

The Chaos of the Unrepentant

Revelation 9:1–21 • Pastor Raul Granillo • August 23, 2026

Today's Text

“And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of **the bottomless pit**. ...From the smoke came locusts on the earth... only those people who do not have **the seal of God on their foreheads**. ...In those days people will seek death but will not find it. ...The rest of humankind, who were not killed by these plagues, **did not repent** of the works of their hands.”

— Revelation 9:1, 3–4, 6, 20

Big Idea

The monsters that torment the earth in Revelation 9 are not aliens or demons dropped from the sky — they are **the chaos we ourselves unleash** when we turn from God. God's judgment is often simply letting us reap what we've sown, so that we might finally **turn and live**.

Key Truth

Sin doesn't just break rules — it **un-creates creation**. When we live by fear, pride, and self-promotion, we push God's presence out and creation reverts to **tohu wa-bohu** — formless chaos. Judgment is God allowing the abyss to open just enough for us to see what we've been building — and to invite us back home before it's too late.

What John Wants Us to See in the Smoke

SCENE	WHAT JOHN SEES	WHAT IT MEANS FOR US
THE ABYSS OPENS (v.1–2)	A fallen star is given the key to the bottomless pit. Smoke rises like a great furnace and darkens the sun and the air.	The abyss is the biblical symbol of chaos — the same deep waters over which God's Spirit hovered in Genesis 1. When humanity refuses to reflect God, creation reverts to chaos. God is not creating the monsters; He is letting us see what we've been building.
THE LOCUST HORDE (v.3–6)	Locusts with human faces, women's hair, lion's teeth, iron breastplates, scorpion tails — tormenting only those without the seal of God for five months.	The sealed are protected. The unsealed suffer torment so severe they seek death rather than repentance. This is the tragedy of sin: it narrows our imagination until escape looks better than mercy.
ABADDON, KING OF THE PIT (v.11)	The locust army has a king — the angel of the abyss. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon (Destruction); in Greek, Apollyon (Destroyer).	Chaos always crowns a king. When we refuse the Lamb, something else will rule us — addiction, ambition, fear, resentment. Every idol eventually reveals its true name: Destroyer.
THE EUPHRATES CAVALRY (v.13–19)	Two hundred million riders on lion-headed horses breathing fire, smoke, and sulfur — released from the Euphrates, the border with Rome's mortal enemies.	John pokes at Rome's paranoia to expose false security. Every empire we trust to protect us — political, financial, technological — will one day fail. Only the Lamb is worthy of our allegiance.
THE UNREPENTANT (v.20–21)	Even after all this, humanity does not repent of its idols, its murders, its sorceries, its prostitution, its thefts.	The most terrifying verse in the chapter isn't the locusts — it's this one. Judgment alone doesn't produce repentance. Only grace does. The question isn't whether God will judge, but whether we will turn before He must.

Define This

Tohu wa-Bohu — Hebrew for “formless and void.” It's the phrase Genesis 1:2 uses to describe the earth before God brought order. Jeremiah 4 uses the exact same words to describe what Judah's sin had turned the land into. **Sin doesn't just break things — it uncreates them.** Revelation 9 is showing us what a world looks like when God finally lets us have our way.

Quote To Remember

“All of this was to be unleashed so that — and this is the point of it all — humans might be challenged to repent.” — N.T. Wright

Take It Home — Reflection

- The unsealed sought death rather than repentance. Where in my life am I looking for an escape from consequences instead of confessing to the One who can restore me? What am I hiding, running from, or numbing rather than bringing into the light?
- The Euphrates cavalry represents the empire that promised protection but couldn't deliver. What system — political, financial, relational, technological — am I quietly trusting to keep me safe that God is trying to expose as unable to save?
- Verses 20–21 are the most sobering in the chapter: even after judgment, they did not repent. What would it take for me to actually turn — not just feel bad, not just adjust behavior, but hand my whole life back to God? What am I waiting for?

My Notes