

# Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

## Subject: Liberation (Rev. 9:1-21)

### Commitment:

Thy Will at Any Cost

In 1925, Betty Stam said: "Lord, I give up my own purposes and plans, all my own desires, hopes, and ambitions, and accept Thy will for my life. I give myself, my life, my all utterly to Thee, to be Thine forever. I hand over to Thy keeping all of my friendships; all the people whom I love are to take second place in my heart. Fill me and seal me with Thy Holy Spirit. Work out Thy whole will in my life, at any cost, now and forever. To me to live is Christ. Amen." Nine years later on December 8, 1934, Betty and her husband, John Stam, calmly and bravely laid down their lives for Christ when they were martyred by Chinese Communists.

### Responsible for Growth

God made you essentially what you are. Don't find fault with Him because you are different from others. Discover what you are and grow in the pattern He has designed for you. We are responsible for growing, but not for the essential element of our being. A little girl expressed it beautifully when she said, "Mother made me this much"—indicating the smallness of a baby—"and I grewed that much"—showing how tall she had become. How tall have you grown in your Christian life?

### Wrong Standard

Pride comes from the fact that we measure ourselves by earthly standards, instead of by God's standard for us. We are like the little boy who came to his mother and said, "Mamma, I am as tall as Goliath; I am nine feet high." "What makes you say that?" asked the surprised mother. "Well, I made a little ruler of my own and measured myself with it, and I am just nine feet high!"

### Sealed

If we are to understand the 144,000 sealed Jews in Revelation [Rev. 7:1](#) to be the initial sealing of an evangelistic force and a signal of God's redemptive focus returning upon Israel (Rom. [Rom. 11:25-32](#)), then from their initial witness, many more, both Jew and Gentile, will come to know God during the Tribulation. These are those who John saw which "came out" of the Great Tribulation ([Rev. Rev. 7:14+](#)). It would seem that these too will be protected from the demonic horde:

Those who have the seal of God include not only the 144,000 Jewish evangelists ([Rev. 7:3-4](#);

[Rev. 14:1](#)), but also the rest of the redeemed (cf. [Rev. Rev. 22:4+](#); [2Ti. 2Ti. 2:19](#)). This seal marks them as personally belonging to God and as such protected from the forces of hell. Jesus promised the faithful members of the Philadelphia church that "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name" ([Rev. Rev. 3:12](#)).

## The Unseen Sin

A half-witted man wore a most curious coat. All down the front it was covered with patches of various sizes, mostly large. When asked why the coat was patched in such a remarkable way, he answered that the patches represented the sins of his neighbors. He pointed to each patch and gave the story of the sin of someone in the village. On the back of his coat there was a small patch. On being asked what it represented, he said, "**That is my own sin, and I cannot see it.**"

**The late Dr. Wilbur M. Smith**, who made the Book of Revelation his special study, once wrote: "It is probable that, apart from the exact identification of Babylon in Revelation 17 and 18, the meaning of the two judgments in this chapter represents the most difficult major problem in the Revelation" (Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 1509). Revelation 9 describes two frightening armies that are liberated at just the right time and permitted to judge mankind.

**The army from the pit (vv. 1-12). The "bottomless pit" is literally "the pit of the abyss."** Luke makes it clear that this "pit" is the abode of the demons (Luke 8:31), and John states that Satan will be temporarily "jailed" there during our Lord's reign on the earth (Revelation 20:1-3). The Antichrist (ie., "the beast") will ascend out of this pit (Revelation 11:7; 17:8). It is not the lake of fire, for that is the final "prison" for Satan and all who follow him (Revelation 20:10), but part of that hidden underworld under the Lord's authority. Today, the fearsome army described here is already incarcerated, waiting for the hour of liberation.

**This fallen star is a person, the king over the beings in the pit** (Revelation 9:11). He does not have complete authority, for the key to the pit had to be given to him before he could loose his army. This "star" is probably Satan and the army, his demons (Ephesians 6:10). One of the names for Satan is Lucifer, which means "brightness"; he also is compared to the "morning star" (Isaiah 14:12-14). Jesus said to His disciples, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

**When the pit was opened, smoke emerged as though the door of a furnace had been loosened.** Jesus compared hell to a furnace of fire (Matthew 13:42,50), an image that ought to make people stop and think before they jest about it. The smoke polluted the air and darkened the sun, which had already been darkened when the fourth trumpet sounded.

**But it is what came out of the smoke that truly terrorized mankind: an army of demons, compared to locusts. The eighth plague in Egypt was a devastating swarm of locusts (Exodus 10:1-20).** People who have never encountered these insects have little idea of the damage they can do. When God wanted to judge His people, He would sometimes send locusts to devour the harvests (Deuteronomy 28:38,42; Joel 2:1).

**These are not literal locusts, because locusts do not have scorpion-like stings in their tails.** These creatures do not devour the green vegetation; in fact, they are prohibited from doing so. This demonic army is given the assignment of tormenting all who have not been protected by the seal of God. The 144,000 men from the tribes of Israel would therefore escape this painful judgment (Revelation 7:1-8). In fact, it is likely that all who have trusted the Lord will be sealed in some special way and protected from torment.

**The normal lifespan of the locust is about five months (May to September), and this is the length of time that the judgment will last.** These demons will sting people and thus create such pain that their victims will actually want to die, but death will flee from them (Jeremiah 8:3).

Reading the detailed description of these creatures, we realize that John is not writing about ordinary locusts. Yet, despite its obvious symbolism, it aptly portrays a powerful enemy armed for battle. With bodies like horses but faces like men, the demons' heads are crowned and covered with long hair. They have teeth like those of Eons, and their skin is like a coat of mail. When they fly, the noise is like an army of chariots rushing by. It is unnecessary to try to "spiritualize" these symbols, or to interpret them in light of modern means of warfare. John is heaping image upon image to force us to feel the horror of this judgment.

**Real locusts do not have a king** (Proverbs 30:27), but this army follows the rule of Satan, the angel of the bottomless pit. His name is "Destroyer." "The thief [Satan] cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10). Real locusts are pervasive destroyers, but this army only tortures those who do not belong to the Lord.

**As God's people, we can be thankful that Jesus Christ holds the keys of hell and death (Revelation 1:18) and exercises divine authority even over Satan.** God has His timetable for all these events, and nothing will happen too soon or too late (2 Thessalonians 2:6; note also Revelation 9:15).

**The army from the east** (vv. 13-21). It was at the golden altar of incense that the angel offered the prayers of the saints (Revelation 8:3-5); now from this same altar a voice speaks, commanding that four angels be loosed. These angels are apparently wicked, because no holy angel would be bound. Each angel is in charge of part of the vast army that follows them at their liberation, an army of 200 million beings! The army is released at a precise time, for a special purpose: to kill (not just torment) a third of the world's population. Since a fourth of mankind has already been killed (Revelation 6:8), this means that half of the world's population will be dead by the time the sixth trumpet judgment is completed.

**Are we to identify this as a literal army of men, moving in conquest across the globe? Probably not.** For one thing, the emphasis in this paragraph is not on the riders, but on the horses. The description cannot fit war-horses as we know them or, for that matter, modern warfare equipment, such as tanks. To assert that this is a literal army, and to point to some nation (such as China) that claims to have 200 million soldiers, is to miss the message John is seeking to convey.

The deadly power of these horses is in their mouths and tails, not in their legs. Fire, smoke, and brimstone issue from their mouths, and their tails are like biting serpents. They can attack men from the front as well as from the rear.

I take it that this is another demonic army, headed by four fallen angels; and that all of them are today bound by the Lord, unable to act until God gives them permission. Why they are bound at the Euphrates River is not explained, though that area is the cradle of civilization (Genesis 2:14), not to mention one of the boundaries for Israel (Genesis 15:18).

One would think that the combination of five months of torment and then death (from fire, smoke, and brimstone) would bring men and women to their knees in repentance; but such is not the case. These judgments are not remedial but retributive: God is upholding His holy Law and vindicating His suffering people (see Revelation 6:9-11). Even a casual reading of Revelation 9:20-21 reveals the awful

wickedness of mankind, even in the midst of God's judgments. The most frightening thing about Revelation 9 is not the judgments that God sends but the sins that men persist in committing even while God is judging them.

**Consider the sins that men and women will be committing:**

**Demon worship, which goes hand-in-hand with idolatry** (1 Corinthians 10:19-21), will be the leading sin. Satan will be at work (always under the permissive will of God), and Satan has always wanted to be worshiped (Isaiah 14:12-15; Matthew 4:8-10). A great deal of "religion" will be practiced at this time, but it will be false religion. People will worship the works of their own hands, which could well include the buildings they construct, the machines they make, and the cities they build, as well as their idols.

**Here are dead sinners worshipping dead gods!** (Psalms 115) Their gods will not be able to protect or deliver them, yet these people will continue to reject the true God and worship Satan and idols!

Murder and theft will also be rife in those days. So will various kinds of sexual immorality. The word translated "sorcery" is the Greek word *pharmakia*, which means "the use of drugs." **Drugs are often used in pagan religious rites and demon worship.** As we see the expansion of today's "drug culture," we have no problem envisioning a whole society given over to these demonic practices.

Mankind will be breaking the first two Mosaic commandments by making and worshipping idols. In their murders, they will violate the sixth commandment, and in their thefts, the eighth. By their fornication, they will break the seventh commandment. It will be an age of lawlessness with "every man doing that which is right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

**But God is working out His plan; and neither the sins of mankind nor the schemes of Satan will hinder Him from accomplishing His win.**

We have come now to the midpoint of the Tribulation (Revelation 10-14), a time during which some important events must take place. Thus far, we have covered about three-and-a-half years of this seven-year period (Daniel 9:27). During His time, Antichrist began his career as a peacemaker and a special friend to Israel; but now, his true character will be revealed. He will become a peace-breaker and a persecutor of the people of God.

Things will not look bright for God's people during this middle stage of the prophetic journey, but they will still be overcomers through the power of the King of kings and Lord of lords!

**No Repentance, No Pardon**

Caleb Young, in Kentucky, thought that a man in the state's prison who was serving a life term had been too heavily sentenced. Bringing influence to bear upon the governor, he obtained a pardon for the man. He went to the prison and had a talk with the man. He said to him, "If you were to be released from this place, what would you do?" The man vindictively replied, "I would go and shoot the judge that sentenced me, the lawyer that prosecuted me, and the witnesses that testified against me." Mr. Young said nothing to the man about the pardon. He went out of the prison and tore the pardon to pieces.