

[1] Read Rev 9:13-21 ¹³The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God. ¹⁴It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels¹ who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”² ¹⁵And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. ¹⁶The number of the mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number. ¹⁷The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. ¹⁸A third of mankind was killed by **the three plagues** of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. ¹⁹The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury. ²⁰The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons³, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. ²¹Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

- **[2] The altar** is the heavenly version (6:9), on which are offered the prayers of the saints (8:3).
- **The Euphrates.** This river was to form Israel’s NE border (Gen. 15:18; Deut. 1:7; Josh. 1:4); only David and Solomon came near to reaching it (2 Sam. 8:3–8; 1 Kings 4:21).
- **Four Angels** will be released at an exact point in time to accomplish a specific mission: killing 1/3 of humanity. They control or employ 200M “mounted” troops, apparently demonic. With the killing of ¼ of humanity previously (Rev 6:7-8), this results in half of the earth’s population being dead.
- **The Army (Cavalry).** They have lions’ heads and colorful breastplates – red, blue, yellow. They use fire, sulfur and smoke to kill, which coincide with red (fire), smoke (blue), sulfur (yellow).
- **Sulfur** is yellow (9:17-18). God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with it (Gen 19:24). It’s different than fire, since both are listed separately (Lk 17:9, Ps 11:6). Sulfur is God’s method of everlasting torment (Rev 14:10, 19:20, 20:10, 21:8). Chemically it’s flammable, found in volcanic regions, and toxic. Fire burns sulfur, which (with whatever is burned) gives off noxious smoke. It was actually used to fumigate houses in earlier times. **See Gen 19:28.**

[3] Repentance. One old definition: “A virtuous alteration of the mind and purpose that creates a similar virtuous change in life and practice.” *Sorrow* is not the point, but change. Paul distinguishes between *sorrow* (λύπη) and *repentance* (μετάνοια), and puts the one as the outcome of the other. “Godly *sorrow* brings *repentance*” (2 Cor. 7:10).

Those punished will not repent. Like the 10 commandments (Ex 20:1-17), sins against God are listed first, then sins that also affect people:

- **[4] Vertical sin.** They didn’t repent of idolatrous worship of both **man-made idols** (v20, Ps 115:4-7, Dt 4:28, Dan 5:23) and the **demons behind them** (1 Cor 10:21). Idols today are less material.
- **[5] Horizontal Sin.** They didn’t repent of the sins that inevitably follow idolatry: murders, magic arts, sexual immorality, thefts (cp Gal 5:20 – works of the flesh; Mark 7:21 – what comes out of the unregenerate heart; Rev 21:8, 22:15). There are many such lists in the Bible.
 - **Murders (φόνος)** – cp Mt 15:19. There is a generic word for “kill”; this is specifically “murder”.
 - **Magic Arts (Φαρμακον)**, first means sorcery, then the use of drugs. Cp. 18:23, Gal 5:20.
 - **Sexual Immorality (πορνεία)**: a generic term, anything but sex between a married man and woman. “Adultery” is more specific – see Mt 15:19. Linked w/idolatry – Acts 15:20.
 - **Thefts (κλέμματα)** – “kleptomaniac”. One antidote to stealing is honest work (Eph 4:28).

[6] What I Learned:

- **It is a tragic irony** that the demons these people worship are the very ones killing them. So it is with sin; we love it so much, and it hates us so much.
- **Punishment can’t create a new heart.** These people are tortured by demons and killed by demons; yet their hearts don’t change (cp 1 Cor 10:1-12).
- **Light refused brings darkness.** Romans 1!
- **Heb 6:9** Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case—the things that have to do with salvation.

¹ **Four angels** also held back the winds of judgment from the four corners of the earth (7:1)

² 16:12 tells us the Euphrates will be dried up to make way for the kings of the East.

³ Some believe “demons” here (δαίμόνια) is an adjective – “demonic stuff”.

Romans 1:1-18 18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. 26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. 28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. 32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.