

The Pouring Out of God's Wrath

Revelation 6:1-8

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Introduction: Chapter 6 follows logically the progression from chapters 4 & 5. If man refuses to acknowledge the holiness of God (ch. 4), & chooses to reject the love of God (ch. 5), he must face the wrath of God. Chapter 6 is the sad picture of what happens when man gets his own way. As Dr. John Vaughn puts it, "The picture is bleak, but the prospect is blessed." That is, we know how the story ends_, we have read the final chapters in God's Word, this Book of Revelation. We who know Christ are on the winning side. But our hearts should be stirred with the knowledge that many of our loved ones & friends are destined to experience the wrath of God, unless they are saved. "It seems strange to us that worship & judgment should go together, but this is because we do not fully understand either the holiness of God or the sinfulness of man. Nor do we grasp the total picture of what God wants to accomplish & how the forces of evil have opposed Him. God is long-suffering, but eventually He must judge sin & vindicate His servants" (Wiersbe). Revelation 6 gives the opening of the first 6 seals; four dealing with the earth & two dealing with heaven. The seventh seal is not opened until Revelation 8:1. Our attention this morning is just with the opening of the first 4 seals (6:1-8).

I. The first seal (:1-2) - The white horse (speaks of **Victory**) [cf. Four horses of the Apocalypse]

A. The command:

1. As the Lamb opens the first seal, the voice of one of the living creatures is heard, saying, "*Come & see.*"
2. Thunder is symbolic of the coming storm of God's judgment.

B. The courier:

1. Christ??
 - a. But Christ comes on a white horse at the end of the Tribulation.
 - b. This rider is given a crown, *stephanos* (of a victor), not a diadem (of a sovereign).
2. *Antichrist??
 - a. Compare Daniel 7:8, 20; 8:9; 11:40-43; II Thess. 2:7-8; Rev. 13.
 - b. One given a crown, & therefore under the sovereignty of God.

C. The consequence: "Blasphemous Philosophy" (Vaughn).

1. "*He went forth conquering, & to conquer*" - implies a world ruler, though only temporary. "This great deceiver will come as a peaceful leader, holding a bow but no arrows. Antichrist will solve the world's problems & be received as the Great Liberator" (Wiersbe).
2. Conquest was his whole aim - cf. II Thessalonians 2:4.

II. The second seal (:3-4) - The red horse (speaks of **Bloodshed**)

A. The command: by the second living creature ("*beast*").

B. The courier: given his authority (under God's sovereignty) & given a great "*sword*" (dagger?).

C. The consequence: "Belligerent Powers" (Vaughn).

1. Peace taken from the world; results in civil war. "Antichrist's conquest begins in peace, but soon he exchanges the empty bow for a sword" (Wiersbe).
2. Speaks of the military warfare of the Tribulation. "It is a picture of wanton bloodshed. War has been part of man's experience since Cain killed Abel, so this image would speak to believers in every age" (Wiersbe).

Summary: "The hope of permanent peace by means of the United Nations & other human efforts is doomed to failure" (Walvoord).

III. The third seal (:5-6) - The black horse (speaks of **Suffering**; cf. Lamentations 5:10)

- A. The command: by the third living creature.
- B. The courier:
 - 1. He has a pair of balances (scales) in his hand.
 - 2. This speaks of rationing of food, the aftermath of war.
- C. The consequence: "Blighted Prosperity" (Vaughn)
 - 1. A great famine - "To put it in ordinary language, the situation would be such that one would have to spend a day's wages for a loaf of bread with no money left to buy anything else" (Walvoord).
 - 2. The wine & oil not 'hurt' - necessities will be in short supply while luxury items abound.

IV. The fourth seal (:7-8) - The pale (light green) horse (speaks of **Death**)

- A. The command: by the fourth living creature.
- B. The courier(s): given authority, God is still in control.
 - 1. "*Death*" - compare the 'Death Angel.'
 - 2. "*Hell*" ("Hades") - abode of the dead (the aftermath of death).
Summary: "Death claims the body while Hades claims the soul of the dead (Rev. 20:13)" (Wiersbe). Note also: "The mention of '*Hades*' *follow(ing) with him*' (:8) leaves no doubt that those who are slain will be unsaved people, who will be cast into hell until they stand before the Great White Throne Judgment (20:11-15). This is only the beginning of the Tribulation that is to come upon the earth" (Levy).
- C. The consequence: "Biological Pestilence"?? (Vaughn) [chemical warfare? AIDs? COVID-like?]
 - 1. ¼ of the earth's population will be killed; over two billion people? [8,019,876,189 in 2024].
"By any standard of comparison this is an awesome judgment. If one-fourth of the world population is destroyed in the fourth seal, it would represent the greatest destruction of human life ever recorded in history... a period of world history awful beyond any words, a period without precedent in its character & extent" (Walvoord).
 - 2. Man is capable of self-destruction, not creation.
 - 3. This must be part of the last 3 & 1/2 years, called the 'Great Tribulation' -
cf. Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:26-27; 12:1; Joel 2:1-3; & Matthew 24:21-22.

Summary: "There is much in the modern world which seems to portend just such a period. The introduction of modern means of warfare with new capacity to destroy life & property, the shrinking of the world by rapid transportation, & the invention of modern weapons of war make all the earth vulnerable to such scenes of devastation & destruction of human life in the event of a world conflict. The darkness of the human hour is in sharp contrast to the bright hope of the imminent return of Christ for His church as an event preceding the time of trouble" (Walvoord). See Rev. 13:9; 16:15; & 22:7.

Conclusion: "As Christians we are often frustrated because wicked men prosper in their evil. We long for justice & righteousness. We wonder why God allows the cause of the Gospel to suffer so many setbacks. But we must not allow impatience for God's judgments to discourage us from obeying the Lord. This chapter of God's Word assures us once again that God will judge the earth & avenge His people. It teaches us not to envy evil doers because the horror that lies ahead for them far outweighs their short time of ease & prosperity for the present. Like Joseph we must wait for the fulfillment of God's promises, our faith being tested by the prophetic vision" (Bell). Who can stand in that day? Only those who have accepted the sacrifice of the Lamb on their behalf. Man left to himself is in rebellion against God. He may "get" his own way - but one day he will face God. Where do you stand this morning? Are you getting your own way, or letting God have His way in your life? Fear Him now & be delivered. Fear Him not until then, & be lost forever. Is Christ your Savior? If not, heed his warning & be saved today!