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A0549 – December 4, 2005 – Revelation 9:13-19 – The 6th Trumpet: Death To One-Third of Mankind

Revelation 9:13-19 Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, ¹⁴ one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." ¹⁵ And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind. ¹⁶ The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. ¹⁷ And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: *the riders* had breastplates *the color* of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone. ¹⁸ A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths. ¹⁹ For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm.

Outline

- I. The First Six Trumpets (Rev 8:7-9:21)**
 - A. 1st Trumpet: 1/3 of Land Burned (8:7)**
 - B. 2nd Trumpet: 1/3 of Sea Became Blood (8:8-9)**
 - C. 3rd Trumpet: 1/3 of Rivers Made Bitter (8:10-11)**
 - D. 4th Trumpet: 1/3 of Heavenly Bodies Darkened (8:12-13)**
 - E. 5th Trumpet (1st Woe!): Demonic Locusts (9:1-12)**
 - F. 6th Trumpet (2nd Woe!): Death to 1/3 of Mankind (9:13-19)**
 - 1. The Origin of the Four Angels (9:13-14)**
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F. 6th Trumpet (2nd Woe!): Death to 1/3 of Mankind (9:13-19)

The 6th Trumpet is also known as the 2nd Woe! as per Rev 9:12 (cf Rev 8:13, 11:14). Remember, the Greek word for *woe* (*ouia*) means “how horrible it will be!” Also recall that the first four trumpets are directed at nature (land, sea, rivers, and heavens) and the three woes are directed at mankind. So, the 5th, 6th, and 7th Trumpets, or the three woes, will be horrible judgments upon mankind. But these horrors are not without a goal. One of God’s desired results is the repentance of men (Rev 9:20-21; 16:11). But men will not repent as to give glory to God but will rather blaspheme Him (16:11; 21). If you thought stinging demonic locusts were bad just remember that men were unable to die and death fled from them but now men will flee death and death will pursue them and destroy 1/3 of the earth’s population; men, women, and children. God was showing grace during the five months of demonic locusts allowing them time to repent but God’s grace will have ended for 1/3 of the earth’s population and His judgment will have come and those who are killed will no longer be able to repent.ⁱ

1. The Origin of the Four Angels (9:13-14)

Revelation 9:13-14 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard one voice from the [four] horns of the golden altar before God, ¹⁴ saying to the sixth angel, the one having the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are (perfect participle) imprisoned in the great river Euphrates."

and the sixth angel sounded. This 6th Trumpet judgment is God’s answer to the martyr’s prayer in Rev 6:9-10. All the trumpet judgments are God’s answer to the martyr’s prayer. From this it is clearly seen that God’s answer to our prayers often comes in stages and not all at one time. We may pray for someone to be healed of cancer and this prayer may be answered through human doctors and through various stages of intervention. Thus, we should never think that God’s answer to our prayer *must* come all at one time. It may come in a series of events over time as here.

and John heard one voice from the [four] horns of the golden altar before God. This voice is likely the voice of the angel who added incense to the prayers of the saints in Rev 8:3.

Revelation 8:3 Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne.

The *golden altar* is the *altar of incense* which stands at the entrance to the Holy of Holies in the Heavenly Temple (cf 11:19). The Solomonic Temple was modeled after the Heavenly Temple This *golden altar* stands just *before* or *in the presence of God* (*enopios*). From there John hears a voice *saying to the sixth angel, the one having the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are (perfect participle) imprisoned at/in the great river Euphrates."* This is the first time that one of the angels who sounds a trumpet is involved in the judgment which follows. So, the *sixth angel* will *sound* and then after the angel at the *golden altar* commands him he will descend to earth and *release the four angels who are imprisoned in the great river Euphrates. the four angels* are fallen angels because good angels are never *imprisoned*. The *great river* is always a reference to the *Euphrates* in Scripture. The *Euphrates river* forms the eastern boundary of the promised Land.

Genesis 15:18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:"

The Euphrates river separated Israel from her two chief enemies: Assyria and Babylon. The area east of the Euphrates is traditionally the route enemies take to attack Israel. At the battle of Armageddon, the enemies of Israel will once again cross the Euphrates river in an attempt to destroy Her.

Revelation 16:12 The sixth *angel* poured out his bowl on the great river, the *Euphrates*; and its water was *dried up*, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.

How these *four angels* can be imprisoned *in* the *Euphrates* river is not exactly revealed but according to Luke 11:24 demonic spirits cannot pass through water. Thus, it seems that these four demonic angels are imprisoned *in* the *Euphrates*.

2. The Purpose of the Four Angels (9:15)

Revelation 9:15 *And the four angels were released, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, in order that they may kill a third of mankind.*

As a result the sixth angel descends to the *Euphrates river* and releases *the four angels*. These *four angels...had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year* to fulfill this very purpose. This shows God's providence over human history. "God's actions are not accidental, but planned and precise in time, to the point of a fixed hour of a fixed day of a fixed month of a fixed year" (Thomas, 44). These *four angels...had been prepared* is a perfect passive participle meaning that God prepared them at some time in the past and that preparation will last until a precise hour of a precise day of a precise month of a precise year. At such a precise time this angel will descend and release *the four angels...in order that they may kill a third of mankind*. The Tribulation is not a result of God's miscalculation. This is not an arbitrary destruction of a *third of mankind*. This is the result of a careful deliberation of God. He knows precisely how many people will be alive on earth at this time, He knows precisely who this one third of mankind is, and He knows that their hour of judgment has come so that they will have no further opportunity to repent. So, the purpose of these *four angels* in God's fixed plan is *that they might kill a third of mankind*. This number is far beyond human comprehension. Under the 4th Seal 1/4th of the world's population was killed. Now, a larger proportion is killed: 1/3rd of the world's population. World War II cost the lives of some estimated 50 million people. While each life to me is of incalculable value because each human is made in God's image, nevertheless, a historic evaluation of all the wars of the 20th century did not even make a dent in the world's population. It hardly even slowed down population growth. But the 4th Seal and the 6th Trumpet will make a huge dent in the world's population. We have to remember in our calculations (if based on the present population of 6.5 billion) would yield the following:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{4th Seal} \\
 6,500,000,000 \\
 \times \quad 0.25 \\
 \hline
 1,625,000,000
 \end{array}$$

1,625,000,000 people killed which will reduce the population at the time of the 4th Seal to

$$\begin{array}{r}
 6,500,000,000 \\
 - 1,625,000,000 \\
 \hline
 4,875,000,000
 \end{array}$$

We are unable to take into consideration any precise number of people who will be killed during the other Seal and Trumpet judgments so we will proceed with this number remaining at the time of the 6th Trumpet.

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \underline{6^{\text{th}} \text{ Trumpet}} \\
 4,875,000,000 \\
 \times \quad 0.33 \\
 \hline
 1,608,750,000
 \end{array}$$

So that our final population at this time, excluding all others who are killed outside of these two judgments would reduce world population to

$$\begin{array}{r}
 4,875,000,000 \\
 - \underline{1,608,750,000} \\
 \hline
 3,266,250,000
 \end{array}$$

This is half of the original population at the beginning of the Tribulation of 6.5 billion. So, the 4th Seal and the 6th Trumpet alone will result in half of the world's population being killed. This is far beyond any human comprehension. Neither the deaths caused by the potato blight of Ireland, the wars of history, the black plague, AIDS, or Cancer can compare. None of these, as horrible as they are and as many lives as they have taken are even a dot on the map in comparison to this number. There will be absolutely no way the world can handle this many deaths. You might keep in mind that these numbers are based on present the present population but that present projections of human population by 2050 are between 8 and 10 billion. This kind of destruction of human life is totally consistent with what Jesus prophesied in Matt 24:21-22.

Matthew 24:21-22 "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. ²² "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Jesus' point is that at this rate if the Tribulation was one day longer than 7 years of 360 days each then no one would have survived. This is how serious God takes sin and rebellion. God does not accept any sin or rebellion no matter how small. By analogy we might say that if the oceans were perfectly pure and one drop of poison was to touch it the entirety of it would be polluted. Thus, since none of us can be totally perfect and because God loved us so much He sent His only begotten Son; holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only

begotten Son of God. These are the words of eternal life, that if you believe in the Son of God you will live. Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.

3. The Description of the Army (9:16-17)

Revelation 9:16-17 And the number of the soldiers of the cavalry was twenty thousand groups of ten thousand (two hundred million); I heard the number of them. ¹⁷ And thus I saw the horses in the vision and those who sit upon them: having breastplates the color of fire even hyacinth-colored (smoky blue) and sulfur-yellow; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths comes fire and smoke and sulfur.

Verse 16 does not describe where the *two-hundred million...soldiers of the cavalry* come from but most likely the *four angels* “turn into this huge force of cavalry”. Some have tried to make this out to be an army of men. The most common suggestion is that these are Chinamen. But I have yet to see a single Chinamen that looks anything like the description given here, much less 200 million. The present army in China is the largest in the world having 2.8 million soldiers but is no real threat at present because their weaponry is out of date and their soldiers are poorly trained. This does not mean they could not be a force to be reckoned with in the future but nevertheless, no Chinamen or horse will ever fit the description mentioned here. Thus, this is a demon army of 200 million strong. John did not see this massive army but he *heard the number of them*. Thus, this is a literal *two hundred million* and is not symbolic.

After hearing *the number of them* John saw what they looked like. ***And thus I saw the horses in the vision and those who sit upon them.*** The focus is not on the rider but on the horse itself which does the killing, though both are seen as a unit. *horses* are frequently connected with warfare in the Bible. God supernaturally designed horses so they could be trained to have courage, swiftness and composure in the midst of violent and torrential warfare.

It seems that both the horses and the riders have *breastplates* even though your Bible probably adds *the riders* in italics it is not in the original Greek text. Rather, the *horses and the riders* both have *breastplates*. For horses to wear such armor is not unheard of historically. The *breastplates* are *the color of fire even hyacinth-colored* which is a smoky *blue and sulfur-yellow*. So, the *breastplates* are the colors of fire: red, blue, and yellow. This is a wicked looking demon. If you recall *fire and brimstone* were associated with God’s judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah in the OT (Gen 19:24) and in the future they will be characteristics of the lake of fire (Rev 20:10; 21:8). You can see that the 6th Trumpet

increases the intensity of the judgments tremendously. This is a period of God's wrath which the Church is not destined for (1 Thess. 5:9-10).

Next the *heads of the horses* are described. *and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths comes fire and smoke and sulfur.* Though the heads of the horses are not lion's heads they are something *like lion's heads*. The head of a lion is majestic and intimidating. The roar of a lion can be heard for over five miles. Their teeth are ferocious. There is no doubt this will evoke unheard of fear in men. *and out of their mouths comes fire and smoke and sulfur.* The *horses* are able to breathe out streams of *fire, smoke, and sulfur*. This is obviously a terrifying demon.

4. The Results of the Army (9:18)

Revelation 9:18 Because of the three plagues these killed a third of mankind, by the fire and the smoke and the sulfur which came out of their mouths.

The horses use the *fire, smoke, and sulfur*, referred to here as *the three plagues* to kill *a third of mankind*. The three together will amount to the largest death-toll in human history up to this point (Thomas, 49).

5. The Authority of the Army (9:19)

Revelation 9:19 For the authority of the horses is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads and with them they do harm.

Verse 19 gives the reason they will be able to kill a third of mankind as well as further description of their tails. First, they have *power* or better, *authority*. The horses have been delegated *authority in their mouth and in their tails*. The authority that is used by their mouth is obvious but the *tails* are a new addition. Apparently, it will not be safe to be in front or behind one of these *200 million* soldier cavalry, *for their tails are like serpents*. They are not *serpents* but they are something *like serpents*. Each *serpent-like* tail has a *head and with* the head *they do harm* to men. It seems that the *serpent-like head* will not kill men but will injure them. Only the *fire, smoke, and sulfur* which come out of the horse's mouth kills.

Conclusion:

We live in the age of grace and biblically grace precedes judgment. As in the days of Noah God gave the earth dwellers 120 years to repent so at present God is giving earth dwellers time to repent and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Bible promises that just as Noah and his family were spared the judgment of the Flood so those who trust in Christ will be spared the Tribulation judgments. God is righteous and He cannot tolerate any sin. If He could there would have been no need for Him to send His only Son to live a perfect life and die on the cross as our sin-bearer. Are you perfect? Have you ever committed any sin whatsoever, even in the minutest detail? If so then you are polluted by sin and can never be in God's presence...unless you place your trust in Christ alone who bore your sin in His body on the cross. Faith alone in Christ alone results in God saving you. Faith strips you of all merit and says in effect that you cannot save yourself and need Christ. Trusting in Christ makes peace between you and God. You enter God's family and become a child of God at that moment...forever accepted in His beloved Son. Will you trust Him today, He won't turn you away.

ⁱ This is yet another example of grace before judgment.

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