

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Second Woe

Rev. 9:13-21

INTRODUCTION:

You know how you can get a song in your head and you cannot get it to go away? This is what happened to me this last week. Except, instead of a song, it was the fifth trumpet of Revelation 9. I could not quit thinking about it.

What was so intriguing to me was how we looked at the passage as a mystery that needed to be solved. Even John found it difficult to describe the scene which he saw in the vision. He used the words “**as**” and “**like**” more often very frequently to describe his vision.

But they say that "A picture is worth a thousand words". With John's vision we, in effect, take one-dimensional scriptures from the Bible and see them as a three-dimensional motion picture. John is able to relay a complex view of the world by using words that paint a picture for us.

We looked at the words and deciphered the images. The eagle was an angel of God. Satan was the fallen angel. The locusts are not military helicopters coming out of a bottomless pit or physical creatures, but spiritual demons (fallen angels). The “**bottomless pit**” or Abyss is the abode of Satan and his spiritual followers. The smoke represented judgment, doom, and torment upon the earth.

It is important to note that the fallen angel is “**given**” the key of the bottomless pit. Throughout Revelation, God is the One who grants authority to Christ, angels, and evil beings. Nothing occurs without His divine permission. This is another reminder of God's sovereignty. God is in complete control of all that occurs in the world. He also is a personal God who is able to exercise His sovereign care in your life.

There are limitations placed upon these locusts. They are **only** “given” power to harm those “**who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads**”. These are the 144,000 from chapter seven that have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. The saved are on earth with the unsaved, but only the unsaved are tormented by the stings. We learned that the stings of torment on the unsaved is the result of sin.

We **SEE** that in our world today. People who seek worldly things like immorality, illicit sex, drugs, murder, lying, theft, and drunkenness for their own pleasure in the end are devastated by those decisions. Not only in this life, but eternally after death as well. That is what this imagery is meant to show us. This is a judgment from God on unbelievers for the purpose of bringing them to repentance. As men fall further from God, these

judgments will intensify. With this judgment, He gives Satan authority over these demonic forces to torment his own.

The bright spot of all of this is that, for the Christian, we are spiritually safe. God does not allow these demons to harm any of His people when we are living a moral life patterned after Christ.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Revelation 9:13-21 (NASB)

¹³ 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.

²⁰ The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; ²¹ and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

Prayer

BODY:

I. **RELEASING THE ARMY OF THE HORSEMEN.**

Revelation 9:13-4 (NASB)

¹³ 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."

Frequently in Revelation we encounter this voice of authority, always indicating the will of God Himself. The fact that this voice is coming from the horns of the golden altar shows that the prayers of God's people are playing an important role in God's decision to invoke these judgments.

These are evidently four angels that John had not seen before. They must be fallen angels since good angels are not bound. God had a purpose for them to fulfill and ordered their release to accomplish His will. Scripture does not record when or why God bound these angels, but evidently He restricted them as punishment. Perhaps He imprisoned them when Satan rebelled against Him.

These angels are bound “at the great river Euphrates”. Euphrates was in the Mesopotamian Valley, which was the cradle of civilization.

- It was where the garden of Eden was located.
- It was where the first sin was committed.
- It was where the first lie was told.
- It was where the first murder was committed.
- It was where the first grave was dug.
- It was the region where God saw that the wickedness of man was great and so He sent the flood.
- It was where Nimrod attempted to build the tower of Babel that would reach into the heavens, so that God confounded the languages.
- It was this region where ancient Israel’s most oppressive enemies came from —the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Medes, and the Persians.

So, it is here that God has kept in confinement, four fallen angels who will be released upon the earth, when the sixth trumpet is sounded. It might be that God chose to bind these angels at the place of Satan’s first apparent victory, as serving notice that this “victory” will be overturned. Thus, the four bound angels are but the first fruits of a far greater victory to follow.

Revelation 9:15-16 (NASB)

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.

Unlike the locusts , these “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.” A third is indicating that a larger portion of earth's population is now being affected. This highlights the preciseness of God’s divine plan. His purposes will be accomplished, perfectly and on schedule.

It was a very large army. Perhaps, in this case, a literal two hundred million since John “heard the number of them”.

II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE HORSES.

Revelation 9:17 (NASB)

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.*

We are now in the second woe. In the first woe, John described the creatures he saw from head to tail describing the characteristics of these demons.

1. “The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle.” These creatures had mobility. They were invading creatures that came like cavalry.
2. “On their heads appeared to be crowns like gold.” Their crowns probably symbolize their victory over the ones who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

3. "Their faces were like the faces of men." This may imply intelligence.
4. "They had hair like the hair of women." This may infer long, loose hair, giving the impression of ferocious beings.
5. "Their teeth were like the teeth of lions." This is a symbol of something frightening. Those who surrender to sin will experience its torment and pain.
6. "They had breastplates like breastplates of iron and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle." These demons were not vulnerable to attack and the sound of their false teaching was intimidating.
7. "They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months." These demons are able to wreak havoc for five months (a period of time) through stinging tails.

The description of this army in the **second woe** is quite similar. But you will find a **couple of differences** between the demonic locusts in the first woe and the horses in the second woe.

1. "Out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone". This portrays their destructive force. The scriptures warn us to beware of false teaching. Many people will buy into their propaganda because of the authority and power of these false teachers. While the locusts in the first woe were **not allowed to kill**, but only **torment**, now, in the second woe, "A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues...which proceeded out of their mouths".
- 2..A second difference is found in verse 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."

III. THE POWER OF THE HORSES.

Revelation 9:18-19 (NASB)

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.

In the first woe, the locusts were not allowed to kill the nonbelievers. They were only permitted to cause torment and pain. Their torment was like a scorpion when it stings a man. But now these horses have **mouths** for false teaching and deception and **tails with serpent heads** for **deadly** torment and death. Now when the tail causes torment with their bite, not only does it just sting, but it is venomous and it will cause death.

All of the commentators that I have been following agree that as we get closer to the final judgment, men are going to be more corrupt and the judgments will increase in severity. However, I believe there is another level intended here. These judgments are not only leveled at unbelievers in general, but also throughout these last days, may be leveled at an individual level as well. As the unbeliever sinks deeper and deeper in sin, his heart hardens and he gradually loses any acknowledgment of it even being a sin.

It is a gradual process of refusing to listen to the Holy Spirit until you cannot distinguish between natural instincts and the prompting of the Holy Spirit?

Could this be the sin against the Holy Spirit that cannot be forgiven?

Let us talk a little bit about the progression of sin.

We know that we all are sinners. James explains what happens when we sin.

James 1:13-14 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one; ¹⁴ but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

So, just as John reveals to us, we are tempted to sin through the delusion of self-gratification by the demons. Sometimes we sin as Paul describes in Romans 7 where he "finds himself doing the things he does not want to do". Then there are times that we make the **deliberate choice** to follow our own desires.

All of us will continue to sin because we have fleshly bodies in a sinful world. The key is that we are not deliberately continuing to sin.

Hebrews 10:26-27 (NASB)

²⁶ For if we go on sinning **willfully** after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.

Hebrews says that if you keep on sinning willfully you are toast - there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. The key is "if we go on sinning **willfully**." Paul clearly did not want to keep on sinning. It would be hard to describe his sin as "deliberate".

When we continue to willfully sin we will become numb to the sin. People are prone to believe satanic lies. It is what Paul calls a "deluding influence".

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 (NASB)

¹¹ For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, ¹² in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

At some point our sin can become unforgivable.

Matthew 12:31-32 (NASB)

³¹ "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. ³² Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but **whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him**, either in this age or in the *age* to come.

Do you have any deliberate sins?

Hebrews is referring to a person who has refused to listen to the Holy Spirit to the degree that it is insulting. This person deliberately keeps on sinning after knowing the truth. The conclusion is that the unpardonable sin is a gradual, deliberate matter. The person comes to the point where they no longer listen or want to listen to the Holy Spirit.

Eventually, you will not be able to distinguish between natural instincts and the prompting of the Holy Spirit? At that point, you have made the decision to cross over into eternal death. This may very well be the sting of the horses tail with the serpents head.

The tenth Egyptian plague killed the firstborn of every Egyptians' family and cattle. First Pharaoh told Moses to leave, but later he changed his mind. When Pharaoh and his army chased the Israelites into the Red Sea, they were all killed. Just as Pharaoh's heart was hardened by the Egyptian plagues and caused his death, so the hearts of these men and women are hardened by the plagues of these last days.

CONCLUSION:

Revelation 9:20-21 (NASB)

²⁰ The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; ²¹ and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

God's desire is that all men should repent. But as men experience God's judgments on earth, many will harden their hearts against God and sin. They begin to ignore the guilt associated with that sin and eventually lose all acknowledgement of that guilt.

The sins of humanity are generally of two types.

1. Verse 20 focuses on sins directed against God—they do not love God supremely (the first four of the Ten Commandments).
2. Verse 21 directs our attention to sins directed against other human beings—they do not love their neighbors as themselves (the last six of the Ten Commandments).

One of the most amazing things about these two verses is that demons are worshipped. Yet, demons are the instruments of man's destruction in the fifth and sixth trumpets. Men worship the very things that destroy them.

Romans 1:28-32 (NASB)

²⁸ And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are gossips*, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; ³² and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Hell is not a place where the good ole' boys sit around and drink beer and play poker to pass the time. It is a place of separation, torment, and agony.

As Paul encouraged the Romans. **Romans 7:24-25 (NASB).** "Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

This is the Day!