Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Satanic Slaughter
Scripture: Revelation 9:13-21
Code: 66-34

Again tonight we return to the book of Revelation and I invite you to open your Bibles to chapter 9...Revelation chapter 9. And we're looking at verses 13 through 21 in this tremendous book and I'll be reading those verses to you in just a moment.

Mankind lies between two mighty opposite spiritual spheres, both touching the earth and man directly. Each of those spheres operates to conform man to itself. And as he yields to one or the other, he becomes a companion to God or a companion to Satan, a companion to holy angels or a companion to demons, a companion to saints or a companion to sinners.

And, frankly, to doubt that reality is the most momentous mistake and the most fatal error that any human being will ever make. Heaven, one of those spheres, is calling to man through Christ Jesus. Hell, the other sphere, is calling to man through Satan. And the voices of hell have always been loud...loud enough and alluring enough to charm and seduce the world. And there is coming a day, frankly, when the sirens of hell will call with a powerful seduction, so powerful that it will drown out the voice of preachers who are calling people to heaven. The people in that day who have ignored all the powerful warnings, all the calls of mercy in the gospel, all the offers of grace will see death come upon them as never before. Judgment fierce and indestructible. And in the midst of it they will not repent. The sirens of hell will totally drown out the preachers of mercy.

In fact, they will curse the God of heaven. They will make their choice to become the companion of Satan, demons and sinners forever. And that's what this chapter is all about. Let me begin reading in verse 12. The first "woe" is past, behold two woes are still coming after these things. "And the sixth angel sounded and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, `Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.' And the four angels who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year were released so that they might kill a third of mankind. And the number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million. I heard the number of them. And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them. The riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone. And the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone. A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths; for the power of the horses is in their mouths, and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents and have heads and with them they do harm. And the rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues did not repent of

the works of their hands so as not to worship demons and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their immorality, nor of their thefts."

Here you have the blowing of the sixth trumpet and in the blowing of the sixth trumpet you have another demon attack such as in the blowing of the fifth trumpet recorded in verses 1 to 11 of the same chapter. Now remember, we are in a seven-year period in the future after the Rapture of the church called the time of the Tribulation. We are in the latter half of that period called The Great Tribulation. The Tribulation time is unfolding for us in seven-sealed manner. There is a scroll which records the takeover the earth by its rightful ruler, Christ. Each phase of that takeover is revealed as the next of seven seals is broken. The seventh seal has been broken. And upon the breaking of the seventh seal it reveals seven trumpet judgments.

We are moving toward the end of that latter half of the seven years and we are already at trumpet number six. There is only one more trumpet to blow and that trumpet contains seven bowl judgments which are rapid-fire, so we're nearing the end. We are in the seventh seal, the book is fully opened. We are in the sixth trumpet, near the last trumpet which encompasses the seven bowl judgments described in chapter 16. And when the final bowl is poured out to end the seventh trumpet which is the consummation of the seventh seal, then the Lord Jesus arrives to set up His glorious Kingdom on earth, the Millennial Kingdom.

So here we are, trumpet number six, judgment to come upon the world in the end of the age. Now remember, by this time there has been a worldwide revival, many have been redeemed, many of the redeemed have been slaughtered and they're already in heaven, a multitude too vast to number, revealed to us in chapter 7. Some of them are still on earth and they'll survive all of this. The Lord will protect them through the slaughter and the judgment and they will enter into the Kingdom in their physical bodies. So there are believers all over the earth. Israel is going to come to repentance and look on Him whom they've pierced and some of them will, as well, of course, become preachers, namely the hundred and forty-four thousand and many others and they will be used by God to preach the gospel across the earth.

It is in that scene that the seventh seal reveals the seven trumpets and we find ourselves at trumpet number six. The fifth trumpet, according to verse 12, was the first of three woes. You remember the first four trumpets had to do with judgment. Judgment, it's described for us in chapter 8, judgment on the land and judgment on the sea and judgment on the fresh water and judgment on the sky. The created universe is judged. The physical universe is judged. But the last three trumpets are called "woes," because they are more frightening judgments, more fearsome judgments. The fifth one involved a demon horde coming out of the pit and running rampant over the earth and tormenting men to the point where they wished they could die but they couldn't, and so they had to endure the torment for five months, demonic torment.

And now we come to the second of those woes and we read about it in verse 13, let's look at it. "And the sixth angel sounded..." Now if you go back to verse 2 of chapter 8 you see there the seven angels standing before God, they are angels accustomed to being in the presence of God. They have seven trumpets ready to go, five have been blown, now back to verse 13, "The sixth angel sounded and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, `Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.'"

Now the first point that I want to direct you to in the unfolding of this scene is the release of the demons...the release of the demons. The sixth angels sounds his trumpet, five have already sounded, the judgments are inconceivable up to now and they will get worse. God is judging man with a final flurry of judgment called the day of the Lord. Land, plants, animals, sea, fresh water, sky, and you remember even terrifying demonic pollution has already fallen upon the earth. Hell has already opened up and belched out, as it were, millions of captive demons who had been bound there. And here comes some more to be released.

Now the voice that follows the sixth angel sounding comes from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God. I need to spend a moment on this to give you some understanding of it. I heard a voice, in the Greek text it's one voice, a solitary singular voice is emphasized. Perhaps it's the voice of the Lamb, after all, He is executing this take over. It's time for Him to give His order, time for Him to speak and to judge.

The voice is not identified but the location from which it comes is identified and that tells us the Holy Spirit is laying emphasis there. Notice that it comes from one of the four horns of the golden altar which is before God. Now John had already seen this altar back in chapter 6. You remember in 6:9 to 11 that there was an altar and underneath the altar there were souls praying for vengeance? They were the souls of martyred believers who had been killed during the Tribulation time and they were underneath this altar and they were pleading for vengeance. And at the time we studied that I told you that was a heavenly counterpart to the altar of incense which is the altar symbolizing prayer or petition. In Old Testament times the altar of incense was where prayers for mercy arose. Now it's become an altar of intercession where prayers of vengeance arise. Originally a place where people of God would go symbolically as the priests took in the incense and they would there symbolically have the pleading for mercy. But already we can see that pleadings from that once known as an altar of mercy have become pleadings for vengeance.

Again in chapter 8 we see that same altar, and an angel at that altar filling up his censer with the fiery incense, according to chapter 8 verse 5, hurls that to the earth. And now we see that the golden altar which once was where you pled for mercy became an altar of vengeance where you plead for vengeance, and now not only an altar of vengeance, but actually an altar of judgment because when the angel throws the fiery coals from the altar, peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning

and an earthquake take place.

So the altar is very, very important as it begins to unfold in its meaning. This would be a visionary replica that John sees, a heavenly replica of the golden altar of incense described in Exodus chapter 30. We don't have the time to go through all of the details but I think it would be helpful, just listen to what it says in Exodus 30 about the original altar of incense that God prescribed to be placed within the tabernacle. "You shall make an altar as a place for burning incense, you will make it of acacia wood." And then He gives its dimensions and it will have horns, little protrusions on the corners which stick up, probably really decorative more than anything, giving it a unique appearance. "You'll overlay it with pure gold, its top and its sides all around and its horns," there it is, the golden altar. "Make a gold molding all around for it, two gold rings," and so forth, further prescriptions are given. "And you shall put it...in verse 6...in front of the veil." Now remember, in the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies, was the ark of the covenant. Immediately outside the Holy of Holies, outside the veil that separated men from God, for God was in the Holy of Holies, on the outside was a place called the holy place, only a priest could go there. The priest could go into the Holy of Holies only once a year, he could go into the holy place every morning and every night. And right before the veil, right before the presence of God, this golden altar of incense was to be placed, right in front of the veil that separated from the Mercy Seat, the ark of the testimony, or the ark of the covenant.

Then the priest was to go in there every morning and he was to burn incense and then he was to go back every twilight and he was to burn incense again. And then verse 10 says, "And Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year on the Day of Atonement, once a year on the altar of incense, the high priest went in and put blood. Now what that was saying was that prayers can rise, prayers for mercy, pleadings to God for grace and blessing, but only on the basis of...what?...sacrifice, only do we have access to commune with God and any right to ask for mercy on the basis of blood sacrifice. The book of Hebrews puts it this way, Christ in His sacrifice has created a new and living way, access to God.

So there were two altars then in the ancient tabernacle and temple. One was the great altar outside in the courtyard, it was called the brazen altar, or the altar of sacrifice, the altar for burnt offering. That is where the sacrificial animals were placed and consumed. That was the bloody place where atonement was made. And then on the basis of atonement the priest would take coals from that altar and take them in and put them on the golden altar, put incense there and prayers would rise, prayers for mercy and grace and blessing from God who would grant that because sin had been atoned for. It is this golden altar here, smaller than the brazen altar, made of gold, not brass, inside the holy place before the veil.

Now this gives us graphic insight into the fact that prayer and worship and communion with God, access to God, a right to plead your case was always connected to atonement, right? I mean, to make it simple, no person whose sins have not been atoned for has any access to God, is that not

true? Without sacrifice to cover sin, no communion with God is available. Sacrifice opens the way to God. So the work of the golden altar, the symbolic emphasis of the golden altar was predicated on the brazen altar. And once a year to carry that symbolism fully out, the high priest on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, would go into the altar which was golden and he would put blood on it. So it was an altar where prayers rose symbolically, prayers for forgiveness, mercy, based upon the fact that sins had been atoned for.

So they always knew it as an altar of mercy. But now it has become an altar of vengeance. And an altar of judgment. And here unimaginable to the Jewish reader, a voice comes out of that very same altar where once was mercy. And the voice that cries from the horns of this altar is not a voice that says, "I forgive, I grant mercy, I grant grace," it is a voice that calls for devastating demonic destruction. And I am immediately reminded of what God said to the antediluvian civilization when He said, "My Spirit will not always strive with man." First Kings 1:50 says that in the past some Jews have clung to the horns of the altar for mercy. There is no mercy left now. The angel in chapter 8 verses 3 to 5 has let us know already that this has become an altar of judgment and the terrible, terrible scene that we see in this text certainly does confirm that.

I can't resist reading you the comment on this very scene that comes out of Hebrews chapter 10. "Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy, how much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has insulted the Spirit of grace, and everybody who has rejected Christ in this time period and the future up to this point will have done all of that." And then he says, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, the Lord will judge His people, it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." This is the end of mercy, folks. This is when mercy is at its end.

And so one says, to the sixth angel, the one whose voice comes out of this altar, says to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." Now this, too, is fascinating. Who are these four angels who are bound? Well, first of all, never in Scripture does it say holy angels are bound. Why would they need to be bound? The only reason you would bind someone would be to prevent them from doing what you don't want them to do, right? Holy angels don't do what God doesn't want them to do. Did you get that? There's a lot of negatives in there. You don't have to bind holy angels to prevent them from doing what they would do against the will of God. So the fact that they are bound should make it clear to anyone that they are demons, fallen angels who need to be restrained. And this is a perfect tense verb which means that something has bound them in the past with continuing results. They are in a state or condition of having been bound. So here are four bound demons, fallen angels, they're another segment of Satan's force.

Now obviously, Satan doesn't want them bound. He'd like to have his demons running loose all over the universe all the time. The demons didn't want to get sent to the pit, you remember...Please...they

pleaded to Jesus...don't send us to the pit. Satan doesn't want them bound and here's another group of four that he has bound, reminding us that God controls all the demonic forces.

Now these four are apparently in charge of a massive demon horde. Not those on the earth, not those who have been up in space battling angels who now, according to Revelation 12, have been cast down to the earth, not those who have come pouring up the shaft of the pit described in the first part of chapter 9. Here's a whole new group...a whole new horde of demons controlled by these four who are bound by God.

Now interestingly enough it says they are bound at the great river Euphrates. That is a very curious thing.

Now the immediate question to comes to my mind as I look at this is why are these demons bound at the Euphrates? Why has God got them captive there? Well if you look back a little bit in history, and I don't want to belabor this, just kind of stick with me for a few months (meant moments) I'll show you what the significance might be. It was one of the four rivers of the Garden of Eden, you remember there were four rivers in the Garden of Eden, there was one and of course the one that was preflood was different than the one that was after the Flood. But the original Euphrates was in the place of Satan's deception of Adam and Eve, it was in the area where Satan first beganhis assault on man. The river Euphrates has a very interesting history. The river Euphrates begins in the Armenian mountains, some of the highest in the earth, flooded in the springtime with melting snows, it goes down to the Torres(?) Mountains and down through the Mesopotamian valley to the Persian Gulf, all the way through that area of the world. It's the most important, the longest, the biggest of all rivers in western Asia. But it was the place where sin was first known, the place where misery first began, it was the place where the first lie was told, where the first murder was committed, where the first grave was dug.

The Euphrates River was the scene of the great apostasies before and after the Flood. The Euphrates River was the scene of the rise of Israel's greatest and most oppressive enemies. The area around the Euphrates River was the scene of the long years in which the children of Israel dragged out their wearisome days of captivity. The Euphrates River was the scene of the rise of those great world empires that oppressed God's people, Babylon, Medo-Persia. They're in that place. Four great powerful demons, magnets of evil are chained by God. And they have in their hands the power to do awful destruction but God restrains them.

The Euphrates, according to Genesis, Deuteronomy and Joshua, was also the eastern boundary of the Promised Land. It was also the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire which is to be restored and revived at this time under the Antichrist. It is the place where the city of Babylon is, and you will remember in Revelation 17 and Revelation 18 both the final form of world religion and the final form of world economy are called Babylon. These could well be the very demons who controlled Babylon

of old, who controlled Medo-Persia of old, who controlled Greece of old, who controlled the Roman Empire of old. Interestingly enough in Daniel, just a brief note, in Daniel chapter 10, just a couple of verses to read to you, verse 13, "The prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty one days..." that's a demon who was leading Persia from the satanic vantage point and Michael had to go and get him out of the way. Down in verse 20, "Do you understand why I came to you, I am now going to return to fight against the prince of Persia so I am going forth and behold the prince of Greece is about to come." So you can see that there were demons associated with these various great empires with Persia, with Greece, certainly with Babylon and certainly with Rome and it may well be that those four great world empires had four great demonic powers over them and these are they. And they've been held prisoner.

Something else, as Satan had entered Eden and corrupted Eden in that same location, later on in that same part of the world he started another corruptive influence, the result of which is still going on because it wasn't drowned like his first corrupt effort. It's the Tower of Babel, the original Babylon in that same area of the world. And out of that complex of religions that was spawned from the Tower of Babel came this complexity of pagan religiosity that involves astrology, pantheism, polytheism, idolatry, spiritism, naturalistic philosophy, all of that garbage has penetrated all over the world and it was originated at the Tower of Babel. And when all of that was scattered and the languages were scattered, they took the religion, the false religion of Babel and populated the world with it. So you see the Euphrates is a demonic area.

You look at it today and it is utterly and totally without any Christian influence. That part of the world is as pagan as pagan gets. It is as anti-Christian as anti-Christianity can be. So, here are these four demons and they're bound there and that seems to be the focus of their activity in the world. And, of course, its proximity to Israel makes it a good launching point for all that they would want to do to destroy the people of God, Israel.

So here are these four demons and the angel blows and the voice says, "Release them." The release of the demons leads to a second point, the return of death...the return of death. Remember, death had taken a holiday under trumpet number five, according to verses 5 and 6. People couldn't die, they tried to die and they couldn't die. They tried to kill themselves and it didn't work. Now death returns, verse 15, "And the four angels who had been prepared...look at this...for the hour and day and month and year were released and immediately they killed a third of mankind." Who released them? God did. And God will now use them in the continuing destruction of the world.

What does that phrase "for the hour and day and month and year" mean? Really very obvious. At the prescribed year in the prescribed month at the exact day and the very hour which God has designed it to happen, that's when it will happen. Matthew 24:36, they were asking when is the Kingdom going to come and when is the Messiah going to come, and all of that. And Jesus said it's not for you to know the day or the hour, but God knows. He knows the day and the hour of everything. The Father

in heaven knows, said the Son of Man. God has His limits and God has His timetable and at the right year in the right month on the right day at the right hour those demons are going to be released and immediately they're going to kill a third of mankind.

Back in chapter 6 verse 8 when the fourth seal was opened, one fourth of the world was killed. Now I'm not a great mathematician but I know if you add one fourth to one third you get over half. So now...by now over half the world is killed, to say nothing of the ones that have been slaughtered in the wars and the pestilences and everything and the world has been absolutely decimated. Far more than a half of the original population that went into the time known as the Tribulation have died. Just the burial of these bodies would be an inconceivable problem. And now here in a very brief matter of time, one third of the remaining world is massacred. They must just be pushing bodies into huge holes to bury them or burn them. It would take some kind of massive force to kill a third of the population of the world and this is some force.

Verse 16 describes their number. "The number of the armies, plural, of the horsemen was two hundred million." Two hundred million...and he says, "I heard the number of them," that's how many. Now remember, there are already the demons that have been running all over the earth all along. They're already the demons who have been in space all along and are now cast to the earth. And then the pit has released a massive demon horde of certainly millions of demons there, and there are still two hundred million more of them that have been bound and are now released...supernatural demon army.

Now some have suggested that this is a human army. Some have said it's going to be the Red Chinese army because in the seventies they did number two hundred million. Some have said it's probably the army from the north described in Ezekiel 38 and 39. And those who want to connect it with a human force usually associate this verse with chapter 16 verse 12, the kings of the east, the drying up of the Euphrates River so the kings of the east can come and they would say, "Well this is the two hundred million coming from Asia, certainly there would be enough people there to make an army that size if the Red Chinese Army in the seventies had two hundred million. And you see that the Euphrates River has dried up and these people come marching."

The problem with that is it's in connection with the bowl judgments which fit into the seventh trumpet, not the sixth. And it doesn't describe an army of two hundred million anyway, it just says the kings of the east. But they say it could be this same group and we now know it's possible to dry up the Euphrates. I don't know if you've been reading about the Ataturk(?) Dam. The Ataturk Dam is in Turkey. One man can walk in and push one button and dry up the Euphrates basically, taking it down seventy-five...to its fullness to seventy-five percent down to just twenty-five percent of its normal flow and do that rather simply.

But I believe the sixth bowl judgment comes later and we'll show you why as we move through the book and looks at a different army and that that is the issue of Armageddon. And I don't see this as a human army. If this was a human army of men and women marching across the land, it would be pretty big. If it were just a mile wide, it would be a hundred miles deep. That's a lot of people. And how could they march and kill a third of the world? I mean, how could they move across mountains and oceans and all of that? Those who see it as a human army when they get into the description that we read in verse 17 and following see those descriptions as descriptions of guns and helicopters and jet aircraft and tanks and rockets. The problem is, he describes all of them like that, so it would have to be two hundred million of those things, those human weapons, human machines.

The language, I think, is better understood of a demon force, particularly when it's connected to four demons who are being held back. So the cosmic war, a war of hell is hitting the earth with all its force. And it's certainly going to appear as if hell is all over the world.

Verse 17, "This is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them, they had breastplates and the colors...notice these, please...the colors were fire, hyacinth and brimstone." Now this is an amazing description...fire, hyacinth or jacinth, you could translate it either way. The color of fire is what? Red. The color of brimstone, brimstone represents a sulphur gas, the color of it would be yellow, sulfuric gas. The color of hyacinth is anything from blue to black. The red of fire, the blue/black of burning smoke and a yellow sulphur gas, the colors of hell...the colors of hell.

"And the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions," that's descriptive language in his vision, God has to represent to him to the demons in some way that he can see them visually, the vision is of these lion-headed beings, that means fierce, strong, determined, stalking their victims to slaughter. And then he says, "Out of their mouths," verse 17 at the end, "proceed fire and brimstone...fire and smoke and brimstone."

This is like again the representation of the fury of hell, the devastating power that they carry is frightening. The power has an effect, verse 18, a third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths.

You say, "Can demons kill?" Sure, people can kill and demons are supernatural. Remember the demon possessed boy in the gospel account, what did he keep doing to himself? Throwing himself where? In the fire. And they do it. They kill with fire, burning people to a crisp. They kill with smoke, suffocating people. You know, of course, that people in fires, as many who...many of those who die as many die from smoke inhalation as die from flames. And sulphur gas asphyxiates them, the very gas of hell, the fire and fury and smoke out of the pit. It's really an absolutely frightening scene.

In chapter 14 verse 10 talks about the wrath of God mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger, and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever. Those

are the people who worship the beast. Over in chapter 19 verse 20, the beast, false prophet, are thrown into the lake of fire and what is it? It's fire which burns with brimstone. Chapter 20 verse 10, "The devil who was deceived is thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone." Chapter 21 verse 8, "The lake of fire that burns with fire and brimstone, again which is the second death." Burning, suffocating and being asphyxiated with sulphur gas or gas of some kind.

If that isn't enough, John has to add verse 19. "The power of the horses is in their mouths," and then he adds a new component, "and in their tails, they seem to create devastation in both directions. Their tails are like serpents and have heads and with them they do harm." And again, remember now, this is a vision, this is imagery, and the Lord is representing to him their destructive power in some visualization: horses, lions, serpents. Those are things that he can understand because they're devastating and destructive things, powerful things. It can't describe men. And since each of the two hundred million are so described, it can't be describing two hundred million rocket launchers. Some commentators say..well these are rocket launchers coming out the back side of these guys and guns coming out the front side of them...and try to make it into humans. It doesn't seem that that's the best understanding.

So, the sixth trumpet will blow and then this...the release of demons and the return of death. Now remember, folks, don't push this off into some nebulous non-descript place, this is our world here. This is the same world we live in with newspapers and television, with schools and colleges and universities and people going to work and doing jobs and trying to eat and live and get married and raise their kids and do the normal things that everybody does, and it's just coming down around them in inconceivable destruction.

There's another point that ends it, the release of demons and return of death and the reaction of defiance. You know, I say to myself, "If I were an unbeliever and I were in this situation, I'd be converted, wouldn't you?" I mean, I'd fall on my face. But by now you have to remember the people of the world have seen it all, they've seen the furious judgments, they've seen the devastation of everything they treasure. They've seen the evil of Antichrist, Satan and demons. They've heard relentless and miraculous preaching of the gospel of Christ. They have been given grace and mercy as a gift that they will not take. Some have received and some have died as martyrs and some have been protected to enter the Kingdom alive. But there's still a mass of humanity that will not believe. It's amazing the hardness of heart. And verse 20 says, "And the rest of mankind," that would be the remaining two thirds that were not killed by these plagues, "did not...what?...repent." It's unimaginable, absolutely unimaginable.

By the way, may I remind you, and I hate to do this all the time but it's so important, repentance is always the issue. If people don't repent, they perish. Repent of what? Sin. That's why Luke 24:47 says that repentance is to be preached to all nations. But if they're so hard and they've made it all the way through to this point, they're not going to repent. It says it. They didn't repent. Verse 21 starts,

"And they didn't repent." It says it twice. And when the seventh trumpet blows and the bowl judgments start, look at chapter 16, verse 1, "Go pour out the seven bowls of wrath." What happens? Verse 9, "The fourth bowl, they were scorched with fire," did they repent? No, they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues and they didn't repent.

Verse 11, "They blasphemed the God of heaven when the fifth bowl was poured and didn't repent." Verse 21, huge hundred pound hailstones coming out of heaven, they blasphemed God because of the plague. You see, they've reached the point now of resolute hardness. They have yielded to the sphere of hell. They have embraced Satan, demons, death. They literally worship Satan.

Chapter 12 verse 9 says that the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan who deceives the whole world. They buy into his deception. Verse 4 of chapter 13, they worship the dragon. They're Satan worshipers, a world of them.

And in the end of this vision John identifies five sins that are representative of their defiance, five sins. One, idolatry--idolatry. They didn't repent of the works of their hands. Well what does that mean? The idols they make. Their manmade gods. In ancient times they actually replicated their gods in wood. He talks about it. Wood, stone, brass, silver, gold idols which can't hear, see or walk, they are nothing, they are not alive, but men make their own gods and here they are and they still won't turn from their own god. You say, "What's important about that?" The important point is that those gods aren't able to cope with what's happening. But they are so resolutely committed to their gods that in spite of the inability of their gods to do anything, they stick with them. Contrast that with the group on the ship we talked about regarding Jonah, who when their gods couldn't do anything to stop the storm and Jonah's God did it, they immediately turned to his God. Not this group, this is how deep and resolute their unbelief has become.

Please note in the middle of verse 20, "So as not to worship demons." Listen, anybody who worships any idol, any false god is worshiping a demon. Psalm 96:5, the Septuagint version says, "All idols are demons." What do you mean? You make a little idol and you decide you're going to bow down to it, and even though it's wood, stone, gold, silver or whatever, a demon will come along, impersonate the god you think is in that idol, and do enough stuff in response to your homage to that god to keep you hooked to a false idol. That's why the Apostle Paul says to the Corinthians, "You cannot come to the table of the Lord and then go in your idol house and worship demons," 1 Corinthians 10. Idol worship in one sense is worshiping nothing. In another sense it is worshiping the demon impersonating the nothing. They worship the dragon, they worship the beast out of the pit, they worship the demons. This is Satan worship gone wild.

We already have it, don't we in our world? At this point it becomes pandemic, endemic. This time of the world's history idolatry, mysticism, spiritualism, spiritism, all kinds of things that involve Satan and the occult and the underworld and demons will be in full force. And everyone, John 3:20 says, who

does evil hates the light and doesn't come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed. Evil will be running amuck like never before. And people will be deep into it and when judgment comes they'll plunge even deeper into it. And the forms of their idolatry will accommodate the unbridled, unrestrained wickedness that's out of control and they'll be so deeply in love with their sin that they'll worship the demons and Satan who is happy to have them sin to whatever degree they would like. Sin such as, verse 21, murder. They've been killing now and they've tasted blood. And they like the taste of it. They've been killing Jews. They've been killing Christians. They've been killing each other for years by now. Violent crime is out of control. Law and order is long gone into history. You have a wretched society of wicked people who will not respond to God or to the gospel, and they are literally infested with demons all over the place. They have long abandoned any sense of sanity or morality, unbridled worldwide bloodshed. They have tasted blood, they have murdered and they're not about to stop.

And then he mentions sorceries. Interesting word in the Greek, *pharmakeia* from which we get pharmacy, pharmaceutics, drugs. This is a word that is bigger than just drugs, although it literally could be translated druggings. Whatever it is that they use to dull their senses, whatever it is that they use to induce their satanic worship, whatever impure occultic practices they use to get in deep to their witchcraft, drunkenness, drugs, seances, hypnotism, incantations, mystic mantras, whatever induces their religious experience, cavorting with mediums, spirits and the deceptions of Satan. They're not about to let go of that. That, too, will be rampant. We see that coming, don't we?, in the New Age. We even see the murders coming. Certainly in our society we do.

The fourth of the sins which they will not turn away from is immorality, *porneia*, from which we get pornography. Sexual sin will go on unchecked. If you think homosexuality, rape, pedophilia, child molestation and bestiality, lewdness, and fornication are going strong now, you couldn't even conceive of what they would be like then. Sexual dissipation and perversion beyond description.

And then he adds thefts. Honesty will be non-existent. There will be no reprisals left. The world is left wretched, full of immoral killers who worship Satan, demons, who are drugged out of their minds by their mystic incantations and drugs themselves who follow their impulses to destroy and plunder. And nobody can do anything about it.

That's what's coming and there's still one trumpet and seven bowls of judgment left. But our Lord is compassionate. And the reason all these warnings are here is for us. Vance Havner(?), famous southern preacher, said, "The real test of how much we believe of prophetic truth is what we're doing to warn men to flee from the wrath to come. To believe the solemn truths of prophecy...he said...and then make our way complacently through a world of sin and shame is not merely unfortunate, it is criminal," end quote.

Even God said, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways. Why will you die?"

This, ladies and gentlemen, if nothing else is a missionary mandate, is it not? We look in the eyes of a world headed for this. And as bad as it is, it isn't as bad as hell itself. And though unbelievers may never experience this because they will die before it happens, they'll experience something far worse, if we could even imagine such a thing.

He's right, it's not just unfortunate if we don't tell them, it's criminal.

Father, we thank You tonight that You have given us this vision. We...we're now responsible for it, it is frightening. We think about what it says in the little epistle of Jude, that You're coming to execute judgment, judgment on the ungodly for all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way and all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against You. And then we remember that it is our responsibility to snatch them out of the fire. Lord, help us to do that before it's too late. For the sake of Christ, we pray. Amen.

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