

The Second, Third and Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:3-8

I believe this morning the Spirit of God would have us turn, once again, to the book of Revelation chapter six, the *apocalypse*, the unveiling, the uncovering, the disclosure of spiritual truth pertaining to the consummation of redemptive history, the completion of divine judgment on God's beloved enemy Israel, his covenant people, his chosen people, his elect people, information that will help us understand their eventual national salvation and the blessings of the earthly kingdom that God has promised to them in the Abrahamic, the Davidic as well as the new covenant that we find in Jeremiah 31.

Before we look at the text I know that at times you will hear people say, "Oh, come on. God is finished with Israel. Israel has been replaced by the Church." It is a common theme. But, as we read earlier in Isaiah 44 verse 21 the Lord says, "Remember these things, O Jacob, And Israel, for you are My servant; I have formed you, you are My servant, O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me."¹

As we proceed in our study, I believe that it is crucial for us to understand that the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 abrogates—or, in other words, formally abolishes—the Mosaic covenant, but not the Abrahamic covenant. There are so many reasons why I would say that, not the least of which is what we read in Hebrews chapter eight verses seven through 13.

Moreover, the converted rabbi, the apostle Paul said this in Galatians three and verse 17, quote, "The Law," referring to the Mosaic Law:

...which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.²

And the Abrahamic covenant promises essentially four things: that there will be a *seed*, who would be the Lord Jesus Christ. Secondly, that there would be a *land* for his covenant people, a specific geographic location; and that there would be a *great nation* that would come forth from him; and then, finally, that they would be *blessed* and they would be *protected* like no other people on the face of the earth.

The prophet Micah said in chapter seven verse 16, describing the future glory of national Israel, he said this, quote:

Nations will see and be ashamed of all their might. They will put their hand on their mouth, Their ears will be deaf. They will lick the dust like a serpent, Like reptiles of the earth. They will come trembling out of their fortresses; To the LORD our God they will come in dread And they will be afraid before You. Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And

¹ Isaiah 44:21.

² Galatians 4:17-18.

The Second, Third and Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:3-8

passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob And unchanging love to Abraham, Which You swore to our forefathers From the days of old.³

Beloved, it is very important that you understand the centrality of God's covenant promises to Israel in your study of Bible prophecy, because as soon as you replace Israel with the Church—assuming that somehow the new covenant of Jeremiah 31 abrogates the Abrahamic covenant—as soon as you do that, you will descend into an abyss of eschatological confusion and chaos that will typically, and certainly historically, leave you with an attitude of anti-Semitism.

Please understand the new covenant was not given exclusively to the Church, but to Israel. However, it is not exclusive to Israel. Many passages clearly indicate this. But you must understand that the universal blessings of the new covenant will one day be mediated by Israel to the Gentile nations especially as they relate to the millennial temple. And all of these things are important for you to keep in mind as we continue to make our way through the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

The new covenant in Jeremiah 31 includes promises concerning the restoration of Israel's theocratic kingdom into their land and a millennial temple that will be built and will even be regulated according to the new covenant, not the old. In Jeremiah 31 we read about Israel's future under the new covenant. There we read, "Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers,"⁴ my covenant which they broke"—obviously speaking to Israel, not to the Church. And in verse 33 he goes on to say, "'But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'"⁵

Now, dear friends, if this were exclusive to the Church and therefore God didn't really mean Israel when he said "Israel" or he later on changed his mind, then I would ask you: Why does the new covenant also include God's promise in verse 36, quote, "[that] the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before [him] forever," And then go on to give great detail describing how he will rebuild Jerusalem.

If you would have me believe that these prophetic truths—not just the ones in the new covenant and all the Old Testament promises—but also in the book of Revelation, if you would have me believe that this is all merely figurative, apocalyptic language that refers to spiritual realities that have been fulfilled spiritually in the Church and that God is completely finished with Israel, then, dear friends, I would be compelled to forever shut

³ Micah 7:16-20.

⁴ Jeremiah 31:32.

⁵ Jeremiah 31:33.

The Second, Third and Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:3-8

my Bible because I have no idea what it says, nor do you. If God doesn't mean what he says, then I don't have a clue what he is saying.

As a footnote, when reading the details of the millennial temple—and we will get into this more later in our study of Revelation—but when we read these details in Ezekiel chapter 40 through 48 some people are appalled to think that a system of animal sacrifices will be reinstated after the one perfect sacrifice, that of Christ, has been accomplished, especially in light of Hebrews chapters 7 through 10.

But you must understand that the millennial system of sacrifices described by Ezekiel radically differs from the Aaronic system that we read about in the Old Testament. It will not be simply a reinstatement of Mosaic Judaism. There will be no ark of the covenant. There will be no table of the law, no cherubim. There will be no mercy seat, no veil, no golden candlestick. All of these things have profound influence and impact that foreshadowed and pointed to the one who would *eventually* come. There will be no table of showbread. There will be no feast of pentecost. There will be no feast of trumpets. There will be no day of atonement. There will be no evening sacrifice.

Moreover, the roles of the priests and responsibilities of the priests will be greatly different. Just because God's sanctifying work with the Church is finished at the rapture, He will still have much to do in teaching and testing and sanctifying Israel during Daniel's 70th week and the kingdom age.

In fact, one of the primary purposes of the coming millennial kingdom, according to Isaiah chapter 60 and chapter 66 will be to vindicate God's chosen people before the eyes of a watching world. Even as the symbolism of the bread and the cup remind us in the Church age of the unimaginable price that Jesus paid to secure our salvation, so, too, five different offerings (four of them blood letting that will be distinctive to Israel's worship) will serve as a perpetual reminder to them during that millennial age of the same sacrifice, the sacrifice of their Messiah, the one with whom they will be living.

I might add, because there will be no other blood shed during the time of the millennial kingdom, a time when the world will be renovated and returned once again to Edenic splendor, the blood sacrifices will be all the more inspiring to the worshipers.

So the central focus of the millennial kingdom will be around God's covenant people Israel who will then worship him properly in the temple that the Lord will rebuild. And then during that messianic age we will see all of the nations coming and worshipping as Israel again mediates the worship of the Lord during that time. And after the messianic age the Word of God tells us that there is going to be a new heaven and there is going to be a new earth and there is going to be a new Jerusalem, the capital city of heaven that will descend. And that is a 1500 mile cube, as we will learn. It represents the holy of holies which was also a cube. During that time in that new Jerusalem, in that holy of holies the Word of God says that there is no temple in it according to Revelation chapter 21 and verse 23. There is no need for a temple.

The Second, Third and Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:3-8

The text goes on to say:

For the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.⁶

In other words, beloved, at that point all of the bride of Christ, all of the redeemed throughout redemptive history will come together and will have as the centerpiece of heaven the holy of holies in which we will live. No more temple--we will be living in the presence of his glory. There in that capital city of heaven all of the redeemed from all ages, the bride of Christ, will there dwell.

So here in Revelation—all of that is introduction. Here in Revelation the Lord Jesus Christ describes the pre kingdom judgments. He is going to describe the “revealing of the sons of God” as we read about in Romans chapter eight and verse 19. He will describe his glorious appearing and many details of the millennial age that will be a bridge into the eternal kingdom and the glories of the new heaven and the new earth will be described here in Revelation.

Now, last week we examined the first of seven seal judgments in Revelation six which Jesus called “the beginning of birth pains” according to Matthew 24:8. And these will result in seven trumpet judgments that will then be followed by seven bowl judgments. And, by way of reminder, even as labor pains increase in severity and frequency with a woman in labor, so, too, will the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments until finally the kingdom is born.

Now in Revelation six we learn that the worthy Lamb takes the seven sealed scroll of divine judgment that proceeds from the Father who is seated upon the throne. And sequentially, then, the Lord Jesus Christ opens up each seal for John to see and to hear and to record for us so we, too, can see it and hear it. Now, I might remind you that the chronology of these events are also consistent with Jesus’ Olivet discourse in Matthew 24 and 25 and Mark 13 and Luke 21.

Now the first four seal judgments each include a colored horse and a rider often called *the four horsemen of the apocalypse*. And this occurs during the first half of Daniel’s 70th week, broadly labeled the seven year tribulation.

Notice again the first two verses of revelation six.

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." 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.⁷

⁶ Revelation 21:22-23.

⁷ Revelation 6:1-2.

The Second, Third and Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:3-8

By way of review, the first seal with its white horse and rider symbolizes a false of counterfeit righteousness that will bring upon the world a pseudo peace, a deceptive false peace whose architect will be the antichrist. And as we examine Bible prophecy in total we understand that he is going to seduce the world with his political savvy and his personal charisma by putting forth a very compelling plan for world peace.

Because of the supernatural defeat of the Russian and Arab invaders on the mountains of northern Israel according to Ezekiel 38 and 39, as the new leader of a revived Roman Empire, the antichrist will engineer a strategic alliance with Israel with a European group of nations. And now that Israel will be newly empowered because of the defeat of the Russian and Arab forces, he will have quite an opportunity to put together this kind of a plan. And at that point the world will think that peace has finally come to the Middle East and, according to Daniel 9:27, we read that “he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week,”⁸ referring to seven years. Even Israel will be seduced by this sham and eventually rebuild the third temple. But three and a half years later they will learn of his charade when he desecrates the temple according to Daniel 9:27.

Now as a footnote here, no one knows the time when the rapture of the Church will take place, when the Lord will return. But in Matthew 16, the first three verses, we have an indication that we need to be wise to discern “the signs of the times” the Lord tells us. And, after describing the events leading up to his Second Coming in Luke 21:29-32 the Lord gave this parable. He said:

Behold the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.⁹

So, beloved, as students of the Word of God we want to be accurate observers of the seasons in which we live. And as we observe the world around us today we recognize that never before in the history of the world can we see events that so clearly match up with the invasion of Israel described in Ezekiel 38 and 39, not to mention the other detailed prophecies that God has given us. The stage is set for these things to begin to happen. Things are being set in order.

As I indicated in our last study, the world stage for a Russian, Arab, Islamic invasion of Israel as we read in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is well staged at this point. An Israeli preemptive attack could set it into motion very quickly. And I find it interesting that just this week in an exclusive interview on March 31st with *The Atlantic*, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel could go it alone and attack Iran if the country went nuclear. He keeps asking the United States to help, but if they don't, he says, “We will go it alone.”

⁸ Daniel 9:27

⁹ Luke 21:29-31.

The Second, Third and Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:3-8

Not only is the state set for the Russian, Arab, Islamic invasion of Israel, but also the subsequent revived Roman Empire of the antichrist. In Daniel seven verses eight through 24 we have a description of how antichrist will lead a European alliance of Gentile nations that will eventually attack the people of Israel and the saints of that day. And currently we see the initial rumblings of all of this as we look at what is happening in the world around us, a final Roman Empire, the last Gentile kingdom of Daniel 2:42-45 and what is described in Daniel 7 and verse 8 and 19-27 as “the fourth beast with its little horn.”

For example, we see today the balance of power shifting from the United States to Europe, a shift that will catapult the antichrist into power as the head of this revived Roman Empire of Daniel’s prophecies, the beast that will come up out of the sea according to Revelation 13. We see the elite leaders of the European Union, for example, forcing their constitution down the throats of Europeans, even though they have voted against it. We see the EU looking to expand their role in the world. They are seeking all of the nations to embrace a new international law, a supreme law that is not anchored in any kind of legal corpus, a law that has not been voted upon by people of a sovereign nation and a law that would ultimately trump the United States’ constitution.

With the G20 summit that we have seen this last week we can see the initiative set into motion for the international regulation of the world’s financial systems under the IMF, the International Monetary Fund which is run by the Europeans and backed by the United States. And on and on it goes.

Beloved, these are facts being debated in the public forum right now. These are not the delusions of some conspiracy theorist. So, again, the stage is being set for a revived Roman Empire under the leadership of the most diabolical leader in history, the antichrist whose initial entry into the world is symbolized in the white horse of the first seal.

But, again, before he arrives on the world scene we believe that the Church will be caught up according to 1 Thessalonians 4:17. And many believe, as I do, the Russian, Arab, Islamic invasion of Ezekiel 38 and 39 will occur before the tribulation that will ultimately be set into motion when the antichrist signs the covenant with Israel and then eventually God will defeat that Russian Arab invasion.

And while Israel is burying the armies of those people—which, according to Ezekiel 39:12 will take seven months—and while they are burning their weaponry which will take seven years according to Ezekiel 39:9, this bloodless victory of a pseudo peace that the antichrist has acquired will cause the world to crown him with a winner’s crown as we read about in Revelation 6:2.

Now, again, all of this is at the beginning of the tribulation. But on the heels of the white horse of this counterfeit peace are three more horses that we will now examine. And like the first rider, please understand, they also represent forces of divine judgment preceding from the throne of God that the worthy Lamb has received in a scroll. And he is now continuing to sequentially open up these seals.

The Second, Third and Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:3-8

So let's look at the second seal in verse three. "When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, 'Come.'"¹⁰ Verse four. "And another, a red horse, went out."¹¹ In Greek a *hippos pyrros* (hip'-pos poor-hros') which means "a fiery 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."¹²

The fiery red horse symbolizes the bloody slaughter and the fires of war that will interrupt this phony peace. Here the angel summons the force of world wide war that will engulf those who dwell upon the earth. And notice, as well, in verse four, "it was granted to take peace from the earth."¹³ In other words, this rider is God's ordained agent. He will be the one who will terminate this peace upon the earth at that time. The antichrist is the one who imitates the Prince of Peace who is to come, the Lord Jesus Christ, the only one who can bring in everlasting peace. And notice also the domain of this existing peace that is terminated is "from the earth"¹⁴ it says. It is not some localized region in Judea as the Preterists would have us believe, but it is from the earth.

Jesus' parallel chronology and description of this is found in his Olivet discourse. We read about it in Matthew 24 and verse six when this pseudo peace of the antichrist is shattered. The Lord said, and I quote:

You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.¹⁵

And will you notice, also, John tells us that this rider was given "a great sword,"¹⁶ a *machaira* (makh'-ahee-rah) sword in the original language, which was the battle sword of the Roman legions.

But notice that this will be a *machaira megale* (makh'-ahee-rah meg-ah'-lay), "a great sword,"¹⁷ emblematic of the severity and scope of the violence that will occur during that specified period of time, namely, between the false peace of the first seal and the world wide famine of the third seal, as we will see.

And, again, today as we look at the world around us, we see the world clamoring for peace, but the kind of peace that man tends to promote is always doomed to be short lived because he is always motivated by sin, especially a peace whose mastermind is the agent of Satan, the antichrist.

¹⁰ Revelation 6:3.

¹¹ Revelation 6:4.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Matthew 24:6-7.

¹⁶ Revelation 3:4.

¹⁷ Ibid.

The Second, Third and Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:3-8

Think about it, dear friends. To be sure, the delicate balance of world powers will be shattered at the battle of Gog and Magog with Russia and the Islamic Arab countries now defeated. Then you add to that the chaos and the confusion of the rapture of the Church. The world will be thrown into economic chaos like we cannot imagine, and frightened people around the world will be crying out for help, and conflict will result and nations will fight against nations. They will be fighting for their very existence.

And pretending to be Israel's ally and defender, the great architect of peace of the Middle East will soon be required to use force in order to police the world and maintain his authority. And his savagery will be worse than any of the blood-thirsty tyrants that we have ever seen in the history of the world. Eventually his aggression and frustration will boil over and his true colors will be shown in the middle of the tribulation when he desecrates the temple.

This will ignite even greater conflict described in Daniel 11 beginning in verse 36. "Then the king will do as he pleases,"¹⁸ Daniel tells us.

... and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done. He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women.¹⁹

Let me explain that briefly; "the gods of his fathers," that is an Old Testament expression that is used to describe the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel. He will have "no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women."²⁰ The Messiah himself is what that is a reference to here. Not so much that he will be a homosexual as sometimes you hear people say. You see, it was the longing of every Jewish woman to be the mother of the Messiah. That was the desire of women, for which the antichrist will have no respect in that he will seek to replace him.

Daniel goes on to say:

Nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all. But 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. He will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him and will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price. 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. He will also enter the Beautiful Land, [a reference to Israel] and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued

¹⁸ Daniel 11:36.

¹⁹ Daniel 11:36-37.

²⁰ Daniel 11:37.

The Second, Third and Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:3-8

out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon. Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape. But he will 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 heels... and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful...Mountain [again a reference to Israel]; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.²¹

Following the second seal with the fiery red horse of war is the third seal, the black horse of worldwide famine. Again, the Lord described this in Matthew 24:7. He said, "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines."²²

Notice verse five of Revelation six.

When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine."²³

So here God the Father seated upon his throne speaks of famine conditions.

Beloved, this rider is the personification of famine. In Lamentations four verses eight and nine Jeremiah associates the color black with the deep mourning of those withering away because of a lack of food. Notice that this rider has a pair of scales in his hand which denotes the rationing or the weighing of food in a famine condition. We know nothing of this here, but some of our missionaries know of it right now. Some of them have family members who are living in refugee camps and they are rationed very small portions of food.

We read, "A quart of wheat for a denarius."²⁴ A denarius was a day's wage in that day. And a quart of wheat will barely sustain one person for one day, much less a man's family. And he says, "Three quarts of barley."²⁵ Barley was what you would feed livestock, it is animal feed, far less nutritional than wheat. "Three quarts of barley for a denarius,"²⁶ for a day's wage. Can you imagine that? And then he adds, "and do not harm,"²⁷ which means damage, "the oil and the wine."²⁸ Oil was and even today is an

²¹ Daniel 11:37-45.

²² Matthew 24:7.

²³ Revelation 3:5-6.

²⁴ Revelation 6:6.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

The Second, Third and Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:3-8

essential ingredient necessary to prepare the basic staples that we have in order to eat, and wine was crucial in that day as it is even in this day in many places for drinking water since the water will be polluted.

Famine conditions are always a natural consequence of war. And when you think of the modern tools of war, you can understand even more fully what kind of famine may exist in the day that the Lord describes. Think about the weaponry that we have today. There are biological weapons. There are chemical weapons. There are nuclear weapons. And now the dreaded EMPs, the electromagnetic pulse weaponry that can be delivered by a ballistic missile with a nuclear warhead.

We are told that if one of these is detonated 300 miles above the United States it would knock out all of the communications in the United States, parts of Mexico and Canada. Imagine if suddenly there is no more internet, no more cell phone, no more electricity in your home. Your car won't drive. There is no Pentagon. This could potentially disable all of our advanced weapon systems. The United States intelligence today indicates that at least 10 countries are presently working on EMP weapons, of course, Russia leads the way. This is considered a very serious threat today by our military experts. Studies indicate that if it were to happen it would take us years to recover.

We know all too well, don't we, first hand, what an electrical outage does. It puts us immediately into the most primitive conditions, no refrigeration, no grocery stores, no heating, no air, no fuel, no transportation. People very quickly begin to starve. Some believe, by the way, that this is why the United States is not mentioned in the end times scenarios.

Well, whatever the means, the war of this period of time.... I should say the wars of this period of divine wrath will result in much of the world's crops and food supplies being destroyed. And as a result there will be famine. So here we see that the new world order of utopian tranquility is not only shattered by international wars, but also by global famine.

The fourth seal is the ashen horse of death. And here, beloved, we begin to see more vividly the frequency and the severity of birth pains. In verse seven we read:

And when He broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." And I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. And authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.²⁹

The term "ashen" translates the Greek word *chloros* (khlo-ros'), which is a reference to a pale, yellowish green color as in the color of grass or certain vegetation. And here it depicts the color of a corpse in the advance stage of decomposition. Indeed, this rider

²⁹ Revelation 6:7-8.

The Second, Third and Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:3-8

has, as we read, *Hades*, or, in other words, the grave following after him, emblematic of the mass amount of deaths that will result as this rider who is the personification of death enters upon the world scene.

And the text tells us “And authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.”³⁰

So think of this. In addition to the millions that have already died as a result of the international wars and the famine, this rider is authorized to kill a fourth of the earth that is left alive.

Yesterday I checked with the United States Census Bureau and they tell me that as of yesterday, 4/4/09, the total population of the world is six billion, seven hundred and seventy-one million, one hundred and thirty-three thousand and four hundred and thirty-eight. I did a rough calculation of one fourth of just that figure which would be about 1.7 billion people would be gone. To put that in perspective I did a little calculation. That would be all of China, the United States, Canada and Australia.

Here we learn that the agents of death that the Lord allows this rider to use, notice, is the *sword, famine and pestilence and wild beasts of the earth*. It is interesting that the first three sword, famine and pestilence, are often linked together in the Old Testament as a trio of terrifying judgment.

And first notice that added to the perils of this second seal of war and the third seal of famine is this horror of pestilence. Pestilence translates the Greek word *thanatos* (than'-at-os) which can be translated “death” or “disease.” And here it is used in a broad sense to refer to disease as it is in chapter two verse 23 and chapter 18 and verse eight.

But also it can refer to death in general as a result of the additional horror of that time, that of earthquakes that Jesus associates with this judgment in Matthew 24:7. Again, there he says, quote, “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.”³¹ To be sure, the concept of widespread disease that will lead to death is certainly consistent with the ravages of war that we have seen throughout history as well as the famine conditions that occur.

In this regard John MacArthur makes an astute observation. He says, and I quote, “Throughout human history disease has killed people on a far more massive scale than war. More union and confederate soldiers died from disease during the Civil War than were killed in battle. An estimated 30 million people died during the great influenza epidemic of 1918 and 19, more than three times as many as the estimated 8.5 million soldiers who died in battle during World War I. In addition,” MacArthur went on to say, “several million more died at about that same time in an outbreak of typhus in Russia, Poland and Rumania. In a world ravaged by war and famine, it is inevitable that such disease will be widespread,” end quote.

³⁰ Revelation 6:8.

³¹ Matthew 24:7.

The Second, Third and Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:3-8

But will you also notice the final agent of divine wrath that will be unleashed upon those who dwell upon the earth, that of “wild beasts.” And this is interesting. We don’t know for sure what this refers to, but I will give you some things that we believe would be consistent with this form of judgment.

Some believe—and they may well be accurate—that this could include rodents that are notorious for spreading disease and thrive in areas populated by human beings. We know that during the 14th century the bubonic plague, also called the Black Death, swept through Europe killing 27 million people, a disease resulting from the bite of an infected flea found on rodents such as rats and mice. And then they seek out other prey when their rodent hosts die. Well, during this time, billions of rats and mice will die requiring countless trillions of fleas to find new hosts.

But God can use many kinds of wild beasts. Any student of the Old Testament recognizes that he has done this before. Let me give you a sampling. He used what was called “fiery serpents” in Numbers 21:6. Remember the story of the bronze serpent? And also they were called “fiery flying serpents.” We see this, as well, in Isaiah chapter 30:6. This is the dreaded *echis* (e-chis), which means “viper” in Greek, that is found in the Middle East and Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and in Africa north of the equator. It is also called the “soft-scaled viper” or the “carpet viper.” It is a relatively small snake, 35 inches long, but it is very aggressive. It is very quick to strike and possesses an extremely virulent hemotoxic venom. In fact, bites from the *echis* species probably result in more deaths than from any other species. And most of the victims are bitten after dark when this creature is active. He has been known to leap up while striking which is suggestive of flight. And for this reason he is sometimes called the “flying serpent,” but also the fiery “flying” serpent.

Scientists tell us that this particular species of snake can have kind of a luminescent glow. This is a result of bioluminescence which is the production and the emission of light by a living organism as the result of a chemical in which chemical energy is converted into light energy. We see this, for example, in the *firefly* that we have around here. Evidently this snake has the ability to kind of *glow* a bit. So this is the “fiery flying serpent.”

We read of other animals that God has used in the song of Moses describing judgment on apostate Israel in Deuteronomy 32:24 we read, “They will be wasted by famine, and consumed by plague And bitter destruction; And the teeth of beasts I will send upon them, With the venom of crawling things of the dust.”³²

And in Joshua 24:12 we read that God, “sent the hornet before you and it drove out the two kings of the Amorites from before you.”³³

And in 2 Kings chapter two and verse 24 you will recall the story of Elijah who called upon the Lord to deal with 42 youths (who would have been around 20 years old) who were ridiculing him, who were mocking him and mocking the Lord. And there we read,

³² Deuteronomy 32:24.

³³ Joshua 24:12.

The Second, Third and Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:3-8

“When he looked behind him and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two female bears came out of the woods and tore up forty-two lads of their number.”³⁴

And in 2 Kings chapter 17 we read about the king of Assyria that sent pagan idolaters from other lands into Samaria to settle the abandoned Israelite towns.... the Israelites with the Jews who had escaped Israel and eventually they became the Samaritans. And in verse 25 we read, “They did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them which killed some of them.”³⁵

And in Jeremiah 5:6 we speak of the judgment of a *lion* and a *wolf* and a *leopard* that God uses to punish the wicked.

And even in Ezekiel 33 verse 27 God had Ezekiel to warn the survivors of the fall of Jerusalem who stayed in the land of promise that they should still worship the Lord their God lest they fall into further judgment. And if they refused, here is what he said, quote, “Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘As I live, surely those who are in the waste places will fall by the sword, and whoever is in the open field I will give to the beasts to be devoured, and those who are in the strongholds and in the caves will die of pestilence.’”³⁶

Well, dear friends, regardless the kinds of beasts that the Lord chooses, this additional agent of divine wrath will be terrifying beyond description. And, again, by the time *the four horsemen of the apocalypse* are finished, which would be midpoint of the tribulation, at least one fourth of the world’s population will be gone; and yet Jesus says, “This is only the beginning of birth pains.”³⁷

Dear friends, today the world mocks the Lord Jesus Christ and all who belong to him. Sometimes I get so offended when I turn on the television and I hear some of these talk show people and some of these quasi comedians that I just have to turn it off. But the patience of the Lord, his loving kindness is going to come to an end some day. The cup of his indignation will one day run over and then he is going to wipe the smirk off the scoffer’s face and they will be forced to acknowledge what they have known to be true all along. And that is that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is, indeed, to be feared, because he is Lord over all.

I just hope and I pray that you have confessed him as Savior and Lord because he is coming again and it could be very soon. Let’s pray together.

Father, as we contemplate the elements of your wrath we shudder, especially when we think of so many that we know and love who do not know you and, even worse, those who claim they know you, but by their lives they demonstrate the opposite. Lord, we pray that you would be merciful. We pray that you will use us to speak truth into the lives of those

³⁴ 2 Kings 2:24.

³⁵ 2 Kings 17:25.

³⁶ Ezekiel 33:27.

³⁷ See Matthew 24:8; Mark 13:8.

The Second, Third and Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:3-8

who do not know you, that we would be salt and light in a very dark and decaying world. Lord, we thank you that even in your wrath we can see your glory and we thank you for the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus.

Take these truths and apply them to our hearts that we might be vigilant in all that we do, serving you and loving you, knowing that some day, and some day soon, we will see you face to face. For it is in Jesus' name that I pray. Amen.

Transcript Explanation: Each transcript is a rough approximation of the message preached and may occasionally misstate certain portions of the sermon and even misspell certain words. It should in no way be considered an edited document ready for print. Moreover, as in any transcription of the spoken word, the full intention and passion of the speaker cannot be fully captured and will in no way reflect the same style of a written document.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Olive Tree Resources.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By Dr. David Harrell. © Olive Tree Resources. Website: olivetreeresources.org