We find ourselves in the first half of the great Tribulation; the Lamb has been opening a seven sealed scroll that came from the right hand of God as He sat on His throne; when He opened the seventh seal there came forth seven angels holding seven trumpets; with the sound of each trumpet the judgments of God fall on the earth; from the first trumpet, one third of all vegetation and grass was burned up; from the second trumpet, one third of all sea life died and a third of the ships were destroyed; from the third trumpet, one third of the water supply from the rivers and the springs was poisoned and men died from drinking the bitter water; from the fourth trumpet, all the luminaries in the heavens—the sun, the moon were dimmed by a third, and one third of the stars were darkened; one third of a day did not shine and likewise the night.

Then before the fifth trumpet sounded, there was a flying eagle, while the text says “angel” going through the midst of the heavens announcing to the earth with a loud voice, “Woe, woe woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”

The word translated “angel” (aietos) is the word for “eagle;” what John sees is a flying eagle sounding woe to the earth; eagles are birds of prey; they are killers and are associated in prophetic literature with judgment and violence (Jeremiah 4:13; Hosea 8:1; Habakkuk 1:8); this eagle can speak and says with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe” — those are words of damnation and judgment, and the woes are directed to “those who dwell on earth” (8:7-13).

As we open chapter nine we read: “Then the fifth angel sounded…” (9:1a); the fifth trumpet has sounded.
The Devil and the Bottomless Pit (9:1b-2, 11)

*The appearance of a fallen star...* “And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit” (9:1)

Who is the fallen star? That star is not an asteroid falling out of the sky; we know that because this star is a person; the star is referred to as “him;” Job and Daniel both speak of angels as stars (Job 38:7; Daniel 12:3) The star of Revelation 9 is the angel Lucifer, whose name means “Day Star;” He is also called “son of the morning.” He is none other than the Devil or Satan himself; Isaiah 14:12-15 speaks of Lucifer as the one who fell from heaven because he wanted to overthrow the government of God; He and one third of the angels who joined him in his rebellion against God were thrust to the earth (Revelation 12:3, 7-9); Jesus said, “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning” (Luke 10:18).

It becomes even more clear who this star is when we look at verse 11 which refers to the name of the angel who had the key to the bottomless pit as “in Hebrew, Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name of Apollyon” (9:11); those words mean “Destroyer;” Satan is the destroyer; he wanted to destroy God and kill Christ; he wants to destroy your faith and your salvation; he wants to destroy all goodness and righteousness and justice; everything that is evil he loves and everything that is pure and lovely he hates; this is one reason Scripture tells us to, “Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good” (Romans 12:9); our life is to be the total opposite of everything Satan stands for.

*The authority of the star...* “To him was given the key to the bottomless pit” (9:1b); Satan is given some authority; when you posses a key, you have authority over whatever it opens or shuts; in this case he is given authority over a bottomless pit or the pit of abyss.

Jesus is the one who said, “I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (1:18); evidently, He temporarily turns those keys over to Satan so he can open the bottomless pit — the pit of abyss; in Luke 8:31 you have Jesus casting the demons of the demoniac in Gadara; the demons begged Jesus not to cast them into the pit *(abussos)* or the abyss; they somehow knew about that place; once there they were confined in the abyss they could no longer do their wickedness; Jesus, instead cast them into swine who ran down the hillside and then plunged themselves into the sea of Galilee; there you have the first deviled ham!
What is this pit? It has been described as a shaft that runs down to the belly of the earth; it is a pit where certain demons reside; it is the abode of fallen demons who have been kept incarcerated.

We know that Satan, along with his demonic horde, dwell in the atmosphere; these spirit beings once fell from heaven (Isaiah 14:12-15) but they now inhabit our atmosphere; Satan is called “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2); those angels that joined him in his rebellion against God, likewise reside in the atmosphere and are divided into ranks according to their influence; Paul admonishes us to: “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:11-12).

But what of those demons in the bottomless pit? Who are they and what did they do to deserve being locked up in the abyss? There were angels who were so evil that God had to cast them into a place called “tartarus;” in 2 Peter 2:4 we read: “For God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell (tartarosas) and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;” the word translated “hell” is “tartarus” and is a word that comes out of Greek mythology; it is a word referring to a subterranean place lower than the grave where the most wicked and rebellious beings were sent to receive the worst and most severe punishment; when Jesus wanted to describe hell, he used the word gehenna, because that was a garbage dump outside Jerusalem where the worms did not die, yet it was a place of unending fire; so Jesus took a word out of Jewish culture to describe hell; Peter takes a word out of Greek mythology to describe the place of incarceration of the worst of the angels; it is the lower part of hell.

What did these angels do that caused them to be put “into chains of darkness?” We get a clue from the book of Jude: “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 1:6-7).

The text is talking about angels who were involved in “sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh;” what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah? Men tried to have sex with angels (Genesis 19); there was a time when angels had sex with the women of
the world; angels are sexless beings in spirit form, but have the ability to manifest themselves in human-like form.

We read about this in Genesis 6; it says “the sons of God” — angelic- demons (Job 2:1) — went after the daughters of men; the result was a type of hybrid creature that was part demon, part human; they were giants known as the Nephilim; the word translated “giants” is “Nephilim” meaning “the fallen ones;” these giants were mighty and caused such wickedness that God regretted that he ever created man in the first place; one of the reasons — if not the main reason for the Noahic flood — was to rid the earth of the wickedness caused by the Nephilim (Genesis 6:1-8).

Many Bible teachers believe that these fallen angels in Genesis 6 were guilty of not only practicing homosexuality, but guilty of creating this hybrid race of giants that caused the wickedness of man to be so great on the earth.

So God, not only in His anger at man’s sin, covered the earth with a great flood; He also apprehended these fallen angels who created such wickedness and cast them into the lower parts of hell, a place that Peter refers to as “tartarus.”

What we have learned is there are billions of demons that reside in the atmosphere according to various ranks that do the bidding of Satan who is the devil; though Satan is the worst of the worst, God has allowed him to become “the prince of the power of the air;” then there were those angels in the pre-flood times that were so wicked and caused such wickedness on the earth that God had to incarcerate them in the lowest parts of hell, called tartarus, or “the bottomless pit.”

The Demonic Locusts Ascend from the Bottomless Pit (9:2-12)

The assignment of the star... “And he opened the bottomless pit...” (9:2a). The key to the abyss doesn’t belong to this star, Satan; it belongs to Christ; He alone has the keys to Death and Hades; so Christ removes the key from His keychain and hands it to Satan; and what happened?

The ascent of smoke and demonic locusts... “...and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth...” (9:2b-3a); smoke ascends from this burning pit then out come these demonic locusts — the angels that sinned and were confined in tartarus.
One commentator says: “Picture what the world would be like if we were to open the doors of all the penitentiaries of earth and set free the world’s most vicious and violent criminals, giving them free reign to practice their infamies upon mankind. Something worse than that lies in store for the world. Satan cast out of heaven is able to summon to his aid the most diabolical fiends in the abyss to act as his agents in bringing mankind to the footstool of the beast.”

When the pit was opened out came smoke; in the center of the earth is molten lava; if tartarus is in the heart of the earth, we can imagine hot black smoke spewing out over the earth causing an ugly black pollution like the world has never seen; it is so thick it blocks out the sun; here is another attack on Mother Nature; and most certainly this pollution becomes a major concern for the Air Quality Management District; they will be in utter chaos.

I remember the 1950s in Southern California; in the summer I would go to Finkbiner Park in Glendora and play baseball with the guys; the park was several blocks from the San Gabriel Mountains and the smog was so thick some days you couldn’t even see the mountains, which are less than a half mile away; then my lungs would hurt because of all that dirty smog I took in; thankfully, the air has cleared up a whole lot from those days, but during the Tribulation all the environmental restrictions will not stop the blackest pollution from filling the earth once the door to the bottomless pit has been unlocked.

To make matters worse, from out of the smoke come locusts; have you ever seen on video a plague of locusts filling the sky? They come in the billions and they can turn day into night; they can blot out the sky; the worst locust plague in modern history struck the Middle East in 1951 and 1952 in Iran, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia; these locusts devoured every green plant across hundreds of thousands of square miles; they ate right down to the bare ground; but the locusts in our text are not real locusts, as you will soon see; these are demonic locusts; these are locusts from hell; these are those wicked demons that God “has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day” (Jude 1:6b); the most evil, the most violent of all Satan’s horde will be temporarily unleashed upon the earth.

The authority given to the demonic locusts... “And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when
it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them” (9:3b-6).

Remember these demonic locusts have been locked up in an abyss; they have been wanting to get at God and at Christ as well as believers for a long time; they have power like the scorpions of the earth have power; while these locusts are set free by Satan, what they can accomplish is controlled by God; there are limitations as to what they can do.

They were commanded not to harm the grass or trees, which over time has regrown from the blasts of the previous trumpets; they were commanded not to harm those who were sealed with the seal of God on their foreheads — that would refer to the 144,000 Jewish evangelists; however, could believers be spared during the Tribulation who also bear the seal of the living God, but not on their forehead? Paul wrote to Timothy saying, “Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, the Lord knows those who are His” (2 Timothy 2:19); the locusts were not given authority to kill anybody, but to torment unbelievers for five months; I assume unbelievers if God does not permit them to harm believers who have the seal of the living God.

It is interesting to me that the period of their activity is five months, and five months is the average lifespan of locusts; five months is 150 days of 30-day months by the Jewish calendar; that is the same time the waters of Noah’s flood prevailed on the earth (Genesis 7:24).

During the five-month period, they torment people, and the pain they inflict is like that from the sting of a scorpion; one writer said that the sting from a scorpion is the most painful and agonizing pain that any animal or insect can inflict on someone; in tropical countries small children often die from the sting of the scorpion.

When someone is stung by a scorpion and receives a full blast of their poison, they will roll on the ground in agony, foam at the mouth and grind their teeth in pain; this is not unlike any demon possessed person we read about in the gospels; when I was in the preaching ministry, I was asked to work with Young Life in dealing with demon possessed young people; there was this one occasion where four or five of us pastors were gathered to help free a young man who was possessed; he was writhing on the floor, foaming at the mouth, gnashing his teeth, screaming vulgarities; it seemed like hours that we prayed over this young man; finally we got him to settle down but I’m not so sure he got delivered; he just wore out and so did we.
Why would God allow these demonic locusts their freedom for five months? Remember, during this first half of the Tribulation, there are 144,000 Jewish evangelists preaching the gospel as well as the two witnesses who prophesy for 1260 days, or for 3½ years; while many of those who accept Christ during this time are martyred for their faith — certainly not a pleasant thought — yet, I believe that God allows these demonic locusts to sting people for five months who reject the gospel; God is in control of these demonic locusts, not Satan; Henry Morris, the creation-scientist, wrote about this; he said: “God allowed them (unbelievers) to experience a little direct fellowship with their future inhabitants in the lake of fire.”

You can imagine how people will react when they get stung; the pain is so great they “will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them” (9:6); these are people who have stubbornly rejected the gospel; yet they realize they are hopeless; they have already seen one third of the vegetation burn up; they have seen one third of the sea life killed; they have seen the rivers and springs polluted, they have witnessed one third of the lights in the heavens go out and a cold spell come on the earth that has killed millions; now they are in pain like they have never felt before; they are demon infested, but they still will not repent.

To them, they see no tomorrow; no hope; to me, the worst pain you can experience is to feel hopeless; when you are on the devil’s side there is no hope; all these people can do is wish to die; people who are hopeless want out of here; when there is no future there is nothing left but to wish for death; but the stings of these demonic locusts could not kill them; that was one of the restrictions God placed on Satan when he was given the key to the bottomless pit to release these miserable demons.

The feelings of these people who have lost hope and want to die is well summed up in the poignant song from the musical version of Victor Hugo’s Les Misérables: “I dreamed a dream in time gone by when hope was high and life was worth living. I dreamed that love would never die. I dreamed that God would be forgiving. Then I was young and unafraid and dreams were made and used and wasted. There was no ransom to be paid, no song unsung, no wine untasted. But the locusts came at night with their voices soft as thunder as they tear your hope apart, as they turn your dream to shame. I had a dream my life would be so different from this hell I’m living, so different from what it seems. Now life has killed the dream I dream.”

You cannot live without hope and our text suggests hope dies and people want death; those are the lyrics for the fifth trumpet.
The appearance of the demonic locusts... “The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns, something like gold, and their faces were like faces of men. They had hair like women’s hair, and their teeth were like lion’s teeth. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months. And they had a king over them, the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon” (9:7-11).

It should now appear obvious that these locusts are not real locusts; they are not some insect that becomes a pest to mankind; these locusts have a king over them, King Satan, and natural locusts have no king (Proverbs 30:27); these locusts are supernatural demonic spirits right out of the pit of hell; and they are to follow their leader Apollyon, who is the Destroyer.

The first thing we learn about their appearance is they are like horses prepared for battle; they are warlike; they are defiant; they are armed; they are prepared for battle.

Their heads are crowned with something like gold; the word for crown (stephanos) refers to a victor’s crown; they are invincible; they plan on being victorious in their undertakings.

Their hair is like a woman’s hair, suggesting their ability to seduce men into sin.

Their faces are like the faces of men, suggesting they are intelligent beings who even possess people.

Their teeth are like lion’s teeth, suggesting they are frightful creatures.

They have breastplates like breastplates of iron, suggesting they have a strong defense.

Their wings make the sound of many chariots, suggesting they travel very fast.

They have tails like scorpions and there are stings in their tails, suggesting they inflict great pain.

When you summarize these demonic locusts we learn they are: warriors ready for battle; they are seducers of men, they are intelligent beings, they are frightful, they are able to defend themselves, they can travel rapidly, and they inflict great pain.
They have one purpose: “Their power was to hurt men five months” (9:10b); all they want to do is to inflict pain; but their authority over the earth is short lived; God only allows them to swarm the earth for five months.

Why does God allow this? “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay saith the Lord” (Deuteronomy 32:35); our God is an angry God who will avenge those who have opposed Him; in this case, God lets Satan do His work; these demonic locusts were freed to harm the believers, but they could do nothing to those who were sealed with the seal of God — and that could possibly include all believers in the Tribulation, for every believer has the seal of God upon them.

Yes, to the fallen star Satan will be given the key to the abyss; I can imagine he will joyfully open that bottomless pit to release those pent up demons — the worst of the worst of his army — who are confined in tartarus; he will believe they will go about their work inflicting pain on all who believe in God; but he will be greatly mistaken; they are harmless to those who are sealed with the seal of God; the only ones inflicted with pain are those whom Satan already controls; God gives the unbeliever a bit of their own medicine.

“One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things” (9:12).

We can be grateful that we are not around when these demonic locusts are released from their abyss; furthermore, we can be grateful that God takes care of His own, even under the worst of situations. Amen!