

A Journey Into the Heavens
The Four Horsemen and the Apocalypse
December 9, 2015

In chapter four we saw John caught up to the very throne room of God in heaven, where he gazed upon the rainbow-encircled throne of God and, as it were, the royal court of God acknowledging the glory of God in creation.

Then, in chapter five the attention shifted to the seven-sealed book and the One worthy to open it. We found this book contains the unfolding of the consummation of the age - the fulfillment of God's eternal plan to set all creation free from sin and death and to bring judgement upon all those who have rejected Him.

The judgements of the book of Revelation begin in chapter six and end in chapter 19. Actually 13 of the book's 22 chapters describe the terrible judgements, beginning with the opening of the seven-sealed scroll. Much of the book of Revelation is _____ to many modern minds because the world would rather believe God is exclusively a God of love, but God IS a God of judgement as well!

Though some see the breaking of the seals as beginning in the past and perhaps continuing until the end of age, there is nothing in history to correspond with the events that transpire when the seven seals are broken. Therefore, it must be concluded that these happenings are in the future.

The opening of the seals continues the description of what John saw when he was caught up to heaven in the throne room of God, beginning in chapter four. As the seals are opened in chapter six, the scene shifts from heaven to earth.

I. The _____ Horse (6:1-2)

When the Lamb opens the first seal, one of the four beasts (or living creatures) says, Come and see (6:1). John looks and sees... a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow...(6:2).

There has been much disagreement as to the identity of the rider on the white horse. Basically the confusion is over whether the rider represents Christ or the Antichrist. There are some similarities to this rider and Christ according to Revelation 19:11-16. *(Let's turn there)*

There are some striking similarities between this rider and Christ, but it should be noted this rider has a crown (6:2), while the victorious Christ in 19:12 has many crowns. Also the Lamb (Christ) opens the seals and would _____ be one of the riders. And furthermore, there are four riders, and Christ is not one of the four - He is All in _____!

Anyone who is familiar with Scripture would expect the Antichrist to resemble Christ. (II Thessalonians 2:3-4)

The combination of the conqueror's crown and the bow without arrows indicates he will go...forth conquering and to conquer peaceably, probably through diplomacy. In the beginning this Antichrist will not appear as the villain he is. Paul warns us of this in I Thessalonians 5:2-3.

When Christ comes to the earth again, His weapon will not be a bow with no arrows, and His mission will not be to bring peace. Instead, Revelation 19:15&21 tell us of his weapon and his effect.

This future conqueror on the white horse will come promising peace and safety and will _____ the world into following him, and then will come the opening of the second seal...

II. The _____ Horse (6:3-4)

At the opening of each seal, one of the living creatures says, Come and see. At the breaking of the second seal...there went out another horse that was red... (6:4). This rider is on a fiery red horse, which symbolizes bloodshed and war, for he will...take peace from the earth... and cause humanity to kill one another...(6:4).

As a further indication of the extensive bloodshed, the rider on the red horse has ...a great sword. The peace brought by the first rider will be superseded by manslaughter and murder. The size of the sword denotes the _____ number of people who will be killed.

Some have conjectured this could be a reference to one of the great persecutions against Christians, like those of Nero and Domitian, but here people are killing one another. In times of persecution Christians did not kill their persecutors. There is no indication in Revelation as to the date or cause of this tremendous bloodshed. Following the red horse is the breaking of the third seal.

III. The _____ Horse (6:5-6)

The black horse represents the famine and poverty that always follows war. John says in verse 5:...and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. The word balances literally means “_____” indicating everything had to be weighed.

Then, John...heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts...(6:6). This voice speaking out of the midst of the four living creatures seems to be God Himself, specifying commodity prices.

The Greek word translated “measure” is a dry measure of less than a quart, or about a day’s food. The Greek word translated “penny” was a day’s wages for the average laborer. Barley was purchased by the poor to mix with wheat. It was the food for slaves and horses, but apparently, if purchased instead of wheat, it could feed a small family for a day since it was one-third cheaper.

These prices indicate a severe shortage, meaning the average worker would barely be able to survive, and if there was a family involved, starvation would be a real problem.

The phrase “hurt not the oil and the wine” in verse 6 is not clear but seems to mean that since these were not necessities, like wheat and barley, but were luxuries of the rich, then the rich people will not be affected by the third seal. This would be consistent with the fact that the wealthy always fare much better during famine than does the average person because their resources circumvent the shortages.

IV. The _____ Horse (6:7-8)

The last summoning shout of Come and see is uttered by the fourth living creature, and John looks... and behold a pale horse...(6:8). The Greek word translated pale is a pale green, like that of a sick or _____ person.

The color goes along with the name of the rider - Death, who is followed by another named Hell (Greek - Hades). At the breaking of the first seal the world seems to have entered an era of peace where all could anticipate the “good life,” but this all quickly dissipates as the judgements begin in verse four. The dream of the “good life” is shattered by the reality of hunger, starvation, anarchy, violence, and utter chaos. As a result, Death and Hades come on the scene. Death claims the _____, and Hades claims the _____.

At death, the soul of a lost person goes to Hades and awaits judgement that will determine the degree of eternal punishment. **(See pages 6-8)**

The effect of the breaking of the fourth seal is the fourth part of the earth is killed (vs. 8). This seems to mean that one-fourth of the world will die from the sword (war), hunger (famine), death (by pestilence of disease), and with the beasts of the earth. The total death count here would be more than about 1 Billion, 7 hundred fifty million, at today’s population figures of _____ Billion people. Such losses were thought impossible before the atom, nitrogen, and neutron bombs, as well as the deadly germ warfare gasses of today.

The chaotic state of the world seems to set the stage for beasts to kill people. The Greek word translated “beast”(THERION) means “wild beasts.” This should be distinguished from the Greek word (ZOON) in 4:6 also translated “beasts” but meaning “living creatures.”

What kind of wild beast there are is not specified. However, as some have pointed out, _____ have been responsible for killing more people than all the wars in history. They have been reported to carry as many as 35 diseases, and their fleas carried the bubonic plague that killed a third of Europe in the 18th century. This information gives us only an idea of how wild animals could contribute to death on a worldwide scale.

No one can say for sure exactly what all this means, but it must not be overlooked that there is a remarkable parallel between the four horsemen of Revelation 6 and what our Lord said on His Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:5-8.

White Horse - Revelation 6:2 & Matthew 24:5

Red Horse - Revelation 6:4 & Matthew 24:6

Black Horse - Revelation 6:5 & Matthew 24:7c

Pale Horse - Revelation 6:8 & Matthew 24:7 -(After the famine Jesus says there will be pestilences.)

It must be noted that the first four seals are basically preliminary happenings. The _____ itself is not yet open. The seals are merely being broken so it can be opened. That is what Jesus meant in Matthew 24:8.

If we carefully look around our world today, we can understand what Billy Graham says in his book, “Approaching Hoofbeats... I can hear the hoofbeats of these horses much louder than when I began writing this book...”

A Journey Into the Heavenlies Are there Degrees of Reward and Punishment in Scripture?

DEGREES OF REWARD IN HEAVEN

First, it is important to note that **every** faithful follower of God eventually will receive an **eternal reward which is Heaven!!**

However according to Matthew we are individually rewarded: *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. (Matthew 16:27)*. If you recall we studied the five crowns that you have the ability to receive as a Christian but not all Christians will receive every crown!

We also find this to be true in the book of Romans: *But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: (Romans 2:5-7)*.

Parables from the mouth of the Lord similarly demonstrate that every person will be judged according to his or her deeds. The parable of the pounds, recorded in Luke 19:11-27, is a perfect example. After reading this parable (and the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30), it is clear that certain individuals receive—and thus are responsible for—more pounds/talents than some others.

Some have argued against the idea of differing rewards by claiming that heaven will be perfect, and that something perfect can be neither improved nor diminished. However, Jesus observed *“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”* (Luke 15:7) In at least some sense, then, joy in heaven can differ in degrees. The principle of degrees of heavenly reward—which is taught quite plainly in Scripture—should motivate every Christian to in the sense of *“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”* (John 9:4)

DEGREES OF PUNISHMENT IN HELL

Biblically, there seems to be definite teaching that there are different levels of Hell--at least in the sense that there are various degrees of punishment. The Bible does not specifically mention higher or lower levels of Hell in the location sense, but it does allude to degrees of punishment and sins:

I. More Tolerance for Certain Sins

Matthew 10:14-15 -And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Matthew 11:23-24 -And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell:for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

Luke 10:13-14 -Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.

II. Greater Punishment for Certain Sins

Matthew 23:14 - Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer:therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Luke 12:47-48 - And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him

shall be much required:and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

(***The meaning of the last section of this parable is inescapable in Luke 12:42-48. All the wicked will be punished; however, those limited in their opportunities to learn about Christ will be punished “with fewer stripes” than those who knew the truth and obeyed it not.)

Hebrews 10:29 - Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

III. Level of Sins

Luke 19:11 - Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above:therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

*** Jesus specifically attributes Judas' betrayal as a greater sin than Pontius Pilate's.

So, if Jesus speaks of greater condemnation for Chorazin and Bethsaida than Tyre and Sidon (Luke 10:13-14), one slave received more punishment than another Luke 12:47-48), the one who delivered Jesus to Pilate has the greater sin (John 19:11), and a more severe punishment is reserved for those who trample underfoot the Son of God, then does not greater sin mean that greater punishment will also happen in Hell?

Does the Bible teach degrees of reward in heaven? Yes, it does. Does it also teach degrees of punishment in hell? Yes, it does. The good news, of course, is that heaven's offer of salvation is open to everyone