


THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

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The book commences with 5 chapters which you might think of as a sandwich. Chapter one is on location in Patmos and chapter 5 in heaven. Between the two is the story of two millennia of the Christian story -7 typical churches in the hands of Christ foretelling the future of Christianity. The 6 seals introduce a period when Christ sets His absolute impress on world history –in the years before his kingdom’s dramatic advent The pace quickens, God’s schedule is met, and the wonder is that the lamb has discerned and woven the dark threads with the threads of gold and silver in an emerging pattern of witness and defiance. The fitting sequel to church history is the sealing of Jewish saints that witness amid great tribulation. Then following an “awesome silence” in heaven great trumpets are blown and distresses fall on men. Last will come the vials-of God’s outpoured wrath prior to realisation of the earthly kingdom of Christ. In the seals the lamb distinctly “limits” and “allows” time only whilst He “marks His gems”. Our LORD showed ahead of time the perilous times that figure in this text. They are prophesied in the Old Testament and confirmed in the shorthand apocalyptic sketches of Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21.

THE TIME OF THE SEALS

There are seven sequences in the Tribulation account and at Chapter 4.1 we enter the first. At chapter 7.1 we enter the second. Between chapter 7.9 and 9.12 we are in the third. Between 9.13 and 15.4 we go through the fourth. Chapters 15.5 to 17.18 present the fifth. In 18.1-24 we have the sixth. In 19.1-16 we have the triumphant sixth. ***The period of the seals runs from the end of the church age to the mid tribulation events. So what we are learning about in this chapter is set to occur immediately upon the rapture of the church.***

1 THE FIRST SEAL

This vision is gained with heavenly perspective. It is introduced by a creature –one of four-that had a mighty voice which John compares to the roll of thunder. John is being made aware of the power of God’s command. The primary order of the voice was directed to the white horse to “come” or “return” or “proceed” though of course the vision was simultaneous and John is made aware of the majesty of the “Living one” who must have known the satanic power he addressed from time immemorial. The first living creature was as a man and His mighty voice was as the lion of Judah and had immediate respect from the ancient lion-like kingdom of Persia and from the “roaring lion”(Satan) and from John-the son of Thunder.

(1) And I saw a white horse and he who placed himself upon the horse **held A BOW**.

(2) **A CROWN** was given to him and he went out conquering and that he should be future conqueror”. *The horse intimates power and the symbolism of horse and bow takes us east to the Persian emblems of power. The white horse of Zechariah 1.8 is in the final set of horses that traverse the peaceful earth whilst Israel is not gathered. The relevant reference here is **the night vision of Zechariah** (1.8) “During the night I had a vision and there before me was a man riding a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him were red, brown and white horses.” The man was actually mounted but at a standstill. The red brown and white horses had travelled the world and found it **at peace**. The crucial point is that the horses were among “myrtle trees” which speak of “victory”-being used for **the victory crown**-and also of transformation” –Isaiah 41.19 & 55.13. The horses are an apocalyptic though enigmatic sign that the Lamb will conquer after these horses representing latter day events have run their course. **This white horse is set to be victorious.** Demosthenes (355BC) spoke of the “white horses of tyrants”. This white horse represents a form of world tyranny.*

(3) Like the Spartans this figure ***crowns himself*** and rides off to conquer.

The “Further proclamation” of 1.17 speaks about the ultimate comfort and choice of Jerusalem as the seat of the Lord’s kingdom. Zechariah then sees a “man with a measuring line” who explains he is going to measure a future Jerusalem without walls. Another (Hebrew=AHR=“second/ later) angel/messenger joins the angel speaking to Zechariah with the stirring news that after the Lord’s anger with “the nations that feel secure” and “at rest and peace” (1.15) “the Lord after he **has honoured me**” This messenger calls Israel “Come come and be saved” (Hebrew=MLT=be rescued) 2.7. This (Messianic messenger) goes to the nations and waves his hand over them and their servants strip them and after that the Jews will know by personal experience that El Shaddai sent the angel of the Lord-or as we would say “God sent Jesus”. When finally the Lord returns Israel will know **because the Lord of hosts(I)** (the Hebrew uses the 1st person where we expect the third) **has sent me**(the Hebrew “sends” and “sent” are one in the KAL form so the evidence maybe said to turn on a previous sending-cf Chapter 12.10)

The former “**Has sent**” Zech2.13 reads definitive “He has sent”. So finally Israel to a man recognises the personal power and authority of Christ.

2 THE SECOND SEAL

When the Lamb opened the second seal, John **heard** and obeyed while a second Living One which on the template of Ezekiel’s vision would be the lion-like Christ saying, “Come”. This command resulted in the emergence of a “fiery” horse.

(1) John saw a “fiery” or “tawny” horse going out and it had been given him to take peace from the earth,

(2) And that they slay one another. The wording signifies religious sacrificial killing of an unusual nature (Greek=σφαζω=cutting the jugular) This form of killing is modelled on sacrificial death and is to be practiced by peoples and nations upon themselves. It is not going to be practiced on Christians for they are in heaven-nor as yet the Jews who are protected till 7.1

(3) And a great sword (Greek=μαχαίρος-already by Xenophon’s time this meant “a bent sword of the scimitar type) had been given to this people. The Greek word means “bent sword” and we are affirmatively told in this scripture that after the rapture one of the most vicious cold-blooded violent eras of man’s life on earth will ensue. The “nation of the bent sword” will be without mediation and wreak havoc on itself.

3 THE THIRD SEAL

When the Lamb opened the third seal John heard the third living one who by parallel with Ezekiel’s model would mirror the ox-like Christ, saying, “Come and see”.

(1) And I saw, and the colour of this horse was **black** (Greek=μελας=enigmatic-malignant). This horse intimates that which will be obscure and enigmatic and because living creatures that die turn black this horse is a symbol of death and famine.

(2) The rider had a yoke-but not for equine control—rather a **controlling balance for trade**- “a balance bar for scales”.

Clearly this time was one when humanity would be put under a mighty yoke. The economic constraint is elsewhere shown to naturally event in the “beast’s number” (666) in 13.18 and 14.19. This number is connected to buying and selling.

(3) A voice from the midst of the living creatures, “A slave’s measure” of corn [*One and a half pints*] **for a days wage** and “three days measure”[Greek χοινιξ Four and a half pints of barley *for a day’s wage.*” “And you must not break the law or acquire illegally oil and wine.” This means severely limited food resources. This is the reason for the “blackness”. The prices translated into pounds mean that a man would have survival rations for his wages-if he receives wages and the food is available.

(4) And do not gain “oil” and “wine” by illegal means. What is being said is that it would be an indictable offence to obtain cooking oil or butter and wine by black market means. There will be immensely tight constraints on food supplies.

4 THE FOURTH SEAL

The fourth living one who under the prophetic parallel would mirror the eagle like heavenly LORD said, “Come”

(1) And I saw a fresh green-grey horse [Greek=*χλωρος*=greenish yellow –strictly of young grass or greenish yellow as the eye but mainly with the significance “fresh”]

(2) The horse is fresh enough to carry its rider “death” [*θανατος*] everywhere and it resembles death.

(3) Another one exactly alike -called Hades followed as his disciple.

(4) To them had long since been given delegated but absolute authority over **a quarter of the earth’s population**. Today the earth supports 6,000,000,000 people. This means that 1,500,000,000 people on earth are to fall victim of this horse and its rider. This is the second large exodus of earth’s population. It may be that hundreds of millions would earlier have been taken home in the rapture. Thus earth would by a conservative estimate thereafter house only 2/3rds of its present population.

(5) This phase of the seals admits of four unnatural deaths. Death by **sword and war** (Greek=*ρομφαία*=broad sword of war) and by **starvation** and **execution** (often of execution following court judgment) together with death by “beasts” or **viruses** (the diminutive *θηριων* is better translated ‘microbes’ than ‘lions’)

5 THE FIFTH SEAL

When the Lamb opened the fifth seal I saw under the altar of incense –which was just outside the veil-but its fragrance came within –

(1) **Souls** slain as sacrificial lambs **on account of God’s word** and **on account of holding true in their witness** combined their prayer. *There was no “Come” here. These souls were “subordinate” to the altar. They were willing to wait and aware that suffering comes.*

(2) They literally screamed at God, “Until when, O Absolute One (literally “despot”) O Holy One-who is faithful to Your promise, will you delay judgement and retribution for our blood from the inhabitants on earth”

(3) They were given white stoles (Greek *στολαι* soldiers dress-often special cavalry uniform-they were being prepared to join the armies of heaven for the coming of the LORD to rule)

(4) And the word that “flowed along the ranks” was “Wait still a very short time-until your fellow servants and brethren (of heaven’s army) is complete-as ready to die as you yourselves were” *What a striking and appropriate reply to this righteous protestation!*

6 THE SIXTH SEAL

And I saw when He opened the sixth seal. *This is the answering earth scene at the moment the great prayer is answered.*

(1) Behold a massive earthquake happened-the first sign

(2) The sun became dark as sackcloth of goats hair

(3) The whole moon became as blood *Though the appearance of man on the moon might seem to fulfil this prophecy the existence of the word ὅλη in the Greek indicates a much more alarming sign. These events appear to be connected to a massive earth event which affects the entire atmosphere.*

(4) The stars fell on the earth (“The end of the world is at hand” is the comment of Charles) or the powers that govern collapse as the fig casts her untimely figs that grew all winter and are cast off in the spring winds. This is a double reference to the physical heavens and the “**winter of the Jewish state** which will suffer severe loss of its young life at this time” *The event as it touches the heavens is indicative not of the end of the world but of a signal that such an end will come “in due time”*

(5) Heaven had been separated as a papyrus scroll is wrapped up or crawls along when the hands that hold it release it or better “as a small papyrus roll turns round and round when the hand that holds it is released. Something immense will occur to the heaven man has been investigating. The word ἀποχωρίζω speaks of a mighty and hugely rapid withdrawing of the heaven.

(6) Every mountain and island were shaken (Greek=κινεω=the action of a plough) from their classic locations. The whole earth was prepared for a new era as the earth is ploughed in spring. As in the deluge the inhabitants will have to go with the change-which is a form of judgement upon them.

(7) And the kings or rulers of the earth and those who became great by possessions and power, and the wealthy, and the military bosses of thousands of soldiers, and the powerful, and every servant and free man hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains.

(8) They keep saying to the rocks and to the mountains, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the lamb-for the great day of His wrath has come and who is able to hold his ground”

The experience was clearly sickening as everything was moving-and darkness was all about and gross changes were afoot-while all well understood that what Christ predicted was now taking place literally.

This chapter is compulsory reading and it is a clarion to seek to be worthy of the out-redemption of the rapture and to prepare even now for the fast approaching era of the day of the coming again of Christ amid such earth devastation and heavenly change that only his hand can steady for the glorious millennium yet to be.

THE END THAT USHERS IN THE BEGINNING

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