

The Sixth Trumpet: The Four Angels Who Had Been Kept Ready, Were Released to Kill a Third of Mankind 9: 13-21

DIG: Who asked for the release of the four angels at the Euphrates River? What are some of the Tribulation Period sins? What response should this woe produce from the unbelieving world? Why? Why then will it fail to bring the majority to repentance?

REFLECT: Do you have anything in common with these people? Is there any sin that you love more than God? Is there an area of your life that you refuse to submit to the Lord? What will be the consequences of your rebellion in the long run?

Then John heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God (9:13b). This is the same golden altar of 8:2-5 that symbolized the prayers of the saints crying out for vindication. Mentioning **the horns** is significant because once a year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest was to cleanse **the golden altar** by sprinkling the blood of a sacrificial animal that had been slaughtered as **atonement** for sin **on its horns** (Exodus 30:10). Here, ADONAI speaks through **the four horns of the golden altar** to symbolize the slaughter, as **atonement** for sin in the Great Tribulation, would soon begin. Since **the angles** with the trumpets stand continually in God's presence, presumably only God gives them orders. On the Lord's command, then, **the sixth angel** will sound his trumpet (9:13a). Each time **the shofar** sounds, the judgment that follows will be more severe than the one before. Long ago Isaiah prophesied: **When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world will learn righteousness** (Isaiah 26:9b).

While the first demonic invasion was led by one fallen angel, this one is led by four. To the sixth angel who had the trumpet, God commanded: **Release the four fallen angels, who are bound at the great Euphrates River** (9:14). The four angels are clearly demons because holy angels are not bound. They seem to have charge over still another great demon horde, distinct from the demon locusts that stung like scorpions (9:1-12). The river Euphrates was a border to the Land promised to Abram (Genesis 15:18; Deuteronomy 1:7 and Joshua 1:4). While the first demonic invasion was able to torment but not kill the earth dwellers, this one will kill a third of the earth's population. So the second woe will indeed be worse than the first.²⁶⁹

The great Euphrates River first appears in **Genesis**. It was close to the Garden of Eden where Adam sinned and Cain murdered Abel. It was where the Flood began, where the Tower of Babel stood, where Babylon was built, and where world government and world religion began. It has long been associated with astrology, idolatry, **demon** worship, witchcraft, and other disgusting sins.²⁷⁰

Four demons had been kept ready for the very hour and day and month and year of God's own choosing. His plan is laid out to the exact hour, minute and second. Though they serve their master, Satan, they cannot act apart from the sovereign permission of ADONAI. They were released to kill a third of mankind (9:15). And 9:18 reveals that they succeeded. Under the previous judgment, men had sought death but could not find it. Under this one, they could hardly escape it. The fourth seal (6:7-8), resulted in a fourth of the earth's population dying. Here, a third of the remainder will be killed. These two judgments alone, not counting all the intervening judgments, would account for the death of half of the people on the earth (Dani'el 12:1). Since we have not seen this loss of life in our lifetime, it is safe to say we are not living in the Great Tribulation as some believe.

The number of demons that John hears is two million that is literally ten thousand times ten thousand. Any attempt to reduce this expression to a math equation misses the point. The expression of ten thousand times ten thousand is a biblical term for an indefinite number that cannot be counted. Earlier, John saw many angels numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousands times ten thousand around the throne of God (5:11). They were so numerous that Yochanan could not count them (Dani'el 7:10).

The announcement of the number in the demonic army is followed by a description of what they looked like. It was difficult for John to describe what he saw. So he uses the words *like* and *resembled* to indicate that he was using symbols to describe the demons as best he could for his readers. The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked *like* this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horse *resembled* the heads of lions and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur (9:17). Some think this refers to two hundred million Chinese. But they would be hard pressed to find just one Chinese person who looked like this, let alone two hundred million of them. No, these are demons once again.

The judgments will be progressive. The first woe brought torment, the second brings death. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths (9:18). Men and women will be devoured by the flames, suffocated by the smoke, and poisoned by the sulfurous gases. The antichrist will promise peace, but without the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6b), there will be no peace. The power of the demons (who appeared as horses) was in their mouths and in their tails; for their

tails were like snakes, having heads (9:19). If these creatures were animals, they would have feared men and women as God had intended (Genesis 9:2). But because they were demons, they fought people, and inflicted injury and a third of mankind was killed. After barely recovering from the five-month torture of the locusts, people will run hysterically away and try to hide, but over a billion will probably be slaughtered.

Joel 1:15 to 2:11 also describes the two demonic invasions of 9:1-21. He describes it by telling about the destruction of the Great Tribulation. He speaks of an invading army that is made up of demons, not humans. The results of their invasion will be convulsions of nature and a total blackout. The passage concludes that the reason for the invasion is the judgment of ADONAI. But at some point, the Lord will stop the plague and the two-thirds of mankind who survive will enjoy a brief reprieve. You would think that what they had experienced would drive them to their knees in repentance. But human rationalization will not permit it. The invasion will have ended, and for the moment they will feel secure.

But even with this satanic slaughter, mankind will still refuse to repent. Once the heart is set against ADONAI, not even the possibility of death will change the human heart. If you say, "No!" to God long enough, He will let you have your way. The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent (9:20a). John lists six (the number of mankind) sins that will be especially prominent during the Tribulation period: demon worship, idol worship, murders, the occult, sexual immorality and thefts.

First, they will not stop worshiping demons. The satanic bible will be widely read, and the Church of Satan will fill its pews. Goddess worship and witchcraft will be the rage of the politically correct. Statues and idols of the antichrist will be common, and multitudes will bow down before them.²⁷¹ No longer will there be atheists or humanists who deny the existence of God and His holy angels. They will have seen angels flying across the sky and proclaiming judgment (8:13, 14:6-7), but they will decide to cast their lot with the devil.²⁷² They will come to believe that the old serpent will sit enthroned (Isaiah 14:12-14), and by following him they themselves will be like God (Genesis 3:5), doing anything they please (Genesis 11:6).

Secondly, they will choose to worship the work of their hands, or idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood - idols that cannot see or hear or walk (9:20b). In the first commandment we are commanded to worship the LORD, and none other (Exodus 20:4). In the second, we are commanded to worship Him directly, and not through any intervening object (see my commentary of Exodus DI - The Second Commandment: You Shall Not Make For Yourselves an Idol). Idolatry in our day is not so obvious but is just as real as it was in John's day. By definition idolatry is turning an earthly thing into a god and worshiping

it rather than the **God** of creation. Whatever we place ahead of **the Lord** in our lives is our **idol**. There are literally hundreds of other passages also condemning the making or worshipping of **idols**. A few examples are **Leviticus 26:1; Deuteronomy 27:15; Acts 15:20; Second Corinthians 6:16** and **First John 5:21**. Worshiping any **idol** is in fact worshipping **demons** (**Psalm 106:37; Deuteronomy 32:17**). False religions are not void of the supernatural; they are full of it, because they are the best opportunities for **demons** to capture souls. **The weapons we fight with are not weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds (Second Corinthians 10:4).**²⁷³

The practice of the church of Rome, however, contradicts this. In direct opposition to Scripture, the Council of Trent (1545-1563), decreed that, "The images of **Christ** and the Virgin Mother of **God**, and of the other saints, are to be had and to be kept, especially in churches, and due honor and veneration [worship] are to be given to them." Roman Catholics tell us that they do not pray to the image, or idol, but to the spirit that is represented by it. However, that excuse is given by **idol** worshipers the world over when they are asked why they pray to their **idols**. Rome has omitted from the Catholic Bible, from her catechisms and from her textbooks: **You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth below or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them (Exodus 20:4-5)**. Each commandment is bumped up, so the third commandment becomes the second, and the fourth becomes the third, etc. When you get to the tenth commandment it is divided in two, to make ten. **Yeshua** teaches that **God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship [Him] in Spirit and truth (John 4:24)**.

Nowhere in the Bible, in either the TaNaKh or the B'rit Chadashah, is there a description of **Christ's** physical features. No picture of **Him** was painted during **His** earthly ministry. The Church had no pictures of **Him** during the first four centuries. All we know about **His** physical appearance was that there was **nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him (Isaiah 53:2b)**. Like the grave of **Moses**, the physical features of **Jesus** were intended to be kept beyond the reach of idolatry. For most people, the pictures of **Christ** are not an aid to worship, but rather a hindrance, and for many they present a temptation to the very idolatry against which the Scriptures warn so clearly.²⁷⁴

Thirdly, they will not **repent of their murders** (see my commentary on **Exodus Dp - The Sixth Commandment: You Shall Not Murder**). Ever since the beginning of the Great Tribulation, when the red horse of war rode forth (**6:3-4**), there had been violence and anarchy on the earth. **The rider** will be **given power to make men slay each other** on an unprecedented scale. Law and order will disincarnate, and mankind will be free to rob and steal and kill as they want. Lacking any sense of morality, evil, unrepentant **people** will imitate the bloodthirsty **demons**. No doubt believers will be **their** main targets as **they** lash out to seek revenge for the torment **God** had brought on **them**.

Fourthly, *sorcery*, or **their magic arts**, the occult, witchcraft, astrology, fortune telling, signs and wonders will be worldwide. *Pharmakon* is a Greek word from which the English word *pharmacy* comes from. But it can also refer to poisons, charms séances, witchcraft, incantations, magic spells, contacting mediums or any object that is tied to idolatry. As society melts down, people will dive deeper into the satanic trappings of false religion. There will be a tremendous increase in the use of drugs. The drug traffickers will make great profits as they traffic in **the souls of men (18:23)**; however, most **people** will use drugs just to escape the reality they live in. Once under the influence of drugs, mankind will accept anything. **Satan** will lead **the whole world astray (12:9)**, and it is obvious that **he** will use drugs to do it.

Fifthly, **their sexual immorality** will be pandemic (see my commentary on **Exodus Dq - The Seventh Commandment: You Shall Not Commit Adultery**). The Greek word *porneia* is the root word of the English word for *pornography*. It is a general term that is used to describe **sexual immorality** of every kind. All religious restraints on **sexual** desires will also be removed, so adultery, homosexuality, and every imaginable **sexual** perversion will become commonplace. Children will be brutalized. Later we are told that **those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood** will have no **right to the tree of life (22:14-15)**.

Finally, people will refuse to repent of **their thefts (9:21)**. Like morality, honesty will cease to exist. Many murders and **thefts** will occur because of the need to take drugs, or secure such necessities as food, clothing, water, housing or medical supplies (see my commentary on **Exodus Dr - the Eighth Commandment: You Shall Not Steal**). Although they are clearly warned by **Him**, **unbelievers** will continue to love **their** sin more than **they** love **God**. The trumpet judgments come to an end by the middle of the Great Tribulation.

The general meaning of **the trumpets** is clear. From the First Coming to the Second Coming, **Messiah** rules all things and again and again punishes the persecutors of the Church by inflicting them with physical and spiritual torment. The blood of the martyrs is precious in the sight of **the Lord**. The prayers of the righteous will be heard. **God** sees their tears and hears their cries for justice. Yet, in spite of all the warnings, mankind in general does not repent. The persecuting world becomes the shameless world. Their shameless disregard of **His** word and the holiness of **His** people bring about not only the seven bowls of wrath, but also the culmination of the final judgment. Now there will be no turning back. Delay will no longer be possible.²⁷⁵

Besides its vivid descriptions of natural disasters and plagues, **John's** vision in the **Revelation** is a heartbreaking commentary on the hardheartedness of humanity. In this passage, for example, **John** tells us that even after numerous disasters fall upon the earth, **the rest of mankind still did not repent of the work of their hands (9:20)**, or worshiping **idols**. How could that be? It seems impossible! We know that we must proclaim the truth of the Gospel. As the vision of the **Revelation** touches our hearts, it should move us to pray for the lost that we know personally. We can plead with **the Holy Spirit** to give them a moment of spiritual clarity so that they could see their sin as it truly is. But even though I am sure it breaks **His** heart, **God** will not violate **their** free will to choose to go to hell.

*Lord, I proclaim **Your** victory over all forms of sin and evil. May **Your Holy Spirit** move my heart to witness **Your** plan of salvation to those around me.*