

Text: Rev. 9:1-12

Title: "Woe for the ones dwelling on the earth – Part 2"

Time: 10/1/2017 am

Place: NBBC

Intro: John Bunyan was a 17th century Baptist pastor who was imprisoned from 1660 to 1672 and again in 1675 for his nonconformist ministry in England. He is the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which is a best-selling allegory about the journey of the Christian life from the City of Destruction to the City of Zion.

In that story Jesus is the prince of the City of Zion, and the prince of the City of Destruction, from which Christian came, is Apollyon. Toward the end of Christian's journey, Apollyon confronts him on the way of holiness. He first argues and then demands that Christian go back to the City of Destruction rather than continue on to the City of Zion. When Christian refuses the confrontation comes to a climax. Bunyan describes the enemy's resolve:

"Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way, and said, I am void of fear in this matter. Prepare thyself to die; for I swear by my infernal den, that thou shalt go no farther: here will I spill thy soul."

Clearly, Apollyon is a resolute enemy. But the resolve he expressed against Christian failed. Christian did not die; he did go further; and no enemy was able to spill his soul.

Our passage this morning is about God's 5th trumpet judgment of the Great Tribulation period, which is also the first of three horrific woes (8:13). These judgments come upon the earth-dwellers who have rejected salvation offered in Christ. As the people of heaven, we need not fear these

things. Our blessed hope is the glorious appearing of Christ and the rapture of the Church to heaven. We will not be here to experience these things.

This 5th trumpet judgment is different from the first four that we studied last week. Those were natural disasters; here we meet a supernatural disaster. It is a woe inflicted upon earth-dwellers by the enemy of every Christian, the one referred to by Bunyan's book (v. 11). He is familiar to us, because as Christians we face this unseen enemy today. Our passage this morning will help us understand the nature of that spiritual danger, because it is a passage in part, about Apollyon.

More specifically, the passage tells us about what will literally be a hellish five months on the earth. Hell is brought to earth by creatures that John describes as locust-scorpions. We will notice three things about these locust-scorpions from the passage together this morning.

I. The locust-scorpions have a leader who destroys (vv. 1-2, 11).

Illustration: Bunyan aptly named the city ruled by Apollyon *City of Destruction*, because *Apollyon* means *destruction*. Bunyan remembers what life was like in that place, where sinners live before they come to Christ:

"Apol. By this I perceive that thou art one of my subjects; for all that country is mine, and I am the prince and god of it. How is it, then, that thou hast run away from thy king? Were it not that I hope that thou mayest do me more service, I would strike thee now at one blow to the ground.

“Chr. I was indeed born in your dominions; but your service was hard, and your wages such as a man could not live on; for the wages of sin is death: therefore, when I was come to years, I did as other considerate persons do, look out, if perhaps I might mend myself.

“Apol. There is no prince that will thus lightly lose his subjects, neither will I as yet lose thee; but, since thou complainest of thy service and wages, be content to go back, and what our country will afford I do here promise to give thee.”

Application: That is the bargain Satan offers the follower of Christ – go back and follow me again and it will be easier for you. Forget the reasons you left the City of Destruction. Serve me again. Our passage helps us deal with that temptation by showing us some important things about this leader of the locust-scorpions.

Satan is real and is a destroyer. Hell is real, and its demons are real and dangerous. When your enemy is a powerful destroyer, it is dangerous to not know your enemy well. And if that is true, think of the danger that comes from not even believing you have an enemy like that in spite of the warning of passages like this. This is the condition of many believers and unbelievers alike this morning. We live as though Satan was just a figment of John’s imagination. He was not. He is the topic of John’s revelation from God. Our unbelief cannot change these realities.

John sees a star that had fallen. We read about that fall in Isa. 14:12-14. Satan was created as Lucifer, the son of the morning. Ezekiel 28 tells us that he was covered with every precious stone, a wonderful musician, an anointed cherub set on the mountain of God, perfect in his way, and one of

the most beautiful creatures God ever made. But because of pride, Lucifer fell, and other angelic beings followed him in this rebellion of pride (Jude 6). These demons are the locust-scorpions of the 5th trumpet judgment.

Just like Satan and the demons are real, so is hell. It is called the abyss in this passage, and it is a place that demons are willing to indwell pigs in order to avoid (Luke 8:31-32; *deep* = *abyss*). This abyss has a shaft entrance that has a gate, which can be opened by a key.

Jesus has the key. He could have sent the demons into the abyss and spared the pigs. He promises our church, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail over it." He can make that promise because He has the key to the gates of hell. But here in this fifth trumpet judgment, that key is given to the leader of hells inhabitants. This is a big difference between the church age and the Great Tribulation. The locust-scorpions have a leader who is real and who is a destroyer. We will face his schemes and opposition today.

II. The locust-scorpions have likenesses that intimidate (vv. 7-10).

Illustration: Bunyan describes the likeness of Apollyon: "Now the monster was hideous to behold; he was clothed with scales like a fish, and they are his pride; he had wings like a dragon, and feet like a bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoke; and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion. When he was come up to Christian, he beheld him with a disdainful countenance, and thus began to question with him." Bunyan must have derived some of his description of Apollyon from John's description of the likenesses of the locust-scorpions in this passage. These symbols are not easi-

ly interpreted, but it would seem that a few conclusions about the nature of demons are made clear here:

A. Demons are weaponized (vv. 7a, 9). They are equipped to attack and destroy what belongs to God.

B. Demons are renown (v. 7b). We read of their golden crowns. They enjoy fame and financing in a world dominated by the prince of the power of the air.

C. Demons are compatible with men and women (vv. 7c, 8a). They can indwell humans, influence humans, and use humans. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but humans are much more than mere flesh and blood.

D. Demons are dangerous (v. 8b). Peter describes the roar of the lion, but also that he seeks to devour. We have to be concerned about our enemy's teeth (1 Pet. 5:8).

E. Demons are cruel (v. 10). They willingly, gleefully, torture men and women during this period.

Application: If you actually saw an entity that looked like one of these locust-scorpions, what would you do? Well, I think I would run and try to find a tennis racket or something. Unfortunately, we cannot see these likenesses of our enemy and his host with our eyes the way John did in this vision. In fact, they often look very much like our friend rather than our enemy (2 Cor. 11:12-15). This is the danger - they can look like ministers of light. How can we recognize them when they look like that? Answer: doctrines - vv. 3-4. Cp. 1 Tim. 4:1. Demonic doctrine shares all the characteristic likenesses of demons. It is weaponized; it is renown and well-financed; it is compatible with humans; it is dangerous; and it is cruel. We must take heed to ourselves and the doctrine we believe (1 Tim. 4:16).

III. The locust-scorpions have limitations that encourage (vv. 3-6).

Illustrations: I can remember crying the first time I read Bunyan's description of Christian's hand-to-hand combat with Apollyon. I think I had that reaction because I have been there. You have been too.

Apollyon threatens: "Prepare thyself to die; for I swear by my infernal den, that thou shalt go no farther: here will I spill thy soul. And, with that, he threw a flaming dart at his breast; but Christian had a shield in his hand, with which he caught it, and so prevented the danger of that. Then did Christian draw, for he saw it was time to bestir him; and Apollyon as fast made at him, throwing darts as thick as hail; by the which, notwithstanding all that Christian could do to avoid it, Apollyon wounded him in his head, his hand, and foot. This made Christian give a little back; Apollyon, therefore, followed his work again, and Christian again took courage, and resisted as manfully as he could. This sore combat lasted for above half a day, even till Christian was almost quite spent. For you must know, that Christian, by reason of his wounds, must needs grow weaker and weaker.

"Then Apollyon, espying his opportunity, began to gather up close to Christian, and, wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall; and, with that, Christian's sword flew out of his hand. Then said Apollyon, I am sure of thee now. And, with that, he had almost pressed him to death; so that Christian began to despair of life. But, as God would have it, while Apollyon was fetching his last blow, thereby to make a full end of this good man, Christian nimbly reached out his hand for his sword, and caught it, saying, 'Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise'; and, with that, gave him a deadly thrust, which made him give back, as one that had received his mortal wound. Christian, perceiving that, made at him again, saying, 'Nay,

in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.' And, with that, Apollyon spread forth his dragon's wings, and sped him away, that Christian saw him no more."

Application: Praise the Lord, our enemies have their limitations. Even the 5th trumpet judgment makes this clear.

A. During this judgment, demons are unable to act on their own (v. 1 – they do nothing until the trumpet sounds; v. 1 – a key must be given to the fallen star; v. 3 – authority is given to them; v. 4 – they are told not to harm plant life and they have to do what they are told; v. 4 – they are told not to harm the sealed 144,000 Jews, and they must obey; v. 5 – they are told to torture, not kill, and no one can die; vv. 5, 10 – they may do so for 5 months and no more). Just like Jesus told the demons to go into the pigs, He is in complete control of the limitations placed upon the locust-scorpions of this judgment. Jesus has an enemy in Satan, but not an equal. It is not even close. The limits of Satan's activity are always drawn by Jesus Christ.

B. Because of this, demons are unable to prevail against Christ's church (Matt. 16:18-19; Luke 10:16-24; Eph. 4:26-27; James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-10). Obey God; resist the devil; and he will flee from you. This is the promise of God.

C. Most importantly, demons are unable to save (v. 6). Paul used this word translated *desire* ("they shall desire to die") in Phil. 1:14, where he says of himself, "having a desire to depart and to be with Christ." During these 5 months of the tribulation, victims of the locust-scorpion demons cannot even die, let alone be saved. But death is no hope. Eternal life through salvation in Christ is the sinner's hope. Demons cannot save, but Christ can.

Conclusion: Today is very much unlike the time of the coming tribulation, even in the limitations of Satan. Today, the gates of hell do not prevail, and so during this age of the local church's ministry, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

"A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction – the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*