't say it, spelling it was enough to get you in big trouble...

Now, that may seem extreme, but the use of our words reflects what is in our heart...

And when we take the use the Lord's name in way it isn't intended, it reveals that we don't honor him as we should in our heart...

I hear the Lord's name used in all sorts of vain ways today, even among believers and it is a real shame..

But it also true the word hell is often a frequent part of people's vocabulary as well...

Now the question is...

What respect do we owe to the word hell?

And the answer is a real sense is none...

But here is the danger of using the word hell so frequently..

And it is this..

We lose sight of what the word really means...

To say you hurt like hell or you are hot as hell causes you to make light of what hell really is...

Yet, many people use the word hell like that every day...

And in doing so, they make hell much less than the place of torment and evil it is...

Because you have never felt the pain of hell...

You have never felt the heat of hell..

In fact, most people know very little about so and that is why they throw the name around like any other word they use...

But I assure you if you ever begin to understand what hell is really like, you will stop using the word in such a silly way...

I have entitled today's message "Hell on Earth, part 1" and that is exactly what we are going to see in Revelation 9:1-12 this morning...

For those of you who may be visiting or haven't been with us lately, we are going verse by verse through the book of Revelation....

We began last October in this final book of the Bible, and we have been blessed by what we have seen...

In fact, we know that the book of Revelation even promises a blessing to anyone who just reads the contents of it..

And we have been blessed indeed..

Now, for the past few weeks, we have been seeing some things that may not look like blessings in the book of Revelation...

Because we have been looking at the judgments that God is going to send upon the earth at the end of time...

It all started in Revelation 5 where Jesus was handed the title deed to the earth to open...

Jesus had earned the title deed to the earth through his life, death and resurrection..

Jesus had overcome sin and death, and as His Father prepares to bring the world to an end, he hands the job to His Son...

It is His world to end...

The Bible says that Jesus put the world together, and now in the book of Revelation it is His job to pull it apart..

So as Jesus opens the deed to the earth, he unleashes destruction upon the earth...

The Bible describes this time of God reclaiming the earth as the tribulation period...

The Bible also lets us know that this period will last for 7 years...

And we have seen that for the beginning of this 7 years, the judgment of God doesn't seem so bad...

In fact, the first judgment that comes when the first seal of the deed is removed creates world peace..

However, it is a false world peace created by the AntiChrist, a man we will meet later in the book of Revelation...

And I suggested to you that this peace will probably take up much of the first 3.5 years of this 7 year tribulation period..

However, that false peace will be interrupted by the next 6 seal judgments which occur near the midpoint of tribulation...

We have looked at those in Revelation 6 where we saw global war, famine, disease, animal attacks that kill 1/4 of the world's population followed by a global earthquake, and changes to the sun, moon, and stars..

Then in Revelation 7, we took time to catch our breath and be reminded of the mercy of God where He will save people during this great tribulation period...

The Bible tells us that all Israel alive during the tribulation will be saved...

And of that group, 144,000 Jews will be marked out for special gospel preaching to the world...

This will be necessary since the church will have been raptured out before the tribulation begins...

And this group will now be given the role to preach Jesus to the world in this time of unprecedented trouble...

But God will also save an incredible number Gentiles as well in the tribulation...

WE saw some of this group in heaven in Revelation 7 as many believers will be killed in all the disasters, yet they will go to heaven immediately like all Christians do today..

Then we got to chapter 8 last week, where heaven went silent as the 7th seal was opened to reveal 7 more judgments to come..

These judgments took the form of trumpet blasts...

The first trumpet brought hail and fire mixed with blood to earth as the result of a possible gigantic volcano blast bringing destruction to a third the trees and all the green grass on earth.

The second trumpet brought a great asteroid crashing in to the sea bringing destruction to a third of the oceans, marine life and ships of the world..

The third trumpet brought a meteor shower that poisoned a third of the fresh water supply of earth...

The fourth trumpet blew and the sun, moon, and stars grew dim and the earth grew colder and darker..

And that brings us to Revelation chapter 9, where we find Hell on Earth, part 1...

What is interesting about chapter 9 is that the entire chapter is about two trumpet judgments...

We will only get through one today, the other will be next week...

But this is unusual because the judgments are usually very short in their description...

But these two judgments take up a whole chapter...

And as we get into these 2 trumpet judgments over the next two weeks, you will see why...

Because these judgments literally unleash hell on earth...

Now in order to understand what we will see here, we must do a little background on the devil and his demons...

The Bible describes the devil or Satan as a former angel of heaven...

Let's look at Isaiah 14:12-14...

12

***“How you have fallen from heaven,
O [g]star of the morning, son of the dawn!
You have been cut down to the earth,***

You who have weakened the nations!

13

“But you said in your heart,

‘I will ascend to heaven;

I will raise my throne above the stars of God,

And I will sit on the mount of assembly

In the recesses of the north.

14

‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;

I will make myself like the Most High.’

15

“Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,

To the recesses of the pit.

Though there are other passages that help us understand Satan better, Isaiah lets us know that Satan was a created angel..

And not just any angel, but an important angel known as the star of the morning...

Yet, He was not content with his role of serving God, but wanted to be above God..

So God cast him out of heaven, and he fell to the earth like a star sometime after the sixth day of creation..

Jesus gives a description of the event as well in Luke 10:18...

***17 The [i]seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”
18 And He said to them, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.***

But we also know that as Satan was cast out of heaven, the Bible seems to indicate that a 1/3 of the angels fell with him...

And we know that because we see demons at work on the earth in the Bible...

We know they possessed people and animals and are very active even today, being described as principalities and powers of the air...

Now, what else do we know about Satan and his demons?

Well, we know they are spiritual in nature...

We can't see them.

We also know that they don't have unlimited power or knowledge and can't do as they please in the world..

Satan and his army of angels are under the direction of God..

A final thought is where do these demons reside?

Well, it seems that Satan roams the earth for the most part, but we also know that he has access to heaven where he accuses Christians before God...

As far as his legion of angels...

Most of them roam the earth seeking to inflict their evil on others..

Demons and the devil may disguise themselves as angels of light but their aim is the destruction of people..

And the reason they hate all people is that every person bears God's image...

Whether that person is a Christian or not, they bear the image of God, so they are targets...

And their objective is to keep people from getting saved..

The want to hurry up the deaths of unbelievers so that God cannot save them...

And they work day and night unseen to our eyes to carry out their evil..

However, we also know that not every demon who fell to earth is now upon the earth...

In fact, the Bible tells us that many have been locked up by God in a pit within the earth...

This is not the final hell, but it is a temporary hell of sorts where these very evil demons are restrained by God..

Listen to how *2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6* describes this prison of demons..

4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,

So, we know that not all 1/3 of the angels are roaming the earth...

Some are bound in a bottomless pit or abyss within the earth, and they cannot leave it..

If you remember the time that Jesus cast the legion of demons out a crazy man...

What did the demons ask him?

Luke 8:30-31..

30 And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion”; for many demons had entered him.

31 They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.

Please dont cast us into the abyss but into that group of pigs..

You see, the demons didn't want to go to the abyss or pit because they knew their freedom to roam the earth was over if they went there...

And so in our quick lesson on the devil and demons, we see that...

#1 - The devil and demons are real

#2 - The devil and demons are destructive

#3- The devil and demons are upon the earth but under the control of God

#4 - The devil fell from heaven and brought 1/3 of the angels with him

#5 - Not all demons are free on the earth, but some are bound in a pit of darkness.

Ok, with all of that in mind, let us get to Revelation 9...

Even though that was long introduction and background on the Satan and his helpers, it will really help us understand this 5th trumpet that is about to sound...

I have divided this 5th trumpet judgment into 2 sections..

We will first see...

I. The Destruction of Hell's Army (1-6)

Followed by....

II. The Description of Hell's Army (7-12)

Let's begin in the first 6 verses of Revelation 9...

I. The Destruction of Hell's Army (1-6)

Verse 1..

9 Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the [a]bottomless pit was given to him. 2 He opened the [b]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. 3 Then out of the smoke came locusts [c]upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 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. 5 And [d]they were not permitted to kill [e]anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it [f]stings a man. 6 And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them.

7 The [g]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. 8 They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions. 9 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. 10 They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to

hurt men for five months. 11 They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is [h]Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name [i]Apollyon.

12 The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.

As we rejoin the action of Revelation, we find ourselves in the middle of these trumpet judgments...

4 have sounded and brought destruction to the trees, green grass, oceans, and fresh water on a 1/3 of the earth..

There has also been a darkening of the sun, moon and stars...

So judgment have come to heaven and earth, but now God's judgment sets its sight on the people of earth...

And to carry out that judgment, God turns to Satan and his legion of demons....

I think we need to see what is happening here in the tribulation and it is this...

God is renovating the earth...

He is clearing a path for His Son to rule the earth...

Think of it this way...

You have a house that you rent out, but you end up renting it to very messy tenants..

They stay in it for years, but when it is time for them to go, you literally have tear the house down to the studs and pretty much start over....

So, you hire a good demolition crew and you send them in to rip your house apart...

Pull up the carpet...

Strip off the sheetrock...

They are told to have their way, but stop short of tearing it completely down...

You just want a skeleton of a house to start over with as you build a brand new house for a new group of renters...

The tribulation period is a time of God renovating the earth...

He is removing the effects of some horrible tenants...

He is removing the effects of sin on the earth...

But he is also removing the unruly tenants as well...

So God turns to the greatest demolition crew ever...

He turns to Satan and his demons to get the earth ready for a complete remodel..

And so I think we are real close to the end of the tribulation when these trumpets blow...

Yes, we have 7 bowls of judgment to go, but all of these final judgments seems to happen pretty close together...

Now, we know this is at least 5 months before the end because this judgment lasts 5 months...

And what is the judgment?

Well, look back at verse 1....

The 5th trumpet blows, and John sees a star that had already fallen to earth...

Now up to this point, we have dealt with real stars and other heavenly bodies like asteroids and comets falling to earth...

But this star has already fallen and he is also handed a key, so it seems that this fallen star is a reference to Satan himself...

And God gives him a key to what?

This abyss or bottomless pit in the earth..

This is the prison where some of the demons have been chained ever since their fall from heaven...

And so Satan takes that key from God, which is a sign that God is in full control of what is happening here, and he opens the pit and out comes a plume of smoke...

And out of the smoke comes an army of locusts...

Now what is this group of locusts?

Are they actual locusts?

Well, no.

We know that because we are about to see that they have faces like men, hair like women, teeth like lions, breastplates of iron, and scorpion tails...

What we see here are demons taking possession of a locust like creature...

Remember, demons are spirits.

So, they need some sort of body to inhabit...

And since Satan can't create, God creates a fearful locust like creature for these demons to possess...

One thing that makes locusts so destructive is their ability to fly, but one thing that makes them less harmful to humans is their lack of a poisonous bite...

One thing that makes scorpions so destructive is their terrible sting...

Many report the paralyzing effects and sharp pain from the sting of a scorpion..

But the one thing that makes scorpions less destructive is their lack of mobility...

They aren't the fastest creatures and they can be stepped on and killed pretty easily...

However, when you combine a locust with a scorpion, you have a deadly killer...

Can you imagine a shark or lion that could fly?

I mean if it was possible to walk outside and be swiped down upon by a tiger, no one would leave home...

Yet one day, God will make a creature with wings and a stinger for demons to possess and they will possess that

creatures and take flight to torment and sting as the 5th trumpet of the tribulation blows..

And so the 5th trumpet brings all the worst demons out of the pit to possess some of the worst creatures imaginable...

Think of this...

Can you imagine if all the prisons of the world released all the worst criminals of all time back into society at the same time?

There would be murder everywhere...

But even that level of evil would not compare to what will happen when all the worst demons of all time are given permission to leave the pit and join with all the other demons to fly over the earth and target the people of earth...

Now, even these demonic locust will be limited...

First, they can't touch the green grass...

Now, you may say I thought all the green grass was dead with the first trumpet...

And it clearly was burned up, but maybe some has grown back by this time...

Either way, these locusts won't attack what locusts of our day attack...

Mainly because they aren't normal locusts...

Instead, they will attack what demons attack, and demons attack people...

So these locusts begin to sting people, with one exception...

They can't touch anyone with the seal of God on their foreheads...

I think this clearly rules out the locusts of hell attacking any of the 144,000 Jewish gospel preachers...

But I would also think that no one who has gotten saved in the tribulation will be harmed by these demonic locusts either...

Their sights are set on those unbelievers in the tribulation...

And they torment these people in the worst way possible...

They sting them them repeatedly, but it wont kill them..

In fact, unbelievers will want to die...

Verse 6 says that they will seek death, but they won't be able to die...

This is quite interesting to me, but no suicide will work in that day....

People will jump off bridges and float...

They will jump off buildings and live through it...

They will shoot themselves but bullets won't kill them..

There are things worse than death, and these demonic attacks will be worse than death...

So, that is the destruction of these locusts, and though we have talked a little about it already, let's end with...

II. The Description of Hell's Army (7-12)

In verses 7-12, John's gives us a picture of these demonic scorpion locusts..

They are like horses, suggesting the intimidation these swarms of locusts will bring to people..

Like horses lined up for war, they are imposing creatures, not nagging insects...

They wear crowns of gold symbolizing their apparent victory in tormenting the unbelievers of the world...

They have faces like men suggesting that these demons are intelligent creatures...

I am sure the militaries of the world will try to fight against these demonic attackers, but the demons are intelligent beings and won't be overcome...

They have the hair of women maybe suggesting they are seductive creatures, but they stalk people with the teeth of lions...

They are also well protected with breast plates of iron, suggesting that the unbelieving world will try to fight against them but will be unsuccessful..

They are also very loud like chariots rushing into battle..

But the worst part of these locusts will be their scorpion tails that sting people on the earth and inflict pain for 5 months...

Why 5 months?

Im not sure.

The normal life span of a locust is 5 months.

They usually live from May until September...

It is also interesting to note that the great flood in Noah's day lasted 150 days, according to Genesis 7:24...

150 days is equal to five months...

I would only make one comment about the 5 months...

God allows that long for people to repent and come to their senses...

Though the stings of the locusts are painful, they wont kill and though that may sound like torture, it is mercy because death would lead to a far greater judgment...

Therefore, God allows people to live so that they can repent and be saved..

Yet, we will find out next week that doesn't happen...

Then in verse 11 we see the leader of these demonic locusts...

He is a king of the abyss that is known as Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek...

Some see him as the devil...

But the devil is not the king of the abyss..

He is out of the abyss; he is the one who unlocks the abyss..

I simply think this is just another fallen angel that has the highest rank in the demon prison, and when the prison is unlocked, he just leads these demons into battle...

Clearly, the devil and other demons will play a role in this attack...

It will literally be all of hell unleashed on earth, and John lets us know that there is more coming in verse 12...

We will see Hell on Earth, part 2 next week and it will get worse...

Conclusion

So, what can we learn from trumpet #5 today?

1) God's creation is more than meets your eye.

The Bible would declare you a fool to only believe what you can see...

There is world beyond your senses, and it is as real as the chair you are sitting in...

The spiritual world that exists is very real, and it is not only beyond your eyes to see, it is beyond your knowledge to fully understand....

We throw around words like devil, demon, and hell like we talk about food or sports or work...

But I assure you, none of us have a full grasp on just how evil the devil, demons and hell are...

They are not characters to be joked about or dressed up as...

They are not places that we should compare to how bad we hurt or feel or experience...

The devil is real and he hates you whether you are a believer or an unbeliever...

And his demons likewise hate you...

If you aren't saved, they have you right there they want you and they will keep you there and watch you burn with them in a lake of fire...

If you are saved, they seek to take away your effectiveness to lead others to Christ...

They want to destroy your character, your family, and your entire testimony...

They aren't something to be toyed with or rebuked...

Now, we know that God rules over them, so we are safe in our salvation, but we aren't safe from temptation and attack...

But never doubt their existence and never think you aren't immune to their attacks...

#2 - God's judgment is more than you can handle.

In case you were wondering how bad the tribulation will be, I hope you are seeing it is worse than your mind can imagine...

Earthquakes, poisonous meteor showers, global famine, super earthquake eruptions, and tainted water supplies are bad...

But flying stinging demonic scorpions are much worse...

Especially considering the fact that their stings wont kill you...

The torture, the intimidation, the loss sounds, and even the sights of a coming swarm of locusts should wake you up enough this morning to say, "I don't want to be around for that."

I don't want any part of that...

I need to be saved from that...

Well, good news because a final truth is this....

#3 - God's salvation is more than you deserve.

If the judgments of the tribulation disturb you, that's great.

While we were at seminary, we lived only 5 miles from Six Flags Magic mountain...

It is a large amusement park with all sorts of rides that my daughters tried to convince me to ride...

Before we went, guess what I did?

I got on the internet and looked at videos of people riding the rides...

There are videos for every ride in the park that people have taken from the front seat of the ride...

So, I watched them, and any one of them that I didn't like the looks of, I stayed off it when we went to the park...

By the time we got to the park, I was only going to get two rides...

So, I simply sat on the bench while the girls got in line to ride.

Thought that is funny, listen to me...

The book of Revelation is a video of what is coming to this earth....

And I hope you see the show and decide that those 7 years aren't something you want to be a part of...

Let me tell your something...

God gave you an front row seat to a preview of tribulation to help you realize you don't want to be here for it...

And he has provided a way out...

It's not a bench..

Jesus Christ is your way out..

Trust in Him today, and be with him as the tribulation breaks out on the earth....

What a good God we serve, who shows us what is coming and then offers a rescue from it...

Trust in Christ today...

Repent of your sin, and put all your eggs in the basket of Christ...

He can save you fully and completely, and he will for all who will come to Him....

Let us pray...