

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Text: Revelation 6:1-8

Introduction:

1. In chapter 6 we have the beginning of Daniel's 70th week and the commencement of the outpouring of God's wrath on the earth.
2. Remember! By this point, the church is not on earth. It is in heaven with Christ (Rev. 4-5). God has not appointed believers to this time of wrath (1 Thess. 5:9; Rev. 3:10).
3. In chapter 5 we saw the Lamb receive the 7 sealed scroll (called by some the Book of Doom) from the hand of God the Father and the judgment of the world committed to the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Acts 17:31 *"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will **judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained**; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."*
4. The key phrase in this chapter would be "the wrath of the Lamb" (Vs. 16). The same Lamb who gave Himself as a sacrifice for man's redemption will judge a rebellious world that rejects His offer of salvation. The "wrath of the Lamb" is imprinted across this whole chapter, indeed across this whole section of the Revelation.
5. It is interesting to note the close parallels between the Olivet Discourse and the seal judgments of Revelation 6 (refer chart). The seal judgments are in the first half of the tribulation period and are what Christ referred to as "the beginning of sorrows" (Mk. 13:8).

In this study, we will look at the first four seal judgments which are portrayed as four horses with their riders:

I. A White Horse – Deceptions & a Deceiver (Vs. 1-2)

A. The Announcement John Heard (Vs. 1)

1. "the Lamb opened one of the seals" = these judgments are directed by the Lamb. These judgments show heaven ruling on earth.
2. "the noise of thunder" = the sound of the beast's voice is as thunder. Thunder signals a coming storm.
3. The four beasts (heavenly creatures) play a role in announcing the first four seal judgments.

B. The Appearance John Saw (Vs. 2)

1. The Representation of the Horse (Vs. 2a)
 - a. 'white' = symbolic of peace and victory.
 - b. The color white in Revelation is also a picture of righteousness. This horse is clearly connected with evil so the righteousness must be a feigned/pretend righteousness.

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2. The Rider upon the Horse (Vs. 2b)
 - a. Question: Who does this rider represent? Some say it is Christ based on similar imagery in Revelation 19:11-16. However, it cannot be Christ for the following reasons:
 - i. Christ is opening the seals so it would be strange for him to be also represented as an actor in the seal itself.
 - ii. Christ clearly comes at the end of the tribulation period (Rev. 19:11-16) and not at the beginning.
 - iii. Each of these horses bear a close relationship to each other and the other three horses are clearly symbolic of evil powers unleashed on the world.
 - b. The observation that this horse and rider bears some resemblance to Christ in Rev. 19:11-16 is correct. That's because it pictures the Antichrist who looks and sounds like the Messiah but is actually an imposter, imitator and pretender. Antichrist will be the master deceiver, he will be the grand look alike, the Pretender Prince.
 - c. He carries a bow but no arrows revealing that his victory is a bloodless victory. He gains power through peaceful means but has the ability and capacity to make war.
 - i. He will seem like the answer to the world's peace problems and the Arab Israeli conflict in particular. The world will be in chaos after the rapture (note sequence in 1 Thess. 4-5). Daniels 70th week, the 7-year tribulation period commences when Antichrist signs a covenant with the Jewish Nation. Dan. 9:27 ***“And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”***
 - ii. Dan. 8:25 says, ***“And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.”*** Think how many dictators have risen to power on false promises of peace and prosperity (e.g. Hitler and his promise of a 1,000-year Reich).
 - iii. 2. Thess. 2:3-4, 9-10 ***“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as***

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*God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God...**Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.***"

- d. He wears a crown which is given to him by God. Romans 13:1 makes it clear that the powers that be are ordained of God. This again highlights that the events of the tribulation are ordered from heaven to accomplish God's purpose of bringing judgment upon a rebellious world. Note similar phrases also in Vs. 4 & 8.
- e. Thomas: "All events in the apocalyptic section of the Book are initiated from the throne described in chapter 4, and must be understood in that light."

II. A Red Horse – Battles & Bloodshed (Vs. 3-4)

A. The Depiction of the Horse (Vs. 4a)

1. Red is the colour of blood and speaks of war and conflict.
2. The false peace of Antichrist is short lived.
3. 1. Thess. 5:1-3 *"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. **For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.**"*

B. The Destruction from the Rider (Vs. 4b)

1. Peace is removed from **the earth**. Peace is not just removed from select parts of the world. Each of these judgments are **global**.
2. "a great sword" = the Roman long sword carried by Roman soldiers into battle
3. Imagine a world where peace between nations is removed resulting in horrific conflicts. Just imagine what would happen if nuclear powers began to exchange nuclear warheads!
4. Imagine a world where peace within nations is removed resulting in civil wars.
5. Imagine a world where peace between neighbors and even family members is removed resulting in riots and murders.
6. The world will never know true, lasting peace until the Prince of Peace, Christ Jesus reigns. You will never know peace in your heart and life until you let Christ take the throne of your heart.

III. A Black Horse – Famine & Finances (Vs. 5-6)

A. The Depiction of the Horse & Rider (Vs. 5)

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1. The color black symbolizes famine and death. Lam. 5:10 *“Our skin was **black** like an oven because of **the terrible famine**.”* “Famine is always the result of war and with famine comes hyper inflation and a destruction of the economic system.” (Jeffress)
2. The pair of balances in the hand of the rider speaks of the careful weighing and measuring of food which is in short supply. It could also picture the control Antichrist will have over the global economy and food supplies (Rev. 13:16-17).
3. Even today, people die of starvation and malnutrition. John Phillips suggests malnutrition claims ten thousand lives every day. He states, “In the United States we throw into our garbage cans every day enough food to feed a family of six in India...One researcher estimates that fifteen percent of all edible food in the United States ends up in the garbage – at a cost of \$17.5 billion annually.” But in the tribulation period, there will be famine and starvation the likes of which this world has never seen.

B. The Directive to the Horse & Rider (Vs. 6)

1. The voice comes from the midst of the four beasts. We know from Rev. 4:6-7 that the four beasts closely encircle the throne of God. If the voice comes out of the middle of the four beasts, it strongly suggests the voice of God from the throne.
2. “a measure of wheat” = a measure is equivalent to approx. 1.1 kilograms. It is the amount required to make a small loaf of bread.
3. a penny” = a penny or denarius was a small, silver Roman coin and the standard day’s wage for the common laborer (Matt. 20:2). Normally it would be enough to buy 8 measures of wheat which would last a family more than a week. The cheaper barley could be bought for 24 measures to a penny. Things will be 8 times more expensive in the tribulation. (Jeffress)
4. Walvoord: “To put it in ordinary language, the situation would be such that one would have to spend a day’s wages for a loaf of bread with no money left to buy anything else.”
5. “the oil and the wine” = these were luxury items in the ancient world. So, we have famine set alongside luxury. Only the rich will be able to afford and enjoy these luxury items.

IV. A Pale Horse – Death & Damnation (Vs. 7-8)

A. The Description of the Horse (Vs. 8a)

1. ‘pale’ = from the Greek word ‘chloros’ which means ‘greenish’. It is a pale, yellowish green, the color of a decomposing corpse. It is the pale color of death.
2. The same word is used to describe the color of grass in Mark 6:39 and Rev. 8:7.

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B. The Destruction from the Rider (Vs. 8b)

1. This is the first and only rider which is given a name. His name is death and he is accompanied by hell. Death receives the body; hell receives the soul for eternity. Power is given to death and hell over a fourth of the world's population. There are 7.5 billion people on planet earth today so that would be 1.9 billion people. That is 1,900 million people! It would be like wiping out the entire population of China and the USA and then some more. Or wiping out the population of China and the entire population of the Southern Hemisphere.
2. To put this in perspective consider that:
 - a. About 25 million died of the bubonic plague (the black death) in Europe between 1347 and 1352.
 - b. About 67 million died during WWI & WW2.
 - c. About 110-259 million have died under communism.
 - d. About 25 million died of the influenza plague of 1918-19.
 - e. The judgments of the first four seals will destroy vastly more people than died from the greatest wars and plagues of history combined!
3. Four instruments of death are at their disposal as follows:
 - a. Sword – represents warfare
 - b. Hunger – represents famine. The famine under the fourth seal is evidently more intense than the famine under the third seal.
 - c. Death – represents disease. Christ spoke of pestilences that will occur during this part of the tribulation period (Matt. 24:7). There will be global pandemics with fatal diseases and superbugs that will make the present Coronavirus outbreak seem like nothing.
 - d. Beasts – wild beasts. The wild beasts of the earth will become more predatory as their food sources have been interrupted. "They will roam the earth looking for prey and taking advantage of the defenseless." (Thomas)
 - e. David Cloud: "Even today thousands of people are killed each year by wild animals, such as bears, snakes, spiders, crocodiles, elephants, tigers, lions, buffalo, boars, sharks and even bees. An estimated 55,000 people die from snake bites in Asia annually. Earlier in the twentieth century some 1,500 people in South Asia were killed by tigers each year. One tiger killed 436 people in Nepal and India before it was shot by Jim Corbett in 1937. Even today about 300 people are killed annually by tigers in the Sundarbans, which straddles India and Bangladesh...Some 1,000 to 2,000 people die each year in Mexico from scorpion bites." (Revelation commentary) "In 1898 in the Tsavo region of Africa (Kenya-Uganda), two lions killed an estimated 135 men who were working on a British railway

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project as accounted in John Henry Patterson's *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo*. One of the lions was shot nine times before it died."
(God's Amazing Creatures)

- f. You can see why Christ said "...*except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.*" (Matt. 24:22)

C. The Damnation of the Slain (Vs. 8c)

1. Hell accompanies the pale horse to receive the souls of the slain immediately into everlasting torments. "Hell acts as death's hearse, standing ready to engulf and detain Death's victims." (Thomas)
2. Hell is a real place for unrepentant sinners who have refused God's free offer of salvation (See Luke 16:22-23).

Conclusion:

1. To the Christian: Do you have a burden to reach lost souls before its too late? Time is running out! Are you consumed with living for Christ or are you investing too much in the temporary things of this life that will NOT last for eternity?
2. To the lost: The message of the Book of Revelation is clear; you can either accept God's gift of salvation today or face the certain wrath of the Lamb someday. You can either face the Lamb of God as Saviour or judge – the choice is yours!