

The Revelation

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Revelation 6:1-8

Introduction

- Ezekiel hears God tell of the “Four severe judgements” (14:21)
- Zechariah sees something similar in 6:1-7
- The Four Horsemen of Revelation represent four great destructive forces God is releasing on a rebellious, sinful, faithless world. The Kingdom of God begins for us here on earth when we accept Christ as Savior. A taste of Hell is what we choose to live with here otherwise.

Vss. 1-2

- Some have suggested the rider of the white horse is Christ Himself, because in 19:11-12 we see Christ coming on a white horse, but that is where the similarity ends. The crown worn here is a “stephanos” crown, a victory crown, whereas in Ch. 19 it is a “diadema” crown, a royal crown.
- This rider represents military power and conquest through war. The bow in ancient times always represented military power and war (Jer. 51:56; Hosea 1:5). Likewise, the white horse was a symbol of military victory. A triumphant Roman general always was paraded in a chariot pulled by white horses. The cavalry of the dreaded Parthians all rode white horses and were equipped with bows.
- Indiscriminate death and suffering, an irresistible force bringing starvation and pain – this is the first horseman loosed on earth.

Vss. 3-4

- The second horse and rider were partners with the first. It is fitting that War would ride a red horse. In the 30 years before Herod the Great, some 100,000 Jews were estimated to have died in revolts against

Rome. In John's own lifetime he witnessed the Jewish revolt that saw the sack of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. The Jewish historian Josephus, who commanded the Jewish army in Galilee, claimed that 1,100,000 Jews died during the siege of Jerusalem alone, with another 97,000 captured and sold into slavery. Revolts were not uncommon around the empire. In 61 AD, John would have heard of a revolt in Britain where some 150,000 Brits died.

- The idea of this kind of catastrophic war was not new, (Is. 19:1-2; Zech.14:13). It is a vision of the world as a boiling cauldron of hate.

Vss. 5-6

- We must remember that John here is not giving us a picture of the end times, but of things that must precede the end (Mark 13:6-8).
- Here the black horse rider represents famine, but not so much a natural famine as a famine largely based on greed. Oil and wine were luxuries, whereas wheat and barley were necessities. In John's time this was often the case during times of shortage – luxuries were readily available for the rich while the poor starved.
- These measures of wheat and barley would be recognized in John's time as one person's food for a day, yet here we see it takes all of that person's wages for a day. If a man had a family there would not be enough.

Vss. 6-8

- And then comes Death. This will be a terrible time, but it is not the end time, the time of final destruction. There will be a limit to what Death can do.
- We often think lightly of our sin, but God takes rebellion against Him quite seriously, and there is no escaping the consequences of our sin.