

Current Affairs #101 – Fire, Smoke, and Brimstone  
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We talked about the four angels who were released to kill a third of mankind. Now this is different, of course, from the rider on the red horse, which rider we encountered early on as the first four seals were opened, and there was the revelation of that which had been sealed, which was held in the hand of the Lamb who sat upon the throne—just to go back into some of these teachings that have preceded.<sup>1</sup> This is different. That spirit, the rider on the red horse, stirred men up against each other to kill each other.<sup>2</sup> But a third of mankind are killed in a combination of things found here, constituting the second woe. We know that because, in verse 16—I left the last broadcast by saying, “We have not looked at how a third of mankind was killed. We want to do that now.” And in verse 16, he says,

*Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them (Revelation 9:16 NKJV).*

Then he goes on to describe the horsemen, and I will just read that portion of it.

*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 [and he reiterates]—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 (Revelation 9:17-19, comments added in brackets).*

Let’s go back though, earlier on in chapter 9, and we will look at these horses. They really connect directly to verse 7 of chapter 9, which says,

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All Scripture quotations are taken from the NKJV Bible, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>1</sup> See Current Affairs #53-54

<sup>2</sup> See Revelation 6:3-4: “When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, ‘Come and see.’ Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that *people* should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.”

*The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months. And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon (Revelation 9:7-11).*

These locusts shaped like horses come out, and their first order is to torment mankind for five months. It specifically references that they had teeth like lions' teeth, and so on. In that administration it would appear that the one directing their activities was the angel of the abyss. So, the angel of the abyss—Abaddon in Hebrew, and Apollyon in Greek—had limited power and was limited to direct them, and that was for a period of five months. Now the same company is under the control of these four angels who have been bound until such a time—“The number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them”—and they now have a different mandate. After tormenting, they now kill. You would say, “Why? If you are going to kill them, why don't you just kill them? Why do you torment them first for five months, and then kill a third?” In this we see the staged mercy of God.

It is always true that when a civilization becomes so corrupt, that the mercy of God is not extended in the form of lovingkindness and tender mercies. At that point, you see, God means to shake everything that can be shaken so that, if there is a remnant that can be saved out of them, He will save them. This is the severe mercy of God. This is the fierce majesty of God. Every time this has ever happened, only a remnant was saved. In the days of Noah, unto which these things are likened— “As it was in the days of Noah” —the whole population saw Noah build the ark for one hundred and twenty years, and God's mercy was for one hundred and twenty years, while the ark was being prepared. But the day that the deluge came, a whole different revealing of the fierce wrath of God was now the order of the day. But the Bible says, concerning that one hundred and

twenty years, it says it this way: “The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared.”<sup>3</sup>

The mercy of God does not first kill; it allows for the torment. And there is a limited administration of these creatures under the rule of Abaddon, and in Greek Apollyon. But then when it moves to the sixth woe, these horses and their riders, the horsemen, now are a numerous company, and they are meant to do a very different kind of harm.

I would like to comment just briefly on the two hundred million. Let me say that when you look this up in the Greek, the word “million” does not appear. It is thousands and tens of thousands. The highest number that the ancients could count to and conceive of was a thousand. So, a thousand times a thousand, ten thousand times ten thousand—those are the typical references. And the number spoken of here is two hundred million. A thousand million is a billion. The number of the horsemen was two hundred million. So, the translators simply used current mathematical understandings to talk about it.

But it is interesting because two hundred million has at least two other previous references in Scripture:

- One of them is Psalm 68, and it says at verse 17— “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of thousands; The Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the Holy Place.” So, twenty thousand times thousands of thousands. The calculus is that it is two hundred million.
- And then also in the Book of Daniel, chapter 7, verse 10, we also have this number again. Beginning in verse 9, speaking of God’s throne it says, “His throne *was* a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire;” [and then verse 10] “A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.” So it seems like—and this, by the way, is in the context of God judging the nations; and specifically, being Daniel 7, it is a reference to the four creatures that Daniel had seen in his vision, particularly

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<sup>3</sup> See 1 Peter 3:20: “who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.”

in reference to the fourth creature that had seven heads and ten horns—when this creature was being judged, the court was set. God was attended by two times ten thousand times a thousand, as the reference indicates to the number of two hundred million attended God.

Whether this is an actual number or not is not so much the point. It is that it has its antecedent in prophetic Scriptures, which is to say, a vast, inescapable army—in this case, as in every case, subject to the control of the angel who is announcing these things, and in turn, the angel is subject to the control of the voice from the golden altar. Now I will move on. I simply wanted to show you the very point I have made before, which is this: There is always a circular reference to the thing. It comes around multiple times so that, if something is lacking in our understanding within a particular context, we can go back to the prior, non-apocryphal context and learn about what God means by those things that He says in a less obscure fashion. That is the intent of God for us in regards to the things mentioned multiple times, that come around and have their references in prophetic Scripture.

Let's go on. Verse 17,

*And thus I saw the horses in the vision [so he saw the horses, and then]: those who sat on them [So the riders on the horses—before he simply described the horses, but now he is describing the riders.] had breastplates [By the way, earlier on it was said the breastplates were made of iron, but they had different colors to them.] 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 (Revelation 9:17, comments added in brackets).*

Previously, he had said they had faces like a man, but now apparently the faces were the front parts of heads that looked like the heads of lions. Interestingly, what came out of their mouths? Out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. And by the way, it is what comes out of their mouths that are these plagues by which the third of mankind was killed,

*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 (Revelation 9:18).*

But you will notice something here, and that is,

- Fiery red—that is a reference to fire, red like fire.
- Hyacinth blue is a very dark blue, and smoke is commonly seen as dark blue smoke. Sometimes it is black, but here it is that dark blue.
- Sulfur is typically yellow, and the reference to sulfur then is captured in the line below: fire, smoke, and brimstone. Brimstone is what the ancients called the sulfuric plumes that came out of a volcano erupting.

The judgment of God, then, comes in the form of fire, smoke, and toxic fumes. And the riders on the horses apparently are arrayed according to the particular plague that the horse on which they sit represents. Here is the combination of the demonic working within the measures of human order and human society, so there are things that are recognizable. And it simply says, “those who sat on them.” It does not say men; it simply says, “those who sat on them.” So, the demonic that rides these horses is a picture, less of people charging into battle, as the imagery suggests, and more the manner in which these plagues affect humankind. They come out of their mouths.

Fire—fiery red—burns up, consumes. In that sense, since these are judgments upon mankind, it devours their reality; it devours their sense of being in control. You see, humans want to be in control. It is analogous to, and only analogous to, how the fire judges the works of man in the Day when God calls the works of man into judgment.<sup>4</sup> If we have done well, our labors will survive the fire in the fashion in which gold survives the fire, and silver and precious stones, which are formed under pressure and in heat. So that which is gold, silver, and precious stones survives the fire. That which is wood, hay, and stubble is consumed by the fire.

And some are said to be saved in those environments as one escaping through the flames, which is to say that when all the works are judged, and the foolishness and folly which constituted the

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<sup>4</sup> See 1 Corinthians 3:12-15: “Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

pursuits of man and consumed their time and their resources, when those things are revealed for the worthlessness that they are, a few will escape as though escaping through the flames. This is that imagery. Instead of purifying the people of God and/or vindicating those who have been faithful so that their works are compared to gold, silver, and precious stones, this is about the world, and there is nothing to be saved out of it. So it is really a destruction of the pride of man; it is a destruction of what they put their trust in. The Bible speaks of this time as the hearts of man failing them for fear.<sup>5</sup> Because if what you have built your life trying to get, trying to acquire, trying to define yourself through those resources and those accretions in your life, these spirits have the capacity to devour them in a fiery red haze.

Hyacinth blue is about obscuring the truth, as in smoke. We often refer to the term “blue smoke and mirrors” to suggest the unsubstantial nature of things. There are two distinctly, characteristically different kinds of smoke. One form of smoke represented the Holy Spirit coming into the temple, obscuring the senses, requiring you to be able to operate in the spirit. When the temple of Solomon was dedicated, the priests were required to operate in a type and shadow of the Holy Spirit. Not so here. Hyacinth blue, that thick, blue smoke will cause men to have no confidence in anything that they normally place their confidences in: in their knowledge, in their understanding, in their contacts, in their abilities to negotiate, in the rest of it. This is a level of robbery of mankind that is really like losing your way in a burning building because of smoke, and the inhalation of smoke, obscuring your vision.

Finally, sulfur yellow. Toxic fumes asphyxiate quickly. It burns the lungs, burns the throat, and burns the eyes, so you cannot breathe, you cannot swallow, and you cannot see. That is the picture here. These are not just sparkling, splendid colors; these are elements of destruction, and they are called plagues, much like the reference to plagues in Egypt. It comes out of their mouths, which is to say these are word-based plagues. These are plagues that come because of the words that are spoken.

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<sup>5</sup> See Luke 21:25-26: “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

Quickly, to hurry to the end of this. So, these demonic spirits speak lies and hypocrisy to people who have their consciences seared with a hot iron. Again, I remind you, go back and look at Timothy, where he speaks about the conditions of men in the last days: lovers of pleasure, lovers of themselves, haters of God, despisers of good, proud, arrogant, trucebreakers, and so on.<sup>6</sup> These are the things that absolutely eviscerate human population.

The final piece is,

*For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; [Why?] for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm (Revelation 9:19).*

This is like the serpent coming into the Garden. They speak with their mouths, but they speak in a serpentine way. The entire thing about them is deception. So they kill and do immeasurable harm to a third of mankind by taking full advantage of the debauchery and the shameless condition into which the world has been plunged. This is the pit of despair. This is where God gives men over, as He did in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, He gives them over to their lusts to do the things that were not convenient. This is the stuff spoken of in the Book of Romans, the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter.

Listen, people think that today, because you can make a Twitter-based argument for any vile and contemptible practice that you want to, and get away with it, seemingly—that only works because you do not choose to retain God in your knowledge. It does not mean it works. It works temporarily, but that is the very thing that these horses and their riders represent: the demonic combination of fire, smoke, and toxic fumes. That is what it represents. Whoever thinks that these things were fulfilled a long time ago would have a hard time explaining how things are going to end in a society in which evil has ripened to the point where men call evil good and call good evil.<sup>7</sup>

There was never a time in the world where all of that has been judged so decisively. The end of the age is when it is judged decisively. Yes, there have been occurrences of this. When Rome

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<sup>6</sup> See 2 Timothy 3:1-5

<sup>7</sup> See Isaiah 5:20: “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

became so corrupt, there was a judgment of it, and it fell; other civilizations, similar things. But we are talking about a third of mankind, and at a time when evil has ripened. It is the condition of mankind that allows for these spirits to be so effective, and God is simply giving mankind over to the choice that he has made. This is before the great white throne judgment. This has to do with the judgment of their flesh; this does not have to do with the judgment of their souls. That is to come at the great white throne. But with the judgment of the flesh, even as fierce as it is, up to and including a third of the population, it is so that, if possible, those who might be saved, seeing the destruction of these times, seeing the hopelessness of these times, that they might apply to the Lord to rescue them out of the kingdom of darkness.

We will continue, just briefly to summarize this, when we come back.

I am Sam Soleyn. We will see each other again. Bye-bye.