

The First Seal

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Revelation 6:1-2

It is my privilege and joy to take you, once again, into the study of the Word of God. We come again to the book of Revelation, chapter six this morning. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, the unveiling of Jesus Christ where the Lord Jesus discloses to us the final chapter of redemptive history that will ultimately culminate in his unveiling in all of his glory when the King comes to establish his kingdom, when the spiritual kingdom in which we live now becomes visible. It is growing every single day. Every time another person comes to a saving knowledge of Christ that invisible kingdom grows, and eventually it will be manifest to the whole world. Every eye will see the King. That will be the time of the glorious manifestation of the sons of God as we read about in Romans chapter eight; and then who we really are as believers will also be unveiled. My, I can't wait to see that, can you? I can't wait to see that. Then the kingdom of God will dominate the world, that glorious millennial kingdom.

Now this morning we are going to look at the first seal of divine judgment here in Revelation chapter six. Let me read these two verses to you, Revelation six beginning in verse one.

And 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." And 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.¹

Before we look at the text closely may I remind you that the first five chapters of the apocalypse have all been introductory and what we see here in Revelation six is the worthy Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ opening up the six seals in the scroll of divine wrath, all of which will proceed from the throne of God. And that will set into motion the final purging that will ultimately kill the vast majority of the earth's population and virtually every living thing upon it.

You will recall that his purpose in all of this is to punish those who refuse to worship him, but also—according to Daniel—it is the time to *finish the transgression*, the transgression of Israel. This is Daniel's 70th week of judgment, and then eventually he will establish his earthly kingdom. Daniel 9:24 says it will be "to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place."²

The first four seals are all represented by four colored horses being ridden by four riders. This is often called the *four horsemen of the apocalypse*. Just by way of big picture overview, the first seal, as we will see, describes a pseudo peace that will lull the world, including Israel, into a false sense of security, visions of utopia, but this will be the calm before the storm. The second seal will be that of world wide war. The third seal will be that of world wide famine. The fourth seal will be that of death through sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts. Then the fifth seal will describe the martyrdom of the saints who will be killed during this time of tribulation, those that come to a saving knowledge of Christ after the rapture of the Church. The seventh seal will be an interlude of silent

¹ Revelation 6:1-2.

² Daniel 9:24.

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contemplation over the staggering judgment that has just occurred and the unleashing, then of the seven trumpets and then the seven bowl judgments.

And the catastrophic consequences of even these first four seals are absolutely inconceivable. Even by the end of the fourth seal, according to verse eight, we see that a fourth of the earth's population will be gone. Yet the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 24 and verse eight that these are only "the beginnings of birth pains." By the end most of the human race will have been exterminated. And even as labor pains increase in severity and in frequency for a mother about to give birth, so, too, will the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments increase in severity and frequency until finally the glorious kingdom will be born when the Messiah returns in all of his glory.

Now, please understand the chronology of these future events. The Church has been "caught up," as Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:7, sometimes called *raptured*. The Lord has promised to keep the Church, according to Revelation 3:10, "from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth."³ And some time after the rapture these seal judgments begin to occur in the first three and a half years of what is called, in a broad category, the *tribulation*, as we read in 2 Thessalonians 1:6. And then after the rapture, according to Daniel 9:27, the "prince to come," who is the antichrist, will make a covenant with Israel and that will begin Daniel's 70th week judgment. Actually that is the beginning of the tribulation, not so much the rapture, but *the signing of the covenant* with Israel. In fact, I believe there may be several years after the rapture before the actual tribulation begins.

At the signing of the covenant with the antichrist, the Jews will finally be able to rebuild their temple on Mount Zion, and many Jews are currently preparing to do this right now to the consternation of the Muslims. And after that, eventually, the antichrist will desecrate that temple in what is called the "middle of the week" or after three and a half years into the tribulation.

Now all of this is consistent with the chronology given 65 years earlier on the Tuesday before the Lord's crucifixion in what is called his Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and 25 and Mark 13 and Luke 21. Sometimes his discourse is called "The Little Apocalypse" because it parallels the events as well as the chronology of what we see here in the *unveiling* in the book of Revelation.

Now, in order to understand the text before us, I want to digress for a minute and give you some more background because it is crucial for you to understand the significance of the temple. The first temple was desecrated in 586 BC by Nebuchadnezzar and there was a restoration that was promised in Malachi 3:1, a millennial temple described in detail in Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48. Then there was a second temple desecration in 186 BC by Antiochus IV. And then, of course, it was utterly destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. And now in a supreme act of blasphemy, Satan has erected the Islamic Dome of the Rock, the Al-Aqsa mosque right on Mount Zion. And in that mosque exists the former

³ Revelation 3:10.

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resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. You can see a place there on the rock where it used to sit, the very holy of holies in the temple.

Currently the sacred temple mount is under the rigid and militant control of the Islamic Authority. If you have been there, as I have, you know how militant they are. When I was there in that mosque they didn't get five feet from me. There was about five of them that followed me around wherever I went staring at me. You are not allowed to do anything that they think might desecrate that place. By the way, this is at the very center of Arab-Israeli conflict. But, of course, our politicians are utterly oblivious to it, constantly trying to apply a political remedy to a spiritual and theological problem.

So the orthodox Jews today are passionate about restoring the temple. But you must understand the secular Jews really couldn't care less. All they want is peace at any cost. But a third temple, we know, will be built during the time of the tribulation. We will study that in Revelation chapter 11, in the first couple of verses. And then we know that it will be desecrated by the antichrist in the middle of Daniel's 70th week as we read in Daniel 9:27 and 2 Thessalonians 2:4. Then after the Lord returns, the Word of God tells us that he will build the final millennial temple described in Ezekiel 40 through 48. Now all of this has significance for understanding this *first seal* as you will eventually see.

Now remember, John is standing in the throne room of heaven. He is looking upon the worthy Lamb who is the Lord Jesus Christ who has just been given the scroll of doom from the hand of the Father. Therefore he has authority, now, to enact all of these judgments. And what we now have is a dramatic visual presentation of the contents of each of these seals that John is given.

So this morning we will concentrate on the first seal.

Verse one. "And 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.'"⁴

So here John *sees* and *hears* one of these magnificent angels around the throne summon the first horseman and his horse of judgment. And we see that the angel's voice is described as a "voice of thunder," reminiscent of the terrifying thunder that accompanied the theophany on Mount Sinai when God gave the 10 Commandments to Moses as we read in Exodus 20.

And in verse two we read, "And 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."⁵

Throughout Scripture we see that horses are often used to symbolize conquest and power and majesty and war. And certainly in Revelation they are associated with a force that will bring great disaster upon the earth. And a white horse was a symbol of victory for the Romans and for the Persians. But also, as we look at the book of Revelation, we see that

⁴ Revelation 6:1.

⁵ Revelation 6:2.

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it can stand for righteousness and holiness. So what does this represent? Some people would say, “Well, this must represent the Lord Jesus Christ.” I do not believe it does.

As we interpret the symbolism of the white horse and the rider we must—and, frankly as we interpret anything in the Word of God—we must do so through the lens of other passages of Scripture. And in order to understand this, we must also go to other prophetic passages that give us context, especially with respect to what happens in the initial phase of the tribulation.

We know from other passages that at the beginning of the tribulation there will be a time of world peace. Today people long for peace, especially Israel. And prophetically we know that out of that peace will come the most diabolically wicked political leader in the history of the world, one who will offer that peace, who will be the antichrist. Daniel 9:27 says that “He will make a firm covenant with the many [referring to Israel] for one week,”⁶ in other words, seven years. Israel will be deceived, we know, from the prophetic Scriptures. They will be deceived by this false sense of security provided by this world ruler, so much so that they will actually rebuild their temple. But, according to Daniel 9:27, “in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”⁷ Jesus described this as well as “the abomination of desolation” in Matthew 24 verse 15. Paul also warned about this peaceful deception in 1 Thessalonians 5:3. He says, “While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.”⁸

So, given the facts, I am convinced that this first horse and horseman symbolize a force of wickedness, a pseudo peace, a false peace, a deceptive peace described in other passages. I do not believe this refers to Christ because the Lord is the one who is opening the seals. And the rider is given a *stephanos* (stef'-an-os) crown in the original language. That is a victor's wreath, and he is carrying a bow. Whereas Christ is crowned with a *diadema* (dee-ad'-ay-mah) crown, a royal crown as we read about in chapter 19, and he carries a sword, not a bow without arrows. And we know that the Lord Jesus Christ comes at the end of the tribulation, not at the beginning.

This, beloved, is I believe, the white horse of counterfeit righteousness, a white horse of feigned holiness, like that of Satan who “disguises himself as an angel of light,” as Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 11 verse 14. He went on to say, “Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.”⁹

There is no indication that this rider is a specific person like Christ or the antichrist or any other specific person, but rather he represents an impersonal force, an impetus, if you

⁶ Daniel 9:27.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ 1 Thessalonians 5:3.

⁹ 2 Corinthians 11:15.

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will, that of a counterfeit peace even as the other riders, likewise, depict the force of war, famine and death.

Now would you also notice that this rider had a bow, but no arrows. Perhaps this is symbolic of the capability to use force without the determination to do so. Unlike the enemies of Israel that we read about in Ezekiel 39 verse three who are said to carry a bow in the left hand and arrows in their right hand. So here we see power and the pretext of peace without malice. We understand this further in the next phrase. Notice in verse two at the end he says, “And a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.”¹⁰ This is not a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal and sovereign king who has no need for anyone to give him a crown. Moreover, he would wear the crown of a king, a *diadema* (dee-ad’-ay-mah), not a *stephanos* (stef’-an-os) crown, not a winner’s crown.

So, again, this horse and rider depicts the force of a false peace that will be secured ultimately by the antichrist, the one who will be given a winner’s crown by the very world he seduces. We have had a foretaste of this in our last presidential election, have we not, where a naïve nation has coronated a charismatic charmer who has seduced people into believing that he will save them from all of their problems.

Likewise here in this first seal there is no hint of any military conquest. We know that that happens in the *second seal*, but not here. Yet we have one, the text says, “who goes out conquering and to conquer.” Obviously, in order for him to do this without war, he would have to do it through political maneuvering, not through military force. Again, similar to the smoke and mirrors we have grown accustomed to in our political world. This will be the galvanizing force, dear friends, behind the coming *new world order* that you hear politicians talking about today. Paul describes the power of the antichrist’s deceptive capabilities in 2 Thessalonians 2:8. He calls him “the lawless one.” And in verse nine and following he says this.

[He is] the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.¹¹

The Lord Jesus Christ said that the antichrist will also have with him in that day the help of false messiahs. In Matthew 24, the end of verse four he says, “See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many.”¹² And, as we study the Word of God we see that he will have with him an army of accomplices that are all false religionists, ear tickling false shepherds will

¹⁰ Revelation 6:2.

¹¹ 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12.

¹² Matthew 24:4-5.

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multiply like fruit flies as they do even in this day. Wherever you have people in crisis, false shepherds come to the rescue to tell you how wonderful you are and how everything is going to work out perfectly well. In fact, these will be like the false prophets in the days of Jeremiah who kept preaching, “‘Peace, peace,’ But there is no peace,”¹³ Jeremiah 6:14.

Now one might ask, “*What kind of events in the prophetic sequence contribute to this period of mass gullibility that would allow the world to be so profoundly duped?*”

Well, I would like to offer you a possible scenario that emerges from the prophetic literature, and I believe that the prophet Ezekiel gives us much insight into explaining a sequence of events that could cause the world to clamor for peace like never before.

Dear friends, something dramatic must transpire in order to get the highly distrusting nation of Israel to be seduced by this pseudo peace that is represented in the first seal at the beginning of Daniel’s 70th week of judgment. And I believe Ezekiel’s prophecy is key.

Let me give you a jet tour through Ezekiel here, literally in a few seconds, so that you get the big picture. Then we will look more closely at a few things. In Ezekiel chapter one through chapter 24 there is a depiction of Israel being removed from her land. And then in chapters 25 through 32 he depicts God’s historical judgments on other nations. And then in chapter 33 there is a historical call to repentance and ultimately the fall of the Jerusalem, all of which happened literally. Next in chapters 34 through 39 there are the prophecies concerning Israel’s literal future return to the very same land from which they had been driven and dispersed across the globe. And in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 there is a graphic description of a future invasion of Israel as well as the aftermath of that invasion, all of which will occur just prior to Messiah’s return to establish his earthly millennial kingdom. Then finally in chapters 40 through 48 there is a detailed description of the millennial temple and the conditions in the kingdom with respect to the boundaries and even the division of the land for each of the tribes of Israel.

And I believe the key to explaining how Israel is going to get suckered by this pseudo peace of the first seal is found in the events of Ezekiel chapter 38 and 39, the prophecy about Gog and Magog and the future invasion of Israel.

As we look a little bit more closely in Ezekiel 37 we see the description of the vision of the valley of the dry bones depicting a national resurrection of Israel and a regathering of Israel back into her land where eventually at his Second Coming the Lord promises, in verse 14, “I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land.”¹⁴ And in verse 24 he says, “My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd.”¹⁵ And then in verse 26 we read about his promises where he finally fulfilled the Abrahamic and the Davidic and the new covenant all together as he ultimately establishes his millennial kingdom. And then in verse 26 of

¹³ Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11.

¹⁴ Ezekiel 37:14.

¹⁵ Ezekiel 37:24.

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Ezekiel 37 he says, “I... will set My sanctuary in their midst forever.”¹⁶ There is the temple that the Jews are longing for. “I am going to set it in their sanctuary forever.”

My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.¹⁷

Obviously this has not happened yet. But then in Ezekiel 38 he gives this detailed description of a future invasion before all of this happens. And then, again, in chapter 39 the description of God coming to the aid of Israel and defeating those enemies and then a description of the aftermath and the ultimate restoration into their land and the millennial kingdom. And then, as I say, in chapters 40 through 48 you have the description of the millennial kingdom.

Now, follow me here. Sandwiched in between Israel’s regathering and promised resurrection in chapter 37 and the millennial temple in chapters 40 through 48 is this invasion of Israel in chapters 38 and 39 telling us that *this battle is linked to the last day’s temple*.

If we look more closely at Ezekiel 38—and if you would like to, if you want to follow along I am going to stay in Ezekiel here for the remainder of our time together this morning—Ezekiel chapter 38 and verses two through six where there is the prophecy of Magog ruled by Gog who is the prince of Rosh. We know this to be the ancient land of the Scythians. This is easily identified as the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan and Kirghiza, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

And then he speaks of Gog’s allies which include Meshech and Tubal. These are the territories of present day Turkey, and then Persia which is today’s Iran, and then Cush and Ethiopia, which is Sudan, and Put, which is Libya, and Gomer, which is present day Germany, and Beth-Togarmah, which is Turkey and many include, as well, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

And all of these nations today we know have military and economic alliances with Russia who has historically supplied them with arms. Most of these nations today are Islamic including six of the former Soviet republics to the north of Israel. And we know that the Islamic people have a violent hatred for Israel.

Furthermore, it is no secret that these nations also want to defeat the United States, Israel’s greatest ally. And Ezekiel specifically tells us that one day they are all going to form a confederacy to invade Israel. This is what we see here in Ezekiel 38.

Furthermore, it is no secret that all of these nations and many more who want to defeat the United States yet are afraid of what is happening with Islam. We see the rise of Islam. It is growing exponentially.

¹⁶ Ezekiel 37:26.

¹⁷ Ezekiel 37:27-28.

Now why would all of these nations, why would these people in Ezekiel 38 want to come upon Israel? Well, there are several reasons. Ultimately Satan, number one, is the god of Islam and he has always been opposed to God's covenant people, the Jews. But, secondly, the Muslims and other non Muslim Arab nations have been and continue to be thoroughly humiliated by Israel because of their stunning military victories over them which calls into question the power of Allah. And if you talk to these people you will very quickly see that this is one of their motivating factors for hating Israel.

Moreover they believe that the land of Israel belongs to them, that they are part of the covenant through Abraham through Ishmael. And so the land of Israel is theirs, not the Jews. And then, also, thirdly, the Muslim and Arab world are insanely jealous of Israel because it is one of the most prosperous nations in the world despite its size. In fact, it is considered to be the Silicon Valley of the Middle East. And militarily it is considered to have one of the most powerful militaries in all of the world. In fact, they tell us that its air force is second only to the United States of America.

And I find it fascinating that there are 1.3 billion Muslims in the world and only 15 million Jews. In fact, there are more people in the state of Florida than there are Jews in the whole world. They only constitute 2.5 tenths of one percent of the world's population, yet the Muslims would have us believe that they are trying to dominate the world. Do you know what? They will some day, when the Lord returns.

But the most powerful motivation for the Islamic world to destroy Israel and all other non Muslim countries is their ambition for total, global dominance. They believe that they are to follow the steps of Mohammed and conquer the whole world for Allah and that he, alone, is to be the authority and that the whole world should follow his law. And the primary tool for their religious expansionism is *jihad*, a holy war that purges the world of the infidel, as well as converts others by the edge of the sword.

And worse yet mainstream Shiites believe in the return of the Messiah like figure called the *12th Imam* and his coming can be hastened, they believe, through apocalyptic chaos and violence perpetrated against Christians and Jews. This is the theology and passion of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran's president. He said, and I quote, "Our revolution's main mission is to pave the way for the reappearance of the 12th Imam, the Mahdi," end quote. He says repeatedly that he believes that they must remove the Zionist regime in Israel and drive the Jews into the sea.

Now Russia's motivation for coming against Israel is very different. Russia is also a very proud nation, but they are a wounded bear right now and she is looking upon Israel with envy. Her motivation to destroy Israel is not theological, but more political and economic. And, of course, they need the help of the Muslim world to defeat the United States and Israel, and in order to get that help they must align themselves with the Muslims and the Arabs. This also allows them to have access to the oil reserves of their Arab allies, but also to hopefully, eventually possess Israel and the vast untapped oil resources of that land as well as the natural resources crucial to survival and prosperity in

that part of the world including water and chemicals in the Dead Sea and so forth. And they also want to gain access to Israel's cutting edge technological advances. And they are many. Not to mention their military weaponry and their military might and their arsenal of nuclear weapons.

No doubt these factors pertaining to the Arab Islamic world and Russia help explain Ezekiel's prophecy where God says he will "put hooks into their jaws" and bring them down upon Israel in verse four.¹⁸ And in verse 13, "to seize plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to capture great spoil?"¹⁹ And certainly a preemptive air strike by Israel to take out Iran's nuclear program could set all of this into motion very, very quickly.

So Ezekiel's prophecy describes this alliance of nations that will swoop down on Israel from the north. It says, *from the mountains of Israel* in chapter 38 and verses eight and 21 and also in chapter 39 verses two and three and 17 through 19. Also a region called that of "unwalled villages" in 38 verse 11 which is currently true of northern Israel. And we are told that these invaders will come, according to chapter 38 verses six and 15 "out of the remote parts of the north." But then in chapter 39 verse four and other passages we are told that God will defeat them on the mountains of Israel.

Now the question is: When will all of this happen? Well, this is greatly debated. Some say it will happen during the tribulation. Others say that it is in conjunction with the battle of Armageddon. Others say that it is during the millennium, but I believe that there are sufficient exegetical reasons to believe that those positions are not accurate. I believe that this battle will occur before the tribulation actually begins during this period of regathering to Israel that we are currently seeing.

Dr. Randall Price shares this position. He said this, and I quote, "There is nothing in the description of Israel in Ezekiel 38 and 39 that does not fit the reality of the modern state of Israel today. This time frame also resolves the problem of how Israel disposes of the captured weapons and the slain bodies of Gog and his allies in Ezekiel 39:9-16. According to Jewish law the dead must be buried immediately because exposed corpses are a source of ritual contamination. However, because of the vast number of corpses, this will take seven months according to Ezekiel 39:12." Furthermore," he goes on to say, "the destruction of the weapons will take seven years according to 39:9. If this battle were to take place at any time during the tribulation the Jews would run out of time to complete this task for they will be persecuted during the last half of the tribulation and most will have fled to the wilderness, Revelation 12:6, or remained in Jerusalem, Zechariah 12:7-8, 13:1 and 14:2. But," he says in conclusion, "if this battle occurs before the tribulation begins, there would be ample time for this job," end quote.

Now some would be quick to say, "Well, wait a minute. In chapter 38 verse 11 it says they must be living securely." Beloved, let me say something here. I have been to Israel and Israel is far safer today than the United States. I would much prefer to live there than

¹⁸ See Ezekiel 38:4.

¹⁹ Ezekiel 38:13.

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I would in Memphis or in Detroit. Moreover this could well be a reference to military might or strength which the Hebrew term *betach* (beh'takh), which means "security," can imply. So I believe all of the elements describing Israel in Ezekiel 38 and 39 are currently in place.

Also, I find it interesting that orthodox Jews in the current Temple movement in Israel interpret Ezekiel in this very same way. They are convinced that the war of Gog and Magog will be the next great war that Israel will fight and it will ultimately give them control of Jerusalem and their beloved Temple Mount.

By the way, when you see orthodox Jews today you will notice that they all walk stooped over. It is not because they have bad backs, but it is because they are mourning because they are without sacrifice. So their passion is to see the Temple rebuilt. Unfortunately, they think that this will be the final battle for Jerusalem described in Zechariah 12 through 14. But before Israel receives her restoration Temple that is promised in Ezekiel 37 it must go through the final purging of Daniel's 70th week.

Gershon Solomon, the leader of Israel's Temple Mount Faithful says this, quote, "The prophet Ezekiel prophesied that in the end times of the redemption of the people of Israel a terrible war will break out in the land when Gog and Magog, with many other nations, come to the land of Israel and try to destroy the people and the state of Israel. The God of Israel will use this means to finally defeat all those many enemies of Israel who have continually tried to destroy the state and people of Israel and push them into the Mediterranean. "Now," he goes on to say, "they prepare to destroy Israel with terrible weapons. Iran, with Russian help, has started to build an atomic capability with long range missiles directed at Israel. Syria, Egypt and other Arab countries are also preparing for an atomic, chemical and biological war against Israel. Russia is doing all it can to renew her political and military ties with the Arab ties around Israel." He went on to say, "that the coming war will be the final war undertaken against Israel by her enemies. In it, God will terribly defeat them, the time of judgment is close at hand. Israel will survive this war and become the nation which God and all the prophets dreamed about." end quote.

Well, indeed, they will experience a time of national revival and regathering of the people back into the land from all of the nations. They will even have a time where they will be free to build the temple. But I do not believe it will be necessarily the final battle. They still must go through the tribulation. All of their hopes and joys will soon be dashed when they recognize that the one who gave them the false peace will desecrate the temple in the middle of the week and they will be persecuted once again, betraying the reality that it was all an illusion. They must still go through the "time of Jacob's trouble" in the last half of the week.

Now what does this have to do with the first seal and the deceptive peace? Beloved, think of it this way. If the battle of Gog and Magog occurs before the tribulation, imagine the clout that Israel would suddenly have when the mighty armies of Russia and all of these Islamic countries are destroyed and the whole world stands in amazement at

what apparently God has done for them. No nation would dare go against them. Imagine how the seven month burial of the dead and the seven year burning of the weapons of all of these defeated armies would be a witness to all of the nations. As a footnote, if this battle occurs before the tribulation, this burning would probably begin about, maybe, three and a half years before the actual signing of the covenant which will technically trigger the seventieth week. And then they would burn until the middle of the tribulation.

Imagine how even the secular Jews in Israel today, who really couldn't care less about the rebuilding of this temple—all they want is peace at any cost—imagine how they would suddenly think if all of Islam was basically defanged. At that point they would join their orthodox brethren and say, "Hey, go ahead, build the temple." And with most of the Muslim world defeated and in shock there would be no one to stop them. Israel will be an oasis in a world that is disintegrating in war and famine and natural disasters that are all described in the next three seals that will happen soon thereafter.

And then, dear friends, add all of this to the rapture of the church somewhere around this great battle, either just before, during or perhaps some time after, when the Church will be translated into heaven. Imagine the further chaos and confusion that will fall upon the world. Think what this will do when the unprecedented carnage is being cleaned up and burning on the mountains of Israel, when a bewildered Islamic world is staggering around wondering what in the world just happened, and then you have the sudden disappearance of millions of Christians.

Dear friends, it would send the world into a tail spin. The economies of the world are hurting now. But imagine what it would be like if the Christians were suddenly taken away. Every government would be in a state of shock. Every leader with nuclear capability would have his finger on the button getting ready to protect himself, not knowing what was going to happen next. And, dear friends, please hear this. The whole world would be craving peace in ways that we cannot even fathom right now. What a perfect storm for the first seal to be unleashed upon the world—the perfect time for the world to come together to follow a charismatic leader promising all that they ask.

Daniel chapter seven verses 23 through 24 describes a coming one world government. Don't you see that happening even now? You have to live in a cave not to see this. It is coming, the one world government which will eventually splinter into 10 governments. This will be like a new world alliance, far more powerful than the United Nations and NATO today. And then that text and others help us understand that this 10 nation confederacy will thrive until the middle of the tribulation under the leadership of the antichrist. And prophecies also indicate that at first antichrist will represent the nations and make concessions with Israel; and imagine, if this happens, the types of concessions he would have to make on behalf of other nations given their astonishing defeat of this Russian-Arab alliance. And then we know prophetically that he will unite the world, the rest of the world, primarily the Europeans, in an alliance with Israel. He will offer them a covenant of protection and commerce and peace. My, there is your new world order. But, dear friends, it will be nothing more than a ploy in preparation for his fiendish,

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satanically inspired goal, that of Jewish genocide and establishing himself as God as we read in Daniel 9:27.

Any student of history will recognize the similarity between the false peace of this prophetic scenario that will one day deceive the world and that of another satanically empowered dictator who also hated Jews, that goose-stepping lunatic, Adolf Hitler.

In this regard Dr. John MacArthur comments, and I quote, “It may seem incredible that the world hovering on the brink of final disaster could be so totally deceived. Yet this is precisely what happened on a smaller scale before the outbreak of the most devastating war to date, World War II. Adolf Hitler spelled out in detail his plans for conquest in his book *Mein Kampf* published more than a decade before World War II began. Yet, incredibly, the western allies, particularly Britain and France persisted in believing Hitler’s false claim to be a man of peace. They stood idly by as he reoccupied the Rhineland, demilitarized after World War I, thus abrogating the Versailles treaty; then annexed Austria, the Sudetenland, and Czechoslovakia. Desperate to appease Hitler and avoid war, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain met with the Nazi dictator in Munich in 1938. Upon his return to England Chamberlain triumphantly waived a piece of paper (containing a worthless pledge of peace with Hitler) which he claimed guaranteed, quote ‘Peace with honor, 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 England had suffered a total, unmitigated defeat, he was shouted down by angry members of parliament. The deception was nearly 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 to avoid the catastrophe of the Second World War,” end quote.

Dear friends, we may not know *when*, but we do know *what*. A time of deception is coming for Israel and all those who live upon the earth who do not trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and serve him as Lord. This, I believe, is the substance of the first seal. And John said, “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.”²⁰

This sets the stage for the second seal which will be the red horse of world wide war. Then the third seal, the black horse of world wide famine, the fourth seal, which is the ashen horse of death through the sword and famine and pestilence and wild beasts; and Jesus said, “This is only the beginning of birth pains.”

I pray, dear friend, that you have trusted in Christ as Savior, because if you haven’t, a time will come when he can no longer be your Savior and he will only be your judge. And for those of us who know and love the Lord, may we all be ready to be caught up with him in the clouds.

Let’s pray together.

²⁰ Revelation 6:2.

The First Seal

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Revelation 6:1-2

Father, we thank you for your prophetic Word. And while we acknowledge that there are things about it that we don't fully understand, we know in general that a day of judgment is coming, a day when you will ultimately be glorified. Lord, how we long for that day. And I pray that we will all be passionate about the gospel, presenting it to our family members and to our friends. Lord, would you be pleased to use our every work to bring people to a saving knowledge of yourself. Thank you, Lord, for the hope that we have in Christ. Thank you that it is a purifying hope. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly, I ask in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

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