

Worship Guide - Lake Mary

WORSHIP SERVICE - 11.7.2021

FATAL JUDGMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

MAIN POINT: Believers should not be disheartened by the ongoing hostility to their faithful gospel witness as it is part of God's sovereign plan.

Revelation 9:13-21

Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, 14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." 15 So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind. 16 The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number. 17 And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths. 18 By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. 19 For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound.

20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, 21 nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

II. FOUR ANGELS RELEASED

1. ORIGIN OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENT

- V13b...and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God,
- Rev. 6:9 - 5th seal - John saw the souls of the martyrs under the altar.
- Rev. 8:3 - 7th seal - An angel with a golden censer, and was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne.
- The four horns--Exodus 30 is where the image is taken from.
- Horns are symbolic of strength and power; four is another number symbolizing completeness.
- Together, these four horns signify the completeness of God's power coming from his presence.
- The full power of God is brought to bear in these judgments of the wicked as a direct answer to the pleas and cries of his people.
- God has ordained that our prayers be part of the execution of God's eternal decrees.

- The effects brought about by God's judgments, whether they are natural catastrophic events, or the result of war and violence, or spiritual forces of darkness, or anything else, are all secondary causes.
- The source of all of these secondary causes must necessarily originate with God.
- God is completely and absolutely sovereign over everything.

2. OPERATIVES OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENT

a. THE FOUR ANGELS

- 14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”
- Who are these four angels?
- Rev. 7:1 “After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth...”
- These angels were restraining the four winds or four angels, most likely the four horsemen, until the servants of the Lord were sealed on their foreheads, then they would be released to harm earth and sea. This is a parallel to that vision.

i. Their Condition

- These four angels that are bound are wicked angels.
- That they are wicked angels is seen in the fact that they are bound, which implies that they had been restrained against their will.
- Holy angels are never referred to as being bound, only wicked angels.
- **2 Peter 2:4** For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;
- Greek verb ‘bound’ is in the perfect tense. It’s an action that occurred in the past that has produced a state of being, or a result, that exists in the present.
- It’s also in the passive voice, where the subject is the receiver of the verbal action, not the one doing it. When God is the implied agent of the verbal action it is called the ‘divine passive.’
- These four angels had been bound at the command of God at some predetermined time and up to the point of their release by the command of God, had been in that state.
- Additionally, they had been prepared for this precise moment at some time in the past.
- The Greek verb ‘prepared’ means to make ready. they had been held at the ready in advance for the precise moment of their release.
- Hour, day, month, year—a specific, predetermined moment ordained by God.
- These four angels are only released according to the sovereign timetable of God.
- God exercises supreme and sovereign control over all of the events of human history.

ii. Their Location

- The four angels have been bound, at the great river Euphrates.
- Why mention a geographical location?
- The mention of the Euphrates has both a contemporary context and a biblical record.
- At the time of the writing of Revelation, the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire was the Euphrates river.
- Across the Euphrates was the mighty Parthian Kingdom—the archrival of the Roman Empire.
- Rome lived in fear that the Parthian army would cross the Euphrates and invade from the east.
- In the Biblical record of the OT, the Euphrates has many references.
- It is mentioned in Genesis as one of the rivers that flowed out of Eden to water the garden of God. (Gen 2:14)
- The Euphrates also marked the Northeast border of the promised land. (Gen 15:18; Deut 11:24; Joshua 1:4)
- Two invading forces crossed the Euphrates during the period of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel and Judah.
- 722 BC Assyrians cross the Euphrates and invade Israel.
- 587 BC Babylonians cross the Euphrates and lay siege to Jerusalem.
- By means of an invading army from the east, across the Euphrates, God sent judgment.
- John uses these images to underscore the reality of impending judgment that would be poured out.
- It is shorthand for where trouble/judgment comes from.
- **Rev. 16:12** The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENT

- Their mission is to kill a third of mankind.

- Remember that the object of divine judgment are the earth-dwellers, they are the target, not the people of God.

How will they carry out their objective?

- By leading a massive demonic cavalry.
- These four angels have power over ungodly spiritual forces that are pictured here as being of an immense size.
- John hears the number of mounted troops—twice ten thousand times ten thousand—or two hundred million.
- This is not a literal number, it is symbolic, it means an innumerable multitude.
- In the Greek it is written as, 'double myriad of myriads', and there is no numerical adjective, meaning John was not trying to give us a specific number.
- Jeremiah 46 which is one of the background texts from which this Biblical imagery is coming from, mentions the conquering armies riding on horses as being "more numerous than locusts; they are without number." (Jer 46:23)

What is this demonic cavalry?

- John reminds us that this is coming to him in a vision: V17a And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them
- First he describes the riders only referring to the color of their breastplates, which were the color of fire, sapphire and of sulfur—red, blue, yellow.
- Then the horses with lion-like heads, breathing out fire, smoke, and sulfur.
- By means of repetition, John says that the colors on the breastplate of the riders correspond with the destructive plagues that come out of the horses that they ride.
- The judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. (Gen 19:24,28)
- In Scripture, these elements are associated with the wrath of God being poured out in fatal, lethal judgment. (2Sam 22:9; Isaiah 34:9-10; Ezek 38:22)
- In **Rev 14:9-11** And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."
- These same elements are in the final judgment of the beast and the false prophet who are thrown in the lake of fire that burns with sulfur (Rev 19:20).
- Same elements again in the final judgment of the devil who was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur (Rev 20:10).

What kind of death is in view?

- It is physical death.
- What will be the cause of their death? The text doesn't say but we know this is all part of judgment that is linked to the final judgment. The plague of killing would include all the forms of death that may fall on the ungodly: (tragedy, illness, natural catastrophes, etc.)
- These plagues inflicted by the demonic cavalry on the ungodly deliver physical destruction that will result in final condemnation.
- The physical death delivered secures their spiritual death for all eternity.
- These agents cause the physical death of idolaters, compromisers, the sexually immoral, and persecutors of the church, who are already spiritually dead.
- Fatal judgment that will result in final judgment.
- **Rev. 21:8** But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

4. OUTCOME OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENT

- V18 by these three plagues a 1/3 of mankind was killed.
- For some unbelievers, their physical death is the consequence of the divine judgment of God inflicted through these demonic agents.
- But what about the other 2/3?

- 19 For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound.
- How do they wound/harm?
- The imagery of the horses' mouths indicates demonic deception resulting in judgment.
- People are being deceived and harmed and some killed by the lies coming out of their mouths.
- 6h bowl of God's wrath which is the parallel vision of the 6th trumpet blast:
 - Rev. 16:13-14 And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. 14 For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.
 - It's a plague of deception.
 - We also know it's deception from the imagery of their tails, they were like serpents with heads.
 - We know who is the ancient serpent, the deceiver—it's Satan —Rev. 12:9 'the deceiver of the whole world.'
 - Satan and his demonic forces promote falsehood, lies, distortion of truth, confusion, upon unbelieving humanity.
 - This inevitably will lead to idolatry. People will devote themselves to their idols and continue in the worship of false gods.
- How do those who survive the fall judgment respond?
- 20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, 21 nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.
- They do not repent. They maintain their persistent rejection of God.
- These same demons they are worshiping are the very same demons that are afflicting them, deceiving them, and keeping them from seeing the light of the gospel.
- Those under this deception continue in all of the activities that Scripture associates with idolatry: murder, sorcery, sexual immorality, theft.
- Their stubborn refusal to turn to Christ and embrace the gospel is due to their devotion to their idols and because they have already met with the judgment of God.

CONCLUSION

- This passage gives us context for the deception we see in the world and the masses who are held captive by it.
- We should not be surprised that those under demonic deception and who remain impenitent would be hostile to the gospel and to God's people.
- It is part of God's plan, they are already judged. They are under judgment.
- We do not fear because we will be vindicated by God—God's enemies will face their predetermined end, destruction.
- And we are warned in Scripture to remain vigilant and alert as Jesus said that the enemy would even try, if possible, to deceive even the elect. (Matt 24:24)
- We have been given spiritual authority and we have been spiritually sealed by God and are kept from damning spiritual harm.
- **Luke 10:19-20** Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.
- This somber reality of those who remain impenitent is a reminder for us to call people to repentance in the face of tragedy, trouble, and trials.
- Every catastrophe, war, act of violence, pandemic, suffering is a divine summons to repentance.
- The divine call when these terrible demonic armies ride to inflict fatal judgment is for people everywhere to REPENT and BELIEVE the gospel.
- The trumpet blast reminds us we are not safe apart from Christ!
- The trumpet blast summons us to flee from the wrath that is to come upon the earth.
- We are to flee to Christ and to turn from our sin and idolatry.

- **John 3:36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.