The Demonic Army from Asia  
Revelation 9:13-21

The seventh seal from the scroll that was in the right hand of God has been opened by the Lamb, Jesus; first there was silence in heaven; then seven angels stood before the throne of God, each with a trumpet in hand; when each angel sounded their trumpet, judgments from God fell upon the earth; when the first angel sounded his trumpet, one third of all vegetation and trees were burned up, when the second angel sounded his trumpet, one third of all sea life died; when the third angel sounded his trumpet, one third of the rivers and springs became bitter and poisonous; when the fourth angel sounded his trumpet, one third of the sun, moon and stars was darkened.

Before the fifth trumpet sounded, John saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!” (8:7-13).

The woe judgments are more severe than anything that has already occurred.

When the fifth angel sounded his trumpet, swarms of demonic locusts were released from the pit of hell and were given authority to torment all who were not sealed with the seal of God; the king of these locusts was the Destroyer himself, Apollyon the devil; then John writes: “One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things” (9:1-12).

Now comes the second woe; “Then the sixth angel sounded...” (9:13a).

The Freeing of Four Angels (9:13-15)

*The prayer from the golden altar...* “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’” (9:13-14).
A voice came from the altar in heaven; who that voice is we do not know; but the voice had authority; we have already seen that there is an altar in heaven; in Revelation 6:9-11 there were the souls that had been martyred in the Tribulation that were underneath the altar praying for God to bring vengeance on those who had martyred them and who are still martyring believers.

In the OT times there was the altar of incense that stood in the Holy Place of the tabernacle in front of the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies; it was made of acacia wood and covered with gold; it had four horns, one on each corner; it was an altar where prayers for mercy arose; this altar was a copy of the real altar in heaven, which has become an altar of intercession where prayers of vengeance arise; the golden altar of incense in the tabernacle where prayers of mercy and forgiveness were offered, now in heaven, becomes the altar where prayers pleading for vengeance are offered.

There is an important truth to understand about prayer based on the golden altar of incense: there can be no prayer without sacrifice; in the OT times the priest would first offer an animal as a sacrifice to God on the brazen altar which was in the courtyard of the tabernacle or temple; the priest would then use a tong to pick up hot coals from the brazen altar and carry them into the Holy Place of the tabernacle and put them in the altar of incense causing wreaths of smoke to ascend upward as a sweet aroma to God; this sweet aroma of incense was symbolic of the prayers of the people (Psalm 141:2); this he would do twice a day, once in the morning and then again at twilight (Exodus 30:1-8).

On the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, the High Priest, who alone could enter the Holy of Holies, would on that day take the altar of incense behind the veil and first smear blood from the sin offering on the four horns of that altar before sprinkling blood on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 30:10); not only was the Ark of the Covenant covered with blood, but so was the altar of incense; there can be no communion or fellowship with God without the shedding of blood; there can be no prayer without sacrifice.

Jesus became our great High Priest, opening the channels to God, because He first offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice; as the writer of Hebrews said of Jesus Christ, “He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; does not need daily, as
those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s sins, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself” (Hebrews 7:25-27).

In the OT there was daily sacrifice before prayer; in this age of grace, prayer and salvation are made possible only through the sacrifice of Christ dying on the cross and then forever living to make intercession for us as our great High Priest.

Now in heaven there are prayers of vengeance from a voice which comes from the four horns of the altar which is before God; it was on those four horns of the earthly altar of incense where the high priest on the Day of Atonement smeared blood, which came from the sin offering at the brazen altar; even in heaven there has to be sacrifice before prayer, but that sacrifice has already been made; a once and for all time sacrifice by our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

*The place where the four angels are bound... “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates” (9:14b); the altar of mercy has become the altar of vengeance; there is a cry to release four angels who are bound by the river Euphrates.*

Who are these angels? Could these angels be demons? When angels disobey God they get bound; evidently they are fallen angels who need some restraint; but the prayer from heaven is to release them, let them do their evil deeds.

The text says they were bound at the great river Euphrates; the river Euphrates has much significance in Scripture; one of the four rivers in the Garden of Eden was the Euphrates; it was near the Euphrates where Satan launched his first attack on Adam and Eve and introduced sin to the world; it was the place where the first murder was committed and the first grave was dug.

It was the place where the ancient city of Babylon existed; it was home to Nimrod, the world’s first dictator, and where the tower of Babel was built which introduced all false religion to the world; it was the area controlled by Nebuchadnezzar and where the Jews spent 70 years in captivity; it was also controlled by the Medo-Persians, the Greeks, and was the eastern border for the Roman empire; it was a place where demons controlled these great empires of the world (Daniel 10:13); today, this part of the world is under Muslim control and totally without Christian influence.
According to the covenant God made with Abraham, it will one day be the eastern border for the nation of Israel (Genesis 15:18); so at this river there are four angels that are bound—four fallen angels.

The preparation for the four angels... “So the four angels who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released....” (9:15a); there is a specific time schedule that God has for these demons to be released; while Satan thinks he is in control he doesn’t realize that he is operating according to God's schedule; God alone knows the timing of all things (Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:7).

The purpose of the four angels... “…to kill a third of mankind” (9:15b); the result of releasing these four demons is the unleashing of an army that will kill another third of mankind; we already saw with the opening of the fourth seal that there came forth the pale horse and he who sat upon it was Death, and Hades followed him and he was given power to kill one fourth of the earth; that rider was the Antichrist; now, with the release of this army that comes from east of the Euphrates, another one third of the world’s population is killed; if you do the math, you have almost one half of the world’s population killed; though we are still in the first half of the tribulation, the effects of all of this could include the entire tribulation; that is, not all these deaths occur in the first half of the Tribulation but most likely include the battle of Armageddon, which takes place throughout the second half of the Tribulation (16:12-16).

The Force of the Army Released (9:16-19)

As to the awesomeness of the army... “Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million: I heard the number of them” (9:16); who is this army of 200 million strong?

Some teach it is a human army that comes from China; as early as the 1960’s it was reported that China could launch an army of 200 million soldiers; in an article that appeared from Associated Press, April 28, 1964 written by John Hightower: “The documents (secret military Chinese plans) make clear that the Red Chinese leaders believe they cannot be defeated by long-range nuclear weapons—such as U.S. missiles—and if they were invaded they would rely on their vast military manpower. One estimate is that in April, 1961, there was supposed to be 200 million armed and organized militia men.”
In the 1960’s, a TV documentary on Red China called “The Voice of the Dragon” quoted a boast of the Chinese themselves that they could field a “people’s army” of 200 million militia men.

Daniel prophesied the events of the battle of Armageddon; an army will march against the Antichrist from the east (Daniel 11:44); this news will greatly disturb him and he will retreat to a place “between the seas” (Daniel 11:44-45); that place, between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea, would be the Valley of Jezreel, or “the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” (Revelation 16:16).

In Daniel 11:40-45 you find the king of the north and south coming against the Antichrist soon to be joined by an army from the east; while the Antichrist is seeking to annihilate the Jews, he suddenly finds much of the world against him.

Why is the Antichrist now so unpopular? Think of all that has occurred since he came on the scene; first there was the promise of world peace; then came war, famines, deaths of up to one-third of the earth’s population; then there were natural disasters that plagued the earth—giant earthquakes, stars falling from the sky, the sun darkened, the moon turning a blood red; then one third of the earth vegetation has burned up, one third of life in the seas has died; one third of the rivers and springs have been poisoned; then the heavens were struck a second time as one third of all the luminaries were dimmed by a third; then demonic locusts stung all unbelievers for five months and people were in great pain—and this is what we have learned thus far; more horrific events are yet to come; but don’t you get the picture? Since Satan has been in control under the influence of the Antichrist, things haven’t worked out too well; now, while seeking to eliminate the Jewish population, the Antichrist will meet his waterloo.

Here is a viewpoint of some prophecy teachers concerning this army of 200 million coming from east of the Euphrates; the continent of Asia, including China, are in revolt against the Antichrist; as they march toward the land of Israel where the Antichrist is stationed, the river Euphrates is dried up (Revelation 16:12); this river is the water boundary between the Holy Land and the east; we have seen this river as the source of demonic activity and evil in the world; its drying up allows these 200 million soldiers from Asia to enter the battle against the Antichrist and in this battle they are responsible for the deaths of one-third of the earth’s population.
With the 200 million troops from Asia and the massive army of the Antichrist, as well as the king of the north—perhaps Russia—all assembled for battle in the Valley of Armageddon, it is no wonder this battle will result in blood running as deep as a horse’s bridle for 200 miles (Revelation 14:20).

Other Bible teachers see this army as demonic; 200 million demons that have been held back by four demonic angels, as well as the will of God; according to Pastor John MacArthur, this army is “a demonic force [resulting in] the cosmic war, a war of hell hitting the earth with all of its force. And it’s certainly going to appear as if hell is all over the world.” MacArthur bases his belief on the description John gives of the horses in his vision.

As to the appearance of the horses... “And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat upon them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and brimstone” (9:17).

The riders wore breastplates of red, the color of fire; hyacinth blue, the color of brimstone; and yellow, the color of sulfur gas; these are the colors of hell, with its fire and brimstone and sulfur gas; it is as though these riders come straight out of hell; hell is described in Scripture as a “lake of fire and brimstone” (Revelation 20:10).

The heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; these lion-headed horses will demonstrate great strength; and their strength is in their mouth, for out of their mouths comes fire, smoke, and brimstone.

As to their acts of violence... “By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed by the fires and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths” (9:18).

How do they kill a third of mankind? Fire burns them to death, smoke suffocates them to death, and brimstone or sulfur gas asphyxiates them.

As to their association with the locusts... “For their power is in their tails, for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm...” (9:19); not only is their power in their mouths but also in their tails, which are like serpents which can do great harm.
Remember the demonic locusts which came out of the bottomless pit when the fifth angel sounded his trumpet? Their heads were like horses’ heads prepared for battle, their teeth like lions’ teeth, and their tails like scorpions and there were stingers in their tails; there is a very similar description between the demonic locusts and the 200 million horsemen army that came from east of the river Euphrates.

What might we conclude? Is this a human army arising out of Asia beyond the Euphrates, or is this army purely demonic from the pit of hell? Let’s look at what we do know from the Scriptures: 1) The number of the horsemen is 200 million; when John wrote this there weren’t 200 million people living on earth, but today we know that if China would call up all their reserves they could field an army of 200 million soldiers; 2) We know that most of Asia and certainly China exists on the east side of the Euphrates; 3) We know that when the battle of Armageddon begins there will be a time when an army from the east comes across the Euphrates to enter the Holy Land and this army gets the attention of the Antichrist; 4) We know that human armies kill people; therein lies a strong argument that the 200 million horsemen are humans from Asia and more specifically China.

On the other hand, it can be easily argued that this army is not human but rather demonic spirits that have been held back for a specified period of time; we know this based on these facts: 1) These horsemen are described in a similar way to the demonic locusts that came from the bottomless pit; 2) Demons can kill people; they are supernatural spirits that are far more powerful than any human; remember the demon possessed boy who threw himself into the fire and the water? He could be burned or drowned to death (Mark 9:14-29); 3) While these horsemen come from east of the Euphrates, that river could simply be a symbol of sin, murder, false religion, captivity and everything demonic; therefore their real origin is from hell with its fire, smoke, and brimstone; 4) That even an army of 200 million human soldiers killing one third of the earth’s population does not seem as likely as 200 million demonic soldiers killing that many people; therein lies a strong argument that this army is totally demonic.

Is it possible that both views could be true? The army from out of Asia consists of 200 million demon possessed soldiers; remember, while the Antichrist is Satan possessed, God has from time to time used Satan against himself; He will and has pitted Satan against Satan; this demonic army from the East is coming to kill the Satan-possessed Antichrist (Daniel 11:40-45); God is the
sovereign One, not Satan; remember, it is Christ who holds the key to Death
and Hades and it is He who gave to Satan the key to the bottomless pit to open
it and release his horde of demonic locusts; Satan planned to harm the people
of God, but what a surprise he got; the people who got stung was everyone not
sealed with the seal of God; Satan thought he could harm the people of God,
but it backfired on him; God used him to hurt his own deceived followers.

Remember too the time God used Satan to punish King David for taking a
military census at a time when David thought he no longer needed the help of
God to defeat his enemy? God was so displeased with David that God sent a
plague and 70,000 men of Israel died (1 Chronicles 21:1-14, compare 2 Samuel
24:1-17).

It is not beyond biblical teaching to think that God would raise up the demons
of hell against the Satan-possessed Antichrist and that these demons were
inhabiting an army of 200 million humans from out of Asia.

Just something to think about!

The Foolishness of the People (9:20-21)

Their refusal to see the need to repent... “But the rest of mankind, who were
not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands...”
(9:20a).

Did you notice the reaction of defiance to all that has taken place so far? Think
again of all the world has seen; they have heard passionate preaching from
144,000 Jewish evangelists; they have seen the devastation of everything they
value; they have seen the evil of the Antichrist; they have seen loved ones die
in the worst of circumstances the world has known since the worldwide flood
in the days of Noah; yet they did not repent of the works of their hands.

The issue is always repentance; it is one thing to say, “I believe!” it is quite
another thing to repent; yet if there is no repentance your belief is not only
worthless, but hypocritical; the word of Jesus to hypocrites was “Woe;” and
now we find ourselves in the second of three “woe” judgments that has
befallen mankind.

Their refusal to stop their sinful ways... “...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” (9:20b-21).

Here we have a listing of six sins that represent the defiance of these fools who have refused to repent.

_Demon worship_... I personally have witnessed a person worshipping demons; she was a young lady who got mixed up in the occult and in my attempt to bring her to the Lord she kept crying out to two demons who were manifesting themselves to her; these demons were determined that she would never come to Christ; when I asked her to confess Jesus as the Christ, for the longest time she could not even say the name of Jesus; ultimately God got the victory in her life; every spiritist, every fortune teller, everyone who claims to communicate with the dead worships demons whether they realize it or not, for that is the source of their power; during the Tribulation you can see that demonic activity is more prevalent than at any time in memorable history.

_Idol worship_... Closely associated with demon worship is idolatry; the LXX translates Psalm 96:5, “All idols are demons;” demons can impersonate idols; I was involved with an exorcism where a teenage girl had a large poster of her favorite rock star who was notoriously known for his drugs and songs straight from hell; when she became a Christian, the demons in her home were made very uncomfortable; the girl told me at night time as she was getting ready for bed that poster would seemingly come to life and the face of that rock star would project in a 3D form and snarl and laugh at her; she had to burn that poster; demons can literally become part of an idol and make that idol appear as though it were alive in a very scary way.

This idol worship could well refer to the people worshipping the image of the Antichrist; this will particularly be true in the second half of the Tribulation when the False Prophet makes an image of the Antichrist who appears to be mortally wounded and then comes back to life; that image will undoubtedly be shown in movie theaters and billboards all over the world; all who see this must take the mark of the beast or face the possibility of death (13:11-18).

_Murder_... This speaks for itself; with all the people dying from natural disasters and war, there are still people dying from being murdered; the evil of mankind never rests.
Sorceries... The Greek word translated “sorceries” is pharmakeia from where we get pharmacy; we are talking here about an opiate epidemic as if one does not exist today; but this word sorcery goes even beyond drugs; it includes all manner of the occult—witchcraft, séances, incantations, necromancy, mantras, mediums and ultimately devil worship.

Sexual immorality... The word is porneia, from where we get pornography; CNN this past January presented a study by several Ph.D. doctors and psychologists saying that pornography can be good for your marriage; pornography is neutral and is not evil; it is like a car, if you drive it recklessly it could kill you, but if you drive it safely it will be of benefit; so the careful practice of pornography has positive effects and should never be viewed as wrong, any more than driving a car safely is wrong; the sexual revolution in this country has no boundaries or common sense.

Thievery... Thieves work best in times of disaster; if there are riots in the streets and store windows are broken, it is easy for people to steal and carry off its merchandise; this is going to be a time of rioting and much thievery.

And what ought to shake people in their boots, so to speak, is there is one more trumpet to sound; one more “woe” judgment to come! For the Church of Jesus Christ good days are coming for we will be out of here! Amen! However for those who know not Christ the worst is yet to come; a famous southern preacher, Vance Havner said: “The real test of how we believe the prophetic truth is what are we doing to warn men to flee from the wrath to come? To believe the solemn truths of prophecy, and then make our way complacently through a world of sin and shame is not merely unfortunate, it is criminal.”

Even God has said: “I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn from your evil ways. Why will you die?” (Ezekiel 33:11).