

Heaven's Horses

Revelation 6:1-8

(preached Pine Grove 1/29/17; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Turn in your Bibles to Revelation 6...

This morning, we will look at the events that begin the 7 year tribulation period upon the earth...

Let's read just the first 8 verses of Revelation 6 this morning..

6 Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come[a]." 2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and 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 broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come[b]." 4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

5 When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come[c]." 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 something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, “A [d]quart of wheat for a [e]denarius, and three [f]quarts of barley for a [g]denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine.”

7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come[h].”

8 I looked, and behold, an [i]ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with [j]pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

Let us pray.

We live in interesting times..

Many hold their breath to see how our new president works out his plans for our country...

Many others hold their breath awaiting the next terror attack in the world...

Many more hold their breath to see how the nations of the world continue to co-exist in peace...

In some ways, our day is no different than others throughout history...

There have always been times of uncertainty and anxiety.

That is part of living in a fallen world governed by fallen people..

The future is always uncertain because people are unpredictable...

Yet, we as believers have peace in uncertain times..

And there is only one reason for that...

We believe in a God who knows the future, and not only does he know it, he has revealed it to the world in the Bible...

No, there's not a year by year prediction of what will happen tomorrow..

But there is a lot more detail about the future that you could ever imagine...

For the past two weeks, we have been given a picture of some future heavenly events in the book of Revelation...

We have been given access to the throne room of heaven, where we watched the praise and worship of God in chapter 4....

Followed by the events of heaven in chapter 5 that will set in motion the unleashing of God's wrath in chapters 6-19 over the next few months...

Today, we leave the future events of heaven and though we stay in the future, we come to get look at the future events on earth as God delivers his wrath to a future world made up of people who have rejected Christ...

This world could be the world in which we live minus the church...

Remember the church is in heaven as we get to chapter 6...

We have seen it there the past two weeks as it is represented by 24 elders...

All of us who have repented and trusted in Christ in this age are in heaven worshipping the Lord as the events of chapter 6 are unfolding on earth..

That is our reward for our belief in Christ in this age...

Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 1 that Jesus is the one who rescues his people from the wrath to come...

Which is a reference to the coming wrath of God in the the 7 year tribulation period..

And so as we leave the future events in heaven and come to the future events upon the earth, we live the church in heaven and go to an earth without the church...

Now, remember no one knows the day and hour that God will begin to unleash the 7 years of tribulation...

It could be a world 5 minutes from now, 5 months, 5 years, or 5 hundred years from today...

There is nothing left for God to accomplish in the world to begin to this final period of world history...

All God has to do is snatch his church out in the world in the rapture in the twinkling of an eye, and then give his Son the title deed to the earth...

And this entire unbelieving world of Rev 6 could be exposed to what we will see here is a just a matter of time...

We don't know when these events are coming...

All we simply know is that he will do it...

And though we don't know the 'when', we are going to see the 'how', beginning in the first 8 verses of chapter 6 today...

I have divided these 8 verses into the four horses we see here...

One horse belonging to each seal..

The familiar phrase is that these are the four horsemen of the apocalypse, meaning the 4 horsemen that usher in the end of the world...

One thing I want to point out before we get into these four horses is this...

These are not the horses from hell...

Satan has no say in how the world ends...

Yes, he has ruled it in a sense ever since the fall of Adam and Eve...

But he has no power to end it...

These horses are sent by God...

Now, let's be clear..

God is not evil.

He cannot be tempted and he cannot sin...

And though these horsemen are going to kill and destroy and starve and make war and deceive the nations, God is the source of any of that horror...

He simply sends these demonic horses to do his work and deliver His justice...

That is why these can be called Heaven's Horses, even though they call down hell's fury at times...

God is sovereign over all..

That is a truth you must accept if you accept the Bible...

And his sovereignty doesn't stop with Satan and his demons...

They are even under his control, and He sets out to take back this world, he uses that evil to deliver His justice..

So, let's meet the first horse once again in verses 1-2...

I. A White Horse of Peace (1-2)

1 Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come[a]." 2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

Now remember, we are in the future...

These are events that will happen beyond 2017...

John was taken to heaven back in chapter 4, where he was given a vision of things that would come after these things...

His view of heaven in chapters 4-5, and his view of tribulation in 6-19 are going to be things of the future...

And one way to know this is that history hasn't given us any events that rise to this level of destruction...

WE will see the 4th horse today bring death to 1 out of every 4 people on earth...

That has never occurred in the history of the world...

John is clearly seeing events that are coming to the world in a global 7 year tribulation period...

And the first thing he sees is Jesus as the Lamb taking the title deed scroll to the earth and breaking the first seal on the scroll..

The breaking of the scroll causes one the four angels around the throne to call to John in a thunderous voice, telling him to Come!

And John sees a white horse with a rider on it carrying a bow...

A crown was given to the rider and he went on conquering and to conquer...

So, what are we seeing here?

Again like much of the book of Revelation from 6-19, you get various interpretations...

My goal as your shepherd is to give you what I believe to be the best interpretation possible according to constant rules of biblical interpretation....

I have no agenda up here...

Im not trying to sell you my book or get you to join my end times fan club...

I simply want you to understand what the Bible means by what it says...

I think the best interpretation is a literal interpretation, keeping in mind other Bible passages and maintaining their truth as well...

With that said, this horse seems to represent a time of peace that kicks off the tribulation period...

In my estimation, this rider may represent the Anti-Christ or other false Messiahs who will come to make peace on the earth in the days after the rapture of the church...

Jesus Himself taught us in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 about the events that lead up to his 2nd coming in what is called the Olivet Discourse...

That his 2nd coming would be preceded by false Messiahs who claim to have come in his name...

I'll put that that passage in Matthew up on the screen as we go through these verses in Rev 6 just so we can see that these interpretations I offer you are not just pulled out of the air...

But they have a basis in other parts of Scripture...

Matthew 24, Daniel 9 and 11, Ezekiel, 1 Thess and others give us picture of this final tribulation period..

The book of Zechariah even talks specifically about these horses...

So as I offer you the interpretation that this white horse represents a false peace to start off the tribulation, I stand in the company of Jesus and others...

Now as we think about this rider on a white horse, who comes to mind?

Well, Christ rides it when he returns in Rev 19, but this isn't Him here as the tribulation begins to break out...

This is someone or some people who are posing as Christ, like the Antichrist or other false Messiahs...

So, this horse and rider comes on a white horse like Jesus to make peace on earth.....

The book of Daniel talks about the Antichrist will come and bring peace to the earth...

Personally, I think he will do it through diplomacy and flattery...

Now, you may say well it says that he will to conquer...

IT says he was sent out to conquer which doesn't mean he does it with warfare...

In fact, he was given a crown by God..

He didn't have to fight and conquer.

And notice he carried a bow but no what?

Arrows.

A bow without arrows suggests a peaceful conquering...

In other words, God enabled him to conquer without weapons by deluding the entire world into following him...

In fact, warfare comes next with the red horse.

We will see that in a minute...

Here are my best thoughts...

The rapture of the church sends the world into chaos...

All the true Christians in all levels of government, military and world leadership will be gone to heaven in the rapture..

That instability will give evil people motivation to do evil....

Organized crime, terrorism will flourish as people are no longer restrained by Godly men and women in all levels of law enforcement and military service...

The result will be chaos, but God will allow someone to come and rally the world together under the promise of peace...

I think that someone is the rider on the white horse that we see here in Revelation 6...

And he will bring something that the world has always wanted, and that is world peace...

There will be world peace.

It wont come through NATO or the United Nations.

It will come through the first horsemen of the apocalypse and though it will sound like good news, it will simply be the calm before the storm...

Which leads us to the storm that comes in verse 3...

II. A Red Horse of War (3-4)

Verse 3...

3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come[b]." 4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

Jesus moves to seal #2, and a red horse follows the white horse...

I don't know the time interval between these two horses...

I suppose some time will elapse as the Antichrist rises in popularity and peace spreads...

But that all comes to an end when the red horse is sent from heaven...

The horse and its rider were given permission to take peace from the earth, which to me suggests that the first horse and rider brought peace...

The horseman carries a sword which is given to men to slay one another....

Take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Daniel,
Daniel chapter 11

We are going through Daniel on Sunday nights, but we
are going to get to Daniel 11 but not yet..

But let's skip down to Daniel 11:35...

Though we will talk about this in more detail on Sunday
nights, let me give you a quick summary of verses 1-34
of Daniel 11...

It is simply a summary of world history from the
beginning of the Persian kingdom to the end of Greece
ruling the world and the actions of their rulers...

History has shown that what Daniel wrote about these
kingdoms came to pass perfectly...

When we get to verse 35, Daniel skips ahead to the final
kingdom of the world...

The kingdom of iron mixed with clay, which is a restored
Roman kingdom, and Daniel begins to describe the
actions of the king who will rule that kingdom...

This helps us see the action of Revelation 6 in another
part of Scripture...

Daniel 11:35...

35 Some of [aq]those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them [ar]pure until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time.

36 "Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak [as]monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done. 37 He will show no regard for the [at]gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all. 38 But [au]instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures. 39 He will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; he will give great honor to [av]those who acknowledge him and will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.

So, what we see there is a time of peace...

God will allow this final king, this Antichrist, to rise to a position of authority where he can do as he pleases and he will be admired by the world for creating peaceful conditions..

And he will have so much power that those who honor him will be rewarded greatly...

Yet, his peaceful reign will come to an end...

Verse 40...

40 "At the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them and pass through. 41 He will also enter the [aw]Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon. 42 Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape. 43 But he will [ax]gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his [ay]heels. 44 But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and [az]annihilate many. 45 He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

As God sends forth the red horse, trouble comes to this man of peace...

Other kings begin to rise up against him, and he will be killed during this war, only to be raised from the dead...

WE will see this in Revelation 13...

But all I want you to see in Daniel 11 are the story of these seals being opened in antlers portion of Scripture...

And to get another look at the Antichrist and his activity upon the earth...

We will see more of this man of Satan, yet I think we get our first glimpse of him in these first two seals...

Let's now look at seal judgment #3...

III. A Black Horse of Famine (5-6)

Let's read verses 5-6 again...

5 When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come[c]." 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 something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A [d]quart of wheat for a [e]denarius, and three [f]quarts of barley for a [g]denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine."

The ancient world was much different than ours in many ways...

Though there was more war and conflict over territories, the greatest enemy of the ancient world was famine...

It is easier to dodge the problem of a spear, but its hard to dodge the problem of no food...

Famines were very common but very devastating in Israel...

That problem of famine will once again rise during the tribulation period as food becomes scarce due to prevalence of war...

Crops will be burned by conquering armies...

Soil will be contaminated by the effects of warfare...

As the world moves from peace to war, the next step will be famine...

The cost to buy the bare necessities of life will skyrocket...

That is why this 3rd horse and rider carry a scale to weigh out rations of food for the purpose of buying and selling it during a famine...

Wheat and barley were part of most households...

The wheat was for the family, and the barley went to the animals due to less taste and nutritional value..

Yet, a quart of each of these will skyrocket in price...

A quart is a daily serving for one man to sustain him....

Yet a quart will have to feed a family since it will cost a denarius, which is the equivalent of one day's wages...

You will be able to get 3 quarts of barley but it wont have as much nutritional value...

Let me bring this to our world...

If you work a normal 8 hour day here at minimum wage, you will have around \$60.

Well it will take all that \$60 buck to buy you enough food for one day...

In other words, a #1 value meal at McDoanlds will cost \$60 but you will have that take that meal home and feed your family with it...

The difficulty of famine is this...

It's a slow death...

There won't be mass death right away, but people will slowly waste away...

Now, God will show mercy in this famine in that oil and wine wont be affected by it...

Oil and wine were necessities for preparing meals, and the verse seems to indicate that oil and wine supplies wont be affected by this world wide famine...

Yet, this seal judgment will still be very difficult on the world...

So, now we have a world full of God-rejecters ravaged by war and caught in a severe famine...

But the judgments and wrath are only beginning...

So, now we must move to the fourth horsemen of the apocalypse...

And this horse and its rider are unmerciful in their judgment...

This is...

IV. A Pale Horse of Death (7-8)

Look again at verse 7-8...

7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come[h]." 8 I looked, and behold, an [i]lashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with [j]pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

This horse and rider have a pale green appearance...

My Bible uses the words ashen, but the word is used to describe grass in the winter...

It is more of a pale green horse...

If you have ever seen someone who is sick on their stomach, they can literally have pale green look...

Often times, people describe the sky during a tornado as having a green tint....

I think these colors are the color of this horse and rider...

And just like a stomach virus or tornado, a pale green horse and rider are not good news at all...

This fourth horsemen will be given authority from God to fill the earth with death...

1 out every 4 people on earth will die...

Some will die through through the swords that the red horse brought...

Some will die through the famines of the lack horse...

But this pale green horse brings 2 more ways to kill a quarter of the world's population...

And that is through pestilence, which is worldwide disease like a plague or super virus, similar to Ebola or something like that...

But then there is threat of wild beasts attacking people...

A famine would create a shortage of food everywhere, and animals would certainly be affected by it...

So, maybe this is a reference to an increase in animal attacks or maybe it is symbolic of more violence and murder...

Whichever it is, all of these causes of death, war, famine, disease, animals are are horrible ways to die..

And many people will die in them....

Let me give you a couple numbers..

This year, the world population will reach 7.5 billion people..

Out of that number, 2.2 billion claim to be Christians...

Now, we know that number to be way too high...

Even Jesus says that not everyone who claims him as Lord is in fact saved...

Many will say to him in that day, "Lord, Lord," but Jesus will cause them to leave his presence since he never knew them...

But let's just say keep that number of 2.2 billion people...

And take them out of the earth in the rapture...

That would leave 5.3 billion people on earth who have rejected Christ as the tribulation starts...

When this 4th horse is sent by God, that means 1.3 billion people are killed in this unleashing of God's wrath...

There has never been anything close to this number in world history...

Though we don't know if this is a one day event, it won't be that long of an event...

Compare this to World War 2, where 65 million people died over a period of 6 years...

Those 65 million represented the deaths 3% of the world's population at that time...

The fourth horsemen will lead to the deaths of 25% of the world's population...

There will be death everywhere...

No family will be untouched by such worldwide devastation...

There will be bodies everywhere...

Yet, the unbelievable thing is the worst is still yet to come...

For us, that's enough to see for one message...

But for the unbelieving world in that day, they will only be given a taste of what is coming....

Conclusion

What do we say about these four horses of heaven?

How does it affect us today?

Let me offer a few thoughts...

#1 - Our world deserves judgment.

Though it may pain us to say it, there is nothing about our current world that is redeemable or worth saving...

Abortion, murder, deceit, lying, greed, pride all characterize our current world...

And the worst part of those sins is that they are completely opposed to the goodness of God...

It may shake us up to see such judgment upon people, but they are completely deserving of it...

God has shown nothing but goodness to every man, woman, boy, and girl, yet those men, women, boys and girls show nothing but evil to God....

You are looking at a man who deserves to go through the tribulation, who deserves the punishment of hell...

I am not a good person because I sin against a holy God who gave me life and provided for my needs for many years without an ounce of gratitude from me..

My sins offended Him constantly every day...

My flesh rebelled against him every day...

My heart was far from Him.

My life was running away from Him...

I may have been a good person in the eyes of the world, but I never was good person in the eyes of God...

And God would have been completely justified by ending my life and sending me to hell...

That is what I deserved...

That is what everybody deserves...

So, when we see devastation like this, we can't ever say that the world doesn't deserve it...

It does...

Our world deserves judgment...

But also remember that...

#2 - Our God deserves worship.

It is easy to leave here this morning and have sour taste in your mouth about God as you see Him send so much wrath upon the world in these judgments...

But remember, God is good...

Though the world and people deserve this type of judgment, God withholds his wrath every day...

God is not willing for any to perish but for all to come to eternal life..

You sit here today deserving all those things in the first 8 verses of Rev 6 and much worth..

Regardless of what mama tells you or your teacher tells you, you are not a good person...

You lie, you cheat, you still, you disobey God's commands every day...

You deserve 4 horsemen to come to your house everyday to see God's judgment upon you...

Yet, God has withheld that wrath in hopes that you would come to Him begging for mercy and putting your trust in Christ to save you...

You are alive today only by the grace and mercy of God...

Yet, there are no guarantees...

Though the tribulation may come in your lifetime, it is also a car crosses the yellow line as you head home today....

Who knows how long the mercy of God will last in your life?

Who knows how long God will withhold his judgment from you and from this world?

Today is the day to come to that God by turning from the sin you love and trusting in Christ who loves you...

We have only begun to see the horror of seven years of wrath, but today you can begin to see the mercy of God who wants to save you and rescue from his wrath to come...

Let us pray.