

The Revelation – The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

In last week's lesson the scene had changed to a book with seven seals, and the only one with the authority to open the seals was the Lamb. With the opening of these seals we are introduced to the apocalyptic plagues which will occur during the time of the Great Tribulation period.

Before going into this further let's take just a few moments to discuss this period in time. In Matthew 24 Jesus took great lengths to discuss these things with the disciples. They asked him what sign they could expect for his coming. Jesus gave them a long dissertation on things which would occur before his coming. There would be wars and rumors of wars. There would be earthquakes and other pestilences. There would be great tribulation.

Now the question may arise, who is being tried during the great tribulation? The answer may not be as simple as it seems. There appears to be two answers. You see, this period occurs at the climax of the battle between God and Satan. As we study the Revelation we will see clearly that those who reject God are judged during this period. There appears, though, to be another tribulation during this period. Satan is not standing still during this time. Satan is waging his own war against the saints of God.

Now there are those who believe that the tribulation period belongs to the Jews and not to the Church. This, though, does not appear to line up with Scripture. After all, Paul tells us in Romans 2:28 & 29 that "he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God." The true Jew after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the one who has been made heir by the blood of Jesus Christ. The Church is God's chosen people and heir to the Abrahamic covenant.

It appears, then, that just as Israel was saved while in Egypt the Church will be saved while on Earth during the period of tribulation. This would explain why Jesus told the churches to not fear because of the things which would happen. This would explain why he told the churches that they would be blessed for enduring great tribulation. He that shall endure to the end shall be saved.

So as we enter this next section keep in mind that God has always protected his people, and there is no doubt that those who rely on him will have nothing to worry about during this period. With that said let's look at the first 8 verses of the 6th chapter of Revelation, which says:

- (1) And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.
- (2) And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.
- (3) And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

- (4) And there went out another horse *that was red*: and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.
- (5) And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.
- (6) And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and *see* thou hurt not the oil and the wine.
- (7) And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.
- (8) And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

This section opens with the opening of the first seal, which introduces the first glimpse we see of the coming apocalyptic climax. A horse is seen with a rider. Notice that the color of the horse is white. This might lead one to believe that this is Jesus Christ. After all, Jesus is clearly described as riding upon a white horse in Revelation 19:11. It appears, though, that this is a mistaken impression. This horseman appears to be riding the white horse in imitation of Jesus Christ. Jesus, though, is never described as having a bow. He fights with a sword. Also, he doesn't have to be given the crown because it already belongs to him. This rider appears to be none other than the deceiver. This rider represents the introduction of the character who is often referred to as the Antichrist.

Even though antichrist is only referred to in 1 and 2 John there are many Scriptures which generically refer to him and to his character. In Matthew 24 he is spoken of as a master deceiver. One of the most clear descriptions is in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10, which says:

- (1) Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him,
- (2) That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.
- (3) Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;
- (4) Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.
- (5) Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?
- (6) And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.
- (7) For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way.
- (8) And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:
- (9) *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

(10) And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Notice here that the people of Thessalonica had misinterpreted Paul's previous letter to think that the day of the Lord had come upon them unawares. Paul is clarifying what he had previously stated to let them know that if they are watchful they will see the approach of that day. You see, they were afraid that they had missed the rapture. Paul tells them that Antichrist must first be revealed. He must sit on the throne, proving to the world that he is God. He must also oppose the Church, which is the body of Christ on earth. We will find later in the Revelation where he makes war with the saints. This, then, is why he is introduced as a warrior on a white horse.

White is also the symbol of peace. You see, antichrist will enter in as the arbiter of peace (Daniel 11:21). In fact, it appears that he will sign a seven year peace treaty (Daniel 9:27), one which he will break (Daniel 11:23). While he will bring the promise of peace in the Middle East, that peace will be short-lived.

The rider on the white horse is quickly followed by a rider on a red horse. This is war following peace. This appears to be a war to top all wars, most likely World War III. Antichrist, though, will appear to come through this squeaky clean. As a matter of fact, he is likely to once again be the arbiter of peace.

The result of war is a great worldwide depression, represented by the third horse, which is black. Finally, because of the extreme poverty disease begins to set in. Twenty-five percent of the population of the earth will die due to the ensuing starvation. At the current population this would be an astounding 1.625 Billion people.

With all of this the people will not turn to God in any massive number, just as the Egyptians didn't turn to God during their plagues.

We will continue with the remainder of this sixth chapter in next week's lesson.

Yours in Christ,

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