**Revelation**

*Lesson 16 – Revelation 6:1-8*

* With the rapid decline of American culture into depravity in the past 60 years (not that American culture was ever perfect before that), it seems that the Church in America has also followed the world’s example. Many denominations have apostatized. Church for many has become a social club or a self-help therapy session with no preaching of Christ, salvation, sin, God’s holiness, etc.
* So I’m sure at times you’ve felt like asking yourself, “Is God really in control?” or “Can I really trust God in all things?” I mean all around us in chaos and corruption both in the world and in the church.
* Having seen the church age from the earthly perspective (Chs 2-3), we are now looking at the church age from a heavenly perspective. In chapter 4 we saw the throne of God and all of creation and the angelic host worshipping Him. God is at the center of all and is sovereign over all. In chapter 5, we saw the book of God which is His eternal plan for the Church and this book could only be opened by the risen and ascended Savior. God’s plan for the Church is carried about and advanced by Jesus Christ.
* “This section describes the operation of the destructive forces that were unleashed immediately on the world as a result of Christ’s victorious suffering at the cross, His resurrection, and His ascent to a position of rule at His Father’s right hand.” –Greg Beale

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|  | Zechariah 1:7-11 // 6:1-8 | Revelation 6:1-8 |
| First Horse | Dark Brown // Dark Brown | White |
| Second Horse | Red // Black | Red |
| Third Horse | Chestnut // White | Black |
| Fourth Horse | White // Dappled-Gray-Bay | Pale |

*Verses 1-2*: The First Seal

1. Jesus opens the first seal on God’s scroll and this causes 1 of the living creatures to bellow out in a thunderous fashion, “Come!” Then John sees a white horse with a rider on it. This will be a common patter in John. He will hear something before he will see something but what he hears and what he sees are always connected.
2. “In Scripture the horse is generally mentioned in connection with the concepts of strength, terror, warfare, and conquest (Isa 30:16, 31:1; Job 39:22-28). In the Apocalypse we have the same association of ideas (Rev 9:7, 14:20, 19:11).” –William Hendricksen
3. “The horses signify that the natural and political disasters throughout the world are caused by Christ in order to judge unbelievers who persecute Christians and in order to vindicate His people.” –Greg Beale
4. There is quite a large debate over the identity of this first horseman. Some take the horseman to be Christ based on a similar description in Rev. 19:11-16 where Christ is riding on a white horse, Rev 14:14 where Christ is wearing a crown and has a weapon in His hand, the color white as a reference to victory or holiness. William Hendricksen & Joel Beeke take this view.
5. Others take the horseman to be the antichrist, some demonic henchman, or some satanic mockery of Jesus (see Rev 12-13). Vern Poythress & Greg Beale take this view.
6. On this view, this is conquest and invasion upon Christians and the Church until Christ returns. This is a destructive agent under the hand of God (“a crown was given to him”). Here “white” is a mockery of Christ’s holiness, purity, and victory as Satan’s evil forces try to appear righteous and deceive people by imitating Jesus.

*Verses 3-4*: The Second Seal

1. The next three horsemen are specific conditions characteristic of the first horseman. Greg Beale writes, “Verses 3-8 describe how Satan attempts to conquer the saints through suffering so that they lose their faith. Yet it must be remembered that these trials also are ironically used by God ultimately as punishments for unbelievers.”
2. The second rider on a red horse represents war. And this primarily is war on the saints.
3. Matthew 10:34 – “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” Christians should not be discouraged from proclaiming the name of Christ since the persecution that is sure to follow is part of God’s sovereign will.
4. Additionally, the Greek word used here for “slaughter//slay” is used by John without exception in the Gospel to refer to the death of Christ and those who follow Him. Secondarily, peace is also taken from the world as a punishment on unbelievers through international and civil conflicts.
5. “In the two thousand years since Christ’s earthly ministry, there has been a major war every century except for two. Thirty million people were killed in World War I and considerably more in World War II. Pol Pot slaughtered more than 1,500,000 Cambodians in less than two years. In 1994, more than half a million Rwandans were massacred in a hundred days. The twenty-first century has by no means been immune to war, as multiple conflicts in the Middle East attest. War is an ongoing menace in this world.” –Joel Beeke
6. Only the return of Jesus will put an end to violence, wars, and persecution of God’s people.

*Verses 5-6:* The Third Seal

1. The third living creature commands the third horseman to come forth and he is riding on a black horse. This horse represents poverty or famine.
2. To eat bread by weight refers to a condition of economic hardship and this horseman is holding a pair of scales in his hand (Compare Lev 26:26; Ezek 4:16). A denarius was a person’s wage for 1 day so it would take an entire day to purchase a quart of wheat which would feed 1 person for 1 day. So along with economic poverty, we see high inflation. This price is about 8-16x the normal price for wheat and barley. Barley was cheaper than wheat and was a food eaten by the poor so if a person wanted to support his family, he would have to buy barley, the food of the poor. If he only wanted to support himself he could buy wheat. But the basic economic condition is that a person worked 1 day for 1 days’ worth of food. It’s a picture of just scraping by on the bare necessities of life.
3. Yet the oil and wine were not to be harmed. These luxuries are outside of the reach of a person living from day to day.
4. “So Christ is saying to His church: ‘Do not expect riches or luxuries, but poverty. Expect to lose your job because you are a Christian. Expect to be overlooked for a promotion because you are a Christian. Expect injustice and unfairness in this world, because that is the kind of world you live in. All of this is what sin has done.’” –Joel Beeke
5. “Famines affect everyone. But especially in such times of limited food supplies Christians will be the first to be affected. They will be persecuted by not being allowed the same access as others to the basic commodities of life.” –Greg Beale

*Verses 7-8:* The Fourth Seal

1. Finally, the 4th living creature calls out and the 4th horseman is Death riding on a pale (literally a greenish sickly color of a decayed corpse) horse, followed by Hades (the place of the dead).
2. This is the most terrible of the 4 horsemen and includes many of the features of the preceding horsemen.
3. Ezekiel 14:21 – “For thus says the Lord God: How much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four disastrous acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast!”
4. Death cuts down and the dead are gathered by Hades. Yet even this is under the authority of God because verse 8 says authority was given to Death and Hades. And God limits this to ¼ of the earth. It’s a very large portion, but it’s also limited and boundaries have been determined by God Himself.
5. Matthew 24:6-8 – “And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. **7**For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. **8**All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.”
6. “In summary, through His death and resurrection Christ has made the world forces of evil His agents to execute His purposes of sanctification and judgment for the furtherance of His kingdom.” –Greg Beale

**Message for Us**

1. “I am so glad that chapters 4 and 5 come before chapters 6 and 7. It is comforting to see the throne and to see who holds the book before seeing the tribulation, suffering, and persecution that are to come. It is good to know that behind this sin-sick world of ours is the sovereign God, who works according to His plan and His timetable. He does all things after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11). God wants us to see our entire lives, yes, everything that exists, from that perspective. That is why He shows us the throne and the book before He reveals what is in store for us, namely, tribulation.” –Joel Beeke
2. It’s possible that one day America’s debtors will come to collect and America will be hit hard, either with another Great Depression or complete economic collapse. Will Christians be hardest hit because we are the most hated? If the black horse should visit our land during our lifetime, we need to be prepared but also reminded that even famine and poverty are under Christ’s sovereign control.
3. “If you know the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be able to cope with whatever shakes our confidence, because Christ has everything under control. I know that war, famine, persecution, and death are frightening, destructive, and powerful, but when they are seen in association with Christ and His gospel, they shrink in importance.” –Joel Beeke