

Revelation Pastor Lou DeVizia

Revelation 9:12-21 Fellowship Bible Church; Woodbridge, NJ

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Introduction: After the first four angels sounded their trumpets, another angel proclaimed even greater woe coming upon the earth from the remaining three. In the first half of Chapter 9, we saw a gruesome judgment of locusts going over the whole earth targeting people (except for God's marked) with painful torment for five months, a torment that seemed to bring all of the ill effects of poisonous scorpion bites short of actually being relieved by dying. Men longed for death, but it did not come. There is simply nothing like that recorded in the Bible or anywhere else. The degree of woe pronounced seems to be quite appropriate.

The absence of death seems to be quite made up for with trumpet number six. Here another judgment being brought directly to men will be unleashed. We have already seen, early in the seal judgments, what seems to have been a great world war bringing about the death of a quarter of earth's population. Here we will see one-third of the population slaughtered. Between these two judgments, this means, more than one-half of the world's population will die, and that does not include the dying multitudes from the other judgments and the persecutions. And all of this happens in the span of the Great Tribulation, a.k.a. the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9), just a seven-year period.

This begs one very important question: what will be the response of people who go through this and somehow manage to survive? That question is answered at the end of this Chapter: they would not repent.

1. Verses 12-19 - The sixth trumpet: The four angels and their army, one-third of mankind killed.

- v.12 - Trumpet five is behind, six and seven are coming. Each brings great *woe*.

- v.13 - *the golden altar which is before God...* It was upon this altar that an angel had offered incense with the prayers of the saints (8:3-4). God Himself was near this altar, as its smoke ascended to Him. Though not specifically stated here, it is consistent with everything we have read thus far that this is the *voice* of the Lamb, Christ, for it is He who is the Judge executing judgment.

- v.14 - The *Euphrates* runs through ancient Babel, where one of the first great rebellions against God in the postdiluvian world took place (Genesis 11). That *angels* (presumably powerful ones) are *bound* here could refer to fallen, rebellious angels, though that is not stated. This is known - *this moment is exactly what these angels were created for:* to hold back this deadly onslaught until this precise moment!

- vv.15-16 - They have been bound there for this specific moment in earth's future. They will be released at this trumpet and *kill a third of mankind* with the force of *two hundred million* (200,000,000) *...horsemen* at their disposal. John emphasizes the specificity of this number!

NOTE: Some interpreters confuse this force with the Armageddon army of Chapter 16. That is an actual, earthly, human army; this seems to be of a spiritual realm.

- vv.17-19 - Here a description of the four angels' force is given. Like with the locusts of the previous trumpet, John seems to be describing something he can't conclusively identify (using the word **like** twice to describe features). This is another spot where interpreters sometimes liken what John is looking at to modern machinery of warfare (which is understandable here!). However, it is best, since angels from the realm of spiritual things are at the helm, to take the scripture literally: horsemen, multi-colored breastplates, etc. These are unnatural, unknown-to-mankind, dreadful and fearsome creatures who will wage war not just near the Euphrates (that's where they start) but all over the world, killing one-third of the population. ...**fire, smoke, and brimstone** This facet is reminiscent of the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19).

2. Verses 20-21 - Hard-hearted, unrepentant mankind.

- v.20 - The survivors do not **repent**. Specific sins are named - their evil **works**, demon **worship**, **idolatry**.

NOTE: To **repent** means to experience a complete inner change: to change one's mind, to change one's heart. To be completely broken and contrite over sin, to understand the condemnation it brings, and to come to hate it and want it gone. Furthermore, true repentance produces fruit - see Luke 3:8-14. The prophets (including John the Baptist) called people to repentance, as did Jesus, and as did the Apostles. What holds back repentance? A hard, calloused, proud, sin-loving heart.

- v.21 - **murders... sorceries** (Greek: *pharmakia*; i.e., illicit drug usage)... **sexual immorality... thefts**. All of these things will continue to be rampant even as mankind experiences the judgment of God.