

The Soon Coming End – Part 10

2 Peter 3:9-13

Revelation 6

As we open these scriptures today, may I remind us again that, yes, when using our human logic alone, most all of the words that we will read in this Bible are mysterious and “incomprehensible”. That is why, as we read and listen to these words, especially such words of prophecy as are given here in this Book of Revelation, it is our need and should be our prayer that the Holy Spirit will fill our minds and our thoughts and provide the “light” that we will need to correctly understand these truths.

And because these particular prophecies in this Book of Revelation are not in an easy-to-follow chronological order of events, I find it necessary to keep going back and reminding myself, and you, of what we understand the order of events to be. And chapter 6 seems to give us an overall kind of framework of order for most of the things that God intends to do during the years of the tribulation.

I'll read those words for us in a moment, so please turn there to Revelation chapter 6. . . . But to reset the stage of what is about to take place, we found in chapter 5 that God the Father was on His throne and was holding forth a “scroll” that was sealed with seven seals. And sealed within this “scroll” is God's plan for all of the things that will take place as the final end of earth is brought to a close.

And Jesus, the only one in heaven and on earth who has the power and the authority to break open the seals of the “scroll” has just taken the “scroll” from His Father's hand. And here in chapter 6, He begins, one by one, to open each of the seals.

And note carefully in these words, that we can have no doubt about whose authority and plans are being carried out. Yes, God will use powerful angels, both good angels, and some very evil demonic angels. And He will also use men against men, national leaders waging wars against one another. But these words are clear for us to understand, every minute detail of this retribution is being carefully orchestrated and carried out by the Lord Jesus Himself.

Follow along with me as I read these words of chapter 6,

1 Then I (John) saw when the Lamb (the Lord Jesus) broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come." 2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. 3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature

saying, "Come." 4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him. 5 When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard something like 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 damage the oil and the wine." 7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." 8 I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. 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. 9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; 10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also. 12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"
(Revelation 6:1-17 (NASB))

A reminder . . . the bible commentators who make it their quest to carefully study and learn about these prophecies and the coming events of the end-times, do often reach conclusions that differ from one another. But thankfully, as a general rule, most of their differences are seldom of a significant nature.

But one point that most bible commentators seem to agree about involves the probable length of time that the "tribulation period" will last, that from the moment the "rapture" takes place and we believers are "raptured" off the earth, until the very final moment in

which the earth as we know it is completely destroyed, will be a period of seven years, those conclusions arrived at because of the oft quoted time-periods of 1260 days and 42 months, with those two time-periods representing a first half and a second half of the tribulation, and the two halves added together making up the seven years.

And again, although these words that we read here in this chapter are a kind of overall framework for most all that will take place over the seven-year period of the tribulation, some of the things mentioned here might already have begun to be put into place.

Here in these words, as Jesus begins to remove seal after seal from this scroll, the horrors of the “soon coming end” are carefully unveiled, beginning here with what has come to be known as the “four horsemen of the apocalypse”, four powerful beings that are sent forth from God to bring great and destructive misery to the whole earth. Listen, as Jesus begins breaking open each of the seals! Seal number 1,

1 Then I (John) saw when the Lamb (the Lord Jesus) broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come." 2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. (Revelation 6:1-2 (NASB))

On this first horse is a powerful being who has a bow, a weapon of war, but he has no arrows. This is believed, by most, to be the “antichrist” who will rise to power in the world immediately following the rapture, and not by force of war, but by acclamation. He has a crown that has been willingly “given” to him by the people of the earth who are crying out for a leader to lead them, to save them from starvation and to protect them, people who are willing to take his “mark”, the 666, and to submit to his demonic control. And so, as verse 2 tells us, this antichrist will be able to go about conquering many of the people of the world without a lot of force and violence. And eventually the whole earth will come under his control.

And then, in verse 3 Jesus opened the second seal and a second horseman is called forth.

3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." 4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him. (Revelation 6:3-4 (NASB))

Before the rapture takes place and perhaps for some time afterwards, as the antichrist begins his rise to power, there will be a relative time of peace on the earth. I have been reminded of the peaceful days of the Reagan years and then carrying on throughout the

1990s. Those really were days of relative peace. Granted, we had the short Gulf War with Iraq in 1990 and 1991, but other than that, there was relative peace. And then came the 9-11 terrorist attack on the Twin Towers. And peace was taken from us. And there has been no peace since.

And that is what this second horse and rider is able to do, to “take peace from the earth”. And while that will certainly take place in a massive worldwide way as the tribulation later begins to escalate, especially during the latter half of the “Great Tribulation”, peace is already being removed from the earth. Death and destruction are becoming commonplace, especially all over the Mid-East. There really is very little peace on this earth right now, and it is getting worse. And that causes me to wonder if this second horseman might already be out there laying the groundwork for his awful work. As these words of prophecy tell us, a great sword is already being wielded, especially in the Mid-East countries, and men are slaying one another. Verse 4 again,
4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him. (Revelation 6:4 (NASB))

And then next, Jesus broke open the third seal. Verse 5,
5 When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard something like 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 damage the oil and the wine." (Revelation 6:5-6 (NASB))

We have been saying that after the rapture takes place, the whole world will be thrown into chaos, business and commerce will be brought to a standstill, food and other necessities of life will quickly go into short supply. The scales mentioned here in verse 5, give indication that food rationing and other kinds of “measuring” out of provisions will take place. Notice also that money will lose its value. This is when the antichrist will fully institute his “mark” of 666 as the only means of buying and selling food and other provisions.

Recall the words in the song, “I Wish We Had All Been Ready”,
“Children died, the days grew cold, a piece of bread would buy a bag of gold, I wish we’d all been ready”. Hunger and starvation will be taking place all over the earth.

Next, here in verse 7, Jesus breaks open the fourth seal.

7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." 8 I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat

on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. 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. (Revelation 6:7-8 (NASB))

This is when violence will begin to escalate all over the earth, most likely beginning during the latter part of the first half of the seven-year tribulation, but then it will really explode during the second half of the tribulation. There will be outbreaks of wars across our world, worse than any other of the world-wars we have known before. And during these wars, there will be no Geneva Convention rules to govern the violence of the wars. The killing will be carried out without any form of pity.

And along with the wars, famines and starvation and plagues will kill as many or more people than does the fighting. Imagine the scale of death spoken about here, over 1/4th of the world population, between one and two billion people will die in a very, very short period of time.

And then in verse 9, Jesus broke open the fifth seal.

9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; 10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also. (Revelation 6:9-11 (NASB))

Here, we see the great number of people who will turn and give their hearts to Christ during the tribulation period, but then will be martyred. Recall that God will call forth 144,000 from the tribes of Israel to become evangelists, prophesying and preaching the gospel to those who were left behind after the rapture, and many, many will turn and receive Christ. But unfortunately, for many of those new converts, they will quickly be killed for their faith.

I confess that I have often pondered how I would respond if my family and I were faced with suffering like this. Would I have the courage and the trust in Christ that would be necessary to go through that kind of awful suffering. I would really like to think so.

And this is the reason why you and I should, this very day, be crying out to anyone who will listen, especially our loved ones, for them to give their hearts to Christ now, before

the rapture, so that they will not have to endure the suffering that will surely come during the tribulation.

Next, here in verse 12, Jesus opens the sixth seal.

12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:12-17 (NASB))

Many bible commentators have said of these events, that this destruction will probably come from nuclear bombs and missiles, with wars breaking out all over the world. And yes, to some degree that will be true, but look carefully beginning in verse 16,

16 and they (the kings and other leaders of the earth) said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:16-17 (NASB))

Again, yes, death and destruction will probably begin with the wars of men against men. But here, the truth is clear. The worst of this devastation will come directly from the hand of God the Father and from the "wrath of the Lamb". As unbelievable as it may sound, the stars really will actually break apart and fall upon the earth, causing devastation beyond anything we can imagine. And with the earth itself beginning to break apart, this will mark the beginning of the final end.

The Lord willing, we'll pick back up here next week. For today, may we close with these final words of this chapter 6,

16 and they (the kings and other leaders of the earth) said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:16-17 (NASB))