

THE HORSEMEN WHO ARE NOT COWBOYS Revelation 6:1-8

(Main Idea of the Text)

John described a day in the future when God will pour out indescribable judgment upon the earth.

(Main Idea of this Study)

God will one day pour out judgment upon the earth and only a relationship with Christ will spare you of this judgment.

I. Be aware of God's weapon of deception (the White Horse) (1-2).

A. Deception is under God's control (1).

- *Lamb opened one of the seals*-connection to chapter 5. John was an eyewitness of this revelation that came to him like action scenes in a film, rather than as words from the pages of a book.
- *voice like thunder*-thunder signals and impending storm and this thunder signaled the coming storm of God's judgment.
- "*Come and see*"-"See" is not found in many ancient manuscripts. "Come" is in the imperative mood and it is a command from God for the horsemen to come forth.

B. Deception will come to conquer (2).

- *a white horse*-A horse was a war machine/animal in his day. The horse was "white," symbolizing victory, righteousness, and holiness. White has these connotations in other places in Scripture. A Roman conqueror typically rode a white horse in a triumphant procession. The horse gave an appearance of purity, but that does not necessarily mean the rider was righteous.
- *a bow*-An instrument for war but note there are no arrows. It is worthless without arrows.
- *and a crown was given to him*-Someone, evidently God, gave him an imperial "crown" (Gr. *stephanos*), anticipating an authoritative career.
- *went out conquering and to conquer*-He was given authority to go about conquering. But here is the real mystery, who is riding the white horse? Several possibilities have been put forth: Jesus (Revelation 19:11-16, however in the passage Jesus wears a *diadema* (diadem) crown), the advance of the gospel, Apollo (representing false religion), the antichrist, the spirit of conquest, the government persecuting Christians or Satan's servants in general, the Roman emperor, warfare, or triumphant militarism. The most probable view is that this is a prophecy of Antichrist, who will make a covenant with Israel, but only as a pretense for destroying the Jews (cf. Dan. 9:27; 1 Thess. 5:3).

Matthew 24:4-5: And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

II. Be aware of God's weapon of war (the Red Horse) (3-4).

A. Destruction is inevitable (3).

- *He opened the second seal*-The Lamb is fully in control.
- *I heard the second living creature saying*-One of the creatures that surrounded the throne.
- "*Come and see*"-The rider of the red horse was summoned to come forth.

B. Destruction is immense (4).

- *Another horse, fiery red-purros*, similar to *pur*, fire flame-colored, blood-red, only here and in 12:3 in the NT. It most likely symbolizes, death, bloodshed and/or war.
- *it was granted to the one who sat on it*-Again, divine authority is given to the rider. All of this destruction is fully under the sovereign control of God.
- *to take peace from the earth*-The false peace brought by horseman 1 will be removed and replaced with war.
- *people should kill one another*-Men will kill one another on a large scale.

If we observe the Olivet Discourse parallelism, the time when peace ends is probably before the middle of the Tribulation (cf. Matt. 24:6-7a; Mark 13:7-8a; Luke 21:9-10).

- *was given to him a great sword*-This was the small Roman sword called "machaira." It was worn on the belt of Roman soldiers and was used for capital punishment of Roman citizens.

Matthew 24:9: Then they will deliver you up to tribulation **and kill you**, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

III. Be aware of God's weapon of famine (the Black Horse) (5-6).

A. Famine is unstoppable (5).

- *When He opened the third seal*-Jesus is still powerful and sovereignly in control.
- *I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see."*-Imperative again.
- *I looked, and behold, a black horse*-Black is associated with famine in Lamentations 5:10. Famine is a logical conclusion to war. Food supplies, factories, farms are destroyed along with those who farmed the land and produced food.
- *had a pair of scales in his hand*-A picture of the rationing that will result from the famine. In John's day scales were used to weigh and measure grain.

B. Famine will be unbearable (6).

- *And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying-* same voice from the midst of the throne, it may have been the voice of God Himself.
- *quart of wheat for a denarius-*A denarius was a day's wage for a soldier or a laborer. This would purchase the normal amount of food required for one man for one day. This shows the severity of the famine: that a man could work all day and have only enough food for himself.
- *three quarts of barley for a denarius-*The prices of both "wheat" (good food) and "barley" (cheap cattle food) will be very high. A quart of wheat will provide one day's ration for a person, but it will cost a whole day's wages.
- *do not harm the oil and the wine-*There are many interpretations of this detail. These were staples of the diet of Mediterranean people. The fact that these were not hurt shows a limited famine. This limitation can also be seen in v. 8. God limits His judgment so that unbelievers will have time to repent (cf. 16:9). It is also possible that both of these were used for medical purposes. Although the point could be that these foods will not be affected by the famine, a more straightforward meaning is that bare staples—oil was used in the preparation of bread, and wine was considered necessary for cooking and purifying water—suddenly will become luxuries that have to be carefully protected. Matthew 24:7-8: For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be **famines, pestilences**, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

IV. Be aware of God's weapon of death (the Pale Horse) (7-8).

A. Death is controlled (7).

- *Come and see-*Same voice, same call, same command, same control.

B. Death will be comprehensive (8).

- *a pale horse-*The term "pale" referred to a yellowish green or off-white color. In English we get the word "chlorine" from this Greek word. It was possibly the color of a dead body. The Greek word describes vegetation elsewhere (8:7; 9:4; Mark 6:39).
- *the name of him who sat on it was Death-*"Hades," also known as the "Place of Departed Spirits," which claims unbelieving people's immaterial part at death, followed on his heels. Death claims the material part of the person, and Hades the immaterial part. Again, this is the inevitable result of war and famine.
- *power was given to them over a fourth of the earth-*God gave Death and Hades "authority" to take one-fourth of the world's population. This evidently is the total number that will die as a result of all the catastrophes predicted so far.

- *and by the beasts of the earth*-Attacks by "wild animals (beasts)" will also contribute to the death rate or the wild animals will feed on the dead corpses of those who have died because of starvation. Presently the world's population is over seven billion people. These initial calamities would reduce this total population number by one and a half billion people.