

### BOOK OF REVELATION

#### Lesson 20 - Chapters 9 and 10

Last week we opened Revelation chapter 9 and there we heard about a fallen angel (symbolized by a star) being given a key to the entry shaft into a place deep in the interior of the Earth called The Abyss, and it is occupied by rebellious spirits that we can rightfully label as demons. A king ruled over the Abyss's inhabitants and the name given him is **Abaddon** that, in Hebrew, means destroyer.

When the fallen angel opened up the shaft, smoke billowed out and in the smoke were legions of these demons in the form of grotesque locust-like creatures. They had human faces, laurel wreaths on their heads, long hair, teeth like a lion, bodies like war horses and with a stinger in their tails that inflicted the pain equivalent to a scorpion's sting. Interestingly enough their stings did not kill; rather they just hurt, relentlessly, and no balm or medication seemed to relieve the agony. God set boundaries on them in that this plague of locusts would only operate for 5 months, and they were not allowed to harm those who had been divinely sealed; that is, a group of Believers who were on Earth during God's judgments, but were supernaturally protected from harm. The only "sealed" people mentioned thus far in Revelation is the 144,000 of the tribes of Israel so I must assume this is who is being described.

What can be so very challenging about this chapter is that indeed it uses many symbols, but John also uses real world creatures and examples to try and describe these other-worldly critters and events. So the symbolic is mixed with the literal and it can be hard (and at times speculative) when trying to separate these events and beings and their meaning into categories of symbolic or literal. So, for example, these locusts aren't actual locusts but rather they have the characteristics of locusts in that they swarm and fly. At the same time they have very uncharacteristic attributes for locusts in that they don't harm vegetation but they do sting.

This judgment of locusts is called the first of 3 "woe" judgments. It is simultaneously the 5th of the Trumpet judgments. So the idea is that the 5th, 6th, and 7th Trumpet judgments are especially horrible and are thus given the nickname of "woe" judgments. I'm highlighting this so that it is clear that the 3 woe judgments are not seen as additional to the 21 Seal, Trumpet, and Bowl judgments that would have given us a total of 24 judgments.

Let's re-read part of chapter 9.

#### RE-READ REVELATION CHAPTER 9:12 - end

So now the 6th Trumpet judgment comes (which is also the 2nd woe). We're told that a voice comes from the 4 horns of the gold altar before God. The gold altar (as it is in the Temple on Earth) is the Incense Altar. However the Altar of Burnt Offerings, on Earth, also has 4 horns. So perhaps it is that the material that the Altar of Burnt Offerings in Heaven is gold instead of the stone used on Earth. Either way the horns represent power; that there are 4 of them

symbolizes an all-inclusiveness. It is interesting that at the earthly Temple the horns were a place of asylum for criminals. That is, a criminal could rush to the Temple altar, grab hold of one of its horns, and they could not be arrested for as long as he stayed there. For example: we read in 1Kings 2 that Joab rushed to the altar and grabbed hold of one its horns so that King Solomon wouldn't kill him. In other words, the altar was a place of sanctuary from the wrath of humans and of God. In Exodus 21 we read this:

**CJB Exodus 21:14 *But if someone willfully kills another after deliberate planning, you are to take him even from my altar and put him to death.***

Thus while sanctuary at the altar is available for some crimes, it is not available for murderers. One of the things we must remember about the altar is that it was holy; thus no layman was permitted to touch it; only priests and properly purified Levites. Thus if a man sought sanctuary at the altar, at the same time he defiled it when he touched it. But in the case of Revelation 9:13 and 14 the horns of the altar become a voice that refuses to offer sanctuary and instead releases hostile wrath instead of protecting people from it. In fact, when we consider that in chapter 6, upon the breaking of the 5th seal when we hear of Believing martyrs abiding under the altar of God pleading with Him to avenge their murder (and God says that they must wait a little while longer), we now have that same altar commanding wrath. So I think the connection is clear enough that we should see that this is the moment when the wait is over and God is avenging (or at least beginning the process of avenging) the killers of the martyrs in carrying out the justice that is called for in Exodus 21:14.

The voice from the altar also commands the release of 4 angels who are said to have been bound at the great river, which is the Euphrates. To be bound means to be restrained, usually against one's will. So, much like the demons of the Abyss and their leader, Abaddon, who were bound against their will, so too these 4 angels were restrained from carrying out what they wanted to carry out, which is wrath upon mankind. They were restrained until the precise moment that the Lord had pre-ordained. As verse 15 says:

**CJB Revelation 9:15 *And they were released. These four angels had been kept ready for this moment, for this day and month and year, to kill a third of mankind;***

Why the mention of the Euphrates River? This 1700 mile long river is the longest in western Asia and it carries with it significance as regards what will define the territory that will eventually be given over to Israel to occupy. In Genesis 15 we read:

**CJB Genesis 15:18 *That day ADONAI made a covenant with Avram: "I have given this land to your descendants- from the Vadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River-***

Often this statement gives us the sense that the Euphrates was merely the northern boundary marker of Israel's promised land. But what we must understand is that this boundary extends to the river's entire length. Thus the northern boundary of ideal Israel is some 1700 miles long.

**CJB 2 Samuel 8:3 *David, on his way to establish his dominion as far as the Euphrates River, also defeated Hadad'ezer the son of Rechozai king of Tzovah.***

King David understood the promise made to Abraham and intended bring that promise to realization if he could. The land that modern Israel occupies today is but a fraction of what it will eventually be. The heated disputes over the Golan Heights and the West Bank represent just a tiny portion of future Israel.

The purpose of these 4 angels is to lead to the killing of one-third of all mankind. The tool they shall use is a demonic army of 200 million! Now whether these are 200 million actual demons or they are 200 million humans being demonically empowered can be debated endlessly. We are not given a description of the beings, only the horses on which they ride. Further, 200 million is meant as a round number and not as a precise number. We see large and small round numbers used throughout the Bible. Yet neither should we regard the number 200 million as but symbolic; it means 200 million. Regardless of a million more or fewer, this devastating war machine is enormous in size and is a force as unstoppable as a tsunami.

That these 4 angels were bound (restrained) next to the River Euphrates means that the vast army that comes to kill so much of mankind comes from areas that are geographically located near and around the Euphrates. But it also means that because the Euphrates is considered by God as defining the full extent of Israel's northern boundary, then it becomes clear that the primary target of this vast army is Israel. Certainly one-third of all mankind does not currently, and will not at the time of this judgment, live in Israel. But the collateral damage caused by this invasion spills over into the rest of the world and it will result in the deaths of billions; how exactly this happens we are not told (to this point in Revelation).

Starting in verse 16 the horses (and not their riders, the soldiers) are described. We're told that they had breastplates that were red, like the color of fire, and included also the colors of blue like irises, and yellow like the color of sulfur. The heads of the horses were like the heads of lions and out of their mouths shot fire, smoke, and sulfur. Let's pause for a second. Plainly these are not actual horses; rather the terms John is using to describe what he sees are confined to things that commonly existed in his day. So the soldiers came sitting or riding atop something that John calls "horses" because the only things soldiers could ride upon in his day (outside of chariots) were animals like horses or camels. So like the so-called locusts that swarmed out of The Abyss, these 200 million soldiers' horses were not actual biological horses. But we should also notice that these soldiers were NOT foot soldiers that marched in formation from all the places they come; instead they come riding atop something fearsome that to John could only be understood as strange beasts that could best be communicated to his contemporaries as horses.

We're told that the power of the horses (the part of the horses that inflicted the damage) was both their mouths and their tails; that is, both the front and the back of the horses. And it was from the 3 plagues of the fire, smoke, and sulfur that these horses emitted that one-third of mankind was killed. So whatever the fire, smoke and sulfur represent each of these is here called "a plague". The tails of the horses are said to be like snakes with heads and they caused great injury.

In the Bible snakes (serpents) are symbolic of evil. That the serpents within the tails of the horses have heads mean they are intelligent beings. How these caused injury (note that this

speaks of injury and not necessarily death) is not spelled out. However since the chief characteristics of Satan are as a liar and deceiver, it may be that this is what causes such great harm. Something else to notice is that the power of the horses is said to be in their mouths, as well as in their tails. Since the term "mouth" is used, and since the mouth is used for speaking, my best conclusion is that this is referring to false prophets and others who speak against God and His truth. Perhaps they are bringing with them the false words of the Anti-Christ. Nonetheless it seems that promoting falsehood is what is being envisioned by this symbolism.

With all the killing and destruction that God's wrath is bringing on a scale not seen since the Great Flood, it may seem that spreading lies and deceit is not nearly as dangerous or important as the indiscriminate brutality of military conflict. From a purely physical standpoint that may well be true; but from a spiritual standpoint deception is the bigger enemy than physical death. It was from the enemy's lie that Adam and Eve fell. It is from the enemy's lie that idolatry arose among God's people and it cost Israel hundreds of thousands of lives as God punished them for turning to other gods. It is idolatry that has, and continues to be, the chief sin that makes people rebel against God and it lays out the broad road that leads to eternal death. Deceit in the Bible is often symbolized, even at times personified, as darkness. God's Word is given to us as light that illuminates the truth in order to counteract the darkness of deceit that pervades this world. And yet even with the truth so readily available the vast majority of all humans throughout history, and especially in the 21st century, choose darkness over light; falsehood over what is real.

So when all is weighed, deceit is the bigger enemy than the business end of a gun. A gun may take your life; but deceit can take your soul. And so these horses of verse 19 are the bearers of deceit; and millions, probably billions, of souls will be lost from the lies they spread. In fact I think my understanding on the meaning of the mouths and tails of the horses as purveyors of deceit and darkness is verified by verse 20, which speaks about idolatry as being continued among mankind even as countless millions fall to the supernatural wrath of God and to what apparently is a vast armed conflict. This is a theme that we see throughout Revelation. That is, despite it becoming obvious that the catastrophes and cosmic events happening in sequence cannot possibly be random or "natural"; and the undeniable fact that they precisely match what the Bible predicts, still most of mankind will shake their collective fists at God and double-down in their rebellion and disbelief rather than repenting and asking God for mercy.

So verse 20 says that the two-thirds of the earth's population that has survived the horrors of God's wrath to this point even then did not turn from their idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood. Nor did they turn from their murdering, use of drugs and all other kinds of perversion, nor from stealing from one another. Thus the plagues were intended to be seen by Earthlings as warnings from Heaven; warnings that were not heeded by most. Certainly some come to belief as a result; but they are not sealed, not protected, and (if one can project a little bit) they would no doubt become instant targets for those who are so hardened that they willfully go on rebelling. One can imagine a bounty on God worshippers at this time since God will without doubt be considered as an enemy of humanity. To continue worshipping idols in the midst of all this calamity represents a kind of comical irony. As stated in several places in the Old Testament, these sculpted pieces of wood, stone, and precious metals cannot walk, or

see or hear. But as a result of worshipping these fictional gods neither can their creators or worshippers see or hear. Idolatry blinds people to the truth and in turn hardens them against God. Repentance is almost impossible for idolaters and thus their eternal death is almost inevitable. Simply look to the Pharaoh of Egypt as an example of the stubborn self-destruction of an idolater.

To quote Charles Lee Feinberg: "The ungodly are incorrigible in their murders, sorceries, and immorality. Punishment does not soften wicked hearts; only the love of God can". Let's move on to chapter 10.

### **READ REVELATION CHAPTER 10 all**

Notice that during the first set of 7 judgments (the Seal judgments), the first 6 of the Seal judgments occurred one after the other in chapter 6. Then there was an interlude that is chapter 7, and then with chapter 8 the Seal judgments picked back up again with the words: "When the Lamb broke the 7th seal". So it is that we find the same pattern with the 7 Trumpet judgments. In chapter 8, after the 7th and final of the Seal judgments is announced, the first Trumpet judgment happens with 6 of the 7 Trumpet judgments announced and happening one after the other. Then we have an interlude that is chapter 10, which continues well into chapter 11, and then the last (the 7th) of the Trumpet judgments is announced. However it is important that I remind you that when this Apocalypse was written, and for another 1000 years, there would be no such things as chapters and verses in the Bible; Old or New Testaments. So for us in our day, there is a kind of mirage that occurs when reading the Bible of there being a hard stop at the end of a so-called chapter, and a hard start at the beginning of the next so-called chapter. But in reality no such things as chapters exist in the Bible; they are late manmade additions. Adding in chapter markings (inserted somewhat arbitrarily by the way) can make it feel to the reader like time has passed, or the scene has changed, or one subject is ending while another is beginning. But when the chapter markings are removed, it all just flows together, naturally, as originally intended.

An interesting feature of this new interlude (chapter 10) is that the same Pre-Tribulation Doctrine adherents who say that the interlude of chapter 7 that occurs between the 6th and the 7th of the Seal judgments means that chapters 6 and 7 are out of order and therefore chapter 7 must be put before chapter 6, oddly do not insist upon the same treatment for the interlude of chapter 10 even though this interruption occurs between Trumpet judgments 6 and 7. In other words, they do not apply to the Trumpet judgments the same criteria regarding the use of an interlude that they used for the Seal judgments. Why not? Because just as reversing chapters 6 and 7 is the only means to make their pre-determined End Times timeline work properly, they must also leave chapters 9 and 10 as is to make their End Times timeline work properly and ignore the interlude. What's the difference between the two interludes? Nothing substantial. But such is the nature of dubious manmade doctrines that they cannot hold up when taking the Holy Scriptures as written.

So just as we are not going to reverse chapters 6 and 7, we'll also not bother chapter 10. Either these interludes are indeed actual chronological interruptions in a particular series of judgments or these are additional things that are happening more or less in parallel with their

respective series of judgments. I confess that I do not have a rigid opinion on which it might be.

The first verse of chapter 10 re-introduces us to this "mighty angel" who makes another appearance. Earlier in Revelation 5 it was this mighty angel who, while at God's throne in Heaven, asked who is worthy to open the scroll that was in the Ancient One's hand. We learn that his appearance to John is that he was dressed in a cloud, had a rainbow over his head; his face was like the sun and his legs like columns of fire. Who is this angel?

First, I want to address an anomaly present here and I suspect some of you may have caught it already. Only if you have a CJB will it describe this mighty angel as having **legs** like columns of fire; all other translations have it as him having **feet** like columns of fire. Without doubt the CJB has it as intended. Let's start with the logical: since when can we compare **feet** to pillars? Feet don't look anything like pillars nor do they operate as pillars; but legs do. The reason for this textual anomaly is that in Greek there are separate words for feet and legs, with **podes** meaning feet (that is what is found in the Greek New Testament manuscripts). However in ancient Hebrew there is only a single word that is used for both feet and legs: **reglayim**. John was a Galilean Jew; he thought in Hebrew. So somehow or another when writing down this vision either John or a scribe chose the Greek **podes** when clearly **skele** (legs) was more correct.

Second; as we look at the various descriptive attributes of this mighty angel we see him dressed (clothed) in a cloud; this is an OT description of God. He had a rainbow over his head; this matches with the description of the Ancient One sitting on His throne with a rainbow over His head from Revelation chapter 4. His face shining as the sun is found in Revelation 1:16. And yet this being is a mighty angel and not said to be God or the Ancient One or the Lamb. The only way to square all these attributes and come up with the answer to the question of who this mighty angel is, is to assume that he is the Angel of the Lord of the Old Testament. Or, as it more accurately states in the original Hebrew in the **Tanakh**: the Angel of YHWH.

In the Old Testament this angel speaks with the authority of God. Here, God's very attributes and appearance are assigned to this angel. Because of most Bible commentators' strict adherence to the Trinity Doctrine, they say that this mighty angel must be Christ; which is the same thing they say about the Angel of the Lord. To this I strongly disagree. The Angel of the Lord is, like the Shekinah, another manifestation of God separate from God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. When Dr. Feinberg was asked why he assigns Christ as the person of the mighty angel, he answers: " He appears as an angel, because reference is made to conditions in Israel before their Messiah had been revealed in incarnation to them." What? How can that be? Revelation reveals first and foremost that Christ is already risen and in Heaven with God as the Lamb; and that John's vision is a glimpse of the future, and not of the past. Old manmade doctrines die hard, don't they? And some of the most brilliant Bible scholars will at times offer some of the most fantastic solutions to make traditional doctrines fit with Scripture.

We also find that this mighty angel had a little scroll in his hand; this is NOT the scroll with the 7 seals that only the Lamb was able to open. This is something different. We'll discuss this a

little more in our next lesson. The angel then planted his left foot on the land and his right foot on the sea; this was to show his sovereignty over all the earth. This prepares us for when that strange ungodly beast emerges from the sea in later chapters and reinforces that God rules above even the halls of Hell.

The mighty angel shouts as loud as the roar of a lion. And when he shouted 7 thunderclaps sounded and they too had voices that spoke. Thunder is usually a precursor to God making an appearance and/or to God bringing judgment. Some say that the angel shouting like the roar of a lion is proof that this mighty angel is Christ because He is called the Lion of Judah. I can't abide in that because at this point in Revelation Christ is known by one thing only: The Lamb that appeared to have been slain. Shouting like the roar of a lion in my opinion is more a metaphor for the loud terrifying roar of a lion as he captures his helpless prey. However I think the main point being made is that the voices heard are voices of deity.

John says he was about to write down what the divine voices said when he was told not to. John's primary job since the 1st chapter of Revelation has not been to interpret these awesome visions but merely to faithfully record what he sees in them.

**CJB Revelation 1:19 *So write down what you see, both what is now, and what will happen afterwards.***

John being told to seal up what he heard the 7 thunders saying reminds us of Daniel being told the same thing in Daniel 12. Did John understand what he heard? Probably to a similar degree as he understood all else he's been told. However this knowledge died with John as God didn't want us to know it in advance.

In verse 7 this mighty angel (that in the Old Testament goes by the title The Angel of the Lord) lifts his right hand towards Heaven and swears by the One who lives forever and ever. The One, the Ancient One, and God the Father are all names and titles for the same person of God. So it shouldn't be difficult to imagine that the Angel of the Lord, a separate and different manifestation of God, would vow in the name of the Father. Yeshua did similarly as He regularly prayed to God the Father asking for the Father's will to be done in Him even though He too, was God. The mighty angel has sworn to carry out that which God has commanded. And what he has been commanded is to carry out his assignment with no further delays. When the 7th Trumpet sounds the hidden plan of God will be brought to its completion. And the hidden plan is the Good News that Christ forgives sins and makes atonement for those sins that have already been committed. But to better understand the significance of this act of swearing by the might angel, we need to refer to Daniel 12:7 where we see something almost identical occurring.

**CJB Daniel 12:4-9 <sup>4</sup> *"But you, Dani'el, keep these words secret, and seal up the book until the time of the end. Many will rush here and there as knowledge increases."* <sup>5</sup> *Then I, Dani'el, looked; and I saw in front of me two others, one on this bank of the river and the other on its other bank. <sup>6</sup> One of them asked the man dressed in linen who was above the water of the river, "How long will these wonders last?"***

***<sup>7</sup> The man dressed in linen who was above the water of the river raised his right and left hands toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times and a half, and that it will be when the power of the holy people is no longer being shattered that all these things will end. <sup>8</sup> I heard this, but I couldn't understand what it meant; so I asked, "Lord, what will be the outcome of all this?" <sup>9</sup> But he said, "Go your way, Dani'el; for these words are to remain secret and sealed until the time of the end.***

What we see happening now in Revelation is what Daniel was told would happen at the time of the end. Daniel could make no sense of it because too much had to happen in between his time in exile in Babylon in the 500's B.C. and when the events of Revelation, still future to us, actually come about.

What must become clear to the Church about this secret plan of God is that the final redemption is coming, but so is judgment and wrath; the two go hand in hand. Mercy is for those who love and obey God, while judgment is for those who do not; there is no middle ground. In reality what we see happening here in Revelation fulfills a promise made by Yehoveh centuries earlier than Daniel. In Deuteronomy He promised this to Moses:

***CJB Deuteronomy 32:39-43 <sup>39</sup> See now that I, yes, I, am he; and there is no god beside me. I put to death, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; no one saves anyone from my hand! <sup>40</sup> "For I lift up my hand to heaven and swear, "As surely as I am alive forever, <sup>41</sup> if I sharpen my flashing sword and set my hand to judgment, I will render vengeance to my foes, repay those who hate me.***

***<sup>42</sup> I will make my arrows drunk with blood, my sword will devour flesh- the blood of the slain and the captives, flesh from the wild-haired heads of the enemy." <sup>43</sup> "Sing out, you nations, about his people! For he will avenge the blood of his servants. He will render vengeance to his adversaries and make atonement for the land of his people."***

Yes, the vengeance of the martyrs under the Altar in Heaven is underway; that is what we're reading about in Revelation chapter 10. The oath that the mighty angel is making is that the delay is over. The time for giving a little more time for people of the Earth to repent and be saved is over. The end is no longer near; the end is now!

There is no lack of Pastors, Bible Teachers, and religious hucksters who pronounce that they have a "word from God" telling them the date of the end, or that they have discovered a secret code in the Bible and decoded it and know the time of the end (and for a few dollars they'll tell you what it is!) I suspect that because God has given John so much information about the End Times, but upon hearing some other information John was told not to divulge it, that very possibly the information that was held back was about revealing the precise time. Back in chapter 9 we were told that the 4 angels bound at the Euphrates had been prepared to act at a very specific moment in history, right down to the day, month, and year. That date was set by God long ago. Can there be doubt that the date for all the events of Revelation, including Messiah's return and the end of history as we know it, have also been set down to the day, month, and year? If this is true, then all that is happening right now that we see playing out on our TV's is a divine process that is more or less on autopilot; nothing will stop it, and no one will



be permitted to know ahead of time the moment that the process reaches its climax. And no amount of guessing is going to lead any among us to that knowledge.

**CJB Matthew 24:32-42 <sup>32</sup> "Now let the fig tree teach you its lesson: when its branches begin to sprout and leaves appear, you know that summer is approaching. <sup>33</sup> In the same way, when you see all these things, you are to know that the time is near, right at the door.**

**<sup>34</sup> Yes! I tell you that this people will certainly not pass away before all these things happen.**

**<sup>35</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. <sup>36</sup> "But when that day and hour will come, no one knows- not the angels in heaven, not the Son, only the Father.**

**<sup>37</sup> For the Son of Man's coming will be just as it was in the days of Noah. <sup>38</sup> Back then, before the Flood, people went on eating and drinking, taking wives and becoming wives, right up till the day Noah entered the ark; <sup>39</sup> and they didn't know what was happening until the Flood came and swept them all away. It will be just like that when the Son of Man comes.**

**<sup>40</sup> Then there will be two men in a field- one will be taken and the other left behind. <sup>41</sup> There will be two women grinding flour at the mill- one will be taken and the other left behind.**

**<sup>42</sup> So stay alert, because you don't know on what day your Lord will come.**

We'll finish up chapter 10 and get well into chapter 11 next week.