

The Horsemen Are Coming

Revelation 6

In chapter 6 we still have the heavenly scene of chapter 5 before us. The Lamb is at the throne as, He breaks the seals on the scroll one by one.

The First Seal: A White Horse-Conquest (6:1-2)

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. 2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

When the first seal is opened, the word 'Come,' uttered by one of the four living beings, sounds like a great crash of thunder.

Immediately John sees a "white horse" with a rider on it carrying a "bow," a symbol of battle. Conquerors in ancient times usually rode white horses to symbolize their triumph after a battle. This rider is also given a victor's crown.

Christ is not the Rider of The White Horse

The Lamb at this point is breaking the seals. It would be very confusing for Christ to be both breaking the seals and riding the horse. Furthermore, the last three horsemen are evil. Christ would not be presented in such company as these horsemen.

The rider of the white horse is the Antichrist, the counterfeit Christ. In the term 'antichrist,' the *anti* in the Greek really means 'instead of,' or 'in place of.' The Antichrist will not call himself the Antichrist. He will claim to be the real Christ, and may say that Buddha, Jesus Christ, and Muhammad, along with others, were all his forerunners.

He will be the individual who represent the anti-Christian political and religious ideologies that characterize the great end-time apostasy. It is possible that this rider is the Antichrist, and some have seen the bow without arrows as a symbol of temporary victory. This would fit the fact that no one will be able to make war successfully with the beast (13:4). He will even make war with the saints and overcome them (13:7).

The Second Seal: A Red Horse-War (6:3-4)

And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. 4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

When the Lamb breaks the second seal, the second living being says "Come!" or "Come and see!" The rider takes on the personification of war (or the lust for it) and the "great sword" as a symbol of war's destruction. Notice that the rider does not do the killing. He is simply to "take peace" from the earth, which causes people to slaughter, butcher, and murder each other.

Please understand church that we have a job to do. In the midst of the wars and rumors of wars, even in the midst of increasing famines and earthquakes, we are to spread the gospel. We cannot wait for ideal conditions...

The Third Seal: A Black Horse-Famine (6:5-6)

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

Then the third living being cries "Come and see!" The third horse is black (compare Zechariah 6:2,6). Black is Often a symbol of suffering and hunger (compare Lamentations 5:10). The rider has in his hands unusual equipment for a horseman: scales for weighing, such as a merchant would use. Notice that the black horse follows the red. All through history, the aftermath of war has very often been inflation and famine. It is possible that the scales here may indicate the careful weighing out of food and possibly general rationing because of scarcity and hunger (compare Leviticus 26:26; Ezekiel 4:16). This rider seems to personify famine. It is also divine judgment.

A "measure" (about a quart) was considered one day's ration for an adult. A "penny" (the Roman denarius, a silver coin was a day's wages for a soldier or laborer of that time. In other words, these were famine prices, about 12 times the normal price. A person on his own might be able to afford a "measure of wheat," but a person with a family would have to settle for a "measure of barley" (the food of slaves and the poor) and still have nothing left over to buy anything else. Satan and his agents may promise prosperity. But instead of experiencing prosperity, a person will have to give a whole day's wages for a little food.

"Hurt not the oil and the wine" may indicate the rich or the powerful taking advantage of the poor, exercising control over the "oil and wine," staples of the time. "Hurt" (damage, spoil) implies wrongful damage or injustice.

As in the vision, starvation is already spreading throughout the world today, just as Jesus said it would (Matthew 24:7), and governments are not able to handle it. The coming world dictator, the Antichrist, will not be able to deal with it either. When the Antichrist does deal with it, it will then be far worse.

The Fourth Seal: A Pale Horse-Death (6:7-8)

And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

With the opening of the fourth seal the fourth living being says, "Come and see. " Each of these living beings thus introduces a new vision to John (who is still near the throne in heaven).

The pale horse of the fourth seal speaks of pestilence and death. Death itself is pictured as if it were a person riding the horse and hell, or Hades, in some way following after. Death and hell are given power and authority over the wicked who die at this time. The dead are receiving their wages (Romans 6:23). They have been both servants and slaves of sin; consequently, death and hell have a rightful authority, "power," over them (see Romans 6:16-21): Death takes the body; hell the soul.

One fourth of the world's population ("the fourth part of the earth") will die. Their deaths, however, will not be from natural causes but from the results of these first four seals, including attacks by "beasts of the earth," that is, wild animals (a different word from that used in 6: 1 or in chapters 4 and 8), which will undoubtedly multiply during these chaotic times and become driven by

disease and hunger.

The Fifth Seal: Martyrs under the Altar (6:9-11)

'And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice,' saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said, unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

The breaking of the fifth seal directs John's attention away from visions of what is going to happen on the earth. Now he sees souls "under the altar" in the heavenly temple. This indicates that part of the judgments written in the Book of Revelation have to do with bringing judgment on a world that so often has martyred true witnesses for Christ.

Because they had shed their blood, these martyrs are pictured as "under the altar," suggesting Old Testament sacrifice in which the animal's lifeblood was poured out under the altar of burnt offering (Exodus 29: 12; Leviticus 4:7). Like the apostle Paul, they were willing to sacrifice themselves for the Word of God and as a witness to the gospel, in effect allowing their lives to be poured out as a drink offering before the Lord (2 Timothy 4:6-8). They address God as "Lord," using a word that means master or owner, recognizing His divine authority and majesty. As the basis for their prayer, they appeal also to His character, which is "holy and true." Their cry, however, is not for personal revenge. Jesus prayed for His executioners; so did Stephen. But though the prayer for leniency has its time, so has the prayer for justice; the hour of God's judgment is about to come.

They were martyred because people rejected the Word of God and their testimony to Christ. What the martyrs cry out for is the fulfillment of the prophecy given in 2 Thessalonians 1 :4-10, when at the close of the Tribulation Jesus will appear 'in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Thessalonians 1:8). For encouragement and assurance of this occurring, these martyrs under the heavenly altar are given white robes, symbolizing righteousness.

They are also told to rest, or remain quiet, for "a little season." The appointed time for Christ's return in judgment has not yet come.

The Sixth Seal: The Wrath of the Lamb (6:12-17)

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree cast her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Anything great enough to produce such an earthquake would probably be accompanied by cosmic

disturbances. Most take the stars falling as John's description of what we know as showers of meteorites. The comparison to a fig tree dropping its late summer figs when shaken by a mighty wind indicates the large number.

Though the language in verse 14 is metaphoric, the language of appearance, it is describing an actual event. To the Old Testament Israelites the heavens looked like a tent outstretched above the earth (Psalm 104:2; Isaiah 40:22). The heavens departing, that is, the sky splitting and separating and curling to each side like a scroll, may also refer to atmospheric disturbances among the clouds

Though earthquake zones are located around the Pacific Ocean and throughout the Middle East and the Mediterranean, earthquakes have occurred in all parts of the world. The description given in connection with the opening of the sixth seal shows a cataclysm that affects every mountain and island. Today no place on earth is safe from an earthquake. The only way we can be sure of our safety is to accept Christ now and find our security in Him.

The first reaction of all who are still alive (and have been left behind after the Rapture of the Church)-the rich and powerful, as well as the poor and the slave-will be fear, for they try to hide themselves in the "dens," or caves, and "rocks," cliffs or rocky grottoes, of the mountains. However, when they realize the mountains cannot furnish them adequate protection, they despair to the point of suicide, calling on the mountains to simply fall in on them. It seems that the glory, or presence, "of the face of him that sits on the throne" and "the wrath of the Lamb" are somehow revealed to them.

Nevertheless, they show no sign of repentance. The question they ask is, "Who shall be able to stand?" The way this is stated calls for the answer "no one"-not kings, not great men, not rich men, not army officers, not soldiers, not slaves, not free men. Everyone left on earth will come under the wrath of God and the Lamb (for their wrath is the same). See Romans 1:18; 2:16; Revelation 15:7.