

This morning we are, once again, in our study of the book of Revelation and I would encourage you to take your Bibles and turn there, Revelation chapter nine.

I stand before you, once again, with great joy to contend earnestly for the faith. We are not here to have a conversation or a dialog, as some apostate churches would have it. But I am here to preach to you, to preach to you hopefully with clarity and certainly by the authority of the Word of God, the riches of his Word never avoiding those truths that seem offensive to the proud or to the ignorant.

And we approach this prophetic text, once again, with a sense of wonder, a sense of awe. I marvel at the condescension of God whereby he would stoop to our lowly estate in order to communicate the details of what will happen at the end of redemptive history. Every verse exalts a unique facet of the character of God. Every passage gives us an increasing understanding of his attributes. Who could possibly miss his unassailable sovereignty as we read these wonderful truths? Who could miss his unwavering faithfulness, his undeserved mercy, his unimaginable power, his unmitigated holiness? Who could possibly miss his unrelenting wrath?

Well, such glorious themes are deserving of our utmost care as we examine them. And I hope that you have prepared your heart for receiving the Word this morning.

Here, again, in the apocalypse, the revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ we are given the details and the chronology of the pre kingdom judgments upon the Gentiles of the world as well as his covenant people Israel. And remember that the essential theme of Old Testament prophecy points to a coming king. It points to the establishment of a kingdom of peace and righteousness when the Messiah returns to this earth, when, according to Isaiah 2:3, “The law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”¹

Here in Revelation we have a detailed summary of the consummation of all of these incredible events. And I must say how I long for the millennium, the consummating bridge between history and the eternal state. But, again, before all of that will occur God will judge the world and ultimately reconcile his beloved enemy unto himself along with many Gentile nations from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues.

This morning we are going to examine here in Revelation chapter nine the sixth trumpet judgment. But before we look at it, before I even read it to you, I want you to think with me for a moment. Unregenerate man has always scoffed at the idea of a coming judgment. In his mind he is undeserving of any such thing because man has no fear of God, he has no understanding of the holiness of God and therefore the depths of his own sin. In fact, unsaved man glories in his shame and he is convinced of his own inherent goodness. The world’s disdain for the Bible doctrines of apocalyptic judgment on non Christians is eclipsed only by their utter contempt for the idea of hell, as well as their contempt for anyone who would suggest that they might deserve it.

¹ Isaiah 2:3.

Jesus has said that before he returns the world will live as like the days of Noah. They will eat and they will drink and marry and give in marriage. In other words, everything is going to go on as life as usual. We read in Matthew 24:39, “they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.”²

For 120 years Noah preached and the people scoffed. And today, dear friends, it is no different. Man denies creation. He also looks back and denies the flood, that first great judgment that came upon the world. So therefore he is going to also deny a future judgment.

In fact, Peter reminds us of this in 2 Peter three beginning in verse three. He says:

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.³

You see, unregenerate man is both self deceived as well as satanically deceived. By nature he prefers darkness over light. The Word of God says that he suppresses the truth in unrighteousness. He is spiritually dead. The things of God are foolishness to him. He has no capacity to discern them. Nor would we apart from his grace. And Satan's ingenious schemes are far too clever and his temptations far too irresistible for man to successfully deal with.

And this is why Satan's ape, the antichrist, is going to one day be so successful; because of Satan's deception and man's self deception. We will soon learn more about the antichrist in our study of the book of Revelation, but I want you to be aware that by the sixth trumpet that we are looking at here this morning, the antichrist will have already desecrated the temple and demand that the world worship him. In fact, in Revelation 13:4 we read, “They worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?’”⁴

And as we will learn in our study of the apocalypse the antichrist will begin with a campaign of deception. He will fool the world in many ways especially with the false peace described in the first seal, and his goal will be global domination attained through religious and political as well as military control. In his quest to rule the world he will

² Matthew 24:39.

³ 2 Peter 3:3-7.

⁴ Revelation 13:4.

have an obsession, and that obsession will be to destroy Israel at all costs. And the theater of operations will be in the Middle East.

My dear friends, the fact that these dynamics can be seen in the goals of Islam is certainly not by coincidence. Even as the antichrist, they are working a campaign of deception. And I am sure as things progress we will see Islam and the antichrist and many of these things come together. Their goal is also global domination. That will be attained through religious, political and military control. Their quest is to rule the world and they have an obsession, just like the antichrist, and that is to obliterate Israel. And certainly the theater of operations is in the Middle East.

I want you to think of how successful Satan's campaign of global deceit is today. The majority of the Arab Muslim world is convinced, for example, that the Holocaust never happened, that it is a myth. Polls indicate that the Muslim Arab world does not believe that they were involved in 9/11. And yet it is fascinating how they exploded into celebration the very day of the attack and considered it a great victory for Islam. In fact, when our soldiers entered into Iraq they saw massive posters all over the region—and I have seen pictures of it, pictures of Saddam Hussein with a big smile on his face smoking his cigar and in the background the twin towers bursting into flames.

On the very day of the attack at 9/11 30,000 Palestinians in New Jersey, right next to Manhattan danced in the streets. And now next to Mohammed, the name Osama is the favorite name for a son in the Arab world. Yet they were not involved? How bizarre. The world is deceived.

Even our dear president, our last president Bush was deceived. He said, and I quote, "Islam is a great religion that has been hijacked by a bunch of radicals," end quote. Dear friends, that is intellectually dishonest and I say that with all due respect. That is intellectually dishonest. That is thoroughly refuted by the very facts of history. He also said, quote, "Islam means peace." No, it doesn't. It means "surrender." It means "be subjugated to Allah."

We pray as Christians as we love Muslim people and as we present the gospel to them that they will surrender not to Allah, but to the Lord Jesus Christ, their only hope of salvation.

We see similar deception in some branches of Evangelicalism that holds to supercessionism or replacement theology where there is an increasing hatred for Israel and Christian Zionists who believe—as we do—that God will, indeed, restore Israel unto himself and to their land as promised. And we see them siding with the Palestinians and with the Muslims.

In his excellent book *Future Israel* a very compelling refutation of supercessionism, Barry Horner writes, and I quote, "The denigration of modern Judaism, especially its national and territorial Zionist aspirations, go hand and hand with sympathy for the cause of the Arab state being predominantly Muslim and particularly a national Palestinian

agenda,” end quote, referring to those who believe that somehow Israel it has been eternally disregarded.

A classic example of this is the official statement of the Fifth International Sabeel Conference held in Jerusalem in 2004. And here these Christians state as follows, quote, “Christian Zionism...” Let me pause there. In other words, those who believe in a premillennial understanding of eschatology, those who believe that God still has business to do with his covenant people Israel and that they will be redeemed as an ethnic people, brought back into their land, and there will be an earthly kingdom that is preceded by judgments upon the world. Those people, Christian Zionism they say, quote, “Is a modern theological and political movement that embraces the most extreme ideological positions of Zionism thereby becoming detrimental to a just peace within Palestine and Israel. The Christian Zionists program provides a world-view where the gospel is identified with the ideology of empire, colonialism and militarism. In its extreme form,” catch this, “it places an emphasis on apocalyptic events leading to the end of history rather than living Christ’s love and justice today. We also repudiate the more insidious form of Christian Zionism pervasive in the mainline churches that remain silent in the face of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Therefore we categorically reject Christian Zionist doctrines as a false teaching that undermines the biblical message of love, mercy and justice,” end quote.

And my response would be, humbly, that love, mercy and justice cannot exist apart from truth, repentance and judgment; and this is what the Word of God teaches.

Beloved, the conditions of global deception are absolutely astounding as they are pervasive. Think about it. According to the Roman Catholic Vatican II, Muslims are considered to be saved apart from the Roman Catholic Church. Now everybody else like us are anathema, but the Muslims are in. America is deceived. There are terrorist cells that exist throughout the United States. I have seen maps of them. Our government is aware of them. Mosques are being built everywhere funded by the Saudis. Yet people are duped into believing that Islam is just a moderate, peaceful religion. Yet, again, historically wherever Islam has taken hold it chokes out every other religion and is utterly hostile to Christianity. It is like an invasive plant.

Beloved, please hear me before we look at the Word this morning. God does not want you to be deceived. This is why he has given us his prophetic Word and this is why I am compelled to preach it with the authority of the Word and with the clarity that is within it. Please understand that eschatology should not be considered as some kind of tertiary divisive doctrine that we need to avoid. Beloved, now it is a matter of life and death. Men’s souls are hanging in the balance and therefore it is deserving of our utmost care. We must do as Jesus said in Matthew 16:3, “Discern the signs of the times.”⁵

So we return again to the text and thus far our study has helped us see the seal and trumpet judgments escalate in frequency and in severity, consistent with our Lord’s

⁵ Matthew 16:3.

description in his Olivet discourse of the birth pains that will also increase in frequency and severity.

And, again, today we examine the sixth trumpet judgment found in Revelation nine beginning in verse 13. let me read this to you.

And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they might kill a third of mankind. And the number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. 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. 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. 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. And 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; and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.⁶

I have divided this section of Scripture into three parts that hopefully will give us some categories to understand it better. We will first see *the divine order*; secondly, *the demonic assault* and, finally, *the defiant response*. First of all the divine order. In other words, the command that triggers this plague in verse 13.

And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."⁷

Perhaps this is the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ standing near the throne or of the angel associated with this altar as we read in chapter eight in verse five. That is not stated. We don't know for sure. But certainly it is ultimately God's command.

And I want you to notice that the voice comes from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God. Keep in mind that this is the heavenly equivalent to the golden altar of incense that we read about in the Old Testament, with the tabernacle as well as the temple, that altar that stood nearest to the holy of holiness in which the glorious shekinah

⁶ Revelation 9:13-21.

⁷ Revelation 9:13-14.

of God's presence was housed, that place where prayers were offered in conjunction with the perpetual burning of incense that is described earlier even in chapter six, in chapter eight of Revelation. Likewise, here in the celestial court, we see this altar standing nearest the presence of God. It is before the throne. And here you must understand that the prayers of imprecation now are coming from the martyred saints as they cry out for vengeance on those who murdered them and who dishonor him so. So it became an altar of judgment in response to their prayers when the seventh seal was opened, and so it is here in the sixth trumpet; and keep in mind, you have seven seal judgments that telescope into seven trumpet judgments that telescope finally into seven bowl judgments.

Notice the voice is heard coming from the four horns. These were small projections on each corner of the altar, and this just simply indicates that the source of the voice was from the sacred surface of the altar emphasizing the fact that what was once an altar of *mercy now rejected* is now an altar of *judgment now required*. This is truly a terrifying scene, dear friends, and it should cause everyone who does not believe that Christ is the only source of salvation to tremble and fear.

Verse 14 we read that for the voice says, "To the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Release...'"⁸ which literally in the original language means "turn loose" or "let go," let loose "the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."⁹ These four angels are demons, because nowhere in Scripture is there any record of holy angels being bound. But that certainly is the case for a variety of other demons as we read in 2 Peter two and as well as in Jude six. In fact, in Revelation chapter 20 verses one and two we read about an angel with the key to the abyss who will one day lay hold of the dragon, the serpent of old who is the devil and Satan and bind him for 1000 years.¹⁰ Furthermore, you must understand that holy angels have no need to be incarcerated to prevent them from doing something contrary to the will of God.

Now, I find it fascinating as we look at the grammar of this particular phrase that these four angels were bound in the past with continuing results. But we are unsure why. The text really doesn't tell us. But perhaps at some level the next phrase gives us a bit of a clue. They were bound at the river Euphrates.

The location of this bondage is most significant. The River Euphrates extends from the Persian Gulf, about 1800 miles up to Mount Ararat in Turkey. It came originally from the Garden of Eden, passing through the Islamic countries today of Turkey, Syria and Iraq.

Biblically the name, "the River Euphrates," refers not just to the river, but to the entire region that it nourishes. We read in Genesis chapter two and verse 10 that, "a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers."¹¹ And according to verse 14 that fourth river was the River Euphrates. So from

⁸ Revelation 9:14.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See Revelation 20:2.

¹¹ Genesis 2:10.

the world's creation it flowed from the cradle of civilization, the region where the history of man began and, dear friends, the region where it will end.

This is the place where Satan first introduced sin, where rebellion first occurred, where the curse on creation was pronounced, and from the beginning this was a land of defiance against God. It was the land of Noah. It was the land of Nimrod and his wife Semiramis and the tower of Babel which spawned the counterfeit religious system of the mother and son fertility cult, god, goddess worship that branched out into the entire world even as we see remnants of it today in virtually all of the pagan religions including Roman Catholicism with the worship of Mary and Jesus. The River Euphrates was the eastern boundary of the Promised Land. And it was along the boundaries of this river that the children of Israel struggled under the weight of their wilderness wanderings. And this is the place of the most violent haters of God throughout history. They made their home along this river. Assyria, Babylon and Medio-Persia.

It is interesting that the great psalm of coronation, Psalm 72, anticipates the reign of Christ and his messianic kingdom, and it talks about that that rule will extend from the River Euphrates to the ends of the earth. In verse eight it says, "May he also rule from sea to sea, And from the River,"¹² a reference to the River Euphrates, "to the ends of the earth. Let the nomads of the desert bow before him; and his enemies lick the dust."¹³

Now, friends, for reasons that we do not know, God has bound these great demons in the past in anticipation of this sixth trumpet judgment here in verse 15. Perhaps they were the mighty Satanic princes like the prince of the kingdom of Persia and of Greece that fought against Michael and Gabriel that we read about in Daniel chapter 10. Perhaps these four demons were once the satanic generals in charge of the vicious empires that set themselves against Jehovah God and despised his covenant people, namely Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece and Rome. But whoever they are, the use of the definite article indicates that *the* four angels are a very specific group, and, according to this text, they are currently this very day bound in the region of the Euphrates where many of our troops are currently stationed.

So we see *the divine order* of, secondly, *the demonic assault* in verse 15. "And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they might kill a third of mankind."¹⁴

The Greek construction here indicates that this could be translated, "They had been prepared for the predetermined hour occurring in the predetermined day occurring in the predetermined month, occurring in the predetermined year." All of that to say the Lord wishes to leave absolutely no ambiguity about his sovereignty here. This should provide great comfort to every believer. Dear friends, please hear me. We serve a God that does not respond to history. He determines it. And God's timetable is precise. All that he has

¹² Psalm 72:8.

¹³ Psalm 72:8-9.

¹⁴ Revelation 9:15.

decreed in eternity past will happen at precisely the appointed time, and he has set the very hour of when this plague will occur.

Now, I want you to notice also the parameters of their nefarious mission. We see this at the end of verse 15. They, “were released, so that they might kill a third of mankind.”¹⁵ Now, you must understand that this is a reference to a *third of what is left*. You will recall in the second seal we have the red horse of world wide wars that will kill millions. The third seal is the black horse of world wide famine that will kill millions. Then you have the fourth seal, the ashen horse of death, war, famine and disease and the wild beasts and the earthquakes. That plague, it says, will kill a fourth of the earth that is still left alive. By the fifth seal—which would be the midpoint of the tribulation—we learn about the martyrs who have died thus far, and the text tells us that they are a great multitude that no one can count. And the sixth seal we have the cosmic disturbances of a great earthquake and volcanoes and meteor showers that will undoubtedly kill millions more, and then the seventh seal unleashes the trumpet, the first trumpet that destroys a third of the earth’s vegetation. The second trumpet destroys a third of the sea and the sea vessels and marine life, and then the third trumpet destroys one third of the world’s fresh water supply. The fourth trumpet, then, there is a loss of light that will lower the earth’s temperature, dramatically affecting the weather patterns, triggering world wide storms and hurricanes and tornados and what not, so the death toll by this time will be into the billions.

And by the fifth trumpet, with billions already dead, there is the release of a scorpion like demon, a demonic horde that will be dispatched to torture nonbelievers, and you will recall that they will not be able to die, although they will want to. But now in the sixth trumpet death returns and it returns with a vengeance. These four demons and the 200 million creatures of judgment they command are ordered to kill a third of mankind, that is a third of what is left. By now, dear friends, the face of the earth will be so charred by fire and choked with smoke and littered with the corpses of animals and people that it will be almost uninhabitable.

Imagine just the stench of rotting corpses mingled with smoke. How tragic yet how fitting as I was thinking about it. You think of all the Christ hating organizations like the ACLU and ACORN and PETA and Code Pink and the gay activists, all of those types of things. They will finally be silenced by the very God they mock. And who will the world blame? Christians as well as the Jews because they will see them, even as many do today, as worshipping the same God; and, indeed, at some level that is true even though one worships in Spirit and truth and the other does not.

Remember by now during the tribulation, the world knows the source of all of these plagues. It is not like they are blaming it on Mother nature or anything else. In fact, you will recall that in Revelation six verse 16 they have already said to the mountains and to the rocks:

¹⁵ Ibid.

Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne,
and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come;
and who is able to stand?¹⁶

And we also know according to the prophetic Word that because of the catastrophic devastation on the earth, the antichrist, by this time, will begin to amass his armies and prepare to go against Jerusalem in the battle of Armageddon.

Now, I want you to notice, verse 16, “And the number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.”¹⁷ This is a curious statement. And some have argued on the basis of Revelation 16 and verse 12 where we read about the kings of the east that will gather to war against God and because in the 1970s the Chinese bragged about having a 200 million man army, because of these things many have argued that here in this particular text in the sixth trumpet, that these 200 million are referring to the army of the Chinese. And some would even add, “Well, I think that they are helicopters.” Of course, there is no exegetical or contextual support for such a fanciful interpretation.

I believe that there is no merit for this being a human army for several reasons. Please understand. First of all, this is the sixth trumpet judgment; it is not the sixth bowl judgment, and it is in the sixth bowl judgment that the armies of the kings of the east come which takes place during the seventh trumpet, not the sixth trumpet. Furthermore, there is no reference in Revelation 16, in that sixth bowl judgment, to the size of the armies of the kings of the east. There is no reference there.

Plus, think about it. The sheer logistics of dispatching a 200 million man army, not to mention 200 million attack helicopters, to cover the entire globe and to kill one third of mankind in a very short amount of time which would probably be about a month. This would be impossible. Moreover, the world’s population by now will be under the rule and the protection of the antichrist who is consumed with killing Christians and Jews. I would also argue that if these were human armies, the world’s hatred would shift from God to the men inflicting such violence upon them making the references here in verses 20 and 21 regarding their lack of repentance literally beg for relevance.

You see, the world would be motivated for revenge against these other human beings, not repentance. And their hatred of Christians and Israel would quickly shift to whoever these nations were that would mount such an attack. And I would also ask: What motivation would there be for the nations to come together and amass a 200 million man army to kill their own in the midst of such devastating, cataclysmic events? It makes absolutely no sense whatsoever.

And, finally, the figurative language that John uses to describe these 200 million creatures suggests they are not human, but supernatural creatures with supernatural powers like the four demons that lead them. John says there was 200 million. I believe

¹⁶ Revelation 6:16-17.

¹⁷ Revelation 9:16.

he is giving us an exact number, not some figurative expression of a vast number. When he chooses to do that he uses phrases like in chapter five verse 11, “And the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands.”¹⁸ Or in chapter seven verse nine, “A great multitude, which no one could count.”¹⁹ But here he even adds, “I heard the number of them,”²⁰ as if to underscore the exact count, to prevent the charge of exaggeration or ambiguity. And since he offers no information here pertaining to the source or origin of this army. By implication I believe it is safe to assume that they are somehow associated with the four demons that lead them.

Now notice the description of this terrifying force in verse 17. “And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them.”²¹ First, now, he begins with what appears to him to be riders on horses, neither of which should be taken literally. These are not real riders or real horses. He says, “The riders had breastplates the color of fire,”²² in other words to be red in color, “and of hyacinth,”²³ which is a dark blue color, “and of brimstone.”²⁴ Brimstone is basically sulfur and it therefore would emit this sulfurous hue of a light yellow color. Dear friends, these creatures will have the glow and the smell of hell.

In Revelation chapter 14 and verse 10 and several passages in Revelation we read about hell being a place of fire and brimstone. Brimstone, again, being a sulphuric chemical that can become explosively hot. This is reminiscent of the judgment that fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And I might add that the only place in the world where this mineral substance of brimstone can be found in golf ball size quantities is on the shores of the Dead Sea where Sodom and Gomorrah once stood, the only place on earth where you can find 96% pure monoclinic sulfur in a round ball. This is what will somehow proceed out of their mouths.

Verse 17, we read,

And the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone. 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.²⁵

Here we have a description of something fierce, of something powerful and horrifying, something capable of killing people with fire, with asphyxiation due to the smoke and, of course, the brimstone that is somehow emitted from their mouths. Dear friends, this will be a taste of hell. And John adds more to his description of these wretched demons in verse 19. He says, “For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for

¹⁸ Revelation 5:11.

¹⁹ Revelation 7:9.

²⁰ Revelation 9:16.

²¹ Revelation 9:17.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Revelation 9:17-18.

their tails are like serpents and have heads; and with them they do harm.”²⁶ Once again, we can only imagine what John is seeing here, what he is trying to describe because he has obviously never seen anything like it. The closest he has ever seen something that would like a horse and a rider and I believe this is where we must leave it.

These creatures will be alien beyond our ability to even fathom. And for this reason I believe the Lord has left it purposefully mysterious. But we do know that they will be ferocious like lions and, shall we say, deadly like serpents. But their actual physiology is beyond our comprehension. This is supernatural. This is alien. This is demonic. This is a foretaste of hell, a foretaste of judgment upon the wicked. And I might add as well, it is also a warning to those left upon the earth that they should repent of their sins before it is too late and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ lest the wrath of the Lamb consume them.

Now, again, during this time, the majority of the world will be worshipping the dragon and the beast, the antichrist, not the Lord Jesus Christ. And they will be like those that marveled at Jesus’ miracles. Remember those who heard the impeccable logic of his preaching and witnessed the perfection of his righteous life and yet rejected his atoning work and even denied his resurrection. And you think, what more could the Lord have done back then and likewise during this time of tribulation.

We know that the gospel is going to go forth throughout the world. There will be many thousands of new converts. We know that there will be the 144,000 evangelists in chapter seven, the two witnesses described in chapter 11. There will be an angel in the sky in chapter 14. Yet the majority of the world will harden their hearts and God will then judicially harden their hearts for ever even as he did those who rejected him when he was on earth as John tells us in chapter 12 verse 40, “HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES, AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART; LEST THEY SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED, AND I HEAL THEM.”²⁷

As I was meditating upon this horrific plague of this divine judgment my mind went to Hebrews 10. Do you remember that great text beginning in verse 26? There we read:

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.²⁸

²⁶ Revelation 9:19.

²⁷ John 12:40.

²⁸ Hebrews 10:26-31.

Well, finally, we see *the defiant response*, evidence of judicial hardening. In verse 20 we read, “And the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands.”²⁹ “Works of their hands” is a phrase used in Scripture to describe idols. They, “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.”³⁰

May I remind you here that all idolatry is the worship of demons? In fact, in psalm 96 and verse five we read that all the gods of the peoples are demons.³¹ Satan’s goal is always to try to get people to worship anything other than the one true God including the many distortions of the one true God or the worship of the one true God in the wrong way. All of that is idolatry. And we see it being prominent even today in many ostensibly Christian denominations. It is absolutely amazing to see the power of demons, to get people to give their allegiance to idols. 1 Corinthians 10 verse 20 Paul says, “The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.”³²

And then, finally, in verse 21 we read, “They did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts,”³³ each of these, of course, being sins that violate the 10 Commandments. Every day we witness the proliferation of these false religions—Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witness, Scientology, Satanism, Mysticism—we even see the idolatry of the reinvented God, that smiley faced Jesus of neo Evangelicalism. We see it in the amorphous, enigmatic, unknowable God of the Emergent Church. All of that is idolatry. All of these are doctrines of demons.

And notice it includes sorceries, *pharmakon* (far’-mak-on) in Greek. We get our English word “pharmacy” and “pharmaceuticals” from this; and it can refer to mind altering drugs that will, no doubt, be a part of the worship of that day. But it also refers to amulets, charms, séances, contacting mediums, magic spells, witchcraft, incantations. In other words, the full gamut of satanic religious options.

“They did not repent of their immorality,” *porneia* (por-ni’-ah). We get our word “pornography” from that, a general term used to describe the full array of sexual sins, fornication, adultery, rape, incest, homosexuality, pedophilia and on and on it goes.

“Nor of their thefts.” It is interesting that this would be included. Even today many religious organizations and certainly many people, many different people groups do not consider it immoral to steal from others in order to perpetuate their perverted causes. And certainly by the time of the tribulation, by the time this particular plague goes forth, food

²⁹ Revelation 9:20.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ See Psalm 96:5.

³² 1 Corinthians 10:20.

³³ Revelation 9:21.

and water and medicine, shelter, clothing, all of those things will be so scarce the world will descend into an abyss of anarchy and it will be every man for himself.

Dear friends, all of these forms of evil are available on the satanic smorgasbord of idolatry. We see it today right here in our world. And they will all be assimilated into the worship of the antichrist and Satan in these final days.

Friends, I close with these words. A day of vengeance is coming. It has been fixed in the counsels of a holy and a sovereign God. And if the warning of these judgments have no effect on you, I fear that your heart is hard, and unless you deal with your sin, the Lord will judicially harden it forever.

For those of us who know that this Word is faithful and true, our calling to evangelism should be stronger, our hope more blessed, our faith more certain, our worship should be more informed and our praise for his saving grace more exuberant. May the Spirit of God fix these truths in our minds and establish them in our hearts to the praise of his glory.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for your Word that gives us such direction and understanding. And, Lord, even though we don't know fully all that you even express in your Word, much less those things that remain secret, Lord, what we do know is that you are sovereign, that you are holy, and that you are merciful. And we praise you, Lord, for saving us. And, again, I pray that as we contemplate the judgments to come that we will develop an ardent zeal for evangelism, that we will go for the even from this place testifying as to the love of Christ and calling people to repentance. Lord, may this be the character of our lives and the longing of our heart. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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