

The Bottomless Pit

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, for a short while this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read.

Revelation chapter 9. Revelation chapter 9, if we read again at the beginning. Revelation 9 from verse 1, where John writes, And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.

He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke, like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.

I don't know about you, but I've always found the book of Job to be a very fascinating book. Because, as you know, you've probably read the book of Job, you know that Job is described as a man who was respected, but also a man who was righteous.

He was someone who feared the Lord, and he was faithful to the Lord. And yet, when you read the opening chapters of the book of Job, you see that in 32 verses, Job lost everything.

[1 : 25] And he spends the next, over the next 40 chapters, trying to understand why. In 32 verses, Job lost everything. And he spends over 40 chapters trying to understand why.

And you know, in many ways, that's often the way it is in life. Our circumstances and situations, they change in a moment. And yet, it can take years for us to come to terms with those changes.

But what's so solemn about the book of Job, is that even though Job can't see it, and he's unaware of what's going on, in the background, and behind the scenes, as it were, Satan is at work.

And Satan is at work, because as we are privy to the conversation, in the opening chapters of the book of Job, we see that this conversation, there was a conversation that took place in heaven, between God and Satan.

How this conversation took place, we don't know. We're not told that. But we're told that the Lord sent to Satan, all that Job has, is in your hand.

[2 : 31] All that Job has, is in your hand. And the Lord granted Satan permission to test and to tempt Job. And we're told that in all that happened, he did not sin.

But you know, it shows us, even those opening chapters in the book of Job, it shows us that all of Satan's actions, they are ruled. And they are overruled by the one seated upon the throne.

All of Satan's actions, they are ruled and overruled by the one seated upon the throne. And in many ways, that's what we see in this chapter. Satan is not in control.

Satan is under control. Satan is not in control, he is under control. And that's what I want us to see as we consider the fifth trumpet and the first woe. That's what we see in these opening verses of chapter 9.

The fifth trumpet and the first woe. And what we see in these opening verses, I want us to see two things. The portion of the bottomless pit and the picture of the bottomless pit.

[3 : 32] The portion of the bottomless pit and the picture of the bottomless pit. So first of all, the portion. The portion of the bottomless pit. It says there in verse 1, The fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth.

And he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. Now we mentioned last week that as we continue our study in the book of Revelation, there are going to be images and illustrations that are going to get more and more interesting.

Because as you know, the book of Revelation, it's one long revelation that we're following slowly, and we're seeing more and more that it's a revelation from Jesus Christ, about Jesus Christ, for the church of Jesus Christ.

And this revelation, it was important to the church, because it's always gradually and gloriously revealing to us Jesus as the risen, ruling, and reigning king who is going to return.

And as we saw with the previous chapter, chapter 8, it started with that scene of silence. It started with a stunned scene of silence. There was this stunned and solemn silence, because it was revealing to us God's divine and definite judgment.

[4 : 49] And the judgment was going to be announced by seven angels with seven trumpets. And as we saw and said last week, the trumpet was used throughout the Bible. We followed the use of the trumpet throughout the Bible, and we saw that it was first of all used as a call to worship, then laterally used as a call to war.

And then, as we see it even here in the book of Revelation, it's a call to warn. A call to warn of God's perfect judgment. But this warning of God's judgment, we have to remember it's only a warning at this point.

It's not until later chapters that we see seven bowls of God's perfect wrath being poured out upon the earth. And so the seven angels with the seven trumpets, they're called to warn about God's judgment.

And we considered the first four of these seven angels with seven trumpets. We saw them last week. We saw that they're grouped together, these first four angels. The four angels, we call them, the first four angels of the apocalypse.

They're grouped together, just like it was for the four horsemen of the apocalypse. Because when we saw the first four seals, the first of the seven seals, the first four of the seven seals being opened, it revealed the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

[6 : 10] And when it came to the four horsemen of the apocalypse, we saw that they were not a scene of terror, but a scene of triumph. But when we come to this passage, we see that the opposite is true.

The first four angels with trumpets, these four angels of the apocalypse, they're not a scene of triumph. They're a scene of terror. They're not a scene of triumph.

They're a scene of terror. Because when each angel blows their trumpet, they warn of a scene of terror upon the earth. But as we read there at the end of chapter eight, after the first four angels of the apocalypse, after they announce their word of warning, we see that the next three angels of the apocalypse, they're going to announce a word of woe.

So the first four give a word of warning. The next three give a word of woe. We read that in verse 13 of chapter eight. Then I looked and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead.

Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow.

[7 : 25] And you know, in his commentary, Joel Beakey, he writes, he says, the first four trumpets are separated from the other three by an intermission, which pronounces a triple woe.

That's verse 13. And during that intermission, says Joel Beakey, John prepares himself emotionally and spiritually for the massive woes that are to follow.

And he says, God is sensitive to the emotions of the apostle because John is about to see things that are even more terrifying than what has already been revealed to him.

God is sensitive to the emotions of the apostle because John is about to see things that are even more terrifying than what has already been revealed to him.

Then I looked and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead. Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow.

[8 : 38] And so the seven angels with the seven trumpets, they not only appear with a word of warning, but they now appear with a word of woe. And, you know, we're familiar with that word of woe because we see it throughout the Bible.

The prophets in the Old Testament, they often pronounced a word of woe to the nation of Israel, where the word of woe was a word of warning to them. You see that in Isaiah, Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

But not only the prophets, we also see Jesus pronouncing words of woe to the scribes and the Pharisees for their religious self-righteousness. You remember how Jesus often said, Woe, woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.

Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. But, you know, my favourite woe in the Bible, it's that famous and familiar moment when the prophet Isaiah, he received that revelation from heaven.

We're told there in Isaiah chapter 6, it begins with those wonderful words, In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe, it filled the temple.

[10 : 06] And above him stood the seraphim, he says. And each of them, they had six wings, and they were calling to one another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory.

But you remember what Isaiah said, Woe is me. Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

But mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. And of course, Isaiah, he cried, Woe is me, because he was made to see how sinful he really was in the sight of a holy God.

And you know, that's what these words of woe are. It's a warning against sin in the sight of a holy God. These words of woe are a warning against sin in the sight of a holy God.

Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth at the blasts of the trumpet, the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow.

[11 : 12] But then the fifth angel announces the first woe. And when he announces the first woe, John sees something. And you know, as Beeky described it, something he had never seen before.

And trying to get your head around this passage, I was thinking, well, it would be the most horrific horror film that could ever be depicted or displayed.

The fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth. And he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace.

And the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. You know, if you read these words and you don't shudder, or you don't have a shiver going down your spine, then you're not understanding what John saw.

If you don't shudder at these words, you're not understanding, because John saw something terrifying. He saw the star of the bottomless pit.

[12 : 25] In other words, John saw Satan. John saw Satan. That's what he sees. The fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.

And you know, the way the sentence is worded in original Greek, the way it's worded in verse 1, it highlights that John didn't see a star falling from heaven. John saw a star that had already fallen from the heights of heaven.

It was a fallen star. And the emphasis there is upon the word fallen. fallen. Not just in the physical sense of falling, but also in the spiritual sense of being a fallen being.

Just like Adam and Eve, they fell into sin. John isn't describing for us this astronomy lesson where he sees a star falling out of the night sky.

No, John is talking about this fallen being that has fallen into sin. More specifically, he's speaking about a fallen angel. A fallen angel.

[13 : 32] And we know that the word star relates to angels because of what Jesus said earlier in the book of Revelation, where Jesus explained that the seven stars are the seven angels. And so when John sees a fallen star, he sees a fallen angel.

He sees Satan. Which should, I don't know about you, but it immediately took my mind to the prophetic words of Isaiah chapter 14.

Because in Isaiah chapter 14, the Lord there, he powerfully and prophetically speaks about Satan. And this is what he says to Satan.

Hell from beneath is excited about you. It's excited about you to meet you at your coming. How you are fallen from heaven, O day star, or O Lucifer, son of the morning.

How you are cut down to the ground. You said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farther sides of the north.

[14 : 42] I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the most high. Yet you shall be brought down to hell to the lowest depths of the pit.

It's so, so solemn. Because Satan, as you know, Satan means adversary. And he's our adversary, the devil. He is the diabolos, the divider.

He's also described in the Bible as the accuser of the brethren. He's the father of lies. He's been a liar and a murderer from the very beginning. He is Beelzebub.

He is the Antichrist. He's the prince of the power of the air. He's the prince of darkness, the prince of demons. And later in this chapter, we read there in verse 11, we're told that they have as king over them.

The angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon. And in Greek, he is called Apollyon. And the name Abaddon or Apollyon, it means destroyer.

[15 : 44] Because Satan's aim, is it not? Satan's aim and objective is to destroy the Christian. My friend, you have an enemy of your soul.

And his name is Satan. But you know, in those prophetic and powerful words of Isaiah chapter 14, the Lord describes him as Lucifer. Lucifer, which means light bearer.

That's why Paul called him an angel of light in the New Testament. He's Lucifer. He was Lucifer, the light bearer. He was the morning star, the day star, the sun of the dawn.

He was, you could say, the brightest angel in heaven. Second in command to God the sun. And yet for him, as we read there in Isaiah 14, it wasn't enough.

He wanted more. He wanted more power, more of a position. He wanted more honour and more glory. He wanted to be number one. He wanted to be God himself.

[16 : 48] But in doing so, Satan, as you know, he broke the first commandment. And as he broke the first commandment, he's cast out and condemned to hell. And as the little letter of Jude shows us, Lucifer is the leader of all the fallen angels whom the Lord has cast out of heaven and condemned to hell.

And you know, it's fascinating and yet it's frightening because you read other passages of the Bible. You read how Scripture interprets Scripture. That's our confessional position.

And you know, you read in the prophetic words of Ezekiel chapter 28 where Isaiah before him and Ezekiel, he's given this powerful and prophetic words to proclaim about the angel of the bottomless pit.

And Ezekiel says there in chapter 28, thus says the Lord God, you were the signet of perfection. This is what he was like prior to his fall.

You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering. Sardis, topaz, diamond, beryl, onyx, jasper, sapphire, emerald and carbuncle.

[18 : 07] They were crafted in gold, he says, and they were your settings and engravings. On the day that you were created, they were prepared. You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you on the holy mountain of God.

In the midst of these stones of fire, you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you.

In the abundance of your trade, you were filled with violence and you sinned. So I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub.

Your heart was proud because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. All who knew you were appalled at you and you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever.

You know, it's so solemn. So, so solemn. And you look at it and you think, well, why is this here?

[19 : 14] What basis does this have to encourage the church? And yet, what we have to remember, John has this revelation. It's a revelation from Jesus Christ, about Jesus Christ, for the church. It's for the church of Jesus Christ.

And it's for the church of Jesus Christ because, you know, at the time, the church, as you know, it was being severely persecuted. All the apostles, apart from John, had been executed and they were being persecuted by the Roman Empire.

The Roman Emperor said that, well, if you confess Christ, you're signing your death warrant. Which is why John, he's, you could say, he's no longer been given a glimpse of heaven.

Now he's been given a glimpse of hell. And he's been shown who is behind Rome's persecution. Who is behind all of it?

Who is behind the opposition towards the church? Who is attacking the church from without and from within? And John sees him. He's a fallen star.

[20 : 15] He's a fallen angel. He's Satan or an adversary. He's the devil, the diabolos, the divider, the accuser of the brethren, the father of lies, the antichrist, the prince of darkness.

He is, as verse 11 says, he's a badan, a Paulian. He's the destroyer of Christians. He's the day star, the sun of the morning. He's Lucifer, the light bearer, the angel of light.

And he's the person at the bottomless, at the bottom of the bottomless pit. He's the person of the bottomless pit. Which brings us secondly to consider the picture that's portrayed later in the, in the following verses.

The picture of the bottomless pit. So we have the person, then the picture. The fifth angel blew his trumpet and I saw a star falling from heaven to earth and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.

He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth.

[21 : 27] They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

When the fifth angel announces the first woe we're not only given the person of the bottomless pit we're also given this picture. The picture of the bottomless pit and throughout this section the picture is a picture you could say a picture of destruction devastation disorder and death.

It's a picture of hell. That's what we have a picture of hell. And you know in his book More Than Conquerors the Dutch Reformed theologian William Hendrickson he said about these verses and I'm so thankful other people have written stuff about this because you'd be completely lost.

This is what he said we should take the picture as a whole. The locusts like horses prepare for battle those crowns of gold threatening victory those faces like human beings who are bent on destruction that hair like fury those teeth like lions those breastplates of iron signifying invincibility that sound of wings like the noise of countless prancing horses and jolting chariots on the field of battle and last but not least that exceedingly painful and yet burning but not fatal scorpion sting striking terror into the hearts of men and filling their souls with the worst conceivable dread and utter hopelessness so that they seek death but cannot find it.

can you conceive asks Hendrickson can you conceive of a more frightful and horrible yet true picture of the operation of the powers of darkness in the souls of the wicked during this present age here are the demons robbing men of all light and truth and righteousness and holiness and joy and peace and wisdom and understanding the entire picture of this section says Hendrickson it emphasizes this one idea this one idea terror and destruction is Satan's work terror and destruction is Satan's work it all comes from the bottomless pit it's a picture of hell but the thing about this picture is that the power of hell is being unleashed we're told upon the earth where the locusts of Lucifer they not only devour and they destroy everything in their path but we're told that they make life itself an unbearable burden they make life itself an unbearable burden where people want to die because death looks like a better option and you know we see it in our own day don't we you see it with assisted suicide people want to die with dignity because death is no longer serious it's no longer solemn it's no longer a doorway into eternity where there's no coming back the devil deceives us to making it look so pretty we want to celebrate death more than that we're told that death doesn't actually separate you from your loved ones because it just makes them a bright shining star in the sky my friend

[25 : 17] Paul was right Paul was right when he said the God of this world he has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel because the warning of this angel of the apocalypse in verse 6 it's such a solemn warning verse 6 and in those days people will seek death and will not find it they will long to die but death will flee from them and you know it was based upon the teaching of this verse and other verses where Jesus says that he talks about hell and it's the fire that is not quenched the worm that dieth not but it was based upon that teaching that the English Puritan Thomas Watson he said that in hell you are dying but never dead in hell you are dying but never dead in those days people will seek death but will not find it they will long to die but death will flee from them so solemn and you know my friend it's not just to the unconverted that we must preach hell it's to the Christian we need to be reminded that there is a heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned we need to be reminded that despite the destruction and the devastation and the disorder and the delusions and the death that the devil might bring into our experience we preach not ourselves but Christ

Jesus as Lord that's the whole purpose of this you know you see it John has been shown the reality of hell and it should encourage him it should exhort him it should spur him on to preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord and that's what it should do for all of us you look at the angel of the bottomless pit and you see the realities of hell you see the power of the devil and the darkness that he has over the blinding people's minds and it should make us see we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord because even though Satan is given the key to the bottomless pit as we see there in verse 1 he only has limited access Jesus is the risen ruling and reigning king this this angel is bound he is limited

Jesus has put him under his feet Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth and in hell which means that Satan is under his sovereign control just like he was in the life of Job Satan was not in control Satan was under control Satan was under control and he's still under control which is why we must preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord but you know I want to conclude this evening by highlighting how precious the church of Jesus Christ is because we see those who are sealed with the seal of the living God and you know that's the purpose of this vision it's to remind us of who we are as the Lord's people we have a message to proclaim despite hell itself we are to preach this message of

Jesus but we're to preach it knowing that we are sealed with the seal of the living God because we read there in verse 4 they were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads so they do not have the seal of God upon their foreheads and you know just like it was for Job who feared God and was faithful to God the devil and the demons of hell they are under the sovereign control of they're under the sovereign control of the Lord the command of Jesus they're told that they weren't able to bring destruction or death or disorder or decay upon those who were sealed with the seal of the living God and you know we saw this mention of the seal back in chapter 7 we saw it there they were sealed with the seal of the living God and it was a seal of sovereignty you remember a seal of security a seal of surety and it was for the church militant the church militant is the church that wrestles not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places and you know reading this passage it should make us want to read

Pilgrim's Progress all over again because like Christian and the Pilgrim's Progress we are to go into our armory put on the whole armour of God pick out our weapons of warfare our sword of the spirit our weapon of all prayer and we're to do it so that we may be able to stand firm in the valley of humiliation when we come face to face with as he's described in verse verse 11 Apollyon were to fight a good fight of faith against Apollyon because you remember when Christian he came face to face with Apollyon in the valley of humiliation he was dressed head to toe in armour he was ready for any ambush or attack or assault or accusation from Apollyon and Apollyon came if you read the passage again read the chapter of Christian in the valley of humiliation and how Apollyon comes to him and the battle it was long and it was drawn out and it was dangerous but in the end that's what I love in the end

[31 : 32] Christian thrusts the sword of the spirit into Apollyon's chest and what does he cry out in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us don't you just love the pilgrim's progress like Spurgeon I think we should read it every year because in that passage we are reminded and reassured that despite all the attacks of Satan despite all the accusations of Apollyon despite all the things he says about our sins and our shortcomings and our failings and our failures and our lack of faith we are sealed with the seal of the living God and because we are sealed with the seal of the living God we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord but more than that we can claim and confess in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us and don't you just love the way

Paul ends Romans 8 I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come neither height nor depth nor any other creature not even Satan is able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord and you see that even a picture of hell should encourage us to stop looking inward and to keep looking upward to keep looking to Jesus the one who loved us and gave himself for us then we're told in verse 12 the first woe has passed behold two woes are still to come God willing we'll look at the next one next week may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray

O Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee for thy word thy word that reveals to us not only our saviour but also our enemy and we see him as a great enemy of our soul and the enemy of many souls around us and how he has blinded their minds in unbelief how he has drawn them and distracted them from the main thing to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness but Lord our prayer is that as thy people as those who are sealed with the seal of the living God that we would continue to preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord that we would see that Satan is one who is chained he is a defeated enemy he is one whom Jesus has put under his feet and one who is under his control and help us then we pray to or to deflect and to defend ourselves against him not by might not by power but by thy spirit and thy spirit alone for oh

Lord that we might speak to Satan even like Jesus spoke to him that it is written thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God help us Lord we pray to have our armour on day by day help us to be even fighting the good fight of faith help us to be standing firm that even though Lord our armour is worn in many ways but we bless thee and we praise thee that thou art the God who clothes us who keeps us who watches over us and who will one day present us faultless before thy glory with exceeding joy help us Lord then we pray to keep going on ever looking to Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith cleanse us we pray go before us take away our iniquity receive us graciously for Jesus sake Amen we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening we're going to sing the words of which we sang earlier but this time in

English Psalm 40 as we said all our Psalms this evening they focus upon the theme of the pit what better words to end with than to be reminded that he took me from a fearful pit and from the miry clay and on a rock he set my feet establishing my way so Psalm 40 page 259 in the Scottish Psalter singing from the beginning down to the verse marked 4 to God's praise I waited for the Lord I was a patient lifted pill a threat to me he he didn't find my voice

[37 : 06] I cried to hear he took me from a fearful pit and from that he came and he said he said my feet he established in my way he He put a new song in my mind, our God to magnify.

Many shall see, yet I shall fear, and on the Lord rely.

O blessed is the one whose trust upon the Lord relies, respecting not the proud or such as turn aside to lies.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.