

The Four Horsemen

Revelation 6:1-8

8/02/07

Intro

John the Apostle has been given a vision of great spiritual importance to us who live in the last days. But in many ways, these are the beginning of the last days. The world stage is changing before our eyes, but these are changes that are setting the stage, as it were, for the revealing of God's wrath upon the earth.

We are currently in the period of time which we could call the "birth pangs" of prophetic fulfillment. Jesus said in **Matthew 24:6-8**, "*You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.*"

The birth pangs will increase until finally the Lord will take the book mentioned in chapter 5 and begin to open the seven seals which seal the scroll. Each of the seals sets forth powerful events of the last days, beginning with what has been famously called, "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse."

That is what we will be studying today as we continue our study through the book of Revelation.

I. The White Horse – The Antichrist

- Some have wondered if this is the same white horse mentioned in Revelation 19. There, without question, that is a picture of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Here, in Revelation 8, this is a picture of the Antichrist that we have heard so much about.

A. He comes as a deceiver

- The fact that this horse is white should not surprise us because we know that deception is the key to understanding the antichrist.

II Corinthians 11:13-15, For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

- Deception is a large part of our society.

Illus – advertising often puts a 'spin' on things to get us to buy. Cigarettes used to be advertised as actually promoting good health. When that no longer worked, they suggested that it made you more rugged and good looking.

- It's also interesting to note that lying and deception is allowed and even encouraged as a means of defending and promoting Islam. There are three occasions for lying in Islamic writings – in war, in settling disputes, and when a husband is trying to make his wife content.
- In the last days, people will not value truth, but will desire simply to have their ears tickled.

II Timothy 4:3-4, For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will

turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

B. He comes as a man of peace

- As we see the events of prophecy unfolding, we will see that Israel will increasingly become the focal point of world events.

Matthew 24:9, “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.”

- There are many who say they have a claim on Jerusalem, which is interesting because its name actually means, ‘possession of peace.’ Jews, Muslims and the Catholic Church all believe that Jerusalem is theirs, though the Jewish claim is obviously consistent with scripture.
- So the “man of peace” comes onto the scene and by amazing skill in diplomacy is able to negotiate a covenant of peace with Israel.
- This is also seen in the prophecies of Daniel.

Daniel 9:27, And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering;

- This will fulfill the words of verse 1 that he will come conquering and to conquer. In other words, he will place himself in a position of great authority over the nations, though he has a bow and no arrows. Many suggest this is a picture of His gaining authority without using an army.

Daniel 8:23-28 Prophecies of the antichrist

C. He comes as a traitor

- He will appear to be a protector of Israel, will be respected by Arab nations, but will be a ruler out of one of the countries of the Old Roman Empire.
- However, when he has won the loyalty and admiration of the leaders of the world, he will betray the covenant he negotiated and betray Israel.

Daniel 9:27, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.

Illus – this was pictured in another time when Israel was under rule by the Greek General Antiochus Epiphanes who governed that region after Alexander the Great died. This man sacrificed a pig in the Holy of Holies, tried to force some Jews to eat it and when they refused had them sacrificed on the Altar of the Lord. The Jews revolted and threw off the oppressor. This is commemorated by the Jewish holiday Hanukkah each year.

Matthew 24:15-16, Therefore when you see the *Abomination of Desolations* which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

- In order for the abomination of desolations prophecy to be fulfilled, there will need to be a Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.
- Many believe that this will be a vital part of the covenant of peace that the Antichrist negotiates.

Illus – Muslims built a mosque near and the Dome on the Rock over the traditional site of the Jewish Temple. Christian scholars believe that it could be possible to build a Jewish Temple next to the Dome of the Rock with a wall separating them. This could possibly fulfill a prophecy in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 42:20, He measured it on the four sides; it had a wall all around, the length five hundred and the width five hundred, to divide between the holy and the profane.

II. Three Horsemen Follow

- We have been focusing on the Antichrist who is represented by the white horse, but the other three will bring great disaster.
 - The scroll itself will not be opened at this point; this is only the breaking of the seals which surround it.
- A. The red horse of war
- First, it is extremely important to note that none of these horsemen can come forth until they are summoned by the living creatures surrounding the throne of God.

- The point is that this is the period of time called the Great Tribulation which is the wrath of God and under the sovereign hand of God.
- The Red Horse represents war, though the word in the Greek for slay is ‘slaughter’ and some have suggested that could also represent sectarian violence.

Illus – the sectarian violence which is seen today in Iraq has been going on for hundreds of years, but in the last days will reach a fever pitch as Islam will become a significant part of last days fulfillment.

- But John also writes that the rider will have a large sword, which represents the devastation of war.

Illus – Today we are seeing the build up of animosity with a newly strengthened Russia (oil was discovered), and China as they become a great world power through economic and military might. This will set the stage for wars to come.

B. The black horse of famine

- The black horse represents famine, but also economic collapse.
- At first, war actually helps the economy as many are employed and production levels are high to supply the war machine;

Illus – “do not touch the oil or the wine” seems to indicate that there will be a group of wealthy people also who have plenty while the rest of the world suffers, adding to the agony of that day. Many wealthy

people keep gold coins in preparation for such a disaster.

Illus – Alfred Nobel amassed a fortune in explosives...

- But at some point widespread war destroys too much and the economic system is destroyed with it. A quart of wheat for a day's wage is disaster.

Illus – Russia went through a period of economic collapse that saw runaway inflation to the point that they had to take three zero's from the currency. Until that point we had to carry huge sums of money to buy simple things.

- We see some indication of what that looks like later in Revelation 13...

Revelation 13:16-17, And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.

C. The ashen horse of death

- The ashen horse represents the death that follows these events and Hades, or hell, following close behind. In other words, death takes the body and Hades takes the soul.

Illus – Many are disturbed by the thought of hell, but God is just and righteous and we can depend that hell is also a righteous and just response to the rebellion of the world.

- There are several ways that death will come and it will take a fourth of the population of the earth at that time. Sword and famine, but also with pestilence, or plagues, and wild beasts.
- Plagues could mean the spread of disease as conditions deteriorate, but also refer to biological warfare and also radiation sickness from radiation clouds that are carried by the wind from nuclear explosions.

App – As we read these prophecies it is important to remember that God promised that the church will not endure the wrath of God.

I Thessalonians 5:9-10, For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

- We are also not to have fear.

II Timothy 1:7, For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.