

February 19, 2023 - Revelation 6:1-8 - "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse"

Introduction:

Horses are exquisite creatures of God and have brought pleasure to many in our day. I really enjoy watching wild horses run especially the stallions in their majestic form. I have calendars of these beautiful creatures. There were four horses I loved as a kid: Chub, Sport, Buck & Cochise. These were the four horses of the Cartwright ranch. I'm afraid that horses won't always be associated with beauty and pleasure, horses and horsemen are mentioned some three hundred times in the Bible. The "Four Horses of the Apocalypse" I have come to concede as descriptive of the end times. They are the most dreadful horses and horsemen of all time and there is nothing pleasant about them. Many artists have tried to paint on canvas the horrors of these four horses to come. The sound of their beating hooves can be heard even now in the distance as time marches towards its end..."

Dr. Billy Graham once wrote, "The increasing sound of their powerful hooves reverberates across our world today". John was the first to see their horrific effect.

Remember, in chapter four we saw John caught up to the very throne room of God in heaven, in chapter five the attention shifted to the seven-sealed book and the only One worthy to open it. We find that this book contains the unfolding of the consummation of the age. It reveals the fulfillment of God's eternal plan to set all creation free from sin and death and to bring judgment upon all those who have rejected Him. The purpose of these judgments is: to establish God's justice. The judgments of the book of Revelation begin in chapter six and end in chapter 19 describing the terrible judgments of the seven-year tribulation beginning with the opening of the seven-sealed scroll and judgments followed by the trumpet, thunders and bowls. As the seals are opened in chapter six the scene shifts from heaven to earth. At the breaking of the first seal comes ...

I. The White Horse (6:1-2)

1. When the Lamb opens the first seal, one of the four beasts (these living creatures we know as Cherubim / *cherubim*) says, *Come and see (6:1)*. John looks and sees ... *a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow ... (6:2)*.

The white horse symbolizes victory and would have been known to John's readers because of the tradition of "Triumphs" in which conquering generals rode white stallions through the city in their victory parades and to banquets.

2. There has been much disagreement as to the identity of the rider on the white horse. Basically, the confusion is over whether the rider represents Christ or the Antichrist. There are some striking similarities between this rider and Christ, but it should be noted this rider has a crown (6:2), while the victorious Christ in 19: 11, 12 has many crowns. Also, the Lamb (Christ) opens the seals and would not be one of the riders. And, furthermore, there are four riders, and

Christ is not one of four-He is All in One. Anyone who knows the Bible would expect the Antichrist to counterfeit Christ. Please note according to 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

3. The combination of the conqueror's crown and the bow; note without arrows indicates he will go forth conquering, and to conquer peacefully, probably through diplomacy. In the beginning, the Antichrist will not appear as the evil villain he is. The apostle Paul warned the church:

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. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3?

4. When Christ comes to earth again, His weapon will not be a bow with no arrows, instead, His weapon according to Revelation 19:15 & 21 - you will note is the Sword of the Spirit as we read in 2 Thessalonians 2.

This future world conqueror will come promising peace and safety and will deceive the world into following him. Then will come the opening of the second seal and ...

II The Red Horse (6:3-4)

1. At the opening of each seal, one of the living creatures Cherubim / chair a bim) says, Come and see. At the breaking of the second seal ... there went out another horse that was red ... (6:4). This rider is on a fiery red horse, which symbolizes bloodshed and war, for he will ... take peace from the earth ... and cause humanity to kill one another ... (6:4). As a further indication of the extensive bloodshed, the rider on the red horse has ... a great sword.

a) In the days when John wrote this scripture they obviously did not have mega-bombs, missiles, tanks, or any of the modern weapons of warfare. Such weapons of destruction had to be put in terms that people would understand in that day, so the major weapon of destruction then was a sword. But this is a "great" sword, a powerful weapon of destruction. The size of the sword denotes the large number of people who will be killed. It is with good reason that many commentators have seen this as a picture of the awesome power of a nuclear bomb, something that could destroy enormous numbers of people. *Jack Van Impe- Revelation pg.74*

2. The peace brought by the first rider will be superseded by slaughter and murder. Daniel 9:27 foretold this...it will be a fault peace. Note weeks is a heptad =7 like our decade = 10.

III. The Black Horse (6:5-6)

1. The black horse represents the famine and poverty that often follows war. John says in verse 5; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. The word balances literally means "scales," indicating everything had to be weighed.

2. The Greek word translated measure a choenix, (*hoy-neaks*) is a dry measure, containing less than our quart or as much as would support a man of moderate appetite for a day. The Greek

word translated *penny* (denarius) was a day's wages for the average laborer. Barley was purchased by the poor to mix with wheat. It was the food for slaves and horses, but apparently, if purchased instead of wheat, it could feed a small family for a day since it was one-third cheaper. The national average wage index for 2022 is \$60,575.07. So, if we divide that by 261 working days for the year that would be roughly \$232 for less than a liter of grain.

3. The scales show us that normal items for survival will sell at many times their normal value. This is inflation; economics out of control; panic in the marketplace!

US Inflation Rate last year was 7.48% and it is rising... Starting with breakfast, eggs are up 32.2 percent, bacon is up 15.3 percent (as is coffee), cereal is up 12.2 percent, and whole milk has shot up 16.9 percent. Packing lunch for the kids? Bread is up 8.7 percent, peanut butter is up 12.1 percent, and lunch meats 16.8 percent; chicken is up 17.4 percent, and ground beef is up 12.6 percent.

a) During the days of the Weimar Republic in Germany after World War I, there were accounts of people taking ten thousand German marks bills, loading them into wheelbarrows, and taking them to market to buy a single loaf of bread. That is what runaway inflation does. It makes money worthless. That in turn becomes an excuse for the rigid controls over buying and selling which we find in Chapter 13 when, under the reign of antichrist, the whole world is subjected to enormously restrictive controls so that "no one can buy or sell without the mark of the beast," {cf, Rev 13:17}. Then, John ... heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts . . . (6:6). This voice speaking out of the midst of the four living creatures seems to be God Himself, specifying commodity prices.

4. The result of all this war and conquest is famine. Only the very wealthy would be able to purchase the necessities of life. These prices indicate a severe shortage, meaning the average worker would barely be able to survive, starvation would be a real problem.

The phrase *hurt not the oil and the wine* in verse 6 seems to mean that since these were not necessities, like wheat and barley, but were luxuries of the rich, then the rich people will not be greatly affected by the third seal. The wealthy will fare much better during the famine than will the average person because of their resources, but nothing will stop the dreadful...

IV The Pale Horse (6:7-8)

1. The last call of "come and see" is uttered by the fourth living creature. Notice the proper sequence of living creatures and calls. They will not have part in the remaining three seals. John looks ... and behold a pale horse ... (6:8). The Greek word translated pale (*chloros*) is a pale green from which we get our English word chlorine. It is like that of a sick or dead person. The color goes along with the name of the rider Death, who is followed by another named Hell (Greek, HADES) riding behind him.

2. At the breaking of the first seal the world seems to have entered an era of peace where all could anticipate the "good life..." but this quickly dissipates as the judgments begin in verse four. The dream of the "good life" is shattered by the reality of hunger, starvation, anarchy,

violence, and utter chaos. As a result, Death and Hades come on the scene. Death claims the body, and Hades claims the soul.

3. The effect of the breaking of the fourth seal is the fourth part of the earth is killed (verse 8). This seems to mean that one-fourth of the population of the world will die from the sword (war), hunger (famine), death (Greek, THANATOS, which probably refers to death by pestilence or disease that usually follows famine), and with the beasts of the earth. The total death count here would be more than one billion at today's population figures. Such losses were thought impossible before the atom, nitrogen bombs, as well as the deadly germ warfare and horrible diseases of our today.

4. Someone has pointed out that rats have been responsible for killing more people than all the wars in history. They have been reported to carry as many as 35 diseases, and their fleas carried the bubonic plague that killed a third of Europe in the 18th century. This information gives us only an idea of how wild animals could contribute to death on a worldwide scale. You see the Greek word translated beast (THERION) means "wild beasts." A different word from the Greek word (zoon) in 4:6, also translated beasts but meaning "living creatures." Globally, as of 8:47pm CET, 17 February 2023, there have been 6,844,267 deaths, reported to WHO.

Conclusion:

A volcanic destruction in 79A.D. wiped out the Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. The eruption was so sudden that the people were killed in the middle of their routine. Men and women were at the market, the wealthy were caught in their luxurious baths, and the slaves were still at their labor. They died as they were covered by volcanic ash and superheated gases. It is hard to imagine the horror of that terrible day. The saddest part is that no one had to die. Scientists tell us that the ancient Roman writers record weeks of rumblings and other signs which preceded the actual explosion. There was even an threatening pillar of smoke which could be clearly seen several days before the eruption. If only they had paid attention to Vesuvius's warning! There are similar warnings that God is giving to us.

We are told that we are accountable to God. We are warned to be prepared. There is a coming day of judgment. There is a way to avoid the coming judgment. Are you saved?