

**Revelation 6: 3-8; "The 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse" (An Introduction),
Sermon # 56 in the series - "The Faithful and True Witness", Delivered by Pastor
Paul Rendall on April 22nd, 2007, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

The Lamb has opened up the first seal of the Book of Church History, the story not only of the redemption of God's Elect, but the story also of how Christ's Church comes to overcome all systematic opposition in order that she might reign upon the earth as the Bride of Christ. There is a great sorrow and tragedy in the history of the world, as we think of nations and kingdoms struggling against God's purpose to have Jesus reign over them, but let us remember that God always does know best what to bring to every generation, both in mercy and in judgment. He is faithful to a thousand generations, to those who love Him. We are and will be "more than conquerors" through Him who loved us. Last week we looked at the Lamb, Jesus Christ, opening up the first of the seals. And we saw that this seal sets forth the purpose of Christ Himself, now that He is risen, ascended, and seated at the right hand of God. It is that He would spiritually ride forth and conquer the hearts of men with His gospel, which is preached by His Church militant through this entire age until He returns. This is how His kingdom progresses among the nations in all generations since John wrote down this prophecy, and this is how it will triumph over all nations and kingdoms in the time of the Millennium before Christ returns. The preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ began with the Apostles at Jerusalem and Judea, and it faced great opposition from the Jews in that day. Much is written in the letters of Paul about this. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 2: 14, for example, "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus." "For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to uttermost."

This opposition continued until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. when the Jews came to know the reality of God's wrath which was so manifest in the judgment against them as a nation for their rejection of their Messiah. They had also rejected the gospel in those intervening years between Christ's ascension and 70 A.D. They filled up the measure of their sins. Jesus Christ had already broken down the barrier between Jew and Gentile at the cross. They should have believed in His gracious purpose to teach and to save them from their sins, but many rejected that purpose and so Christ directed His apostles to preach to the Gentiles. It was not God's purpose that the Jews should continue as God's special and only people in the world, but that they should by faith in Jesus Christ come to form the root out of which the tree of Christ's Church should grow. But the majority of the Jews having rejected Messiah, and still to this day rejecting their Messiah, disbelieved the Apostles. Listen to Paul speaking to them in Rome where he was being held a prisoner. In Acts 28 Paul called the leaders of the Jews together to tell them why he was a prisoner and also to take the opportunity to preach to them the gospel. They said to him in verse 22, "But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere." (Meaning Christianity) "So when they had appointed a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law and the Prophets, from morning till evening." "And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved." So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke

rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, 'Go to this people and say: "Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you will see, and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull." Verse 28- "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it." Now this is where the book of Acts ends, a few verses later. Paul did not outlive the days of persecution before the destruction of Jerusalem; but even before that we find him saying that "the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles. We my brethren, in relation to this church age are in the "times of the Gentiles." For as Paul says again in Romans 11, verse 25, "For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." The Jews as a nation and as a body of people world-wide are still under this partial hardening, this blindness until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

I have said all this by way of introduction to introduce the subject of Rome in relation to the forward progress of Christ's gospel. Paul was in Rome when he was martyred for the faith. Paul's words about the Jews that I just read to you are written in the book of Acts in relation to his solemnly testifying of the kingdom of God to the Jews there in Rome. His statements about the Church's being in the times of the Gentiles now, until the Jews are finally converted nationally, is found in his letter to the Romans. But it was to the Apostle John that the great privilege was given of revealing, in an overview, the history of the Church whose greatest opposition was to come from Rome. And this is what John does for us, when here in Chapters 6 and 7, he reveals that the next great opposition would come from the Pagan Roman Empire itself. Indeed all of the major, systematic, Antichristian oppositions of Satan to the Church's making progress with the gospel among the nations are given to us in symbolic form in chapters 6-19. They are pictured for us under the "7 seals, the 7 trumpets, and the 7 vials which are mentioned in these prophetic chapters. All three of these have reference to Rome, each in a different way. The Seals refer to the progress of the Church; its history under Pagan Rome. The Trumpets refer to the progress of the Church under a generally Christian Roman empire with Antichrist beginning to rise in that time period. And the Vials refer to the progress of the Church under a Papal Antichristian Rome which continues to this day, and will for a time yet. I will speak of the times of each of these periods in later sermons. In each time period there is opposition and persecution; in each there is triumph and victory. That is a very brief outline of what we are looking at here in these chapters 6-19. We will also be looking at the great systematic opposition of Satan in raising up Mohammedanism which is mentioned in Chapter 9 in symbolic and picture form. It falls under the Trumpets section as a part of that time. In Chapter 10 - Chapter 11: 13, John is given a vision of the 7 thunders and he is given a little book which is a codicil of the bigger book of the seals, the trumpets and the vials. It is a little overview of the times related to how long the last period of the storm of Antichristian darkness will last, and what we are to expect toward the end of that time. This introduction leads me now to open up to your mind's eye the reasons why I believe that Chapters 6-19 all have a reference to Rome in relation to the progress of the gospel in Church History before the Millennium. 1st- I want to show you that Rome is the Fourth and Final World Monarchy. And then 2ndly - I want to apply this truth to Christ's opening of the seals.

1st- Let us look at the fact that Rome is the 4th and Final World Monarchy.

Turn with me to Daniel Chapter 2. Here in Daniel chapter 2 we find that King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon was having dreams and verse 1 says that "his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him." He was so troubled by these dreams that he gave command to call the magicians, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to come and tell the him

what his dreams were, as well as give the interpretation. Yes, you heard me right; he wanted them to tell him what he dreamed. He was firm about this. If they didn't tell him the dream, as well as the interpretation, then he would consider them worthless and have them killed. It was sure a good way to separate out the true from the false prophets. In verse 10, the Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. Well, Daniel was among those men who were considered wise men in Babylon and so they were seeking to kill him. But Daniel went in, verse 16 says, and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation. Then it says in verse 17, "Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to his companions, that they might seek the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon." "Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision." "So Daniel blessed the God of heaven." And can we not bless Him in this same way that He reveals these things to us this afternoon as well? "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His." "And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding." "He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him."

In verse 27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king." "But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days." Verse 31 continues, "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image!" "This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome." "This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay." "You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces." "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found." "And the stone that struck the image became a mountain and filled the whole earth." "This is the dream." "Now we will tell you the interpretation of the dream."

"You, O king, are a king of kings." "For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all--you are this head of gold." "But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth." "And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others." "Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay." "And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile." "As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay." "And in the days of the these kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to another people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." "Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold--the great God has made

known to the king what will come to pass after this." "The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure."

Now I have read this passage to you to show you that this prophecy of Revelation 6-19 is not simple a matter of principles which apply to an individual's salvation, or a matter of Christ's reigning over the entire Church age; both of which are true, but rather it is a matter of distinct and particular historical fulfillments of the gospel of Christ as preached by His Church going forth conquering and to conquer. This prophecy speaks of 4 successive world monarchies; the first of which is Babylon or Chaldea. The 2nd is Medo-Persia, the 3rd is Greece, and the 4th is Rome. According to verse 44 it is in the days of these kings who are a part of the 4th world monarchy which is Rome, that the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and this kingdom shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever. This can be none other than the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. This prophecy speaks of Christ as "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands;" it is the work of God that Christ was formed in Mary's womb in the incarnation. It was by His resurrection power and grace that His Church is built. After this stone strikes the feet of the image (the Roman Empire in all its forms of oppression and opposition to Christ's kingdom), then this stone becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth. This represents the final success of the Church's gospel work and is the Millennium of Revelation 20; Christ's Kingdom, His Bride, His Church reigning upon the earth.

Now 2ndly and in closing- Let me briefly apply what we have discovered to the opening of the seals in Revelation 6.

We have seen that it is in the days of the kings of the Roman Empire that Christ's kingdom was set up. Last week we saw that the rider on the first horse, the first horseman is Christ Himself riding forth in the spreading of His gospel throughout the Church age. But when we come to the second of the 4 horses in this passage we find that the one sitting on the fiery red horse was granted to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given him a great sword. When the 3rd seal was opened, there was a black horse, and he who sat on it has the power to destabilize the economy of whatever part of the world that is being specified here. And when the 4th seal is opened, there was a pale horse with the rider named Death seated upon him, and Hades followed with him. And it says that "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." What place and what time period is being specifically referred to in the opening of these seals? I believe that it is the Pagan Roman Empire which is being referred to here, under the name of "the earth." I am sure that it is true that we can draw and apply principles of spiritual truth from these verses, applying it to the whole Church age. This is legitimate in the general sense of application, but it does not seem to be specific enough to fit the context of all that historic progression which is coming afterwards in the following chapters. Rome, in all of its forms, down through Church history is the horse that Satan has ridden and is riding now, until Christ gives His Church the victory which is spoken of in Revelation 19. It is Rome in all its forms in these different periods of time within this Church age that has been Satan's greatest strategy to block the forward progress of the Church and which keeps her presently from reigning upon the earth. But our Lord Jesus Christ shall conquer, and we shall begin to see how, next week. Next week I will try to open these seals up more specifically and make applications from both the Amillennial and Post-Millennial perspectives.