

# The Revelation of Jesus Christ

## The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

### Rev. 6:1-8

#### INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing with the second vision of John that started in chapter 4 where John was summoned up into heaven in the Spirit. There he saw the throne room of God and the worship that was taking place. This part of the vision is desperately needed by God's people, including us today, because we are able to see behind the veil and understand what is happening here on earth from God's perspective. We can only see the physical things that are going on around us with our eyes. Without this understanding that God is still in control, it would be impossible for us to understand why all of this chaos and evil sin is so prevalent around us.

In chapter 5 the vision shifted its emphasis from God who is on the throne, to Christ and a book with seven seals. John told us of a book that had been concealed and sealed up until the end time. At first it appeared that there was no one in heaven or on earth that could open the book, because it had been sealed by God and only God or someone as with as much authority as God could open it. Then a lamb appeared in John's vision that appeared to be slain, but it was standing. It represented Christ Who had been crucified on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for our sins, buried and rose from the dead by God to affirm that Jesus was indeed the Christ. Then Christ ascended in the clouds into heaven and He appeared before God, He was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom.

The last days have begun and it was now time for the book to be revealed. Then we see Jesus take the book out of the right hand of God. The One Who has the authority to open these seals is the One Who loved you so much that He gave His life for you that you may be able to overcome.

This morning we will meet the four horsemen of the apocalypse and the contents of the book or scroll containing a description of the last days will finally be revealed.

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

Revelation 6:1-8 (NASB)

6 Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come." <sup>2</sup> I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

<sup>3</sup> When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." <sup>4</sup> And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that *men* would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

<sup>5</sup> When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. <sup>6</sup> And I heard *something* like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine."

<sup>7</sup> When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." <sup>8</sup> I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

## Prayer

God, we come to You this morning asking that You grant us insight beyond our own understanding. Give us eyes of faith to see and ears of faith to hear. Use your Holy Spirit to enlighten us as we listen to You in the midst of this difficult portion of Your Word. Help us to feel Your MAJESTY and POWER and GLORY from this vision so we can have the same spontaneous worship for You as all of your heavenly hosts are doing right now!

What we can understand in the here and now, teach us. What we are to know only when we see You face to face, help us to accept in faith and trust You all the more.

In Christ's Name we pray, Amen.

In this scripture we see the world as it is today, and as it progresses towards the ultimate end. WE ARE SEEING WHAT IS AND WHAT WILL BE. That is, after all, John's purpose of writing the visions.

### Revelation 1:19 (NASB)

<sup>19</sup> Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.

We will find that the seven SEALS, the seven TRUMPETS, and the seven BOWLS are all interconnected. But they are not chronological, but rather, they overlap each other. Through them we see how God judges through the leaders of earthly nations and through all of the major events currently occurring in these last days of history.

These seals will help us to understand, at least in a broad sense, if God is ruling and reigning over all, why it is that evil, corruption, hunger, calamity, violence, and wars continue to exist and even increase in our world today?

As we go through the seals, trumpets, and bowls, we will see an intensification of the events. Even though they are covering the same period of time, as each new cycle unfolds, we are seeing greater intensity of God's judgment. We even see this within each of the individual seals, trumpets, and bowls. By the time we get to the sixth seals, we will see mankind cowering and begging the rocks to fall upon them in order to try to escape God's wrath. So we can expect, as we get closer to the return of Christ, an intensification of judgment.

This is something that Jesus, Himself, points out.

## Matthew 24:3-14 (NASB)

<sup>3</sup> As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

<sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. <sup>5</sup> For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. <sup>8</sup> But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

<sup>9</sup> “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. <sup>10</sup> At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. <sup>11</sup> Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. <sup>12</sup> Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. <sup>13</sup> But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. <sup>14</sup> This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Jesus tells us that the last days are a period of time that is like labor. The pain will intensity until Christ's inevitable return. That is the picture that Revelation paints for us in these visions.

Perhaps an illustration will serve to show how the seals, trumpets, and bowls are connected.

### **ILLUSTRATION:**

Imagine a computer. When you use Google Maps to pull up a map of Greenwood, it will give you a 30 square mile map with Greenwood in the center.. Each time you choose to zoom in, it will give you less area and more detail. You can even choose 401 Oak Street and actually see the church and property.

All of the maps show the same basic thing only from different perspectives and distances.

So here, we are seeing WHAT IS AND WHAT IS TO COME with increasing intensity and clarity until we see the end. As the heat is turned up on the dragon, the beasts, and the false prophet and his henchmen, they respond with rage and hostility. So as the hostility turns up on them, the intensification turns up on the church.

The first four seals all go together. The number four symbolizes the earth. It means that the four horsemen are bringing judgment upon the whole earth. That does not mean that it is the entire earth all at one time. But over the period of the last days, all parts of the earth will be affected.

### **BODY:**

#### **I. THE FIRST SEAL - WAR.**

##### Revelation 6:1-2 (NASB)

<sup>6</sup> Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, “Come.” <sup>2</sup> I looked, and behold, a white

horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

Here we see a rider on A WHITE HORSE carrying a CROSS BOW AND WEARING A CROWN.

Since white is usually symbolic of purity and because Christ is seen riding a white horse in chapter 19, many try to make this a symbol of Christ. But there are many things that indicate that this is not Christ. In chapter 19 Christ is identified as the rider, here He is not. In chapter 19 Christ has 7 crowns (which means complete authority), here the rider only has one crown. All four of the horsemen are working together to bring havoc upon the earth.

This is the SYMBOL OF WARFARE AND DESIRE FOR CONQUEST. It indicates that there will always be one nation conquering another. Forceful persecution and servitude of people from the conquered nation will be a part of life – and increasingly so. Nations will always crave the power to conquer some new foe and claim some new territory.

Certainly that explains a great deal of what has happened, and still happens, in our world. It is not surprising to discover that at its height Communism conquered about 500 square miles of land per day. And a quick glance at the daily news shows us more. Check out Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, North Korea, Egypt, the Middle East – one nation desiring another, trying to conquer one more foe. In our day nations are more dependent on each other than ever before, yet they are also more at odds. We are into stockpiling weapons because we fear one another. The spirit of conquest rules. So we desperately want peace – all of which means the stage is set for that false one who will come proclaiming peace and sway and seduce people and nations into his hold. We are ripe for the flatterer and promiser of peace.

## **II. THE SECOND SEAL - REMOVAL OF PEACE.**

Then John witnesses the opening of the SECOND SEAL.

Revelation 6:3-4 (NASB)

<sup>3</sup> When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come.” <sup>4</sup> And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that *men* would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

A RED HORSE was sent out, symbolizing the fact that this rider is PERMITTED TO TAKE PEACE FROM THE EARTH. It's more than a conquering; it's a killing of one another. There is no peace between people. This is not just nation against nation – This is also INTERNAL STRIFE. There will be trouble within. It's a constant repeat of Cain and Abel! Civil disorders are part of these last days. People will turn on one another in greater numbers! The restraints will be removed so envy, jealousy, hatred, and strife will rule. It is, and will be, as Zechariah prophesied:

Zechariah 14:13 (NASB)

<sup>13</sup> It will come about in that day that a great panic from the Lord will fall on them; and they will seize one another's hand, and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another.

One of the aims of Communism, and now of terrorists, is to keep us so busy trying to prevent war from without that they can infiltrate us and get us fighting from within. Historians, in fact claim this is precisely how the Roman Empire fell – it defeated itself from within! Any nation with unrest in itself is doomed! A house divided against itself cannot and will not stand. The red horse reminds us it is so, and always will be.

### **III. THE THIRD SEAL - FAMINE.**

Now we come to SEAL THREE.

Revelation 6:5-6 (NASB)

<sup>5</sup> When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, “Come.” I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. <sup>6</sup> And I heard *something* like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine.”

This time it's A BLACK HORSE, and the rider is HOLDING SCALES. It's evidence of ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. There will be a scarcity of essential products, and an uneven distribution of wealth. Let's face it – wars contribute to economic chaos. In the time of war and strife, people grab and store up for themselves – and there is little left to spread around. There is scarcity. John points out that one day's wage will buy one day's food – people working all day just to feed themselves!

And what about distribution of food and wealth? Oil and wine are untouched. In other words, the rich are unscathed! The poor get poorer and the rich get richer! The poor struggle to hang on and the rich wallow in their caviar and champagne.

Does all of this sound familiar? Do you often feel like you're being required to live on less and less? Yet have the wealthy gone broke? The Bible does not condemn being rich. Yet there is something radically wrong in a world in which the scales are tipped as they are in ours. It's a sign that the end is certainly fast approaching. When we see how rich our nation is and how poor so many others are, when we see how rich some of our neighbors are and how poor others are, disaster of the first magnitude is on the way. Someone has reported that the amount spent throughout the world on military equipment and personnel in one day is equal to the cost of feeding, clothing, and housing the entire world for a year. Nearly 40,000 people die each day of malnutrition and related diseases. Yet it will always be so.

### **IV. THE FOURTH SEAL - DEATH.**

And before we can catch our breath, John sees the FOURTH SEAL opened.

Revelation 6:7-8 (NASB)

<sup>7</sup> When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come.” <sup>8</sup> I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

Out gallops A PALE HORSE. The Greek word here refers to a greenish gray color, much like the backside of a green leaf. This was a color in Greek culture that referred to someone who was sick. If you were this color, you were deathly sick.

This rider was named Death; and Hades was following with him. This symbolically represents PESTILENCE AND DEATH, which always follows war. This represents the POWER TO BRING ABOUT THE DEMISE of a significant portion of the earth's population. Verse 8 pictures it graphically when it mentions the beasts. As people die off, the beasts gain more and more control. Soon they rule! Yet it is really stressing all the various forms of death that strike people in the world.

If this were a 21st Century list it would include auto accidents, plane crashes, disease epidemics, heart attacks, terror attacks, etc.. Despite all of our great medical research and discoveries, we seem to discover more and more unknown and untreatable diseases. Despite all of our high-tech security, enemies still find more ways to attack us. We see now, and will see increasingly, that people die from unexpected causes. But, for a time, there will be a limit on death, but it will intensify until the end.

## **CONCLUSION:**

With all of that being said, what should we do with this?

Remember - tragedies of this nature do not mean that God is no longer on the throne or that He has forgotten us. We are never forsaken. Rather, God is still working everything out according to His timing and His will. He prophesied it all, and when it happens, it simply shows He's still on the throne! And if God is in control of all the crises of the world, He can handle our own personal crises as well!

Remember, Jesus said that the last days were like birth pangs? These contractions are pointing to the fact that one day the baby is going to be born. All of these events are pointing to the fact that one day Jesus will return and judgment will be complete. **It is inevitable!**

**This is a judgment that is pointing to a greater judgment!** Thus you should look at your own mortality and know that you need to get right with God. Every time we see these terrible calamities on earth, they are terrible. So many thoughts go through our mind. But when we see these things it should always cause us to consider if I am prepared for Christ's return. Because there is a bigger judgment coming. We can still get right with God now. When Christ returns that window will SHUT FOREVER!!!! If you finally see God face to face in all of His glory and you find that you were not prepared, how much would you be willing to give to be able to go back to earth and make it right! But it will be too late!

**Revelation is a picture book, not a puzzle book!** Become engrossed in the overall story. Praise the Lord. Cheer for the saints. Detest the beasts. Long for the final victory. **Remain faithful and overcome!** That is the way to read Revelation.

The birth pangs will end someday and you **will** face God in judgment. It is inevitable! You want to hear God say, "Your name is written in the Lamb's book of Life. Well done My good and faithful servant."

**He is Lord!**