

Revelation 6:1-2  
 The Tribulation and the White Horse Rider  
 Study 22

Chapter 6 of the book of Revelation this morning.

- This is our 22<sup>nd</sup> study through this letter
  - It's taken us 6 months to get to the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter in this book...so we're right on schedule 😊
- This morning I initially planned to work through the first 8 verses and look at the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse
  - However, I found the Lord had taken me a different route
    - So this morning we will be looking at an introduction to the tribulation period
      - And an introduction to the first seal and the rider on the white horse
- Let's still read the first 8 verses so we find ourselves with context

**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." **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 of wheat for a denarius, 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."

The apostle John has been translated from the Isle of Patmos and brought, by Jesus, into the presence of God.

- The two previous chapters - chapters 4 and 5 - have been a glorious time of worship with all creation
  - Those chapters are filled with praises and worship and singing
    - As the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, is found to be the only One worthy
      - to take the 7 sealed scroll from the right hand of the Father
- But now, as we enter into chapter 6, the tenor of the book changes radically
  - We are now entering the time of what is known as “The Tribulation period” and God’s wrath has come

Jesus has taken the scroll from the Father, and has begun to break the seals thereby revealing it’s content

- and initiating a 7-year tribulation period
  - This tribulation period is contained within the 7 sealed scroll and begins with the opening of the seals
    - Thereby, unleashing God’s wrath upon the earth and setting for 3 sets of judgments.
      - Those judgments are called in the book of Revelation
        - ***The Seal judgments, the Trumpets judgments and the Bowls of wrath judgments***
- To help understand what we’re looking at, if we were to look at the scroll this morning, what you’d see is a scroll sealed on the top- on the edges
  - So when you break one, it unravels a little ways and you can see what’s written on it
    - And then the next seal is broken and you can then see more
- When the first seal is broken, it reveals the first judgment – the white horse
  - Then the second seal is broken and that reveals the fiery red horse and the judgment brought on by that rider
    - And so forth

When we get to the 7<sup>th</sup> seal, that’s most of the message of the scroll

- Meaning that the rest of the scroll unravels when the 7<sup>th</sup> seal is unbroken
  - When we come to the 7<sup>th</sup> seal, that message unveils the remainder of the judgments
    - Containing the 7 trumpet judgments

- And when we come to the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet message – which is at the mid-point of the 7 year tribulation period (at 3.5 years)
  - That 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet message contains the 7 last plagues that are called the Bowls of Wrath
    - Which are poured out upon the earth
- And so this tribulation period that begins with the 7 broken seals and culminates at the last plague – or last bowl
  - All is God’s wrath unleashed on an unbelieving and Christ rejecting world

Now, at this point I think it’s necessary to clarify a very important point.

- Let’s look together at a few verses in Revelation and then I’ll make my point
  - Look at verse 15 in chapter 6, at the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> seal we read
    - **15** And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, 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?”
  - Rev. 11:18, at the sounding of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet we read - “The nations were angry, and *Your wrath has come*, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth.””
    - Rev. 15:1 - “Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, *for in them [that is, in the 7 plagues] the wrath of God is complete*
      - Rev. 16:1 - “Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the bowls of the *wrath of God on the earth*”
        - Revelation 16:17, at the 7<sup>th</sup> plague (or bowl)
          - “**17** Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “*It is done!*”
- Notice the progression here in the book

- The seal judgments tells us that the great day of His wrath has come
  - And then in the trumpet judgments we see the wrath of God has come
    - Rev 15 talks tells us that in the last 7 plagues the wrath of God is complete
      - And when the last bowl is poured out the Lord says “it is finished”
        - The wrath of God is done!

Here’s my point in all this:

- There are some who believe and teach that the wrath of God is only at the end of the tribulation
  - That the wrath of God only applies to the 7 last plagues
    - This has lead to a teaching that the rapture of the church
      - will happen sometime during the tribulation period - before the wrath
        - and so it is called the Pre-wrath rapture of the church
  - Meaning that Christians will go through a portion of the tribulation
    - But be raptured – or “taken out” to be with Jesus - before the wrath of God is poured out on the earth
      - Because, as 1 Thes. 5:9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ”
- The most well known book on the subject is from a guy named Marv Rosenthal called “The Pre-wrath Rapture of the Church”
  - A book I read many years ago.
    - Though well done, it wasn’t enough to convince me then, and I’m not convinced now either

For me, when I read these verses and see the chronology, it helps me understand more clearly.

- The wrath of God is seen throughout the entire tribulation period
  - And, as I see it, the wrath of God begins at the seal judgments and runs throughout the entire tribulation period
    - Culminating at the last bowl that’s poured out when God says “it is done!”

Let's talk about this wrath of God in the tribulation period for a moment and ask the question of "why". Favorite question!

- Why is God's wrath even poured out to begin with? What is its primary function?
  - What is the purpose of God's wrath as it's being poured out on the earth during this 7-year tribulation period?
    - I think the Bible gives a few reasons
- First, it is to finish God's discipline of the nation of Israel. This is why this period is also known as "The Time of Jacob's Trouble"
  - Jeremiah 30:7 "Alas! For that day *is* great, So that none *is* like it; And it *is* the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it."
    - God's reasoning for His discipline of the nation of Israel - as is His reasoning for all discipline
      - is so that they would turn back to God and receive their Messiah
        - This is one reason for God's wrath in the tribulation period
- We also see God's wrath being poured out to judge the unbelieving, godless people on the earth
  - These are those that have rejected the love of God offered to them
    - And instead, rebelled against their creator and refused to surrender to Him and receive His forgiveness for sin

One last reason I'll offer up for God's wrath during the tribulation period that the bible talks about:

- God's wrath is poured out on the earth to avenge the blood of the saints spilled by the enemies of God
  - 6:10 - "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?"
    - 16:6 - "5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.""
      - 17:6 - "6 I saw the woman [*who sits on the 7 headed beast*], drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."
- 18:20 – when we see the fall of Babylon "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and *you* holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her"

- 18:24 - “and in her [in the great city of Babylon] was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth”
  - 19:2 - scene in heaven after the trib, during the worship in heaven - “For true and righteous *are* His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants *shed* by her.””
- Why will God unleashed His wrath to such a volume and degree like never before?
  - The answer, is to avenge the blood of the saints who have been killed by the wicked system and wicked people of this world
    - God will not let the wicked go unpunished and in His love, will avenge the blood of His children

I take this verse as applicable to those in the Middle East right now who are being slain for their love of Jesus

- God will avenge their blood one day
  - I take comfort in that.
    - Not because I don't have sadness for those on whom the Lord has unleashed His wrath – though they deserve it absolutely
      - But because God is a righteous God. A just and holy God
        - He will set everything right according to His righteousness – and not man's
- The one who walked the hills of Galilee - our gentle loving Savior
  - Who died on the cross for our sins and rose again
    - Will one day be executing wrath upon this world like this world has never seen

And this tribulational wrath will be unprecedented. It will be like nothing anyone has ever seen or experienced before

- Joel 2:11 “For the day of the LORD is **great** and **very terrible**; Who can endure it?”
  - Nahum 1:6 “Who can stand before His **indignation**? And who can endure the **fierceness** of His **anger**? His **fury** is poured out like fire, And the rocks are thrown down by Him.”
    - Mal.3:2 “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?”

- Zeph. 1:14 “The great day of the Lord *is* near; *It is* near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter; There the mighty men shall cry out.**15** That day *is* a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, **16** A day of trumpet and alarm Against the fortified cities And against the high towers.
  - **17** “I will bring distress upon men, And they shall walk like blind men, ***Because they have sinned against the Lord***; Their blood shall be poured out like dust, And their flesh like refuse.”
    - **18** Neither their silver nor their gold Shall be able to deliver them In the day of the Lord’s wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured By the fire of His jealousy, For He will make speedy riddance Of all those who dwell in the land.”
- The day of God’s wrath, the tribulation period, is a day that IS coming upon the whole earth
  - And it is unlike anything you could imagine
    - And let me tell you something - you do not want to be here for it
      - Jesus warns in Matt 24:22 that “unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”
- The only way you won’t be here for it if it happens in our lifetime
  - Is to surrender to Jesus today.
    - To repent and receive Jesus as savior

But let me pause for a moment of genuine reflection and bring a moment of reality into this

- When we see God’s terrible wrath and the suffering and devastation that is coming upon the earth
  - Let us not think for a moment that God’s judgment comes without His kindness. Without mercy and grace first
    - What do I mean by that?
- I think often people look at the wrath being poured out
  - and wrongfully conclude that God is a vengeful, merciless, judgmental God of wrath
    - Forgetting that judgment was not first – grace and mercy were.

We must never forget, that what proceeds God’s judgment on earth

- Was that God came in flesh in the person of Jesus Christ

- To die on the cross in our place
  - Taking upon Himself the wrath of God that we so deserved
- And that those who receive Jesus and become born again
  - Will never experience the wrath of God because
    - Again, God in human flesh took that wrath that our sins deserve
      - He took it upon Himself so that we who are in Christ Jesus do not have to experience it
- And this is the kindness of God:
  - That the cross proceeds judgment
    - God brought to us first mercy and grace in the Person of Jesus Christ

We must also remember that judgment is followed by His righteous rule and reign and establishment of His kingdom (Merrick)

- The renewal of all things; the reversal of everything that has gone on
  - No more sorrow, no more pain, no more suffering – all things made new
- So, judgment, even though it is horrific, wasn't first
  - Mercy and grace were
    - Nor is judgment the final word: Righteousness and renewal are
- Mercy and grace were needed because sin deserves to be judged
  - And if there is going to be righteousness and renewal on the earth, sin must be judged

That's an introduction to the tribulation period.

- Of course there is much more and we'll look at that as we move along in the book
  - But let's finish up this morning with an introduction to the first rider in verse 1 and 2

**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."

- When Jesus opened one of the seals – John hears one of the four living creatures invite him to come and see
  - To look at what's going to take place now that the seal has been broken
    - And there seems to be quite an intensity about
      - Given the voice came over like thunder.



- It strikes me that John was given such a privileged to see what no man has seen before
  - But, then again, here we are, privileged to be reading what God had shown John
    - We may not have been eye witnesses like John
      - But we are blessed nonetheless to have this information at our fingertips
- **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.

This is the first of four horses of different colors and four horsemen (possibly there are 5, but we'll ponder that next week 😊)

- When the first seal is broken, it reveals a white horse and a rider
  - Horses, in the bible, are often a symbol of power – often military power
- And on this horse is a rider
  - That rider is described as having a bow and a crown
    - And his mission is to go out conquering and to conquer

There is much discussion surrounding the identity of this rider upon the white horse

- and it would be good for us to enter into that discussion
  - And really there are two main camps on who this rider is
- There are many who believe that this is Jesus
  - Turn with me to chapter 19
    - **“11** Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called **Faithful and True**, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. **12** His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on **His head *were* many crowns**. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. **13** He *was* clothed with a **robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God**. **14** And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. **15** Now out of His mouth goes a **sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations**. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. **16** And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

- Now, of course there is no question who this is describing.
  - This is Jesus Christ riding out of heaven to judge and war at the battle of Armageddon
- And there are some similarities between this description and that of our text in chapter 6
  - Both ride a white horse, both wear a crown, and both are victorious in their pursuit

But, even though there are similarities, the differences in their description tells us that this is not Jesus

- First, notice that the rider in chapter 6 is wearing a crown – one crown
  - Whereas Jesus in chapter 19 wears multiple crowns
- Also, the word for crown in chapter 6 is the Greek word <stephanos> meaning a victor's crown.
  - Like a wreath given to someone who's won a contest. It's a temporary crown
    - Jesus, on the other hand is seen wearing multiple diadems
      - Unlike <stephanos>, <diadem> is not a victors crown but a Sovereign's crown
        - It's a king's crown. The crown of a sovereign ruler
- Notice also that Jesus has a sharp sword in which to strike the nations
  - But in chapter 6, the rider has a bow.
    - Notice also that this rider in chapter 6 sets forth at the beginning of the tribulation
      - Whereas Jesus rides forth at its end

It's clear then that this is not Jesus, but rather someone else.

- It may look like Jesus, it may imitate Jesus in many ways and try to pass himself off as Messiah-like
  - But it's not Jesus
- We also know it's not Jesus because Jesus here in chapter 6 is seen as the One breaking the seals
  - And sending out the horsemen
    - It would be illogical for the same person to be opening the seals and sending himself forth
- Besides, If Christ rides forth here, who is it that remains in heaven to open the remaining seals.
  - This is not Jesus.

- It's someone who looks like Jesus in some ways
  - But after closer examination, we see that it's not
    - So who is it?

To answer that, we need to look at Matt 24.

- Matt 24 is a passage of scripture that talks about the tribulation period
  - From beginning to end, Matthew describes the entire 7 year tribulation period
    - And if we were to lay the book of Revelation in terms of chronology of events
      - Side by side with Matthew 24
        - We would find an uncanny parallel between the progress of chapter 6 as a whole
          - And the description Jesus gives us of the end of the age in Matt 24
- We don't have the time to look at each one so let me briefly summarize
  - In both passages the order is
    - (1) war (Matt. 24:6–7; Rev. 6:3–4);
      - (2) famine (Matt. 24:7; Rev. 6:5–6);
        - (3) death (Matt. 24:7–9; Rev. 6:7–8); (
          - 4) martyrdom (Matt. 24:9–10, 16–22; Rev. 6:9–11);
    - (5) the sun darkened, the moon darkened, and the stars falling (Matt. 24:29; Rev. 6:12–14);
      - and (6) a time of divine judgment (Matt. 24:32–25:26; Rev. 6:15–17). (Walvoord, John)
        - So it's war, famine, death, martyrdom, and so on

What's interesting to me, is that before war and famine and so on, Matt 24 describes a deception that takes place

- In Matt. 24:4, And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. **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..." and so on
  - In John 5:43 Jesus says "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive"
    - I believe that this is exactly what is being spoken about in Revelation chapter 6

- To an unsuspecting world he *looks* like Messiah, the political savior of mankind,
  - yet he is a deceiver, the *anti-* or *pseudo*-Christ.
    - And I believe that here in Rev 6 is documented the initial appearance of the figure of the Antichrist upon the stage of world history

The Bible describes a the coming of a world leader who will rise to power at the beginning of the tribulation period

- He is who Daniel describes as the little horn – Daniel 7:8, 21, 25
  - He's called the prince to come in Daniel 9:27-27
    - The king who blasphemies in Daniel 11
      - The man of sin and perdition in 2 Thes 2: 3-4
        - The beast in Rev 13
- But more popularly, he is called the Anit-Christ
  - And he is a man who has great power and political influence over the entire world

He's described in Rev 6 as a man with a bow, but no arrows who goes out conquering and to conquer

- Though a bow is a symbol of strength in the bible and the ability to conquer his foes
  - Don't automatically conclude that this is describing a bow that an archer would carry – though it may
    - Interestingly, the first use of the word *bow* in Scripture is just after the flood of Noah's day
      - when God promised He would put a bow in the clouds - what we call a rainbow.
        - That bow was to be the sign of a covenant
- Coupled with his ability to deceive like no other
  - I believe this may be an indication of his initial deception by means of a peace agreement spoken about in Daniel 9:27
    - “Then he shall confirm a **covenant** with many for one week ***[a week here is prophetic language implying a 7 period of time]***; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.

This man that will come on the scene will be a tremendous man of influence and power like never before

- And he will, seemingly, bring an end to the war and fighting in the middle east
  - By making a peace treaty, an agreement, a covenant with the nation of Israel
    - He will be looked at as the savior of the world and people will worship him and his accomplishments
- He will be persuasive and gregarious
  - And the world will follow him
    - Someone once said that he has the “*Oratorical skills of a Winston Churchill / the Determination of a Joseph Stalin / the Vision of a Carl Marx / the respectability of a Ghandi*” (Salvato)
      - *The Military Prowess of a Douglas MacArthur & the Charm of a Will Rogers*

But in reality, he is a big fake. He comes on the scene as the man with the answers to the world’s problems

- But in reality, he is THE deceiver possessed by Satan himself
  - And at the middle point of the tribulation, everything will go to hell in a hand basket
    - 1 Thes 5: **2** For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. **3** For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape”
- This rider is Satan’s masterpiece and the counterfeit of all that Christ is or claims to be.
  - He is therefore cast in the role of a conqueror, which seems to be the significance of the white horse.
    - In biblical times, it was customary for a conqueror to ride in triumph on a white horse. (Walvoord, John F)

When we look at the landscape of the world – politically, the ideologies, the deaths, the war, the a pain and suffering

- And the deception that already exists
  - Do you think that the world is ripe for this type of man?
- The need for a political leader who has the answers to all man’s woes
  - A gregarious leader who will put an end to all the religious fighting by blending all religions of the world...

- we've been seeing this head this way for years with the World Summit of Religious Leaders
  - Trying to get us to see the commonality and ignore the differences
    - There's even a bumper sticker adopted by some in this very vein

Yes...I believe this world is ripe for the deception that is coming upon it?

- Do you believe the world is being set up for this right now?
  - And not just in the world, but even in the church
    - Spiritual deception is rampant and those in the church are allowing this deception to rule and reign unchallenged
      - Yes, we are ripe for a complete deception
- Dan. 11:32 - "*With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.*" (NIV)

But listen Christian, even though we know the Antichrist is coming soon,

- The truth is there are many antichrist's now and they are paving the way for THE deceiver
  - 1 John 2:18 "Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the[a] Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour."
    - **And we who see it coming need to fight the lie with the truth!**

But you might ask how?

- BY RECOGNIZING THE LIE - Gen. 3 Gives Satan's Strategy
  - Questions God's Word - "Did God really say?"
  - Contradicts God's Word - "You will not surely die!"
  - Casts Doubt On God's Character - "God knows.. you'll be like Him."
  - Calls Us to Set Ourselves in God's Place - "You will be like God"
- BY KNOWING THE TRUTH!
  - Do We Know The Truth?
  - BY SPEAKING THE TRUTH!
    - Dan. 12:3 - Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.
- FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

- (Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” 1 Timothy 6:12
  - Remember: Our Weapons are Divinely Powerful –
    - The Word of God which is The Sword of the Spirit and Prayers which are like Guided Missiles.
      - “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,” 2 Corinthians 10:4