

The Horseman

📖 Revelation 6:1-8

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In Rev 4-5 the scene begins with John being taken up into heaven to see in vision the True Temple of God, which I take to be the Supreme Headquarters of the Universe. Central to the Temple is the throne and the Father who sits upon the throne. The picture is the preparations in heaven for judging the earth. Beneath and around Him are the war council consisting of four living angelic beings and twenty-four elders sitting on twenty-four thrones. They worship Him because He created all things. Attention is then drawn to a scroll sitting upon the right palm of the Father. The scroll contains the eviction measures necessary to remove the earthdwellers and restore the earth to its pre-Fall conditions. Because no one is found worthy to take the scroll and break its seals John weeps. Then one of the twenty-four elders informs John that there is One who has overcome and is able to break the seals. This one is a Lamb, standing, as if slain, signifying the sacrificial death of Messiah and His resurrection at the first coming, but also He is a Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David coming to reign in glory at the second coming. Upon seeing that He is able to take the scroll and break its seals, worship erupts beginning with the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures singing a new song, expanding to include an innumerable host of angels and at last to every creature in the universe. The stage in heaven is now set. As heaven rules earth the scene now moves to earth where the judgments will begin.

These begin with the seal judgments. To review, the scroll has seven seals and as each seal is broken by the Lamb judgments take place on earth. When the seventh seal is broken seven angels appear with seven trumpets. The seventh seal is the seven trumpets. As each trumpet is blown judgments take place on earth. When the seventh angel is about to sound the mystery of God is finished because the seventh trumpet is the seven bowls, which are the final judgments necessary to remove the kingdom of this world and to establish the kingdom of Christ in its millennial expression.

Starting with the first seal in Rev 6:1, we recall from our study in Daniel that there will be 70 sevens or 490-years scheduled for Israel and Jerusalem until the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. Isaac Newton considered this prophecy to be a mathematical certainty. The first 483 years concluded with the Triumphal Entry and since He was rejected by that generation of Israel, the calendar went into postponement so that the final seven years still remain. The last seven years will begin when the anti-Christ makes a firm covenant with the nation Israel. But

that presupposes that the nation Israel is back in the land as a distinguishable national entity. That's why we studied Ezek 37, the dry bones and how two phases of regathering are described there; one in unbelief, which is currently in process, and one in belief, which is near the end of the Tribulation time. In 1948 they became a viable national entity so that at least that pre-requisite is in place for the anti-Christ to make a covenant with them. I take it that although there is no explicit mention of this covenant in Rev 6:1, it is essentially at this time that he makes the covenant. But for that to take place the Church has to have already been removed. 2 Thess 2, the apostasy, or absence of the faith on earth has to happen first, and that's a result of the Church being removed, then after the apostasy comes the revealing of the anti-Christ. He has many revealings; his signs, miracles and wonders, the number of his name as 666, the signing of this covenant with the nation Israel, the abomination of desolation, etc.... But clearly for the nation Israel to enter into a covenant with him he already has to be someone very powerful. What I am saying here is when the rapture of the Church happens, the apostasy is the result on earth, and then the anti-Christ will begin his meteoric rise to power. According to Daniel 7 there will also be ten kings in the European Theater and the anti-Christ will arise among them and become an eleventh king. So the ten kings would already be in place. They could be in place before the rapture as part of the stage being set. Or they could come after the rapture. But either way after the rapture things will begin to take place very quickly. Assuming all of that, I think the order will be the rapture, the apostasy, the ten kings, the revealing of the antichrist arising among the ten kings, and then the signing of the covenant which will begin the final seven years of Daniel's 490-year calendar. And I think the signing of the covenant corresponds to Rev 6:1. When we looked at the Olivet Discourse in Matt 24 we saw the events that immediately precede the kingdom, and this is also a picture of the final seven years. So Matt 24-25 are a mini-Revelation. In 24:5 Jesus mentioned many coming in His name saying they are the Christ. This is a plurality of anti-Christ's; the anti-Christ will be among them. In 24:6 Jesus said the Jews will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. In 24:7, Jesus explains this as nation will rise against nation, which is local wars, and kingdom against kingdom, which is confederacies of nations joining in conflict against other confederacies of nations. Also famines, on a global scale, and earthquakes, on a global scale. These things are referred to by Jesus as "the beginning of birth pangs." And these things in Matt 24:4-8 are all the things described in Rev 6. So the beginning of birth pangs is Rev 6. And what I am saying is that the early part of the Olivet Discourse given by Jesus is parallel to Rev 6 and this is all the final seven years of Daniel's 490-year calendar. So you can see that all of what we have been doing this last year has been building to this point.

Now as to chronology of the seven years, I place the seals and the trumpets in the first half and the bowls in the second half. There's good reason for that as you follow the flow in Revelation. The writing style is what is commonly called oriental. By oriental I don't mean Chinese. I mean the area of the Levant or Middle East was known in the ancient world as the orient. The Hebrews followed the oriental writing style. This style followed a pattern much like modern journalistic style of writing where a chronology of events is stated and then the author goes back and gives highlights. This style of writing is found in Gen 1-2. Gen 1 gives the chronology; day

one, second day, third day, fourth day and so on. Gen 2 then backs up and highlights the most important day, the sixth day and the creation of man in God's image, his mandate, marriage, etc... There's no conflict between Gen 1 and 2, it's just the oriental writing style common to the Hebrew people. Other parts of the Bible that follow that writing style include Ezek 38-39, the Olivet Discourse, and the Revelation. Rev 6 is a chronology; seal one, seal two, seal three, seal four, seal five, seal six, then before the seventh seal in Rev 7 he backs up and gives important events that occur during the first six seals. So Rev 7 really overlaps with Rev 6. Then in Rev 8 he moves on to the seventh seal, which is the seven trumpets, the trumpets blow sequentially; trumpet one, trumpet two, trumpet three, trumpet four. Rev 9 continues with trumpet five, trumpet six. Then you have the seven peals of thunder, which no one knows what those are exactly, and then in Rev 10 the seventh angel is about to sound and yet he does not sound yet, and he backs up in Rev 10 and 11 to explain other important events that overlap with the trumpets. So much of Rev 10 and 11 overlap with Rev 8 and 9. That brings us through the seals and the trumpets up to the mid-point of the seven years. Then in Rev 12 he gives us background to the anti-Christ, the ages long conflict between Satan and God so we can understand Rev 13, what the anti-Christ does at the abomination of desolation, the false prophet, Rev 14 the victory of the 144,000 and Rev 15 the preparations in heaven for the bowl judgments, the last of the judgment of God. In Rev 16 the bowls are described as punishing judgments. Then in Rev 17-18 he backs up and describes mystery Babylon, which overlaps with the second half bowl judgments. Then Rev 19 picks up with the day of the Second Coming. Rev 20 with the Millennium, etc... My point is to show you the writing style and why I think the style of writing is telling us the sequence is seals and trumpets in the first half and bowls in the second half.

Our exposition today begins in Rev 6:1. **Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come."** The expression **Then I saw** signifies a continuation of the vision John began to see in heaven in 4:1. Thomas wrote, "All events in the apocalyptic section of the book are initiated from the throne described in chapter 4 . . . , and must be understood in that light. Though indirect, all that transpires under the seals is an implementation of the 'book of doom' through the agency of the Lamb introduced in chapter 5."¹ At this time John **saw...the Lamb break one of the seven seals**. This reveals information previously concealed. Garland said, "Each time, with the opening of a seal, nothing is read from the scroll (Lanski), but actions occur that unquestionably match the corresponding part of the scroll exposed through each consecutive seal."² The agent who initiates the action on behalf of the Lamb is said to be **one of the four creatures**. This is one of the four living angelic creatures we met in Rev 4 that sits in the immediate vicinity of the Father's throne in heaven. He either has the face of a lion, signifying nobility, an ox, signifying strength, a man, signifying intelligence, or an eagle, signifying speed. Each of the four living creatures will be the agent of one of the four seals broken by the Lamb. These facts indicate that the events which are about to take place on the earth ultimately come from the Lamb. They are judgments of the Lamb. Confirmation that this is the wrath of the Lamb is seen by the fact that under each of the first four seals the phrase "it was given" (*διδωμι*) is used to describe the events which subsequently take place. These things could not take place

on earth were it not for the Lamb. The form of the wrath is what we expect if we are familiar with the wrath of God unleashed upon Egypt during the Exodus or the judgments upon Israel's enemies during the Conquest; wars, natural disasters, famines, earthquakes, and the like....Thus, as to the form, these things have been seen before. However, the severity of these things has never been seen before. Garland said, "Human history records a litany of wars, natural disasters, famines, and the like, but what is about to come forth upon the earth is *completely unique*." The reason it can be described as completely unique is because for the first time in history a certain hidden restraint upon men, probably effected by the Holy Spirit, is removed. This will allow man's fleshly lusts to be express itself in an extreme manner. Since the first four seals are at least familiar in form to historical events it is not until the sixth seal when heavenly phenomena take place that unbelievers recognize what is transpiring as the wrath of the Lamb (6:15-17). Nevertheless, all of the seals are the wrath of the Lamb. They are the first steps of the Lamb toward removing His enemies from the earth in order to establish the kingdom of God.

In 6:1 John **saw the Lamb** break **one of the seven seals** and then John **heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come."** The sound of the angelic creature's voice **as thunder** signifies judgment. The command to **"Come"** is addressed to a horseman and his horse. Each horseman will be given something unique. Each horse will be a different color. The relationship between what is given and the color seems to be in the effects that take place. The significance of a **horse** is that it was the war machine of John's day. Therefore, the effects are the war machine of the Lamb.

The first horseman and his horse are seen in 6:2. John says **I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.** The color **white** can have many significations. In this context it signifies peace, because in verse 3 "peace" is taken "from the earth." Therefore, the **white horse** signifies **peace**. That will be the effect of this horseman's judgment, a temporary establishment of peace. The horseman is variously identified. An older identification is that he is Christ because in Rev 19 Christ is seen returning to earth on a white horse to establish peace on earth. However, the different timing and contexts argue for this not being Christ, but a counterfeit Christ. The counterfeit Christ is the anti-Christ. He attempts to counterfeit Christ by establishing a counterfeit peace. It would be strange if the anti-Christ was not introduced in connection with the beginning of the seven years since this is when he will make the treaty with Israel for seven years. If this is correct, in terms of Daniel, the ten kings have already arisen to power and this is the eleventh king arising among them. Now, if we identify the first horseman as an individual, as I have done, then to be consistent we have to identify all the other horsemen as individuals. It is my suggestion that all four horsemen are the same horseman. And I suggest they are all the anti-Christ. I think that he is the major actor on earth during the final seven years and I think it would be odd if Rev 6 did not begin by tracing the career of the anti-Christ. There are some who think that it is not possible for God to release the anti-Christ but in Zech 11:16 the Lord said, "Behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the

fat sheep and tear off their hoofs. Woe to the worthless shepherd..." The worthless shepherd seems to be the anti-Christ and God is the one who will raise him up. None other could. Therefore, I am positing that the first four seals are all descriptions of the career of the anti-Christ.

The anti-Christ is seen first with **a bow**. A **bow** is an instrument of warfare. He uses it to go **out conquering and to conquer**. However, he does not have any arrows for his **bow**. This seems paradoxical. How can one conquer without weapons? The way anti-Christ conquers the world is with a message of peace. His message will be that the way to world peace is through disarmament. This is not surprising considering that this is already an idea that is widely promoted by progressive utopianism. Apparently the anti-Christ will be successful at winning the world over with this argument. His means is deception. 2 Thess 2:9 says that he comes "in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness." Heightened demonic activity will be a highlight of the Tribulation time. The anti-Christ will become for the world their Messiah, one who can finally accomplish the dream of world peace. His means disarmament. Stedman said, "The rider of Revelation 6 is given a bow, but there is no mention of arrows. This suggests that his conquest is a bloodless one. It pictures the conquest of the world by the Antichrist as taking place by the overpowering of the minds and wills of human beings, without the physical destruction of war. It will take place not by force but by deceit, by lying that misleads people and nations without the shedding of blood." The world will disarm and a temporary peace will be established. However, it will not last. 1 Thess 5:3 says, "While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape." The "peace and safety" will be short-lived. The reason is because the Lamb will break the second seal and the effects are peace is taken from the earth.

Revelation 6:3, **When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come."** This is another of the four living angelic creatures. He is an agent of the Lamb. Nothing was read from the scroll but the command to "**Come**" is clearly the action that corresponds to that part of the scroll. The command is addressed to the horseman and his horse. 6:4, **And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was given to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.** The second **horse** is **red**. **Red** signifies war and bloodshed. Because this verse says it took **peace from the earth**, war will be the result of this horseman's judgment. This horseman, like all the others, is the anti-Christ. After he has established peace by disarmament, he will go to war. According to Daniel, when he arises among the ten kings as an eleventh, he will put down three kings. It is very likely that he does this at this point. He will begin his warmongering as described in Dan 11:38 where it says "he will honor a god of fortresses..." and in verse 39 where it says, "He will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god..." Since the first seal was peace by way of disarmament, then the only implements of war will be ancient weapons. They will hammer their plowshares into swords. All battles during the seven year Tribulation are described in terms of ancient weapons. Most think this is impossible and the wars will be waged with modern weaponry, a nuclear holocaust, but I think they will be waged with ancient implements. So, at this time the anti-Christ will

start to try to take over the earth. In the parallel of Matt 24:6 Jesus said, "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars...For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." It seems that the seals are following right along with the events Jesus announced in the Olivet Discourse. Wars will be happening all over the earth, between one nation and another nation, as well as between confederacies of nations and other confederacies of nations. The peace that the anti-Christ established will be suddenly taken away and massive bloodletting will ensue. God's enemies will be killing themselves off in preparation for the Lamb to return and establish His kingdom and true peace on the earth.

Also, some think, and I think possible, that during the second seal the Battle of Ezekiel 38-39 will take place, the battle where the Islamic nations led by a ruler from Russia will come against Israel. This battle takes place in two phases. Ezek 38 describes the first phase when Israel is attacked and God defends her. Ezek 39 describes the second phase when the bones are buried and the wooden implements of war burned. The second seal would be a good time to place the first phase because it is early in the first half of the Tribulation and Israel will be living at peace, undisturbed and in unwallled villages. 6:4 says, **men will slay one another**, and we read of that in Ezek 38 when the Lord confuses the Islamic armies and they begin to fight amongst themselves and kill one another. But the war and bloodshed is bigger than one battle in the land of Israel because the end of the verse says he was given **a great sword**. This is a *μαχαира μεγαλη*, with which he is able to kill many people. It is wars happening all over the planet. So the first seal is temporary peace, a counterfeit peace, the second seal is war and bloodshed.

In 6:5 the Lamb **broke the third seal**, and John says, **I heard the third living creature saying, "Come."** This is another of the four living angelic creatures; either the one like a lion, signifying nobility, the one like an ox, signifying strength, the one like a man, signifying intelligence or the one like an eagle, signifying speed. Each one functions as an agent of the Lamb. This one, like the others, says **"Come."** He is speaking once more to a horseman and his horse. **I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.** The color **black** can have many significations; death, evil, darkness, etc...The signification here is one of the more difficult. Most identify it as famine. They argue that famine is a result of war and since the second seal is war then the third must be famine. That may be, but the fourth seal describes famine by name, so it seems that the third seal does not represent famine. Instead, I suggest this horse represents economic recession. The horseman **had a pair of scales in his hand**. This horseman, once more, is the anti-Christ. He is putting economic policies in place that will result in an economic recession all over the world. This will no doubt be preparatory for his later economic policy requiring one to take his mark; either his name or the number of his name, in order to buy or sell. That economics in view is seen by the fact he had **a pair of scales in his hand**. **A pair of scales** signifies value. In the ancient world scales were used to measure the weight of an item against standards in order to determine the value. The scales are in view.

In 6:6 **And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine."**

This is the first time that we have heard the scroll read. After the two prior seals were broken there was action only. This time John **heard something like a voice**. It came from **the center of the four living creatures**. The only One's in the midst of **the four living creatures** are the Father and the Lamb. This is probably the voice of the Lamb. For the first time John hears Him reading the scroll. The Lamb said, **"A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine."** The **denarius** was the weight of silver due for a day's wages in the ancient world. Here a quart of **wheat** is equal to a **denarius** and **three quarts of barley** is equal to the same day's wage. What this judgment is saying is that a day's wage will purchase either a **quart of wheat** or **three quarts of barley**. **Wheat** was high quality food in the ancient world, whereas **barley** was cheap cattle food. A **quart** of wheat was sufficient to feed a soldier for one day. It would take several quarts of barley to do the same. Therefore, the meaning of **a quart of wheat for a denarius** is that a full day's wages will only result in enough money to buy enough **wheat** for one person. By comparison, in John's day a **denarius** would buy enough **wheat** for 12 or 15 people. If one had a family to feed he might choose instead **three quarts of barley**. **Barley** has much less nutritional value but at least everyone would have something to eat. The point in both cases is the same; the prices for food will be very high because of economic inflation. Of the final phrase, **and do not damage the oil and the wine**, Constable said, "Do not harm" means, "Do not tamper with." The anti-Christ will set strict price controls during that time.³ Stedman said, "Inflation may well be the justification the Antichrist will use to impose rigid controls over buying and selling, as we shall see in Revelation 13. At that time the whole world will be under such tight economic controls that "no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name."

In 6:7 we come to the fourth seal. **When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come."** Once again, **the Lamb** is the only one who can break **the seals**. And once again the last of the four **living** angelic **creatures** utters his voice, **saying, "Come."** The address is to the fourth horseman and his horse. In 6:8, **I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.** The color **ashen**, in the Greek is a "pale green pallor," signifying death. Death is the effect of this judgment. The name of the horseman is **Death**. This is a name of the anti-Christ. He is the one who will bring so much **Death** on the earth through the **authority** that is **given to** him. This is the only horseman and horse that is followed by another. **Hades was following with him. Hades** is the place of the unbelieving dead. When they die their spirits descend to **Hades**. As the followers of the one who is **Death** they quite naturally end up in **Hades**. Constable said, "Perhaps John saw Hades following Death as a man on foot follows a mounted warrior grimly gathering in his victims, or as a hearse follows a horse."⁴ **Authority was given to** anti-Christ, who brings them to their death, and to **Hades**, who gathers in the dead, **over a fourth of the earth**. Whether **a fourth of the earth** is to be understood geographically, as the extent of anti-Christ's rule at this time as he rises to become world ruler at the mid-point, or populationally, as the percentage of earth's people he kills, is not entirely clear. Most consider it a reference to

the percentage of people on earth that he kills. If that's the case, since the current world population is 7 billion, one-fourth of that is 1.875 billion. At this point in the Tribulation an extreme realization will begin to sink in. The world appears to be totally coming to an end. The means by which these 1.875 billion people will die is stated to be four means; first, **with sword**, because the anti-Christ is on a march with his armies to rule the world, second, **with famine**, because the anti-Christ has set economic controls that starve people to death, third, **with pestilence**, because medicine and medical supplies will be in such short supply that fatal illness will abound, and **by the wild beasts of the earth**. Grammatically this final means is distinct and not a cause of the anti-Christ. Wild animals will be feeding on people because of the scarcity of food. This is all the judgment of God; the wrath of the Lamb. He is the one who raises up the worthless Shepherd anti-Christ who is the rider of each of the four horses; the first signifying peace, the second war, the third economic recession, and the fourth death, and those who follow the anti-Christ are quickly shuffled into Hades.

Having evaluated these things, why are such things written to the Church? The Church will not be here during this time? Why then is it written to us? In part to inspire us to witness to our family members, friends, neighbors and co-workers. You don't want them to enter into this time, do you? You don't want them to be left behind wondering, "Why didn't they tell me the truth?" "Why didn't they tell me about Jesus Christ?" "Now I am stuck here in this hell on earth. Another reason, in part, is to remind us of where this world is going and the spiritual and moral forces that are presently at work. When we realize how much God hates these things we are better able to recognize the evil that is so deceptively presented before us, and to stray far from it.

In summary, this is the beginning of the wrath of the Lamb. It begins with the rise of the worthless shepherd. The worthless shepherd is the horseman. The horseman is the anti-Christ. He is on his march to world ruler. He will make the treaty with Israel. He will disarm the world with a message of peace. He will disrupt the peace with war, keeping peace with Israel and bringing many to believe in him. He will bring economic recession by his economic policies causing the world to fall before him. He brings about the death of ¼ of the world's population, giving the world the impression that he cannot be defeated.

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 6:2.

² Tony Garland, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*.

³ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 6:6.

⁴ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 6:8.