

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 2 THE EARTHLY DRAMA

STUDY SEVEN

More Demons, More Deaths, More Defiance

Revelation 9:13–21

Though God’s judgment will be awful, its purpose is to bring humanity to its knees. Not only to fulfill what God has predicted but to give people a final opportunity to turn their lives over to the Lord Jesus Christ so that they might know peace and relief and forgiveness throughout eternity.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IN the eighteenth century, the good news of Jesus Christ swept across the US in a movement known as The Great Awakening. People flocked to open fields by the thousands to hear of the grace of God, and the masses turned to Him in sincere repentance and joyful worship.

A key player in the drama of this nationwide revival was pastor and theologian Jonathan Edwards. On July 8, 1741, this serious and earnest man delivered one of the most iconic sermons ever preached: “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”

That doesn’t sound like good news. Yet Edwards understood that you cannot experience the life-changing truth of the gospel without first knowing the *bad* news—the depth of the sinful human condition. Listen to Edwards’ warning and feel the fire of the message he delivered on that warm summer day:

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: ’tis a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in hell; you hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder.¹

Edwards’ strong words are accurate. God will carry out His judgment against the wicked. Yet no one is without hope. This *Searching the Scriptures* study explores this urgent theme. Though the fire of God’s wrath burns hotly, there still is time for the unrepentant to experience His grace and mercy.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Many struggle with the topic of God’s wrath. Take a moment to quiet your heart of worries and clear your mind of distractions as you prepare to engage with this challenging aspect of God’s character. Write a prayer asking Him to teach you life-changing truth as you study His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

“Terror, terror, terror to all who belong to this world because of what will happen when the last three angels blow their trumpets” (*Revelation 8:13*). Each of the final three trumpet blasts represents a unique terror that would fall upon the wicked world. The first terror looked like a swarm of demon-locusts released from the bowels of the earth.

Then, the second terror, recorded in *Revelation 9:13–21*, released another demonic plague. While the first fleet of demons only harmed humans, this new army could commit far greater horrors.



Observation: The Sixth Trumpet

As you read of the terror-inducing results of the sounding of the sixth trumpet in *Revelation 9:13–21*, pay attention to what the text says.² Your patient and careful observation of the passage will act as the foundation upon which you build your solid interpretation and timely application.

When the sixth angel blew his trumpet, John heard a voice rising from the altar in God’s throne room (*Revelation 9:13*). According to *9:14*, what did this voice say?

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According to [Revelation 9:15–16](#), what emerged from the Euphrates River upon the sounding of the sixth trumpet? What additional details did John include about this moment?

In [9:16](#), John *heard* that this demonic army contained a nearly unimaginable number of *200 million* mounted troops. Then, in [9:17](#), he *saw* the force. Summarize the appearance of these armed riders in the space below.

According to [9:18–19](#), how did these demonic horses and riders harm humanity?

The first six of the seven trumpet plagues devastated the earth and destroyed more than one-third of the human population. According to [9:20–21](#), how did those who survived these horrors respond to what they had endured? Did these events harden or soften their hearts toward God?

What's the purpose of these judgments? To the skeptic it sounds like God is a sadist—smiling as He unloads His cruel judgments on helpless humanity. Don't believe that for a moment. Since the beginning of sin, God has promised there will be consequences. But His longsuffering and mercy have been in place often through the process. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: Divine Judgment, Human Rejection

As you read about the horrors of the judgments in Revelation, it may feel like God is absent amid the chaos. Yet John suggested the opposite. Jesus Christ, the slaughtered Lamb, was the one who was worthy to open the scroll of God's plan of redemption and to carry out God's judgment against the powers of evil (*Revelation 5:1–8*).

John affirmed this truth when he noted that the four angels who led the demonic parade of the sixth trumpet judgment “had been prepared for this hour and day and month and year” (*9:15*). What does this verse reveal about God's sovereignty? For some help grappling with these challenging truths, consult your Bible-study tools, like Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on Revelation*, or *Constable's Notes* at netbible.org.³

You may read about humanity's response to these extraordinary plagues that represent the first six trumpet judgments and wonder, *How could you not turn to God after experiencing these realities?* But even today, people experience the evils of this world and still refuse to place their lives in God's hands.

Why might someone choose not to repent after experiencing the greatest calamities that accompany the powers of sin and death? How should this perspective affect the way followers of Jesus approach evangelism and share the good news of His kingdom?

Never think that life is sort of a haphazard set of events tossed on the chessboard and left for you to work out. We are moving through life precisely as God planned. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: The Euphrates River

The Euphrates River represents a key landmark in the setting of the story of the people of God. Because *Revelation 9:14* associated it with judgment, let's explore the significance of this river.

Genesis 2:10–14 identified the Euphrates as one of the four rivers that fed the garden of Eden. After sin banished humanity from paradise, God chose to include this river as a key part of His plan. According to *15:18*, what land did God promise to give to Abraham as a part of His creation-redeeming covenant?

Now, take a look at a Bible map (like “*Deportations and Returns under Assyria and Babylon*” at insight.org/general/bible-maps) and identify these boundaries. The generations of Abraham's descendants who inherited this covenant didn't hold up their end of the deal, so God sent foreign nations to conquer this land and send the people of Israel into exile (see *Deuteronomy 28:15–68*).

Isaiah 7:18–25 records a prophecy that foretold God's response to Israel's unfaithfulness. According to these verses, how would God judge Israel? Whom would He send against them? From where would this force arise?

In the Old Testament, the Euphrates River is associated with both blessing and judgment. How does this context help you better understand the meaning of *Revelation 9:13–21*? Where is there blessing amid the judgment in these verses?

God's judgment arises from the Euphrates River, which flows with both His justice *and* His mercy. Once the tide of God's wrath washes away sin and its pollution from creation, eternal springs of life will well up for those who drink of His grace and forgiveness.

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Application: Truths of Hope

Revelation 9:13–21 offers wisdom regarding difficult realities and hopeful truths. Consider these points of practical application from Pastor Chuck.

First, *no matter how impressive human strength may be, the presence of supernatural activity is overpowering. Without divine protection, we're helpless.*

Satan and his horde of demons do rule this world. Yet, though they are strong, Jesus is stronger. He has claimed authority over both heaven *and* earth (*Matthew 28:18*). In what ways do you feel threatened by evil spiritual forces today? What practical steps can you take to claim divine protection from the King of creation?

Second, *no matter how extensive human suffering might be, the curse of spiritual depravity is overwhelming. Without eternal salvation, we're hopeless.*

Only some will turn to Jesus amid their suffering. Believers who have eternal hope in Jesus Christ can endure—and even *grow*—through suffering. How has the good news of Jesus Christ offered you hope in your life even as you have experienced some of the worst consequences of the curse of sin?

Judgment and hope are not contradictory ideas. Indeed, we have hope only because of God's judgment. As you conclude your time in God's Word today, prayerfully reflect on these final words of hope from Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon:

And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has flung the door of mercy wide open, and stands in the door calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God; many are daily coming from the east, west, north and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in, are in now an happy state, with their hearts filled with love to him that has loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.⁴

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, before I came to faith in Jesus Christ, I was indeed a sinner in the hands of an angry God. Yet You are the God of justice and mercy. And while You carry out Your wrath against sin, You have shown great love to me—a sinner. Thank You. Help me live well in light of this truth today as I seek to extend Your grace to those around me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” *Sermons and Discourses, 1739–1742*, online vol. 22, ed. Harry S. Stout, 412, Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, edwards.yale.edu/archive?path=aHR0cDovL2Vkd2FyZHMueWFsZS5lZHUvY2dpLWJpbi9uZXdwaGlsby9nZXRvYmplY3QucGw/Yy4yMTo0Ny53amVv.
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#).”
3. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).
4. Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” 416–417.

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Brad Smith, writer and content strategist, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2003, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

