

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Beginning of the End

Scripture: Revelation 6:3-8

Code: 66-24

Revelation chapter 6 is a very important Scripture and one which will speak to us profoundly and even shockingly as we go through it. Tonight we take another trip back to the future as we look back to the ancient book of Revelation and in so doing look forward to the unfolding of God's wrath to come in the future.

As you come into chapter 6, as you know if you've been with us, the music of praise that occupied chapters 4 and 5 has ended and the stirrings of judgment that began at the throne as far back as chapter 4 verse 5 where you see some flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. Well that anticipated judgment breaks into action in chapter 6. Here you have the Lamb of God, the worthy Lamb, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, none other than our Lord Jesus Christ, beginning to break the seals in the little scroll which records the wrath of God as Christ takes back the universe which is His own from the usurper, namely Satan, and all of his minions or demons.

Now the visions of this text in chapter 6 take us to the beginning of God's final wrath. As we have noted for you, it's our conviction that the church is raptured before this happens and we see, in fact, the church is in heaven, represented by the twenty-four elders who are praising God and glorifying God and glorifying the Lamb as the Lamb steps on to the stage of history to enact these judgments. And so the church is caught up to be with the Lord and are there in the glory with the Lord as this period of time, this seven-year period known as the Tribulation begins and as the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls all are enacted, all emblems of final judgment.

Man's world faces an inevitable death. Sin is taking a fearsome toll that ultimately ends up in the judgment of God. Every dimension of our culture, even dimension of our society is escalating on the down slide, being devastated by depravity, more and more given over to lust and pride and self-indulgence, immorality and rejection of God and Christ and the truth of Scripture. And thus man is sentenced, his whole world is sentenced to divine wrath. Man will drink the cup of wrath to the fullest. As one writer said some years ago, "The dust of death is on us." We have had our little moment in the sun and we have botched it. Doom may be very near. We may be very close to the final frantic antics of dying man.

Jeremiah the prophet, you'll remember, looked at the coming period of God's judgment in reference to Israel and what they would have to face when he wrote, "Alas, for that day is great, there is none like it, and it is the time of Jacob's trouble," Jeremiah 30 and verse 7. The Jews are going to face the

inevitability of God's wrath, those who have rejected their Messiah.

Isaiah, on the other hand, looked also at the final wrath and saw it not so much from the perspective of the Jews, but in chapter 34 of Isaiah he looked at it with reference to the Gentiles. In verse 1, "Draw near, O nations, to hear and listen, O peoples, let the earth and all it contains hear and the world and all that springs from it," he's engulfing all of humanity, "For the Lord's indignation is against all the nations and His wrath against all their armies. He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to slaughter so their slain will be thrown out, their corpses will give off their stench, the mountains will be drenched with their blood and all the host of heaven will wear away and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll. All their hosts will also wither away as a leaf withers from the vine, or as one withers from a fig tree, for my sword is satiated in heaven. Behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom and upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction, the sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is sated with fat with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams for the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in the land of Edom."

Moving from what will happen in Edom to the wider world of final judgment, the prophet Isaiah looks at the ultimate doom and destruction of humanity. And so we hear from the prophets of old and not just in those passages, they're merely emblematic, that there will come a final day of judgment. For the Jews it will be the time of Jacob's trouble, and for the Gentiles it will be the slaughter of the world.

And so, when we look at our world we have to realize that it's headed for doomsday. In fact, we feel like we can hear sometimes the choking of a dying world, the final gasps, as it were.

In this chapter to which we give our attention tonight, Revelation chapter 6, we are literally transported to the future. The experience of opening the seven-sealed scroll was not only visible to John in his vision, but is now made known to us because God wanted him to write it down. Remember now, there's a little scroll in this scenario here, it is mentioned back in chapter 5 as being in the hand of God. And then, of course, it is taken out of the hand of God by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and here in chapter 6 verse 1 says, "He begins to break the seals." It was rolled a little bit and sealed on the edges, rolled a little bit and sealed, and all of those were to keep it from ever being known or read or revealed until the appropriate time which here is revealed to us and ultimately will be in actuality unrolled. As it unrolls, the events of God's wrath unfold.

Now there are seven seals on this scroll and we'll go through those seven seals, and they encompass the whole period until the final coming of Christ.

Now contrary to what some people have thought in looking at prophecy, the first of these horsemen brings a time period of peace and prosperity, we saw that last time. But the following three are deadly forces. The first one, you remember, was peace. What is to follow is anything but that.

Now just to remind you, also, these four horsemen are what Jesus calls in Matthew 24 "the beginning of birth pains." In the anticipation of a birth there are birth pains. Those birth pains come somewhat infrequently and then they get more frequent and more frequent and more frequent until the final birth takes place. The same is true of the events that are going to occur during this time period. There is a coming a final event, the coming of Christ to establish His Kingdom, that is the birth in mind. The birth pains are those events that are preliminary to that and they begin to go more rapidly and more rapidly and more rapidly as they get to the final event. It's a very vivid analogy. There will be pain and then more pain and then more pain and more pain, faster and faster, until the final and ultimate pain of Christ's coming and destroying all the wicked on the face of the earth.

The beginning of the birth pains used in Matthew 24:8, that phrase, then describes the first half of the final period and is really parallel to the first four horsemen that John sees in his vision. The fifth seal is severe and widespread persecution and that persecution is depicted here in the fifth seal as you see in verse 9, "Underneath the altar are the souls of those who had been slain because of the Word of God and because of the testimony which they have maintained." Obviously by the midpoint in this seven-year period, people have been saved, people have been converted in that first three and a half year period. All the church is gone before the period started, in the Rapture, but in the first half there will be people redeemed and they will then be slaughtered. They will be crying out in verse 10, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" And these indicate also in verse 11 that they have been glorified because they have white robes and they are in their rest and the number of the their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been should be completed also. So more are to be slaughtered.

So the midpoint, the fifth seal here is really the persecution. It also has a very unique event within that persecution called the abomination of desolations. That is that which was spoken of in Daniel chapter 9 verses 24 to 27. That is when the Antichrist desecrates the temple in Jerusalem, starts the persecution of Christians, the persecution of Jews and sets himself up as God. And then there is worldwide persecution. After that, in the second half, what Jesus called in Matthew 24 "the Great Tribulation," that was the name of the second half, the first half, the beginning of the birth pains, the second half the Great Tribulation, and in that second half the persecution continues, then comes the sixth seal and then the final, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the slaughter of the ungodly.

The abomination then effected by the Antichrist in Jerusalem, according to Daniel 9:27, is at the midpoint of the seventy-year period. Daniel says it happens in the very middle of the week. Sometime around the middle. That triggers the Great Tribulation. That's the switch that throws humanity into the Great Tribulation, the final three and a half years, 42 months, 1260 days before the coming of Christ, the final two seals, the final trumpets and the final bowl judgments.

So the events described in the scroll then when full unrolled will encompass the full seven years of God's wrath. And the last part of it we could call "the day of the Lord." The final fury when God Himself comes in the form of Christ and enacts His own judgment but that final day of the Lord is preceded by divine judgments that we're seeing unfold in these first five seals.

Now as each seal is open, the sequence of judgment unfolds vividly. Let's remind ourselves of the first seal, verses 1 and 2. "He heard one of the four living creatures," you remember the four cherubim who surrounded the throne of God, we discussed them earlier, these four living creatures each have a role to play, "the first one says with a voice that is like that of thunder," which, of course, fits the idea of judgment, "he says, 'Come,'" and he is calling to a rider. In verse 2 a white horse comes and there is a man sitting upon it and he has a bow and a crown is given to him and he comes to conquer, conquering and to conquer. This, as we noted last time in great detail, symbolizes the deceptive short-lived world peace. The rider and the horse is not a particular individual, but a force, the force of peace. It will feature many false deliverers, many false messiahs led by the ultimate false Messiah, the Antichrist, the ultimate false Christ, the supreme human tool of Satan.

Now they will be orchestrated by false christs and false messiahs and Jesus said in Matthew 24 many of them will come. And they will continue to come through the whole period, but initially they come and they offer world peace, the Antichrist is certainly a key player, prosperity sets in around the world, the white horse depicts that. The fact that he is white indicates majestic conquering, it indicates even purity and righteousness, a false purity and a false righteousness. You'll notice he has a bow but no arrows which means he has a certain amount of authority but he conquers without ever shooting anything. It is a conquering without bloodshed. A crown was given to him, he didn't take it, it was given to him, which means the world crowns peace as king. All over the world peace becomes the issue. And we told you that that is certainly the mood of the day, isn't it? World peace, global peace, and peace will be crowned king. And peace will be conquering and come to conquer even more, a series of triumphs leading to a golden age of prosperity with the promise that more prosperity and more peace is to come.

All of this, of course, is deceptive and it's a false security. As we saw even in Matthew 4...24:4 and 5, Jesus said, "Don't let people deceive you with this, it is a deceptive peace that doesn't last long." Why? The prophets have always said there is no peace for the wicked. False teachers say peace, peace, but there is no peace.

Now that leads us then to the second seal, following the peace. And we don't know the exact timetable but it's not going to be very long because into the first half you have to have these other three riders occur, so if it's only three and a half years, you can know that the world peace isn't going to last very long. John is still in heaven as you come to verses 3 and 4, transported there at the beginning of the vision in chapter 4 verse 1, but the visions are now depicting events happening on

earth. The next beginning birth pain that will increase in intensity toward the final event of God's wrath and the coming of Jesus Christ, can clearly be understood if you just look at verses 3 and 4. "And when He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, 'Come,' and another, a red horse went out and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth," that, by the way, is another reason we know the first rider is peace because the second one takes peace, "and that men should slay one another and a great sword was given to him." In a word, the second rider is not peace, the second rider is war...war. Worldwide war. Now that shouldn't surprise us because in Matthew 24 Jesus said, following the deceptiveness of peace, chapter 24 verses 4 and 5, He immediately says, "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars." And then in verse 7 He says, "Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom," that's going to be the next in the flow, in the sequence of precursors to the final day of the Lord.

Here the story gets ugly. Here the story gets ugly and stays that way until Christ establishes His Kingdom.

Now let's look at the details. Verse 3, He broke the second seal, the capital "H" on He indicates you're talking about the Lamb, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the rightful heir, and He breaks the second seal which unrolls another section of the scroll which describes the events that are going on in this second phase of God's unfolding judgment. "I heard immediately the second living creature," John never reads anything, it's as if when you unroll the scroll, whatever is written there is acted out, it becomes a visible drama. And the second living creature, the second living one, cherub, says, "Come," and again the same exact scenario, the angel around God's throne described for us in chapter 4 verses 6 to 9 as one of the four living ones, summons the next rider as the sovereign Lord breaks the seal and judgment unfolds. There is an immediate response by the rider, in verse 4, "And another, a red horse went out."

Now I don't want to take the time to do it tonight, but if you want an interesting study, just look in your concordance and trace it through the Old Testament. You'll find that whether you're reading Job 39 or Proverbs 21 or Psalm 76 or in Jeremiah 6, Isaiah 43, Zechariah 9, Zechariah 10, horses are associated with triumph, with majesty, with power, with might, with force. We even find them later on in the book of Revelation, quite unusual horses. In chapter 19 and verse 11, here comes the Lord in His Second Coming on a white horse, and then down in verse 14, the armies which are in heaven, namely believers, are also clothed in fine linen, white and clean following Him on white horses. Now it's questionable whether those are literal horses, certainly they are symbolic of triumph, they are symbolic of power and majesty and force.

Now this force that is coming, you'll notice is red as opposed to white. And red like fire and red like blood speaks of the holocaust, of war. War in its most frightening and devastating form. We know it's war because it says he takes peace from the earth, men slay each other and a great sword was given to him. We also know it's war because it parallels what Jesus said about war and rumors of war and

nations rising against nation. God then sends as a judgment on the short-lived peace, the false peace, immediate war.

You will notice then it also says, "A red horse went out and him who sat on it, it was granted..." By whom? By God. Please remember this because it's a very important point. All of these things that are happening are happening at the command of God. Some people will try to tell you that this is not the wrath of God because they will say we want to make sure that we are delivered from the wrath of God as Christians, but we also want Christians to go through the Tribulation, so we can't call this the wrath of God. And it has been called a number of things, sometimes the wrath of men, sometimes the wrath of Satan. There's only one thing you could call it biblically and that is the wrath of God. It comes from the throne in the little scroll in the hand of God and is executed by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is God's unfolding wrath, it is God who has granted this red horse, the authority and the power, to move and bring war. It was God who allowed the false peace, it is God who starts the wars. God allows it. As we read in Matthew 24, they're going to involve nations all over the earth, nation will rise against nation, kingdom will rise against kingdom. I don't know how it happens but just when everybody's sort of breathing in the air of euphoria, war is going to start to break out and it's going to escalate all over everyplace.

In Mark chapter 13 we read in verses 7 and 8, "And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, don't be frightened. Those things must take place, that's not yet the end." This is still in the birth pangs, in the beginning of this period. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, don't be frightened for nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. That's the beginning, Mark 13:8 says, of birth pangs, and he reiterates precisely what our Lord said also in the gospel of Matthew.

Then in Luke 21, just a note in case you're wanting comparative passages, you find the same thing. In verse 9, "And when you hear of wars and disturbances, don't be terrified, these things must take place first, but the end doesn't follow immediately, nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, and there's more to come," and we'll see what the more is.

Now this force of war that comes has three features. Feature number one, to take peace from the earth. Verse 4, to take peace from the earth. Sometime early in the first three and a half years, in the birth pangs, in the beginning, world peace turns into war. That initiated peace, that counterfeit prosperity comes to a fast end. And notice please it says, "To take peace from the earth." That means it's global. War is going to break out everywhere. The whole earth is going to lose its peace.

Secondly, "Men are going to slay one another." Violent slaughter begins to take place all over the world. And we don't know the specifics of that except to say just exactly what the Scripture says. There will be a slaughter all over the earth.

By the way, this war runs pretty much through the whole rest of the Tribulation. Certainly runs past the midpoint and on well into the second half. The slaughter runs on beyond this as well. It starts early, it goes on for a long time.

The third feature, "A great sword was given to him." A machaira megala, this machaira is the word that is used for the soldier's sword, the one they carried into battle. It also is used often for the assassins weapon. It depicts war and assassination and rebellion and revolt and massacre, deadly force involving slaughter and death. That is the intent of the megala machaira, the great sword. And that is the sword that was used by the soldiers as well as the assassins. The ones not so much the long broad sword, but the deadly one they carried, the machaira, the shorter one, like the assassins dagger mostly, although it can also refer, that word can to other kinds of swords. At this particular time, whatever positive things have been going on in the world, come to a screeching halt. Read Jeremiah 25, if you get a chance, from verses 15 on and you will see something of the unfolding of this horrible war.

Now Antichrist will be a key player in this as he was a key player in the global peace. We know that from Daniel 8:24. We don't exactly know what his role is going to be at this time, but we know he's going to get involved in it. Daniel 8:24 says this, regarding Antichrist, "He will destroy to an extraordinary degree, he will destroy mighty men and the holy people." Now you remember, he is the one who orchestrated a peace treaty with Israel, according to Daniel, right? He made a covenant with them. He probably will be the instrument of world peace, but when war starts to break out all over everywhere, to contain his power and to maintain his authority, he's going to have to turn to war. He slaughters many, including Jews and Christians. He may not initiate the wars, he may be attempting to resolve them toward the midpoint, then he does his foul deed of abomination and that is part of, only part of, the holocaust that he creates.

Just look for a moment at Daniel 11, I don't want to go on without at least giving you a touch of the scenario that Antichrist gets into. In Daniel chapter 11 verse 36 it says that this Antichrist, called the king who will do as he pleases, or the willful king. The Antichrist will exalt and magnify himself above every god. He becomes a world dictator. He speaks monstrous things against the God of gods, Daniel 11:36. He will prosper until the indignation is finished for that which is decreed will be done. God allows this profane man to become sovereign and a dictator, to speak against God, to rise to power. He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers, he is irreligious. He shows no regard for the desire of women. Now that could be a reference to the desire of women being a phrase the Jews use to speak of the Messiah, that is a possibility, that he has no regard for the true Messiah, the true Christ. Perhaps a better possibility is when it says he does not have the desire of women, it indicates that he's a homosexual, not an unimaginable thing in our world. He will not show regard for any other god, he will magnify himself above all of them. He will honor of God of fortresses, that's a god of might, a god whom his fathers didn't know, he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones, and treasures. He will be extremely wealthy to finance his wars. He will take action against the strongest

of fortresses, with the help of a foreign god. He will give great honor to those who acknowledge him and he will cause them to rule over the many and will parcel out land for a price. He has his foes and his allies and he starts to fight here and there and gain his allies for the wars. You can see him engaging in a massive war effort. And it all is all over the world surrounding Israel. Initially he's supposed to protect Israel. And apparently he does protect Israel when this all begins. They make a covenant with him and he protects them while this worldwide war is unfolding and escalating and he's trying to position himself as the world dictator and the great power. And the slaughter's going on and he continues to protect Israel until the midpoint and then he does what he does in desecrating the temple and starts to move to slaughter Israel.

No doubt the Antichrist comes in peaceably. Probably solves some problems in the Middle East and even worldwide global problems. He becomes the protector of Israel, with whom he makes a covenant. He heads up the revived Roman Empire, probably a European confederacy, the revived Roman Empire having occupied Europe. He will come as some great leader out of Europe. Israel is under his protective umbrella and under the protective umbrella of the western confederacy, the European power. And Antichrist will rule the world. And then the world in all of its uprisings will be quelled and squashed.

Then verse 40 says, "And at the end time," this is probably on into the second half, just to show you the full range of his warring, on into the end of the second half, the time of the end, likely the Great Tribulation, the last half of that seven years, "The king of the south will collide with him." Now we don't know who the king of the south is but if you go south from the land of Israel you're in Egypt. And it would not be too hard to believe that Egypt would come against the Antichrist. It would not be too hard to believe that Egypt would come against him since he has now established his throne...where?...in Israel, in Jerusalem. That's where he set himself up as God to be worshiped by the whole world. That's a strategic place, you know, in the world because it's the very crossroads of the whole world...Asia, Africa, Europe. And he's attacked by the king of the south. Literally the Hebrew text says "to push like a goat," like putting your horns down and coming at an attack. Probably the king of the south is not identified only as Egypt because it's the whole of the south, the whole Muslim world of Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia, Africa...the alliance that comes against him comes from that part of the world. An African army of some kind moves against the Antichrist who is not only ruling the world but has set his throne as God in the city of Jerusalem.

Also you will note in verse 40 that the king of the north will storm against him, chariots and horsemen and many ships, and, of course, the modern equivalent of all of that. Here comes the king of the north. Who is that? Well some believe it is Russia. It could be Russia, I have certainly taught in our study in Daniel that it is well to assume it could be that massive nation of Russia. There's still every reason to think it might be because it talks about it being in the north and that is north.

It is also reasonable to assume that it could be another Arab conspiracy. And the way the Soviet Union is breaking up today, and has broken up, and the way Arab world seems to be coming together as a common enemy against Israel, it might be reasonable to assume that some kind of Middle East Arab coalition with Iraq and Iran and the other hostile Arab nations would come together, so you've got a Muslim world pushing at the bottom and another Muslim world...you say, "Why is it called the king of the north? Because every conqueror who comes into the land of Palestine in its history comes from the north because you can't get there from the east. The west is water, the south is occupied already, the place to come from is the north because if you're in the south everything east is below Jerusalem and below Israel, and trying to scale all of that and come up from underneath is very difficult. Coming down from the top is the way every, every enemy has always come, even to this very time they come down from the north. So whatever these armies are, here is Antichrist, he's trying to control war all over the place. He abominates in the temple, he sets that up. We move into the second half, war is still going on all over the globe. And now the world is turning on him. The king of the south comes, the king of the north comes.

"He will also...it says, enter the beautiful land...and many countries will fall but these will be rescued out of his hand, Edom and Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon. Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries and the land of Egypt will not escape." By the way, the northern power seems to be utterly defeated. Antichrist wins. He then goes on to conquer other countries, overflow, pass through them. The beautiful land has reference to Palestine, Israel. He conquers all of that land, of course, all the other lands. Verse 42, "He stretches out his hand against other countries, the land of Egypt won't escape." So he's defeated the two kings, the two armies. He moves into the glorious land of Israel, this is...perhaps this is the place where he does the abomination, we don't really know. Maybe this is the midpoint. It's hard to be sure about that. Maybe it's already happened by the time this happens. What reason would the south have to push that way and the north to push that way if he hadn't always...already established his power in that location. So it's hard to know. But he has desecrated the temple. He has set himself up as God. If you want to read about it, read Revelation 13:7, we're going to get there.

He holds the Middle East in his hands, all of its resources. He is the sovereign invincible God in his own mind, he consumes the harlot church, the false religion that is remaining in the world, according to Revelation 17. He has a partner called the False Prophet who calls the whole world to worship him. And it's in that position we find him in verse 42, as he moved out from that to conquer other places, continue to overthrow other countries. There is an unending, blood-letting going on, Edom, Moab, Ammon, frankly that's barren wasteland and he leaves it there, doesn't do that. Instead of moving southeast, moves southwest, as the indication of the text is. He gains control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver, the precious things of Egypt, Libyans, Ethiopians will follow at his heels.

Then in verse 44, "Rumors from the east and the north will disturb him and he will go forth with great wrath and to destroy many." The rumors from the east could be the army of 200 million, you

remember in the book of Revelation, that army of 200 million that moves coming from the east, from the north again another conspiracy. And he moves with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many. He's a powerful, powerful force.

"He'll pitch the tent of his royal pavilion between the seas," that's the Med and the Dead. And if you put your tent between those places, you're in the land of Israel. He puts his place of power in the very holy mountain of Zion. And yet he will come to his end, he'll meet his match.

He thinks he's conquered the world...as the kids today say...Not! Wrong. It isn't going to happen cause the Lord is going to come.

So, wars start in the beginning and they stretch through. And at some point the abomination of desolation and all of this war keeps escalating until Christ comes back to conquer him.

Now you can go back, if you wish, to the book of Revelation. So as you look at this rider, this warring rider, this is the beginning of the birth pains and it gets much worse. Daniel seems to show us the escalating wars as Antichrist gets involved in them. So the starting of wars in the first half runs right on through to the end. Man's last attempt to save his society ends in worldwide holocaust, the whole thing beginning to disintegrate. War comes, stays, escalates to the end.

Let's look at the third seal. Verse 5, here's the same exact introduction. "When He broke the third seal I heard the third living one, the third cherub say, 'Come.'" And again the command is given to the horse and rider. "And I looked," and here his shock is indicated in the word "Behold!" an exclamation, "A black horse and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard, as it were, a voice in the center 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.'" So the third seal is opened and the third rider comes. And John's startled response is indicated in the word "behold," and he sees a black horse and black is the color of famine. Read Lamentations chapter 5 and verses 8 to 10, and you'll see black identified as the color of famine.

Hunger is the effect of worldwide war. Jesus said this also. Jesus said, following the nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom, "There will be famine," Matthew 24:7, this too is God's judgment. He's done it before. Haggai 1, Ezekiel 4, God has brought famine before and He'll bring it again.

When there is this kind of war all over the globe, people stop producing, the slaughter is massive, as we shall see in a moment, food supplies are destroyed. And you can imagine war at this level with the kind of weaponry we have today will be devastating. And as a result, rationing is going to take place because of the scarcity of food. That's why it says in verse 5 that the rider on the black horse also has a weapon of sorts, it isn't a great sword like the other rider, but it is a pair of scales in his hand. And

that...that is used for measuring. And what it means is that food is going to be rationed, it's going to be measured out, weighing out food, food lines. We find that very easy to understand, don't we? Some of you may even remember food lines in World War II. Some of you have seen pictures of food lines in eastern Europe. Starving people all over everywhere getting in line. You've seen third world countries today where there is rationing of food.

Then right in the middle, this is amazing in verse 6, "I heard as it were a voice in the center of the four living creatures." You tell me, who is in the center of the four living creatures? Who's in the center? Around whose throne are they? God's throne...God's throne, so there's no question in my mind but that God is here speaking because these creatures, these four living angels, these four cherubim, are surrounding the throne of God. And in the midst of the throne, the voice of God. And God says, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, three quarts of barley for a denarius and do not harm the oil and the wine." God is speaking. Again it's a reminder that this is a judgment from God. He also speaks, by the way, in the fifth seal, down in verse 11, God speaks. And so we shouldn't be too sure that He isn't speaking here. He speaks about the fact that this has to go on a little while until everybody who is going to be killed is killed in verse 11. Here it is God who speaks and God says, here are the conditions, a quart of wheat for a denarius.

Now let me tell you what that means. A quart of wheat would sustain one person who had a very moderate appetite for one day. A quart of wheat would sustain one person with a very moderate appetite for one day. A denarius is one day's wage. So you would work just to eat the bare minimum, yourself...which would provide nothing for your family. Famine conditions. All your work would only provide food enough for one person.

Then He says, "Three quarts of barley for a denarius." You could get more food to feed your family if you'd settle for barley but barley was animal food...animal food. It would be lining up taking your choice between bread and dog kibble, basically. Low in nutritional value, barley was cheaper, at least a family could eat that. But it would take all their money for three quarts which would feed three people animal food. Those are famine conditions and that's what war's going to do to the world.

And then God says, "Do not harm the oil and the wine." There have been a lot of different kind of interpretations of that. I think if you just read it straightforward, it makes simple sense to say, God warns them to be very careful with their wine and their oil because it's so precious. If all you have is raw wheat without any oil to mix with it, without any wine to go with it, it's very, very difficult. Bare staples all of a sudden become luxuries. Oil was used for the preparation of bread, for cooking as was the wine. He says you better be careful how you treat it, don't hurt it, don't waste it, don't damage it, it is precious, it will be measured out and treated with tremendous care. You can't hurt grain but you can certainly hurt those things by breaking or tearing whatever they're in or being wasteful. Real famine, real famine, global famine is coming fast. World peace, world war, world famine and you're not even out of the first three and a half year of this period.

Finally, the last rider, the fourth seal, verse 7, the same exact scenario, "When He broke the fourth seal I heard the voice of the fourth cherub," and now we know why there were four of them, they each had a role to play here, "And he said, `Come,'" he's commanding the next horse and rider, "And I looked and behold," this has been translated a number of ways, "a pale horse, an ashen horse," you'll be interested to know that the Greek word is chloros from which we get chlorophyll or chlorine, and usually it's associated with what color? Green, a sort of yellow pale green. In fact, that word chloros appears several times in the New Testament in connection with grass or vegetation, such as in Mark 6:39 and Revelation 8 and Revelation 9.

So he sees this pale, green horse, "And he who sat on it had the name death and Hades was following with him and authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth." Here is the pale, ashen, green pallor of death, decomposition, a corpse. And fittingly the one who sat on it has the name hathanatos, death, ominous. What follows war is famine, what follows famine is...what?...death...death. And what follows death? Hades. That's just another word for the grave. The grave comes, as it were, the grave digger comes with his shovel to collect the bodies that death destroys.

Hades is the right partner for death. You find them teamed up in chapter 20 verse 13, Hades is death's hearse, he can keep up with death's ride, they work together. This is the result of the second and the third seal. But more than that, look at verse 8, "Authority was given to them," by whom again? Who gave the authority? God because this is the unfolding of His title deed and His scroll, it is His judgment. "Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth to kill them." It is estimated that by the year two thousand, in another few years, we will have around six billion people on the earth. What this tells us is that one point five billion of them will die. Unthinkable number of people, it could literally wipe out two continents. Nuclear weapons and sophisticated arms make this possible now in a very brief time where as it may have been impossible in a time of bows and swords.

But four things are going to do the killing. The sword, and we've already talked about that in connection with the war...famine, we've already talked about that in connection with the third seal...but here are two other ones, pestilence and the wild beasts of the earth. This is fascinating. Pestilence and the wild beasts of the earth. By the way, these four are linked together several times in Scripture, and I need to probably at least draw that to your attention. These four have been predicted by God to be His means of final judgment in a number of Old Testament passages. Jeremiah 14:12, He says, "I'm going to make an end of them by the sword, famine and pestilence." There He has three of the four. In Jeremiah 24 verse 10, "I will send the sword, the famine and the pestilence upon them." And then again in the forty-fourth chapter of Jeremiah, these things go together again, chapter 44 and verse 13, "I will punish those who live in the land of Egypt as I have punished Jerusalem with the sword, with the famine, and with pestilence."

Now what you have is the sword which leads to famine which leads to pestilence. Where the sword falls and famine exists, you have pestilence following along. In Ezekiel, for example, just two passages, chapter 6 verse 11, "Thus says the Lord God, I will...because of the evil abominations of the house of Israel, they will fall by the sword, by famine and by plague," there's another word for pestilence...sword, famine and plague.

Then in Ezekiel chapter 14, probably the most significant one, starting in verse 13, Ezekiel 14, listen to this, "Son of man, if a country sins against Me by committing unfaithfulness and I stretch out My hand against it, destroy its supply of bread, send famine against it and cut off from it both man and beast, even though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in its midst, by their own righteousness they could deliver only themselves, declares the Lord God, if I were to cause wild beasts to pass through the land and they depopulated it and it became desolate so that no one would pass through it because of the beasts, though these three men were in its midst as I live, declares the Lord God, they couldn't deliver either their sons or their daughters." In other words, the presence of righteous men ultimately won't stop the judgment. "If I were to bring a sword on that country and say let the sword pass through the country and cut off man and beast from it, even though these three men were in its midst, Noah, Daniel and Jonah...or Job, rather, as I live they couldn't deliver their sons or their daughters. Or if I send a plague," there are all four, "against that country and pour out My wrath in blood on it to cut off man and beast even though Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, as I live they couldn't deliver it. For thus says the Lord God, how much more when I send My four severe judgments, sword, famine, wild beasts and plague to cut off man and beast from it."

In other words, if they couldn't endure when one of them came, what are they going to do when all four hit at the same time? They're going to hit.

What is pestilence? Actually it's the same Greek word as the word for death, thanatos, but here it refers to the cause of death. Jesus said there will be earthquakes, following the famine it could be a word that encompasses natural disaster. I think that's right. If you have war at the level it's going to be happening in this particular time with the kind of weapons that we have today, there is going to be a cataclysm of earthquakes created by the bombs and the missiles and all of that devastating destruction. It could also...so it could refer to the kind of earthquakes that are the result of that, it could refer to natural disasters that God is going to set loose, such as earthquakes and floods. It could refer to biological weapons and chemical weapons which we have in vast abundance which could wipe out millions of people, one quart of nerve gas can kill a million people. It could refer to diseases.

Listen, when you have worldwide war and the devastation that's going to take place with that worldwide war, followed by the famine that's going to take place, you know as well as I do that there's going to be a problem with health, sanitation, all of those things. I don't know if you remember this,

but 20 million people died in flu epidemics in World War I because as nations moved around they brought viruses with them. Six million more died of Typhus in World War I. Mass death even by some pestilence disease like AIDS is possible. And there are more massive killing bacteria around. Typhus, you remember, killed 200 million people in four centuries. We underestimate the power of disease to wipe out whole populations.

And then in Revelation 6 he adds not only the pestilence which could mean all of those things, but he adds wild beasts. You say, "What is that? We don't have any wild beasts in America? What's this talking about? We don't have wild beasts or nothing, you've got to go to Africa to find lions or up in China somewhere to find Siberian tigers or whatever. What wild beasts?"

Let me ask you a question. Do you know the most deadly creature on the face of the earth? The most deadly creature on the face of the earth? Not a snake, not a lion, not an alligator, a rat. Historically the deadliest creature on the face of the earth. Why? Rats are annually responsible for the loss of billions of dollars of food in America alone and death all over the world. Rats infested with Bubonic Plague killed one third of the population of Europe in the fourteenth century, that's Encyclopedia Americana's own figure. Rats can carry as many as thirty-five diseases at once and amazingly if ninety-five percent of the rat population is exterminated in the given area, it will replace itself in less than a year. It has killed more people than all the wars of history and it always makes its home where men dwell.

With war and famine and earthquakes, sanitation goes. No medicine, living conditions descend to a primitive level and the rats may be the wild beasts that run wild to kill. Awesome, divine judgment. And this is only the beginning...only the beginning, far more to come.

And sadly, it isn't even until the sixth seal that the people recognize that God is the source of this. You would ask a question, right?, is there any hope for our world? And the answer is no, there's no hope, this will come...this is inevitable. You ask another question, "Is there any hope for me?" The answer is yes, yes, there's hope for you in Jesus Christ. You heard the testimonies tonight, didn't you? These people have not only been delivered from alcoholism, they've not only been delivered from false doctrine, they've not only been delivered from their own sins and their own iniquities, but they've been delivered from all of this.

Is it any wonder that the writer of Hebrews said, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" And the answer is, we won't. But Jesus has provided a way of escape.

Father, thank You for the gift of Christ and His provision, frightening things, terrifying things await the world, and You've spelled it out but they won't acknowledge it. This is where it's going and we don't know how long until it's going to start. But, Lord, we thank You that You've delivered us from Your fiery wrath, from the day of the Lord, the day of fearful judgment. You've delivered us through Christ. We thank You for the salvation that He provides that saves us from the wrath to come, including that

eternal hell, that eternal judgment. May no one here be so foolish as to neglect so great salvation, for only in Christ can we escape. We thank You that some day Jesus is going to come and gather His own to Himself and to His presence before this terrible, terrible, frightening, final chapter of human history takes place. We thank You that in Christ we can live in hope and not in fear. We want to stand in that scene in heaven and be singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to redeem," and be a part of the blessed and not the cursed. And we thank You that that is provided in Christ through His death and resurrection for He gave Himself for our sins.

While your heads are bowed as we close in a just a moment, I want you to turn that prayer personally into your own heart. Do you know Christ? If the Lord Jesus were to come and take His church away, would you go or would you stay to be lured into this trap of peace that ultimately will catch you in a devastating and unbearable judgment? If you know Christ, you're His.

You say, "What's the means to do that?" Believe in your heart that He died and rose again for you and confess Him as your Lord, ask Him to save you from your sin and judgment. God in human flesh, that's Christ, came into the world to die in your place, to bear your curse that you may never feel the curse of God. You need only ask.

Father, we do pray that every heart would be turned toward Christ and we praise You and thank You that You have provided an escape, not just an escape but that You've provided a glorious heaven in which we will dwell with You forever. We thank You in the Savior's name. Amen.

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