

Revelation 6:3-17  
 The Four Horsemen  
 Study 24

The last couple weeks we took brief departure from our verse-by-verse study through the book of Revelation

- So that we could look a bit more in-depth into a couple necessary concepts
  - One being the tribulation period
    - This is the future 7-year period of time in which God will unleash His wrath upon the whole world
      - It's a time when God finishes His discipline of the nation of Israel
  - Which is why the Bible also calls the tribulation period "The Time of Jacob's Trouble" (Jacob being re-named Israel by God back in Genesis)
    - The tribulation period is also the time when God brings about judgment to a rebellious, unbelieving and Jesus rejecting world
- We also looked more in-depth last week at the person of the Antichrist
  - His character, how to identify him when he come on the scene, his career and ultimately his fate
    - These were a couple of necessary foundational studies as we head into the deeper chapters of Revelation
      - But now this morning we return to chapter 6 where we will pick up our verse by verse study

To re-set the scene...

- For the last couple chapters – 4 & 5 - John has been in the throne room of God
  - Where he has been witness to God the Father on His throne and Jesus Christ as the worthy Lamb of God
    - As He takes a 7-sealed scroll from the right hand of the Father
      - And as He does, all heaven breaks loose in praise
        - The angelic beings, the church who is represented by the 24 elders, the four living creatures,
          - And ultimately all of creation

- Chapter 6 shifts its focus from the glorious song of the redeemed in heaven
  - To now the terrible judgments upon the blasphemers and unbelievers
    - Who the book of Revelation calls “those who dwell upon the earth”
- Their church is in heaven, the Lamb of God has the scroll and He has begun to break each seal
  - And with each break, the wrath of God takes its toll
    - So let’s pick things back up in chapter 6

**6** Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.” **2** And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

**3** When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.” [b] **4** Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that *people* should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

**5** When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. **6** And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart[c] of wheat for a denarius,[d] and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.”

**7** When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see.” **8** So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

**9** When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. **10** And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” **11** Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they *were*, was completed.

**12** I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon[f] became like blood. **13** And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. **14** Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. **15** And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders,[g] the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, **16** and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! **17** For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Let me briefly point out a bit a structure here.

- The scenes of the book of Revelation are constantly shifting back and forth throughout the book
  - Alternating between heaven and earth throughout
    - We started with John on earth, who then is translated to heaven
      - And then scene returns back to earth with the 7 letters to the churches
        - Then back to heaven in chapters 4 and 5 in the throne room
- Even here in chapter 6, from a broad view, we have scenes depicted on the earth and scenes in heaven
  - Verse 1-8 take place on earth with the riders going out to inflict judgment on the earth
    - And then with the 5<sup>th</sup> seal, verses 9-11, we are back in heaven with the souls under the altar
      - Then the 6<sup>th</sup> seal Back then to earth in verses 12-17
      - This type of back and forth is seen throughout the entire book
- And as Walvoord “This alternating pattern reveals to us that the God who sits on the throne in heaven is in complete control of what transpires on earth.
  - The events happening on earth—no matter how frightening and devastating—are neither haphazard nor random.
    - They are ordered by the One seated on His throne.
      - Heaven rules on earth.

- God's people are to view what is happening on earth from God's viewpoint rather than from man's.
  - Every generation of believers can draw comfort and strength by looking at things from this perspective."

Verse **6:1** "Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." **2** And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer."

- Now, we have spent enough time on this particular verse so we won't spend much time expositing
  - Save to remind us that the rider on the white horse is the antichrist
    - But I do want to say something from a broad perspective
- The introductory break of the first seal begins the 70<sup>th</sup> week Daniel speaks of in his book– the last 7 years prophesied in Daniel 9 that we looked at last week
  - When Jesus the Lamb of God breaks the first seal, it is to be recognized as the inauguration of the tribulation period
    - What Daniel describes as the beginning of the 70<sup>th</sup> week prophesied in Daniel chapter 9
      - Again, we looked at that last week so I won't spend time

But it's important to recognize that this is the beginning of the end of the world, as we know it

- And no one will feel fine
  - The 7 years of tribulation begins for all remaining humanity on the earth
- From man's point of view, it begins with the signing of a peace treaty
  - that the antichrist orchestrates with Israel and her enemies
    - The mid-point of the tribulation period is recognized with the breaking of that covenant
      - And then the end of the tribulation period is recognized when Jesus returns
        - Thus ending the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel

Many ask the question – where do the seals fit in the timeline of the 7-year period.

- Do they fit in the first 3.5 years or in the last half,
  - Or are some seals in the first half and others in the last?

- I realize for some this make little difference, but for many this has great impact on how we view end time prophecy
      - And there are many great scholars that spend a tremendous amount of time on this subject
- I don't want to get overly involved in this because I want to get through the 6 seals
  - So let me give a very brief argument for why I believe all the seals are in the first half of the tribulation period
    - Starting with what we know for sure

We know that the tribulation starts with the antichrist and the signing of the covenant.

- We also know for certain that at the middle of the tribulation the Antichrist will break that covenant and put an end to the sacrifices in the rebuilt temple
  - We see this clearly laid out for us in Daniel 9:27
    - “Then he [***the antichrist***] shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.”
- We also know that the book of revelation is laid out for us chronologically
  - Meaning that the three sets of judgments –the seals, the trumpets and the bowl
    - Follow in succession one after another
      - That means if we can find the middle of the tribulation period in Revelation,
        - that will help us determine where the seals sit
          - As well as the rest of the judgment septets
- In Revelation 11 we read a revealing passage in verse 1
  - “Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, ***and those who worship there.***”
    - What does this tell us?
      - It tells us that the temple has been rebuilt and the Jews are worshipping there
- That means, that the antichrist, in terms of the Biblical timeline of Revelation,

- Has not brought an end to the sacrifices and offerings in the temple
  - Which, again, is the definitive mid-point line as pointed out by Daniel
    - So, in my estimation, this definitively tells us that the seal judgments are in the first half of the tribulation period.
      - As is the sealing of the 144k Jews that we see in chapter 8 and so on
- Ok...with that structure set and the timeline set
  - Let's continue in verse 3 of chapter 6 and break things down...another long introduction

**3** When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." **4** Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that *people* should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

- The first seal revealed the Antichrist who came conquering and to conquer
  - Yet without conventional weaponry
    - His mission is to conquer the world without lifting a military finger
- Then the second living creature says to John
  - "come and see"
    - Interestingly, this living creature, when he introduces the second horse
      - He doesn't use a voice of thunder like we saw the first living creature use in introducing the antichrist
- This seems significant.
  - As if the first horse is of a greater role perhaps.
    - Possibly indicating that the "first horse brings the other three horses in its train as a sequential consequence" (Showers)

The second horse is described in color as "fiery red" – the same color used to describe the dragon in chapter 12:3

- The only two passages where this Greek word appears
  - Some suggest the color signifies war and bloodshed, which seems to be supported by the context
    - And it was granted to the rider on the red horse to make war amongst the people by taking peace from the people
- Couple things I want us to see
  - First, it was granted to him.

- Again, God is in control of all things and even this was granted by God for His divine purposes
- The other thing that we see here is that when the first rider comes,
  - He conquers by means of negotiation and avoids bloodshed
    - But in no time his motives will become clear
      - And when the second rider shows up, he will bring war and bloodshed and death
- And when we read that peace is taken and “that *people* should kill one another”
  - The Greek word here is quite descriptively brutal
    - It’s the Greek word for slaughter. To butcher and murder
      - We see the root of this word to describe the Lamb who was slain
        - “This will be a time of unprecedented bloodshed which will forever puncture the naive view of humanism that man is inherently good.” (Garland)

So the first two seals

- The antichrist will come and make a peace agreement with the nation of Israel and put an end to the fighting
  - But it will be a lie. It will be false peace
    - Because as suddenly and unexpectedly as the peace agreement comes
      - It will end just as abruptly when the second rider is unleashed
        - And the world will scream for stability and peace but will not find any
- Could you imagine peace being taken from this world?
  - What a contrast of that in which Jesus gives us
    - **John 14:27** “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”
    - **John 16:33** “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

What I find very provocative is that the church is gone and soon after peace is ripped from the world – never to return

- The church, which is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit

- Is such a purveyor of peace because of the Prince of Peace
  - He gave us peace unlike any natural thing – His peace is supernatural
- Not just for personal peace, but possibly for the peace of the world
  - As we, the church, spread the Gospel of peace
    - And that Gospel brings peace to the hearts of mankind, which changes nations
- Eph. 6: **15** and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace”
  - Rom. 10: **14** How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? **15** And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!”

We are not to be ignorant of the peace that the Gospel of Peace, given to us by the Prince of Peace, brings upon the heart of man, which affects the nations around us.

- Imagine if there was not a Christian witness in the world what kind of world it would be
  - Savagery; self righteousness, evil pride abounding
    - No! The church – the children of God – are vital to the current peace we experience
      - But one day, it will be fully removed and the effects are what we are seeing here in the seals

**5** When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.

- The third horseman is allowed to go forth
  - He is on a black horse – which speak of judgment and famine and death
- And in the hands of the one who sits on the black horse
  - A pair of scales
    - In which, we will see in verse 6, is used to weigh the food of the world
      - Indicating the scarcity of it - and showing how the economic balance will be radically altered
- This seems to indicate that there will be global food rationing.



- A crippling, punishing inflation that will make the early 80's look like grand affluence by comparison
  - All as a possibly result of a post-Rapture economic collapse
    - Possibly the result of the war and the famine that always follows it

**Verse 6** “And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.”

- There's a few things we need to understand in reading this
  - First, a denarius is a day's wage. It's an average workman's average daily wage
    - Also, we see the mention of both wheat and barely
- Barely is used in contrast of wheat
  - Barely was used to feed the animals, but wheat was used for human sustenance
    - And what this is saying here is that the average working class can spend an entire day's wage on a loaf of bread
      - Or on three meals of animal feed
- But, the rider of the black horse is instructed to not touch the luxury items – oil and wine
  - In context, this is not Texas tea – this oil is not Iraqi oil
    - It's a luxury oil – likely olive oil
      - And wine

In any event, the tribulation will begin with a false peace brought by the antichrist

- But soon afterwards, this pseudo-peace will be removed from the earth as the second rider goes forth
  - Taking peace from the earth
    - And the people of the earth will slaughter one another like a man slaughters a cow
- The world's economic stability will be non-existent.
  - Famine will be world wide – not just in what we call third world countries
    - Lam. 4:9 is sobering “*They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field.*”

I think of us as Americans when I read this.

- Our country is so opulent
  - So full of luxury and rich supply
- Think of how much food we waste on a daily basis
  - Produce that doesn't look perfect is tossed;
    - We overfill our plates to such a degree that when we don't eat it all, we toss the rest in the garbage
- I've heard it said that in the US what we throw in the garbage every day would feed a family of 6 in India
  - The average dog in America has a higher protein diet than many people in other parts of the world
    - When we sit down to dinner, 400 people starve to death daily
- This isn't to make American's feel guilty for the blessings God has bestowed
  - But to give us perspective
    - Because as horrific as the current famine around the world
      - The famine that is to come will be even worse. Even more devastating
        - Because all will be affected as the entire world suffers the wrath of God that is being poured out
          - There will be no nation untouched

And think about what these verses intimate about who will suffer the most. Not just in America but abroad

- It will be the poor and middle class
  - Wheat and barley are food stuffs for the poor and middle class
    - But the luxury items such as oil and wine for the rich will be untouched

Devastating stuff so far, isn't it. And we have only seen three of the horsemen go forth.

- In fact, Jesus in Matt 24 calls these the beginning of sorrows
  - Matt 24 "5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these *are* the beginning of sorrows."

- Verse 7 When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." 8 So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth."

This is the fourth seal of seven, but the last seal that unleashes a horse with a rider

- Four seals; four horses; four horsemen
  - Like we talked about at the onset of our Revelation study
    - Numbers show up consistently within Revelation and typically have a symbolic meaning to them
      - And the symbolic meaning of the number four in the book of Revelation seems to be a signature of the world or of global effect.
- The number four appears in the book of Revelation in association with the living creatures ,
  - the four horsemen of the first seven seals (Rev. 6:1-8),
    - the four angels in Rev. 7:1-2 standing on the four corners of the earth (Rev. 7:1) holding back the four winds of the earth,
      - The four horns of the altar in Rev. 9:13),
        - the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates who are released to kill a third of all mankind (Rev. 9:14),
          - And the four corners of the earth to which Satan travels to gather the final battle in Rev. 20:8.
  - And of course, we see here in verse 8 the global emphasis of the number four is also seen in the *four* angels which kill a third of *all mankind*

When the fourth seal is broken, a pale horse is revealed

- The word for 'pale' is where we get our English word: Chlorine or chlorophyll
  - It's <chloros> which describes a yellow-green appearance
    - It's sickly – like vomit; it's deathly
- And on this horse is seated the only rider that is named: Death
  - And following him is Hades
    - Personifying Death and Hades
- Eventually, Death and Hades will be destroyed in the lake of fire (Rev 20:14)

- But here we see them personified and coupled together – which they often are in scripture
  - *Hades* is the destination of the unsaved upon passing through the gateway of *death*.
    - This seems to be their relationship here because *Hades followed* behind *Death*—taking in the soul and spirit of those who had first died.

“...And power was given to them [verse 8] over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.”

- Think about the implications of this judgment.
  - One fourth of the earth’s population will die.
    - Either by sword, by hunger, by death or by beasts of the earth
- Here we see again a four-fold source of judgment – hinting again at the global scope
  - But think about that for a moment
    - 1.2 million were killed in the Korean war
      - High estimations of the Vietnam war are 3.8 million killed
        - Over 16 million died in WWI
          - And a whopping 60 million were killed in WW2 – which at that time in was over 3% of the worlds population in 1939
- We currently have 7.3 billion people on this planet
  - One fourth of 7.3 billion would be 1.825 billion people
    - To give a perspective, the US has 318.9 million people
      - The global devastation would be 5.72 x the population of the US
- For those that are more visual –
  - Nearly the entire population of China, USA and Russia gone (Approx. 1.858b)
    - Those that think the tribulation period has already begun are fooling themselves

Death and Hades are given power to kill one-fourth the earth by sword, hunger, death and beasts

- This word here for sword, is different than the sword given to the second rider

- There, in verse 4, that is the word for a big knife. Something used for hand to hand combat, as in a war
  - But the word here in verse 8 is the word for a large and broad sword, used by barbarians.
    - The first sword is used in war by men
      - But this broad sword indicates death by a single blow
- As has frequently been the case in the past, hunger follows war:
  - The second horseman took peace from the earth and the effects of his ride contribute to the effectiveness of the fourth horseman.
    - And although the third horseman brought great famine
      - The famine now becomes even more severe.
        - The listing of alternative forms of death pictures inescapable judgment.
- Those who escape death by the *sword* may die of *hunger*.
  - Those who survive the *hunger* are likely to perish from disease (*death*)

And of course those that survive the first three will be so weak

- That they won't be able to defend themselves against the attack of the animal that have become supernaturally emboldened to kill
  - **“15** ‘So it shall be a reproach, a taunt, a lesson, and an astonishment to the nations that *are* all around you, when I execute judgments among you in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I, the Lord, have spoken. **16** When I send against them the terrible arrows of famine which shall be for destruction, which I will send to destroy you, I will increase the famine upon you and cut off your supply of bread. **17** So I will send against you famine and wild beasts, and they will bereave you. Pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I, the Lord, have spoken. (Eze. 5:15-17)
    - **11** ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Pound your fists and stamp your feet, and say, ‘Alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! For they shall fall by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. **12** He who is far off shall die by the pestilence, he who is near shall fall by the sword, and he who remains and is besieged shall die by the famine. Thus will I spend My fury upon them. **13** Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord (Eze. 6:11-12)

It is hard not to cry and weep when we think about such destruction.

- But again, we must not lose sight of the why here
  - The why can be boiled down to one small three letter word: sin

When we as believers read about the terrible things coming upon the world

- Knowing that we will be in heaven during God's wrath poured out
  - It can be tricky to apply it to our every day lives
    - But when we realize that the reason for all this is our sin, then it becomes very real
- God is holy; and we are not
  - And He must deal with sin
    - And we can either experience God's wrath apart from Christ
      - Or we can become a Christian and be 'in Christ'
        - Where we will not experience God's wrath
- 1 Thes. 5:9 "9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ"

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation." (Rom. 3:24-25)

- The basic meaning of propitiation is "appease" or "satisfy."
  - What did the death of Christ appease or satisfy in the nature of God?
    - In his very nature, God is holy and righteous.
      - He can have no fellowship with anything that is sinful, including sinful men.
- Therefore, God's wrath burns hot against sin and sinners because he must judge all sin.
  - If he doesn't do this, He's not acting according to his perfect character.
    - But, in love, God sent his Son Jesus Christ to be the perfect sacrifice for sin.
      - No mere human being could have atoned for the sins of men because all are sinners.
- But Christ, who was a perfect human as well as truly divine, became the perfect sacrifice for sin.
  - God poured out his wrath against sin on the person of Jesus Christ.
    - The death of Christ appeased God's wrath and satisfied his holy, righteous demands against sin.
- God took out his wrath on Christ instead of on sinners.

- Now anyone who will place his faith and trust in Jesus Christ as personal Savior from sin will receive the forgiveness of sins,
  - and the wrath of God will not come down upon that one
    - Because Christ bore God's wrath on that believer's behalf.
- Why? Christ satisfied the holy, righteous demands of God against sin.
  - Now, through the death of Christ, a holy God and sinful men can meet and God can have fellowship with men.