

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Revelation 6:1-8

East Berlin Community Church

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April 3, 2022

Introduction

- The death from the tainted Tylenol capsules in 1982
- Since then everything is sealed and we are warned not to buy something if the seal is broken
- Jesus Christ, in Revelation 5, received a seven-sealed scroll containing the title deed to the earth and the plan on how He will regain what is rightfully His.
 - Only Jesus is found worthy to take and open the scroll
 - But He cannot take possession of what is rightfully His because of a squatter, a usurper, who thinks that the kingdoms of this world belong to him—Satan
 - The scroll is sealed and unbroken, meaning that it has not been altered or tampered with since its inception.
 - But in Revelation 6, Jesus Christ begins to break open the seals one by one.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse—Revelation 6:1-8

- Revelations 6:1-8 -- *“Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, ‘Come and see.’ And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, ‘Come and see.’ Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come and see.’ So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, ‘A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.’ When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, ‘Come and see.’ So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed after him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the field.”*

A. The Timing: The breaking of the seals marks the beginning of God’s wrath.

1. Generally, the entire seven-year period is a time for God’s judgment.
 - Jeremiah 25:30-33-- *“Therefore prophesy against them all these words, and say to them: The LORD will roar from on high and utter His voice from His holy habitation; He will roar mightily against His fold. He will give a shout as those who tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise will come to the ends of the earth—For the LORD has a controversy with the nations; He will plead His case with all flesh. He will give those who are wicked to the sword,” says the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: Behold disaster shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the farthest part of the earth. And at that day the slain of the LORD shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall become refuse on the ground.”*
2. Specifically, the last three and one-half years is known as the “Great Tribulation”.
 - ^a Jeremiah 30:7-- *“Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.”*
 - Daniel 12:1-- *“At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.”*
 - Matthew 24:15-- *“when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place*

- Matthew 24:21-22-- *“then there will be great tribulation, such as not has been since the beginning of the world until this time, no nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”*
3. Question: *Does Jesus open the scroll and seals at the beginning of the seven-year tribulation or does He wait to open them at the middle of the tribulation, at the beginning of the Great Tribulation?*
- a. A few scholars place it at the middle of the tribulation, and thus all three rounds of judgment, the sealed judgments, trumpet judgments, and bowl judgments all occur in the last 3 ½ years.
 - b. Most scholars, and I agree, place the opening of the seals at the beginning of the seven-year tribulation
 - 1) The Scrolls represent specific divine judgments pour out sequentially on earth with continuing effects or results.
 - 2) They encompass the entire period, culminating in the second coming of Christ.
 - 3) My understanding is that the first four seals are broken in the first half of the tribulation. The fifth seal stretches from the first half into the second. And the sixth and seventh seal are opened during the last half of the tribulation. The seventh seal contains the seven Trumpet Judgments, and the seventh Trumpet Judgment contains the seven Bowl Judgments that are poured out right before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

B. The Sequence: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

1. First Horseman of the Apocalypse: The ANTICHRIST.

- Revelation 6:1-2-- *“Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, ‘Come and see.’ And I looked and behold a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.”*
- a. The **Invitation** of the four-living creatures to *“Come and see”*.
 - Revelation 4:6-8-- *“Before the throne there was a sea of glass. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face of a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures each had six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come.’”*
 - b. The **Identity** of the Rider on the White Horse?
 - 1) **Jesus Christ**
 - a) Support
 - (1) He is the only one identified in Revelation as riding a white horse.
 - Revelation 19:11-- , *“Now I saw heaven opened and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him as called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.”*
 - (2) *“White”* associated with Christ and righteousness.
 - Revelation 7:14-- *“arrayed in white robes...who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”*
 - (3) Since the sealed scroll contains the blueprint on how Jesus will reclaim what is rightfully His, isn’t it plausible that He should lead the charge riding on the white horse?
 - b) Problems
 - (1) There are significant differences between the rider of Revelation 6 and Revelation 19.
 - (2) The timing is wrong. Jesus Christ returns to earth at the end of the tribulation with His armies to conquer.
 - Revelation 19:15-- *“Out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron.”*

- (3) The rider of Revelation 6 wears a “victor’s crown”, whereas the rider of Revelation 19 wears the crown of royalty and sovereignty
- (4) The four horsemen have an essential likeness to one another. The next three are evil.
- (5) Jesus Christ is the One opening the seals. It would seem strange for Him to be one of the seals.

2) **The Antichrist**

a) Support

- (1) After the rapture, the world will be looking for someone to provide peace and security. The Antichrist will broker a deal with Israel to provide them with protection
- (2) He will carry a “bow” without arrows, signifying that he will initially achieve his victories through diplomacy, and not warfare.
- (3) His main means of conquering will be by cunning deceit.
 - 1 Thessalonians 2:9-11-- *“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they might believe the lie.”*
- (4) But the period of world peace will not last.
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:3 -- *“For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction will come on them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.”*

b) Problem: *How can Jesus Christ employ the Antichrist to accomplish His goal of reclaiming the kingdoms of the world?*

- (1) Throughout history God has used godless nations as instruments of judgment against other nations.
 - (a) God used the Assyrians to judge the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC.
 - (b) God used Babylon to judge the southern kingdom of Judah in 606 BC
- (2) While God uses godless nations to judge others, He does hold those godless nations accountable for the atrocities of war, and judges them accordingly.
- (3) God will use the Antichrist to prepare the Jewish people to receive their Messiah and His kingdom. But He will also hold the Antichrist accountable and judge accordingly.
 - Revelation 19:20-- *“the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast, and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.”*

2. **Second Horseman of the Apocalypse: WAR and BLOODSHED**

- Revelation 6:3-4-- *“When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, ‘Come and see.’ Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.”*
- a. The Rider on the Red Horse will *“take peace from the earth”*.
 - b. The Antichrist who was the architect of world peace will become a fierce warrior.
 - Daniel 8:23-24-- *“A king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; He shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; He shall destroy the mighty and also the holy people.”*
 - c. The Tribulation period will be full of wars and bloodshed
 - 1) During the first half, the world will turn violent. There will be *“wars and rumors of wars.”*
 - 2) At the middle of the tribulation, when the Antichrist breaks the covenant with Israel and sets himself up as god, this will touch off a major conflict.—Daniel 11
 - 3) At the end of the Tribulation, the battle of Armageddon will take place.

3. Third Horseman of the Apocalypse: FAMINE

- Revelation 6:5-6-- *"When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, 'Come and see.' So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hands. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, 'A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.'"*
- a. Famine is a logical consequence of world-wide war as food supplies are destroyed, supply lines disrupted, and those involved in food production are killed.
- b. War also brings hyper-inflation
 - 1) A *denarius* was a one-day wage for the average worker in Jesus' time. It was enough money to support a family, to provide food, shelter, and clothing plus the other necessities of life.
 - 2) During the Tribulation, a *denarius* will buy only a quart of wheat, enough for one person for one day, or three quarts of barley, a grain low in nutritional value, enough to feed a family of three. The cost is 12 times higher than normal. That's hyper-inflation.
- c. The warning to not *"harm the oil and the wine"*?

4. Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse: DEATH

- Revelation 6:7-8 -- *"When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, 'Come and see.'" So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth."*
- a. The "pale" colored horse is the color associated with the decomposition of a body.
- b. Sitting on the pale horse is DEATH and he is followed by Hades, or the grave-digger.
- c. They are given *"power over a fourth of the earth to kill."* In today's terms, about 1.5 billion people.
- d. Death has FOUR means to accomplish his grim task.
 - 1) *"Sword"* or War
 - 2) *"Hunger"* or Famine
 - 3) *"Death"* or Disease
 - 4) *"Wild beasts of the earth"*?
- e. God threatened to use all four means as instruments of judgment against Israel.
 - Ezekiel 14:13-- *"I will stretch out my hand against it: I will cut off the supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it."*
 - Ezekiel 14:15-- *"cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they empty it and make it desolate so that no man may pass through because of the beasts."*
 - Ezekiel 14:17-- *"Bringing a sword against it"*
 - Ezekiel 14:19-- *"send a pestilence into the land and pour out my fury on it in blood."*
 - Ezekiel 14: 21-- *"For thus says the Lord GOD: 'How much more it shall be when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem—the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence—to cut off man and beast from it."*

You and I today?

1. For us who know Jesus Christ as Savior, we have nothing to fear.
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10-- *"For God did not appoint you to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him"*
2. For those who do not know Christ as Savior, they have everything to fear.
 - Hebrews 10:31-- *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*