**THE GREAT DAY OF GOD’S WRATH BEGINS**

**REVELATION CHAPTER 6**

For the last couple of weeks in our study of Revelation we have been in heaven. Thru the Apostle John’s eyes we saw a glimpse of heaven – God’s throne, the 24 elders and all the saints and the angelic host – millions and millions worshipping Him. We watched as Jesus took the scroll with seven seals, the title deed to the earth, from His Father’s hand. Jesus alone is deemed worthy to judge and rule the world. He is about to redeem that which rightfully belongs to God, a creation made perfect but then ruined by sin and Satan. What a glorious scene we have witnessed!

Today we’ll be in Chapter 6. We have been transported back down to earth where we see a world in utter turmoil. This chapter ushers in the period known as the Tribulation. Daniel prophesied about the Tribulation and indicates that it would last for a period of 7 years. It is widely held that the “one week” of Daniel 9:27 refers to this seven-year period. Suffice it to say, you think things are bad now? They’ll be a whole lot worse then! As we look at the events of the Tribulation over the coming months I think you will understand why I am a “pre-trib” guy. I have given you my reasons why I don’t think the church will go thru the Tribulation. Some of you may think that I am just being hopeful and optimistic. Truth is none of us knows for sure. All I know is this – whenever the Tribulation come, I do not want to be here!

On to Chap 6 – watch now as one by one the seven seals are broken and God’s judgment is poured out upon the whole earth…

1 Now I watched when the Lamb (Jesus) opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!"

2 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.

Jesus breaks the first seal. Jesus is in heaven and as we read thru this passage He will be the One breaking all the seals. The command is sounded from heaven, “Come!” Immediately we hear the hoof beats of a horse and we are introduced to the first of what have been called the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” – a white horse and its mysterious rider. A red horse, black horse and pale horse will soon follow. These four horses and their riders (which all signify the same individual), they personify various world conditions, philosophies, politics and principles that will prevail upon the earth during the Tribulation period.

We know that Jesus is the Lamb in v 1, but who is this rider on the white horse, v 2? At first reading one might be tempted to jump to the conclusion that this is Jesus (because in Rev 19 Jesus is observed also riding a white horse). I need to point out that there are some differences between these two riders.

Jesus in Rev 19 has a sword of judgment, eyes like a flame of fire and He wears many diadems on His head, king’s crowns that God has given to Him, the crowns of a ruler. In Rev 19 Jesus is called “the King of kings and Lord of lords.” Here in Rev 6 we see that the mysterious horseman has a bow but no arrow. This symbolizes he comes to make peace. Also he is wearing only one crown and it is not a diadem. It is a crown of victory such as might be awarded to the winner of an athletic contest. So, the rider here in Chap 6 is NOT Jesus. This is a false messiah, the antichrist, who comes in victory in the guise of making peace. As we will see in our study, this is a false peace. This guy, whoever he is, conquers politically on the premise of peace and love. But woe to those who follow him…

3 When He opened the second seal (Jesus is still in heaven), 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.

The second seal is broken and the command, “Come” rings out once more. This time we observe a red horse and rider. The red horse is symbolic of war and the bloodshed it brings. Again, the rider symbolizes the same person as before, the antichrist. But he looks different now. The so-called peace of the antichrist proves to be short lived and now we see full-scale war break out. Notice that the antichrist no longer has a bow, but now holds in his hand a great sword symbolic of intent to wage war. So much for peace! Very deceptive! He’ll stab in the back those who once trusted him.

5 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.

6 And 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 third seal is broken and again the command, “Come” is given. Things are getting worse. Now we see a black horse and its rider. The black represents widespread death, caused by a horrible famine upon the face of the earth. One fourth of the entire world’s population dies as a result (according to Rev 6:8). In our day and age malnutrition is a global problem and many relief organizations have been established to get food and clothing to those needing them. But what we see today cannot be compared to what will happen during the Tribulation. Notice what seems to be a rather odd statement in verse 6. Normally a denarius, a normal day’s wage in John’s day, would be able to purchase 8 quarts of wheat or 24 quarts of barley. When the third seal is broken the food shortage becomes so severe that food prices skyrocket to 8 times their normal price. More people will die as a result of this famine than have died in all the wars in the entire history of mankind combined! It is a staggering number! This worldwide famine will produce pestilence, epidemics of various diseases and infestations of insects, mice and rats. It will be a very unpleasant time to say the least.

7 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.

The fourth seal is broken and the last summons, “Come” goes out. A pale horse gallops onto the scene. This horse is the color of death. Upon it is a rider named Death and behind him is another horse with its rider, Hades. The two of them ride in tandem. The picture here is what happens to those who are lost without Jesus Christ – utter hopelessness. As soon as they die, hell comes along right behind and snatches them up.

As you read all this in Revelation some folks might say, “Wait a minute! How could a loving God permit such horrors to take place and how could a loving God send people to hell?” While it is true that God IS a God of love, He is also a God of justice and righteousness. And to those who continually thumb their noses at Him, He is a God of wrath. A perfect and holy God cannot tolerate sin. Read your Bible, both the Old Testament and New Testament, and notice how time after time God’s judgment fell upon those who blatantly disobeyed Him – even His own people! Let’s get one thing straight. God does not send people to hell. People send themselves to hell. How? By rejecting God and His loving, gracious, redemptive plan of salvation thru His Son Jesus Christ.

The Bible is clear that God does not desire for any to perish but for all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). His Word warns us and provides a way to eternal life through Jesus Christ. God leaves that choice completely up to us. If we choose the pathway to destruction after He has pointed us to the cross, how is that God’s fault?

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 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.

The fifth seal is broken. Many of those who get saved during the Tribulation period are being martyred. People who dare to stand for the word of God suffer severe persecution. The blood of the martyrs cries out for vengeance, “How long, O Lord, will you wait to judge those who killed us?” We will learn more about these martyrs in Chapter 7. They were told to wait just a little while longer. “Trust me on this” God says. “When all your other brothers and sisters in Christ have been martyred on earth and join you, then I will avenge you.” All in God’s perfect time.

12 When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood,

13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.

14 The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

Now the sixth seal is broken and immediately catastrophes, natural disasters, begin to take place. Everything is shaken and people panic, as God’s wrath is unleashed upon all mankind who rejected Him. The whole cosmos is going to respond to the wrath of God. These verses indicate that there will be massive earthquakes and meteor showers. The sun will appear as black and the moon will turn blood red perhaps as a result of many explosions and fires produced by the earthquakes that give off a glow in the sky. The Day of the Lord, which is described in these verses, was also prophesied about in the Old Testament (in Isaiah 34:4, Joel 2:30-31) and by Jesus in the New Testament (in Matthew 24:29). A terrible day of judgment.

15 Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,

16 calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,

17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Those without Jesus Christ will be praying for death rather than face the wrath of God. His terrible judgment will not discriminate. Kings, common people and slaves alike will be affected. They will cry out as though the world was ending, but little do they know this is all just the beginning.

What you need to see from all of this is that the first 21 months of the Tribulation will be simply terrible. The antichrist will assume control of the world, there will be global war, famine, inflation, pestilence and a quarter of the world’s population will die. Then there will be horrific persecution of the new believers followed by God’s catastrophic judgment through natural disasters. My personal conviction is that, if you are in Christ, if He is your personal Lord and Savior, you won’t have to go through any of this! For those today who do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior it is not too late. Today the door of mercy remains wide open. Just like the doors of the Noah’s ark before the raindrops came. Anybody could have come into the ark that wanted to. Noah preached for 100 years. Sadly, only a handful responded.

Have you ever had a bad dream about something awful happening to you? Remember your relief when you woke up and discovered you had only been dreaming and that it had not actually happened? Chapter 6 is like a bad dream. It offers a precursor of things to come. The good news is that it has not taken place ------- not yet.