

“The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse”

(A verse-by-verse analysis)

There has been a particularly acute point of controversy between believers as to whether the church is raptured before, during or after the Tribulation period. The Church is raptured in Revelation, chapter four, verse one, before the events of the Tribulation begins in Revelation 6:1. We will continue to see irrefutable evidence throughout these lessons that absolutely prove the rapture takes place before the Tribulation period begins.

The rapture is only an evacuation of believers before the great judgment of the tribulation hour. It is a meeting in the heaven-lies and not Christ's return to the earth. Since His first coming was to earth, His second coming must also be to earth. The rapture, then, is not a coming to earth, but a meeting in the clouds to take His embassy, the church, to heaven for protection during the Tribulation period and to prepare and position His church for the Millennial reign of Christ. Seven years after the rapture, we return with Him to earth for the Thousand Year Millennial Reign.

Revelation, chapter 6 begins what is known as the “*Day of the Lord*”. The word *Day* means *purpose* instead of a twenty-four hour period. This is referred to in Isaiah 2:12, Joel 2:11, Zephaniah 1:14-18, and many other passages.

With the breaking of the first seal and the appearance of the four dreaded horsemen of the apocalypse, the period of time known as the Tribulation begins. This seven year strand of world history graphically described in Rev. 6:1 through Rev. 19:11, will be the darkest hour the world has ever known or ever will know. We understand that the Tribulation Period is seven years from Daniel's reference to the seventy weeks or the seventieth seven, in Daniel 9:24-27. The seventieth week is really the last seven years of the 490 years, or seventy sevens. The part that will inaugurate the last seven years of this dispensation is when Israel makes a covenant (signs a peace treaty) with the antichrist for the last of the seventieth weeks. (*Daniel's seventy weeks is explained in further detail in lesson 13.*)

First Seal

Verse 1

In chapter 5, Jesus went to the Father and took the scroll out of the Father's right hand. The scroll had to do with earth. The first Adam sold out. In chapter six, verse one, the last Adam, Jesus, will begin to regain everything that the first Adam lost. John now sees the One who is worthy, Jesus, opening the first seal of the book which is actually the title deed to the earth. Notice that nothing happens on earth until Jesus breaks one of the seals over in the throne room in heaven. Immediately, John hears the noise of thunder, a sign of the impending calamity.

Verse 2

When the Roman armies returned to Rome from their victorious military campaigns, the Roman general or admiral would enter Rome on a white horse. This rider that appears at the outset of the Tribulation is playing the role of a conqueror which is the significance of the white horse. *The rider on the white horse is Satan's master-piece, a counterfeit.* He is not the true Christ.

Let us draw a parallel between the rider mentioned in Revelation 6:2 and the rider mentioned in Revelation 19:11-16: “*And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*”

Study Tip:

Nothing happens on earth until the believers meet Christ in the heaven-lies.

Verses 3-4

Study Tip:

The white horse =
"The Conqueror".
The red horse =
"War".

The rider referred to in Rev. 6:2 is not wearing a crown when he rides out. He is given a crown and he is carrying a bow. Sometimes to understand what is written you have to *ask what is not written*. Notice he doesn't have any arrows. Isn't that interesting? Why would he have a bow but no arrows to go with the bow? The fact that this man is carrying a bow with no arrows tells us that he will gain control of the world with a diplomatic tactic, by an international peace pact. *"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week"* Dan. 9:27a. The antichrist, the man on the white horse in Rev. 6:2, conquers through diplomacy as a king; hence, the crown. By promising peace he takes control over the nations and establishes a world government. Revelation 13:7 says, *"power (is) given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations"*.

The *antichrist* is referred to in Dan. 7:9 as the *"little horn"* with *"...the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things"*.

Daniel also saw the antichrist in a vision in Dan. 8:23-25, *"And in the latter time... when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand"*. Do you know why *"his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power"*? Because Satan is the one who will give him his power, his throne, and his authority.

After Daniel saw the man in this vision and the death and destruction he would bring, Daniel said, *"And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days"* Dan. 8:27.

Daniel 9:27, tells us about the peace treaty as well as its failure: *"And he (the antichrist) shall confirm the covenant with man for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease"*. He will make a peace treaty and then break it. When peace is confirmed, fundamentalist Israelis who follow Judaism, will feel at ease to conduct sacrifices without fear of war. However, in the midst of the week, or literally in the middle of the heptad, the antichrist will break the treaty. The term, *heptad*, in Hebrew means *"seven years"* as, *decade*, means *"ten years"* in English. That is another way we understand that the Tribulation covers a timetable of seven years, simply because Dan. 9:27 says the antichrist will make his peace treaty for a heptad, seven years, and then break it in the middle of the heptad, or after three and-one-half years.

Second Seal

He promises the world peace and immediately they are in a dilemma. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, referring to the time when the antichrist comes to power, *"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them...and they shall not escape"*.

The *horse* is simply a *symbol of power*. How many horses do you have under the hood of your car? The Bible interpreted it for us by using the symbolism of a red horse. The Greek word used here indicating red signifies *"fiery"* red. The red horse means war and bloodshed instead of the peace and safety which is promised by the antichrist.

It should also be noted that the Greek word used here for sword was the word used for the short Roman sword which was the main sword carried by soldiers going into battle and is symbolic of violent death, war, and the power of the governmental authorities to punish evildoers.

Verses 5-6

Third Seal

This somber picture is symbolized by the *color of black*, which is *symbolic of mourning and death*. In most all countries of the world black is the traditional color worn at funerals.

Much of the death during the Tribulation will be by starvation. Notice Jeremiah's use of the word black as he is lamenting over the famine in his time. *"Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine"* (Lam. 5:10). In Jeremiah 30:7, referring to the famine which will take place during the Tribulation, Jeremiah says, *"Alas"*. Famine takes place early during the Tribulation and intensifies greatly as it escalates to the point that no one will be able to buy or sell without the mark of the beast during the last three and-one-half years of the Tribulation.

Famine and inflation usually follow war. The rider on the black horse produces these tragic twin sorrows upon the earth. To better understand this, let us examine Ezekiel 4:10, 11, and 16: *"And thy meat which thou shalt eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time thou shalt eat it. Thou shalt drink also water by measure...behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care"*. Notice in this passage that because of the famine the people of Jerusalem will eat and drink by weight. A weight was a dry measure of about a quart, approximately 1.92 pints. One of these rations was the daily portion for one man.

Let's look at a story in the gospels to better understand this. The chief priests and scribes, who were Pharisees, sent forth some of their Pharisee disciples of the Herodian sect as spies, to feign themselves as just men hoping to entangle Jesus in his words. They asked him, *"Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?"* But Jesus perceived their craftiness, and said to them, *"Why tempt ye me? Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, 'Caesar's. And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's and unto God the things which be God's"* Luke 20:22-25.

At the time of Christ Roman currency was used in Palestine. A denari was a Roman silver coin equivalent to one day's wages. In New Testament times labourers received a denari, or one penny, as an entire day's wages. A measure of grain would fix one meal, one loaf of bread. This indicated that enough wheat to feed one man for one day cost a full day's wages. The cost of wheat here is five to twelve times its normal price. Famine is indicated. No wonder Moses said in Leviticus 26:26, *"Ye shall eat, and not be satisfied"*. During the Tribulation there is going to be a famine and it will take a day's wages to feed one person one meal per day.

A person who buys wheat, a more expensive grain, will be able to eat one meal a day. Barley, a cheaper grain was largely the food of the poor and was relatively cheaper than wheat. A person who prefers to buy barley will be able to eat three meals a day. But what if a man has a wife and children? There is a song that says during the Tribulation *"a piece of bread could buy a bag of gold"*. This is exactly what God is saying will happen. A man will have to spend everything he has just for enough food to keep from starving to death.

A days wage for a loaf of bread with no money left over to buy anything else is the order. What about the *"oil and wine"*? These were luxuries in Bible times, and we find that there are those who still have wealth during the Tribulation. Nevertheless, the general picture is that of hunger stalking the world. Because of the situation, *"they shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord"* (Ezek. 7:19). James adds, *"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you...your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days"* (James 5:1,3).

Study Tip:

The black horse =
"Famine".
The pale horse =
"Death & Hell".

Verses 7-8

The fourth horse is described as *pale*. The Greek word, "*Chloros*," is translated into English as pale. It is the same word from which we get the term chlorine gas. In other New Testament scriptures chloros is translated "*green*". Mark 6:39 says, "*And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass*". "*And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing*". Rev. 9:4. This word in Greek means a yellowish green but refers here to the color of a corpse or the blanched appearance of a person struck with terror.

Fourth Seal

Famine always follows war and because of famine there is pestilence and disease. The third seal unleashes hunger and inflation upon the earth, but the fourth seal produces mass starvation. He is simply saying because of horsemen one, two and three, one fourth of the earth's population is now dead because of war, famine and disease.

The fourth rider is the deadliest. That is why his name is Death and also why Hell follows with him, hell being the place of the unrighteous dead. He destroys the body, then Hell swallows up the souls and spirits of those he kills with sword, hunger, and the beasts of the earth who are also hungry because of the great drought.

The Greek word used here for "*sword*" in verse eight describes a big sword with a large blade, depicting the large amounts of people who will die by war and violence. One fourth of the earth's population is dead and the Tribulation has barely begun. If that were to happen today over one and a half billion people would die. Mankind easily has the capacity now with it's arsenals of nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, and test tubes filled with germs for the greatest biological and bacteriological attack ever. Such destruction could be brought about in just a few hours. The after-effects of such a battle could easily dwindle earth's population by twenty-five percent. World War II was terrible. Over 55 million people died. But that is nothing compared with what is about to be unleashed on planet earth. It will be an awesome hour.

Fifth Seal

Verses 9-11

These scriptures refer to Tribulation saints composed of Israelites and Gentiles converted by the preaching of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists. These 144,000 evangelists are referred to in Revelation 7. These martyred saints are not part of the Church which was already raptured in Revelation 4:1.

The souls of these slaughtered saints are seen "*under the altar*" because in the Levitical rite the blood was poured out at the foot of the altar where there had been a sacrifice.

Souls will be saved during the Tribulation hour the same way souls are saved today, through the precious shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the believers of the Tribulation hour proclaim Christ crucified, they lose their lives. They will not be killed at this point in the Tribulation because they won't receive the mark of the beast. The applying of a mark to buy or sell doesn't occur until the last three and-one-half years of the Tribulation period. Verse nine says they "*were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held*". They will be killed because they simply will not deny God and the true Jesus. And from underneath the altar they say, "Lord, do something about this beast, this monster". And God says, "Take a nap, rest, cease from your labors and toil. It's not finished yet. There are some more who are going to join you in martyrdom, a great multitude".

Study Tip:

144,000 Jewish Evangelists, not raptured with the Church, will see converts to Christ.

Verses 12-17

These slain martyrs are crying. They are not, however, in an unconscious state. The doctrine of "soul sleep" is not taught in the Bible. Paul said in 2 Cor. 5:8, "To be absent from the body (is) to be present with the Lord". The Bible teaches that the spirit and soul are separated from the body at death. The body is asleep in one place, the grave, whereas the spirit and soul are in another place, heaven or hell. For the Christian to be, "absent from the body," means to be "present with the Lord". That's why Paul said in Philippians 1:21, "To die is gain".

It is also the reason that, when Christ returns at the rapture, He brings those who "sleep in Jesus" with Him. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him". I Thessalonians 4:14. Now, how can the Lord bring the dead with Him and still come after the dead in I Thessalonians 4:16? It's because the souls and spirits are with the Lord, "absent from the body" and "present with the Lord," but their bodies are in the grave. Hence, Christ brings the dead, the souls and spirits already in His presence, with Him, so they may come to get their bodies.

Notice these martyred Tribulation saints crying out in verse 9 are wearing white robes. Now, if spirits are lifeless, they could not cry or wear white robes. The spiritual being must have a temporary covering because 2 Cor. 5:1 says, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved," dead, "we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens". We may not understand everything about the spirit world, but one thing is certain, being in spirit form does not mean unconsciousness. Spirits move, talk, cry, and even wear white robes. Demons are also spirits. Demons spoke on many occasions in the Gospels. Why? Spirits live! Our loved ones are with Jesus if they died trusting in the shed blood of Jesus. Soon the rapture will occur and they will come forth for their eternal covering, their bodies.

Sixth Seal

When reading the following passage remember that the elements of divine judgment are all done *supernaturally naturally*. Jesus has control of everything and He will make use of all natural cataclysms to bring judgment.

There are three earthquakes in the book of Revelation, the one mentioned here plus two others in chapters 11, verse 13, and chapter 16, verses 18 and 19.

The judgments occurring in these portions of scriptures are to be taken literally. Earthquakes have accompanied the judgments of God throughout history. Mount Sinai quaked when God descended upon it in fire in Exodus 19:18. Rocks were smashed before Elijah during an earthquake at Mount Sinai in I Kings 19:11.

There was also an earthquake when Christ died at Calvary, Mt. 27:51-52. If all these quakes were real, why wouldn't the earthquake depicted at the opening of the sixth seal be literal as well?

"Sackcloth of hair", referred to in verse eleven, was a rough cloth made from the hair of a black goat and was worn in times of mourning.

The phrase, "untimely figs" means figs which are not ripe yet. This refers to the green figs which appear when a heat wave occurs before winter is over causing the figs to bud early. Then a late frost takes place which kills the figs which will subsequently fall off in the spring when the trees are shaken by the strong spring winds. The convulsions upon earth are so great that the stars of heaven fall, comparative to figs being shaken out of a tree prematurely.

Notice in verses 12 through 14 every time He says "as". He didn't say the moon became blood. He said it looked like blood. It was "as" or appeared that way.

Study Tip:

Earthquakes and other natural elements will be used as divine judgment.

Strong winds, tornados and hurricanes will no doubt wreak havoc on the earth during the Tribulation hour. Nuclear war will lay bare entire regions of the world. Devastating earthquakes will cause islands to simply disappear and mountains to be moved from their foundations. It is no wonder that one-fourth of the world's population dies through the manifold catastrophes that bombard the earth. Great men, rich men, chief captains, mighty men, bondmen, and all free men will hide in dens and in mountains for safety. Now we can better understand the statement Christ made in Luke 21:26, *"Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth"*. The situation becomes so desperate that men cry for the rocks to, *"Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come: and who shall be able to stand?"* Rev. 6:16-17.

Verse 14 says, *"... heaven departed as a scroll"*. The picture is that of a papyrus scroll rent apart, whereupon the divided portions curl and form a roll on either side.

The sixth seal is comparable to what Jesus said in Mt. 24:29 *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken"*. (See also Mark 13:24-25 and Luke 21:25-26.)

Who can survive the *"Day of the Lord"*? It will be *"A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains...there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations?"* Joel 2:2.

"Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger" Isaiah 13:6-13.

God tells us, in verse 12, who will survive the Day of the Lord. *"I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir,"* Few will survive.