

The Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse

Conrad Baker

www.MaranathaMedia.com.au

An Exposition of the First Four Seals of Revelation Chapter 6

In introducing the prophecy of the seven seals it is helpful to review chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation. These introduce the seven seals. In Revelation four God is revealed as Creator upon the throne in supreme control. In Revelation five Jesus Christ is brought to view as the omnipotent Lamb who has conquered Satan and paid the price for the world's redemption. This means that the world's destiny is decided. The saints of God are guaranteed the kingdom and all rebels against God are guaranteed destruction. In the seals, the church of God is revealed in deadly conflict with the powers of darkness and though error and apostasy appear to dominate, yet God is in control.

Christ has the title deeds of the kingdom, the church is assured of final victory.

CONFUSING INTERPRETATIONS

The first four seals involve the celebrated Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Many and varied attempts have been made to interpret these horsemen through the years, and even today there is still much confusion concerning them. The problem with most interpretations of the four horsemen is that they tend to apply the predictions to events that are shallow and inconsequential, whereas the grand prophecies of the Book of Revelation apply to various aspects of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, the conflict between the people of God and their enemies.

For example, to apply the four horsemen to the popular worldly interpretation of war, famine, pestilence etc. cheapens the whole prophecy. Why preserve in holy writ, predictions of conditions that have been common throughout history and which have no significance as far as the great controversy between good and evil is concerned?

DO NOT REPRESENT ANGELIC AGENCIES

What then is the significance of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse? The popular view today amongst some scholars is that the horsemen represent angelic powers. This view is based on the Book of Zechariah 1:8-10 and 6:1-8. In Zechariah 1 there is brought to view three horses, red, speckled and white. In chapter six, four chariots are brought to view with red, white, black and bay horses in each. In scripture horses and chariots represent the angels of God.

“The chariots of God are twenty thousand even thousands of angels the Lord is among them as in Sinai.”
Psalms 68:17

In the seven seals however, the four horses are not horses and chariots, they are horsemen - there are no chariots. Therefore to employ the horses and chariots of Zechariah as a basis for this prophecy must be seriously questioned. Moreover in the Book of Revelation angels are always referred to in literal terms particularly in the prophecy of the seven seals. In Revelation 5:2, 11 the angels are distinctly referred to as “angels”. In Revelation 7:1, 2 the angels are again designated in literal terms “four angels, holding the four winds”. In verse eleven “angels” render praise before the throne.

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A HORSE REPRESENTS SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Following the basic law of interpretation of letting scripture interpret scripture, what does scripture declare as to what a horse represents? The answer is found in Revelation itself. In chapter nineteen another white horse is brought to view. This is sometimes spoken of as the fifth horse of Revelation.

“I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True and in righteousness he does judge and make war.” Revelation 19:11

This refers to Jesus Christ at the Second Advent. It is a military picture, symbolic of Armageddon. Jesus is pictured riding a white horse. For what reason? “In righteousness he does judge (or punish) and make war”. “This is a war picture. A horse denotes war. Verse 13 says “and the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses”. Do the angels literally ride white horses when they descend to this planet at the Second Advent? No! This is a symbol of Armageddon - the last great conflict. In Smith’s Bible Dictionary - a scholarly and authoritative work it declares:

“In the ancient frescoes of all the great nations of the east, Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, the horse is not shown as a beast of burden. It is used only for war and processions and sometimes for hunting.”

The S.D.A. Dictionary likewise confirms this. It says,

“In contrast with the many texts that speak of the use of the horse for war, there is only one that mentions the horse in connection with agriculture.” Page 490

A horse denotes warfare. It does not represent angels. Each horse of the Apocalypse represents a particular kind of warfare which we will endeavor to show.

THE WHITE HORSE

“I saw when the lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard as it were the noise of thunder and one of the four living creatures saying come and see and I saw and behold a white horse and he that sat on him had a bow and a crown was given to him and he went forth conquering and to conquer.” Revelation 6:1-2

The white color denotes purity and righteousness.

“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” Isaiah 1:18.
This is a warfare of righteousness.

BASED ON PSALM 45

Who is the rider of this white horse? To find the answer we need to go back to the Old Testament because the Book of Revelation is based on that. The source from which this symbolism is drawn is undoubtedly the messianic 45th Psalm. In this Psalm, David predicts the coming of the Messiah as a mighty warrior, and a conquering King. This perfectly parallels the first horseman of Revelation. There are five distinct parallels between Psalm 45 and Revelation 6:2

THE FIVE PARALLELS

PSALMS 45

Verse 4

‘In thy majesty ride prosperously.’

Verse 1

‘I speak of things touching the king.’

Verse 4

‘Ride prosperously because of truth, meekness and righteousness’.

Verse 5

‘Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies.’

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Verse 5

'Whereby the people fall under thee' indicating the triumph of the Messiah.

REVELATION 6:2

He rides 'a white horse.'

The rider has 'crown upon his head' denoting kingship.

Rides a white horse denoting purity and righteousness.

'He that sat on him had a bow in his hand.' The purpose of a bow is to shoot arrows. Arrows represent the Word of God. Habakkuk 3:9

He 'went forth conquering and to conquer'.

These five parallels reveal that the first horseman of Revelation six represents Jesus Christ engaged in a warfare of righteousness and purity.

THE WAR INVOLVES THE CHURCH

When did Jesus Christ wage such a war with the Word of God? After His ascension to Heaven. In what way? By His church on earth. Before he ascended to heaven Jesus Christ commissioned his church to battle with Satan and the powers of hell.

"Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." 2 Timothy 2:3

"Put on the whole armor of God for we wrestle (or war) against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places." Ephesians 6:10-12 margin.

"We do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

It is a spiritual warfare. No carnal weapons are to be used but only the spiritual weapons that Christ has given. The Song of Solomon, in describing the church militant on earth says, it is "terrible as an army with banners". How true this is of the church when it is pure, faithful and obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ. As the great hymn says "Onward Christian Soldiers, marching as to war." This warfare against evil is the greatest war ever known. The greatest battle ever fought is the battle against Satan and the powers of darkness. To wage this warfare, moral courage is required. It takes moral strength to be a true Christian.

FULFILLED IN APOSTOLIC CHURCH

Did the church of Christ after His ascension go forth conquering and to conquer as Christ commissioned it? Indisputably so. In spite of the power of paganism which was established and protected in the surrounding nations, the gospel of Christ spread like fire in the stubble.

And this in spite of fierce persecution. Two and a half million Christians were done to death by pagan Rome according to some authorities, but in spite of it, five million converts were won to Christ in the first century of the Christian era. The apostle Paul declared of his day, "The gospel is preached to every creature under heaven." Colossians 1:23. Under the power of Pentecost the then known world heard the gospel. As the author of the book, Great Controversy, declared of those early years of the church,

"Under the fiercest persecution these witnesses for Jesus kept their faith unsullied-they uttered no complaint-the great controversy in which the disciples of Jesus yielded up their lives did not cease when these faithful bearers fell at their post. By defeat they conquered. God's workmen were slain, but his work went rapidly forward. The gospel continued to spread and the number of its adherents to increase. It

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penetrated into regions inaccessible even to the eagles of Rome. The subjects of Satan were leaving his service and enlisting under the banner of Christ.” Great Controversy, page 41-42.

What a marvelous picture! The first horseman went forth conquering and to conquer. In the Book, Acts of the Apostles, the author says

“The words of the apostles were as sharp arrows of the Almighty, convicting men of their terrible guilt in rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory.” Acts Apostles, page 45.

The arrows represent the Word of God and how effective they were in the minds of men. Thus the prediction of the first horseman was faithfully fulfilled in the history of the church of the first century A.D.

THE RED HORSE

“There went out another horse that was red and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another, and there was given to him a great sword.” Revelation 6:3-4

Here is presented a different horse and a different rider. This indicates another kind of warfare.

FAULTY APPLICATIONS

It is claimed by some that the red horse represents “God’s activities on the earth” and that the prediction that “he would take peace from the earth” was a fulfillment of Matthew 10:34-36. This claim must be rejected. Notice these words of Jesus.

“Think not, that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” Matthew 10:34-36

This did not apply to the period of the red horse. Jesus’ words were fulfilled under the white horse when the church was pure and united and the gospel was powerfully proclaimed and as a result great persecution came. The red horse “takes peace from the earth and they kill one another”. In other words he would bring disunity and discord into the church.

It is also claimed that the white horse continues throughout the Christian era. Is this correct? Did the church of Christ continue to conquer? The apostle Paul was shown very clearly that the church would not continue in triumph. It would go astray.

“For I know this, that after my departing (or death) shall grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch and remember by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears.” Acts 20:29-31

What a sad experience for the apostle. After all that he had endured in proclaiming the gospel and raising up churches, finally in the midst of these very churches would come false teachers and apostasy. They would “speak perverse things”. In fulfillment of this prediction false teachers did arise and apostasy gradually entered the church.

A DIFFERENT FORM OF ATTACK

Satan resorted to a different attack - he found that persecuting the church only increased its numbers. “Satan therefore laid his plans to war (notice, it involves warfare) -more successfully against the government of God. The great adversary now endeavored to gain by artifice what he had failed to secure by force. Persecution ceased and in its stead was substituted the dangerous allurements of temporal prosperity and worldly honor. Now the church was in fearful peril. Most of the Christians at last consented to lower

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their standard and a union was formed between Christianity and paganism ... (notice that, “most of the Christians” - the great majority of the church went astray) ... the foul leaven of idolatry thus brought into the church, continued its baleful work. Unsound doctrines, superstitious rites and idolatrous ceremonies were incorporated into her faith and worship. As the followers of Christ united with idol worshippers the Christian religion became corrupted and the church lost her purity and power.” Great Controversy, page 42-43.

A sad picture but this is what the red horse represented. Red denotes sinfulness. “Though your sins be as scarlet” Isaiah 1:18. After the death of the apostles the church became sinful. A war was mounted against the doctrines and standards of the church. “Power was given him (the rider) to take peace from the earth.” Those who endeavored to uphold true doctrine and to be faithful to Christ were hated and proscribed. One writer declares of the period:

“As long as persecution continued, the church remained comparatively pure. But as it ceased, converts were added who were less sincere and devoted and the way was opened for Satan to obtain a foothold.”
“These apostate Christians uniting with their half-pagan companions, directed their warfare against the most essential features of the doctrines of Christ ...the doctrine of religious freedom was termed heresy and its upholders were hated and proscribed.” Great Controversy, page 44-45.

Peace was truly taken from the earth as far as the church was concerned. There was fierce conflict between truth and error and this is confirmed by recognized church historians. Mosheim declared,

“There was continual war and trouble.”

Edward Gibbon wrote,

“The bands of civil society were torn asunder by the fury of religious factions.” [1]

Gregory Nazianzon said,

“The kingdom of heaven (the church) was converted by discord into the image of chaos of a nocturnal tempest and of hell itself.”

Eusebius the Bishop of Caesarea declared,

“We sunk into negligence and sloth, envying and reviling in different ways, and we were almost on the point as it were of taking up arms against each other. Prelates inveighing prelates.. .hypocrisy and dissimulation had risen to the greatest heights of malignity. Pastors deserting the law of piety were inflamed against each other, accumulating threats, rivalry, hostility and hatred.”

This was the second period of the church, the red horse. Peace was surely taken from the church. What a contrast to the period of the white horse. In that period the pagans, as they observed the Christians in their fervency, purity and unity said “See how they love one another,” but under the period of the red horse they said, “See how they hate one another.”

THE GREAT SWORD

“There was given to him a great sword.” What does the sword represent? There are three applications in scripture of the sword.

1. It denotes authoritarianism or civil power - the magistrate, the state etc.
2. It denotes division and separation.
3. It denotes retribution, war and slaughter. Only the first two apply to the red horse period. Did the spirit of authoritarianism come into the church? The church leadership became permeated with love of position and a thirst for power.

Even in the days of John, the last of the apostles, this antichristian spirit was entering the church. [2]

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“I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them receives us not. Wherefore if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren and forbids them that would, and casts them out of the church.” 3 John 1:9-10

As one author declared,

“As persecution ceased and Christianity entered the palaces and courts of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and his apostles, for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions.” Great Controversy, page 49.

Speaking of Constantine the Great, the Roman Emperor who endeavored to unite the church, the same author says,

“He was urged to do this by the bishops of the church, who (were) inspired by ambition and thirst for power.” Great Controversy, page 53.

“When the early church became corrupted, by departing from the simplicity of the gospel in order to control the consciences of the people, she sought the support of the secular power.” Great Controversy, page 443.

This was “the great sword”. McClintock and Strong, writing of this period of church history declare,

“Men, exalted in the scale of society, were eager to extend the power which had been entrusted to them. And they sought to do so by exacting from the people, acquiescence in the peculiar doctrines that they chose to publish as articles of faith.”

DIVISION AND DISSENSION IN CHURCH

But the sword also denotes division and separation. Was there division and dissension during this period?

“It required a desperate struggle for those who would be faithful to stand firm against the deceptions and abominations which were disguised in sacerdotal garments and introduced into the church ... after a long and severe conflict the faithful few decided to dissolve all union with the apostate church if she still refused to free herself from falsehood, and idolatry... if unity could be secured only by the compromise of truth and righteousness, then let there be difference and even war.” Great Controversy, page 45.

As revealed above there was war, but unfortunately, some who determined to stick to the truth and be faithful, at times used carnal weapons, contrary to the instruction of Christ. The red horse then, denotes the emergence of the apostate church. The true church was now under attack especially in its doctrines and standards. The majority, of the orthodox church had become sinful, heretical and political.

THE BLACK HORSE

“When he had opened the third seal I heard the third living creature say Come and see and I beheld, and lo, a black horse and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.” Revelation 6:5

Black is the opposite to white, indicating that it is the opposite to purity and righteousness. Here is pictured the third period of the orthodox Christian church. It suggests a period of unrighteousness-of moral darkness, of error and of apostasy. Was this correct? Did this condition befall the established church of the day? Did the orthodox church, the official church sink deeper into apostasy?

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CONVERSION OF CONSTANTINE

In this period Christianity became popular and as a result was in great peril. This period begins with the conversion of the Roman Emperor, Constantine, about 300 AD. He affected a bogus conversion to Christianity in order to secure the unity of the empire. He was never a true Christian but in order to persuade the pagans to embrace Christianity, he offered, particularly the lower classes, a white garment and twenty pieces of gold. In response, the pagans swarmed into the rivers and were baptized into the Christian church. In one year alone in Rome, 12,000 men were baptized plus a proportionate number of women and children. [3]

BAPTIZED PAGANISM

The result was that paganism walked into the church. This is the source of all the pagan rites and ceremonies that we now find in the church of Rome and also in many Protestant churches. [4]

“The nominal conversion of Constantine in the early part of the fourth century, caused great rejoicing, and the world, cloaked with a form of righteousness, walked into the church. Now the work of corruption, rapidly progressed. Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror. Her spirit controlled the church. Her doctrines, ceremonies and superstitions were incorporated into the worship of the professed followers of Christ. This compromise between paganism and Christianity, resulted in the development of the “man of sin”, foretold in prophecy as “opposing and exalting himself above God”. That gigantic system of false religion is a masterpiece of Satan’s power, a monument of his efforts to seat himself upon the throne to rule the earth according to his will.” Great Controversy, page 50.

In this period the great apostasy had become fully developed - the apostate Roman church was now complete. John Dowling declared,

“There is scarcely anything which strikes the mind of the careful student of church history with greater surprise than the comparatively early period at which many of the corruptions of Christianity which are embodied in the Roman system took their rise.” History of Romanism Book 2 Chapter 1, Section 1.

This can be proved to the hilt. The church of Rome often says “we go back to the apostles”. Yes, they may trace their lineage back but it is via the black horse and the red horse. They go back through the line of apostasy. The church of Rome is a breakaway - an apostasy. It is interesting to notice that the paganism with which corrupt Christianity united in that day, was Babylonian Sun worship that had revived in Persia. It was called Mithraism. They worshipped the sun under the name of ‘Aithra. This was the paganism that amalgamated with apostate Christianity. Roman Catholic authorities freely admit that this is so.

“In her work of Christianizing the world, the Catholic church adapts herself as far as possible to her surroundings. She does not reject completely the custom and institutions of a people whose land she enters, but she endeavors to bring these institutions into harmony with her own doctrines. So it comes, we find the early writers of the Roman Catholic church retaining in substance the old myths and legends - changing them only to invest them with a Christian atmosphere.” Catholic Educational Review, March 1921.

Many other authorities could be quoted to prove that this has been the practice of the church of Rome down through the years. [5]

It was in this period that Sunday observance was established in the church. Mithraism celebrated as its chief day of the week, the day of the sun, i.e. Sunday. Authorities are very clear that it was in this period that the observance of Sunday was established in the orthodox church, in place of the true seventh day Sabbath. Dr. G. Murray of Oxford University wrote,

“Mithraism had so much acceptance that it was able to impose on the Christian world its own Sunday in place of the Sabbath. It’s sun’s birthday December 25 as the birthday of Jesus.” ‘Christianity In the Light of Modern Knowledge,’ pages 73-74.

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Numerous other statements by historians show that Sunday came from Mithraism and entered the church in the period of the black horse. [6]

BALANCES

“He had a pair of balances in his hands.”

What would the balances represent? [7] The old fashioned balances were scales. In scripture they have three applications:

1. They denote commerce.
2. They denote corrupt dealing.
3. They denote judgment.

All three fittingly apply to the period of the black horse.

COMMERCIALIZATION OF RELIGION

The Papal church now began to engage in the commercialization of religion. People were led to believe that it was essential to pay for the benefits of salvation. If you were baptized you had to pay. If you were confirmed in the faith you had to pay. If you married, you had to pay. If you received forgiveness from the priest you had to pay. When you buried your loved one you had to pay. When masses were said, to get him out of purgatory you had to pay. This commerce became a source of tremendous income for the apostate church. [8]

CORRUPT DEALING - RELICS

The scales also represent corrupt dealing. The most striking evidence of this corruption through the dark or middle ages was the sale of relics - the bones etc, of so-called dead saints. These were employed to draw people to the churches. The most outrageous claims were made in regard to these relics. Today in catholic centers you may see the relics on display. In Milan cathedral are 12 vials containing the fingers of the 12 apostles preserved in spirits. In St. Marks in Venice there are 8 pieces of the cross, 2 thorns from Christ's thorny crown, some blood of Christ in a vial, a nail from the cross, a lock of the virgin Mary's hair, a bone of St. Paul's leg, a bone of St. Matthew's leg, a bone of St. Phillip's leg, a bone of St. Peter's leg, the finger and tooth of Mark, a piece of St. John the Baptist's head and a piece of St. Stephen's backbone.

While in London in 1956 the author spent some time with a Catholic priest who was in the process of leaving his church. The author queried the priest about many things, one of which concerned the relics. What do the priests really believe about these relics? Do they believe they are the bones of dead saints? No, he said, the priests believe that many of the bones are the bones of dead dogs. What a fraud? What corrupt dealing?

G.R. Balene in describing the relics in Canterbury cathedral before the Protestant Reformation wrote, “But Canterbury eclipsed them all in the splendor of it's relics. Round the shrine of St. Thomas were 12 complete skeletons of canonized saints - three skulls, four arms and 300 thighs, thumbs, teeth and jawbones. Here too, was part of the Bethlehem manger and of the virgin's bed and the table of the last supper. Here was Aaron's rod that budded and mare marvelous still, the actual clay out of which God had molded Adam.” ‘A Layman's History of the Church of England,’ pages 47-49.

The second thing that was fraudulent, were the promises that the church made to their people if they looked upon the relics. They were promised remission from purgatory of lengthy periods of time, even to thousands of years. How people have been misled through the years!

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JUDGEMENT

The third significance of the scales or balances, is that they represented judgment. “Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting.” Daniel 5:27. We suggest that this represents the fact that in this period of the black horse - the church was judged and found wanting and was rejected by God. After long patience with the apostasy, after many warnings, the apostate church was finally rejected.

“Popery had become the world’s despot, but the noon of the papacy was the midnight of the world. The condition of the world under the Roman power presented a fearful and striking fulfillment of the words of the prophet Hosea. Because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee.” Great Controversy, 60.

In the period of the black horse the cup of the Roman church’s apostasy was filled to the full and it was rejected by God.

SPIRITUAL FAMINE

“I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say A measure of wheat for a penny and three measures of barley for a penny.” Verse 6.

Wheat and barley were the staple food products of the day. “A measure” equaled almost one quart. The penny was the denarius which was equal in value to one day’s wages for a laborer. This meant that the cost of common food was exorbitant at 8 to 10 times above the normal price. This indicated that food was in short supply and denoted a famine. A literal famine or a spiritual famine? Undoubtedly a spiritual famine for the Word of God. The apostate church created such a famine. The Bible was taken away from the people.

“In order for Satan to maintain his sway over men and establish the authority of the Papal usurper, he must keep them in ignorance of the scriptures. It’s sacred truths must be concealed and suppressed.” Great Controversy, page 52

The leaders of the church began to lock up the scriptures in the Latin language, and only the few who understood Latin could read it. The Bible began to disappear from the people and the result was that error increased and superstition soon enslaved the minds of men. Thus began, what is termed in history, the Dark Ages, and how dark they were? [9]

THE OIL AND THE WINE

Notice what the living creature declared in connection with this church period of the black horse:

“See thou hurt not the oil and the wine.” Verse 6

Oil represents the Holy Spirit. Wine represents doctrine. Intoxicating wine represents false doctrine. Unfermented wine represents the true doctrines of the Word of God. Some believe oil not only represents the Holy Spirit but also the righteousness of Christ. [10] It is true that when one receives the Holy Spirit, the Spirit imparts to him the righteousness of Christ. In the period of the black horse, did the Holy Spirit and true doctrine disappear? Was the righteousness of Christ still available? God decreed “Hurt not the oil and the wine” in other words let them not disappear let them be preserved. When the apostate church began to dominate the world, God preserved small remnants of people who had in their possession the precious Word of God in its purity. The Waldenses of Northern Italy were one such group. They possessed the Word of God in their native tongue. In this way the Holy Spirit, the righteousness of Christ and true doctrine were preserved. The gospel of salvation was still available to men and women if they should seek it. [11] (What of the claim that ‘the oil and the wine ‘ represents certain people? See Appendix)

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THE PALE HORSE

“I looked and behold a pale horse and his name that sat on him was death and hell (or the grave) followed with him. And power was given to them over the fourth part of the earth to kill with sword and with hunger and with death and with the beasts of the earth.” Revelation 6:8

What color is meant by ‘pale’? Is this an improvement? Is it a return towards the whiteness of purity and righteousness?

“The Greek word is ‘chloros’, which denotes ‘a greenish, verdant, dun color: green, pale!’ Dr. Strong. Dr. Ellicott says “the color palid or livid is that deadly greenish hue which is the unmistakable token of the approach of death.”

Phillips translation reads “A horse, sickly green in color.”

The N.E.B. reads “another horse, sickly pale.”

Dalrymple says, ‘The greenish color which appears on a corpse when decomposition begins. The Greek medical writers used the term to denote a pale or bilious complexion. Two versions translate it as ‘pallidus’, whence our word, ‘pallid. [12]

This is how Heaven describes the established church in the fourth period of the Christian era. It denotes decomposition. It indicates corruption. It denotes revulsion. This was how the official orthodox church of the period appeared in the sight of heaven.

CHURCH WAS POLITICALLY SUPREME

This was when the established church of Rome was supreme. Death rode the horse. In that dark apostate period, spiritual death reigned supreme. The church was revealed in all its corruption and repulsiveness. In 538 A.D. when it is suggested that this appalling period began the church leaders assumed a new order. They now were considered as rulers of state whereas heretofore they were considered to be saints. [13] In 538 the church gained political power which rapidly increased until she oppressed all Europe. As Wylie so truthfully declared “the noonday of the papacy was the midnight of the world’: History of Protestantism”. Death rode supreme. [14] It was literal death to dissenters and it was spiritual death to her supporters. Millions of true believers were done to death. [15]

Now, for the first time, I found myself face to face with a terrible demonstration of the truth of these histories. Today we need to be aware of the fact that the Dark Ages have been whitewashed. Catholic historians have been granted permission by their church to falsify history in order to hide the awful guilt of the church. The Dark Ages are now painted as an era of chivalry, peace and stability. [16]

However both Catholic and non catholic historians of yesteryear recorded the slaughter of millions for the crime of dissent from Mother church. [17] It may interest the reader to notice the testimony of the well-known Anglican preacher, scholar and author of last century, Dr. Gratton Guinness

“It was in the early part of the year 1870, that I crossed the Pyrenees on my way from France to Spain. On reaching Madrid I went with Mr. William Green, the friend and biographer of Matamoros, to see the newly opened Quernadero. Some workmen employed in cutting a road across the summit of a low hill close to the city had inadvertently dug into a broad bank of ashes, which had been buried for one or two centuries. Mingled with the ashes they had found a large quantity of charred human bones, together with fragments of rusted iron, and melted lead. The spot was speedily verified as the famous Quemadero, or place of burning, one of twelve places where so called “heretics” were annually burned in Spain, during the reign of the Inquisition.”

“I found the road had been cut through the centre of this bank of blackened bones and ashes. The strange stratum displayed seemed about six feet in depth, and covered quite a large area. There, then, exposed to the light of day were the ashes of Spanish martyrs. I stood in silence and looked at the ghastly monument. I had seen before not a little of Romanism on the continent, and in other countries, and had read of the

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multitude of martyrs who had suffered cruel deaths in past centuries at the hand of Spanish priests and inquisitors, on account of their faith In the pure gospel of the grace of God, and their opposition to Popish superstitions and idolatries.”

“There, lying before me were the bones and ashes of Spanish confessors and martyrs who had suffered death at the stake. I could examine, and satisfy myself of their character. I could handle them, and did. Reverently I removed some burnt bones from the general mass, and wrapped them, together with a quantity of ashes, in a Spanish newspaper which I still possess, bearing the date of that day.” ‘History Unveiling Prophecy’ pages 393-397

As the author of ‘Great Controversy’ declared,

“Persecution opened out upon the faithful with greater fury than ever before and the world became a vast battlefield. For hundreds of years the church of Christ found refuge in seclusion and obscurity-the accession of the Roman Church to power marked the beginning of the Dark Ages. As her power increased the darkness deepened. Those were days of peril for the church of Christ. The faithful standard bearers were few indeed. Though the truth was not left without witnesses, yet at times it seemed that error and superstition would wholly prevail, and true religion would be banished from the earth.” Great Controversy, page 54

In this period there was established the most terrible of all engines of the papacy - the Inquisition. The prince of darkness wrought with the leaders of the papal hierarchy. The mangled forms of millions of martyrs cried to God for vengeance upon that apostate power.” Great Controversy, page 59.

FOUR FORMS OF DEATH

Truly, death rode the pale horse and truly ‘the grave followed with him’. Four forms of death are then listed by which the apostate church destroyed dissenters. “With sword and with hunger and with death and with the beasts of the earth.” Notice the fours here. Four horsemen, the fourth part of the earth, and four methods of killing. Four denotes universality and it represents the well nigh total supremacy of the false church in that period of history.

Of the four methods of killing, it lists the sword, hunger, death and the beast of the earth. Death here may denote pestilence. This prediction was literally fulfilled in the first three methods of killing but in regard to “the beasts of the earth” - there seems to be no evidence on record that God’s people were so martyred at that time. However, this does not necessarily mean, that it did not occur.

Dr. Bickersteth gives these four methods of killing a symbolic interpretation. He says “The sword represents war, crusades, in union with the state.” This was literally fulfilled in this period. Great crusades were inspired by the church, and led by the church against millions of dissenters of the time. “Hunger” denotes spiritual hunger through lack of the Word of God. Thirdly, “pestilence” denotes false doctrine and fourthly “beasts of the earth” represent to wolves in sheeps’ clothing” referring of course to the priests and friars of the day.

FOURTH PART OF THE EARTH

“Power was given unto them (death and the. grave) over the fourth part of the earth.”

The church’s influence at that time extended over approximately one quarter of the then known world. There are some who claim that the pale horse period applies to the last days. Unfortunately Babylon’s domination of the last days will not be over a fourth part of the earth - it will be worldwide. “All the world wondered after the Beast,” “All that dwell on the earth shall worship him.” Revelation 13:3,8. Indicating it is a worldwide power. This pale horse only fits the Dark Ages of church supremacy when the noonday of the apostate church was the midnight of the world.

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REASON FOR REIGN OF THE FALSE CHURCH

In the light of these terrible facts of history, why was it that God permitted this reign of Antichrist? Why did Heaven permit such awful tribulation upon his people? This deserves consideration. We suggest at least two reasons. The first reason was to reveal to the on looking universe the true character of Satan's kingdom. Originally God permitted Satan to set up his kingdom on earth in order to reveal to the universe whether Satan's claims were right or not. There they beheld the fearful outworking of Satan's principles in the cruel and bloody history of the false church.

"That gigantic system of religion is a masterpiece of Satan's power, a monument of his efforts to seat himself upon the throne to rule the earth according to his will." Great Controversy, page 50.

The second reason is a sad one but it seems that it was essential. The reason God permitted Babylon to prevail over his people was in order to preserve the Christian faith, to preserve the purity of the gospel - to preserve His church. History affirms the sad fact that affluence corrupts the church and begets apostasy. On the other hand adversity purifies the church and preserves the faith.

This concludes the first section of the seven seals. The four horsemen represent four phases of spiritual warfare.

1. A warfare of righteousness by Christ and his people.
2. A war against the doctrines and standards of God's church.
3. A war against the character and leadership of God's church.
4. A war against the people of God's church.

The final three seals will be dealt with in the next chapter or in the tract entitled "THE FINAL THREE".

APPENDIX

"The Oil And The Wine."

The following statement from the S.O.P. is interpreted by some to mean that it the oil and the wine" represented certain people in the church.

"He who would reform others, must first reform himself. He must obtain the spirit of his Master, and be willing, like him, to suffer reproach, and to practice self-denial. In comparison with the worth of one soul, the whole world sinks into insignificance. A desire to exercise authority, to lord it over God's heritage, will, if indulged, result in the loss of souls. Those who really love Jesus, will seek to conform their own lives to the Pattern, and will labor in his spirit for the salvation of others."

"In order to secure man to himself, and insure his eternal salvation, Christ left the royal courts of heaven, and came to this earth, endured the agonies of sin and shame in men's stead, and died to make him free. In view of the infinite price paid for man's redemption, how dare any professing the name of Christ treat with indifference one of his little ones? How carefully should brethren and sisters in the church guard every word and action, lest they hurt the oil and the wine. How patiently, kindly, and affectionately should they deal with the purchase of the blood of Christ: How faithfully and earnestly should they labor to lift up the desponding and the discouraged! How tenderly should they treat those who are trying to obey the truth, and have no encouragement at home, who have constantly to breathe the atmosphere of unbelief and darkness." 5 Testimonies, page 614-615.

At first glance it appears that "the oil and the wine" is applied to "his little ones", "the desponding and discouraged, those trying to obey the truth and have no encouragement at home". This interpretation of the S.O.P. statement appears to the author to conflict with normal Bible interpretation. If the above is how the S.O.P. uses the phrase, then maybe it is taking it out of context and employing the phrase "in a homiletic manner". On the other hand, could it be that the S.O.P. is warning us to take care of those who are immature, or in discouraging circumstances etc. lest by our lack of sympathy and understanding they be led to look upon the truth of God - the righteousness of Christ and true doctrine - "the oil and wine" - in an

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unfavorable light and give up their faith? This would certainly be “hurting the oil and the wine”. This view would then harmonize with normal Bible interpretation.

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