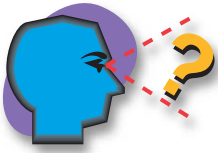
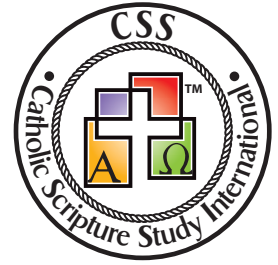


# Revelation

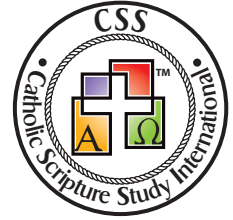


## Suggested Responses to the Questions

**Note:** Be sure to answer all the questions yourself before reading the suggested responses in order to make the most of this study.

### Revelation 9:1-21

1. According to Hebrew tradition, the “bottomless pit” is the place where Satan and the other fallen angels are imprisoned until their final punishment. Sometimes called the abyss (from the Greek *abussou*, meaning “unfathomably deep”), it’s an image that also refers at once to the waters under the earth at the time of creation and to Hades, the abode of the dead. In Luke 8:31, the demons beg Jesus not to send them into the abyss. According to Hebrew tradition, the entrance to the abyss is a hole in the great rock that was under the Temple at Jerusalem, and as long as the Temple is on top of the abyss, Satan and his demons remain imprisoned. In the apostle John’s day, Christians of Jewish background would have identified the “bottomless pit” as lying beneath the Temple at Jerusalem.
2. In Revelation 9:11, the king over the locusts is called “the angel of the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.” Since the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit is given to this fallen star, that can be interpreted to mean that Satan and his demons are allowed into the world to prowl around like roaring lions, “seeking someone to devour” (*1 Pet* 5:8). Hebrews 2:14 teaches that Jesus took on human nature “that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil.”
3. The locusts in Revelation 9:3-4 are given power “like the power of scorpions of the earth.” These locusts aren’t allowed to harm “the grass of the earth or any green growth or any tree, but only those of mankind who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads.”
4. The plague of locusts written about by the Old Testament prophet Joel has many similarities to the locusts in the apostle John’s prophetic vision. The army of destroying locusts in Joel 1:6 is “powerful and without number; its teeth are lions teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness.” The locusts in Revelation 9:8 have “teeth like lion’s teeth.” Joel 2:2 describes “clouds and thick darkness!” an image that corresponds to Revelation 9:2, in which the “sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.” In Joel 2:4, the prophet describes the locusts as being like horses in appearance, “like war horses they run.” Then in Joel 2:6, the prophet writes: “Before them peoples are in anguish, all faces grow pale.” In Revelation 9:6, people long for death to escape the torture of the locusts, and in Revelation 9:7, the locusts are described as being “like horses arrayed for battle.”
5. The curses described in Deuteronomy 28:65-68 are uneasiness, unrest, wandering, persecution from other nations, a trembling heart, failing eyes, a languishing soul, doubt about life, dread, fear, and devastating sights. This is similar to the description in Revelation 9:6, which includes the detail that “men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them.”



## Suggested Responses (cont.)

6. The substance of St. Peter's first sermon recorded in Acts 2:14-40 is that God is pouring out his Spirit in order to prepare a remnant of people that will survive impending doom. This rather disturbing exhortation implies some tremendous future destruction such as the Final Judgment written about in The Revelation to John (the Apocalypse), in which an elect remnant of people is protected by receiving the seal of God.
7. Some scholars believe that the plague of stinging locusts allowed to torture for five months those not marked with the seal of God symbolizes the early beginnings of Jewish rebellion against Rome in 66 A.D. The Jewish historian Josephus describes how in May of that year, Gessius Florus, the procurator of Judea who despised the Jews, deliberately slaughtered 3,600 Jews, hoping to incite a revolt. His plan worked, and a vicious war broke out in Judea. On the heels of the Jewish uprising, Roman troops from northern Syria crossed the Euphrates River and under the command of Cestius, the Roman governor of Syria, invaded Palestine and ravaged the countryside for five months.
8. In Deuteronomy 32:4, God is described as the "Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he." Psalm 37:28 praises God because "the LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. The righteous shall be preserved for ever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off." In Matthew 23:23, Jesus chastises the scribes and Pharisees for neglecting "the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith." Paragraph 1041 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that "the Last Judgment calls men to conversion" and "inspires a holy fear of God and commits them to the justice of the Kingdom of God." In an excerpt from one of his general audiences reprinted in *Rome to Home*, Pope John Paul II preached that God's judgment is deeply united to his will to save. God's desire is "to liberate people from the slavery of evil." Rather than being a cold act of justice or revenge, "in actual fact, this term, judgment, which is clearly of biblical derivation, is the last link in the chain of God's love for all of us. God judges because he loves, and he judges in view of love."
9. The sins mentioned in Revelation 9:20-21 include idolatry, murder, sorcery, immorality, and stealing. The sad comment that "the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues did not repent" implies that the apostle John's prophetic vision concerns the judgments of a God who desires to move people to repentance.
10. Paragraph 1470 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that in the sacrament of Reconciliation "the sinner, placing himself before the merciful judgment of God, *anticipates* in a certain way the *judgment* to which he will be subjected at the end of his earthly life. For it is now, in this life, that we are offered the choice between life and death, and it is only by the road of conversion that we can enter the Kingdom, from which one is excluded by grave sin. In converting to Christ through penance and faith, the sinner passes from death to life and 'does not come into judgment.'"

*Responses to the Questions for Reflection will vary.*