

NOON BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION 6

AS WE TURN TO REVELATION 6, LET'S REMEMBER ONE OF THE IDEAS THAT IS GUIDING OUR STUDY OF REVELATION. WE BELIEVE THAT REVELATION WAS WRITTEN AT THE END OF THE 1ST CENTURY AND IT WAS WRITTEN TO A REAL GROUP OF CHRISTIANS LIVING DURING A TUMULTUOUS TIME. THEY NEEDED HOPE, THEY NEEDED COMFORT, THEY NEEDED ANSWERS. AND SO, AS WE READ REVELATION, WE WANT TO CONSIDER WHAT THESE PASSAGES MEANT FOR THE FIRST CHRISTIANS READING THE LETTER, BEFORE WE JUMP TO WHAT IT MEANS FOR US. IT WILL BE TEMPTING TO JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS THAT ARE ONLY RELEVANT TO OUR TIME AND FUTURE - BUT THAT WOULDN'T PROVIDE HOPE FOR THE CHRISTIANS READING THIS LETTER FROM JOHN (AND JESUS) WHO REALLY NEEDED HOPE.

REMEMBER, WE'RE ON THE HEELS OF REVELATION 4-5 IN WHICH WE WERE INVITED TO THE HEAVENLY THRONE ROOM SCENE OF JESUS BEING PROCLAIMED "WORTHY TO OPEN THE BOOK AND ITS SEVEN SEALS", BECAUSE HE HAD OVERCOME BY BEING SLAIN (5:5, 9). THE SCENE IS GOING TO SHIFT FROM THE WORSHIP TO THE WORK OF OPENING THE SEALS. AS WE DISCUSSED LAST TIME, THIS BOOK/SCROLL IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE WORK AND PURPOSES OF GOD WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED. UNLESS THE WORTHY ONE OPENS THE SEALS, THE REST OF HISTORY REMAINS STUCK. NOW THAT CHRIST HAS OVERCOME AND PROVEN WORTHY TO OPEN THE SEALS, WE CAN DISCOVER WHAT IS NEXT.

THE 4 LIVING CREATURES BEFORE THE THRONE WILL SERVE AS GUIDES THROUGH THE OPENING OF THE SEALS. THEY ARE GOING TO INTRODUCE US TO 4 RIDERS ON 4 HORSES. THESE 4 HORSEMEN ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF HUMAN SUFFERING AND WORLDLY TROUBLE. THOUGH STARTLING IN THEIR APPEARANCE AND PURPOSE THEY ARE FUNCTIONING IN WAYS WE ARE FAMILIAR WITH FROM SCRIPTURE AND LIFE IN GENERAL. (EX: WAR, FAMINE, DEATH).

THERE IS AN OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGE THAT WE SHOULD REFERENCE AS WELL. IT'S ZECHARIAH 6. IN THIS CHAPTER THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH SEES 4 HORSES PULLING 4 CHARIOTS OF VARIOUS COLORS. THE CHARIOTS ARE BEING SENT BY GOD TO PATROL THE EARTH, TO TRAVEL AROUND THE "4 CORNERS OF THE EARTH" DOING THINGS THAT GOD COMMANDS. THESE HORSES IN ZECHARIAH ARE RED, BLACK, WHITE AND "DAPPLED GRAY". SO BIBLE READERS WOULD LIKELY BE DRAWN BACK TO THAT PASSAGE. BUT FOR OUR PURPOSES TODAY, WE WILL ACTUALLY BEGIN IN WITH JESUS.

MATTHEW 24:3-14, 29-31

THIS IS JESUS' MOST COMPLETE TEACHING ON THE THINGS THAT WILL HAPPEN AND DEVELOP AFTER HIS ASCENSION AND BEFORE HIS RETURN. AS WE KNOW FROM SCRIPTURE AND HISTORY, THESE THINGS HAPPENED AND HAPPEN. WHEN WE READ THIS TEACHING FROM CHRIST, WE'D BE MISTAKEN TO THINK THAT THESE THINGS ARE JUST GOING TO HAPPEN RIGHT BEFORE HIS RETURN AS KING - FOR WE SEE THESE THINGS UNFOLDING OVER THE CENTURIES. BEFORE WE MOVE TO REVELATION 6, LET'S HIGHLIGHT SOME OF THE THINGS JESUS SAYS WILL HAPPEN:

- 1 - FALSE TEACHERS, FALSE CHRISTS, MISLEADING MANY (V. 4-5, 11, 23-27)
- 2 - WAR, NATIONAL & ETHNIC CONFLICT (V. 6-7)
- 3 - FAMINE, EARTHQUAKES AND OTHER NATURAL CALAMITIES WHICH WILL AFFECT THE WORLD (V. 7B) (INCLUDING THE SUN & MOON BEING DARKENED, AND THE STARS AND HEAVEN BEING SHAKEN (V. 29-30)).
- 4 - DEATH (BECAUSE OF HUMAN CONFLICT, BECAUSE OF DISASTERS, BECAUSE OF JUDGMENT).

AND SPRINKLED THROUGH MATTHEW 24 IS THE WARNING THAT THERE WILL BE TROUBLE FOR THOSE WHO FOLLOW JESUS, BUT THAT THERE WILL BE DELIVERANCE IN THE END FOR THOSE WHO STAY FAITHFUL UNTIL THE END (V. 13). EVENTUALLY THE NATIONS WHO HAVE NOT TURNED TO CHRIST WILL MOURN AND HE WILL RETURN TO RESCUE HIS PEOPLE. IN FACT JESUS SAYS:

MATTHEW 24:22 (NIV) - "IF THOSE DAYS HAD NOT BEEN CUT SHORT, NO ONE WOULD SURVIVE, BUT FOR THE SAKE OF THE ELECT THOSE DAYS WILL BE SHORTENED.

JESUS TELLS US IN A PRETTY STRAIGHTFORWARD WAY HOW THINGS ARE GOING TO BE UNTIL HE RETURNS. WITH THIS IN OUR MIND, LET'S JOIN THE VISION OF JOHN, ALREADY IN PROGRESS...

REVELATION 6:1-2 - SEAL 1: WHITE HORSE

WHITE HORSE. RIDER HAD BOW, WEARING CROWN. HE WENT OUT CONQUERING AND TO CONQUER.

THIS IS THE FIRST HORSE SEEN. THERE ARE TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF THIS HORSE. THE FIRST, A POSITIVE INTERPRETATION, THINKS OF THIS WHITE HORSE LIKE THE WHITE HORSE JESUS WILL APPEAR ON IN REVELATION 19. THIS INTERPRETATION PROPOSES THAT BEFORE WE CONSIDER THE TROUBLE THE WORLD FACES, WE REMEMBER THAT THE GOSPEL HAS GONE OUT TO CONQUER AND OVERCOME. WE BELIEVE THAT AND PERHAPS THIS IS WHAT THIS MEANS.

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER INTERPRETATION FOR US TO CONSIDER. THE OTHER THREE HORSES ARE ALL BRINGING ABOUT EVIL AND TROUBLING RESULTS. THIS RIDER ON A WHITE HORSE IS CONQUERING BUT THE TEXT DOESN'T IDENTIFY THE RIDER AS JESUS (NOR DOES HE HAVE A SWORD). IS IT POSSIBLE THAT THIS WHITE HORSE AND ITS RIDER THAT IS HAVING SUCCESS AND CONQUERING IS SOMEONE THAT APPEARS TO BE LIKE CHRIST, BUT IS NOT - A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FALSE CHRISTS AND THE MISLEADING SPIRIT THAT WOULD SATURATE THE WORLD? WE KNOW THAT JESUS SAID THAT BEFORE ANY WAR OR EARTHQUAKES - HIS DISCIPLES SHOULD BE ALERT AND AWAKE BECAUSE THERE WOULD BE MANY WHO WOULD COME, CLAIMING TO BE THE CHRIST, BUT BEING FALSE. LOOKING AND SOUNDING LIKE HIM WHO IS THE CONQUERING KING, BUT ONLY A SECOND RATE VERSION AND COUNTERFEIT.

MAY THE LORD GIVE US UNDERSTANDING.

REVELATION 6:3-4 - SEAL 2: RED HORSE

RED HORSE. RIDER TAKES PEACE FROM THE EARTH, MEN WOULD SLAY ONE ANOTHER. GREAT SWORD GIVEN TO HIM.

THIS HORSE IS CREATING CONFLICT, WAR AND STRIFE.

REVELATION 6:5-6 - SEAL 3: BLACK HORSE

BLACK HORSE. RIDER HAD A PAIR OF SCALES. VOICE FROM CENTER OF LIVING CREATURES "A QUART OF WHEAT FOR A DENARIUS AND THREE QUARTS OF BARLEY FOR A DENARIUS, AND DO NOT DAMAGE THE OIL AND WINE." (V. 6)

DENARIUS EQUALS A DAYS PAY. NORMALLY THE PRICE OF WHEAT & BARLEY WOULD NOT BE THIS HIGH. ESV STUDY BIBLE SAYS "A HEAVENLY VOICE COMMENTS ON THE SCALES' SIGNIFICANCE, CITING INFLATED GRAIN PRICES (8 TO 10 TIMES NORMAL)."

REVELATION 6:6 (NLT) - AND I HEARD A VOICE FROM AMONG THE FOUR LIVING BEINGS SAY, "A LOAF OF WHEAT BREAD OR THREE LOAVES OF BARLEY WILL COST A DAY'S PAY. AND DON'T WASTE THE OLIVE OIL AND WINE."

SO THINGS ONE NEEDS FOR EVERYDAY LIFE ARE HARD TO COME BY BUT THINGS THAT YOU DON'T NEED TO SURVIVE, BUT ARE ENJOYABLE AS A LUXURY ARE PREVALENT. PASTOR MATT CHANDLER COMMENTS ON THIS VERSE BY SAYING THAT THE WORLD "HAS NOTHING THEY NEED BUT EVERYTHING THEY DON'T NEED". THIS HORSE IS OVERSEEING SCARCITY, INJUSTICE, FAMINE, INEQUALITY AMONGST THE NATIONS.

REVELATION 6:7-8 - SEAL 4: PALE HORSE

ASHEN HORSE (SICKLY PALE). RIDER NAMED "DEATH". HADES (SECOND RIDER?) IS FOLLOWING WITH HIM. AUTHORITY GIVEN TO THESE RIDERS OVER A FORTH OF THE EARTH, TO KILL WITH SWORD AND FAMINE AND PESTILENCE AND BY WILD BEASTS.

DEATH IS THE GREAT ENEMY OF HUMANITY AND HADES IS THE GREEK WORD FOR "THE GRAVE" WHICH IS WHERE ONE GOES AFTER DEATH. DEATH IS CHASING ALL THE WORLD AND THE GRAVE IS NOT TOO FAR BEHIND.

THE 4 HORSES & THEIR RIDERS

THESE HORSES AND RIDERS ARE PRESENT IN HUMAN HISTORY. IN FACT THESE FOUR HAVE INFLUENCE AND AFFECT HUMAN HISTORY. THE CONDITIONS THAT THEY BRING WITH THEM ARE NOT JUST SOMETHING FOR THE FUTURE, OR THE END TIMES. THEY HAVE BEEN A PART OF THE HUMAN STORY SINCE VERY EARLY ON. AND OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH HAVE EXPERIENCED AND WILL EXPERIENCE THESE.

REMEMBER THESE FOUR HORSES ARE RELEASED AFTER FOUR SEALS ARE OPEN ON THE BOOK/SCROLL THAT WAS REPRESENTATIVE OF HUMAN HISTORY AND GOD'S STORY. THE THINGS DESCRIBED HERE THAT COME WITH THE 4 HORSES ARE VERY CLOSELY ALIGNED TO WHAT WE READ IN MATTHEW 24 WHERE JESUS TELLS US WHAT THE WORLD WILL BE LIKE UNTIL HE RETURNS. THIS IS WHAT JOHN IS SEEING NOW, SYMBOLICALLY COMMUNICATED THROUGH HORSES AND RIDERS BRINGING THESE THINGS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. IN MATTHEW 24, WE READ THAT THESE DIFFICULT THINGS AND DIFFICULT TIMES WOULD COME AND THAT THE PEOPLE OF GOD WOULD HAVE TO ENDURE TO THE END. LET'S SEE WHAT JOHN SEES NEXT.

REVELATION 6:9-11 - SEAL 5: CRY OF THE SAINTS

JOHN SEES UNDERNEATH THE ALTAR THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SLAIN BECAUSE OF THE GOSPEL AND BECAUSE OF THE TESTIMONY WHICH THEY MAINTAINED. THESE "SOULS" CRY OUT "HOW LONG LORD, HOLY AND TRUE, WILL YOU REFRAIN FROM JUDGING AND AVENGING OUR BLOOD ON THOSE WHO DWELL ON THE EARTH?"

THOSE SOULS WHO CRIED THIS WERE GIVEN WHITE ROBES AND ARE 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.

WHEN WE READ MATTHEW 24, JESUS SAID THAT HIS PEOPLE WOULD HAVE A LOT OF TROUBLE. THERE WOULD BE DIFFICULTY AND EVEN DEATH.

MATTHEW 24:9 ESV - "THEN THEY WILL DELIVER YOU UP TO TRIBULATION AND PUT YOU TO DEATH, AND YOU WILL BE HATED BY ALL NATIONS FOR MY NAME'S SAKE.

BUT WHAT DID CHRIST TELL HIS DISCIPLES TO DO DURING THIS TIME AS EVIL INCREASED IN THE EARTH?

MATTHEW 24:13 - "BUT THE ONE WHO ENDURES TO THE END, HE WILL BE SAVED.

HE TELLS HIS DISCIPLES THAT THERE WILL BE AN END TO THE TROUBLES AND THEN HE BEGINS TO TELL THEM THE SPECIFIC THINGS THAT WILL HAPPEN BEFORE HE RETURNS. HE DESCRIBES CELESTIAL SHIFTINGS AND NATURAL CATAclysm THAT WILL PRECEDE HIS ARRIVAL AS CONQUERING KING AND JUDGE.

REVELATION 6:12-17 - SEAL 6

GREAT EARTHQUAKE SUN BECAME BLACK, MOON BECAME LIKE BLOOD (RED). STARS FELL, LIKE UNRIPE FIGS FALLS FROM TREE DURING GREAT WIND. SKY ROLLED BACK LIKE A SCROLL KINGS OF THE EARTH, GREAT MEN, COMMANDERS, RICH AND STRONG - AND EVERY SLAVE AND FREE MEN HID IN CAVES AND AMONG ROCKS.

THESE INDIVIDUALS LONG TO DIE OR AT LEAST BE HIDDEN, CALLING FOR THE ROCKS TO FALL ON THEM AND HIDE THEM FROM THE ONE WHO SITS ON THE THRONE AND FROM THE WRATH OF THE LAMB; THEY SAY THAT THE DAY OF "THEIR GREAT WRATH HAS COME" AND ASK "WHO CAN STAND IT?", OR "WHO IS ABLE TO SURVIVE" (NLT).

THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT LINE TO GIVE CLARITY ON THIS SECTION. IT'S AS IF WE HAVE BEEN DISTRACTED BY THE SEALS AND HORSEMEN AND ARE REMINDED TO LOOK BACK AT THE ONE ON THE THRONE. THIS VISION OF JUDGMENT IS FROM THE LORD AND FROM HIS CHRIST. FOR THE CHRISTIANS READING THIS VISION, THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN FAMILIAR WITH THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS THAT THE HUMAN RACE HAS BEEN FACING (WAR, DEATH, FAMINE, NATURAL DISASTERS, ETC), AND SPECIFICALLY WITH THE DIFFICULTY THAT COMES WITH BEING A FOLLOWER OF JESUS.

ROME IS IN POWER, EVIL MEN ARE INCREASING, RICH PEOPLE ARE EXPLOITING - AND THE CHURCH OF JESUS IS CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE. SURELY MEN AND WOMEN FROM AMONGST THEIR OWN NUMBER WERE KILLED FOR THEIR FAITH. THEIR MEMORY AND THEIR SURVIVING BROTHERS AND SISTERS SURELY ASKED "*HOW LONG O LORD... (V. 10)*"

ONE OF THE FUNCTIONS OF REVELATION IS TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION. HOW LONG TILL SALVATION COMES? HOW LONG TILL EVIL IS DEFEATED? HOW LONG DO WE NEED TO WAIT AND ENDURE AND SUFFER AND DIE? IN FACT, REVELATION 7 IS GOING TO BEGIN TO HELP ANSWER THAT QUESTION. BUT THAT IS THE QUESTION FOR THE CHRISTIANS OF EPHESUS AND PHILADELPHIA AND LAODICEA. AND IT'S CERTAINLY THE QUESTION FOR US NOW TOO.

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER QUESTION BEING ASKED BY THOSE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS CONVERSATION. THOSE IN POWER, THOSE AFFLICTING THE SAINTS, THOSE LIVING LUXURIOUSLY IN THIS LIFE, LIVING IT UP WITH OIL AND WINE WHILE THE POOR CAN BARELY GET A CUP OF WHEAT - THEY ARE GOING TO ASK ANOTHER, MUCH DIFFERENT QUESTION. THEIR QUESTION IS "*WHO CAN STAND BEFORE THE WRATH OF GOD AND THE WRATH OF THE LAMB?*" AND THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION FOR THEM TO ASK BECAUSE THEY WILL DISCOVER THROUGHOUT LIFE AND TODAY AS WELL THAT THEY

CAN'T OVERCOME THOSE LEADING THEM DOWN THE WRONG PATH, THEY CAN'T BRING PEACE, THEY CAN'T BUY OR ATTAIN WHAT THEY REALLY NEED AND THEY CERTAINLY CANNOT OUTRIDE DEATH AND THE GRAVE. THE GREAT MAN AND WOMEN OF THE EARTH FIND THEMSELVES HELPLESS IN THE FACE OF THESE FOUR RIDERS. THE GOVERNMENT LEADERS CAN'T STOP DEATH OR PESTILENCE, THE RICH CANNOT STOP THE WAR OR THE FAMINE. AND SO THEY WANT TO HIDE AND RUN SO AS TO NOT BE OVERTAKEN. THEIR POSITIONS AND AUTHORITY AND WEALTH AND STATUS HAS ALLOWED THEM TO STAND AND SURVIVE, BUT NOT AGAINST GOD AND HIS CHRIST.

AND SO, THOSE CHRISTIANS THAT WE MET FROM 7 CHURCHES IN REVELATION 2-3, ESPECIALLY THOSE CHRISTIANS WHO WERE LUKEWARM OR LOST THEIR LOVE OR WERE ON THE FENCE ABOUT LIVING FOR THIS WORLD OR GOD'S COMING KINGDOM, THOSE CHRISTIANS SHOULD LISTEN UP AND CONSIDER THE TWO QUESTIONS BEING ASKED. AND SO SHOULD WE.

WE EITHER TURN TO CHRIST AND FIND FORGIVENESS AND PEACE AND HAVE THE SURE PROMISE OF RESURRECTION AND RESCUE AND SALVATION, ALONG WITH TROUBLE, TRIALS AND MAYBE SHORT-TERM PAIN OR WE LIVE FOR OURSELVES AND THIS WORLD AND ENJOY LIFE (MAYBE) AND THEN FACE GOD'S ANGER ON OUR LAST DAY WHEN WE WILL BE REQUIRED TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT FOR THE WAY WE LIVED OUR LIVES - OR BETTER SAID, HOW WE STEWARD THE GIFT OF LIFE THAT HE GAVE US.

IT IS A VISION OF UNDERSTANDING AND CONTEXT THAT IS ANSWERING THE QUESTION OF BOTH THE RICH AND GREAT WHO ARE HIDING BECAUSE "WHO CAN STAND IN THEIR WRATH" AND THE MARTYRS WHO ARE ASKING "WHEN IS THE VENGEANCE OF GOD COMING?!"

SO WHAT DO GOD'S PEOPLE DO AS THEY WAIT FOR THIS MOMENT OF COMPLETION AND THE END OF THESE TERRIBLE THINGS? WE WILL GET SOME SPECIFIC ANSWERS FROM THE NEXT CHAPTERS. BUT UNTIL THEN, LET'S REMEMBER AND REFLECT ON THE GOSPEL.

WHEN WE TURN ON THE NEWS OR TALK TO OUR NEIGHBORS AND HEAR THE GALLOPING SOUND OF FALSEHOOD, CONFLICT, INJUSTICE AND DEATH, REMEMBER THE GOOD NEWS. WHEN YOUR ANXIETY RISES BECAUSE OF THE RISE OF EVIL, REMEMBER THE GOSPEL.

WHY REMEMBER THE GOSPEL? THE GOSPEL IS AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF VICTORY OVER THESE VERY THINGS. THE GOSPEL ANNOUNCES THE TRUE KING AND OVERCOMING ONE (WHITE HORSE). THE GOSPEL ANNOUNCES THE END OF WAR AND STRIFE ON THE EARTH (RED HORSE). THE GOSPEL ANNOUNCES TRUE SATISFACTION, ABUNDANCE, AND PROVISION (BLACK HORSE). THE GOSPEL ANNOUNCES VICTORY OVER DEATH AND THE GRAVE. (PALE HORSE).

THE GOOD NEWS THAT JESUS CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS, THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS RAISED BY GOD FROM THE DEAD, THAT JESUS CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN - AND THAT THOSE WHO HAVE FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST ARE GIVEN LOVE, LIFE AND HOPE - IS EXACTLY WHAT WILL INFORM OUR ANSWER TO THE QUESTION "WHO IS ABLE TO STAND..."