

- **Preliminary Comment:** Last Sunday a handout was given that did not come from me, one that I knew nothing about until a copy was given to me as I prepared the computer and TV. I read it Sunday afternoon.
 - Several people called it to my attention and said they were confused by that second handout. At first they thought it was a 2nd handout from me (something I do from time-to-time). The second handout concerned “Typology.” That discussion is fine.
 - But, it begins by saying that there is only one intended interpretation of Scripture. People assumed that meant there is only one correct interpretation of Revelation.
 - Indeed, I am confident that Revelation has only one intended interpretation, but no one seems to know what that “one” is.
 - In the centuries since Revelation was written, there have been a variety of assumptions used in its interpretation. For example, one methodology assumes all the prophecies in Revelation are in the past for today’s people. Another assumes everything from the 4th chapter to the end is future to today’s people. Each of these assumptions yields very different meanings.
 - The “interpretative scheme” I am using (and have discussed) is one I believe to be accurate and faithful to the text. Not everyone will agree. I understand that.
 - These comments are intended to clear up any misunderstanding about the unexpected handout.
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Today’s Lesson

1. **Introduction:** Jesus continues to open the “seal judgments.” As will be seen, the first seal and the next five seem to present a way of understanding the effects of sin on our fallen world that will prepare us to understand the “why” for the increasingly worse judgments that follow.
 - The move from seals to trumpet and bowl judgments will reveal a noticeable progression in intensity of judgment events. There is also a cyclical nature embedded in the judgments in which each series adds understanding to ideas that are common to all 3 cycles.
 - The first-seal realities of spiritual warfare (and other forms of propaganda) that incite war, murder, and famine have long been a part of the experience of fallen humans.
 - When the first seal was opened, it’s symbolic revealing of the power of propaganda and spiritual warfare prepared the way for more aggressive ways of conquering.
 - Today the white horseman rides through the world spreading counterfeit “truths,” conquering through lies. He especially shoots false ideas and plausible but false beliefs into minds separated from God and opposed to God’s plan for human life (Romans 8:7).
 - The white horse’s rider fools the world with false images of peace, prosperity, and righteousness, but the untruth he spreads leads to the direct opposite of those desirable concepts.

2. The Second Seal in Revelation 6:3-4: *When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!”⁴ And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.*

- In our time, mass murders (ethnic cleansing) have occurred in Germany, the Soviet Union, China, Cambodia, the Sudan, and Rwanda, etc. The rider of the red horse has taken physical peace from the earth so that people will follow their sinful inclination to deliberately kill one another.
 - Since Adam and Eve’s Fall, human society has been inherently violent. Cain killed his brother, Abel, beginning the reign of aggression. People are killed to provide advantage to the killer.
 - The 20th century showed the truth of inherent human violence with two world wars of astounding violence. The 21st centuries has followed suit.
 - The deadly scourge of bloody armed conflict seems continuous. Then, there are repeated times of high tension identified as “cold wars” that have their own cruelty and murder.
3. **Disobedience:** God judges' disobedience. To those of the Jews (God’s own covenant people), who disobeyed the covenant, God promised ***“And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant.”*** (Leviticus 26:25) He has done that several times. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 BC again in 70 AD are examples.
4. **The Great Sword:** The purpose of the great sword the rider of the red horse receives appears to be divine judgment in which death will be inflicted on many people. The “great sword” symbolizes a totally effective instrument of death enabling people to slay one another in large numbers. Modern Israel has experienced this great sword.
- In today’s world the great sword might possibly represent weapons of mass destruction.
5. **Conclusion on the First Two Seals:** The first seal represents God’s wrath at sin that results when God permits people to follow their inclination to lead people astray. The second seal represents God’s wrath at sin displayed by the inclination of sinful people to engage in war and murder.
6. **Revelation 6:5-6 :** *When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶And I heard what seemed to be 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 wine!”*
- The black horse and rider appears after the red horse (war) and before the pale horse (death).
 - Warfare and widespread bloodshed eventually lead to economic hardship, including famine.
 - The black horse symbolizes famine, economic hardship, scarcity, and inflation. The rider holds scales used to weigh food, thus signifying rationing and high prices for daily essentials. A voice coming from among the four living creatures establishes a maximum price for wheat and barley.
 - A person would normally eat a quart (about 2 pounds) of wheat each day. The price is a day’s wages for a quart of wheat. If they switch to barley, the cost is about one third that of wheat.
 - To what does ***“do not harm the oil and wine”*** refer? The judgment was of limited extent.

- But why was the judgment limited to producing scarcity in daily needs without grapes for wine and olives for oil being included?
 - One possibility is God shows mercy even during judgment. Grain crops and most other food crops are seasonal, planted anew each season. Vines for wine and olive trees for oil are not. Their destruction would cause long-term devastation, requiring much expense and labor to restore.
7. **Revelation 6:7-8** : *When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!”⁸ And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.*
- **“Behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s name was Death.”** “Pale” signifies the yellowish green color of a corpse. The rider is named “Death” and is accompanied by “Hades” signifying the realm of the dead not the final place of punishment.
 - Death and Hades are given authority from God over a fourth of the earth (apparently meaning ¼ of the earth’s population) to kill in four specific ways: sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts (same ways as in Ezek. 14:12-23).
 - God allows human sin and wickedness to do its destructive work, resulting in judgment by warfare, murder, famine, pestilence, and disease, but with a measure of restraint – only ¼ are affected.
 - Notice, these first 4 seals closely parallel the “birth pains” Jesus mentions in the Olivet Discourse, namely, wars, nations rising against nations, earthquakes, famines pestilence as seen in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.
 - The OT background for the 4th seal’s judgement is Zechariah 1:7-11, 6:1-8 where riders on different colored horses are sent by God as instruments of judgement on His enemies.
 - In both Revelation 6 and the Olivet Discourse, the images refer to preliminary judgments that operate throughout history and intensify as the last day approaches. All the threats illustrated by the four horsemen apply across history, from civilizations beginning until today.
 - God allows the disasters represented by the 4 horsemen to take place as a natural result of human sinfulness. Sin has both immediate and accumulated results (stored up wrath).
 - Human sinfulness moves steadily toward its just end, resulting in warfare, violence, bloodshed, economic hardship, and death. These things are subservient to God’s plan for a holy people who will live in His presence eternally.
 - When we think of God’s judgment on sin, we should also think about His provision for the faithful: the Lamb of God died on a cross to pay the penalty due the sins of the faithful. He bore the wrath of the Father due the faithful who committed the sins. All this so that those “in Christ” will not suffer the penalty and wrath due their sins but will instead live with the Lamb in God’s presence forever.
8. **Purpose:** The visions from God recorded by John in Revelation are intended to draw us closer to God and are not for us to examine with a microscope trying to determine a map of end-time events.

- God is sovereign. He will end this present age in a way that honors Him and provides a place for His people to dwell forever in His presence. What more do we need to know? Be obedient!
 - The visions of the 4 horsemen remind us to depend on the eternal, sovereign God and not on fragile things like nationality, power, wealth, or health.
 - Trust and depend on God. Within His love and care, work toward results He approves. Your soul is secure in Him (Think about the hymn “It is Well with My Soul”). Your mortal life is subject to the twists and turns of this sinful world, but your soul is safe and secure “in Christ.”
 - Remember that our Lord Jesus, the King who rules over the nations and over us as individuals, is also the Suffering Servant who faced unearned punishment on our behalf without a word of protest.
9. **Revelation 6:9-11** : *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 witness they had borne. ¹⁰ They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” ¹¹ Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.*
- Opening the 5th seal reveals another truth about the sinful world in which we live. In much of the world, faithful witness to God is dangerous. There have been and continue to be many killed for their witness. The deaths of faithful people may make only little ripples on earth, but God notices.
 - In Revelation, their deaths are recognized as being because of faithfulness to God, and their sacrifice will result in God acting on their behalf at the right time.
 - At the time Revelation was written, many had been martyred. The church, while waiting for God’s action, did not try to take judgment in their own hands. They prayed and continued to offer their lives as faithful witnesses all the while trusting God to carry out His plan.
 - The martyred faithful witnesses are anxious for God’s justice on those who killed them.
 - While the time is not yet right for God to judge and enact vengeance on those who martyred them, the rightness of the martyr’s plea was recognized. They were given white robes and told to rest a little while longer.
 - The results of martyr’s work is not yet complete. God exercises patience until completion of the effects of their witness (even though the delay is costly to the witnesses).
 - Much like Jesus’ parable of wicked tenants (Mark 12: 1-12), God continues to send His servants though they are ridiculed, tortured and even killed, all for the hope that the wicked might change.

10. **Next**: The Sixth Seal.