

# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the word of God

# 2020

## JUNE

## Revelation- Victory Book Chapters 1-11

### *Introducing*

Revelation 6 compared with  
the Lord's Tribulation discourse

### *From Study Groups*

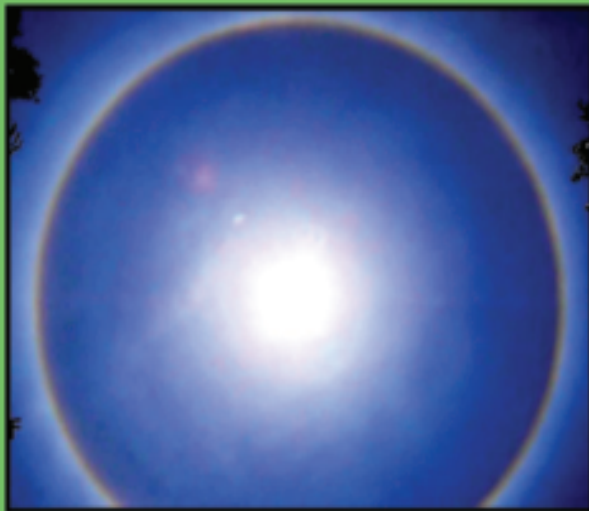
The four horsemen, slain witnesses  
and cosmic upheaval (Rev. 6)

### *Comments*

The extent of the Day of the Lord  
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Churches of God in  
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*Revelation 4:3*

## REVELATION 6 COMPARED WITH THE LORD'S TRIBULATION DISCOURSE

The following review of the prophecies, or summaries thereof, given by the Lord Jesus and recorded in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 is given here to show that the prophecies come in the same order as the opening of the seals in Revelation 6. This helps us to confirm the view that Rev. 6 also speaks of the time of the great tribulation and the day of the Lord, and helps us rejoice in the consistency of Scripture and that 'we have the word of prophecy made more sure' (2 Pet. 1:19 RV).

### *The counterfeit Christ*

Mat. 24:5: 'Many shall come in my name, saying, "I am the Christ" and shall lead many astray.'

Rev. 6:2: The man on the white horse is not the Christ of 19:11-16 but a false Christ.

### *Wars and rumours of wars*

Mat. 24:6-7: 'And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars ... nation shall rise against nation. ' .

Rev. 6:4: To the man on the red horse 'it was given to take peace from the earth.'

### *Famines*

Mat. 24:7: 'There shall be famines.'

Rev. 6:6-7: The man on the black

horse had a scale in his hand, and a voice speaks, implying food shortages.

### *Deaths*

Mat. 24:7 with Luke 21:11 refers to famines, earthquakes and pestilence.

Rev. 6:8: To the men on or associated with the pale horse was given authority 'to kill with sword, and with famine and with pestilence' (RVM).

### *Martyrdom*

Mat. 24:9: 'Then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation and shall kill you.'

Rev. 6:9: After the four seals and the four horsemen comes the fifth seal when John sees 'the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.'

### *Upheaval*

Mat. 24:16 with Luke 21:21-25: 'flee unto the mountains ... there shall be signs in sun and moon and stars ... and the roaring of the sea and the billows.'

Rev. 6:12-16: 'the stars of the heaven fell ... the heaven was removed ... every mountain and island were removed. And they say to the mountains and to the rocks, "fall on us and hide us."' .

*P.D.*

## *From Study Groups . . .*

### THE FOUR HORSEMEN, SLAIN WITNESSES AND COSMIC UPHEAVAL (Revelation 6)

**From Aberdeen:** *The rider of the white horse* (6:2) can be identified as the coming world leader, who is the Antichrist (13:4 and 1 John 2:18). In support of this view, the setting of the four horsemen is in the context of the Great Tribulation, of which the Book of Revelation presents many details. The fact that the rider on the white horse comes forth conquering and to conquer suggests that the message of the white horse is linked, concurrently, with the advent of the other three horses. What do these four horses convey to us? In summary they convey a picture of harsh authority (white horse), violence and war (red horse), impoverishment of the masses (black horse), persecution, famine and pestilence (pale horse) (Comment 1).

We are approaching the day of our Lord's coming for His church. The message of the four horsemen is becoming clearer, as governments across the world exert increasing control over their populations. The wave of stricter control measures to counter such things as terrorism, pandemics and mass migration is preparing the way for the rider on the white horse, to whom will be given the reins of power. The revelation to John tells of how this conquering one 'was given a crown'. The Greek word here for crown is *stephanos*, which is in keeping with this coming conqueror having a bow [cp. Aberkenfig, para. 2—*Eds*], the bow being symbolic of military strength which in turn would be supportive of his conquering character and mission (Rev. 6:2).

The black horse and rider with the scales has been helpfully explained in *B.S.* 1972, Melbourne paper (p. 93) as follows:

'It was suggested that the rider brings famine to the earth and that the high price of basic foods means starvation for the masses; whereas the oil and the wine are not touched, possibly indicating that the wealthy are able to survive on the luxuries of life'. This suggested interpretation of a future world of scarcity is a remarkable insight from our Australian Bible students of well-nigh fifty years ago.

*James Johnson*

**From Aberkenfig:** Following on from the worship in Chapter 5, we now have judgements. God is long-suffering but eventually He must judge sin. John now describes the first half of Daniel's 70th week (Dan. 9:27), that seven-year period of tribulation foretold by the Lord Himself in Mat. 24 [cp. Comment 1 para. 2].

When the Lord (the Lamb) opens the first seal, John hears one of the four living creatures say with a voice of thunder, 'Come', and he sees a white horse. The rider is given a bow and a crown. We note that he wasn't given any arrows, indicating that he has conquered the nations peacefully. His crown here (Gk. *stephanos*) is not a crown of regal authority but a victor's crown. This indicates that it is not the Lord but the impostor, the Antichrist. After what we call 'the Rapture', the Antichrist will declare false peace and security and make his pact with the Jews (1 Thes. 5:2-3 and 2 Thes. 2). The crown the Lord wears in Revelation 19:11-12 is the Greek word *diadēma*, a tiara, and He has 'many diadems' (cp. Comment 5).

The second seal is opened by the Lamb, and the scene changes to a red horse (vv.3-4), indicative of war, terror and carnage. War has been a part of man's nature since sin entered Eden. The Antichrist's conquest begins in peace, but he soon exchanges the empty bow for a great sword. This was not the *rhomphaia* (the two-handed, two-edged sword) as we have in 2:12 and 1:16, but a dagger-like *machaira* of assassination, uprising and warfare (see Bauer and Danker, eds., 'A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament' pp. 943-944), suggesting it could be a reference to the 'end times depicted by Christ when He said: 'ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars' (Mat. 24:6-7 RV). God is not responsible for the lawless deeds of men and nations, but He is in control.

The third seal is opened, with the third living creature crying 'Come', and the scene changes to a black horse. A progression can be seen—after warfare comes famine and poverty. The rider has a balance (scales) in his hand. This is borne out by the 'voice from among the four living creatures' declaring the shortage of wheat and barley. At much-inflated prices, these are necessary for people's sustenance. Oil and wine, not vital to life, are still available. It brings before us the occasion when God warned His people (Lev. 26:26) saying because of their sins there would be a shortage of bread. To 'eat bread by weight' is a Jewish saying that indicates food is scarce. Ordinarily a penny (denarius), a labourer's daily wage, would have purchased eight to twelve measures of wheat: a measure of about two pints being sufficient for one person's daily requirements, but inadequate to feed his family (cp. Lam. 5:10; Deut. 32:24). Whilst at the same time the rich are enjoying plenty of wine and oil, is it any wonder that the Antichrist will eventually control the economy with a rationing of food to the hungry masses?

The fourth seal is opened and John sees the pale horse. The Greek word is *chlōros*, 'a yellowish green'. This pictures the terrifying scene of illness and death moving across the earth (see Bauer and Danker pp.1085-1086) and hell (Hades) follows with him. These two are given authority over one quarter of the earth to kill with the sword, famine, death and wild beasts. Death claims the body and Hades the soul.

What the exact time delay is between those events, we are not told. We know they will occur somewhere in the middle of the Tribulation, when the Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel [see Comment 1]. The question could be asked, 'How could God allow such things to happen?' God is absolutely fair and just in punishing evil. God allows evil in the world, but He is not its author. He holds back the wickedness of humanity, but there will come a time when this restraint will be broken and disaster pours forth like a flood. We compare this with Joel 2:30-31; 3:15, and Isaiah 13:9-10; 34:2-4, when the whole scene is one of chaos, and the words of the psalmist in 94:1-5 can be applied: 'O God to whom vengeance belongeth ... How long ...?' They break in pieces Thy people, O LORD'. Yet God is still in control. The words of our Lord on the way to His crucifixion (Luke 23:30) are almost mirrored in Rev. 6:15-16, 'For the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?'

*Bill Paterson*

**From Buckhaven:** In Chapter 6 the Lamb opens the seals and future history unfolds. Four horses and riders are revealed (see note below), harbingers of war, famine, pestilence, disaster and death.

*First, a white horse signifying power and victory* In the Godhead we have a holy Trinity, but in the end times we have an unholy trinity: Satan, the Antichrist and the false prophet. The rider on the white horse has a crown (rule) and a bow (power). Power is given him to have dominion. His crown is the victor's crown [Gk. *stephanos*—a band or wreath, here probably of metal; cp. gold in 4:4—*M.A.*]. We suggest this represents the Antichrist coming to power and is not to be confused with the Lord when He comes on the white horse in the day of vengeance, with many diadems upon His head (Rev. 19).

*Second, a fiery red horse* Power is given to this person to take peace from the earth, having a sword. Now we have conflict and wars. John heard the Lord in His discourses speak of these times; now John, in the Spirit, is seeing things that must come to pass.

*Third, the black horse seems to indicate evil* Now we see weights and measures, famine and scarcity of food. A penny (for one measure of wheat or three measures of barley) was equivalent to a day's wages in John's lifetime. However, oil and wine are plentiful. We see great hardship for the masses. Daily living will be extremely difficult.

*The fourth horse is 'pale'* (Gk. *chōros* green, sallow), a sickly pallor. Death and Hades are closely associated. Power is given them to bring death to a quarter of the earth's population.

*The fifth seal* Those martyred for the testimony (v.9) are given white robes signifying victory and palms signifying triumph. They are told to rest (repose) until the fullness of the divine purpose is ripe.

*Finally, the sixth seal* Stars fall from heaven with great disturbances on the earth. This we believe to be the beginnings of ‘the great day of the LORD’ (Joel 2:31; Rev. 16:17-21).

*Note* Zechariah 6 depicts horses of similar description [Comment 2]. In Zechariah God is dealing with Israel and the nations. The lowly myrtle tree symbolizes Israel. The horsemen speak of divine activity. Israel is laid aside for a season. In Chapters 1 and 2, the horns and the smiths indicate the overthrow of Israel’s enemies; the measuring line, the future prosperity and glory of Israel with the wall of fire round about: Israel cleansed and the priesthood restored. Zechariah’s far-reaching visions take us to ‘the man whose name is the Branch’ (6:12), who shall build the temple and be a king upon his throne. He also speaks of a third part of a remnant who will be brought through the fire and purified in the time of Jacob’s trouble (Zech. 13:9; Jer. 30:7).

*Martin Notman*

**From Cromer:** *The horsemen* To whom is the command ‘Come’ addressed? The additional words ‘and see’ (Rev. 6:1 RV footnote, NKJV) are not in the best manuscripts, and should not be included. They give the impression that the words were addressed to John, but they were not: they were addressed to the horsemen [Comment 3]. Each of the four horsemen had a message of death, chaos and destruction. We should note that, although each man of power would think that his own authority or power had achieved his objective, the phrase ‘there was given unto him’ recurs, showing that all authority is in the hands of God.

*The slain witnesses* Those who had suffered death for the word of God expostulated with Him, saying ‘How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?’ (6:10 RV); but they were assured that they still had to wait a little time, and their status was marked out by the award of white robes. An incidental assurance to us is that they, the dead in Christ, were in full communication both with God and with each other [Comment 4].

*Cosmic destruction (6:12-17)* How literally are these words to be taken? In apocalyptic language John describes God’s judgement on sinners—it is truly terrifying, yet caves and rocks are still available to be used as hiding places (see Comment 13 in *B.S.* April, 2020). This is ‘the wrath of the Lamb’, the one who has done everything possible for our salvation, but whose goodwill cannot now shield from condign punishment. The Lamb, the symbol of meekness, will overthrow every power that vaunts itself against Him.

*Peter Hickling*

**From Greenock:** *Come to pass hereafter* The events described from Chapter 4 onwards obviously take place after the Revelation was written. It seems certain that they take place during Daniel's 70th week which is the seven year 'gap' between the Rapture and the Lord's triumphal return. We may have had pandemics such as Spanish Flu in 1920, Ebola in 2014, and now Corona; but these will pale into insignificance when the trauma of the horsemen hits planet earth.

The identity of the first is disputed by some Bible commentators. The white horse suggests a victory parade and the crown a royal seal of approval. The rider might have carried a sword, unsheathed with the point upward, which is the pose of the victor after combat. The bow is a distance weapon and is not suitable for firing from a moving horse. It would be perceived as a threat which is still some way off. He has to overcome, but the details of who, where, how and when are not given. At the end of the chapter the Lamb is located with the One seated on the throne. The suggestion that this is the Antichrist is more fitting. It seems unlikely that it is the Lord Jesus. In Chapter 19 we are told clearly there that He is the rider on the white horse and we are given the purpose of His appearing. However, here we should note that he was given a crown at the start of his mission: he was not wearing it by virtue of who he was, but rather it is a badge of office [Comment 5].

The rider on the red horse is charged with taking away peace. Currently we see this in the shoppers' behaviour over shortages at supermarkets. So far, we have not seen much in terms of physical violence, but it may soon arise as tensions increase around us.

The black horse brings news of severe famine. The equivalent of a day's wage would only provide a subsistence diet.

Death completes the vision. It is only with the advent of satellite images of the surface of the earth that man has been able to calculate the ratio of land to sea. There is still a lack of precision in interpreting the evidence but 21% is quoted. Nearly two millennia ago John is given the figure as 25% [Comment 6].

We can observe the chaos caused today by the pandemic and we can be confident that our Lord's return is near.

*Steve Henderson*

**From Halifax:** *Four horsemen, slain witnesses, cosmic upheaval* Matthew Henry (*Commentary on the Whole Bible*) warns: 'Yet we are not here told what was written in the book, but what John saw in figures enigmatical and hieroglyphic; and it is not for us to pretend to know "the times and seasons which the Father has put in his own power"'. Nevertheless, Larkin submits that the scroll of Rev. 6 is the 'Book that Daniel was told to seal up'—Daniel 12:4 (*Dispensational Truth*,

*Rev. Ed.* 1920, p.134). It may also be pointed out that the opening of the seven-sealed scroll closely parallels the end time symbolism of Jesus' Olivet discourse (Mat. 24:1-35; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-33), in which He provides much detail [Comment 7].

*The horsemen* With the opening of the first seal there was 'the noise of thunder' (Rev. 6:1), and one of the living creatures said, 'Come'. This emphatic call (vv. 1,3,5,7) is not addressed to John or to Christ, but rather to the horsemen in each case. Riding upon a white horse, the first horseman was equipped with a bow and came forth to conquer. That horseman is not representative of Christ, but rather of the Antichrist. When the Lamb opens the next seal, John sees a second horseman riding out on a fiery red steed, speaking of war and bloodshed. To him is given a great sword and the power to remove peace from the earth. A rider on a black horse comes out at the opening of the third seal. He holds balances (v.5) bringing with him the scarcities of famine. The fourth seal is opened to reveal a fourth rider. He rides a pale horse. This cadaverous colour fits well with the name of the rider—'Death', is followed by Hades (v.8 RV). 'For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. But all these things are the beginning of travail' (Mat. 24:7-8).

*Robert J. Butler*

**From Mount Forest:** There is nothing to suggest the awful consequences of the opening of the seals were first read out from the scroll, or even reflected the content of the scroll. We do not need to understand the scroll of Chapter 6 as though it contained only prophecies of doom. What if this scroll describes the multitude of eternal blessings secured by the sacrifice of the Lamb, so great that this scroll also needs to be written on both sides? [Comment 8] Yes, those blessings must be preceded by a display of divine righteousness, and indeed wrath, marked by the opening of the seals. But those preceding judgments are an outworking of John 5:22, a fact well understood by the apostles (Acts 10:42). It is not hard, physically, to break a seal. The context here shows that the difficulty was in finding someone with sufficient authority. Although at points Revelation addresses the vengeance of God and the vindication of the saints, all this leads to a glorious outcome. Although God would have a perfect right to exterminate every living thing on earth, and every heavenly being, the grandeur of His mind is not so restricted. Rather, the Lord's recorded words in Luke 24:26 reveal a broader purpose, and Revelation hints in this direction in passages like Revelation 5:12-14; 7:10-17; the 'Hallelujahs!' of Chapter 19; and the delights of 21-22. These things surely are among the matters that 'angels desire to look into' (1 Pet. 1:10-12; Rev. 5:3-4).

As to the four horsemen depicted here in Rev. 6, it appears appropriate to align our interpretation of the opening of the seals with the Lord's words in Mat.



24, culminating in the return of the Son of Man. As the Lamb will indeed appear on a white horse in final victory (Rev. 19:11), so the counterfeit imitation will earlier be seen on earth in the opening phase leading into the period of increasing tribulations. The horsemen are likely personifications of evil forces allowed by divine edict to do their work (cp. John 13:27), to inflict harm. It is interesting to note in Rev. 6:8 the necessary statement 'Hades followed him', and note also 1:18. Death may come as a result of the depicted evil horseman, but those who die are all inevitably under the judicial control of the righteous Lamb; they are confined under His jurisdiction pending judgment; Satan never has power over, or in, Hades.

*Geoff Hydon*

**From Podagatlapalli:** *The four horsemen, slain witnesses and cosmic upheaval*  
The four horsemen represent territorial conquest, civil war, famine and fatal disasters respectively. These will happen one after another on the earth (cp. 6:8 and Ezek. 14:21) so that when the fifth seal is broken, a company of martyrs appears, begging the sovereign God to avenge them. The sixth seal is like a reply to their cry. It suggests a terrible revolution: all established authorities are overthrown. How strange those words sound together: 'the wrath of the Lamb' (v.16; cp. Ps. 2:12)!

The horses represent God's judgment of people's sin and rebellion. God is directing human history, even using His enemies unknowingly to accomplish His purposes. The four horses are a foretaste of the final judgment yet to come. Each of the four horses is a different colour. Some say the white horse represents victory and its rider is Christ (because Christ later rides to victory on a white horse—Rev. 19:11). But since the other horses relate to judgment and destruction, this white horse and rider may be the Antichrist who rules the world by deception for a short time. The other coloured horses represent different kinds of judgment: red for warfare and bloodshed, black for famine and death, pale for Death and Hades. It is not clear whether Hades was on a separate horse or merely went along with death. These horsemen are given control of one fourth of the earth, indicating that God is still limiting His judgment—it is not yet complete. With these judgments there is still time for people to turn to Christ and away from their sin. In this case the limited punishment not only demonstrates God's evaluation of sin, but that He is also merciful and loving, giving people another opportunity to turn to Him before He brings final judgment [see Comment 10].

The altar represents the altar of sacrifice in the temple where animals were offered to atone for sins. Instead of the altar, John saw the souls of martyrs who had died for preaching God's word. These martyrs were told that still more would lose their lives for their belief in Christ (6:11). In the face of warfare, famine, persecution and death, Christians will be called to stand firmly for what they

believe. Only those who endure to end will be rewarded by God (Mat. 13:13) [Comment 9].

The martyrs are eager for God to bring justice to the earth, but they are told to wait. Those who suffer and die for their faith will not be overlooked, nor do they die in vain. Rather, they will be singled out by God for special honour. We may wish for justice immediately as these martyrs did, but we must be patient. God works according to His own timetable and He promises justice. No suffering for the sake of God's kingdom, however, is wasted effort.

The prayers of the saints here are in keeping with the 'imprecatory Psalmist' who calls for God's judgment upon the Psalmist's enemies. In both cases, the concern is for God to vindicate His name and His suffering people. Here, in 6:10 and in 8:4-5, the judgment of God is revealed in the seals, trumpets and bowls, in answer to the prayers of the saints.

*B.V. Prasada Rao*

**From Ravulapalem:** *Earth upheaval, stars displacement* These displacements of sun, moon and stars (vv.12-17) can be compared with Mat. 24:29. These changes will happen at the time of the Great Tribulation. Jesus spoke about this period in Mat. 24:21. It will occur at the time of opening the first five seals. The changes occur before the coming of the Day of the Lord (Acts 2:19-20). The Day of the Lord and the Great Tribulation are not the same.

The day of the Lord will bring the anger and vengeance of God on the people of the world (vv.10, 16-17; 1 Thes. 5:2-3; Is. 13:6-13 and 1 Pet. 3:10). The Great Tribulation period is the time when Satan and wicked people pour violence and anger on the people of this world and especially those who turn to God in end times. Between the Great Tribulation period and the day of the Lord there will be changes in sun, moon and the stars. It is important to recognise this truth in understanding the book of Revelation [Comment 10].

When the sixth seal was opened by the Lord there prevailed a great earthquake (v.12). Also see 16:18; Is. 24:19-20; Heb. 12:26 as well the shaking of the earth—Ex. 19:18; the trembling of the sky—Hag. 2:6. As John sees the sun turned black and the moon turned to blood red, the stars fall to Earth, the sky recedes like a scroll, and every mountain and island is removed from its place so that even the kings cannot hide their faces from the Lord and from the wrath of the Lamb. From this wrath Jesus alone saves believers in this present day of grace (1 Thes. 1:10; 5:9). Hallelujah!

*S.J.M. Edward*

**From Surulere:** *The upheaval of earth* Few sights on earth both fascinate and terrify mankind more than a drastic change in the natural order of things. Despite man's achievements in science, technology, medicine and several other areas, he

is often perplexed and humbled by the forces of nature. Job, no doubt, stood in awe at the Lord's displaying of His almighty power in nature when He queried him thus: 'Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: "Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me: Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His?"' (Job 40:6-9 NKJV).

The scenes of devastation which greeted John's eyes upon the opening of the sixth seal must have been unnerving. These events are not symbolic but are divine insight into a future terrifying display of God's divine power and authority over the earth and celestial bodies: 'Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same and Your years will have no end' (Ps. 102: 25-27).

Some might question how a God of love and compassion could unleash such carnage on His creatures, on the heels of the four apocalyptic horsemen, to bring about a great earthquake, the blackening of the sun, bloodying of the moon, falling of the stars, receding of the sky as a scroll and moving of every mountain and island out of its place (Rev. 6:12-14). Of a truth, as Jeremiah declared: 'For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men' (Lam. 3:33). Nevertheless, at this time the dispensation of grace is over; the Great Tribulation, the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7) is at its peak, and now it is only whoever calls on the name of the Lord, literally, shall be saved (Rom. 10:13). As in the dispensation of grace, so also then it is acceptance of the finished work of Christ on Calvary that opens a pathway into everlasting life.

The kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man (v.15) will have refused to call on the name of the Lord God or to acknowledge the supremacy of the Lamb. Thus, when the tokens of His creative powers are shown in these upheavals, their reaction is still not to embrace Him but rather to seek to hide (v.16).

The Lord Jesus remains the focus for all ages as the Creator, Saviour and soon-coming Judge: 'All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made' (John 1:3); 'For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers' (Col. 1:16-17).

Scenes such as are unveiled with the opening of the sixth seal reinforce the need for us to appreciate greatly the salvation we now enjoy as we see clearly the picture of the great difficulties ahead for our world. Peter puts it aptly: 'Therefore,

beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless ...' (2 Pet. 3:14).

*Frederick F. Ntido*

## COMMENTS

**1. (Aberdeen and others):** *The four riders and their timing* One offers suggestively that, in a passage where only one rider is named, we are not expected to identify the first three as particular persons. The fourth rider and his follower are abstracts—Death and Hades (though of course very real), the focus being therefore on the character of what all four do or cause, further made vivid by crown, bow, scales, or sword (cp. *B.S.* 1972, p. 92, Comment 3). 'Introducing' sets out the closely parallel order in the Lord's prophecy in Matthew 24, where His words, "All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. Then ... And then ..." (vv.8-10) suggest a phased sequence of trends or events, probably with some overlap. This supports reading Revelation 6:1-8 as also a series of phases: ruthless power-grabbing, leading into war, which brings famine; and lastly more killing with the sword, starvation (i.e. famine that kills), disease and predation in its train.

If as some say the actions of the four riders and follower are concurrent, how is the slaughter (Gk. *sphazō*, 'slay or slaughter') caused by the wielder of the great sword (v.4) distinguished from the vast amount of killing by the sword of Death and Hades? Overlapping phases could occur within the seven years of Daniel's 70th week, beginning with the rise by conquest to global power of the Satan-backed Antichrist indeed. Most of this might be achieved by an overwhelming show of force (the bow of verse 2), though at times he might need to use it. The climax of Seals 1-4 in the grim work of Death and Hades may belong in the second half of Daniel's week, but we can be sure that the Seal 6 events in 6:12-17 occur at its close, as J. Miller reasons in his *Notes*, *Hayes Press*, pp. 670-671. The point suggested above is that in our passage John does not identify the first rider he sees: it may not yet be revealed to him then that this conqueror will prove to be the Beast of 13:1, the Antichrist whose spirit he warned about in 1 John 2:18.

*M.A.*

**2. (Buckhaven):** *The horses in Zechariah 6* (a) There is indeed similarity with the horses in Rev. 6, but the bay (RV) or dappled ones (NAS, NIV, ESV) are not pale green; and they are paired in chariots. This suggests they are like the four riders in Zech. 1, making survey of the nations (1:11), but the chariots show urgency (6:9). In 6:8 the chariot returning from the north has reported to the angel (through whom the Lord speaks) with news that has given Him rest, because men of the captivity have now come from Babylon to help in the service or rebuilding of God's house (6:10-11). (b) Friends have clearly added this valuable note to show how Rev. 6 depicts a stage in God's overall purposes, while He has His eye of love

trained on the purifying of Israel until their time for deliverance. Thus, the horses of Rev. 6 go out in stark contrast to the survey teams of Zech. 1 and 6.

M.A.

**3. (Cromer):** While textual evidence favours the omission of 'and see' in one sense it is irrelevant to distinguish between the two translations as it is the sight of the four horsemen coming into John's vision which is the point of importance.

R.B.F.

**4. (Cromer):** The souls who cry for the Lord's vengeance are not those who are the 'dead in Christ' of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, who are already 'with the Lord' having bodies of glory like His (Phil. 3:21). They are experiencing eternal rest and joy. The ones referred to here are those who have been martyred during the first part of the tribulation period for proclaiming God's word and holding fast the testimony of the coming Prince, the Lord Jesus, and the kingdom He will establish (Mat. 24:8-14; cp. Acts 5:31). They were to be at rest in the assurance that their fellow-servants, who would undergo the same ordeal as they had, this time during the second part of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, the 'great tribulation', would finish their course of service for God their Master (Rev. 7:13-14; 6:10; Mat.24:31).

R.B.F.

Are Cromer friends not raising the interesting point that if the martyrs under the altar (Rev. 6:9) communicate both with God and with each other after death, why would believers who die before the Rapture not have the same ability? (In support of R.B.F.—those who are 'slain for the word of God and for the testimony they had borne' (ESV) are believers in Christ of whom the Word speaks, but they cannot be in the Church the Body of Christ, since those have been resurrected in transformed bodies and are already with Him, whereas the martyrs under the altar are significantly called 'souls'. See *B.S.* 1972, pp.81,93.)

M.A.

**5. (Greenock and others):** Scholars show that the *stephanos* was awarded for victory in contests or recognition of service to the state, before its exalted use in the crowns of 4:4 and 2:10. Thus in 6:2 there may be an element of political posturing and manoeuvring in this rider's strategy along with gaining control of armaments (see Comment 1 on the bow as show of force). That it was given from the outset to the first rider, though part of God's overrule, may also signal permission to conquer. The *royal* crown was the *diadēma*, which in finest form was a band of gold that could be multiple, thus showing several kingships. See also references to Gk. *stephanos* in other papers.

M.A.

**6. (Greenock):** 'The earth' in Rev. 6:8 could also be taken to mean the total population of the earth, in the same way that 'the world' in John 3:16 means the world of all mankind.

*J.J.*

The Greek word *gē* can stand for the earth as land/ground area in full, or a particular part of it, or encompassing both land and water.

*R.B.F.*

**7. (Halifax):** But Larkin is more circumspect later (and rightly so). In his chart of *Daniel and Revelation Compared*, between pages 139 and 140, he states that 'the book that Daniel was told to "seal up" was descriptive of the "time of trouble" or "tribulation period", and thus runs parallel with the "seven sealed book" of the book of Revelation'.

*P.D.*

**8. (Mount Forest):** The hypothesis that the very specific details which accompany the opening of each of the seven seals, are not directly related to the content of the scroll, has no support from Scripture, nor is there evidence to support the idea that the seven-sealed scroll contains any reference to future blessings.

On the contrary, the sequence of events recorded by John very obviously implies a connection between the opening of the seals, the judgements that follow, and the scroll, including its contents. If this were not so, surely this would be clearly stated. The new song, sung by the living creatures and the twenty-four elders in Revelation 5:9 explains that the Lamb is uniquely qualified to take the book and open its seals, because He was slain and shed His blood to pay the redemption price for people of every nation. Thus He earned the right to judge all who reject Him. Your reference to John 5:22 supports this: 'the Father ... has given all judgement to the Son.' Thankfully, we are agreed that, (as one mighty preacher put it): 'The hand that was pierced with the nail, will either sign the pardon or sign the sentence.'

*J.J.*

**9. (Podagatlapalli):** While that is true, and, as other contributors point out, will be on the basis of the finished work of Christ, only 'he that endures to the end ... shall be saved' (Mat. 24:13) 'and except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved' (24:22). The characteristics of the time set out in 24:9-12 will make enduring intensely hard, although initially they will not be as widespread as they will be later.

*P.D.*

Harry King (teacher and evangelist with Churches of God) helpfully pointed out in one of his addresses, that 'enduring to the end' and 'being saved' in Mat. 24:13,22 have to do with being saved from the persecution of the Beast. It does

not mean that a person who has put their trust in Jesus can be eternally lost because they fail to endure the end

*J.J.*

This is consistent with the point made by R. Armstrong in his article on 'The Great Tribulation' in *Needed Truth* 1970, p.114. The Lord's words 'He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved' (Mat. 24:13) are significant. The endurance he referred to is physical, and applies to those who will escape from the man of sin and his evil forces. The word 'endure' is from the Greek word *hupmenō*, which means to stay under or persevere.

*P.D.*

There can be no doubt that a person who has accepted the Saviour will never be lost eternally—John 10:27-29 being just one passage that is often quoted in this connection. The Lord Jesus, answering the disciples' questions about the future in Matthew 24:3-14 (see also Luke 21:7), speaks of 'the gospel of the kingdom', which has different features from the gospel of 'the day of grace' when repentance and faith alone guarantee the receiving, as a free gift, eternal life (Acts 20:21; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 6:2b). When the church the body of Christ is taken to glory at the coming of the Lord, the Holy Spirit will work in a different way from now, reverting to His *modus operandi* in lives of faith before His coming at Pentecost and permanent residence in believers (see 2 Thes. 2:6-7; Acts 2:2-4, 33, 38; John 14:16-17; 16:13-14; Eph. 1:13-14; see also *B.S.* 2018, p.131).

The gospel of the kingdom will be preached initially by the 144,000 Israelites mentioned in Revelation 7:5-8 (see also 14:3-5) and their message of trusting in the coming King, the Messiah, and who will bring summary judgement to a sinful world, will be one requiring faith and 'endurance to the end' which will involve suffering and persecution at the hands of the Adversary, the great dragon and his minion, the 'beast' (Rev. 12:3,7,9; 13:1,4,7). No one will be 'saved' from the harassment and terror-reign of this vile personification of evil. Resisting the pressure of having to take the mark of the beast will be a real test of faith (Mat. 24:9-13; Luke 21:12; Rev. 13:16-17; 14:11). See also *B.S.*, 2018, pp. 128-129 & 176.

*R.B.F.*

**10. (Ravulapalem):** It is perhaps better to be less definitive about the timing of the Day of the Lord since it will come as a thief (2 Pet. 3:10) and doubtless overlap the great tribulation. It may be best to view the entire period following the Rapture up to and including the Millennium and the final judgments as comprising the day of the Lord since the scriptures referring to it are so widespread and even more so when those referring to 'that day' or the 'great day' are included. As Cromer friends point out the phrase 'there was given unto him' (each horseman) recurs, showing that all authority is in the hands of God during the tribulation period.

*P.D.*

Two questions, with one answer covering both, from *Needed Truth* 1955, p. 44, shed further light:

*Questions ...*

What is meant by 'the last day' in John 6:54 and is the 'day of God' the same as the 'day of the Lord'?

... *and Answer* The last day is not an ordinary day, but 'the day of the Lord' which is associated with the Lord's return to earth, and will continue for more than 1,000 years, for it is in that day that the heavens shall pass away (2 Pet. 3:10), and it closes with the judgement of the Great White Throne. Following this is 'the day of God' (2 Pet.3:12), 'the day of eternity' (2 Pet.3:18. R.V.M.).

*J.J.*

## *Feature*

### CHURCHES OF GOD IN THE BOOK OF THE ACTS

#### **First Century Events**

The early verses of Acts 1 are of supreme importance as they convey the master-plan of the triune God in investing the Lord's chosen band of apostles with the pattern of divine service. He would be with them for a period of well over a month, carefully explaining His own role in keeping the closest interest in their work, with the divine Spirit performing His duty in empowering them for witness to the truth of the kingdom of God. We see this put into practice on the day of Pentecost, when the word was preached so effectively by the apostles that thousands were saved, then baptised, and added together in testimony with the apostles and faithful womenfolk who had travelled at times with the Lord in His journeys, supplying victuals for the needs of His retinue, and also members of the Lord's family circle (1:12-14). They pressed on, fulfilling the necessity of continuing steadfastly in maintaining doctrinal purity ('the apostles' teaching'), displaying 'togetherness' in united testimony ('the fellowship'), worship (the breaking of the bread'), and assembly prayer gatherings ('the prayers').

Later on, we find that through the scattering of the seed of the Word in corporate witness, the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased numerically and a great company of those who officiated in temple duties embraced the teaching of the kingdom of God, and are described as 'being obedient to the faith', thereby finding a valued place in and becoming part of the '*The Church*' and the '*Churches of God*', a collective noun, comprising the number of churches of God linked together in testimony at that time (Acts 6:7; 9:31).



## **Our Identity**

Those people then who were reached by divine grace and were obedient to God's call to His way of service were 'disciples of the Lord' as mentioned in Acts 9:1, against whom Saul of Tarsus was bitterly opposed. He actively sought to gag and imprison as many as he possibly could. They were also known as having affiliation to those who were now identified by the term 'the Way', an expression we come across quite a few times in the book of the Acts (see 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24: 14, 22). This may have come about as a result of the Lord referring to Himself as 'the Way', or perhaps more likely, from the crux of their messages to the multitudes, which became known as 'the way of salvation', or alternatively 'the way of God' (cp. 16:17; 18:26). They were determined to follow the Lord by aligning their lives to His teaching, and in so doing some of them would ultimately pay a heavy personal price.

## **Apostolic Authority and Revelation**

One of the vital passages of the Bible as far as rule and government in churches of God is concerned is found in Acts Chapter 20, where Paul has summoned the elders of the church of God in Ephesus to his location in Miletus. He is still avidly at the forefront of evangelisation and instructs his fellow-elders to be aware of their personal responsibilities and probity of character, and then launches into his own life of commitment, since conversion, to his Master's cause, saying from a clear conscience, 'For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God (v.27). This turn of phrase, 'the whole counsel of God' has equivalence to the other expressions we have looked at, viz. 'the kingdom of God' and 'the faith'. It is nothing less than the complete teaching of the Lord for New Testament times.

How overwhelming is the statement that Paul makes of the Lord's death and blood shedding having the purpose of bringing into existence the church / churches of God, in which He would find such pleasure, with His own demonstrating their love for Him through obedience to His word! Those in churches of God are called 'the flock'. They are together in service under the ownership of the Chief Shepherd (see 1 Pet. 5:2-5). Paul foresaw, through revelation, that difficult times would soon arrive, with grievous wolves, in effect rapacious overseers, seeking greater prominence and exerting pernicious influence on God's flock (Acts 20:29-30). What sadness and deprivation was to follow!

How grateful we should be that nearing the end of the nineteenth century there was, in God's mercy and grace, the recovery of divine truth, when godly men and women felt they had to separate themselves from companies of believers, having seen the truth of their ground for gathering together for worship in the service for God was not on the basis of their membership of the body of Christ, but as obedient disciples of the Lord; the need for the fellowship of

assemblies as opposed to autonomy; the requirement of collective rule and government in a united elderhood; and adherence to the distinctive truths of the church of God, the house of God, and the kingdom of God.

### **Our 'Standing' Collectively**

Acts 12 introduces us to a critical period in the early testimony of churches of God. Herod the king, son of Herod the Tetrarch (Luke 3:19), was out to make a name for himself among the Jews as well as the Romans, and with a fearful flexing of his muscles ensured the beheading of the apostle James, followed by the imprisonment of the apostle Peter. Persistent and fervent prayer by the church resulted in Peter's escape from certain death (v. 5). The believers in the church of God in Jerusalem (and more than likely those in other churches of God in other parts too—see 8:1, 4, 8, 11:19-26), had earnestly petitioned the Lord for courage in witness, and He gave them that in rich supply (cp. 4:29, 31).

A plurality of elders in each church of God was necessary to preserve the unity of the faith in its outworking in a local and practical way, and the exercise of such responsibility was not to be undertaken lightly (Acts 14:23; 1 Pet. 5:2-3). The coming together of overseers in conference to discuss and, if possible, decide issues affecting the testimony was not by any means a light burden to bear. The issue of the rite of circumcision being necessary for salvation propounded by a number of believing Jews, had to be thrashed out in the council of apostles and elders held in Jerusalem with Paul and Barnabas, and the other elders accompanying them from Antioch being present. The matter of maintaining unity of doctrine was critical, and was achieved after a great deal of discussion on God's working with Gentiles based upon clear scriptural prophecy (15:6-29).

### **How God's work is done**

Firstly, by the work and power of the Spirit of God in the lives of His own, already referred to in our opening of this subject (see also Acts 1:8). The work is done by the servants of God but results rest in the sovereign operation of the Spirit of God. That's why it is futile to worry about results if prayer is earnest and the work of sowing the seed of the Word is being done faithfully and fervently. Fretfulness and frustration at a lack of 'success', as we may think, on our part will yield nothing. The outcome of all labour is in His sovereign will.

Secondly, by God's empowering and enabling grace. When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, having been commissioned by the church in Jerusalem to spend some time there and provide assistance where possible, he saw incontrovertible evidence of God's hand at work and set about encouraging and exhorting the disciples to cleave to the Lord (11:22-23).

Thirdly, by the saints care for one another, not only locally, but further afield, as we see demonstrated by those in testimony in the church of God in Antioch, readily responding to the material needs of fellow-believers in the churches of God in Judaea (11:29).

### **Interdependence of Churches of God and Inter-Fellowship of Disciples**

This is discernible from a number of scriptures. As already noted in the paragraph immediately above, the response of the disciples belonging to the church in Antioch, having become aware of the acute need of help regarding those in the churches of God in the province of Judaea, was to despatch Barnabas and Saul with love-gifts to them. Again, as mentioned in the penultimate paragraph above, the church in Jerusalem wasted no time in sending Barnabas to evaluate and support by his presence and ministry the 'new' church in Antioch. When news reached the ears of the apostles in Jerusalem that the preaching of the Word was bearing fruit in Samaria, Peter and John were selected by their fellow apostles to make their way there (Acts 8:14). All the churches of God in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria are linked together as seen in Acts 9:31 under the collective term 'church', enjoying not only a time of freedom from political pressure and religious persecution, but also a real sense of being consolidated in their convictions, conducting their lives in the fear of the Lord, and feeling the presence and solace that only the Spirit of God can impart. The sense of wellbeing, as result of being 'together' in God's service, would stand them in good stead in days to come.

*R.B. Fullarton*



*New Testament churches in Asia Minor*

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