

The Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse

Revelation 6:1-8



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

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What is the difference between the judgment of God and the discipline of God?

In Revelation 6, with the Lamb of God being worthy, He opens the first six of the seven scrolls. The first four have gained the monicker as the "Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse." With each opening of the seal, the four creatures worshipping God in the throne room summons one of the horse and his rider to come forth. These horsemen are not necessarily demonic forces but one thing is clear, they are the instrument of judgment upon the world. This is the beginning of the end and the timeline has begun for when Christ will return for His people. Most depictions of the four horsemen tend to be with these as representations of the devil's work throughout the earth. Yet, this would ignore the presence of the creatures summoning them. Whether it be through the permissive will of God, which allows things to happen, or the active will, which causes things to happen, the seals are the result of the judgment of the Lamb being poured out on the world. For all whose identity remains with the Lamb of God, the consequences of the judgment will not be felt. The church will feel the effects of the judgments but our ultimate source of hope and salvation is Jesus Christ who reigns in the throne room of Heaven, speaking with the authority of God the Father.

White Horse of Conquest

The first horseman is given a crown and permission to conquer the earth. The rider presents itself as a King and bear authority. But, it key to note that the authority is given. Thus, there would be one greater than this rider who parades around in place of the true King. This may come in the form of governmental oppression or philosophical oppression that holds the people down and keep them subjugated. Yet for the Christian, while we may feel the effects of living in a conquered land, we will not feel the consequences of being conquered. The rider on the white horse may appear to be a king and rulers, but ultimately, we serve the one who King who reigns victorious in the throne room of God. Furthermore, His authority has been passed on to the church to be "more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37). Through Christ, the church can remain steadfast as a foundation that will not be conquered.

Red Horse of War

The second horseman is described as riding a fiery red horse. This

rider's sought to remove the peace from the world and, out of that lack of peace, cause people to war against one another and kill one another. Any modern reading of the news would accurately depict what this looks like and would naturally seem to come as a consequence of being conquered. As the horseman continues to ride, the effects of the war will continue to be poured on on the world. The effects on the surrounding culture will be evident and obvious as peace is snatched out of our very hands. Yet, for the church, we must remember where our peace comes from. It was Jesus who said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33). As the world descends into chaos and war, the church will stand on the foundation that Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. Even as judgment falls on the earth, we will endure war but rest in the true peace that comes from above.

Black Horse of Toil

The third horseman rode atop a black horse. From this came the judgment of toiling over the work to provide even the most basic of food. Simply making it became a task and ordeal with the work done seemingly not being able to provide for a family. There comes with this a sense of toil from the hard work that amounts to hopelessness and a lack of provision for those working the hardest to provide. Yet for the church, we have everything we need with Jesus Christ. He is our source of provision and help. Furthermore, we can seek to find our rest from toil in the strength of Jesus Christ who proclaims in victory "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:30) By being in the presence and will of God, we understand that we, though made for work, have been blessed by the Sabbath. Our work will cease and faith take over in trusting God for our very provision, even when it seems that our work amounts to nothing.

Pale Horse of Death

The final horseman is one that most are at least somewhat familiar with; death with Hades traveling close behind. With the mention of Hades, this isn't merely a physical body dying, but rather the fate of the souls being collected as well. There is much to death that is often overlooked. But with permission to wipe out one quarter of the earth, it cannot go overlooked much longer. The judgment that rider of the pale horse brings is one of finality. Yet, for the church, we know death to have lost its power over us by the magnificent work on the cross. Through Christ's sacrifice, death has been defeated and subjugated under the authority of Jesus Christ so much so that we can exclaim "O Death, where is your sting?" (Hosea 13:14). Through Christ we may feel the effects of death but will live in eternity as the bride of Christ, one with the Lamb of God.

The issue with attempting to analyze the timeline of the events is that we miss the message of the apocalyptic prophesy. Rather interpreting the meaning and application we endlessly debate the timeline knowing full well that the time has not even been fully revealed to the Son. Instead, it would do us better to remember that Revelation was written to the church on what it should expect and how it can conduct itself in light of the coming judgment. In each case, the church is presented with an opportunity to shine the light of God during tumultuous times. Hence the letters to the church before the throne scene began; we are to continually rest in the strength of our faith in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, to live out our faith in the context of God's judgment on the world. In this way, they will see that Jesus saves and redeems.

Discussion Questions

- Why is it significant that the Lamb of God is the one opening the seals in conjunction with the four creatures in the throne room of God? What does this communicate about what is happening?
- What does each horseman symbolize and bring with it as its judgment on the earth?
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
- What is the judgment the church deserves? What is the judgment the church gets?
- How does Jesus shield the believers from the consequences of the judgment? Which one of these scares you the most to endure the effects? What hope does Jesus offer to you in the face of consequences?
- Why do we tend to lose hope when we get close to times of difficulty or judgment? How can we lean into God for strength to secure us in our faith?
- What role does the church play in the coming judgment on the world? How can we display the impact of God in our life to the world during difficult and trying times?