

1. **Introduction:** Chapters 6 through 20 are in the portion of Revelation where interpretations differ the most. Every attempt to pin down the symbolic image-laden language of these chapters to a single specific meaning has encountered difficulties.

- The interpretation we are following is compelling and seems consistent with the available data but does at times conflict with other interpretations. The key is when Revelation was written.

2. **Views on Revelation:** We briefly examined four dominant views on interpreting Revelation: Idealist, Historicist, Futurist, and Preterist. The interpretive scheme that I am using (at least so far) doesn't fit any of those but could be called a partial or modified Preterist view.

- The driving force for my interpretive scheme is the conviction that Revelation was written before the 70 AD destruction of the Temple. The meaning assigned to Revelation 6-20 is drastically affected by that conviction. The Futurist view assumes a late date of 95-96 AD.
- Those who believe in the futurist view see these chapters as describing events that will take place in the future, primarily in a period of seven years that is called the Great Tribulation.
- If the futurist view is correct that Jesus will secretly rapture His people out of the world before the seven-year Great Tribulation begins, Revelation's relevance to original believers who received it as a letter is difficult to understand, particularly in view of the "soon" (1:1; 22:6; 22:7, etc.) and "near" (1:3 & 22:10) statements that seem to indicate imminent events.

3. **Sin Nature and God's Restraint:** When Adam and Eve sinned, they acquired a sin-nature. Since then, every person is born with a sin-nature. God imposes constraints on sin-natures.

- A believer's sin-nature is constrained by both progressive sanctification and common grace, but only common grace constrains an unbeliever's sin nature.
- God's common grace is conditionally given to all people, conferring non-redemptive blessings and restraining sin. Only the redeemed have sanctification's blessings and constraints on sin.
- For His own good reasons, God at times chooses to selectively remove His common-grace restraints on sin (Romans 1:28-31).
- When common-grace restraints are removed, unbeliever's sin natures are unconstrained and their evil deeds escalate. Escalating evil demonstrates the inherent evil in this fallen world.
- Unconstrained sin-natures are selfish, ruled by desire to satisfy wishes and wants by any means necessary. Great evils result when people follow their own evil inclinations.
- God's common grace restrains sin, evil, and misery of all kinds.

4. **Judgment:** God's judgments stem from His wrath at sin. Despite sin, God's plan for a holy people to live with Him will ultimately be realized.

- At any time in history, when God allows sin to follow its course, dreadful consequences follow (as in Noah's flood). God is sovereign over both natural and man-caused disasters.
- Adam and Eve experienced personal consequences because of their sin. There were also general consequences including losing their holiness and God's cursing the earth producing consequences affecting all people. We don't know the extent of changes due to the curse,,
- But they were significant and negative for humans, perhaps including "natural disasters."

5. **Romans 1:18, 22:** *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. Claiming to be wise, they became fools.*

6. **John 3:19:** *And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.*

7. **Romans 1:28-29, 32:** *And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. Though they know God's righteous decree (His moral law) that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.*

- These verses show the “why” of God’s wrath at sin. Because Jesus bore the wrath of God due their sins, believer’s souls are protected from God’s wrath. Wrath due the sins of the unredeemed remains. Their souls are not protected from God’s wrath.

8. **Judgments in Revelation:** The judgements in Revelation impact believers and unbelievers unequally. Redeemed people may physically suffer tribulation, even to the point of death, but their souls are safe and secure in Christ.

- When God removes common-grace restraints and gifts, the unredeemed follow directions from the inclinations of their sin-nature. Unconstrained sin-natures go into overdrive. Feelings and imagination of unconstrained people follow their sin-nature.
- In Revelation, there are 3 series of seven judgments. Seven each, of seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments. All 3 series of judgments portray events and phenomena that occur repeatedly in history between the first and second comings of Christ.
- Each series of judgments terminates in the same “consummation of all things” closing human history with final judgment on unbelievers, salvation and vindication of God’s people, and the full manifestation of God’s Kingdom.
- Opening seals reveals God’s judgments on sin that have been in place since Adam and Eve’s sin and will continue until the Last Day.
- Because of their general nature, Revelation’s judgments at times result in redeemed people suffering physically, mentally, and psychologically, but their souls are safe “in Christ.”
- I believe Revelation applies to the entire church age from Jesus’ ascension to just before and including the Second Coming of Jesus.

9. **Perspectives.** Different visions appear to present different perspectives of the same stream of events. The technical term is “**recapitulation.**” Sometimes, a vision focuses on the entire expanse of church-age history, other times on a major event or a series of consequential events.

- But each of the 3 series of judgments terminates in the “consummation of all things” which closes human history with final judgment on unbelievers, salvation and vindication of God’s people, and the full manifestation of God’s Kingdom.

10. **Seals:** Opening the first four seals reveals God’s judgments on the sin-driven problems of untruth, war, murder, and discord, all always present since Adam’s sin.

- Disasters revealed appear to be examples of sin’s self-inflicted, self-defeating character.
  - God is sovereign over all events of human history. At times, God permits unredeemed human sinfulness to run its course free from common-grace constraints (Rm 1). The self-inflicted effects of sin are amplified without God’s common grace gifts and restraint.
  - At times in history, when sinfulness has been allowed to follow its course, the consequences are dreadful (like Noah’s flood). God is sovereign over natural and man-caused disasters.
  - The first four seals on the scroll are associated with the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (see Zechariah 1:7-11, 6:1-8). The four horses go out to the four winds of heaven (meaning the judgement they impose has widespread consequences).
  - As each seal is opened a new vision begins revealing consequences of God’s wrath at sin.
11. **God is Sovereign in All Things**: Each of the four horsemen receives permission from the Lamb and His agents before carrying out the judgements God has decreed. Each horseman brings different types of disasters. Jesus, the Lamb of God, opens the seal releasing the first horseman .
12. **Revelation 6:1-2**: *Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, “Come!”<sup>2</sup> And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.*
- As the Lamb opened the first seal, one of the living creatures shouted “*Come*” in a voice like thunder. John saw a white horse come forth whose rider was holding a bow.
  - The rider of the white horse came out conquering and will continue to conquer. The power of the white horse’s rider is unleashed to conquer by leading people astray.
  - A crown (*stephanos*), signifying temporary power from a higher authority, is given to the rider of the white horse. He rides out skilled in military conquest eager to conquer.
13. **Possible Confusion**: Christ appears on a white horse in Chapter 19, but here in Chapter 6, the rider of this white horse is not Christ but an instrument of Christ’s judgment.
14. **Arrows**: Scripture often uses the image of arrows shot by bows as symbols of God’s judgment. Job describes metaphorical arrows to account for his real pain and suffering.
- Job says, “*His archers surround me. He slashes open my kidneys and does not spare; he pours out my gall on the ground.*<sup>14</sup> *He breaks me with breach upon breach.*” (Job 16:13-14)
  - Job suffers, but not from normal arrows! What arrows will the rider of the white horse use?
15. **The Rider’s Mission**: A clue to the white horse rider’s mission and the arrows he will use is found in the Olivet Discourse.
16. **Mark 13:5b-6**: Jesus said, “*See that no one leads you astray.*<sup>6</sup> *Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray.*”
- So, the mission of the rider of the white horse is “spiritual warfare.” He aims to deceive with counterfeit truth, leading people away from God, deeper into a morass of fake truth.
  - He uses arrows of untruth to mislead everyone he can. Temptation to stray from God’s truth is powerful for both unbelievers and believers.
  - The rider of the white horse’s attempts to deceive are varied, continuous, and powerful.

17. **The Young Church:** Believers were in danger of being overwhelmed by deceivers, liars and false teachers. Such people often came in the name of Christ but then spread false doctrine.

- The white horseman labors to kill truth with sharp-pointed false ideas, trying to persuade believers and non-believers that Christianity's tenets are false (Ps 11:2; Jer 9:8; Eph 6:16).
- "God's Word" is symbolized as a sword (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12). The bow of the rider of the white horse, symbolizes counterfeit "truth" or a false gospel.

18. **2 Thessalonians 2:11-12:** *Therefore, God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, <sup>12</sup> in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

- God's "white horse" judgment allows false teachers to deceive people. If a deceiver can gain a person's attentive trust, they will feed them what they want to hear.
- Jesus' disciples asked Him privately about when disaster would occur and what would be the sign of His coming at the end of the age. Jesus' answer was **Matthew 24:4-5:** *"See that no one leads you astray. <sup>5</sup> For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.* (i.e., beware of spiritual warfare which is the mission of the rider of the white horse)
- Deceivers stick as close to truth as possible in spreading their false doctrine. C.S. Lewis said, a slight tilt from truth is a slippery slope that over time leads to totally false views.
- God's truth has endured the stress of religious deception and unchristian philosophies since the beginning of Christianity testing believers and confusing unbelievers. The modern "tolerant" view of many roads to salvation is a delusion creating a huge vulnerability.
- The truth as Peter says in Acts 4:11-12 is: *"This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. <sup>12</sup> And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*
- Today the white horseman rides through the world spreading counterfeit "truths," conquering through lies. We see and hear them all around us. He especially shoots false ideas and plausible but false beliefs into minds separated from God and opposed to God's plan for life (Rm 8:7).
- The white horse's rider fools the world with false images of peace, prosperity, and righteousness. The untruth he spreads leads to the direct opposite of those desirable concepts.

19. **Matthew 7:15-16:** *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?"*

20. **Next:** Opening the other seals.