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The Mission
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Revelation 6

Revelation 6:1, 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?”

So here in chapter 6 we have the beginning of the vivid details of John’s vision of the seven-year tribulation period, which will come sometime after the Rapture of the church. And again, we’re not told the time period

between these two events. We just know from the word of God that the church won't be here. And we've gone over and discussed I believe most of the scriptures that speak to that event.

Now, this particular event here is what is most commonly known as the day of the Lord. It's a time of unparalleled judgment which will come upon the earth, when God will judge the sin of mankind, and vindicate His holiness, and fulfill His promises, and a time also when He will prepare the nation of Israel for Christ's return. And in the midst of it all—a time when He will bring millions of people from every tongue, and tribe, and nation to faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, this time of tribulation, appears to be a time when everything seems be out of control and going crazy, but it's not. It's a time that has been very carefully planned out and is under God's sovereign and complete control. A time when He will guide all the nations of the world into the harbor of His perfect plan.

The church as I've told you before will not be present on the earth during this time. They will be kept from this divine judgment by means of the rapture, which precedes the tribulation. Jesus will come for us, and we will be raptured to meet Him in the clouds (1 Thessalonians 4); then following the tribulation, Jesus will come back and we with Him, and that's in Revelation chapter 19, as He comes down to earth to establish His millennial kingdom.

So, there is no sign of the church on the earth from chapter 4 through chapter 19, because these chapters describe what is going to happen between the rapture and the Lord's return to earth.

Now, it's also a belief of many that the Holy Spirit won't be present here on earth during that time period. And that when the church is

removed, the Holy Spirit is removed as well. And they point to what Paul said in

2 Thessalonians 2:5 and following, Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so, until He is taken out of the way.

That's the Holy Spirit that Paul is saying will be taken out of the way. But notice, he doesn't say the Holy Spirit is taken out of the world, he says He's taken out of the way.

8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

So this is the scripture some people use to say the Holy Spirit won't be present here on the earth during the tribulation. But I don't believe that's the case.

Now, I agree that the "restrainer" mentioned here in verse 6 is indeed the Holy Spirit—or the Holy Spirit working through the New Testament church. And that in our current age, one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to restrain evil.

But Paul says, there's coming a time when the Holy Spirit will no longer hold back the flood of lawlessness. And that appears to happen when the church is removed from the world at the rapture.

In other words, after the church is removed from the earth and is in heaven, the Antichrist's path to power will be unobstructed. And God's judgment will be unleashed on sin, and those who continue to rebel against God.

But now, just because the Holy Spirit ceases to restrain the march of evil in the world, that doesn't necessarily mean that He's totally absent. And for several reasons I don't believe personally He will be totally absent.

For one He's a member of the Trinity, and being God in the Spirit, means by His very character He's omnipresent. In other words, He's everywhere at all times, and so He must be in the world during the tribulation.

Secondly, salvation is the Spirit's work in the human heart; and without Him, no one is saved.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

So, if the Spirit were not present during the tribulation, then no one could be saved. But we know that there will be people saved during the

tribulation—because it says a numberless throng will “come out of the great tribulation” So, the Spirit is obviously at work during that time.

Revelation 7:14 says, And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

We also know from scripture that it’s the Holy Spirit who empowers Christians to be witnesses, and to make the message of the cross effective.

Acts 1:8, But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

And we know that during the Tribulation, there’ll be plenty of preaching:

Matthew 24:14 says, “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come”

And in order for the preaching during the tribulation period to have any power or effect whatsoever, the Holy Spirit has to be involved.

And then in Ezekiel 36:24 in reference to the nation of Israel during that time, God said, For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you

and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. 28 Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

So, I believe that during the tribulation, though the Holy Spirit will no doubt modify the work He does now, to some extent—and He will no longer restrain evil to the degree He now does, but I do believe He will be present here on the earth just as He is now.

Now, in our study of chapter 5 if you'll remember, we watched as a scroll sealed with seven seals was given to the Lamb, which is Jesus Christ.

That was **chapter 5:1, And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.**

The scroll of course contains the judgments of God; and the fact that it is written on both sides indicates the extensive nature of these impending judgments. And then a mighty angel cries out verse 2 and asks,

2 “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?”
3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.

A fact that caused the Apostle John to mourn in verses 3 & 4, because if the scroll could not be opened, then wickedness of the world would not be judged, and evil would continue to infect the earth.

But as John is weeping over the fact that no-one was worthy to open the scroll, Jesus shows up. And He appears as a lamb that has been slain, a reminder of the price that He paid to not only pay for the sins of the world, but to judge those who would not believe on Him.

And then chapter 5 closes with the worship of all of heaven and earth.

And then in chapter six and verse 1, amid all the worship due Him, the Lamb, or the Lord Jesus begins to open the seals. And with the opening of each seal, the scroll is able to be unrolled a little more, revealing bit by bit the judgments God has in store for the earth during the tribulation period.

And when the first seal is opened this is what is commonly known as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, as each of these first four judgments appear symbolically as a horse and a rider bringing devastation in their wake.

And so look again at chapter 6, verse 2, as John describes what comes forth when Jesus opens the first seal:

1 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.

So this is the first of four horsemen to appear, and this is not Jesus Christ; this is the Antichrist. He will be “crowned” by the same world, which he will eventually “conquer.”

But for now, at least for a period of time he is going to bring global peace, just as the prophet Daniel prophesied.

Daniel 9:27, Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.”

He’s going to establish a covenant with Israel and even allow a new Jewish temple to be rebuilt. And of course we talked week before last about

how Israel is already preparing and waiting for an opportunity to rebuild what will be their third temple.

And then the opening of the second seal is described next. This second horseman brings an end to world peace. And this of course is where the story turns real ugly and the blood begins to flow—and by the way, it is going to flow until chapter 19, until the time when Jesus returns.

And then in verse 4 it says,

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.

The covenant with Israel will be broken, and war will break out and involve the entire world. And in the book of Ezekiel, we read about this great battle. And I'm not going to take the time to read all of it, it's in Ezekiel chapters 38 & 39, and you really need to read it when you go back and restudy what I'm teaching tonight, because it describes some really horrific scenes that will take place.

And then the third seal is opened, and a rider on a black horse comes galloping into view. He brings with him famine and death. And food will become scarce just as does many times after war; and

verse 6 says, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.”

A quart of wheat [will cost] a denarius.” And a denarius was a day's wages, and so what it's saying; is that every dime you make in a days time will all go towards a little something to eat. There'll be nothing left for anything else.

The fourth seal follows, and a rider appears on a “pale horse,” which indicates a very unhealthy appearance. And verse 8 explains why:

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.

This rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over one-fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

Death comes sweeping in to take the lives of a quarter of the world’s population through war, famine, disease, and even wild beasts. This morning the population of the world was 8.2 billion and so that would mean that in today’s numbers, more than two billion people will die in a matter of months. Corpses will be piled high in every city. John describes Hades following Death like a shadow, scooping up as it were the condemned souls of the dead.

And so this is God’s warning, that death is not the end of suffering for those who reject Jesus Christ. Hades is that place where the souls of unbelievers go after death—a place of conscious suffering. At the final judgment, Revelation 20 tells us that Hades will empty its inhabitants into the lake of fire, which is eternal hell.

The fifth seal is then opened, and the scene shifts back to heaven in verse 9. And by the way, all throughout the book of Revelation the scene shifts from heaven to earth and back again over and over.

And so here in verse 9 John sees **“the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.”**

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.

People ask will there be people saved during the tribulation? Well, here's the answer. This tells us that people **will** come to faith in Christ after the Rapture. They will suffer persecution, and many, in fact most, will be martyred for their faith.

And in verse ten they're shown asking the Lord how long it will be before their deaths are avenged. And don't miss this: these people are in heaven, but they're aware of what is happening on earth.

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.

And again, it mentions that during this terrible time, people who come to faith will do so at the expense of their life. They'll have to give their lives in order to be saved.

Then the sixth seal is opened, and earth begins to experience one disaster after another.

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.

A mega earthquake occurs; the sun is darkened; the moon becomes red like blood; and the “stars [fall] to the earth,” which may be a reference to meteors or asteroids crashing into the earth.

John describes the sky in verse 14 as vanishing “like a scroll that is being rolled up”—as if the atmosphere is shriveling up like paper. John writes, “Every mountain and island was removed from its place.” Whatever you learned in geography class won’t matter, because everything’s going to be moved from its’ place!

This is the culmination of what Jesus was telling His disciples in Matthew chapter 24. He had foretold that things would get worse than they currently were. That the temple would be destroyed, that they would experience persecution and even death, but that these were only “the beginning of sorrows”, or “the beginning of birth pains.”

Now, most of us are familiar with birth pains, some from experience, others as spectators, but we all know that they start slow and not so painful at first, but as time goes on, not only does the frequency increase, but so does the intensity of the pain. And at the very end, well, you don’t want to be nowhere around if you can help it.

And so that’s the way it’s going to be during the tribulation as time goes on. And when we get to the Great Tribulation period, during these last 3-1/2 years, and especially toward the very end, just like the birth pains of a woman, things are going to get increasingly worse as time goes on.

Jesus said, in verse 21 of Matthew chapter 24 that there would be a time of great tribulation—a time of great catastrophe and anguish, and after that terrible time, the sign of the Lord’s coming will appear.

Well, this is that time that John sees. And things so terrible are happening that he doesn't even have the words to describe it. And entire books of course are written on these particular verses and a lot of speculation and a lot of theories are given as to what all this means, but if you'll just take it literal, just as it's written, without trying to make it say something it doesn't say, that in itself is terrifying enough.

We don't know for sure what some of these things John saw will be, but we can know this, it'll all make sense when it's over. The earthquakes; the sun going dark, the moon turning crimson red, the stars or the appearance of stars falling from the heavens to the earth, and the sky receding like a scroll, and every mountain and island being moved out of its place, all that's going to take place in some fashion or form. And however it happens it's going to be a horrifying time and the response of people on the earth is going to be absolute terror. Because people are going to know for sure that these are judgments which are coming from God, and they're going to pray—but they're not going to pray to Him.

Verse 16 shows how defiant mankind will be to the very end. In stead of crying out to God, they're going to call out to the mountains and rocks.

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?"

Fall on us and hide us from the face of God. In other words, “They would rather hide from God in fear, or rather be killed, than run to Him in faith.

But what they don’t realize, that either way, dead or alive, they’re going to have to face Him. Either way, they’re going to stand before God and be judged as to what they did with Jesus.