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Reading: Revelation Chapter 6

EXPLORING THE FUTURE

12. THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

Thomas Carlyle the craggy Scots philosopher was once summoned to an audience by Queen Victoria. The Queen was worried about the way affairs were going in her realm and eager to have the sages opinion as to how they were likely to work out. "*You are regarded as a prophet, Mr. Carlyle, she said, " Tell me, what do you think the future will be like ?"*" The great man was silent for a moment and then made the answer, "*I don't know your Majesty, but whatever it is it will be bad.*" Thomas Carlyle, suffered acutely physically and so perhaps there was a physical basis for his social pessimism. According to the N.T. a surer guide than Carlyle things will not finally be bad, but unspeakably good. "*Say unto the righteous that it shall be well with him.*" (Is 3:19) The long range forecast is excellent. There are however, menacing black thunderclouds in the offing. A terrible tornado is about to burst upon the world.

Thankfully, before this tempest breaks, the Church will be taken out of the way. The Lord's Coming to the air will precede the Great Tribulation. A discouraged and despondent Job once exclaimed, "*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not.*" (Job 14:1-2) Job's pessimistic description is tragically true for the unsaved man apart from the grace of God. Throughout his tortured and sinful history man has been subjected to calamities, disasters, and plagues which have tracked him as a cat would a mouse. But according to the Bible there is coming a Calamity unlike any which this weary world has ever seen. The Bible uses different titles for this blood chilling period. It is called, The Day of the Lord: (Is 13:9) The Indignation: (Is 26:20) The Time of Jacob's Trouble: (Jer 30:7) The Seventieth Week (Dan 9:27) The Tribulation: (Matt 24:21) Now no-one will deny that suffering and tribulation are promised the believer in this life.

Christ said, "*In the world ye shall have tribulation.*" (Jn 16:33) Paul said, "*All that live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution.*" (2 Tim 3:12) And one has only to think of Christians being thrown to lion's in a Roman arena and believers today undergoing persecution in various parts of the world. Such persecution with their untold agony, are not however "*The great Tribulation.*" For this Special Period will

not only differ in Intensity it will differ in Kind. You see, Tribulation is godless men against godly men, but The Great Tribulation is God against godless men. Jeremiah, spoke of this time. He said, "*Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces turned to paleness ? Alas for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble.*" (Jer 30:6-7) Joel spoke of this time. He said, "*The day of the Lord cometh for it is nigh at hand, a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness.*" (Joel 2:1-2) The Lord Jesus had this to say about this time, "*For then shall be Great Tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of this world to this time, no nor ever shall be.*" (Matt 24:21)

That is a remarkable statement. Considering all the wars, famines, heartaches, atrocities that have taken place on earth, to hear Christ say there is a time coming, the like of which the earth has never seen, makes one tremble. Now this seven- year period of Daniel's prophecy comprises the fascinating and sometimes frightening series of events we're going to explore in Revelation chapters 6 to 19. If you read the life of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, you'll discover that fully one third of the story is focused on a single seven day period, the week leading up to His Crucifixion. In just the same way Revelation 6 to 19 are focused on a single seven year " Week," of time a period which comprises the end of the history of this age. Now this seven-year " Week," is characterised by three series of events. (1) The Seven Seals: (6:1-8:5) (2) The Seven Trumpets: (8:6 19:21) (3) The Seven Vials: (16:1 19:21) Now remember that the Book of Revelation alternates between Heaven and Earth. A scene on earth is followed by a scene in Heaven, a scene in Heaven is followed by a scene on earth. For two breathtaking chapters we have been in Heaven. The Scroll has changed hands and the right to judge and rule the world has been placed upon the Lord Jesus. For God has committed all judgment to the Son. (Jn 5:22) The Lord Jesus is about to take back creation from the usurper Satan. But as the Lord Jesus begins to break the seals in that scroll, so the judgments begin here on earth.

The Seals are broken, the Trumpets are sounded, and the Vials are outpoured. Each series of judgments, in an ascending scale of severity flows from the other and each has its ultimate cause in the taking of the scroll by the Lord Jesus into His capable and pierced hands. Everything that now happens in the Book of Revelation happens because He precipitates the action. From start to finish He is in complete control. Now we've entitled this study this ... The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Many have heard of these Horsemen, but few know what they represent. So lets begin by looking at

(1) THE FIRST SEAL: DOMINION

John says " *And I saw* " (6:1) The noise of thunder is at hand because the storm is about to break over the earth. Now remember that when this scene takes place the church is gone and a rider on a white horse goes forth. In the Bible, a white horse symbolises Conquest. When an ancient King would come back victorious from the battlefield, he would ride a white charger.

Now who is this person going forth on a white horse. Lets try and establish,

(a) *HIS IDENTITY:*

Who or what is this rider on this white horse ?

Well some identify him as Christ, because in

(Rev 19) Christ appears on a white horse.

(19:11) So is this the Conquering Christ ?

I don't think so. For notice the differences between the two riders. For example in (6:2) the rider is given a crown (*stephanos*) whereas the rider of

(19:11) appears on the scene wearing

" *many crowns.* " (*diadema*) Notice also that these four horsemen stand together, there is something common to all. The white, the red, the black and the greenish pale. Now if the first one is Christ then He is associated with war, starvation and death. I cannot connect our Lord with these things. But while there are differences between the two riders there are Similarities. Both are crowned and both are bent on conquest. This suggests to me that the rider of (6:2) maybe someone who is like Christ in some ways, but is not Christ. Who could this be ? I believe this is Antchrist riding forth on a white horse seeming to be an invincible conqueror. Do you know what the world is looking for

this ? The modern world is looking for a man. Someone who can solve the world's problems financially, socially, internationally, and ecclesiastically. And one of these days Satan's man, is going to appear. Paul says, " *then shall that wicked be revealed whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.* " (2 Thes 2:8-9) Look at

(b) *HIS AUTHORITY:*

(6:2) " *And a crown was given unto him.* " It will be the sovereign God who will allow this man to come to power. In fact, God will cause it to come to pass so that He can accomplish His purposes. " *For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.* " (17:17) God is going to convince the kings and rulers of this world to give up their power to the Antichrist and Satan will think he has won a victory, but its all in Gods plan. My did you ever think that you would live to see the day when the Queens head may not be on our money ? They're talking about that in Downing Street, in London right now. It was old Churchill who said, " *I hope to live to see the United States of Europe.* " My right now they are talking about the proposed

European Constitution. Someone sent me details of it just a few days ago. Do you know what it is ? it's a proposed new set of rules for governing Europe, an attempt to create a " *Euro State*." Do you know what they want to put into the European Constitution ?

1. One President for the whole of the European Union.
2. One Foreign and Defence Policy for the whole of the European Union.
3. One Army, Navy, and Air Force for the whole of the European Union.
4. One Justice System for the whole of the European Union.
5. One Currency, the Euro for the whole of the European Union.
6. One Taxation System for the whole of the European Union.
7. The European Union not Britain will have sole legal power to negotiate treaties, trade agreements and represent Britain on world bodies like the U.N. the W.T. and the " G8," countries.

My do you see the pieces of the jigsaw beginning to fall into place ? Sure we can't even sell our beef now if Brussels says no. And I believe according to (Daniel 7:24) that out of this European Union will come a man who will have all the power of Satan and who will make the world wonder and he will ride forth with military power and a political crown to conquer and gain dominion. But come back to (Rev 6) and notice that while this rider has a bow he has no arrows and that suggests to me,

(c) *HIS DIPLOMACY:*

It pictures the conquest of the world by the Antichrist not by force, but by deceit. Indeed Paul reminds us in (2 Thes Ch 2) that for those who are left behind at the Rapture, " *God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie.*" (2 Thes 2:11) They will be deceived into thinking that the Antichrist is Christ Himself. Here is one who will successfully unite the nations of the world, here is one who will effectively solve many of the problems currently being experienced in the Middle East, here is one who will begin his career as a peacemaker, as he lulls people into a false sense of security. My as you look around at the forces of deception that surround us today its not hard to believe that we're in the last days. Turn on the T.V. or open a newspaper and you can read the outrageous propaganda of one nation against another. When Kuwait was liberated by U.N. forces in February 1991, the government of Iraq claimed victory even though its army had been destroyed. Across Iraq and wherever the supporters of Saddam Hussein lived, wild rumours sprang up. Four hundred Jews were killed when an Iraqi Scud missile exploded at Ben Gurion Airport. Over 100,000 American soldiers were killed by Iraqi forces, but fewer than an hundred deaths were reported by the Western press. Lies, every one of them, yet they were believed by Saddam's supporters right across the Middle East.

In our society great masses of people are just as willing to be deceived. Willingly

deceived by drugs, by the false image of maturity that cigarette smoking is supposed to impart. Willingly deceived by the lie that this perfume of that cosmetic will bring instant romance into a woman's life.

Such deceptions and many more are continually fed into our society and our society devours the lie. We live in an age of runaway deception, but the worse deception is yet on the horizon. For the Antichrist will come peaceably but before long he will reveal himself in his true colours. It may seem incredible that the world, hovering on the brink of final disaster, could be so totally deceived. Yet that is precisely what happened on a smaller scale before the outbreak of the most devastating war to date, World War 2. Desperate to appease Hitler and avoid war the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain met with the Nazi dictator at Munich in 1938. Upon his return to England, Chamberlain triumphantly waved a piece of paper containing a worthless pledge of peace from Hitler which he claimed guaranteed "*peace with honour, peace for our time.*" When Winston Churchill one of the few never taken in by Hitler rose in the House of Commons to declare that our country had suffered a total defeat he was shouted down. The deception was almost universal, almost everyone misread Hitler's intentions. Only after he invaded Poland in September 1939 did the allies finally acknowledge the truth. By then it was too late.

My the same thing is going to happen again the world will be deceived as the rider on the white horse will be welcomed and worshipped as a kind of divine superstar. (1) But look at:

(2) THE SECOND SEAL: DESTRUCTION

(6:3-4) Its a fact of history that when a devil-inspired leader comes upon the world stage with idea's of conquest in his evil mind, there always follows war and havoc and destruction. Here:

(a) A FALSE PEACE WILL END:

During the first three and one half years of the Tribulation the Antichrist will bring a pseudo-peace to the world. Everyone will be singing his praises as the greatest leader in human history. But

" When they shall say peace and safety then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child." (1 Thes 5:3) (a)

(b) A FIERCE WAR WILL BEGIN:

For this second rider appears on a red horse, the symbol of war because it is the colour of blood. General Omar Bradley once said about our generation: "*We know more about war than about peace. We know about killing than about living.*" *This is our twentieth first's century's claim to progress, knowledge of science*

outstrips capacity for control. We have too many men of science, too few men of God. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. We are a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants." War seems to be the direction of our world. The Lord Jesus said, "*And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars for nation shall rise against nation.*" (Matt 24:6) But it will be worse than that. For this second seal seems to imply civil war. Can you imagine the confusion and division ? The Church will have gone, there will be nothing to hold back the power of evil in mankind, thus the swords of this world will drip with blood as men are unrestrained. Do you recall the 1989 massacre of Tiananmen Square in China ? Civil war, national war, global war. But look at:

(3) THE THIRD SEAL: DEPRIVATION

This time its not a white horse not a red horse but a black horse. and this horse will bring a time of famine. Do you know what's going to happen in the Tribulation period ?

(a) THE POOR WILL GET POORER:

A "*pair of balances*," indicates a scarcity of food. People are going to be without the necessities of life. Wholesale starvation is going to take place because famine invariably follows war. Normally a penny (a Roman denarius, a days wages in Palestine in Christ's day, Matt 20:2) would buy eight measures of barley or twenty four of wheat. Under these famine conditions the same wage will buy only one measure of wheat or three of barley. In other words there will be one-eighth of the normal supply of food. Already much of the world lives in perpetual hunger. Malnutrition stalks the globe. It claims ten thousand lives every day. More than half the world goes hungry to bed. So all this happened before. It is happening now and it will happen again. And there's not much chance that the Antichrist will be issuing food stamps either. (a)

(b) THE RICH WILL GET RICHER:

For the rider on the black horse was instructed not to "*hurt the oil and the wine*," luxury foods of John's day. Apparently luxury food items will not be in short supply, but of course most people will not be able to afford them. I wonder will the rich retain their wealth as a result of a sell-out to the Antichrist ? (13:17) Mywhat a period this is going to be. Dominion, Destruction, Deprivation,

(4) THE FOURTH SEAL: DEATH

(6:8) The word "*pale*," here is actually a root word for green. It means a sickly green, that of decay, rottenness and gangrene. This fourth rider is named death. And

when our Lord opens this 4th seal there will be:

(a) *DEATH ON A MASSIVE SCALE:*

The effect of these four horsemen is that 25% of the people on earth will die. Do you know what that means ? It means that if the Tribulation were to happen soon that the world's present population about 6 billion were divided by four you would get a figure of more than 1.5 billion people or roughly the population of China and the U.S.A. combined.. Think of it: more than one billion people perishing in this phase of the holocaust. My would you that not fire your heart to get the message of the gospel out ? Do you know something ? Some of your loved ones and mine could be there. (a)

(b) *DEATH BY A PECULIAR MEANS:*

Being killed with the beasts of the earth may mean diseases spread through animals, since that word "*death*," can also be translated "*pestilence*." Do you know what is the most destructive creature on earth as far as mankind is concerned ? Its the rat. The rat is clever, adaptable and destructive. If 95% of the rat population is exterminated in a given area, the rat population will replace itself within a year. Rats carry as many as 35 different disease's. In fourteenth century Europe, one third of the population died because of the bubonic plague, spread by rats. Do you know what they're telling us now ? That we may get cancer through salmon. Now can you trace the chain of events here ? The Antichrist comes with dominion and war, which causes famine, which brings deprivation and death to 1.5 billion people. And Hell follows close behind death. Death receives the bodies, but hell receives the souls. And no one will be able to escape.

(5) THE FIFTH SEAL: DETERMINATION

(5:9-11) Does this not refute the damnable doctrine of soul-sleep ? Here are martyrs for the faith saying, "*Lord, why don't You do something ?*" And God replies, "*Just a little while, I am waiting for a few more.*" For God has determined to avenge this world. Can you see:

(a) *THEIR CRIME:*

Their crime was faithfulness to Christ. The day is coming on the earth when men and women who turn to God through faith in Christ, shall once again seal their testimony with their own blood. These are Tribulation saints who have received Christ as the result of the faithful witness of those depicted in (Ch 7) Look at:

(b) *THEIR CRY:*

(6:10) Its a cry for vengeance against their persecutors. How unlike the attitude of Christ and His followers in this present Church Age ! Do you recall how the Saviour prayed when He was on the Cross ? " *Father forgive them do.*" (Lk 23:34) Do you remember Stephen the very first martyr who prayed, " *Lord lay not this sin to their charge.*" (Acts 7:60) Do you know what Rachel Saint said, the sister of Nate Saint one of the five brave men who was martyred in Ecuador in 1956 as they attempted to reach the Auca tribe with the gospel ? She was being interviewed and the questioner asked her, " *Why did you go back to this tribe after they killed your brother ?*" She said, " *In the Auca culture, they lived for vengeance, but as a Christian, I knew that forgiveness is the only way to live toward those who hurt us.*" Her love and that of her companions conquered the man who had killed Rachel's brother and he was saved and baptised. Why then do these martyrs of the fifth seal not show this spirit of forgiveness ? Its because they are no longer living in an age of grace but in an age of judgement and they're praying according to the principle of that period of time in which they find themselves.
(Ps 79:5 89:46) Will you note:

(6) THE SIXTH SEAL: DISRUPTION

Everything is disrupted, something cataclysmic happens and all nature is upset. Look at:

(a) *THE CAUSE OF THIS DISRUPTION:*

Drastic changes in the heavens could result in earthquakes and drastic changes in the topography of the planet. Can you imagine a worldwide disaster so bad that mountains and islands were knocked out of place ?

(b) *THE COMPLETENESS OF THIS DISRUPTION:*

For it affects every class of society from the meanest slave to the greatest king. This dreadful day will reveal that God is no respecter of persons. All will be gripped with one common terror and all will be helpless before " *the wrath of the Lamb.*" But there is no place to hide. Even a fall-out shelter cannot provide protection in that day. My unsaved there is a Rock to which you can come for refuge this that Rock is a Person, the Rock of Ages, our Lord Jesus Christ. Will you receive Him, while there is yet time, for the day of His Judgment is drawing near ?

We have looked together this at these six seals and these seals represent a condensed overview of this dramatic period known as the Tribulation. We may ask, why does the Lord reveal these terrible scenes to John, and through him to us ?

Perhaps to Comfort us. For if we belong to the Lord, we will not be a part of this scene. That is the great promise of Revelation. For us it will not be Tribulation but Translation. But my do these scenes not Challenge us ? You see God has given us this horrific vision of the Future in order to inspire us to witness in the Present. Mydo you want your family, your friends, neighbours to go through these terrible scenes we have just witnessed ? Do you want them to think back on all the conversations you had with them, the chances *you had to share your faith with them, and to ask,*

" Why didn't my friend tell me about the Lord ? He had the truth, she had the truth. Why did that Christian allow me to go through this Hell on earth ?" Will they say that about you, about me ?

***Men die in darkness at your side,
Without a hope to cheer the tomb,
Take up, the torch and wave it wide,
The torch that light's times thickest gloom***