

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 2 THE EARTHLY DRAMA

STUDY SIX

Releasing Demons from the Abyss

Revelation 9:1–12

Because something is invisible is no reason to believe it isn't real. As a matter of fact, the longer I walk with Christ and the deeper I understand His Word, the more real the invisible becomes to me. The more I sense the conflict about me that I cannot see or hear or even feel, the more I want to stay away from anything that opens a door to demonic activity.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WE are at war. No, not at war with another nation or people group. After all, the apostle Paul said, “For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places” (*Ephesians 6:12*).

Many refuse to believe it. They say, “If I can't see it, then it can't be real.” Yet every day, Satan and his minions terrorize people across the world—including the very people who deny their existence.

So how do we fight an invisible enemy?

Thankfully, Scripture affirms that we aren't alone in the battle. Jesus fights with us . . . fights for us. And He assures us that His victory is already secure. Yet we must live in the tension of the already-but-not-yet of Jesus' triumph over Satan.

This *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study will look at the book of Revelation's introduction to the topic of spiritual warfare. Though we may not be able to see Satan physically, Scripture indeed affirms he is at work. As we witness the enemy working, we will equip ourselves to defend against his attacks in the war zone of life.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Spiritual warfare may feel foreign to you. It may even make you feel uncomfortable or anxious. Offer these feelings to God as you prepare to engage with this challenging topic. Ask Him to open your mind so you can learn what He wants to teach you.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In the second cycle of judgments in Revelation, seven angels obtained trumpets. As each angel blew his horn, the sound of God’s justice echoed across the earth. The first four trumpets brought *natural* disasters like hail and fire, blood-filled seas, and blinding darkness.

Yet even with such miraculous events, the people of the world still refused to turn to God in repentance. In fact, they made the choice to continue to “belong to this world” rather than join the family of God (*Revelation 8:13*).

So, in response, God continued with the fifth trumpet judgment. This time, the judgment took on a *supernatural* flair.



Observation: The Fifth Trumpet

As you read the account of the fifth judgment in *Revelation 9:1–12*, do your best to restrain your imagination. The judgments of Revelation sometimes push us toward speculation, but for now, focus on observation—what the text *says*.¹ Try to imagine John’s vision exactly as he described it.

According to *9:1–2*, what did John see when the fifth angel blew his trumpet? What did the heavenly star receive? What did it do with this object? What were the results of these actions?

Like exhaust pouring out of the tailpipe of an old truck, black smoke clouded the air when the angel opened this bottomless pit. Yet the smog signaled the arrival of something far more sinister. According to *9:3*, what came out of this pit next?

These grasshopper-like insects may seem harmless at first, but locusts can devastate a local community. These creatures reproduce rapidly and abundantly, and the swarms can migrate by the *millions*. As a blanket of locusts falls over a field, they can consume an entire season’s worth of crops in just a few hours.

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John's readers would have been familiar with the horrors of swarming locusts. The locusts in his vision, however, were different than the ones he and his readers knew so well. According to [Revelation 9:4](#), what were these locusts authorized to do and *not* to do? See [7:1–3](#). How is this function different from their normal behavior?

According to [9:5–6](#), how did people react to the presence of these locusts?

In the space below, summarize how John described the appearance of these locusts in [9:7–10](#). Remember, God gave John this vision, so he had to use natural language to describe supernatural images.

According to [9:11](#), who was the king or ruler of this swarm of locusts? Check out this verse in several Bible translations to get a sense of the meaning of his name.

What a horrifying picture! Torture, pain, and devastation, yet no release of death. But God was not yet done. John noted that two more “terrors” were yet to be unleashed upon the world ([Revelation 9:12](#)). The final two angels would each blow their trumpets, but not all hope would be lost. In fact, even in these dark verses, we can see some light shining through.

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Interpretation: A Swarm of Demons

The most pressing interpretive question [Revelation 9:1–12](#) raises is, “What do these locusts represent?” While many people have offered various interpretations, most scholars see these locusts as demonic beings.

What details in the passage help us see that these destructive creatures are demons rather than something else? What attributes do these demonic beasts share with locusts? Identify specific phrases from the passage. For some help, feel free to consult a commentary, like *Insights on Revelation* by Pastor Chuck or [Constable’s Notes](#) at netbible.org.²

What does this passage reveal about the *extent* of demonic power? What does it reveal about the *limits* of demonic power?

How can a follower of Jesus Christ maintain a disposition of hope despite the fact that spiritual warfare is a true—and often frightening—reality?

Demons have supernatural power because they are supernatural creatures, meaning the normal weapons of war will not hurt them. Their ability to move and to bring destruction is greater than you and I have seen with the human eye because they are not human. They are superhuman. They have a power from Satan himself. Yet they are not to hurt believers. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: Visions of Locusts

Throughout Scripture, locusts represent God's judgment. Early in Israel's history, God sent a plague of locusts against the Egyptians prior to the Israelites' deliverance (*Exodus 10:1–20*). Several centuries later, the prophet Joel announced a prophecy that would foreshadow this apocalyptic vision in Revelation.

Read *Joel 2:1–11* and summarize how this prophecy compares with *Revelation 9:1–12*. What is similar? What is different?

In Joel's prophecy, God leads this army of locusts against Jerusalem—toward His own people (see *Joel 2:1* and *2:11*). Yet He later balances His omen of judgment with a refrain of hope. Summarize the prophecy from *2:18–27*. How does this promise reverse the effects of the earlier locust judgment?

While Joel addressed the people of Israel, both he and John foresaw the locusts assaulting those who refused to repent. How does this correlation help us understand the purpose of these visions of locusts?

Horrible setting, isn't it? Dreadful. How wonderful it is for the child of God to know that, in trusting Christ, there is not only instantaneous forgiveness, but there is also the deliverance from the dominion and authority of Satan and sin over us. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: The Spiritual War

Revelation 9:1–12 teaches difficult truths about demons and about spiritual warfare. It's natural to feel afraid about demonic activity in this world. Yet we must never forget that, though Satan is the ruler of this world, Jesus is the King of creation. The truth of that hope eclipses our fears. In light of these realities, Pastor Chuck shares four points of application:

1. Though invisible, demons are real and aggressive.
2. Though innumerable, they are organized and committed to our destruction.
3. Though intimidating, they have limitations and can be restrained.
4. Though insidious, they bow before the sovereign Lord Jesus Christ.

How does your culture view the spiritual realm? What do you think about it? Do you tend to downplay the presence of demonic and angelic activity? Or do you think you might overemphasize its impact on your personal walk with God?

As you think back on your life, have you ever had a supernatural encounter with a demon? Remember, demons are subtle and insidious. You may not have noticed in that moment, but that attack may very well have been a *spiritual* attack. As you reflect on this moment, how do you sense God protected you from harm?

As a follower of Jesus, what role do you play in the age-old battle against Satan? What does it look like to “put on all of God’s armor” as you exist in enemy-occupied territory and await Christ’s return (*Ephesians 6:11*)?

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Every day, we engage in a conflict with Satan and his army of locusts. These demons may seem to have claimed a foothold on this world—and indeed their forces will only get stronger. Yet Revelation reminds us that Jesus—our redeemer, our protector, our King—will return to reclaim His creation. Indeed, we may be at war, but Jesus has already claimed the victory.

And we claim that same victory through faith in His name.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, help me to remember that we are engaged in a spiritual war—even though I cannot see it. When I feel like I'm losing the battle, remind me that I do not fight against flesh and blood. Remind me that You fight for me and that You've already won the war. Give me the strength and courage to live boldly for You in this needy, hostile, and desperate world. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Brad Smith, writer and content strategist, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2003, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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