

# BIBLE STUDY – SHORT NOTES:

## WHAT IS THE BOTTOMLESS PIT?

THE BIBLE TALKS ABOUT A “BOTTOMLESS PIT”  
OR ABYSS. WHAT IS IT? IS IT LITERAL, HISTORICAL  
OR METAPHORICAL?

Version 1.0  
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### 1. VARIETY OF MEANINGS

- Historical
- Literal dwelling place of demons
- Symbol of evil
- Prophetic of armies in the Day of the Lord

### 2. REVELATION STRUCTURE

- 1st SEAL: white horse (the false religion)
- 2nd SEAL: red horse (war and Tribulation)
- 3rd SEAL: black horse (famine)
- 4th SEAL: pale horse (disease epidemics)
- 5th SEAL: souls under the altar (martyrdom)
- 6th SEAL: signs in the heavens (earthquake, the sun idarkened, meteorites, moon appears blood red. The 144,000 are after the sixth seal, but before the seventh.
- 7th SEAL
  - 1st Trumpet
  - 2nd Trumpet
  - 3rd Trumpet
  - 4th Trumpet
  - **5th Trumpet (1st Woe): The Bottomless Pit (Abyss) is opened**
  - 6th Trumpet (2nd Woe): one third of mankind is slain
  - 7th Trumpet (3rd Woe): Christ, the Messiah, returns to earth.

### **3. RELEVANT SCRIPTURES**

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the **bottomless pit**.

And he opened the **bottomless pit**; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

And the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads *were* as it were crowns like gold, and their faces *were* as the faces of men.

And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions.

And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings *was* as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power *was* to hurt men five months.

And they had a king over them, *which is* the angel of the **bottomless pit**, whose name in the Hebrew tongue *is* Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath *his* name Apollyon. {Apollyon: that is to say, A destroyer}

One woe is past; *and*, behold, there come two woes more hereafter. (Rev 9:1-12)

From the above we see that armies ascend out of this pit. These appear to be demons that are released and which empower the Beast Power. As such, this prophecy is probably dual in scope representing demons and the armies of the Beast they inspire (and its awesome weaponry).

Note: the Beast comes out of this metaphoric abyss.

These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the **bottomless pit** shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. (Rev 11:6-7)

A further scripture refers to the Beast arising out of the bottomless pit:

And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the **bottomless pit**, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. (Rev 17:7-8)

So, the end-time Beast comes out of the bottomless pit. This may symbolise the following:

- That it is influenced by demons
- It is restored from a condition of relative little influence and a sort of underground existence
- Its sudden appearance takes the world by storm

Satan's fate is also related to the pit:

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the **bottomless pit** and a great chain in his hand.

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

And cast him into the **bottomless pit**, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. (Rev 20:1-2)

Satan is put away into the bottomless pit. Apparently the same one that the 200 million ascend from and that the Beast also ascends from.

Notice what is said about the demons' fate:

And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.

And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. (Luke 8:30-33)

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment (II Pet 2:4)

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains **under darkness** unto the judgment of the great day. (Jude 6)

So this pit must represent something very evil – a place where evil springs. Is it a literal place and symbolic – is it dual in meaning? That would seem to be the case and represents the way Scripture is often written, particularly in prophetic books.

Who has the key to the abyss? We are told that it is Apollyon or the destroyer – Satan the great deceiver. God Himself is also a destroyer – of that which is wicked and evil – see James 4:12:

There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to **destroy**: who art thou that judgest another? [cp I Cor 10:10; Ex 12:23; I Chron 21:12]

The Greek for destroy is *apollumi* according to Strong's:

**622 ἀπόλλυμι** *apollumi* {ap-ol'-loo-mee}

**Meaning:** 1) to destroy 1a) to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to ruin 1b) render useless 1c) to kill 1d) to declare that one must be put to death 1e) metaph. to devote or give over to eternal misery in hell 1f) to perish, to be lost, ruined, destroyed 2) to destroy 2a) to lose

In the Old Testament the Hebrew *tehom*, 'the primeval ocean' (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 24:2; etc.), is equivalent to 'abyss'.

Note also the springs of the deep at the time of Noah's flood where the same Hebrew word *tehom* is used:

"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." (Gen 7:11)

So the bottomless pit is the sea or a very specific region within it.

## **4. ORIGINAL GREEK**

The *Oxford Dictionary* online (<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/abyss?q=abyss>) explains this word as follows:

**Pronunciation:** /ə'bis/

*noun*

- a deep or seemingly bottomless chasm: *a rope led down into the dark abyss*

- a wide or profound difference between people; a gulf: *the abyss between the two nations*
- the regions of hell conceived of as a bottomless pit: *Satan's dark abyss*
- **(the abyss)** a catastrophic situation seen as likely to occur: *teetering on the edge of the abyss of a total political wipeout*

**Origin:**

late Middle English (in the sense 'infernal pit'): via late Latin from Greek *abussos* 'bottomless', from *a-* 'without' + *bussos* 'depth'

The definition of "a deep or seemingly bottomless chasm" mirrors the Scriptural meaning of the term.

The Greek for "bottomless pit" or "the deep" in Rev 9:1 is *'abussos* which became translated as *abyss*.

*Strong's Concordance* renders it thus:

**12 ἄβυσσος** *abussos* {ab'-us-sos}

**Meaning:** 1) bottomless 2) unbounded 3) the abyss 3a) the pit 3b) the immeasurable depth 3c) of Orcus, a very deep gulf or chasm in the lowest parts of the earth used as the common receptacle of the dead and especially as the abode of demons

**Origin:** from 1 (as a negative particle) and a variation of 1037; TDNT - 1:9,2; n f

**Usage:** AV - bottomless pit 5, deep 2, bottomless 2; 9

*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia;*

**ABYSS**

a-bis', (he abussos):

In classical Greek the word is always an adjective, and is used

1. literally, "very deep," "bottomless";
2. figuratively, "unfathomable," "boundless." "Abyss" does not occur in the King James Version but the Revised Version (British and American) so transliterates *abussos* in each case. The the King James Version renders the Greek by "the deep" in two passages (Luke 8:31; Romans 10:7). In Revelation the King James Version renders by "the bottomless pit" (Revelation 9:1,2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3). In the Septuagint *abussos* is the rendering of the Hebrew word *tehom*. According to primitive Semitic cosmogony the earth was supposed to rest on a vast body of water which was the source of all springs of water and rivers (Genesis 1:2; Deuteronomy 8:7; Psalms 24:2; 136:6). This subterranean ocean is sometimes described as "the water under the earth" (Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 5:8). According to Job 41:32 *tehom* is the home of the leviathan in which he plows his hoary path of foam. The Septuagint never uses *abussos* as a rendering of *sheol* (= *Sheol* = *Hades*) and probably *tehom* never meant the "abode of the dead" which was the ordinary meaning of *Sheol*.

In [Psalms 71:20](#) *tehom* is used figuratively, and denotes "many and sore troubles" through which the psalmist has passed (compare [Jonah 2:5](#)). But in the New Testament the word *abussos* means the "abode of demons." In [Luke 8:31](#) the King James Version renders "into the deep" (Weymouth and The Twentieth Century New Testament = "into the bottomless pit"). The demons do not wish to be sent to their place of punishment before their destined time. Mark simply says "out of the country" ([Luke 5:10](#)). In [Romans 10:7](#) the word is equivalent to Hades, the abode of the dead. In Revelation (where the King James Version renders invariably "the bottomless pit") *abussos* denotes the abode of evil spirits, but not the place of final punishment; it is therefore to be distinguished from the "lake of fire and brimstone" where the beast and the false prophet are, and into which the Devil is to be finally cast ([Revelation 19:20;20:10](#)).

## **5. ANCIENT TRADITIONS & MYTHOLOGY**

In mythology, the *Abyss* refers to a bottomless pit – the deepest portion of the sea and underworld.

According to *Wikipedia* (article "Abyzou"):

A.A. Barb connected *Abyzou* and similar female demons to the Sumerian myth of primeval Sea. Barb argued that although the name "Abyzou" appears to be a corrupted form of the Greek word *abyssos* ("the abyss"), the Greek itself was borrowed from Assyrian *Apsu* or Sumerian *Abzu*, the undifferentiated sea from which the world was created in the Sumerian belief system, equivalent Babylonian *Tiamat*,<sup>[4]</sup> or Hebrew *Tehom* in the Book of Genesis. The entity Sea was originally bi- or asexual, later dividing into male *Abzu* (fresh water) and female *Tiamat* (salt water). The female demons among whom *Lilith* is the best-known are often said to have come from the primeval sea. In classical Greece, female sea monsters that combine allure and deadliness may also derive from this tradition, including the Gorgons (who were daughters of the old sea god *Phorcys*), Sirens, Harpies, and even water nymphs and Nereids.

In the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures, the word *Abyssos* is treated as a noun of feminine grammatical gender, even though Greek nouns ending in *-os* are typically masculine. *Abyssos* is equivalent in meaning to Mesopotamian *Abzu* as the dark chaotic sea before Creation. The word also appears in the Christian scriptures, occurring six times in the Book of Revelation, where it is conventionally translated not as "the deep" but as "the bottomless pit" of Hell. Barb argues that in essence the Sumerian *Abzu* is the "grandmother" of the Christian Devil.

*Wikipedia* (article "Abzu") states:

The **abzu** (Cuneiform: 𒀭, ZU.AB; Sumerian: abzu; Akkadian: *apsû*) also called **engur**, (Cuneiform: 𒂍, LAGAB×HAL; Sumerian: engur; Akkadian: *engurru*) literally, *ab*='ocean' *zu*='to know'<sup>[1]</sup> or 'deep' was the name for fresh water from underground aquifers that was given a religious quality in Sumerian and Akkadian mythology. Lakes, springs, rivers, wells, and other sources of fresh water were thought to draw their water from the abzu.

In Sumerian culture

In the city Eridu, Enki's temple was known as E<sub>2</sub>-abzu (house of the cosmic waters) and was located at the edge of a swamp, an abzu.<sup>[2]</sup> Certain tanks of holy water in Babylonian and Assyrian temple courtyards were also called abzu (*apsû*).<sup>[3]</sup> Typical in religious washing, these tanks were similar to the washing pools of Islamic mosques, or the baptismal font in Christian churches.

[edit]In Sumerian cosmology

The Sumerian god Enki (Ea in the Akkadian language) was believed to have lived in the abzu since before human beings were created. His wife Damgalnuna, his mother Nammu, his advisor Isimud and a variety of subservient creatures, such as the gatekeeper Lahmu, also lived in the abzu.

As a deity

Abzu (*apsû*) is depicted as a deity only in the Babylonian creation epic, the *Enûma Elish*, taken from the library of Assurbanipal (c 630 BCE) but which is about 500 years older. In this story, he was a primal being made of fresh water and a lover to another primal deity, Tiamat, who was a creature of salt water. The *Enuma Elish* begins:

When above the heavens did not yet exist nor the earth below, Apsu the freshwater ocean was there, the first, the begetter, and Tiamat, the saltwater sea, she who bore them all; they were still mixing their waters, and no pasture land had yet been formed, nor even a reed marsh...

The above is of some interest and may assist in understanding the *abyss* concept.

## **6. FINAL COMMENTS**

From the Scriptures (with some information taken from tradition) we can see that the abyss or very deep pit is:

- Symbolic of a place of evil which Abaddon or Satan is the leader of
- Is the dwelling place of many demons waiting for their judgment day
- The Beast of Revelation ascends from the pit, symbolically
- At the 5<sup>th</sup> Trumpet of the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal, a horde of 200 million comprising the armies of the East arise – here the pit seems metaphorical unless it is dual in nature – ie a literal army of 200 million and demons that inspire them

- It is where Satan will be confined to for 1,000 years from where he is released for a short time afterward and finally defeated.
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## **APPENDIX: ARTICLE EXTRACT**

**“What will Christ do after the defeat of the human armies in the decisive battle in the Kidron Valley, just outside Jerusalem?” Church of the Eternal God newsletter, Update 528 for the Week ending February 10th, 2012**

“The removal of Satan is described in Revelation 20:1–3: ‘Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He [the angel, pictured by the suitable man who took the Azazel goat into the wilderness] laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan [pictured by the Azazel goat], and bound him for a thousand years; and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. [This is pictured by the fact that the Azazel goat was not killed, but placed alive in the wilderness, far away from the camp of Israel.]”

What exactly is that bottomless pit, mentioned in Revelation 20:1-3, where Satan and his demons will be bound? It is not a mystical fiery “hell” way down under the surface of the earth—such a “hell” simply does not exist, and nowhere in the Bible is it remotely mentioned. Even the lake of fire in which Satan and his demons will be cast before the Great White Throne Judgment begins, will be ON the earth—not UNDER the earth.

Now note again the reference to modern Babylon in Revelation 18:2: “And he [an angel] cried mightily with a loud voice, saying ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of DEMONS, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird.”

In this passage, Satan is also included as the highest demon and the ruler over the demons.

What, then, is the relationship between the bottomless pit or the abyss and the wilderness of the modern city of Babylon, which is built on seven hills?

We write the following in chapter 7 of our free booklet, “The Book of Zechariah—Prophecies for Today,” on pages 55-56, when addressing Zechariah’s seventh vision, pertaining to a wicked woman in a basket, which pictures the modern system and city of Babylon (please read the entire chapter 7):

“Some commentaries identify the woman in the basket [in Zechariah 5:5-11] as the woman or harlot riding the beast, as described in the book of Revelation. There, she is called ‘Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth’ (Revelation 17:5). She is also described as a religious city built on seven hills (Revelation 17:9, 18, New International Version, Living Bible)—in other words, Babylon the great, in the book of Revelation, signifies a false religious, political, military and economic system...

“We read that the woman, personifying worldwide wickedness or iniquity, is confined to a basket or container, but she is trying, unsuccessfully, to escape from her prison (verses 7–8). This gives us the time setting of Zechariah’s vision—it describes the woman’s future judgment—which will occur when Jesus Christ returns. The modern CITY of Babylon the great—as well as the SYSTEM which it represents—will be destroyed with fire (Revelation 18:8, 21; 19:3). Depending on the translation, it will become a ‘dwelling place’ or a ‘habitation’ or a ‘house’... or a ‘home’ (New International Version) of ‘demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird’ (Revelation 18:2).

“This fact explains why two women with wings of a stork (Zechariah 5:9)—perhaps angels—carry the imprisoned woman to the land of [Shinar or] Babylon, to build a house or dwelling place for her (verse 11)... The two women will assist in removing ‘wickedness’—the wicked system—from this earth... wickedness will be placed ‘forever in Babylon’ (compare Geneva Study Bible); that is, the burned and destroyed location and area of the modern city of Babylon will become a ‘house’ for demons during the time of the Millennium...”

We see, then, that the abyss or the bottomless pit, where Satan and his demons will be shut up, describes the destroyed areas where currently the modern city of Babylon is situated. We read that the modern city of Babylon will never be rebuilt and inhabited again (Isaiah 13:19-22).

After Satan and his demons are confined to the bottomless pit or abyss of the wilderness of modern Babylon, unable to deceive the nations anymore during the time of the Millennium, Jesus Christ will proceed with freeing the enslaved peoples of the modern houses of Israel and Judah. We will address these events in more detail in a subsequent Q&A.

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