



We are now going over Rev. 9 and the study of the sixth "trumpet" (*shofar*), another of God's judgments against a rebellious world. Society is described as being similar to Sodom and Gomorrah, with great moral degeneracy, and to Noah's day, filled with worldliness, violence, corruption, and rebellion.

It's hard to grasp how much our world has become like this. As the story of the frog in the kettle, where it never jumped out because the temperature was gradually raised to boiling, so this society has gotten so used to the gradual increase of terrible violence and perversions that it has in large gotten used to it.

John begins, "One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things. Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.' So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind" (9:12-15).

In John's day, the Euphrates River was the easternmost boundary of the Roman Empire and was generally considered the border between Rome and the kings of the East. Later, John will describe it again when he says, "Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared" (Rev. 16:12).

With each *shofar* blast the intensity increases. Already, with the opening of the fourth seal, a fourth of mankind was killed (Rev. 6:8). Now, of those survivors, a third is killed in this plague. *Nelson's Commentary* mentions, "A third of humankind could number in the billions. Coupled with the former destruction of one-fourth of humanity, over one-half of the world's population will have been killed."

John continues, "Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; *I heard the number of them*" (vs. 17). Notice John didn't count the huge army himself but heard the total number--200 million (the Gk. equivalent is "two myriads of myriads" twice 10,000 x 10,000). This indicates a world population of at least several billion people if the Asians could solely have an army of 200 million able-bodied soldiers. In contrast, in Christ's day there

were only around 200 million. In the year 1000 it was 400 million; in 1800 – 1 billion; in 1900 – 1.6 billion; in 2,000 – 6 billion; and now 7.6 billion.

John continues, "And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm" (Rev. 9:18-19).

This army was largely mounted on enormous contraptions with huge lion-like heads (domes) on top of armor plated horses with serpent-like rods shooting out fire, smoke and destruction. This seems to describe a modern tank with a turret similar to a head of a lion and a body like the trunk of a horse.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary notes, "The lion-like heads of the horses imply something *other* than natural horses...and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and sulfur. Some have taken this as a picture of modern warfare including the use of armed vehicles such as tanks shooting their cannons and machine guns. Whether symbolic or literal, the passage certainly implies terrible destruction and an awesome invading force. The results are twice stated and include the death of a third of mankind."

As our booklet on Revelation states, "This event, the second woe or sixth-trumpet plague, seems to be a massive counterattack against the European-led forces of the first woe or fifth trumpet plague. By this time in John's visions all nations have refused to repent. They have refused to respond to God's warning through famine, pestilence and environmental disasters, or the agony of the fifth trumpet. Therefore God will no longer restrain the beginning of an all-out world war—a global conflict that will soon climax at Christ's return.

"The time has arrived for God to allow man to slaughter his fellow human beings without restraint (except for those righteous few whom He has already sealed). An unimaginable carnage is about to begin. One third of the earth's population will die in this

conflagration. Apparently, this will be *in addition* to the deaths from famines, disease epidemics...John vividly describes this terrifying end-of-the-age conflict in the only way he can—in the language of the first century....Tanks and missiles and aircraft with machine guns, smart bombs and laser-guided missiles did not exist, so he could not begin to describe such weapons in a way we would immediately recognize. When we get into chapters 13-18 we will learn more details about Satan's role in these destructive events. The *titanic war* described in chapter 9 is *the background* of all the remaining punishments in Rev." (pp. 42-43).

John adds, "But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts" (9:20-21).

Notice the five main sins of the people on earth: idolatry, murders, sorceries, sexual immorality and thefts. All of these sins are happening in a large scale today. Many worship idols (such as the Catholic Church, Hindus, Animists, Buddhists, and even Muslims with their Kaaba). Society will be crime-ridden with frequent murders and thefts. There is an increase of occultism and a drug culture (starting in the 1960's). The Gk. term for *sorcery* is *pharmakeia*: drugs and spells. *Tyndale Commentary* notes, "The word denotes the use of drugs or enchantments..."

After describing the events of the Sixth Trumpet blast, there comes an interlude or pause before the Seventh Trumpet and another long one afterward, between the blowing of the Seventh Trumpet and the pouring out of the Seven Bowls. So the next six chapters concentrate on what the Church will be doing during this time and--it is very encouraging in the midst of such destruction! So it behooves us to pay close attention because we may live to see it.

John then writes, "I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. Now when the seven

thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.' The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets. Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, 'Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth.' So I went to the angel and said to him, 'Give me the little book.' And he said to me, 'Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.' Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. And he said to me, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings' (Rev. 10:1-11).

The term "little book" in Gk. is *biblaridion*, and John is asked to eat it, which means to assimilate its content, just as Ezekiel was asked to do in Ez. 10:9. It was sweet in his mouth but was bitter in his stomach. As Ladd brings out, "This is obviously a symbolic representation of Ezekiel's prophetic commission by which he received the word of God and was commissioned to proclaim God's word of judgment and woe to a rebellious people. This interpretation fits the context of Revelation--God's judgments are about to reach their terrible climax, and on the threshold of the consummation, John's prophetic call is renewed and reinforced." This prophetic mission at the end-time will be carried out by the two witnesses mentioned in the next chapter.

Our booklet on Revelation explains, "As the angel speaks, John hears seven thunderous utterances ...Notice that God revealed more prophecy to John than He allowed him to record. Next the angel emphasized the importance of the imminent seventh trumpet...The climax of the fulfillment of all the prophecies of the Bible will occur when Christ returns at the sounding of the seventh trumpet...The prophecies here will be explained and proclaimed to

the nations at the time of the end. God plans to ensure that the final proclamation of His prophecies, and the gospel itself, grabs the attention of all people! When the time of the end arrives, God will raise up, in Jerusalem, two prophets to complete this phase of His work before Christ's return. As His chosen witnesses, these two will carry out a spectacular mission on God's behalf. They will perform dramatic miracles as they proclaim God's plagues and judgments" (pp. 43-44).

John writes, "Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, 'Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.' These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire. When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.' And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and

the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly" (Rev. 11:1-14).

Our booklet mentions, "They will exercise some of the same supernatural powers that God anciently granted to Elijah and Moses...The work of the two witnesses is presented between the sixth and seventh trumpet plagues. Yet this is actually the time of the conclusion of their work—their prophesying lasts for 3 ½ years, the same length of time Jerusalem will be occupied by the gentiles. Thus it will have commenced just before the Great Tribulation. In addition to their activities described here, they appear to be directly associated with certain prophecies of Zechariah (Rev. 11:4 with Zec. 4:3, 11-14). We are introduced to the two witnesses *at the temple site* in Jerusalem...Jesus had earlier warned that a specific event will trigger many of the events in Revelation" (Mt. 24:15-16, 21).

"Christ's words indicate that the devil will enable the prophetic Beast and False Prophet to commandeer the temple area, temporarily making it the center of their own satanically inspired system of worship. Opposing the Beast and False Prophet will be God's two witnesses...But how will the two witnesses and their message be received? People will loathe them. Like no other prophets in the history of God's people, the witnesses and their message will be 'hated by all nations' (Mt. 24:9). Yet God is consistent. The effect of His witnesses' work will be similar to that of other great prophets (Ez. 33:33). They will gain worldwide attention, giving them an unprecedented opportunity to warn the nations that they should repent of their sins. He will allow the Beast to execute them...By that time the people of every nation will have seen and heard the frequent reports on the activities of the two prophets through worldwide communication systems [including the Internet]...The whole world, having hated the two witnesses' rebukes and calls for repentance, celebrates their deaths, but the rejoicing will be short-lived. Three and a half days after their execution, the two prophets will be resurrected—at the very time the seventh trumpet announces the return of Christ and the resurrection and reward of God's servants. A startled world will have irrefutable proof of who is the true God and which is His religion!" (pp. 45-46).