

September 28, 2010

Four Horsemen, Martyrs, and the Wrath of the Lamb

Text: Revelation 6:1-17



This vision, as with all the following, comprises all of human history from Christ's ascension to the End.

Brighton: They (the visions) are presented so as to portray conditions, circumstances, situations, environments, and contexts in which people find themselves during the time period covered. (p.150)

The end result of these visions is NOT a predictable course of human history.

The end result of these visions IS a predictable view of the human condition- in suffering due to Sin
The purpose is to move all who hear it to repentance and faith before the End.

¹Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" ²And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

Why Horses and Horsemen? The horses & horsemen symbolize tribulations that humans frequently experience. → In apocalyptic literature, if an author wants to portray events common to human experience, he uses symbols taken from earthly life (horses and riders). If he wants to portray supernatural events, beyond human experience, he creates symbols which do not exist in experiential human knowledge (like the demonic locusts we will see in Chapter 9).

Also see Zechariah 6:1-8

- + White Horse- Parthian military leaders rode white horses into battle. White is also the color of God's majesty and wisdom, holiness, righteousness- the rider believes this is his divine right. White is also the color of victory.
- + Bow- the symbol of intention to conquer by military might, Parthians were the only mounted archers in the ancient world.
- + Crown- in the rider's conquest, he will be victorious

Who is this horseman and what does he represent?

Brighton: "The rider of the white horse symbolizes and represents every form of tyranny which is won and acquired by power and force, usually warfare or forms of it, and which then by a dictatorial rule exploits, enslaves, dominates, and terrorizes." (p. 163)

³When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" ⁴And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

- + Bright Red Horse- representing blood
- + "Permitted to take peace from the earth"- instigate warfare and/or unlawful killing
- + Great Sword- symbolizes the rider's role as Destroyer of Peace

Who is this horseman and what does he represent?

⁵When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶And I heard what seemed to be 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 wine!"

- + Black Horse- black is the color of death, associated most often with Famine (Jer 14:1-2)
- + Pair of scales- used for measuring out foods according to volume- economy
- + "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!"
 - a denarius is one day's wages.
 - there is an economic imbalance in the supply of food and the daily necessities of life
 - despite human adjustments, hunger and starvation ensue

Who is this horseman and what does he represent?

⁷When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" ⁸And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

- + Pale Horse- "pale" in Greek is the word for a person who is ill and the color of death.
- + "Name was Death, and Hades followed him."- Hades is broadly death & the grave, narrowly it is the place of judgment & punishment.
- + Authority over a fourth of the earth- death has an extensive reign, yet it is only beginning
- + Sword, famine, pestilence, wild beasts- these are violent deaths inflicted on Christians during the time of Nero and Domitian

SUCCESSION OF THE FOUR HORSES= What follows Tyranny is Bloodshed, what follows Bloodshed is Famine, and the final result is Death and the Grave.

⁹When 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 witness they had borne. ¹⁰They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

- + Under the altar- could be the altar of sacrifice, but more likely it is the incense altar, also seen in Rev 8:3-5. Jewish tradition held that there was only one altar in Heaven- the incense/prayer altar.

Is there any need for an altar of sacrifice in Heaven? Is there a need for a prayer altar?

- + The souls of those who had been slain for the word of God... witness- speaking of martyrs, how can this characterize ALL Christians?
- + Why are they calling for vengeance? Psalms 79:10; 94:1-6 and all "imprecatory Psalms"
- + White robe- of the OT priests- the priests who offered prayers on the incense altar (Rev 5:10)

¹²When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, ¹³and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. ¹⁴The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

The 6th Seal is the End of this world & the terror experienced! It is the OT "Day of the Lord"

Verse 12

- + Great Earthquake- Joel 2:1-11, Hebrews 12:26-28
- + Sun became black as sackcloth- Joel 2:30-31, Mark 13:24-27
- + Full moon became like blood- Joel 2:30-31

Verse 13

- + the stars fell to the earth- Isaiah 34:1-4, 2 Peter 3:12-13

Verse 14

- + The sky vanished like a scroll being rolled up- Isaiah 34:1-4
- + "Every mountain and island was removed from its place"- new earth is on the way

Verse 15

- + Why does everyone from the richest to the poorest hide?

Verse 16

+ the wrath of the lamb? I thought the lamb was salvific and the Son of Man was judgmental, what gives? Jesus' salvific work as the Lamb of God makes him worthy to sit as the righteous judge. Jesus appears as BOTH in Rev. 14- the first scene of Christ's second coming.