

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Revelation 6:1-8

October 7-8, 2017

John was in the Spirit and was given a view into heaven. There was a sea of glass like crystal; and in the center was One sitting on a throne. Around the throne were 24 thrones where 24 elders were sitting, clothed in white with golden crowns on their heads.

In the right hand of Him who sat on the throne was a book, written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. John heard a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and break its seals?”

No one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it. At this, John began to weep greatly, but one of the elders said to him, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion from the tribe of Judah has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.”

But when John looked, he saw between the throne and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain; and He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. When He took hold of the book, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb and worshiped, singing a new song.

Today, in chapter 6, we’re going to watch with John as the Lamb breaks the seals of the scroll, for

with the breaking of each seal, events of the latter days will unfold.

Today, we are currently in the period of time which we could call the “birth pangs” which lead up to prophetic fulfillment. Jesus said in **Matthew 24:6-8**, *“You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.”*

The ‘birth pangs’ will increase until the Lamb opens the seven seals which seal the scroll. Each of the seals sets forth powerful events of the last days, beginning with what has been famously called, “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.” And when you look at what is happening in the world today, you can almost put your ear to the ground and hear their hoofbeats drawing near.

I. The White Horse – The Antichrist
--

- In Revelation 19, Jesus is portrayed as riding on a white horse, but in Revelation 6, this is not that white horse and Jesus is not the one riding on it.

- This is the Antichrist. He is not revealed until the Lamb breaks the first seal of the book. He is held back until this seal is opened.

2 Thessalonians 2:3, 6-8, Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come (the return of Jesus Christ) until the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction... And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed... only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.

A. He comes as a deceiver

- The fact that this horse is white should not surprise us because we know that deception is the key to understanding the Antichrist.

Illus - Back in the days of Western movies it was convenient because the bad guys always wore a black hat. And wouldn't it be helpful if dishonest salespeople always wore a plaid jacket?

2 Corinthians 11:13-15, Such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore, it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

- Deception is a large part of our culture. It's like our society is ready to receive a deceiver.

Illus – Advertising often puts a ‘spin’ on thing. Cigarettes used to be advertised as promoting good health. When that was no longer effective, their ads suggested that cigarettes made you more rugged and good looking.

- In the last days, people will not value truth, but will desire simply to have their ears tickled.

2 Timothy 4:3-4, For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

B. He comes as a man of peace

- As we see the events of prophecy unfolding, we will see that Israel will increasingly become the focal point of world events.

Matthew 24:9, “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.”

- Jews, Muslims and even the Catholic Church all believe Jerusalem is theirs, though only the Jewish claim is consistent with scripture.
- The “man of peace” comes onto the scene and by amazing skill in diplomacy is able to negotiate a covenant of peace with Israel.
- This is also seen in the prophecies of Daniel.

Daniel 9:27, And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week (seven years), but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering;

- This will fulfill the words of verse 1 that he will come conquering and to conquer. In other words, he will place himself in a

position of great authority over the nations, though he has a bow and no arrows. Many suggest this is a picture of His gaining authority without using an army.

Daniel 8:23-26 Prophecies of the Antichrist who conquers

C. He comes as a traitor

- He will appear to be a protector of Israel, he will be respected by Arab nations, but will arise as a leader of one of the countries of the Old Roman Empire.
- However, when he has won the loyalty and admiration of the leaders of the world, he will renege on the covenant he negotiated and betray Israel.

Daniel 9:27, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.

Illus – This was pictured another time in history when Israel was under the oppression of the Greek General Antiochus Epiphanes who governed that region after the death of

Alexander the Great. He sacrificed a pig on the Holy of Holies, tried to force some Jews to eat it and when they refused had them sacrificed on the Jewish altar. He also erected an altar to Jupiter in the temple. The Jews revolted and threw off the oppressor. This is commemorated by the Jewish holiday Hanukah each year.

Matthew 24:15-16, “Therefore when you see the *Abomination of Desolations* which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.”

- In order for the ‘abomination of desolations’ prophecy to be fulfilled, there will need to be a Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.
- Many believe that this will be a vital part of the covenant of peace that the Antichrist negotiates.

Illus – Muslims built a mosque and the Dome of the Rock over the traditional site of the Jewish Temple. Christian scholars believe that it would be possible to build a Jewish Temple next to the Dome of the Rock with a wall separating them. This could possibly fulfill a prophecy in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 42:20, He measured it on the four sides; it had a wall all around, the length five hundred and the width five hundred, to divide between the holy and the profane.

II. Three Horsemen Follow

- We have been focusing on the Antichrist who is represented by the white horse, but the other three will bring great disaster.
- The scroll itself will not be opened at this point; this is only the breaking of the seals which surround it.

A. The red horse of war

- First, it is extremely important to note that none of these horsemen can come forth until they are summoned by the living creatures surrounding the throne of God.
- The point is that this is the period of time called the Great Tribulation which is the wrath of God and under the sovereign hand of God.
- The Red Horse represents war, though the word in the Greek for slay is 'slaughter' and some have suggested that could also represent sectarian violence.

Illus – the violence which is seen in the Middle East and many Arab countries has been going on for hundreds of years, but in the last days will reach a fever pitch as Islam will become a significant part of last days fulfillment. Then you see the rising trend of mass shootings like what just happened in Las Vegas.

- But John also writes that the rider will have a large sword, which represents the devastation of war.

Illus – Today we are seeing an increase of animosity between the west and a newly strengthened Russia (by oil) and also with China as they become a great world power through economic and military might. This is setting the stage for wars yet to come.

B. The black horse of famine

- The black horse represents famine, but also economic collapse.
- At first, war actually helps economies as many are employed and production levels are high to supply the war machine;

Illus – “do not touch the oil or the wine” seems to indicate that there will be a group of wealthy people also who have plenty while the rest of the world suffers, adding to the agony of that

day. Many of the world's wealthy keep gold coins in preparation for such a disaster.

- But at some point, widespread war destroys too much and economic systems are destroyed with it. A quart of wheat for a day's wage is disaster.

Illus – In the 90s, Russia went through a period of economic collapse that saw runaway inflation to the point that they had to take three zeros from the currency. Until that point we had to carry huge sums of money to buy simple things when we traveled there.

Illus – In Venezuela today you see the collapse of the economy and the result is famine and hyper-inflation.

- We see some indication of what that looks like later in Revelation 13...

Revelation 13:16-17, And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.

C. The ashen horse of death

- The ashen horse represents the death that follows these events and Hades, or hell, following close behind. In other words, death takes the body and Hades takes the soul.

Illus – Many are disturbed by the thought of hell, but God is just and righteous and we can depend that hell is also a righteous and just response to the rebellion of the world.

- There are several ways that death will come and it will take a fourth of the population of the earth at that time. Sword and famine, but also with pestilence, or plagues, and wild beasts.
- Plagues could mean the spread of disease as conditions deteriorate, but could also refer to biological warfare or radiation sickness from radiation clouds that are carried by the wind from nuclear explosions.

App – As we read these prophecies it is important to remember that God promised that the church will not endure the wrath of God.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10, For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for

**us, so that whether we are awake or asleep,
we will live together with Him.**

➤ We are also not to be afraid or have fear.

**2 Timothy 1:7, For God has not given us a spirit of
fear, but of power and of love and of a sound
mind.**