REVELATION 9

The Abyss Opened: Hearts That Will Not Repent

“The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands”
REVELATION 9:20

Where John has brought us

1. The first four trumpets struck land, sea, fresh water and light — but only a third.

2. Up to now the trumpets have struck creation.



The Bottomless Pit Opened

A key is given, the smoke rises, and torment is let out — on a leash

REVELATION 9:6

And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik notes this star is a person — the key is given to him. Guzik leans toward an angel; whether good or evil depends on whether he is the angel of the abyss in verse 11.

WHAT IT MEANS

The pit does not open on its own. A key is “given” (v1), the locusts' power is “given” (v3), and they are “told” what they may and may not touch (v4).

ἄβυσσος

ABYSSOS · “BOTTOMLESS PIT”

The deep, the abyss — in the New Testament, the prison of demons. The demons begged Jesus not to send them there (Luke 8:31; compare 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6).

God's leash on the pit

WHO HOLDS THE KEY?

v1	The key of the pit is GIVEN — it opens only by God's permission
v4	Only those without the seal of God — not grass, not trees, not His own
v5	Not permitted to kill — torment only
vv5, 10	Five months — a set length, then it ends
v15	Released at the hour and day and month and year God prepared

Hell is let loose in chapter 9, but every move is given, limited and timed by God.

Locusts with a King

An army out of the pit, and the destroyer who leads it

REVELATION 9:7

The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.

DAVID GUZIK

These are not ordinary insects. Ordinary locusts eat green things; these are told not to touch grass or trees, but people.

WHAT IT MEANS

John piles up the word “like” — like horses, like gold, like the faces of men, like the hair of women, like the teeth of lions, like the sound of chariots. He is straining to describe something no one has seen.

Ἀπολλύων

APOLLYŌN · “DESTROYER”

The Greek name of the king of the locusts, “the angel of the abyss” (v11). John gives his Hebrew name too: Abaddon (G3), which means destruction (Job 26:6; Prov 15:11).

The Army from the Euphrates

Released from the golden altar, at the hour God appointed

REVELATION 9:13

Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik takes the four angels as evil, since they are bound, yet held for God's exact moment — the hour and day and month and year.

WHAT IT MEANS

Look at how precise God is: “prepared for the hour and day and month and year” (v15). Not one minute early, not one late.

κέρας
KERAS · “HORN”

A horn — and on an altar, its four corners, a symbol of power. The sixth trumpet's command comes “from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God” (v13).

They Did Not Repent

The survivors hold on to their idols, their drugs and their sins

REVELATION 9:20

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk;

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik says God's trumpets are meant to bring people to repentance, and the survivors refuse.

WHAT IT MEANS

This is the point of the chapter. The whole thing turns on the words “did not repent” (vv20, 21).

φαρμακεία

PHARMAKEIA · “SORCERIES”

Sorcery, magic arts, drugs and potions — the word our pharmacy comes from; the related pharmakon (G5332) is a drug or potion. In verse 21 it sits on the list right next to murder, immorality and theft.

What they would not turn from (9:20–21)

"DID NOT REPENT"

AGAINST GOD · v20

- worshiping demons
- idols of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood
- gods that can neither see nor hear nor walk
- the works of their hands

AGAINST PEOPLE · v21

- murders
- sorceries — pharmakeia, drugs and potions
- immorality — porneia
- thefts

Pain alone does not change a heart — only turning to God does.

The survivors cling to sins against God and sins against people — and pain alone does not change their hearts.

What to carry from this chapter

1

The key is given.

The pit opens only by God's permission; Satan as master of hell is foreign to Scripture.

2

A real prison.

Abyssos is the prison of demons — the place they begged Jesus not to send them.

3

The sealed are spared.

The locusts may hurt only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

4

Death is no escape.

Men will seek death and not find it — the answer to torment is the Savior.

More to carry

5

Named for what he does.

Abaddon and Apollyon both mean destruction; Jesus came to give life.

6

Exact to the hour.

The four bound angels are held for the hour and day and month and year God set.

7

Pharmakeia.

The word for sorceries gives us pharmacy; drugs and spiritual bondage go together.

8

Pain does not change a heart.

People go back to normal after a calamity; the survivors did not repent.

Talk it through

1. Who gives the key to the pit, and what does that tell you about who is really in control?

2. What three limits does God put on the locusts, and who is protected from them?

3. Why do you think men will long to die and death will flee from them — and what is the real answer to that kind of pain?

4. Where does the command to release the four angels come from, and why might that matter?

5. After all they have seen, what do the survivors refuse to turn from — and which of those still has a grip on men today?

CLOSING

The pit opened, the destroyer rode, and a third of mankind died — and the rest did not repent. Pain alone will not change a heart. God still holds the key and still marks His own; if He is warning you, don't sit through it unchanged. Turn to Jesus today.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

O·I·A study, slides, reflection journal and film: see the Revelation study page.