**Revelation 9:1-11**

We continue our study through the Revelation of Jesus Christ. We understand the symbolic drama being played out before us sends a message to those in the first century to whom it was written. It is a definite message for them. But not only them. It is a message to the church universal. This is depicted by, among other things, the fact that there are 7 letters to 7 churches in Asia Minor, which we know is a number signifying perfect or complete within the bible. So the 7 letter are representative of the entire church universal throughout all time until the Day of Judgement.

Although John is delivering those brethren a specific message it is very much applicable to us today. It’s very important to understanding the book that the historical timeframe it covers is from the time of the cross to the Judgement Day. So, the message is timeless for all who will live in the Christian dispensation. This is us. This is further evident by what we read about in chapters two and three. At the end of each message to the 7 churches we see this statement from God, *to him who has an ear to hear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

And so we focus on this historical background method of interpretation. There’s another concept that helps us to understand the book and it’s also been mentioned throughout our studies. This is the concept of parallelism or recapitulation. This is found in Revelation. This is very important to understand as well and I think it has been helpful to me to study this further and I want to spend just a few moments sharing things which might also be helpful to you.

As we continue with our study in chapter 9 it’s important to note that we are in the second drama or cycle of seven parallel stories or recapitulated stories. The first drama, or cycle we’ve already studied, the seven seals drama. Revelation is a picture book and retells the same thing in dramatic fashion.

The idea of parallel stories that send the same message over and over with small bits included in one telling that are not in the others is something we are used to. We may not realize this but God has prepared us to understand this concept very early in His teaching us.

For example, in Genesis 37:5-9 we read about a young 17 year old named Joseph who told his brothers the contents of a dream he had. He told them that all of them were in a field working and binding sheaves together. When each of them had bound one sheave, each brother’s sheave stood upright and the 11 brother’s bundles bowed down prostrate to Joseph’s bundle which was standing upright. This is a strange and dramatic dream about things in this world given humanistic characteristics. But then, God tells us that Joseph had another dream which he told to, not only his brothers, but his father as well. In this second dream the sun, the moon and eleven stars bowed down to Joseph. When his father Jacob heard this, he understood to some extent. He kept it in his heart.

But you see, these dreams are parallel to one another. They are one. We understand the meaning of the dreams was that the brothers would physically bow to him many years in the future in the foreign land of Egypt. But they would also bow down to him in a spiritual sense. He would be the spiritual leader of the family for God’s sake, even his father would follow him because God was working through Joseph. You see this is recapitulation.

Furthermore, you remember later in Genesis 41, Pharaoh had a couple of dreams. His first dream was that he was standing by the river and as he looked 7 fat cows walked up out of the water of the river and began to feed in a neighboring meadow. As he stood pondering that, he looked back across the dramatic stage and 7 ugly and gaunt cows come out of the water and walk over to stand next to the 7 fat cow. As he considers this, all of a sudden these ugly and gaunt cows cannibalize the big fat cows. This is a strange dream and these are some strange cows. This may sound a bit like a nightmare for some.

But then Pharaoh had a second dream. In this one a stalk of grain appeared which had seven good and plump heads of grain coming off of it. Then, seven thin heads appeared on the stalk, these heads were dried up and wind damaged. Next, not unlike the first dream, these strange ugly heads of grain blighted by the wind seeming have mouths and maybe some teeth and they begin to eat up the plump grains. No one has seen vegetation like this before. And that’s the dream. But listen to the point Joseph makes about these dreams in Genesis 41:25…

*25Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh* ***are one****; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do: 26The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads are seven years;* ***the dreams are one.***

So we see recapitulation in the bible in the first book, Genesis. It’s two separate cycles of dramatic story telling with the same message and yet they are different in the type of symbols being used. Lastly, on this point, I’ll mention that within the New Testament we have the synoptic gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Why do we have the same three stories written in almost identical fashion and yet there are differences which harmonize the group together. This is another example of recapitulation. It is a retelling of the life and work of the Messiah from different vantage points but telling the same truths. The gospels are one.

It is this way in last book of the bible, Revelation. The multiple stories contained in this 21 chapter book are one. They are one in general thematic messages. On the board we have the stories broken out. Review……

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cycle 1 | Cycle 2 | Cycle 3 | Cycle 4 | Cycle 5 | Cycle 6 | Cycle 7 |
| Cross - JD | Cross - JD | Cross-JD | Cross-JD | Cross-JD | Cross-JD | Cross-JD |
| **7** seals Judgements  4:-8:1 | **7** trumpet Judgements  8:2-11:19 | Woman  vs Dragon  12:1-14:20 | **7** bowl Judgements  15:1-16:21 | Spiritual Babylon Judgment  17:1-19:10 | False Prophet & Beast Judgment  19:11-21 | Judgment of Devil, God’s kingdom and the world  20:1-21:8 |
| JD  6:12-17 | JD  11:15-19 | JD  14:14-20 | JD  15:1 – 16:17-21 | JD  19:1-10 | JD  19:20-21 | JD  20:10-15 |
| Limited intensity 1/4 | Increased intensity  1/3 |  | Maximum  intensity  4/4 | Maximum intensity | Maximum intensity | The End |

Because of the manner in which Revelation is arranged, it’s a mistake to think the book is happening in chronological order. When we read about the trumpet judgements they are happening at the same time as the seal and the later bowl judgments.

As Jamie mentioned last time the time in history this is happening is important. All of the events of each cycle happen from the time of the cross to the second coming of Christ. For the most part we know a cycle of judgement is over because we a have a judgement scene. A judgment Day scene is a marker for the end of a dramatic cycle.

Let’s look at an example of the ending of the seal judgments. Revelation 6:12-17

*12I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 13And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. 14Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 15And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”*

This is judgement for the lost but it is limited to just ¼ of them (6:8). And after this judgment day scene of the sixth seal we have the seventh seal in chapter 8:1 where there is just silence in heaven as Jamie mentioned. This is for dramatic effect. Judgment has happened and everyone is quiet for a half an hour.

Then the angel shows John the next recapitulated cycle and introduces the 7 trumpet judgements. And we see the same theme from the cross to the Judgment Day but there’s an increased intensity (7:9-12)- we find instead of one fourth of the earth affected, a third of it is. And we know when the cycle ends because when then 7th angel trumpets we read a judgement day scene. In 11:15-19

*15Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” 16And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17saying: “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. 18The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth.” 19Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.*

I think if we can remember this it will help us as we go along to understand the structure of the book as it pertains to recapitulation or parallelism. One suggestion that might be helpful is to highlight the passages in your bible where the Judgement Day scene ends a dramatic cycle. We’ve read two of them but it might be helpful to take 5 or 10 minutes and read the others so they become markers in your mind.

But here we are in our chapter study, 9:1-11, and we are looking at the 5th trumpet which is the first of three woes coming from the throne of God. Unlike the first 4 trumpet judgements which effect the trees, green grass and the sea, these last trumpets afflict mankind directly with judgements. Let’s read the first 6 verses…

*9 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. 2And 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. 3Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4They 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. 5And 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. 6In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.*

Here is a picture of a once restricted part of the underworld, the abyss. It has been locked up till now. The keys are used by this fallen star person and the abyss is now open. Out of it come smoke and out of the smoke come demonic forces from the underworld to kill and to torture. Yet they are restricted in their tortures by the throne of heaven. God is always in control. He can use Satan’s kingdom for His own purposes. He is the sovereign ruler. This is why the Revelation starts out with the vision of God’s throne and the throne of the Lamb. Chapters 4 and 5 are the main characters of these stories. These locusts that swarm out of the smoke are bound by time too. They can do their damage for only 5 months, which I don’t believe is a literal period of time but just shows this is God’s mercy in giving people time to repent.

I want to mention something about the abyss or as it is sometimes called, the bottomless pit. It is mentioned 7 times in revelation (9:1,2,11;11:7;17:8;20:1,3) and it is clearly the home of the demonic underworld. The locusts (11:7), the beast (17:8), the Destroyer (Apollyon/Abaddon) (9:11), and Satan (20:1-3) all dwell in the abyss.

Let’s look closer at these locusts from the underworld who bring about the first of three woes. Let’s read verses 7-10….*7The 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. 8They had hair like women’s hair, and their teeth were like lions’ teeth. 9And 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. 10They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months.*

Remember this is symbolic. The locusts were ***like*** horses prepared for battle, with crowns ***something like gold***, etc…This is symbolism. These are the strangest locusts I’ve ever heard of. When you think of locusts in the bible what does it remind you of? Is should remind us of the locust judgement plagues God sent on Egypt.

You also might be thinking about another less known locust plague which is more closely related to these locusts in Revelation and this is in Joel 1-2. The language is very similar and I think spending a little time noticing what Joel was prophesying about will help us understand what God is wanting to draw to the mind of those who read Revelation 9 and the locust trumpet.

Joel prophesied before the Babylonian Captivity but during the days in which Judah had become rebellious after the splitting of the kingdom. Joel prophesied about a future Day of the Lord. A future Judgment was coming. In chapter 1 he calls for the elders and warns about an army of locusts coming which will case a tremendous famine. There would be no meat to eat as a result of the animals dying due to the lack of grain. There was also drought coming.

But Joel also uses these locusts as an symbolic illustration of a fierce nation that will come from the north to destroy. So, when we read about locusts we are reading about judgement throughout the bible. I would imagine the Egyptian locust plague would have come to the mind of the elders to whom Joel was writing. Look at Joel 1:1…

*Hear this, you elders, And give ear, all you inhabitants of the land! Has anything like this happened in your days, Or even in the days of your fathers? 3Tell your children about it,  
Let your children tell their children, And their children another generation… 4What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten. 5Awake, you drunkards, and weep; And wail, all you drinkers of wine, Because of the new wine, For it has been cut off from your mouth.* ***6For a nation has come up against My land, Strong, and without number; His teeth are the teeth of a lion, And he has the fangs of a fierce lion.***

So, those elders would remember the locust plagues in Egypt but we have the perspective of looking back to this as well as we consider the locust woe of Revelation which they did not have. The language is unmistakably similar to that of Revelation where we read about locusts that had lion’s teeth. Notice in Joel 2 there are trumpets sounding as well…

*2:1- Blow the trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For* ***the day of the Lord is coming****, For it is at hand: 2A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, Like the morning clouds spread over the mountains.* ***A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; Nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations****. 3A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; The land is like the Garden of Eden before them, And behind them a desolate wilderness; Surely nothing shall escape them.* ***4Their appearance is like the appearance of horses****; And like swift steeds, so they run. 5With* ***a noise like chariots*** *Over mountaintops they leap, Like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, Like a strong people set in battle array, 6Before them the people writhe in pain; All faces are drained of color. 7They run like mighty men, They climb the wall like men of war; Every one marches in formation, And they do not break ranks….10****The earth quakes*** *before them, The* ***heavens tremble; The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminis****h their brightness. 11The Lord gives voice before His army, For His camp is very great;* ***For strong is the One who executes His word.*** *For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; Who can endure it?*

I think we get the picture. This is a judgement scene similar. The locusts in Revelation are strange locusts in that they don’t chew on vegetation, they chew on men. They have teeth like lions, they devour before them. They have tails like scorpions stinging from the rear, not unlike the flames behind the army mentioned in Joel. They have breastplates which means they have a good defense. Men won’t be able to do much about these. And then their wings make the sound of chariots being pulled by many horses going to battle. Because of them men will seek death and desire to die but will not be able. These are the locusts released from the abyss.

This is symbolic and we people state many things about these locusts but I think what is happening here is a woe on those outside the church by tortuous and corrupt governments which are under the control the dark spiritual powers. I don’t think it is coincidental that early on in the book John gives a description of the messenger as, *he is the first born from the dead and rulers of the kings of the earth* (1:5). John wants us to know at the onset Jesus is in control of governments. John then quickly begins in verse 12 to give us a picture of this Victorious Ruler with His bronze feet like refined in fire, white shining hair, eyes like a flame of fire and a double edged sword coming from His mouth, a voice like roaring waters. *The ruler of the kings of the earth* is a phrase used over and over again in Revelation. 5 times in fact. A theme we shouldn’t ignore. But going back to these perverted looking locusts with men’s faces and women’s hair..

I like what James Resseguie states in his commentary about these locusts. He says in revelation we have hybrid creatures. For example, in Revelation 4 we have the hybrids of the lion, calf, man and eagle with eyes all around. These are around the throne of God and are in harmony with Him. They have characteristics normal to our world which represents the creation in harmony with its Creator. In Revelation 9 we have a perversion of the normal order of creation and a representation of the creation in rebellion against the Creator. He says, these locust hybrids represent the evil side of humanity that undoes God’s way of ordering this world. Like the part animal, part human sphinx, these satanic locusts in revelation are emblematic of humanity’s divided nature - a mixture of good and evil, the human and the demonic. I think that is worthy to consider as we study these things out.

Also, we notice in Revelation that tails are associated with demonic creatures in Rev 12:4 (dragon who pulls down a third of the stars from heaven during the 7th trumpet blast). But let’s move on and notice our last verse we’ll consider this afternoon, v11…*11And they (*locusts) *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.*

This passage helps us to understand who it is that has the keys in verse 1 and the authority to release the underworld powers of darkness. I believe the fallen star of v1 who is given the key to the bottomless pit is the same mentioned here who is the king or ruler over them, v11. We also are given his name. Both the Hebrew and Greek names can be literally translated as ***the Destroyer*** --This is the footnote in my bible. This is none other than the devil. As John would put it later in the next cycle of the woman vs the dragon story --he is *the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan who is cast out of heaven and down to the earth* 12:7-9.

In verse one it says again that the star has fallen from heaven to the earth and in chapter 12 it says Satan is cast out of heaven to the earth. This happens as a direct result of Jesus’ messianic mission while he was hear on the earth. He fulfilled the mission of subduing Satan. This is why when Jesus was on the earth battling against the evil forces and he sent out the 70 to preach the gospel he empowered them with the ability to cast out demons and remember, they come back to Him and report that *even demons are subject to us Lord!* And remember how Jesus responded in Luke chapter 10:18 – *I saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall by any means hurt you.* This symbolic language. You see Revelation is telling us nothing necessarily new but recapitulating things we know and encouraging us to overcome and stay faithful even to death.

Now, these evil forces depicted by these demonic locusts could not harm the children of the God, those who are sealed, but only those who are outside the kingdom. Verse 4 said, *4They 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.* We learned about those who are sealed from the previous dramatic cycle of the seals in 7:5. This is the ironic isn’t it? Men and women who will not submit to God but follow after the prince of the ruler of this age. The very person they follow is devouring them to pieces by his evil forces.

We’ll stop here. Verse 12 says*, One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.* There are two more trumpets and we’ll look at those if the Lord wills next time. Jesus is victorious but we have to submit our will to His and endure till the end. If you don’t have victory in Jesus you can but you must be born anew spiritually or you can’t enter into the kingdom.

**Additional notes** – G.K. Beale – “Abaddon is closely linked to Sheol or the place of death in the OT (Job 26:6; 28:22; Ps 88:11; Prov 15:11; 27:20). These names, together with the statement that the angel is ‘king over’ the demons, suggest that this is either Satan himself or one of his most powerful representatives. Revelation 12:3-4 and 13:1 are compatible with this conclusion, since there the devil and the beast are pictured, respectively, with kingly diadems on their heads and as leaders of evil forces.”

The locusts are pictured as not harming the earth’s vegetation so the damage now envisioned is that of a ***famine of the soul*** (the prophets sometimes spiritualize famine, e.g. Amos 8:11-14).

This picture in vs2 about the smoke ascending from a previously locked abyss, the darkening of the sky and the locusts swarming out of it is a picture indicating that the judgment formerly limited to the demonic realm is being extended to the earthly realm. As a result of Christ’s death and resurrection, the devil and his legions have begun to be judged, and now the effect of their judgement is about to be unleashed upon unbelieving humanity, who give their ultimate allegiance to him. An essentially identical pattern of widening judgment occurs in 12:7-12; 13:3-8; 16:10; 17:8).

The spiritual and psychological nature of the torment of these demons is emphasized by the fact that men will seek death and will not find it. The effect of the locusts is to remind the church’s ungodly persecutors that their idolatry is vain and that they are separated from the living God, and consequently have no hope.

Do we tend practically to view spiritual warfare as a struggle between two equals (God and Satan) even though the Bible, as here, suggests otherwise?