

Introduction

Revelation 9:1–12 ESV

¹ 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. ² 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. ³ Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. 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. ⁵ They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. 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. ⁷ In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, ⁸ their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; ⁹ they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. ¹⁰ They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails. ¹¹ 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. ¹² The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.

Opening Thoughts

Before we dive in to [Revelation 9](#), we need to get our bearings. Where are we in this book? What has John already seen? And most importantly, what lens should we use to read these difficult visions?

Many Christians avoid Revelation. They find it confusing or frightening. But the early church treasured this letter. It gave them hope during terrible persecution. The message was clear: God sees what you're suffering. He will make it right. Evil will not win.

We need to hear that same message today.

A. Review of Revelation's Structure

Think of Revelation as a series of visions that build on each other. John sees three sets of seven judgments: seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. Each series grows more intense. Each one brings us closer to the final victory of Christ.

We're now in the second series. The trumpet judgments began in chapter 8. The first four trumpets struck the natural world. A third of the earth burned. A third of the sea turned to blood. A third of the stars darkened. These judgments hit creation itself.

But now something changes. The fifth and sixth trumpets (chapters 9-11) shift their focus from nature to people. The intensity increases. And John marks this shift with a warning.

In [Revelation 8:13](#), an eagle flies overhead crying out: "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!" (ESV)

Three woes. Three final trumpets. We're about to study the first woe.

B. Understanding Apocalyptic Literature

Here's what we must understand: Revelation speaks in symbols. John isn't giving us a photograph. He's painting a picture.

The Jewish people knew this style of writing well. They called it apocalyptic literature. The Old Testament has examples. Daniel saw beasts rising from the sea with multiple heads and horns ([Daniel 7](#)). Ezekiel saw wheels covered with eyes ([Ezekiel 1](#)). Zechariah saw flying scrolls and women in baskets ([Zechariah 5](#)).

No one in the ancient world read these visions and thought, "I wonder what that literal ten-horned beast will look like." They understood the code. The symbols pointed to spiritual and political realities that couldn't be captured in plain speech.

John writes the same way. When he describes locusts with human faces, lion's teeth, and scorpion tails, he's using vivid imagery to describe spiritual realities. The original readers would have recognized the Old Testament echoes. They would have understood the meaning behind the symbols.

Our job is to ask: What is John trying to show us? What truth is this symbol revealing?

We also need to remember John's purpose. He wrote to seven churches in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). These believers faced persecution from Rome. Some had been killed. Others lost their businesses. All of them felt pressure to compromise their faith.

Revelation gave them hope. It pulled back the curtain on reality. Yes, Rome looks powerful. But God is more powerful. Yes, evil seems to be winning. But God's victory is certain. Hold on. Don't give up. Your suffering matters, and God will judge those who harm His people.

This is still the message for us today.

C. The Heart of God in Judgment

Now we come to the hard part. How do we read passages about judgment without losing sight of God's character?

Here's the key: God's judgments are not random acts of rage. They flow from His love for what is right and His grief over what is wrong.

Think about it this way. If you truly love someone, you hate the things that hurt them. God loves His creation. He loves the people He made in His image. And He hates the sin, rebellion, and evil that tear them apart. His judgments are not vindictive. They are corrective. He allows consequences because consequences can wake people up.

Peter wrote: "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9, ESV).

God delays final judgment because He wants people to turn back to Him. Every warning is an invitation. Every consequence is a chance to change course.

Think of the Exodus. God sent ten plagues on Egypt. Each plague grew worse than the last. But God's purpose wasn't simply to punish Egypt. He wanted Pharaoh to let the people go. Each plague was an opportunity for Pharaoh to repent. "Let my people go" echoed through each judgment.

Pharaoh refused. And his refusal brought more severe consequences.

The same pattern appears in Revelation. The judgments escalate. The warnings grow louder. But the purpose remains the same: to call people to repentance before it's too late.

We'll see this clearly at the end of Revelation 9. After all the horror of the fifth and sixth trumpets, John writes: "The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent..." (Revelation 9:20, ESV).

God's heart breaks when people refuse to turn. He doesn't delight in judgment. He delights in mercy.

The prophet Ezekiel heard God say: "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?" ([Ezekiel 18:23](#), ESV).

We need to keep this in mind as we study [Revelation 9](#). These are hard verses. The imagery is disturbing. But behind every judgment stands a God who is both perfectly just and deeply loving. He loves the world too much to let evil destroy it forever. And He loves people too much to let them walk blindly toward destruction without warning them.

That's the heart we must see as we read these passages.

Verse by Verse

A. The Fallen Star and the Abyss (v. 1-2)

Revelation 9:1-2 ESV

¹ 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. ² 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.

1. Old Testament Background

John isn't inventing new imagery here. He's drawing from a deep well of Old Testament passages that his readers would have recognized immediately.

The Fallen Star

Stars falling from heaven appear several times in Scripture. But they rarely refer to actual astronomical objects. They usually point to spiritual beings or human rulers who have fallen from their position.

The most famous passage comes from [Isaiah 14:12](#):

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!" (ESV)

In context, Isaiah is mocking the king of Babylon. This proud ruler thought he could exalt himself above God. He wanted to "ascend to heaven" and "sit on the mount of assembly" ([Isaiah 14:13](#)). But God brought him down. His fall was total and humiliating.

But the early church saw something deeper in this passage. The language goes beyond any human king. The pride described here mirrors the original rebellion of Satan himself. Jesus seems to confirm this connection in [Luke 10:18](#), when He tells His disciples: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (ESV).

So when John sees a star fallen from heaven, the original readers would have thought immediately of spiritual rebellion and divine judgment.

The Hebrew word translated "Day Star" in Isaiah is *helel*, which means "shining one" or "light-bearer." The Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint) translated this as *heosphoros*, meaning "dawn-bringer." Later, the Latin Vulgate used the word *lucifer*, which also means "light-bearer."

This is why some translations call the fallen star "Lucifer." It's not a proper name in the original text. It's a description of someone who once shone brightly but fell into darkness.

The Abyss

The word translated "bottomless pit" in the ESV is the Greek word *abyssos*. It literally means "without bottom" or "unfathomable depth." This word appears seven times in Revelation and always refers to the same place: the prison of demonic forces.

The Old Testament hints at this place. In [Genesis 1:2](#), the Spirit of God hovers over the "deep" (Hebrew *tehom*, Greek *abyssos*). This is the formless, chaotic darkness before God speaks creation into order. The abyss represents the opposite of God's ordered creation. It's a place of chaos, darkness, and evil.

The Psalms also mention this deep place. [Psalm 107:26](#) describes sailors whose ships drop "down to the depths" (Hebrew *tehom*). The word carries connotations of danger and terror.

But the clearest picture comes from [Luke 8:31](#). Jesus encounters a man possessed by many demons. When Jesus commands the demons to leave, they beg Him "not to command them to depart into the abyss" (ESV). The demons fear this place. They know it's a prison they cannot escape.

Paul mentions the abyss in [Romans 10:7](#), asking rhetorically, "Who will descend into the abyss?" He's making the point that we don't need to journey to this unreachable place because Christ has already conquered death and the realm of the dead.

So the abyss isn't hell (Greek *gehenna*), the lake of fire mentioned later in [Revelation 20:14-15](#). The abyss is a temporary holding place for demons. Hell is the final destination of Satan, demons, and all who reject God.

The Smoke

Smoke rising like a great furnace also echoes the Old Testament. When God appeared to Abraham to make His covenant, "a smoking fire pot" passed between the pieces of the sacrifice ([Genesis 15:17](#), ESV). When God descended on Mount Sinai to give the law, "Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln" ([Exodus 19:18](#), ESV).

Smoke in Scripture often signals God's presence and power. But here the smoke comes from the abyss, not from heaven. This is smoke that darkens rather than illuminates. It obscures the sun rather than reveals God's glory.

The imagery also recalls the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. After God rained down fire and sulfur, Abraham "looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace" ([Genesis 19:28](#), ESV).

John's readers would have caught all these references. A fallen star. The abyss opening. Smoke like a furnace. Each detail pointed them back to God's past judgments and His power over spiritual forces.

2. What This Means

Now let's pull the meaning together.

God Remains Sovereign

Notice the careful wording in verse 1: the star "was given" the key. John doesn't say the star took the key or stole it. Someone gave it to him. The passive voice here (common in Revelation) points to God as the giver.

This is crucial. Even a fallen spiritual being cannot act without God's permission. The key to the abyss belongs to God. He alone decides when it opens and what comes out.

This same truth appears in the book of Job. Satan cannot touch Job until God permits it. God sets the boundaries: "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand" ([Job 1:12](#), ESV). Later God loosens the restriction slightly: "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life" ([Job 2:6](#), ESV).

Satan is on a leash. Demons are locked in prison until God releases them for His purposes. This should comfort us. No evil force operates outside God's control.

Nothing Happens by Accident

The opening of the abyss is not a cosmic accident. God permits it at a specific time for a specific purpose. What comes out of the abyss will serve God's plan, even though the beings themselves are evil.

We see this pattern throughout Scripture. God used the Assyrians to judge Israel ([Isaiah 10:5-6](#)). He used the Babylonians to discipline Judah ([Jeremiah 25:9](#)). He even used the Roman authorities to crucify His Son ([Acts 4:27-28](#)). In each case, evil people did evil things. But God was working through their rebellion to accomplish His purposes.

God doesn't cause evil. But He permits it and uses it. And He always sets limits.

Even Demons Serve God's Purposes

This is hard for us to grasp. How can holy God use unholy beings to accomplish His will?

Think of it this way. A judge in a courtroom uses the testimony of criminals to convict other criminals. The judge doesn't approve of crime. But he uses even the words of guilty people to establish justice.

God does something similar. He allows demonic forces limited freedom to test, refine, and judge humanity. Their actions reveal what's in people's hearts. And their destructive nature demonstrates the consequences of rebellion against God.

Later in Revelation, we'll see that even the beasts and false prophets and demonic armies ultimately serve to bring about God's final victory. They think they're fighting against God. But they're actually fulfilling His plan.

This is what theologians call God's sovereignty. Nothing catches Him by surprise. Nothing spins out of His control. Even the darkest spiritual forces move only within the boundaries He sets.

We serve a God who is both powerful enough to control all things and careful enough to set exact boundaries on evil. That should give us confidence as we read these difficult passages.

B. The Locusts from the Abyss (v. 3-6)

Revelation 9:3-6 ESV

³ Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. 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. ⁵ They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. 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.

1. Old Testament Echoes

The Book of Joel

When first-century Jews heard about a locust plague, they immediately thought of Joel.

Joel described a devastating locust invasion, but he wasn't just reporting agricultural news. He was using the locusts as a picture of coming judgment:

"A day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations." (Joel 2:2, ESV)

Joel continues: "Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like war horses they run...like a powerful army drawn up for battle." (Joel 2:4-5, ESV)

We'll see this same imagery when John describes the locusts. They look like horses prepared for battle.

But here's what matters most. Joel doesn't end with judgment. He ends with an invitation:

"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster." (Joel 2:12-13, ESV)

The locusts come as a warning. They're meant to drive people back to God. The judgment is severe, but it's not final. There's still time to repent.

The Exodus Plague

The other clear reference is to the eighth plague on Egypt. God sent locusts that covered everything and ate everything. Egypt was devastated.

But notice God's purpose in Exodus 10:2: "that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD" (ESV).

The plagues revealed God's identity. Each plague gave Pharaoh another opportunity to submit. Each one grew more severe because Pharaoh's heart grew harder.

The same pattern appears in Revelation. These trumpet judgments are warnings building toward a final decision. Will people repent or will they harden their hearts like Pharaoh?

2. The Nature of This Judgment

Look carefully at the boundaries God sets. Three times John uses language that shows strict divine control. The locusts "were given power" (v. 3). They "were told" what not to harm (v. 4). They "were allowed" to torment for a limited time (v. 5).

Notice: given, told, allowed. This is not chaos. This is controlled judgment with clear rules.

Limited in Scope (v. 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."

Real locusts eat vegetation. But these locusts are forbidden to touch any plant. Their target is specific: people without God's seal.

This tells us two things. First, these are not natural locusts. John is describing something spiritual. Second, God protects His own. Those who bear God's mark are safe.

This echoes Revelation 7:3-4 and Ezekiel 9:4. God marked His people before the judgments began. When God judged Egypt, He protected Israel. When the destroyer passed through Egypt, he passed over houses marked with lamb's blood (Exodus 12:23).

God's people may live in a world under judgment, but they do not experience God's wrath. Paul wrote: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1, ESV).

Limited in Duration (v. 5)

"They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them."

Five months. Not forever. God sets a time limit. The torment will not continue indefinitely. This is grace within judgment.

Think of Job. Satan could afflict Job only for a limited time and in limited ways. When God's purpose was accomplished, the suffering ended.

Limited in Intensity (v. 5)

"They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them."

The locusts can torment, but they cannot kill. Why? Because torment can lead to repentance in a way that death cannot. Once someone dies in their sins, the opportunity for repentance is gone.

C.S. Lewis wrote, "Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

The torment is "like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone" (v. 5). The pain is intense but not usually fatal. That's the picture here. Real suffering, but suffering with a purpose: to bring people to their senses before it's too late.

3. The Torment Described (v. 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."

Life Without God

What kind of suffering makes people want to die? John is describing more than physical pain. He's describing spiritual anguish. This is what it feels like when people finally experience life completely separated from God's grace.

Right now, even rebellious people benefit from God's common grace. The sun rises on the evil and the good ([Matthew 5:45](#)). People who mock God still breathe His air and experience moments of joy.

But what happens when God removes His restraining hand? When people get exactly what they've been asking for: life without God? They discover it's unbearable.

When these locusts torment people, they're giving them a taste of that reality. This is what you've chosen. This is life in rebellion against God.

The Inability to Escape

But here's the terrible twist: "death will flee from them."

They want out. They're willing to die to make it end. But they can't. They're trapped in the consequences of their choices.

This echoes the rich man in Jesus' parable ([Luke 16:19-31](#)). In torment, he begged for relief. But Abraham told him a great chasm had been fixed that no one could cross ([Luke 16:26](#)).

The choices we make have consequences we cannot undo.

A Warning for Today

We see glimpses of this torment in our world today. People chase pleasure but find emptiness. Addiction traps people in torment they cannot escape.

But here's the difference. In our world today, hope still exists. God's grace is still available. People can still cry out for help and find it. The door of repentance is still open.

The torment of verse 6 is meant to be a warning to us now. Turn back to God while you still can. Don't harden your heart until you can no longer feel conviction.

The purpose of this passage is not to scare us into submission. It's to wake us up to reality. Life without God is not freedom. It's torment. And God loves us too much to let us walk into that future without warning us first.

C. The Description of the Locusts (v. 7-10)

Revelation 9:7-10 ESV

⁷ In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, ⁸ their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; ⁹ they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. ¹⁰ They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails.

1. Understanding the Symbolism

John piles image upon image here. Horses. Crowns. Human faces. Women's hair. Lions' teeth. Iron breastplates. Chariot noise. Scorpion tails.

This is not a biology lesson. John is not trying to describe what these creatures literally look like. He's doing what apocalyptic writers always do: using vivid symbolic language to communicate spiritual truth.

Think about how we speak today. We say someone "fought like a lion" or "was sneaky as a snake." We don't mean they literally became an animal. We're using imagery to capture character and behavior.

John does the same thing, but he layers the images to create a composite picture. Each detail adds to our understanding.

"Like horses prepared for battle"

This comes straight from Joel 2:4: "Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like war horses they run" (ESV).

Horses in the ancient world meant military power. A nation with cavalry had a huge advantage in battle. Horses were fast, powerful, and terrifying to face.

These locusts move like a cavalry charge. They're organized, powerful, and unstoppable. This is not a scattered swarm. This is a military assault.

"Crowns of gold"

The Greek word here is *stephanos*, which refers to a victor's crown, not a royal crown (*diadema*). This is the wreath given to winners of athletic contests or military victories.

These locusts appear victorious. They look like conquerors. They seem to have authority and power.

But notice John's careful wording: "what looked like crowns of gold." They're not actually wearing crowns. They just appear to be. This is false authority. These are defeated beings masquerading as victors.

"Faces like human faces"

Human faces suggest intelligence and personality. These are not mindless insects acting on instinct. They're purposeful. They have intent.

This detail makes the vision more disturbing. We can dismiss insects. But beings with human faces demand our attention. They're personal, not impersonal.

"Hair like women's hair"

Some commentators suggest this refers to the antennae of locusts, which can look like flowing hair. Others think it refers to seduction and attraction. In the ancient world, long flowing hair was associated with beauty and allure.

The point may be that these beings are deceptively attractive. They don't initially appear as monsters. There's something appealing about them, something that draws people in before the sting comes.

"Teeth like lions' teeth"

This image comes directly from Joel 1:6: "For a nation has come up against my land, powerful and beyond number; its teeth are lions' teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness" (ESV).

Lions' teeth speak of destructive power. Lions tear and devour. These locusts have the capacity to destroy whatever they bite into.

"Breastplates of iron"

Breastplates protect vital organs. Iron was the strongest metal commonly available in the ancient world. Roman soldiers wore iron armor.

These locusts are protected. They're invulnerable to human weapons. You cannot fight them off. You cannot defend yourself against them.

"Noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle"

Again, this echoes Joel 2:5: "As with the rumbling of chariots, they leap on the tops of the mountains" (ESV).

The sound alone would terrify. Imagine hearing thousands of chariots thundering toward you. The ground shakes. The noise is deafening. There's no escape.

"Tails and stings like scorpions"

Here's where the physical description connects back to their function. The sting is in the tail. That's where their power to torment comes from.

Scorpion stings are painful but rarely fatal. The venom causes intense burning pain, swelling, and numbness. The pain can last for days.

These locusts combine the swarming power of an army with the individual sting of a scorpion. They attack in mass, but each one inflicts personal torment.

2. The Point of the Imagery

We could spend hours debating what each detail means. But we might miss the forest for the trees.

Step back and look at the whole picture. What is John communicating?

This is spiritual oppression

These locusts represent demonic forces released from the abyss. They picture the internal torment that comes when people persistently reject God.

The Apostle Paul wrote about people who reject God: "And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done" (Romans 1:28, ESV).

When people continually say no to God, He eventually gives them what they want. He withdraws His restraining hand. And the result is spiritual bondage that feels like this vision: powerful, inescapable, tormenting.

Sin and rebellion lead to bondage, not freedom

Our culture tells us that freedom means doing whatever we want. Throw off God's rules. Live for yourself. Follow your heart.

But that's not what happens. Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin" (John 8:34, ESV).

Sin promises freedom but delivers slavery. It promises pleasure but brings pain. It looks attractive at first but it has teeth like a lion and a sting like a scorpion.

These locusts picture what rebellion against God actually produces: a terrifying, painful bondage that people cannot escape on their own.

We cannot fight spiritual forces with human strength

Notice the breastplates of iron. These beings are protected against human resistance. You cannot defeat them in your own strength.

Paul wrote: "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12, ESV).

The battle is spiritual. And spiritual battles require spiritual weapons. Paul goes on to describe the armor of God: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God (Ephesians 6:14-17).

Human willpower cannot break demonic bondage. Human philosophy cannot answer spiritual emptiness. Human effort cannot earn God's favor. We need God Himself to rescue us.

Don't get lost in the details

John isn't giving us a field guide to demons. He's painting a picture of the horror of life under spiritual oppression.

The specific details matter less than the overall impact. This is terrifying. This is powerful. This is inescapable without God's intervention.

That's the point.

D. Their King: Abaddon/Apollyon (v. 11-12)

Revelation 9:11-12 ESV

¹¹ 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. ¹² The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.

1. The Names

John gives us this king's name in two languages: Hebrew and Greek. This tells us he wants both Jewish and Gentile readers to understand exactly who this is.

Abaddon (Hebrew: אַבְדֹּן)

Abaddon means "destruction" or "place of destruction." It appears six times in the Old Testament, always referring to the realm of the dead or the grave.

Job 26:6: "Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering" (ESV).

Job 28:22: "Abaddon and Death say, 'We have heard a rumor of it with our ears'" (ESV).

Proverbs 15:11: "Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD" (ESV).

Proverbs 27:20: "Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and never satisfied are the eyes of man" (ESV).

In these passages, Abaddon is a place. But here in Revelation, John personifies it. The place of destruction becomes the king of destruction.

Apollyon (Greek: Ἀπολλύων)

Apollyon means "destroyer." It comes from the Greek verb *apollymi*, which means "to destroy utterly" or "to perish."

This same root appears throughout the New Testament. Jesus said, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy (*apolesai*) both soul and body in hell" ([Matthew 10:28](#), ESV).

John uses both names to make sure everyone gets the point. Whether you speak Hebrew or Greek, whether you're Jewish or Gentile, you need to know: this king's nature is destruction.

2. The Contrast

John wants us to see a sharp contrast between two kingdoms and two kings.

Satan's kingdom brings destruction

Abaddon. Apollyon. Destruction. Destroyer. Everything about this king's identity centers on tearing down, ruining, and annihilating.

This is what Satan does. Jesus called him "a murderer from the beginning" ([John 8:44](#), ESV). Peter warned: "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" ([1 Peter 5:8](#), ESV).

The locusts serve a king whose very name is Destruction. And they do what their king does: they destroy.

Christ's kingdom brings life

Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" ([John 10:10](#), ESV).

The contrast couldn't be clearer. Satan steals, kills, and destroys. Jesus gives life, abundant life, eternal life.

Satan's kingdom is Abaddon—the place of destruction. Christ's kingdom is eternal life with God.

Satan's subjects experience torment and seek death. Christ's subjects experience peace and find life.

3. The Choice

Every person serves one of two masters. There's no neutral ground. Jesus said, "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters" (Matthew 11:30, ESV).

You either belong to the King of Life or the king of destruction. You either bear the seal of God or you face the torment of those who reject Him.

The good news is that the choice is still yours. Right now, today, you can choose which king you'll serve.

The locusts in Revelation 9 torment "those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads" (v. 4). But the invitation to receive that seal is still open. The door of repentance is still available.

Paul wrote: "Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2, ESV).

Don't wait. Don't assume you'll have another chance later. The time to choose is now.

Choose the King who gives life. Choose Jesus. Choose freedom over bondage, hope over despair, life over destruction.

That's the message hidden in this difficult passage. Yes, judgment is coming. Yes, those who reject God will face terrible consequences. But the alternative is still available. Life is still offered. Salvation is still free.

Choose wisely.