

Revelation Chapter Six.

Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." ² And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. ³ When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." ⁴ Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that *people* should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. ⁵ When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ And I heard 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 the wine." ⁷ When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." ⁸ So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth. 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 testimony which they held. ¹⁰ And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they *were*, was completed. ¹² I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. ¹³ And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. ¹⁴ Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. ¹⁵ And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" ¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Introduction

After our Christmas series from Luke's Gospel we move back into the book of Revelation.

Apart from the Easter series and our Communion messages on Mark's Gospel we will continue with Revelation until we finish the book.

As I mentioned in September when we started in revelation, there are different opinions by Biblical scholars on how to interpret the book of Revelation.

I am convinced that because John tells us 5 times that it is a book of prophecy, then this is how we should interpret the book.

(Rev. 1:3, 22:7, 10, 18, 19.)

What John tells us came to him as a series of visions, similar to the prophecies of Daniel and Zechariah. Although some books of the Bible contain prophecy, Revelation is the only book that identifies itself as Prophetic.

We were told in Chapter one that we are going to be blessed by God as we hear the words of this prophecy. As we studied the letters to the 7 Churches we were encouraged by the many characteristics of Jesus Christ. He is the Faithful witness, the ruler of Kings, the beginning and the end, the one who was dead and now lives, the person who gives us a new name and releases us from the burden of sin, the person who gives us the tree of life, the one who keeps us from the hour of trial, the one who stands at the door of our hearts and knocks and desires a personal relationship with us.

These were just some of the things we learnt about Jesus as He spoke to the 7 Churches.

We discovered last time in chapter 5 that Jesus was the only one found worth to open the seals of the scroll.

We now come to discover what is inside the seals that Jesus was found worthy to open.

There are 6 seals in chapter 6 and we will deal with each one separately.

1. The first seal – The Conqueror. – v. 1-2.

We are told that the opening of the first seal revealed somebody who sat on a white horse, wearing a crown, and having a bow.

We are told that this person went out conquering and to conquer.

We must always interpret scripture from scripture to discover things that we find difficult.

Firstly, we need to go to the prophecy of Zechariah Chapter 6: v. 1-8.

Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots *were* coming from between two mountains, and the mountains *were* mountains of bronze. ²With the first chariot *were* red horses, with the second chariot black horses, ³with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses—strong *steeds*. ⁴Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, “What *are* these, my lord?” ⁵And the angel answered and said to me, “These *are* four spirits of heaven, who go out from *their* station before the Lord of all the earth. ⁶The one with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them, and the dappled are going toward the south country.” ⁷Then the strong *steeds* went out, eager to go, that they might walk to and fro throughout the earth. And He said, “Go, walk to and fro throughout the earth.” So they walked to and fro throughout the earth. ⁸And He called to me, and spoke to me, saying, “See, those who go toward the north country have given rest to My Spirit in the north country.”

Zechariah tells us of four horses which are let loose upon the earth to deal out vengeance on Babylon and Egypt and the nations that have oppressed God’s people.

In both cases John and Zachariah see these horses as the instruments of God’s Judgement.

As each of the seals in broken open, a new terror falls upon the earth.

Some scholars have suggested that the rider on this white horse is Jesus Christ, but this is not the case.

Jesus is identified in Revelation Chapter 19 v. 11-12 as the rider of a white horse. However, Jesus in Revelation Chapter 19 is wearing a different crown.

The Crown in Revelation 19 is called in Greek the “diadem” which is the “Royal Crown”, however the crown in Revelation Chapter 6: v.2 is called in Greek the “stephanos” crown. This specifically is the victors crown or the conquerors crown.

The picture here is definitely of God using someone to pour out is wrath upon the earth.

In Roman history whenever a conquest was celebrated, the Roman general paraded through the streets in a chariot which was drawn by white horses.

The second thing that convinces us of the truth of this rider on his white horse is what he has with him.

We are told that he has a “bow”.

In the Old Testament the “bow” is always the sign of military power.

Jeremiah 51: v. 56,

⁵⁶ Because the plunderer comes against her, against Babylon, And her mighty men are taken. Every one of their bows is broken; For the LORD *is* the God of recompense, He will surely repay.

Hosea 1: v. 5

⁵ It shall come to pass in that day That I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.”

Psalms 46: v. 9.

⁹ He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;
He burns the chariot in the fire.

So it is very clear to us and to the people of John’s day that the first horse stood for military conquest.

So here we see clearly that in the last days, that is the days we are living in now and have done since the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God will pour out His wrath upon this earth through military conquest.

It is likely that as we get closer to the second coming that the significance of these wars will have a greater impact of everybody in the world.

We live in a global village where we are all closely connected and nations are fighting for survival. In Matthew 24: v. 6 we are told that wars and rumours of wars are part of the sign of the second coming of Jesus.

The nations to watch in the world today are those with the economic and military power. These are the nations we need to pray for.

2. Second Seal – Conflict on the earth. – v. 3-4.

When the second seal was opened John saw another horse.

It was a fiery red horse. From John's explanation we are in no doubt about the purpose of the rider of this horse.

We are told that it was granted to this person to take peace from this earth.

This would involve people killing one another.

Apart from the people who are killed in wars, there are at least 437,000 people murdered for no real reason each year in our world.

This is about 35% of the population of Osaka.

According to Isaiah and Zechariah this picture of the end times fits the prophecy of John here.

Isaiah 19: v. 2

² "I will set Egyptians against Egyptians; Everyone will fight against his brother, And everyone against his neighbor, City against city, kingdom against kingdom.

Zechariah 14: v. 13.

¹³ It shall come to pass in that day *That* a great panic from the LORD will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, And raise his hand against his neighbor's hand;

It is clear that as we get nearer to the second coming of Jesus, there will be a total breakdown of human relationships.

In the world we live in today it is not hard to imagine this happening.

In the last 15 years we have witnessed everything from the destruction of the twin towers in New York, to the recruitment of British Born Muslims who have killed British people.

Why has this happened.

It is because of hatred and a hardened heart.

It is also because of God's wrath being poured out through these events.

Take note of what it says in v. 4. "and it was granted to the one..... This means God allowed it to happen for His sovereign purposes.

The important thing is not whether we die in a war or we are murdered by our neighbour, the important thing is, are we saved from the wrath of God for our eternal existence.

If we know and love Jesus as our own personal Saviour, then we are safe and secure for ALL eternity.

Yes, we have to die one day, but that is not the end.

God has a plan and purpose to raise His children from the dead and start a new world where there will be No sin or death or any evil.

That is the great encouragement all Christians can receive, in spite of the awful world we live in today.

Japan is one of the safest places in the world to live in today.

However, there are still about 1,000 murders every year in Japan.

The most important thing that we can do for the Japanese people in 2017 is to share with them the "Gospel" of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I know it's hard and I know there are many rejections, but the message of forgiveness, through the death of God's Son Jesus Christ is still the greatest thing that we can offer people.

Q. What are you going to do this year, to at least TRY to share your faith?

3. The third seal – famine on the earth – v. 5-6.

When the third seal was opened, John saw a black horse, and the person sitting on the horse had a pair of scales in his hand.

John heard a voice which said

“ A quart of wheat for a denarius and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine..”

It is important to note that the three main crops of Israel at that time were corn, wine and oil.

In the Old Testament it is always these three crops that are mentioned when the land is being described.

(Deut.7:13, 11:v. 14, 28: v. 51, Hosea 2: v. 8, and 22.)

It is also important that we know that a man's food ration for the day was either a quart of wheat or three quarters of barley and a man's wages was a denarius.

So what John is saying here is that a time will come when food is going to be very scarce on this earth.

It will take a man's wages to cover the cost of food for one person. If that man was married and had children, then it would be very difficult.

So John is foretelling a time when there will be a world-wide shortage of food.

This could happen in the next 10-30 years quite easily.

90% of the world's wealth is owned by 1% of the population.

It is easy to see how the average person could become poor very quickly.

I can't predict when this will happen, but I do know that one day it will happen.

4. The fourth seal – widespread death on the earth – v.7-8.

John saw at the opening of the fourth seal, an awful picture.

He saw a pale horse, the rider was called “death” and “hades”.

Power was given to them to kill 25% of the earth with the sword, hunger, death, and by the beasts of the earth.

John was speaking in terms that the Jewish people would understand.

Turn with me to Ezekiel Chapter 14: v. 21.

²¹ For thus says the Lord GOD: “How much more it shall be when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem—the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence—to cut off man and beast from it?”

Also in Leviticus chapter 26: v. 21-26 there is a passage which tells us of the penalties which God will send upon His people because of their disobedience.

²¹ ‘Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins. ²² I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; and your highways shall be desolate. ²³ ‘And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, ²⁴ then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. ²⁵ And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. ²⁶ When I have cut off your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall bring back your bread by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied.

Just as God judged His chosen people for their disobedience, so He will judge the nations and their people for their rebellion against Him.

There is no escape for the consequences of sin.

5. The Fifth seal - The cry of the Martyrs – v. 9-11.

When John opened the fifth seal he saw people who had been killed because of God's word, and because of their testimony.

These people cried out with a loud voice saying

“How long, O Lord, holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth.”

A reply came to these “Martyrs” that they should wait a little longer until the number of “Martyrs” was complete.

It also mentions that a white robe was given to each of them.

Psalm 79: v. 5-10. In the N.K.J.

⁵ How long, LORD? Will You be angry forever? Will Your jealousy burn like fire? ⁶ Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You, And on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name. ⁷ For they have devoured Jacob, And laid waste his dwelling place. ⁸ Oh, do not remember former iniquities against us! Let Your tender mercies come speedily to meet us, For we have been brought very low. ⁹ Help us, O God of our salvation, For the glory of Your name; And deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins, For Your name's sake! ¹⁰ Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?” Let there be known among the nations in our sight The avenging of the blood of Your servants *which has been* shed.

When the Psalmist uttered this cry he was surprised by God's seeming inactivity. God didn't seem to be doing anything.

However, the Psalmist did not doubt God's ultimate action.

Yes, one day, God will vindicate the “righteous”

Yes, one day, God will punish those who have killed His chosen people.

Yes, one day the Martyrs of this earth will be judged by God.

However, we are told that God Himself will decide when that happens.

The Jewish people had a conviction that the “drama” of history had to be played out in full before the end would come.

God would not act until His appointed time.

We want things to happen in our time but God brings things about in His time.

Probably the wisest man that ever lived, King Solomon said this

“ To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.” (Eccl.3: v.1)

In Ecclesiastes chapter 3 Solomon goes on to list the events of life that happen in God's time...

I now quote from v. 14-15 of chapter 3.

¹⁴ I know that whatever God does,

It shall be forever.

Nothing can be added to it,

And nothing taken from it.

God does *it*, that men should fear before Him.

¹⁵ That which is has already been,

And what is to be has already been;

And God requires an account of what is past.

It is easy to be critical of the “Martyrs” who wanted God's judgement to come upon their killers, but until we have been tortured and killed for our faith, we should reserve judgement.

The final seal in this chapter is cosmic disturbances.

6. Sixth Seal – Cosmic disturbances – v. 12-17.

What we have in these verses is an echo of the Old Testament teaching about the end times.

Joel Chapter 2 speaks to us about the “Day of the Lord” and in verse 10 it says “ The earth quakes before them, the heaven’s tremble, the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness.” Then we have the warnings in the New Testament.

Matthew 24: v. 29

²⁹ “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Mark 13: v. 24-26

²⁴ “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵ the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

This is a similar picture to what John experienced.

When this happens, everybody will have to acknowledge that the great day of God’s wrath has come, and who is able to stand?

We are told that believers will receive a blessing from God for hearing the prophecy of Revelation read out. It is difficult from this chapter with so many negative things happening to discover what the blessing for us might be?

Application

The blessing of this chapter is that we can know Jesus as our own personal saviour and hold on to the promises that He gives to all His children.

If you are NOT a Christian today, among all the bad news for the future is one bit of good news.

Today is the day of Salvation, you can know Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour, today.

I can make no promises about tomorrow, but I can ask you to come to Jesus Christ today!!!

If you come today, Jesus promises you forgiveness of your sins, based on His death as God required punishment for sin.

He promises you peace in your heart and a joy that is not affected by outside circumstances.

Jesus promises NEVER to leave you or FORSAKE you.

Paul says in Romans 8: v. 38-39

³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Once you come to Jesus, even death is the gateway to eternal life and a wonderful future.

We have learnt today that God is a God of wrath and He will pour out His wrath upon this world and all those who rebel against Him.

However, God is also a God of love and He does not want you to experience His wrath. Therefore, today He offers you Jesus Christ as an alternative to His wrath.

Q. Will you choose Jesus or will you ignore God’s love?

There is no second chance after death.

Hebrews 9: v. 27 in the N.K.J.

²⁷ And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, Amen.