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## **Hell on Earth Revelation 9:13-21**

The May 1984 issue of *National Geographic* showed color photos and drawings depicting the swift and violent destruction that completely wiped out the Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum in 79 B.C. The volcanic explosion of Mount Vesuvius was so sudden that the residents were killed, instantly welded in place by the superheated gases, ash and lava while going about their daily routine, shopping at the market, soaking in their bath tubs. Even see the family pets suffered the same quick and very final fate. Looking on the expressions of the frozen faces, it takes little imagination to picture the shock and terror of that moment.

The sad part is that these people did not have to die. Historians studying the ancient Roman records confirm that the mountain had been rumbling and shaking for weeks prior to the actual explosion. Even the ominous plume of smoke was visible just days before the eruption. If only they had been able to read the warning signs and respond. Maybe there were some there who warned the villages of the danger..but like Harry Truman of Spirit lake that ignored the geologists warnings about Mt. Saint Helen's, most of Pompeii was buried. There are similar rumblings today in our world, wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, nuclear threat, economic chaos, the breakdown of the family, violence, drugs and falling moral standards. None of these things are new...none are something we haven't noticed up on the hill, but they are glimpses, short blips of what is to come one day. God has issued His warning very clearly in the book of Revelation. No surprises. People do not need to be caught unprepared for their is an escape to those who will look to the way God has provided.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Revelation. The passages we have been studying are a warning for you. If you are not a Christian this morning the chapters after 4 are for you. They are screaming out very loud and clear that God is merciful, but God is also just and time is running out. If you are not a believer, you need to get saved because the destruction you will be faced with is quite terrible.

We have been studying the judgments of God on the rebellious and unbelieving world. Seven seal judgments, the 7th includes 7 trumpet judgments, or judgments that are announced by the angel's blast on his trumpet. In chapter 8 we studied the first 4 trumpet judgments that had severe affect on the vegetation, the transportation, the sanitation and illumination, the lights the sun, moon and stars. Then in chapter 9 we studied the first of the woe trumpets, the nasty locusts that were demonized scorpions straight out of the pit of hell that attack and sting and torment all those who are not sealed by God. These people will feel such pain they will want to die but are unable to end their life.

And now this morning we will begin to work our way through the grisly 6th trumpet judgment in Revelation 9:13. (READ) After the 6th angel blows his trumpet, John hears a voice coming from the golden alter of incense with four horns. Note this is a voice singular, not a multitude of voices so it cannot be referring to the slain martyrs that are at the base of the alter. The voice of this speaker seems to be the lamb that was slain. The One who redeemed His people. Calling out direction to the 6th angel. This is what he says in verse 14. " Release the 4 angels who are bound up at the great river Euphrates."

Who are these four angels imprisoned at the river Euphrates? Are these the 4 good angels from chapter 7:1 that held back the destructive winds from the four corners of the earth? I don't think so. In the Bible we know there are good and bad angels and these appear to be bad angels, and not good angels. Why? Because no where in the Bible does god ever bind, or imprison a good angel. The good angels in chapter 7 are straining to hold evil back. The 4 bad angels in chapter 9:14 can't wait to be released to lead evil much like the demonized locust of the previous verses.

These angels are at the River Euphrates. This is the most important river mentioned in the Bible. It flows from the Armenian Mountains all the way to the Persian gulf 1780 miles long. This great river forms the eastern boundary of the territory promised to Abraham and his descendants in the Abrahamic Covenant with God, Genesis 15:18. It is also the geographical area from which come the nations of Babylon, modern Iraq. and Assyria that have a long history of invading and conflict with the people of Israel. The garden of Eden we are told was

some where near the Euphrates river. Remember that Eden was the sight of the first victory for Satan, the first lie, the first sin and deception of humans.

These are death angels who have been prepared for release at a specific time. Hour day, month and year has been planned. These evil angels are chomping at the bit to wreak their destruction on the earth, but not before God allows it. Only God knows the exact date. He has it marked in red on his calendar, but it is only God that knows the exact time and day, no human knows so be very careful about listening to those set such dates. God's timing is always firmly within His sovereign control. These events and timing seem to be very critical and well planned.

The end of verse 15 says that they can kill 1/3 of the remaining people on the earth. Wow. What incredible destruction. We know from that from the 4th seal of the Ashen horse of death in Rev. 6:8 we know that 1/4 of the human race was killed. Now we see another 1/3 of those left on the earth are wiped out. If you got an A in math fractions you will determine that after the Christian are gone, now fully 1/2 of the worlds population has been killed, what incredible devastation in judgment. Daniel 12:1 speaks of the terrible time of distress never before experienced on the earth. Not since the time of Noah has such devastation occurred. Matthew 24:21 tells us that all people would end in physical death were it not for God stopping the carnage short by Jesus second coming again to regain His rightful reign on the earth.

Look with me at verse 16. It seems that these bad angels release or lead a huge armies of horsemen. 200 million was the number that John heard. Obviously too large for John to count in his vision, but he heard how big it was. John describes what he saw in verse 17. 200 million horsemen with breastplate armor the color of fire red and dark blue hyacinth and brimstone yellow. They were like horses in power, but not horses as there heads were like that of a lions and out of their mouth proceeded fire and smoke and sulfur brimstone. A third of mankind killed by their powerful deadly force. Verse 19 continues to describe the deadly force. For the power of the horses is in both their tails and out of their mouths. In their tails are like serpents whose heads do harm and inflict injury.

Some interpreters will read this passage and say this huge army group is a demonized group just like the locusts of the previous verses. Yet, usually pure groups of demons are unorganized and move in swarms. This group seems to be organized, at least enough to be numbered. Others will read this and say not only is this group demonized but it seems like John is trying to describe modern day warfare with a 1st century vocabulary of experience. John had never seen tanks and Apache helicopters with nuclear warheads...so it could be that he used the language he knew to describe something he had never seen before. A horse with firepower coming out the mouth and guns in the tail with a serpent like head may be John's attempts to describe modern warfare.

There are others who see a close similarity to this 200 million mounted men army in the 6th trumpet in Revelation 9:16 with the Army from the East in Revelation 16:12 during the 6th bowl of wrath judgment. Flip ahead to Revelation 16:12 See how both also mention the great river Euphrates. Hear it says the Euphrates is dried up so that the kings from the east can march across it and move to the final battle on the plains of Armageddon in Israel. Hundreds of years ago it would seem impossible to dam up the great Euphrates river so that armies could walk across. Now with the construction of modern dams, the president of Turkey could simply push a button on the Ataturk Dam and shut down 75 percent of the water that flows to the neighboring countries of Iraq and Syria.

Because both the trumpets of wrath and the bowls of wrath all spill out of the same 7th seal, some people see these final judgments of the trumpets and bowls of wrath to be happening so quickly, that there is overlap in the events. And that this 200 million army in chapter 9 is the same army in Revelation 16 continuing on as the army of the East fighting against Christ and His righteous army when He returns. Daniel 11:44 predicts this large invasion of armies on Israel from the North and the East.

Is it possible to assemble an army of 200 million soldiers? Some would take this number to mean the army will be of overwhelming size and strength. But it could very well be a literal number of 200 million which is amazing because when this letter was written in John's day

there were not even 200 million people in the whole world. Yet we do know of a very powerful country in the East, China's population is expected to exceed 1.4 billion by next year. It is not very difficult to imagine 1 soldier for every 7000 citizens, even after the loss of 1/2 of their population due to other judgments. May 21, 1965 p35 TIME magazine said China claimed to be able to field an army of over 200 million men and women.

How could they get to the battlefield? Even now China has 12,000 soldiers assigned to building roads in the Pakistani controlled Kashmir area so that they can flow their troops across Asia in a shortcut to the sub-continent. India has objected adamantly to the Chinese road building efforts stating that it is a great threat to peace in Asia. When these roads are completed, they will enable millions of soldiers to be moved rapidly to the middle east conflict.

The judgments grow more and more devastating and obviously from God, yet in spite of clear evidence of God's power, there seems to be no change of heart. This 6th trumpet judgment produces only fear but no repentance. Why is it that God's judgment has no effect on the hearts of man, exempt to continue to harden and calcify their rebellion? One might well expect that the rest of those left alive on the earth who were not yet believers would fall on their faces and repent. But no, they do not. Look with me at verses 20 and 21 "The rest who were not killed, didn't repent of the works of their hands, or repent of their demon worship, or repent of their idolatry worship of things they made with gold, silver, brass stone and wood. Notice the decreasing value in the list of things humans will worship.

No repentance. No change, no difference in what they believe and do not change what they are doing. The terrible judgment hits, but they don't change their life. They continue in their merry and very sinful ways. Repentance means a 180 degree change from the direction you are going. You are heading one way, one direction and you decide, no I need to be going the opposite way. So you do. You don't keep on walking in the original direction talking about how sorry you are for walking in the wrong way. You don't keep walking that way and tell about how sometime you are really going to stop and go the other way. Repentance is actually turning around going back the right way, the righteous way.

Here in verse 20 people are so stuck they don't repent. They worship the work of their hands, whatever they build, their homes, money, businesses, possessions. There God is stuff and they believe the more they have the better off they will be. They truly believe it and they live like it. You can tell by the stuff they have and the way they treat that stuff. These people worship stuff made of metal, gold, silver, stone, wood. They devote large portions of their time treasure and emotion into stuff that can't talk, can't hear and can't even walk. Why do we do that? Why do we allow possessions to control us? If you think its bad now, just wait until the end times come rolling around.

It also says in verse 20 that they refuse to worship God, but are more than happy to worship demons. Is it no surprise in that day to see an increase in demon worship? When I was a kid, I pictured demon worship and occult as a tribesman in dark Africa or Voodoo doctor from Haiti poking pins into a doll. But, from the stories I've heard while I've been here in Yacolt it's a scary picture. It is no wonder we see a terrifying increase in demon worship.

There belief structure is in self and in Satan. And there is a direct link between what one believes and the actions or works of that belief. True. Should not what one truly believes be reflected in the actions of their life or their works? What you truly believe is what you will truly do...every time. Here the rebels actions are determined by their belief system. Verse 21. They murder. They will have no problems taking life if it serves their purpose. When a young child, a baby is inconvenient..just kill it. When an aging parent is a pain in the next...just kill it. Anything in their way is reduced to an it. Just get rid of it...Where the gospel is not known life has been cheap. The whole ancient Aztec culture was based on killing. It was thought a great virtue to sacrifice your child to the ever hungry gods. A man was not allowed to marry unless he captured an enemy alive and sacrificed him to the gods. Thousands of people were killed at the dedication of their temples and during the spring rites to appease the hungry gods. It was sick. Yet we read in the last days murder will be the norm. Life will be cheap...hope will be impossible to find apart from God.

It says they will run to sorceries, the occult. The Greek word here is Pharmankia. We get our English word pharmacy. In the ancient day

their was a coupling of mind altering drugs and occult worship. Do you see any increase in that today? Thirty years ago. Drugs were cherry flavored cough syrup and an aspirin. Not today. They use of mind altering drugs is epidemic and nothing to play around with...teens, parents, don't mess with tools of the evil one. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit you are to be filled with the spirit of God not controlled by drugs or drink. Don't go there and give the devil a foothold of opportunity.

We see their actions will also be marked by immorality. promiscuity The Greek word in Porneia. We get our word for pornography. This refers to any sexual activity outside of the bound of marriage. We see where divine restraints are gone, human passions break loose.

We see thefts on the increase. Embezzlement stealing all motivated by greed. There will be no respect for each other or for any laws. For all laws to work they must be based on a standard of morality and in this day their will be none. Anarchy will rule. Each man and woman will do what is right in their own eyes.

These people fear God, but fear will never force anyone to repent and worship God to faith in Christ. It just will not happen, that is astounding depravity of man in rebellion. Punishment itself does not lead man back into repentance, but more often it hardens the heart and makes it even worse.

The universalist believe that everyone will eventually be saved. They say that for those who miss the light during God's time of grace, they will for sure see the error of their ways under God's time of judgment and come to Him. But here we read so clearly, that is just not true. If they refuse to learn by God's grace, they will not respond under God's judgment. For punishment by itself does not lead man to God. It is only the love of God showed to us clearly on the cross of His son Jesus Christ that will move and soften the hearts of men. Men may fear God, but fear, by itself, will not force men to repent.

Dr. George Sweeting recalled a time when his family visited Niagara Falls. It was spring and ice was rushing down the river. As he viewed the large blocks of ice flowing toward the falls, he could see that imbedded in the ice were carcasses of dead fish. Sea gulls by the score

were riding down the river feeding on the fish. As they came to the brink of the falls, their wings would go out, and they would fly and escape the falls. While he was watching, he noticed one gull was so engrossed in the carcass of the fish, it seemed to delay leaving and he was wondering how long he would wait before he flew off. When the bird and ice came to the brink of the falls, the powerful wings went out. The bird flapped and flapped, and even began to lift the ice out of the water, but it had delayed too long so that its claws had frozen tight into the ice. The weight of the ice was too great for the bird and the gull was plunged off the edge into the crashing abyss below.

I speak to the person who has not yet come to affirm belief in God and accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Do not wait too long. These chapters in Revelation are for you. They are a strong warning. Do not become so attached to the things of this world that you cannot let go. There is a great danger in delay, for you do not know what could happen even this afternoon. Now is the appointed time. Now is the day of Salvation. Repent and turn from your evil ways and turn to God, to life, to peace, to salvation. Fear may stop you to think about God. Fear may motivate you to seek God. But fear will never change you. Only God's love can change you. Jesus ultimate demonstration of love on the cross when He died for. When we were still sinners, Christ died for us. He lavished His love on us. Won't you accept that love. Now is the time. Don't let your claws be caught in the ice. Do it now.