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Introduction: One question you might have in the study of Revelation up to this point is, "what about the devil, what is his place, if any, in all of this?" Up until now we have seen Jesus revealed, His address to the churches (the seven letters), a view of the glory of the throne room of heaven, and the beginning of the Great Tribulation on the earth. In all of the judgments we have seen to this point - which have been almost indescribably fierce - we have seen the evil of man's doings producing turmoil and chaos, we have seen natural and cosmic disturbance, and we have seen divine fury poured out. But we have not seen Satan involved with anything yet. That changes in Chapter 9.

Really, in addition to continuing the revelation of the judgment of the Great Tribulation which is coming on the earth, this section of this chapter prompts an interesting and valuable study of Satan, as it debunks common myths and reveals God's truth. Where did Satan come from? Where is Satan now? Is he real? How powerful is he? Is he an independent force of evil or does God still have control? Does he act alone or does he work with others? These and other questions are worthy of studying and answering in the context of this passage. We will see plenty of Satan again in later chapters, including his final doom.

But the main point here is to show the judgment of God continuing to be poured out on the earth. Chapter 8 presented the sounding of the first four trumpets. This first half of Chapter 9 deals with just one, the fifth. There is a great deal of description given to this one. Also, a specific time period (five months) is given to its effects, rather than just a single, catastrophic, instant effect as previous judgments seemed to show. This is an important impasse in the book.

1. Verses 1-6 - The fifth trumpet: Satan falls to earth, the abyss is opened, men are tormented five months.

- v.1a - This **star** is not a natural phenomenon, for it is referred to as **him** and **he** (v.2). A majority of Bible-believing scholarship identifies him with Satan because: 1) the "fallen star" motif is reminiscent of Lucifer in Isaiah 14; and 2) his immediate action when coming to earth is to unleash harm, but excluding God's elect (v.4).

- v.1b - **bottomless pit** = *abyssos* or abyss. We know from elsewhere also that presently condemned demons inhabit the abyss, Luke 8:31. Notice that the "star" (Satan) was **given the key**. This reveals that as powerful a being Satan may be, he is not *all-powerful*; he is not Christ's equal, he is limited by the will of God. See Job 1 and 2 and notice how Satan is 1) able to be present before the Lord *and* work on earth (implying traversing between the two); and 2) is limited in power only to what God permits. Satan exists in the spiritual realm, but he is also known to be powerful on earth; see Ephesians 2:2, 2 Corinthians 4:4, and 1 John 5:19.

- v.2 - A great **smoke** arises when the pit is opened.

- vv.3-6 - These are not ordinary **locusts**. One scorpion bite can make a man gravely ill or even kill him. These locusts were given similar **power**, but not to **kill**. And they were limited, divinely, from harming the sealed **of God** - the 144,000 of the previous chapter plus any remaining converts who

had not been martyred - or any vegetation, which apparently rebounded from prior judgments. The pain and suffering these would cause would last **five months**, and it would even cause men to long for **death** (though it would not come).

2. Verses 7-11 - A description of the tormentors.

- vv.7-10 - Many theories abound concerning these descriptive terms. Clearly John did not recognize easily what he was looking at, for he uses the term "like" eight times, indicating some uncertainty in identifying what he saw. Some have likened this to weapons of modern warfare, but it seems unlikely those would cause mass injury without killing anyone. The first half of the chapter is best taken as literally as possible. What this is is a force of demonically-controlled, horrifyingly grotesque creatures who swarm the earth causing tormenting pain and sickness, but not death.

- v.11 - **Abaddon** and **Apollyon** both mean "destroyer". Some identify this with the star which fell, the same being (i.e., Satan). Others distinguish him as another ruler of demons. It is difficult to say with certainty. But the main point, derived from the meaning of the name, is that these demon/locusts have a mission, and that is to destroy by inflicting as much pain as possible. Shockingly, this and the trumpet judgment coming next will not lead men to repentance!