

The Grace of Wrath

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Text

Revelation 9:1-21

Topic

The trumpet judgments are so horrific that men will desire to die but
"death will flee from them"

Title

"That'll Be The Day You Can't Die"

They surged through a portal which had been opened for their invasion. Armored, equipped with horrific weapons, riding powerful mounts. Beasts called Leviathans accompanied them.

They were the Chitauri, the first major threat to Earth that required the formation of the Avengers when they attempted a planetary invasion as part of an alliance between Thanos and Loki.

The MCU has nothing on the Bible.

More than two millennia before the Battle of New York the apostle John saw an invasion of Earth as a 'portal' is opened. Not in space, but on Earth:

Rev 9:1 "...I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit.

Rev 9:2 And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace...

Rev 9:3 Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

No Avengers will rise to defeat them. They will “torment [those who inhabit the earth] *for* five months [during the future Great Tribulation].” “Their torment [will be] like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.”

A second supernatural invasion will follow.

It is an effort by God to lead nonbelievers to repentance by showing them who it is they worship.

Take a peek ahead to the end of the chapter. Nonbelievers on earth at the time of these incursions “worship demons...” (v20).

I’ll organize my comments around two points: **#1 You Can Be Saved By God Who Is Worthy**, or **#2 You Will Be Enslaved By The ‘gods’ You Worship**.

#1 - You Can Be Saved By God Who Is Worthy (v4)

The Gospel is the power of God to save you.

For God so loved [mankind] that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. God is not willing that any should perish but that all come to repentance.

God through the Gospel desires all men to be saved. He draws us by His Spirit and grace. Jesus in John 6:44 said no one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws Him. Jesus explained in John 12:32 saying, “If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to my self.”

Whosoever believes on Him, whoever calls on the name of the Lord, will be saved. Jesus is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe.

God’s power and will to save sinners will infuse the Great Tribulation. The Gospel will be unavoidable:

- 144,000 sealed servants will share the Gospel during the Great Tribulation. "A great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues" (7:9) will respond positively and be saved.
- A great eagle will fly around Earth saying, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" (8:13). It serves as a planetary warning system giving nonbelievers opportunity to repent and receive Jesus.
- Later in the Revelation we will see the careers of two supernatural witnesses to the Gospel.
- Another angel will be "flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (14:6).

Jesus announced, "this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14).

The Great Tribulation will be the setting for the greatest revival the world has ever experienced.

Before we read of the horrific supernatural creatures that will be unleashed, we are reminded of the salvation of God.

Rev 9:4 They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

144,000 Jewish men from the twelve tribes of Israel have a seal of divine protection on their foreheads. Not one of them will be harmed or lost.

Whatever news outlets exist in the Great Tribulation, they will report that this group is immune from both persecution and the hellish attacks we are going to read about.

Whether or not a nonbeliever can see the seal on their forehead, they will see that they are *sealed* - safely set apart by God.

The Revelation constantly makes it a point to remind us that these judgments are supernatural. The inhabitants of Earth will know that they issue from God's throne in Heaven. God thereby condescends to, in a sense, 'prove' His almighty power.

There are parallels to the ten plagues God sent upon Egypt when it was time to "Let My people go." His mighty power to save was on display, highlighted by His judgments.

Our God saves. His death and resurrection are sufficient to save *any* and *all* who believe. Believing in Him is the essence of salvation. God justifies the believing sinner and declare him or her 'righteous.'

Salvation may look a bit different in the Great Tribulation, but it has always been the same. You are saved by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

#2 - You Will Be Enslaved By The 'gods' You Worship (v1-21)

God warns us in the Psalms,

Psa 115:4 ... idols *are* silver and gold, The work of men's hands.

Psa 115:5 They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see;

Psa 115:6 They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell;

Psa 115:7 They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat.

Psa 115:8 **Those who make them are like them...**

Psalm 135:15-18 is almost identical.

You become like *what* or *who* you worship.

Rev 9:1 Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit.

The "angel sounded" the fifth of seven trumpets.
Each of them unleashes a judgment on those who inhabit Earth.

The "star" is a person because he is able to hold a key. Angels are sometimes referred to as "stars." In Job 38:7 we read, "When the morning **stars** sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

Television commercials occupy too much of our brains. Slogans, jingles, sayings... Reading verse one I recalled a slogan for a bug spray. It promised, "Insects won't bite; they won't even light." "Light," or "light upon," means to *land on something*.

The word "fallen" immediately suggests to our thinking an evil, "fallen" angel, maybe even Satan. However "fallen" could be translated "light upon." In that case, this angel is another of God's heavenly host, who "lights" upon Earth.

Indiana Jones #5 is set for a July release. Maybe it will be *Indiana Jones and the Key to the Bottomless Pit*. Indy will find the key, then have it stolen by Vladimir Putin, whose real name is Abaddon.

"Abyss" is a better name for "bottomless pit." It describes a subterranean cavern connected to earth's surface by a shaft whose opening has a secured lid of some type. This abyss was commonly understood by the Jews to be a prison for evil supernatural beings.

If you think about it geometrically the *only* place that you could have a "bottomless" pit is at the center of a sphere, since at that point, all directions are *up*.

Rev 9:2 And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit.

In the DPV (Deep Purple Version) of the Bible it also says *Smoke on the Waters - A Fire in the Sky*.

Rev 9:3 Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

What insect creeps you out the most? The Jerusalem Cricket tops my list.

Did you know there is a red widow spider? It is #2 on the list of 50 most dangerous bugs in America, right after the black widow. It is only found in certain parts of Florida.

Two species of scorpion are high on the list. There is something called the Puss Caterpillar. It is the caterpillar form of the Southern Flannel Moth. It is one of the most venomous caterpillars in the United States. One of???

Somewhere in the Abyss there is a species of intelligent killer locusts.

Rev 9:4 They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

The mention of them harming vegetation solidifies the fact they really are locusts and not man-made devices.

They won't hurt those who are sealed. Question: Will those who receive Jesus also be tormented by these creatures? We are not told.

However, in the last two verses of the chapter there is a strong indication that those who "repent" are considered a separate class. They may not be "sealed" the same way the 144,000 are, but they belong to God.

Rev 9:5 And they were not given *authority* to kill them, but to torment them *for* five months. Their torment *was* like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.

Entomologists will tell you that a locusts have about a five month period of pillaging. They are restricted from killing anyone but that isn't a good thing.

Rev 9:6 In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.

One Greek scholar commented, "Death will not be just hard to find. It will aggressively run away from those pursuing it." It might be possible to "find" death, to die, but it will be elusive.

In *World War Z*, within 12 seconds after contact you begin to show signs you are turning into a zombie. You have only a split second after that to try to kill yourself.

Is it paralysis but with intense pain? Whatever it is, it will be the ultimate 'fate worse than death.'

Rev 9:7 The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces *were* like the faces of men.

I've always assumed they were locust-size. What if they are horse-size?

Their "crowns" might be a physical attribute similar to the "crowns" we ascribe to other species, e.g., white crowned sparrows.

If you've seen the 1958 original version of *The Fly*, think of the ending. The guy who morphed into a fly is caught in a spider web. He still has a human face. Vincent Price watches as the spider approaches, with the fly begging, "Help me!"

Rev 9:8 They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' *teeth*. There are a slew of grotesque artist's renditions on line. Let's just say you might not want to Google them before bed.

Rev 9:9 And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle.

The "sound of freedom" is a phrase we use when one or more of the jets from LNAS flies over. These locusts will be the deafening sound of fear & fright.

Rev 9:10 They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months.

Are you kidding me? Just when you thought it could not be any worse, they have stinging scorpion-like tails.

Rev 9:11 And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.

We know from the Book of Daniel that evil, fallen angels have limited authority over provinces on the earth. The angel Gabriel told Daniel about grappling with a supernatural being he called the Prince of Persia.

This evil angel has some authority with regards to the Abyss. I say "some" because he doesn't have the key. The extent of his oversight of the Abyss we do not know. His name, in two languages, is *Destroyer*.

Rev 9:12 One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.

Meaning the sixth and seventh trumpet blasts. I hate telling people that things might get worse before they get better - if indeed they ever do get better.

Rev 9:13 Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

Previously in the Revelation, Jesus opened seven seals on the seven-sealed scroll:

1. The first five seals encompass approximately the first 1260 days of the Great Tribulation.
2. The sixth seal was a preview of everything contained in the seventh seal.
3. The opening of the seventh seal revealed angels blowing seven trumpets in succession.
4. The first four trumpets are judgments against those who dwell on Earth using the natural world.
5. The trumpets we hear in chapter nine are supernatural judgments against those who live on the earth.
6. The seventh trumpet will reveal angels pouring-out seven bowls of God's wrath in succession.
7. The trumpets and the bowls occupy the final 1260 days of the Great Tribulation.

Rev 9:14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

Good angels are never "bound." Why these are not free we do not know.

Rev 9:15 So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.

At the appointed hour on the appointed day in the appointed month and in the appointed year. Once the Great Tribulation begins, it will run its course exactly as written.

Rev 9:16 Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.

This a precise, not symbolic, number.

Rev 9:17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone.

We are not told the identity of the horsemen. Probably a fallen angel cavalry. It isn't Communist China.

These are supernatural judgments.

Later in the Revelation, in chapter sixteen, a reference is made to the Euphrates River drying up so that an army from the east can arrive at the final battle of mankind, Armageddon. It is not the same army that we see here.

Is it just me, or are there a lot of horses in the Revelation? These are another unusual species, having lion-like heads. They are a little like dragons, too, in terms of emitting "fire, smoke, and brimstone."

Rev 9:18 By these three *plagues* a third of mankind was killed - by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths.

These three weapons - not nuclear bombs - will be responsible for the largest death toll in human history to that point.

Rev 9:19 For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.

Their tails look like Medusa's hair.

These judgments are meant to lead men to repent. How does it go?

Rev 9:20 But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.

Rev 9:21 And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

“The works of their hands” is a phrase associated with idol worship. I read so many lists of modern idols. One of them mentioned cell phones. (I’d call that an addiction).

Idolatry can be understood as the desire to replace God with self. Satan tempted Eve to be like God. To replace God and be her own ‘god.’ Problem is, like Bob Dylan sang, “It may be the devil, or it may be the Lord, but you’re gonna have to serve somebody.”

Serving the devil has awful repercussions. Four of them are highlighted: Murders, sorceries, sexual immorality, and thefts.

“Murders.” According to WHO, every year in the world there are an estimated 40-50 million abortions. This corresponds to approximately 125,000 abortions per day. Abortion is one of the most frequently performed surgical procedures in the United States.

Here is an unexpected oddity. In places where physician-assisted suicide is legal, suicide rates are on the rise as well. They attribute it to “suicide contagion.”

The word translated “sorceries” is *pharmakeia*, the word we translate “pharmacy.” It has a wider range of meanings. It can refer to magic, but it very often refers to the practice of medicine or what might be called healing arts. Doctors, medications, surgeries; none of these are condemned by the Bible. What the word might point to is mankind’s selfish quest for immortality. Today we are messin’ around with DNA and AI to create a super man.

“Sexual immorality” is any sexual belief or behavior that contradicts God’s Word. Marriage is one biological male and one biological female in an exclusive, monogamous, heterosexual covenant of companionship to last as

long as they both are alive. Anything outside of that is spiritually sinful, emotionally damaging, and physically dangerous to humanity.

Biblical marriage has been under attack quite a while. Selfish nonbelievers are playing God by supplementing biology with a false psychology of gender.

"Thefts" could be translated *dishonesties*. It suggests the breaking down of absolute standards. Mankind has for the most part abandoned the absolutes in God's Word. The only thing nonbelievers claim to be absolute is that there are no absolutes.

In Psalm 78:34 we read of Old Testament Israel, "When He slew them, **then** they sought Him; And they returned and sought earnestly for God."

The word "repent" is repeated twice in the last two verses.

Repentance is the goal of these judgments.

Thanos chided Dr. Strange, "You never used your greatest weapon."

Our greatest weapon is the Gospel. Let's prefer it to all others - certainly to all man-made weapons.