

The Sixth Trumpet
Revelation 9:13-21
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INTRODUCTION

1. We now come to the second “woe” the eagle mentions in Revelation 8:13.
2. John mentions it in 9:12 when he says, “One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.”
3. This second “woe” begins with *the sixth trumpet* judgment mentioned in Revelation 9:13-21.
4. In the fifth trumpet we saw how demons were allowed to “torment” unbelievers for “five months ” but were not allowed to kill them.
5. Now in the sixth trumpet they will “kill a third” of mankind.
6. This all begins in Revelation 9:13.
7. Read Revelation 9:13-21.
8. There is a terrifying judgment coming for unbelievers.
9. Despite the suffering and death toil coming on this world, many will still refuse to repent and turn to Jesus.
10. The heart of man is either broken or hardened.
11. When it is broken – salvation is at the door.

12. Psalm 34:18 says, “The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.”
13. When a heart is hardened the only thing left is judgment.
14. The psalmist said in Psalm 32:10, “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.”
15. Proverbs 11:21 says, “The wicked will not go unpunished.”
16. Judgment is coming accompanied with “many sorrows.”
17. It begins with the first seal in Rev.6:1.
18. Paul says in 1 Thess.5:3, “For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.”
19. The judgment concludes with the bowl judgments of the seventh trumpet in the Day of the Lord prior to Jesus’ return with the saints in chapter 19.
20. We have seen a lot of devastation up to this point but there is still more to come.
21. Currently we are looking at the wrath of God as it is carried out on mankind in the trumpet judgments.
22. The first trumpet was sounded in Rev.8:7 and came with devastation as “hail and fire followed, mingled with blood.”
23. The second trumpet in verse 8 brings a “great mountain burning with fire” out of the sky that is “thrown into the sea.”
24. The third trumpet sounds in verse 10 and “a great star fell

from heaven, burning like a torch.”

25. Verse 12 tells us at the sounding of the fourth trumpet, “a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened; and a third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.”
26. Then the fifth trumpet sounds in 9:1-12 and out of the pit comes demons who were commanded to “torment” unbelievers for 5 months.
27. Now we come to the sixth trumpet in verse 13.
28. Let me remind you before we look at this trumpet.
29. The church is already gone.
30. The 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each tribe have been sealed.
31. They are preaching the Gospel and calling people to repent while all of this is going on.

I. The Sixth Angel Sounded (vv.13a-15)

A. John Heard A Voice

“Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice”

1. This was a single, solitary voice

“The Greek literally reads, ‘one voice,’ stressing that John heard a single, solitary voice” (MacArthur).

2. The voice is unidentified

a) It is possibly that of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ

“He is pictured earlier standing near the Throne (5:6), when He took the seven-sealed scroll from the Father’s hand (5:7) and broke its seals (6:1), thus unleashing the series of judgments of which the sixth trumpet is a part” (John MacArthur, Revelation 1-11, p.267).

b) It could be the voice of the angel whom John had seen standing near the golden altar of incense (8:3)

B. The Voice Comes From the Golden Altar (v.13b)

“From the four horns of the golden altar which is before God”

1. John had already seen this altar twice in his visions (6:9-11; 8:3-5)

2. The altar is the heavenly counterpart to the Old Testament altar of incense

John MacArthur writes in his commentary on Revelation 1-11: “In the Tabernacle and temple, this altar was a place where incense was burnt, symbolizing the people’s prayers for mercy rising to God. But in John’s vision the golden altar became an altar of imprecatory intercession, as the martyred saints pleaded there with God for merciless vengeance on their murderers (6:9-11). Then in 8:5 it became an altar of judgment” (p.267).

3. The original altar is described in Exodus 30:1-10

“The incense altar was located in front of the veil that separated the Holy of Holies, where God’s presence dwelt, from the Holy Place” (MacArthur).

- C. The Voice Calls for a Release of Four Demons (vv.14-15)

“Saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great River Euphrates.’”

1. These “four angels” are currently “bound” (v.14a)

“Bound” Gr.deo, “to bind.” The perfect tense implies that “these four angels were bound in the past with continuing results; They were in a state or condition of bondage until God’s determined time came for them to be released to execute their function as instruments of divine judgment” (John MacArthur, Revelation 1-11, p.268).

“These angels are apparently wicked, because no holy angel would be bound” (Warren Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary).

“God’s control over demonic forces is complete – they are bound or loosed at His command” (MacArthur).

2. They are “bound at the great River Euphrates” (v.14b)

Craig Keener, in his IVP Bible Background Commentary: NT, says, “Ancient literature indicates that it was common knowledge that the river Euphrates (16:12) was, above all else, the traditional boundary between the Roman and Parthian Empires.”

Robert Mounce says, “But John is not describing a Parthian invasion. While his imagery is freely drawn from sources both secular and sacred, he weaves it into an eschatological tapestry uniquely his own” (The Book of Revelation, pp.200-201).

“Rising from sources near Mount Ararat in Turkey, the Euphrates flows more than seventeen-hundred miles before emptying into the Persian Gulf. It is the longest and most important river in the Middle East, and figures prominently in the Old Testament. It was one of the four rivers into which the river that flowed out of the Garden of Eden divided (Gen. 2:14)” (John MacArthur, Revelation 1-11).

3. Their release will usher in death on a third of mankind (v.15)

“So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.”

“Death, which had taken a holiday under the fifth trumpet (9:5-6), now returns with a vengeance.

John MacArthur again writes, “At the precise moment in the predetermined year, the month, and the very day and exact hour called for by God's sovereign plan, He will release these four high-ranking demons so that He can use them in His ongoing judgment of the world. The shocking, terrifying purpose for the release of these demon leaders and their hordes was so that they would kill a third of mankind ("those who dwell on the earth"; 8:13). The judgment of the fourth seal killed one quarter of the earth's population (6:8); this additional third brings the death toll from these two judgments alone to more than half the earth's pretribulation population. That staggering total does not include those who perished in the other seal and trumpet judgments. The repeated emphasis throughout the trumpet judgments on one-third (cf. 8:7-12) demonstrates convincingly that these are controlled, precise divine judgments and not mere natural disasters. The terrible slaughter will completely disrupt human society. The problem of disposing of the dead bodies alone will be inconceivable. The sickly stench of decaying corpses will permeate the world, and it will take an enormous effort on the part of the survivors to bury them in mass graves or burn them. How these demons inflict death is specifically revealed in v. 18. To slaughter well over a billion people will require an unimaginably

powerful force” (Revelation 1-11, p.270).

Warren Wiersbe adds, “The army is released at a precise time, for a special purpose: to kill (not just torment) a third of the world's population. Since a fourth of mankind has already been killed (Rev. 6:8), this means that half of the world's population will be dead by the time the sixth trumpet judgment is completed” (The Bible Exposition Comm.).

II. The Army in the Vision (vv.16-19)

A. They Number Two Hundred Million (v.16)

“Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million, and I heard the number of them.”

1. Some have suggested that this is the human army referred to in 16:12 and led by “the kings of the east”

In the 1970's the Red Chinese Army reportedly numbered 200 million

David Jeremiah says that by “the year 2000 the Chinese population would be at least 1.35 billion. It is not difficult to imagine that there could be a soldier for every 7,000 civilians. This number is almost twice as many troops as the Allied and Axis powers combined, when they were at peak strengths in World War II” (Escape the Coming Night, p.131).

Robert Mounce says, “Reference to a *Time* article which reports 200,000,000 men and women is

interesting but no special help. John's eschatological steeds breathe out fire and brimstone and have serpent-like tails with lethal heads (vss.18-19)" (The Book of Revelation, pp.202-203).

2. The impracticality of this view

Donald Salerno paraphrases from Tim Dailey's book *The Gathering Storm* the impracticality of an invasion of two hundred million men from China. He says:

“(1) The swiftest movement of troops in history occurred when the United States moved half a million troops into the Middle East within six months. At this same rate it would take two hundred years to move a 200 million-man army from China to the Middle East. (2) The land route that an army from China would have to take would go straight through the central Asian republics of the former U.S.S.R.. This is an incredibly hostile territory, and it is not likely that they would be able to pass through with ease. (3) The equipment needed to move this army would consist of a conservative convoy of approximately ten million vehicles containing food, fuel, and supplies. If each vehicle occupied forty yards of road space (including the space between vehicles) the convoy would stretch ten times around the earth to the span of 227,272 miles. (4) Finally, because of the time factor involved, this army would have to begin its movement toward Israel literally decades before the beginning of the Seventieth Week. Since we have not seen any recent troop movements, we are in for a long wait for the Seventieth Week to

begin” (Revelation Unsealed, pp.158-159).

B. They Are Not Human But Demonic (vv.16-19)

1. Their description (vv.16-18)

- a) In verse 16 they number “two hundred million”
- b) Also in verse 16 they are seen on horses as they are described as “horsemen”
- c) In Verse 17 they are described as “those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow.”

“The color of fire is red; that of hyacinth, dark blue or black like smoke; that of brimstone, a sulfurous yellow, describing the rock which, when ignited, produces a burning flame and suffocating gas. Those are the very colors and features of hell (cf.14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8), and they paint a terrifying picture of God’s wrath poured out on the sinful world by these demons. These colors are reminiscent of the destruction of Sodom, Gomorrah, and the nearby cities (Gen.19:24-28)” (John MacArthur, Revelation 1-11, p.271).

- d) The rest of verse 17 describes the horses:

“And the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions.”

“Like lions these demon forces fiercely, relentlessly, determinedly stalk and slaughter

their victims. John noted three ways that the demon horses killed their victims, all of which picture the violent, devastating fury of hell. They incinerated them with fire, and asphyxiated them with smoke and brimstone” (John MacArthur, Revelation 1-11, p.271).

2. Their destruction (vv.18b-19)

- a) “Fire and the smoke of brimstone” came out of their mouths (v.18b-19a)

This is what killed “a third of mankind” (v.17b). “Their power is in their mouth and in their tails” (v.19a).

- b) From their tails “they do harm” (v.19b)

III. The Rest of Mankind (vv.20-21)

“The death of one-third of the earth’s remaining population will be the most catastrophic disaster to strike the earth since the Flood. Yet in an amazing display of hardness of heart, the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent” (John MacArthur, Revelation 1-11, p.272).

Albert Barnes says, “No reformation followed; there was no abandonment of the prevailing forms of iniquity; there was no change in their idolatry and superstition” (Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible).

A. They Did Not Repent of the Works of Their Hands (v.20)

“Once the heart is set in its hostility toward God not even the scourge of death will lead men to repentance”

(Robert Mounce, The Book of Revelation, p.204).

1. Ever since the Fall, men have practiced idolatry, worshipping “the works of their hands”

That phrase is used throughout Scripture to refer to idols.

- a) Deut.31:29 - “For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you. And evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands.”
 - b) Ps.135:15 - “The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands.
 - c) Acts 7:41 - “And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the work of their own hands.”
2. In ancient times, and even in some cultures today, people actually worshiped “idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk”
 - a) Ps.115:1-8
 - b) Rom.1:18-32
 3. To worship an idol or false deity is to worship demons
 - a) Ps.106:32-37

- b) Ps.96:5 - the LXX renders this “All the gods of the peoples are demons.”
- c) Paul said in 1 Cor.10:20 that “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons.”

“When people worship idols, gods that do not exist, demons who do exist will impersonate those gods and hold those idolaters captive to their demonic power and deception. False religions are not void of the supernatural; they are full of it – because they are the best opportunities for demons to capture souls” (John MacArthur, Revelation 1-11, p.273).

B. They Did Not Repent of Their Murders, Sorceries, Sexual Immorality or Thefts (v.21)

1. Murders

“Bereft of any sense of morality, evil, unrepentant people will imitate the demon horde’s murderous blood lust. Believers in the true God will no doubt be their prime targets, as they lash out seeking revenge for the disasters God has brought on them” (John MacArthur, Revelation 1-11, p.273).

2. Sorcery

“Sorcery” Gr.pharmakon, where we get the English words “pharmacy” and “pharmaceuticals”

This word can also refer to “poisons, amulets, charms, seances, witchcraft, incantations, magic spells, contacting mediums, or any object that is

“...tied to pagan idolatry to elicit lust or to seduce.”

“Pliny describes the use of many superstitious and magical practices to bring about healing one being ‘that snake bites and scorpion stings are relieved by intercourse’ (Natural History - Fritz Rienecker, The Linguistic Key to the Greek NT, p.834).

3. Sexual immorality

“Immorality” Gr.porneia, this describes sexual sin of every variety, including fornication, adultery, rape, and homosexuality

Indescribable sexual perversions will be running rampant in that day.

4. Thefts

Like morality, honesty will be nonexistent, as people compete for the increasingly scarce supplies of food, clothing, water, shelter, and medicines.

CONCLUSION

“Mankind will be breaking the first two Mosaic commandments by making and worshiping idols. In their murders, they will violate the sixth commandment, and in their thefts, the eighth. By their fornication, they will break the seventh commandment. It will be an age of lawlessness with "every man doing that which is right in his own eyes" (see Jud. 21:25)” (Warren Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary).

“Under the influence of the massive demon forces the world will descend into a morass of false religion, murder, sexual perversion,

and crime unparalleled in human history. It is sobering to realize that the Lord will one day come "to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (Jude 15). In light of that coming judgment it is the responsibility of all believers to faithfully proclaim the gospel to unbelievers, thereby "snatching them out of the fire" (Jude 23)" (John MacArthur, Revelation 1-11, p.274).