

The Four Angel Cavalry

📖 Revelation 9:13-21

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Turn to the Book of Revelation. Remember, this book is called Revelation, not Revelations. Revelation means “an unveiling.” It is primarily an unveiling of things in the future that are soon to take place. It comes from Jesus Christ and a blessing is pronounced on those who read, hear, understand and respond to these things. The proper response is, first, to strive to live a life that is pleasing to God. This is done by means of the Spirit, not by the flesh. So we are to learn to live by the Spirit, and second, to actively engage in evangelism. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe and we should be prompted to tell people the gospel so that they can be saved and not have to enter the Tribulation, or 70th week of Daniel.

We’ve already seen from Daniel that the future things being unveiled relate to the 70th week of Daniel, a period of seven years of 360 days each, during which the nation Israel is being purged to faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the nations of the world are being punished for their treatment of Israel. The purpose of this time is for God to establish His covenant program with Israel in the restoration of the kingdom. For this to happen the kingdoms of this world must be destroyed. Throughout this difficult time many Jews and Gentiles will come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Many of them will also be killed. They will be resurrected to have their part in the kingdom. Those who survive will enter into the kingdom in their natural, mortal bodies to re-populate the earth.

We have already seen that the difficulties of the 70th week are described as seal, trumpet and bowl judgments. As far as chronology is concerned, I think it is best to view the seals and trumpets in the first half of the Tribulation and the bowls in the second half. Messianic Jew, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, and pastor-teacher, Robert Dean, hold to this view, as well as others. The reasoning for this chronology is that the seals and the trumpets are described in Rev 6-9 and then events surrounding the abomination of desolation at the midpoint are described in Rev 10-13. This is a very straightforward reading of the Revelation that does not force the interpreter to read Rev 10-13 back into Rev 6-9 somewhere. But it’s very common for commentators to do that, most commonly at the sixth seal, but sometimes at the second or third trumpet. But it just seems much more natural to see a progression of seals, trumpets and then the midpoint.

With that said, we have studied the six seals and seen that the seventh seal opened up seven trumpets. The first four trumpets are upon creation, because man depends upon creation and yet does not thank God for creation, but rather worships creation instead. These judgments destroy thirds of creation. The fifth trumpet begins a series of three woes that are directly upon man. In 9:1 the fifth angel sounded and John saw the key to the bottomless pit given to a fallen angel. In 9:2 the fallen angel opened the bottomless pit and black smoke came out of the pit along with 9:3, demons that are pictured as locusts with scorpion-like power in their tails. In 9:4 these demons were limited in that they were told not to hurt the grass or any green thing or any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. What is happening is God is permitting demons to do what they would naturally do if they were permitted to; which is to hurt men, to torment them. In 9:5 they are given further limitations. They were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. This will be very bad, as 9:6 reports, "in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them." In other words, they will not even be able to commit suicide, because the moment they try they are stung so that they are incapacitated and cannot commit the act. It will be a living death. But it is really God's grace giving them more opportunity to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. In 9:7 these demon locusts are described in their overall appearance as "like horses prepared for battle." Then their heads are described as wearing crowns like gold, having faces like the faces of men, in 9:8 hair like the hair of women and teeth like the teeth of lions. In 9:9 their thorax is described as having breastplates of iron, and wings that sound like many chariots, of many horses rushing into battle. In 9:10 their abdomen is described as having "tails like scorpions, and stings; and the part you want to avoid is "their tails" because "their power to hurt men for five months" is in their tails. In 9:11 "they have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon." This name means "destroyer," and so their leader is a very bad demon named "destroyer," whom some have claimed is Satan himself, but we really do not know for sure, and I think unlikely. In any case, in 9:12, this will go on for five months, it is the first woe and it will be unbearable pain, but no one will be able to die from these stings. Today we move to the sixth trumpet, which is the second woe, and under this one people will be killed. So this is an escalation of intensity consistent with the overall birth pangs theme.

In 9:13, **Then 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."** It's difficult to tell whose **voice** came **from the four horns of the golden altar**. John apparently did not see, he only **heard**. The last being we saw at **the golden altar** was the angel in 8:3 who added incense to the prayers of all saints and it may be the voice of this angel. However, it may be the voice of the Lamb or of God the Father. No one can know for sure. What we can know for sure is that this **voice** was standing at **the golden altar** in the holy place of the heavenly temple. That makes me think it is an angel because the **golden altar** is said to be **before God**. **God** is always seen as enthroned above the cherubim of the ark of the covenant in the most holy place of the heavenly temple. So the layout is the same as in the temple

built by Moses, which was a copy of the true temple in heaven. The **golden altar** was in the holy place, right outside the veil, and in the most holy place, right inside the veil, was the ark of the covenant and throne of God. So, the voice came from that golden altar and that altar has **four horns**. Now normally the **four horns** were a place of refuge. If one went and took a hold of the **horns** of the **altar** they could not be killed. Take, for example, the story in 1 Kgs 1 where Adonijah tried to take the throne of David before it was given to him. They even had a coronation ceremony. But as they were doing so Solomon was crowned king. Adonijah then feared because he would be viewed as a rival king. It says "And Adonijah was afraid of Solomon, and he arose, went and took hold of the horns of the altar." He was assuming he would be safe taking hold of these horns. And when this came to the ears of Solomon Adonijah's messenger said, 'Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.' On that occasion Solomon let him live, but in the end Adonijah made another play on the throne through the unsuspecting Bathsheba and that resulted in him being executed. But the point is that to take hold of the horns of the altar would give one safety. But the announcement that comes from the **four horns of the golden altar** is not one that will bring safety. This voice says to **the sixth angel**, "**Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates**. There are a number of strange things here. First, who are the four angels? Are they good angels or are they demons? The four angels must be demons because good angels are never said to be **bound**. So this is another demon judgment like the previous locust judgment. Both are releasing demons for the purpose of bringing havoc on the human race so men will believe in Christ. Second, when were these angels **bound**? We're not told when they were **bound** but we know there was only one fall of angels. This occurred when Satan fell. Therefore, we reason that at that time God bound certain angels for the purpose of releasing them at certain times. Verse 15 is going to tell us these four angels were prepared for a very specific time and purpose. Third, how can angels be **bound**? Angels are spirit beings. They can't be held by physical materials like chains or bars, or so we think. So how are they **bound**? We're never told. We might say there are spiritual parallels to physical materials. In other words, there are spiritual chains or bars. These may simply be in the form of God's commands. He will not permit them to do certain things. Certainly confining a spirit being is not difficult for God. Or they may involve certain physical things such as water. Our verse says they have been **bound at the great river Euphrates**. This is very strange statement. We don't understand how water can confine a spirit being. Perhaps Luke 11:24 has some bearing on it, where it says, "When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest..." Perhaps spirit beings can only pass through dry places. If so, then they cannot pass through watery places. What this would mean so far as the construction of the molecules of H₂O I don't know or understand. That is simply what it says. But in some way they are **bound at the great Euphrates River**. Now the mention of the **Euphrates** is interesting. The **Euphrates** river is the most common river mentioned in the Bible. Before the Flood there was a Euphrates river and it is mentioned at creation along with three other rivers; the Pishon, the Gihon and the Tigris. In that world the Euphrates was near the creation of the first human beings, the fall into sin and the first murder. After the Flood there was another river that Noah and his family named the Euphrates, perhaps because it reminded them of the prior Euphrates river. In this world the Euphrates was near the Tower of Babel, it was the border of the Promised

Land and it was where the Israelites were taken during the Babylonian captivity. At the time of Christ, it was the border between Rome and the Parthian empire. The significance of the Euphrates is probably that it was always the source of enemy attacks. In this sense, what the four angels will bring will be an attack on the human race.

Now in 9:15 we are told that **the four angels...had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year.** The Greek construction has one article governing the four time designations, **the hour...day...month...year.** The significance of this construction is that it designates very specifically an appointed time. In other words, this is minutely timed. These four angels were locked away at the fall in preparation for this purpose. What purpose? **So that they would kill a third of mankind.** The trumpet judgments deal in **third's.** This is obviously an escalation over the fourth seal where "a fourth" of mankind" were killed. When we look at the numbers, if people only died during the fourth seal and the fifth trumpet, then a full half of mankind would be killed. At present the earth's population is 7 billion people. If the Tribulation were to begin today by the sixth trumpet 3.5 billion people would be killed. But, there were also many people killed under the second seal, which was war, and the fifth seal martyrs, and the sixth seal cosmic disturbances as well as during the first trumpet burning up of a third of the earth, trees and grass, the second trumpet turning a third of the seas to blood, the third trumpet poisoning a third of the fresh springs and rivers of water. And so, it is not at all beyond reason to conclude that probably three-fourths of the earth's people have been killed by this time. This certainly fits with Zephaniah's revelation about the day of the Lord where he says, "For He [the LORD] will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth." Jesus also said of this time, in Matt 24:22, "Unless those days had been suddenly terminated, no life would have been delivered; but for the sake of the choice those days will be suddenly terminated." The point is that the judgments during the day of the Lord will be so great that they nearly exterminate the human race.

Now what's so strange is that in 9:15 we have **four angels released,** obviously fallen angels, for this purpose of killing at least a billion people, and then in 9:16 it says, **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...** I find it so strange, and I hope you find it strange too, that the text moves from **four angels** in verse 15 to **two hundred million** army in verse 16. You'd think that something was left out? Because in math you can't have an equation that says four equals two hundred million. That's just not how it works. And yet that seems to be what is said and we are given no explanation for how this can be. Because of this commentators have given a number of explanations. One common explanation is to say that the four angels go out and raise up a two hundred-million-Chinaman army to march from the east of the Euphrates. Usually they cite the Time magazine article from May 21, 1965, which says that Red China claimed to have an army of 200 million. Since China is east of the Euphrates then China fits the bill. Further they tie this to the sixth bowl judgment where the Euphrates is dried up so the kings of the east can cross the river. However,

this is not the sixth bowl judgment but the sixth trumpet judgment. In the sixth bowl judgment the kings of the earth cross the Euphrates river to gather for the Campaign of Armageddon. But in the sixth trumpet judgment four angels are released from the Euphrates to kill a third of mankind. They are two separate judgments separated by almost three and a half years. Further, in reality there has never been an army fielded this large. Currently the first four largest militaries are China with 2.3 million, the United States with 1.5 million, India with 1.325 million and North Korea with 1.19 million. No nation has ever had a military force even near 200 million. The logistics of moving such a force into the Middle East would be impossible. "According to General William K. Harrison (an expert in military logistics), an army of 200 million could not be conscripted, supported, and moved to the Middle East without totally disrupting all societal needs and capabilities ("The War of Armageddon," xerographic copy of unpublished, undated article). As General Harrison brings out on this aspect of Revelation, God has made men with certain limitations; and the actual raising and transporting of an army of the size spoken of in v. 16 completely transcends human capability. All the Allied and Axis forces at their peak in World War II were only about 70 million (*The World Almanac, 1971*, ed. L. H. Long [New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, 1970], p. 355)."¹ Another weakness of the view that the 200 million are humans is the description of them in verse 17. They are described as **horses** with breastplates of three different colors with heads like lions and fire proceeding out of their mouth. That doesn't sound like men. To explain this away commentators argue that these men are here described as using modern military equipment to kill a third of mankind. The breastplates are said to equal tanks, troop carriers, missile launchers, rocket batteries, artillery pieces, each in the color of their nation's origins. The lion's mouths that spew forth fire are said to be cannons, mortars, rocket launchers and missiles. The tails of the horses like snakes are said to be helicopter gunships with rotors mounted or missiles that leave a snake-like trail of smoke and inflict injury with their warheads. But that this is not what is meant is clear from how John would have described modern mechanized military equipment. John would have used the closest objects to him that approximated what he saw. If John had seen a modern military tank he probably would have mentioned something like a giant chariot with many wheels. If he saw helicopters he would have mentioned giant eagles in the sky. But that is not what he said. He said he saw some sort of animal mounted by riders. Because of this most commentators think this is a demonic army. Under the demon interpretation there are two views. One is that these four angels lead a demonic army. They were kept bound until this time so that they could be released to gather and lead this demon army. However, the strange transition from verse 15, the four and verse 16, the two-hundred million, leads me to conclude that the four angels turn into a two hundred million strong army. Robert Thomas agreed, saying, "The four angels, once they are set free, turn into a huge force of cavalry."² How this can happen, we don't understand. All we have are strange statements about demons, such as the one in the gospels where Jesus reaches the shore and gets out of the boat and immediately he is met by a man with an unclean spirit. The text is clear that it is one spirit, it's singular. This man dwelled among the tombs. NO one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain. They had bound him many times with shackles and chains but he torn them all apart, and no one was able to subdue this demon possessed man. When Jesus approached the demon said, "What business do we have with each

other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me" For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit." Again, Jesus did not say unclean spirits, plural, but unclean spirit, singular. Then He asked the demon, "What is your name?" and He used the singular. And then the spirit said, "My name is Legion; for we are many." When Jesus cast out this Legion they went into two thousand swine. We don't really understand how one demon can in some way multiply itself and be many, but it seems to be attested by Scripture. So I prefer to view verses 15 and 16 as implying that the four demons become a huge cavalry force of two hundred million. That is why I named the lesson, *The Four Angel Cavalry*. They are really four and they are really a cavalry of two hundred million. Now John did not see the two hundred million but he **heard the number of them**. No one could see two hundred million and give that figure anyway. And do I take the two hundred million literally? I do. The Greek says "Twenty thousand ten thousand," which when multiplied together gives two hundred million. Now that is quite an army.

And what John saw in 9:17 is what each demon in the army looked like. **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.** The very description militates against these being Chinamen. If they are Chinamen, I never saw a Chinaman this mean looking, and I never want to. But what's being described is not a Chinaman, but demons. I view them as horses with riders or a horse and rider so closely attached, it is more like a centaur. Now the translation here puts *the riders* in italics, which means it's not supported by the Greek text, but an interpretation. In reality, the riders and the horses have these **breastplates**. The **breastplates** have three colors, **fire**, which is red, **hyacinth**, which is blue, and **brimstone**, which is yellow. If you were to look at the head **of the horses** it would be **like the head** of a lion. So it's not a lion's head, but it is something that resembles a lion's head. And then out of the mouth proceeds fire and smoke and brimstone. So this is really not anything we are familiar with. This is what the four demons transformed into. And the purpose of this is verse 18, for them to **kill a third of mankind**. And the **three plagues** that they killed them with are **fire, smoke and brimstone**. If you're a good Bible student you recognize all three of these as related to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The world at this time will be worse than Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom and Gomorrah was a local judgment of God. This is a global judgment of God. One third of humanity, one out of every three people on the earth, will be killed. That means if you have a family of three, one of you would die, if you were here. Of course, the Church will not be here. All believers will have been removed at the rapture. But those left behind who survive to this point will be here and experience the largest death toll in human history since either the Flood or the fourth seal.

In 9:19 we see some explanation. **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.** They have **power** in two places; the mouth and the tail. It won't be safe in front or behind one of these demons. For their tails are like serpents. Each has a serpent-like tail with a head on it and with the head they do harm to men. The fire, smoke, and sulfur seem to come out of their mouths and heads so that they kill. This is something like a fire-breathing dragon and

history as well as the Bible attests to creatures modernly called dinosaurs, who had a cavity where it has been proposed that they mixed the chemicals necessary for breathing fire. It will be something like that and they will kill one third of all humanity. We're not told whether those one third believed before they were killed or not, but I would suggest that many of them did believe because of what is said next.

In 9:20, **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; and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.** I want to point out that the main issue is verse 20, **they did not repent of idolatry.** The word **repent** means "change of mind." It doesn't mean turn from sin. It doesn't mean commit yourself to Jesus. It means have a change of mind. And those who survived did not change their minds about worshipping what they made with **their hands**, which is said to be a part of **worshipping demons.** So they will continue to construct little idols of these fire and sulfur breathing demons and worship the demons they represent. They will construct them **of gold, silver, brass, stone, wood**, whatever they can afford, materials that **neither see nor hear nor walk.** Idolatry is such a foolish thing because the little idols are crafted by men and the materials they are constructed of are inanimate. But they would much rather worship the creation and the creatures they represent than God. So they will not be moved to **repent** of their idolatry.

In 9:21 other sins that issue forth out of idolatry or go along with idolatry are listed as things they would also not repent of. **And they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.** You notice many of these things are right out of the ten commandments. Idolatry, murder, immorality and theft. They will not change their mind about committing **murders**, innocent life will be taken. **Sorceries** is the Greek word *pharmakeia*, from which we get pharmacy. It's the place you get drugs and this is a reference to drug use heavily associated with sorcery, witchcraft and dabbling with that sort of thing. The occult has always been heavily involved in drug use and demon worship. They use the drugs as a coping mechanism, to escape the pain of the hell they are having to live through and to induce other mental states. They will practice **immorality**, which is the Greek word *porneia*, from which we get porn. It refers to any kind of sexual immorality; fornication, adultery, homosexual activity, etc... These practices will be rampant. They're already rampant. But what is happening now is just leading up to the most intense period of sin the world has ever seen. And lastly, they will not repent **of their thefts.** They will steal that which does not belong to them so that they become rich. They will become a part of the Babylonian system of economics described later in Rev 17-18, centered in the Middle East, a system which will burn to the ground in a single hour near the time of the campaign of Armageddon.

So even in the face of great judgment, when four angels are released and become a cavalry of two hundred million, and set out to kill one third of all humanity with their fire breathing mouths on head and tail, those who survive will not have a change of mind about their idolatry and the things that attend idolatry; drug use, murder,

sexual promiscuity and theft. That brings us to the end of the sixth trumpet. By this time, it is very near the end of the first half of the Tribulation. The seventh trumpet is about to sound, but before it sounds, chapter 10 will introduce the seven peals of thunder, and we don't know what these are because John was told not to write. So we'll look at them, then chapter 11, the two witnesses and then the seventh trumpet will sound where we find the seven bowls. So the structure is interesting again, in that the last of a series of seven, is set off from the previous six and opens up another series of seven. And it's these kinds of observations that are important to understanding the chronology of the Tribulation...

¹ Quoted by Tony Garland,

http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book_of_Revelation/commentary/htm/chapters/09.html#3.9.16

² Robert Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 45.