

Hymns: 1 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God 7 God Will Take Care of You

Scripture: Psalm 2:2-12; 103:8-18

Big idea: Judgment of God

Today, we're continuing our preview of the earth being devastated as the judgment of God is carried out by the forces of evil. Let's briefly recap where we've been in the book of Revelation so far:

Chapter 1 sets the stage with the apostle John receiving a message from God and giving a glimpse of Jesus as He is in glory.

Chapters 2 and 3 contain letters that Jesus sent to seven churches which serve as examples of the kinds of churches, with various strengths and weaknesses, that have existed throughout the ages. Within each letter, Jesus describes tidbits of what our future with Him will be like.

Chapter 4, takes us to heaven where God appears before His own. We saw four cherubim who represented the creatures of God's creation and twenty-four elders representing the church seated before God's throne giving praise and worship to Him.

Chapter 5 remained before God's throne in heaven, but the attention turned to the seven-sealed scroll. No one was found worthy to open it until the Lion of the tribe of Judah who is the Lamb of God stood in the midst of the scene before the throne of God and took the scroll from God the Father. As he did, every creature in heaven and earth broke out in praise to Jesus Christ the Lamb.

Chapter 6 began the opening the seals of the scroll – each a judgment with the first four described as *the four horsemen of the apocalypse*. The fifth seal revealed Tribulation martyrs under the Altar of Incense before the throne of God. And finally, the sixth seal described cataclysmic, but not fatal, judgments of the earth.

In Chapter 7, we paused to witness one hundred forty-four thousand sealed Jews, Tribulation martyrs, and twenty-four elders before the throne of God in heaven..

Chapter 8 unleashed the first four trumpet judgments including – devastating destruction of one-third of sea life, water purity, ships, sun, moon, and stars.

Last time, we started into chapter 9 with the fifth trumpet judgment. There, we learned of the bottomless pit and the creatures that come out of it. This included the Beast/Antichrist and also strange locust-like creatures whose sole task was to inflict pain on unrepentant mankind.

Let's now proceed with our text for today.

Revelation 9

[13] *And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,*

[14] *Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.*

[15] And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

[16] And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

[17] And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

[18] By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

[19] For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

[20] And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

[21] Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Okay, there's our sobering passage for today. Let's dive in and see what we can find.

Revelation 9

[13] And

This verse proceeds directly from the the fifth trumpet judgment in the preceding twelve verses of this chapter. That judgment was called the first woe.

the sixth angel

Seven angels stand before the throne of God holding trumpets. This is the sixth one.

sounded,

He blew his trumpet. That initiated what is called the second woe (of three).

and I heard

The apostle John continues this time by sharing first what he *heard* in a body capable of being in heaven, seeing, and hearing. Note with the previous trumpet, John said he *saw*. This time he says he *heard*. Hearing is the emphasis here in this sight-and-sound theater.

a voice

Whose voice? Let's see.

from the four horns

Can horns make the sound of a voice? You may recall in the book of Daniel talk of the *little horn* which spoke blasphemies (Daniel 7:8, 25). Is that's what's going on here?

of the golden altar

Which golden altar? Where is it?

which is before God,

Okay. This is the Golden Altar of Incense. We ran into that altar before in this study (Revelation 6:9 and Revelation 8:3, 5).

[14] Saying to

This voice is directed to someone or something.

the sixth angel which had the trumpet,

The receiver of the message from the four horns is one of these seven angels who each stand before God's throne holding and blowing a trumpet. This is the sixth one whose sounding initiates the sixth judgment.

Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

Notice the voice commands this sixth angel. It charges him to do something very similar to what was done earlier in this chapter (Revelation 9:1-4) when a key was given to the angel to open the bottomless pit. Who was doing the commanding of that angel? We concluded He was the same One Who opens the seals of the scroll – the Lamb Jesus Christ.

Where did we last find the Lamb in this scene? Before the throne (Revelation 5:6-7). Where is the Golden Altar of Incense? Before God (Revelation 9:13). Where is God? Seated on His throne (Revelation 7:10). While the scripture does not explicitly say the Lamb said these things, the implication is clear.

Where is the great river Euphrates? This is where Abram originally lived before God called him away from there to go to the Promised Land. It's the same river today that travels through the country of Iraq.

[15] And the four angels were loosed,

To be loosed, the angels must have previously been tied, bound, or otherwise constrained. Similar imagery we found earlier in this chapter (Revelation 9:3) regarding the locusts in the bottomless pit and later where Satan will be bound and confined (Revelation 20:1-3). This confinement indicates these angels are most likely demons.

which were prepared

God had placed these killer angels there for a specific purpose.

for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year,

This will happen precisely on God's timetable.

for to slay

Who will be doing the killing? The four demons just released.

the third part of men.

Wow! Think about that. According to World Population Review

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/>, the current population of the earth is 8.3 billion people. One third is about 2.8 billion – which is very close to the total populations of India and China combined!

[16] And the number of the army of the horsemen

What army? How can modern warfare even use horsemen? There seems to be a break in the description here. After the four demons kill one-third of humans, then we see what today is an obsolete army of horsemen?

What's going on here is a deeper dive into the same event – the mass killing – to describe **how** the four fallen angels execute this killing spree.

were two hundred thousand thousand:

The number – two-hundred million – gives us a feel for the magnitude.

Recall from Revelation 5:11 the number of angels just around God's throne:

[11] And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

The number of angels seen around the throne was one-hundred million plus – the same range of magnitude.

Satan often tries to duplicate and counterfeit God's power. Recall Satan's man the Beast rides the white horse in Revelation 6:2, and we will see the Lamb riding a white horse to final conquest in Revelation 19:11, 15.

and I heard the number of them.

This army made a sound that John could hear, or perhaps he heard someone say the number of horsemen. Notice again, the text focuses on hearing.

[17] And thus I saw

John now switches this sight-and-sound description to sight.

the horses

Which horses? Those of the horsemen army.

in the vision,

Here's the second emphasis on seeing.

and them that sat on them,

Who sat on these horses? The demonic army horsemen.

having breastplates

These demonic horsemen wore breastplates that looked like:

of fire,

and of jacinth,

...a smokey, dark-red stone.

and brimstone:

...burning sulfur.

*and the heads of the horses were **as** the heads of lions;*

These were no ordinary horses. Normal horses present a rather docile facial appearance. No, these demonic horses look as fierce as lions.

and out of their mouths issued

fire

and smoke

and brimstone.

Don't miss the parallelism. These three things we saw on the breastplates of the horsemen now we see proceeding from the horse's mouths. The Bible uses repetition for emphasis. Guess what? We're about to see it again.

[18] By these three

What three? Those key three items in the breastplates and issuing from the mouths of the demonic horses.

was the third part of men killed,

by the fire,

and by the smoke,

and by the brimstone,

Can you think of another place in the Bible where we have **fire and brimstone** and smoke mentioned? Sure. The judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:14, 18). It appears God is using the emphasis to assure we make the link. He judged Sodom and Gomorrah for their gross sin and killed them all this way. Here He judges the whole earth using the same means.

which issued out of their mouths.

Whose mouths? Those of the demonic horses.

[19] For their power is in their mouth,

The power of these demonic horses to kill comes from their mouths.

and in their tails:

These hideous creatures have something else in their tails. What do they look like?

*for their tails were **like unto** serpents,*

The image of the creatures keeps getting worse – horses with lion's heads and snake's as

tails.

and had heads,

Their tails had heads like snakes! Isn't that a pretty picture!

and with them they do hurt.

What evil do these snake heads do? Apparently, they cause harm rather than death. This likely matches what the locusts did with their tails like scorpions. They hurt men with stings while not killing them.

But wait! What about the locusts being helicopters and the 200 million horsemen being an army from China riding not horses but tanks? If you grew up in the 1970's you no doubt heard these fanciful tales by pseudo-Christian fiction writers. Clearly, if we take the scripture seriously, the strange locusts came at the sound of the fifth trumpet from the bottomless pit (Revelation 9:2-3). They were demonic creatures. Similarly, the strange horse-creatures that follow at the sixth trumpet came from the underworld and were demonic creatures directed by demons (Revelation 9:15, 18). With that, let's finish up our scripture for today.

[20] *And the rest of the men*

One third being killed leaves two thirds still alive. These are the rest.

which were not killed

the survivors.

by these plagues

calamities.

yet repented not *of the works of their hands,*

What works of their hands?

that they should not worship devils,

spiritual adultery,

and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood:

which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

God makes this point elsewhere in scripture as he mocks this futile form of false worship. Psalm 115:4-7 makes this same point. In 1 Corinthians 12:2 the apostle Paul calls them *dumb* idols.

[21] ***Neither repented*** *they of*

their murders,

murder shows disdain for man made in God's image,

nor of their sorceries,

illicit drugs,

nor of their fornication,

illicit sex,

*nor of their thefts.
stealing.*

Application

These people of the earth have very hard hearts. They witness ramping up of catastrophic judgment, cling to their evil ways, and defy the only One who can save them. God says He does this to bring these hard-hearted men to **repentance**. They must turn to Him and from evil. Look what the Apostle Paul says about this condition of unregenerate man penned before the book of Revelation was even written:

Romans 2

[Who] shalt escape the **judgment of God**?

[4] [Do you despise] the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God lead[s] [you] to **repentance**?

[5] But after [your] hard[] and **impenitent heart** [you treasure up to yourself] **wrath** against **the day of wrath** and **revelation** of the **righteous judgment** of God;

[6] Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

[7] To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

[8] But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and **wrath**,

[9] **Tribulation** and anguish, upon every soul of man [who does] evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

[10] But glory, honour, and peace, to every man [who does good] work[s], to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

[11] For there is no respect of persons with God.

As we saw today, God must judge righteously. He offers eternal life to all who simply believe Him and accept His free gift of grace. But those who reject His offer and defy Him, will receive tribulation and wrath and be *punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*; (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Our passage today gave us a glimpse into God's judgment against the wicked.

Benediction

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen (Revelation 22:21).