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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

If you're here today the first time in a while, you may feel a little bit confused, because it's kind of hard to understand this one message without hearing it in the context of all the others.

Let me give you a little perspective. We believe Jesus Christ is going to come back to this planet and "Rapture the Church." That means all true Christians are going to be caught up just like Elijah was caught up into heaven on a fiery chariot in the Old Testament. According to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, Christians will be caught up to be with the Lord and all of the ones we love who died and are Christians will be caught up to be with us in heaven. This can happen at any moment! When's it going to happen? I don't know. There are some people who try to set a date and tell you exactly when it is going to happen, but I am not on the scheduling committee I am on the welcoming committee. I just want to be here to welcome Him when it happens. It's going to happen in an instant. If the Lord waits until about the year 2000 then you can just write it down there are going to be individuals and groups who are going say there is something special about the year 2000. A thousand years ago at the end of the first millennium, 1000 A.D., churches were filled on New Year's Eve on the night it went from 999 to 1000, thinking that was the time Jesus was going to come back. It doesn't have to be the year 1000. It doesn't have to be the year 2000. It could happen before the year 2000. Only the Lord knows when it is going to happen but it is going to happen!

After Jesus comes and raptures the Church all true born again Christians will be in heaven. This is what the Bible teaches and that's what we are studying now in Revelation. There will be a seven-year period of terrible tribulation and crisis on the earth led by a one-world ruler whom the Bible calls the Antichrist. We don't know who he is now. There will be terrible judgments poured out by God upon the earth. I don't really enjoy reading it because it depicts such severe wrath and judgement. The title of the message tonight is, "Life and Death on Earth During the Tribulation." As we study this, remember, during the entire sermon if you are a Christian, you will not be here during this time! Why are we even studying it? Because it is in God's Word and we believe every word of God's Word is profitable and we are committed to studying it verse after verse.

God's judgement poured out on earth is pictured symbolically in Revelation by three series of sevens. Seven seals on a book are opened, and the seventh seal leads into seven trumpets. Last week we studied the first four trumpets and there are three more left. Tonight we'll look at trumpets 5 and 6. It is a picture of an angel blowing a trumpet announcing judgement. Each angel announces a judgement to come.

John says in Revelation 9:1-12, "The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft [or the door] of the Abyss. [or the pit] When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads." We studied that God put a seal on the foreheads of

144,000 Jewish evangelists so they could not be hurt. That's whom he is talking about here. They'll hurt everybody except them.

"They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them." Things are going to be so bad, people will try to commit suicide and be unsuccessful.

In verse 7 there is a description of the locusts: It's like a bad dream after eating doughnuts and chili and taking a ride on a roller coaster. "The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces." Remember I told you every time you are studying Revelation, whenever he uses those words, "resembled" or "were like" that's where you bring in symbolism—it's not literal. "Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek Apollyon." [which means "the destroyer"] The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.

I. THE FIFTH TRUMPET: AN ARMY FROM HELL

The first thing I want to talk about is the fifth trumpet, and it is literally an army from Hell, because the bottomless pit is opened up. In chapter 9:1, it talks about a star that has fallen. Do you remember the last chapter talked about stars and heavenly bodies but they are not personified? This is. That's the key to interpreting it, because it says, "*he* was given a key" "*he* opened the Abyss." Some people think that this is the devil, but I don't. I think this is just an ordinary angel. By the way, many times in the Bible angels are referred to like stars when they are personified. This angel has a key to the pit. What is the Abyss? What is the pit? That is where the Bible says demons reside, where they are kept waiting until the time when they will be set loose. Do you remember a few weeks ago when I was preaching from Mark about the "demon-possessed man." and how those demons said to Jesus, "Don't send us into the pit before our appointed time." That's the same thing they are talking about. That word, Abyss or pit, appears nine times in the New Testament—seven times here in the book of Revelation.

I think this is the same angel who is pictured in Revelation 20:1-3, "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss, and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time." Back to Revelation 9. I think the angel here is also the angel pictured in Revelation 20. It is an angel who has been given the key to this pit where these demons are kept in reserve and he lets them out on the earth. Let's be thankful to God tonight there are not more demons released on this earth than there are right now. There are many, many more held in reserve until this time. This is going to be a veritable army, and they are coming.

1. Demonic army from the pit appears as a swarm of locusts

There are three things about this demonic army. Number one, they appear as a swarm of locusts. We can't really relate to locusts because most of us have never seen a swarm of locusts, but John describes them as locusts because in biblical times and even today in some parts of the world a swarm of locusts is millions upon millions of locusts that cover the sky, blocking out the sun. They are little grasshoppers, sometimes big grasshoppers, and they eat anything green. You've seen in the movies how a swarm of locusts will pass over a forest and in their path there is nothing green left: every leaf, every blade of grass, everything green has been eaten up and they leave devastation in their wake. That's why he describes this army that way, because there is a whole cloud of them coming up out of the pit.

You can stand outside the main entrance of Carlsbad Caverns, New Mexico at about sunset and you can see a swarm of bats—millions of them fly out of Carlsbad Caverns and it is such a cloud of bats, that they look like a dark cloud blocking out the sunset. So it is as John pictures this in his vision; he says that's what it looks like. Locusts were the only thing he had to compare it to.

2. They have power to inflict terrible pain for five months

The second thing about this army is they have power to inflict terrible pain for five months. Even in this time they are limited by God. You see God is in control. He says, “You guys cannot kill anybody but you can cause them to suffer.” the word there means “torture for five months,” a specific period of time. Why are they described like scorpions? We don't see a whole lot of scorpions. We see a few here in Texas and as you get down toward the Mexican border, there are more. In fact, I read just this week as I was studying for this that every year more people in the Valley die from scorpion stings than from snakebites. Scorpions are really insects belonging to the arachnid (spider) family. Scorpions range in length from one inch to six inches long. They have long, coiled tails with a sharp stinger in it and in that stinger is a neurotoxin different than venom. When a scorpion strikes its prey, the neurotoxin attacks the nervous system and when people die from a scorpion sting, it is oftentimes not from the venom itself. The neurotoxin causes their throat muscles to constrict and many times they choke to death. What a terrible torture that is! So if God is trying to describe the pain this army inflicts on people, he describes it as the pain in the sting of scorpions.

3. They are led by “the Destroyer”

Number three. It is very obvious this army is led by “the destroyer.” Look at that phrase, “Abaddon” in verse 11, the Greek “Apollyon.” Someone said that this is the word used for Satan himself who is “the destroyer.” That's what Satan wants to do. You see that's the difference between God and Satan. Jesus said in John 10:10 “The thief.” the devil “comes to kill, steal and destroy.” but Jesus said, “I've come that you might have life, and you might have it more abundantly.” The devil wants to destroy anything good about your life. So he's the leader of this demonic army. As they are described there in verse 7 and forward, it's amazing the way they look! How are they going to be? It's just hard to imagine, but it's going to be a demonic army so awful they are going to inflict pain on many, many people on the earth during the Tribulation.

II. THE SIXTH TRUMPET: DEATH ANGELS ARE RELEASED

With the sixth trumpet we see death angels are released. "The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.' And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number. The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions," There's that word "resembled" again. They weren't lion heads, they looked like it. "And out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur [The King James Version says "brimstone"] A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke, and sulfur [brimstone] that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury." This is what we learn about this sixth trumpet and it gets worse. Have you noticed how each one of these trumpets gets worse and worse and worse and each one of the seals got harder and harder and we have yet to see the "bowls of wrath." Each one gets more and more terrible.

This is a picture of the four death angels released. These are special angels created seemingly for no other reason than for this. It says in verse 14? "They were held at the river Euphrates. And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind." There are not quite six billion people on earth right now. What if there are one billion Christians? Some estimates say there are one billion Christians in the world. When Jesus comes back, one billion Christians are raptured if there are one billion true born again believers. We don't know. That leaves five billion. Earlier in one of the seals judgments, a fourth of the world died during that judgement so, there were over a billion killed there. In this single judgement, one third of the world's population is killed. It boggles the imagination but this is exactly what the apostle John saw. He says, "these four angels." these death angels and by the way this isn't the first time we learn about death angels. In the Old Testament God sent a death angel to Egypt who passed over the homes where the blood of the Lamb had been put on the doorpost because they were protected by the blood.

You don't ever have to worry about death or death angels. If you are protected by the blood of Jesus Christ, judgement passes over you. That's the good news. These death angels apparently are going to employ an army of two hundred million. Isn't that amazing? That's a big army. The greatest army in ancient history was the army of Xerxes of Greece who had one and a half million soldiers. At that time, it was the most massive army in the world. In World War II there were twelve million soldiers. Can you imagine an army of two hundred million? Someone said, "An army of two hundred million men would stretch one mile wide and eighty-seven miles long." quite an army! There are those who say the only nation on earth today that could mount an army of two hundred million people is China. Whether it's going to be from one nation or a combination of many nations, we don't know but that's the number that's given. This is what the Bible teaches as the method of their killing. It talks about how these warriors look like horses, that's the only thing John had to relate to, horses and soldiers. "They had head like lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and sulfur; it came out of the front of them and the back of them" and the sound of them was the "sound of much noise." It doesn't take much imagination

for me to close my eyes and picture what he is talking about and think that he very well could be talking about fighter jets! They fly in the air and they have power out of their mouths you know the front of a jet is open like a lion's mouth. There are many people who speculate that it's what John is seeing. Of course, thousands of years ago he had no point of reference to talk about. He just described it the best he could. We don't know exactly what it is, but we know the devastation and the destruction is going to be great! Every time I read this I am just thankful that I am not going to be here. Amen! I thank God I am going to be in heaven!

I have rushed through those first two trumpets because I want to spend the rest of the time on the last two verses in the chapter. How do you think people on earth are going to react judgement after judgement after judgement after judgement? Thousands of people are killed. There are signs in the sky. There is environmental damage there are all kinds of disasters happening. What do you think is going to be the reaction of mankind? Don't you think they are going to fall on their knees and say, "God we've learned our lesson! We repent!" Do you think they are going to do that? That's the third thing we want to talk about.

III. THE RELOCATION OF THE SURVIVORS

Number three. Notice the reaction of the survivors. How are those who remain on the earth who are not killed going to react when this happens? Look at verse 20. "The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts." Can you imagine that? God's judgement being poured out and mankind hardening his heart more and more against God, shaking his fist in God's face, refusing to repent. Notice some of the sins of the Tribulation and that's one reason I believe we are very close to it, because the sins that are described here in Revelation 9, are the sins of America today!

1. The sin of false worship

Notice five of the sins he mentions here. Number one is the sin of false worship. "They did not repent of worshiping demons." Amazingly, it is the devil that is killing them and torturing them. The demonic army is destroying them, yet they still worship demonic forces. I don't have to tell you there is Satan worship happening in Tyler, Texas tonight. We have a dear saint in our church, a born again believer who is covered by the blood of Jesus Christ who used to be a part of that and he is still receiving threats from the church of Satan. These Satan worshipers have threatened to kill this saint but, I want to say publicly that Jesus Christ is stronger than all the forces of Satan and that saint does not have to be afraid nor do we have to be afraid because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world. I want to tell you. It's going on right now and you may not know it. Parents, some of you may not know it, but some of the music—not all—but some of the music your kids are listening to, particularly acid rock and heavy metal is really plugged into demon worship. If you don't believe me, get the lyrics. Take the tape or the CD packages and read the lyrics of the songs. It's there. Of the three teenage suicides I have heard of lately, all three cases these young people were heavy into heavy metal music. That's exactly what the devil wants to do, get anybody to do to take their own life to destroy themselves. I heard a group of little girls talking their slumber party and they got bored and wanted to do

something, so they lit a candle and they all held hands around in a circle and they tried to call back the spirit of one of their aunts who had died. When I heard that, I just about had a fit. I said, "Girls. No! No! No! Don't even mess around with that kind of stuff!" I told them. "Don't play with a Ouija Board or have anything to do with Tarot Cards. Don't have anything to do with it because the Bible talks about that as the worship of demons and the involvement of demons." and I said, "You run away from that as fast as you can!" It's in the world today. Anybody who is looking for any other source of direction and revelation other than God is plugging into another supernatural force, which is of the devil. I don't know about you, but every time I drive down the road and I see one of these big Palms that say, "Palm Readers," most of the time I point my finger at it and say out loud, "I rebuke you in the name of Jesus." And you ought to do the same thing. The Bible says during the Tribulation it's going to be even worse. They are going to continue to do that.

2. The sin of murder

The second sin is all right here in the scripture, verse 21. "Nor did they repent of their murders." Really, what is our world coming to? I don't want to preach an "Ain't It Awful!" sermon but with the increase of violence in our schools, kids are taking guns to school wanting to blow away their classmates when they get a little angry. Did you read what's happening in the trial out on the West Coast about these people who dragged the truck driver out of his rig and beat him up in the riots that took place after the Rodney King verdict was announced? The defense attorneys are saying they are not to blame; it was just the result of "mob mindset." I ask you, have things gotten so bad in our country that violent behavior can be excused away simply because they were part of a mob? It is getting worse and worse. Murders are on the increase. I'm not necessarily talking about somebody taking a gun and shooting somebody else. We as Americans are guilty of one and a half million murders a year by putting to death 4,000 unborn babies every day who have no opportunity to cry out and say, "Let me live!" Don't you think God is going to judge America for that? I believe he is. Murders!

3. The sin of sorcery

Number three, and this is very interesting. It says in the New International Version, "their magical arts." the King James Version says "sorcery." It is the Greek word *pharmakeia*. You don't have to have a college degree to know what the word *pharmakeia* stands for. It means pharmacy, drugs. Witchcraft or sorcery in the Bible had to do with potions and drugs and medicines and things like that. What this is talking about is during the time of the Tribulation drug abuse is going to continue to be a massive problem as it is today. I don't have to tell you what the problem is with cocaine and crack but I do know there is a bigger problem in America for prescription drugs than there is for illegal drugs. I'm talking about people who go to a doctor and get prescriptions. They have to take a pill to go to sleep. They have to take a pill to get up they have to take a pill to settle down. I'm not talking about people who have real medical problems you have to have medicine for and you know who you are. If your doctor tells you to take it, you need to take it. I'm talking about those people who are addicted to medicines even though they may have a prescription for it. That's *pharmakeia*, depending on some other source for help other than God.

4. Sexual sins

Number four. This is no surprise to you but sexual sins. Sexual immorality is the Greek word *porneia*. We get our word pornography from that. Is there any surprise during the time of Tribulation even though a third of the world has been killed there is still going to be an increase in sexual promiscuity? Just this week I read in the *Dallas Morning News* a report of a survey given to teenagers in high schools in America and you know this is the first time I have seen this phrase. You know parents and teachers it used to be they surveyed teenagers and asked them about premarital sex and how many of them had been involved in premarital sex. How many have not. There's a whole new ballgame a whole new vernacular now and the phrase that I saw for the first time now they are asking teenagers now about unprotected sex and protected sex. Those are the categories. It's no longer who abstains and who doesn't now the big question that they are asking is "who does it with protection" and "who does it without protection," as if it's a given fact teenagers are going to do it, just protect yourself! Isn't it sad we have come to that point? That is what we are talking about?

5. The sin of theft

In the time of Tribulation it's going to be even worse and then finally is theft. There is an increasing, growing mindset of some people in our world that our society owes them a living and they feel like they ought to go out and take whatever they want because it is theirs. I heard Paul Harvey talk about a certain storekeeper in inner city Chicago, who has been robbed seven times in seven months by the same man. The police asked him if he noticed anything different about the robber each time. He said, "Yeah, each time he is dressed better." In Sacramento, California the police are so busy handling crimes they are no longer charging criminals for misdemeanors, felonies only. Did you catch that? That is saying to criminals, "Come on out and rob us. As long as it is \$700 or less go ahead and take it because our court system, our jails and our police are so busy taking care of crime we are not even going to prosecute." Isn't that sad? The Bible says during the time of Tribulation it's going to be even worse.

CONCLUSION

Ladies and gentlemen, the good news is this: God loves you so much that he sent his son, Jesus Christ and in his first coming he came as the Lamb of God to take away our sins. In his second coming he is coming as the Lion of the tribe of Judah and you will either fall under his mercy or you will fall under his wrath. The choice is yours. If you will accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you can receive his mercy. His salvation and his grace tonight, but if you resist it, you will experience his wrath one day!

OUTLINE

I. THE FIFTH TRUMPET: AN ARMY FROM HELL (vs. 9:1-12)

1. Demonic army from the pit appears as a swarm of locusts
2. They have power to inflict terrible pain for five months
3. They are led by the "Destroyer"

II. THE SIXTH TRUMPET: DEATH ANGELS ARE RELEASED (vs. 9:13-19)

Only China can boast of an army of 200 million

III. THE RELOCATION OF THE SURVIVORS (vs. 9:20-21)

Their sins:

1. False worship: Fortune telling and materialism are symptoms of this
2. Murder: Serial murders and abortion will increase
3. Sorcery (*pharmakeia*): Drug abuse, both illegal and legal, will continue to enslave
4. Sexual sins: Pornographic activity will spread
5. Theft: We've seen examples of this in mob looting