

## Lesson # 33 The 6th Trumpet Judgment

## Revelation 9: 13-21

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**Revelation 9:13-21 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup>Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, <sup>14</sup>saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." <sup>15</sup>So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind. <sup>16</sup>The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number. <sup>17</sup>And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths. <sup>18</sup>By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. <sup>19</sup>For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound. <sup>20</sup>The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, <sup>21</sup>nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

**I. Release of the 4 Angels****vv. 13-15**

①

As the 6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet sounds – this 2<sup>nd</sup> Woe – the severity of judgment cranks up yet another notch. As a result of this judgment, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of mankind will be killed. John hears a voice which begins the events of the judgment, and it proceeds from the horns of the golden altar before God. Arguments exist as to whose voice John hears, but the best argument is that it is Christ's voice, because of the authority being given in command form to the angel who has just blown the 6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet.

The command, "...release...the River Euphrates" seems to say that the 4 angels are well known beings, but there is no biblical data we can draw from to discover why they are well known. Although some see them as holy angels – along the lines of those in Rev. 7:1 who stand on the 4 corners of the earth and hold back the 'winds', these 4 are "bound at the great River Euphrates". Therefore, these must be fallen, evil angels – cf. **II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6**; Rev. 20:1ff – who have been bound until this time arrived and they will perform this aspect of God's wrath. They are real angels, not symbolic of something else.

The great River Euphrates forms 1 border of the promised land, and is the river the armies of rebels against God will cross before the return of Christ in Rev. 16:12. Its' source is in the mountains of Armenia and it joins up with the Tigris River in Babylon. The river forms a barrier between Israel & her enemies Assyria and Babylon, and it also formed a boundary between Rome and the Parthian Empire of the east. The area east of the Euphrates has traditionally

been the source of attacks against Israel. In modern warfare ( with the possible exception of Guerrilla warfare ), a river poses no barrier to attackers, but in the future, this late in the Tribulation, after worldwide devastation, how much modern technology will be left to make war with? Perhaps, fossil fuels will be non-existent by then, or ravaged industrial centers will have no ability to forge or manufacture electronic weapons of war we are so familiar with today.

Verse 15 is incredible because God's sovereignty just screams off the page. These 4 angels are released at His command, and notice the structure of the sentence, "So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind". Do you grasp the scope of what is being said here?

We do not know how long these 4 angels have been bound here, but we do know that for as long as they have been here they have been prepared ( taught? ) for this function they will perform when God's perfect timing has arrived – just as if an actor is basing his next move onto the stage on the cue he is waiting to hear. Notice Daniel 9:27 & the use of the phrase, "the decreed end". In fact this entire prophecy of vv 24-27 is particularly tied to specific timing.

Note that the command of Rev. 9:15 goes out a very specific date and time. God is a God of precision and purpose, and these angels are not released until He says so, and then, immediately. Once they are released, they do not simply escape their bonds, but perform the work they been prepared to do since they were bound. Nothing is put in motion until God puts it in motion. He does not just allow things to occur, he decrees them, plans them and then executes them exactly as He desires. A litany of OT passages trumpet this truth – Isa. 43:11-13; 44:6-8; 45:18-23; 46:9-11; 55:8-11; Ps. 105, etc. Throughout the prophetic books especially, we see God's precision and ability to predict the future accurately as evidence of His being God. This passage in Revelation certainly supports that. (2)

What is the work they have been prepared to do? Verse 15 tells us, "to kill a third of mankind." Whereas the demonic locusts of the 5<sup>th</sup> Trumpet were not allowed to kill their victims, the purpose of these angels is to kill. This is talking about physical death here, not symbolic or spiritual, but real death. By v. 20, those killed are no longer on the earth. It is ironic that after 5 months of torture from the stings of locusts, which had been limited to unbelievers, where the victims could not die, just as that pain is subsiding & people want to recover & live, many will die anyway.

Again, just as in previous Trumpet judgments, believers are spared death. We know this because the 3 Woes are against "the earth dwellers" ( literally 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of mankind ) – cf. Rev. 8:13. Verse 20 also adds a clue to support this contention because it says that "the rest of mankind did not repent...". This plague has nothing to do with those already in God's service.

While ¼ of the world's population died in the 4<sup>th</sup> Seal ( Rev. 6:8 ), this 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of that reduced number ( 75 % left of the number after the Rapture ) will be

numerically larger – a larger %age of death than has ever been seen on earth!  
 Could this possibly be describing the events and results of 70 AD at Jerusalem??!  
 Utterly impossible!

## II. The Huge Army

vv. 16-17

There is an almost disjointed feel to v. 16. In verse 15, the 4 angels are released and in v. 16 there is an army, seemingly out of nowhere. Are we to assume that the 4 angels have turned into this army, or that they lead this army, or that they summon this army? Since we are not told, we cannot be certain of the answer to this.

The next question is this: Is this a demonic army or a human army? In the OT, God used human armies time after time to fulfill His purposes – cf. Isa. 10:6-7; 44:27-45; Hab. 1:6-11; Jer. 51:11,28; Joshua; etc. These armies were often heathen, wicked armies...sometimes used against Israel to punish her for her sins. However, God also used angelic beings, both holy & demonic, to carry out destruction and calamity when God's temporal judgment called for it. Take note of passages like Isa. 37:36-38 as an angel kills 185,000 Assyrians in 1 night as they mustered to attack Jerusalem; Balaam, in Numbers 22 was accosted by a sword wielding angel who barred his way and forced him to give a prophecy of God rather than the false one he intended to deliver as a result of a bribe he'd been given; demonic spirits assisted God in the death of King Ahab as described in I Kings 22:19-23; In Ezek. 9 ( esp. v 1 ), 6 angels are sent through Jerusalem to mark the believers in order to spare them, then they kill others who rebelled against God; and the destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah in Gen. 19 was carried out by 2 angels. ③

And, along those same lines, there is something other-worldly about this cavalry of 200 million horses and riders. For one thing, it appears that the deadly aspect of this army is the horses. Notice **v. 17** – the riders wear bright breastplates the colour of fire, sapphire and sulfur, but the horses' heads are like lion's heads and they breathe fire, smoke and sulfur. Is it possible that the demonic locusts ( which have disappeared from the scene ) have morphed into this new apparition? Or is a new group of demonic beings now on the scene?

While the possibility of an army of 200 million is possible today ( & assumed possible in the future – China on it's own could field an army that big ), and perhaps 200 million horses are available too, it seems more plausible that this is some sort of demonic army. It appears from the wording of the text that this is an exact number and not just an estimate of an innumerable army.

The breastplates mentioned seem to apply to the riders only but some commentators think this is also the garb of the horses too, a not uncommon factor in ancient battles involving horses. The colours mentioned – fire, sapphire, sulfur – are just colours, not the actual elements. The symbolism of the colours

could be associated with judgment, such as at Sodom & Gomorrah or the Lake of Fire itself – fire, smoke & brimstone.

The heads of the horses resemble ferocious lions & spew out fire, smoke & sulfur, probably meaning that each horse is spewing forth all 3 things, not that 1/3<sup>rd</sup> spew out fire, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> smoke, etc. In any case, this is a horrifying judgment, ghastly to even envision.

### III. The Weapons of Warfare

vv. 18-19

These 3 elements are used to kill 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of mankind – fire, smoke & sulfur – which come out of the mouths of the horses. They are called plagues here, harkening back to the plagues of the Exodus, and this word now begins to appear more frequently in the Tribulation record. This will far eclipse the death toll from any historic conflict or event as 100's of millions, if not billions of people will die and rot. It would be an insurmountable and extremely dangerous task to bury the dead in numbers like this, especially as hordes of killers are roaming the earth like lions, seeking whom to devour next.

While v. 18 gives this general picture of the power & danger of the horse's mouths, v. 19 sheds light on something else that is very interesting and does tend to support the angle that these are demonic beings and perhaps even that these are the locusts who have morphed into these battle horses and riders. Their tails are like serpents with heads and they use this power to wound – remember, the locusts could only wound, not kill, and their power to torment was also found in their tails. So these beings not only wound, but also have the power to kill. Judgment has been ratcheted up to a new level.

④

### IV. Human Depravity on Full Display

vv. 20-21

It is too late for those killed by this plague – their fate is sealed. However, the 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of mankind remaining alive has certainly witnessed the results of this plague – the gruesome horses and riders, the death of loved ones and friends, and other horrors. You would think, as rational beings, that these people would be crying out to God for mercy, begging for forgiveness, but that is not what happens!

In full out defiance against what is an obvious judgment of God, these people do not repent of their:

- Evil works
- Idolatry - especially as they worship the Beast
- Murders – for survival's sake as well as hatred & wickedness
- Sorceries ( witchcraft, drugs, poisons, etc. )
- Sexual immorality
- Thefts

They obstinately refuse to alter their conduct, actions and thoughts...instead continuing to do what their sinful nature tells them will bring them pleasure. Repentance for these people does not appear as an attractive option. Ultimately, their refusal to repent solidifies their idolatry and worship of the Beast & of demons, which practice leads to the murders, sorceries, thefts, etc.

The reader here is reminded that these idols they ( we ) worship “cannot see or hear or walk”, highlighting the senselessness of worshipping anything or anyone but God – cf. Deut. 4:28; Ps. 115: 5-7; 135:15; Isa. 44:12-20; etc.

We do not next proceed immediately to the record of the 7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet Judgment & the 3<sup>rd</sup> Woe. Two chapters are inserted next as another parenthesis – Rev. 10:1to11:14 to prepare us for that trumpet wherein God’s victory over the wicked is sealed and the 7 Bowl Judgments begin.

Next lesson – Lesson # 34 The Mighty Angel, A Little Scroll & 7 Thunders –  
Rev. 10:1-11