

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (6.1-8)



Review From Last Week (Revelation 5)

1. Revelation 4-5: the theological and liturgical introduction and centre of the book (Revelation 4: creation; Revelation 5: redemption; OT background: Daniel 7; Ezekiel 1-2, 10; Isaiah 6)
2. The Scroll: The scroll contains the account of how God's name is hallowed, how his kingdom comes, and how his will is done on earth as it is heaven. It contains God's judicial and redemptive plan for history. (cf. Daniel 7.10; 12.4-9; Ezekiel 2.9-10; Exodus 32.15-16)
3. The authority of the Lion and the conquest of the Lamb; beastly rule vs. the rule of the Lamb (cf. Genesis 49.8-12; Isaiah 11.1-4; Mark 10.32-45; John 12.31-33; Colossians 2.13-15)
4. Kingdom Service – Praise and Prayer (Revelation 6.9-11; 8.1-5)

5. A New Song (cf. 1 Chronicles, 15-16, 25; Psalm 96; 98), A New Exodus (cf. Exodus 12.12-13; Isaiah 53.5-7), A New People (cf. Genesis 1.26-29; 2.15; Numbers 3.8; Exodus 19.2-6; 1 Peter 2.9-10)
6. All heaven breaks loose; worthy is the Lamb (cf. Revelation 4.11, 5.9, 5.13)
7. The character of God's rule revealed in the life-giving conquest of the Lamb (Exodus 17.1-7; Deuteronomy 32.15-18; John 3.3-5; Ezekiel 47.1-12; 1 Corinthians 10.1-4; John 7.37-39; John 16.32-17.1-5, 13-18; 19.30-36; 21.17-19)

Revelation 6.1-8

Old Testament Background to Revelation 6.1-8

Leviticus 26.18-28: And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins,¹⁹ and I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.²⁰ And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit.²¹ “Then if you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins.²² And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted.²³ “And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me,²⁴ then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins.²⁵ And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant. And if you gather within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.²⁶ When I break your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven and shall dole out your bread again by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied.²⁷ “But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me,²⁸ then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins. (cf. Ezekiel 5)

Deuteronomy 32.15-28:¹⁵ “But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked; you grew fat, stout, and sleek; then he forsook God who made him and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation.¹⁶ They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger.¹⁷ They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded.¹⁸ You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth.¹⁹ “The LORD saw it and spurned them, because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters.²⁰ And he said, ‘I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness.²¹ They have made me jealous with what is no god; they have provoked me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are no people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.²² For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.²³ “And I will heap disasters upon them; I will spend my arrows on them;²⁴ they shall be wasted with hunger, and devoured by plague and poisonous pestilence; I will send the teeth of beasts against them, with the venom of things that crawl in the dust.²⁵ Outdoors the sword shall bereave, and indoors terror, for young man and woman alike, the nursing child with the man of gray hairs.²⁶ I would have said, “I will cut them to pieces; I will wipe them from human memory,”²⁷ had I not feared provocation by the enemy, lest their adversaries should misunderstand, lest they should say, “Our hand is triumphant, it was not the LORD who did all this.”²⁸ “For they are a nation void of counsel, and there is no understanding in them.

Ezekiel 14.12-23: And the word of the LORD came to me: ¹³ “Son of man, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it and break its supply of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast, ¹⁴ even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁵ “If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they ravage it, and it be made desolate, so that no one may pass through because of the beasts, ¹⁶ even if these three men were in it, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters. They alone would be delivered, but the land would be desolate. ¹⁷ “Or if I bring a sword upon that land and say, Let a sword pass through the land, and I cut off from it man and beast, ¹⁸ though these three men were in it, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they alone would be delivered. ¹⁹ “Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out my wrath upon it with blood, to cut off from it man and beast, ²⁰ even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, they would deliver neither son nor daughter. They would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness. 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! ²² But behold, some survivors will be left in it, sons and daughters who will be brought out; behold, when they come out to you, and you see their ways and their deeds, you will be consoled for the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, for all that I have brought upon it. ²³ They will console you, when you see their ways and their deeds, and you shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, declares the Lord GOD.”

Zechariah 6.1-8: Again I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four chariots came out from between two mountains. And the mountains were mountains of bronze. ² The first chariot had red horses, the second black horses, ³ the third white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled horses-- all of them strong. ⁴ Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?” ⁵ And the angel answered and said to me, “These are going out to the four winds of heaven, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth. ⁶ The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the white ones go after them, and the dappled ones go toward the south country.” ⁷ When the strong horses came out, they were impatient to go and patrol the earth. And he said, “Go, patrol the earth.” So they patrolled the earth. ⁸ Then he cried to me, “Behold, those who go toward the north country have set my Spirit at rest in the north country.”

Revelation 6.1-8

Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, “Come!” ² And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

³ When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” ⁴ And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

⁵ When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ And I heard what seemed to be 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 wine!”

⁷ When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” ⁸ And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

1. **The First Seal:** Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, “Come!”² And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.
 - a. the four living creatures call forth the four horsemen (God’s justice brings about the restoration and renewal of creation)
 - b. “Behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer”
 - i. Christ or Antichrist?

Revelation 19.11-16: Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.
 - ii. Beastly rule (a messianic masquerade) seeks to conquer the followers of the Lamb (cf. Rev 11.7; 13.7), hence second seal.
 - iii. “a crown was given to him”: authority granted by God
2. **The Second Seal:** When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!”⁴ And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.
 - a. “slaying” has particular reference to the Lamb and his followers (Rev 5.6, 9, 12; 6.9; 13.8; 18.24) (**Revelation 6:9** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.)
 - b. Such persecution belongs to God’s sovereign purposes:

Matthew 10.34-40: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.³⁶ And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household.³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.⁴⁰ “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. (cf. Jeremiah 1)
 - c. “it’s rider was permitted”: again, permitted by God

3. **The Third Seal:** When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ And I heard what seemed to be 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 wine!”
 - a. Denarius = a day’s wages
 - b. Economic cost of following Christ (cf. Rev 2.9; 13.16-17; but Rev 7.16)
 - c. Oil and wine may be luxury items of the wealthy (although, **Deuteronomy 7.13:** He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock, in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you – that oil and wine are not affected may be evidence of God’s mercy)

4. **The Fourth Seal:** When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” ⁸ And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.
 - a. Christ has the keys of Death and Hades (Rev 1.18) (death puts limits of human sinfulness)
 - b. A fourth of the earth (God’s judgment is restrained, allowing for repentance)
 - c. “they were given”: again, granted by God

5. **The Four Horseman:** *God uses beastly empires (whose rule is a messianic masquerade), the sword, economic injustice, and even Death and Hades to accomplish his purposes: (1) the purification and strengthening of faithful believers and (2) the punishment of unbelievers.*