
The Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse

"Then in my vision I saw a door open in heaven and heard the same voice speaking to me, the voice like a trumpet, saying, 'Come up here: I will show you what is to come in the future'. With that, the Spirit possessed me and I saw a throne standing in heaven, and the One who was sitting on the throne..." (Rev. 4: 1-3)

"There is no need to cry: the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed, and he will open the scroll and the seven seals of it." (Rev. 5:5)

"Then I saw the Lamb break one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four animals shout in a voice like thunder, 'Come'. Almost immediately a white horse appeared, and rider on it was holding bow; he was given the victor's crown and he went away, to go from victory to victory." (Rev. 6:1-2).

"When he broke the second seal, I heard the second animal shout, 'Come'. And out came another horse, bright red, and its rider was given this duty: to take away peace from the earth and set people killing each other. He was given a huge sword." (Rev. 6:3-4).

"When he broke the third seal, I heard the third animal shout, 'Come'. Immediately a black horse appeared, and its rider was holding a pair of scales; and I seemed to hear a voice shout from among the four animals and say, 'A ration of corn for a day's wages, and three rations of barley for a day's wages, but do not tamper with

the oil or the wine'." (Rev. 6:5-6)

"When he broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth animal shout, 'Come'. Immediately another horse appeared, deathly pale, and its rider was called Plague, and Hades followed at his heels. They were given authority over a quarter of the earth, to kill by the sword, by famine, by plague and wild beasts." (Rev. 6:7-8).

The traditional interpretation of this vision by scholars suggests the white horse (a symbol of victory) represents the Parthians, identified by the bow, their favorite weapon. They were the terror of the Roman world in the first century owing to their stunning defeat of the mighty Roman army under Crassus at the Euphrates river. The Roman Empire, despite its overwhelming military advantage was never able to subdue them.

The second horse is seen by scholars as the symbol of war. The third horse, the symbol of famine, with food rationed and sold at prohibitive prices. The fourth horse is death itself and is thought to signify endemic plague.

These interpretations, however, represent a world view. We are cautioned in scripture to view all of its verses through the eye of God. A spiritual interpretation is especially relevant here because these verses come from the Book of Revelation.

The ancient Parthians are gone. They exist today only in prophetic terms. The designation stands for a militant future population spread throughout the Middle East including Iran, Iraq and the "Stans" (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, etc, etc.).

The knowledge of their impending appearance on the world stage has been deduced by seer's (under the influence of the Holy Spirit) reading biblical warnings concerning the eastern "Meds" of the last days with rumors that developed in the wake of Nero's death. Those rumors saw Nero returning in the last days at the head of a great Parthian army, crossing the Euphrates to retake his throne in Rome by force.

The Parthians, barbarous warriors who are predicted to wrest control in the

last days of the lands now peopled almost exclusively by civilized Muslims are certain to come to power. Scripture is clear in this regard. And though there were no Muslims at the time, the first-century Romans were still well-advised to fear these Middle-Eastern warriors.

The threat of attack by the eastern world has always hung, like a sword of Damocles over the western world. During the last 1400 years, beginning in 600 A.D., with the birth of Mohammed, three enormous assaults by Muslim armies against the West reaching all the way to France and Vienna Austria have been repulsed, but at great cost and loss of land.

The Crusades in the 10th and 11th centuries constituted the lone Christian counterattack against this Muslim aggressions which did not end until almost the beginning of the 18th century.

Those three invasions are significant because prophecies in the Book of Daniel warn that the world is to be destroyed by what he calls a "fourth Persian empire" at the end of time (Dn.11:2; 7:23-27). In fact, the rise and treacherous activities of that empire, its attack on the Christian religion and its ultimate destruction at the hand of God is the central subject of his entire book.

In keeping with prophecies swirling around the Christian community at the time of Nero, the Parthian designation seemed most applicable to the white horse because the scholars continued to see only terror in the four horsemen. The most frightening thought to the early Christian community, fueled by rumors in first-century Rome, was the return of Nero, newly reborn and more powerfully capable than ever to topple Christ and His Church.

The Parthians were excellent archers, and since those bows and arrows easily translate today into missiles and rocket launching platforms, the threat has not dissipated with the appearance of modern technology. Thus the image and its threat remains.

The Parthians must be considered when contemplating the four horsemen of John's Apocalypse. (Jer. 18:17; Hosea 13:15; Ezk 17:10; Jer.51:11; Is.13:17-18; Rev.16:12, etc., etc.). Especially since the Book of Chronicles specifies that the Diaspora to Babylon cannot end until the Prince of Persia comes to power (2 Chron 36:20).

In this sense, their appearance would seem to constitute the fourth horseman, i.e., the Wrath (Death & Hades), not the first (white) horse. This, because it

is their destiny according to Daniel, to bring the earth to a flaming end. They bring to completion and termination the whole process of the Wrath - the cleansing of sin from the earth begun by the sword of Jesus Christ, the purpose of which is the destruction of the spiritual city known as Babylon the Great by the Word of God.

Almost certainly we are seeing the seeds of the barbarous fourth kingdom of Persia promised by Daniel, growing now out of the caves inhabited by Osama bin Laden and his followers. Too many other signs have coalesced over the last 50 years not to suspect that our world has now been captured in the "tractor beam" of God, and He is pulling us to the End defined. If that is the case, the Parthian threat is at hand. The kings of the East are taking their places now along the banks of the Euphrates.

While modern scholars see the four horsemen as four terrifying wings that structure the Apocalypse, some early Christian scholars argued that the white horse represented God and its rider the Church of Jesus Christ. The question, then, is whether or not these visions apply to the very End (at the time of Christ's Return) or have a broader, longer meaning.

Some see these horsemen ranging the earth throughout the entire Christian era. It is these who tend to see the white horse as either Jesus or the Church (i.e., the man in white per Ezekiel). The title "man in white" is often applied to the Pope (see the 3rd prophecy of Fatima). Since these horsemen represent angels, the man in white should, in this case, probably be seen as the "Angel of the Covenant" (see Zech. 3:1-7).

"The glory of God called to the man in white and said, 'Go all through the city, all through Jerusalem, and mark a cross on the foreheads of all who deplore and disapprove of the filth practiced in it. To the others I heard him say, 'Follow him through the city, and strike...but do not touch anyone with a cross on his forehead. Begin at my sanctuary.'" (Ez.9:3-6).

The "others" who follow the man in white are the "destroying angels" first seen at the time of Moses when they crossed Egypt killing all the first-born there, but passing over the Israelite houses marked with the blood of the paschal lamb. In Ezekiel's passage there were six of these destroying angels, all called to bring destruction to those who refused the mark of the man in white:

"Then as I listened he shouted, 'Come here, you scourges of the city, and bring your weapons of destruction'. Immediately six men advanced from the upper north gate, each holding a deadly weapon." (Ez.9:1-2).

There can be little doubt that John's passages about the four horsemen is drawn from Ezekiel's vision by the design of the Holy Spirit. John shows them called into service by the "four animals" at the altar of God, figures most people see as representing the four Gospels of Christ. There is no question that God calls them and sends them to earth.

While it is hard for most Christians to see God bringing such destruction down on the world, Jesus told us that He had come to bring strife to the earth:

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth: it is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies will be those of his own household." (Mt. 10:34-36).

The sword Jesus wields here is little different than the bow carried by the figure on the white horse, the first of the four horses of the Apocalypse. The sword cuts apart dividing one side from the other, both killing and saving. The bow stands for victory in warfare. It was a symbol of the seeming invincibility of the Parthian warriors who wiped out an entire Roman army and were never conquered by Rome. As a warrior, Christ is invincible. No empire can defeat him. His ultimate victory is assured.

I think it is important in Revelation's passages to remember the depth of the confrontation between the people of God and the people of this world who are so strongly opposed to Him. The polarity between these two was the reason so many Christians had to die in the Roman coliseums, and it accounts for the daily persecutions everyone must suffer, to this very day, as they try to follow the Gospel in a world deeply antagonistic to those teachings.

Even during the era where Satan was locked in the Abyss, the harshness of Christian persecution existed and touched every servant of God. Now, with

Satan back on earth and mobilizing the people of Babylon against Christians, that persecution once more can be seen in open ridicule and hostility.

Crosses and Bibles are forbidden as is the mention of God or Jesus in a growing number of places that only a few years ago showed little or no antagonism to these symbols or signs of faith. Physical assaults on churches themselves, unheard of in the past, have become commonplace. It is because Satan has returned from his imprisonment that this and overt violence on the scale of world warfare, mass execution and genocide has suddenly swept over the world.

The horses that follow the white rider bring not only this latest warfare, the global wars, plagues and famine of the last days, they also have accounted for the harshness of life on earth, well chronicled by historians and TV shows, that have dogged mankind since the time of Christ. The Christian era has truly been a time of trouble as Daniel predicated.

The Word of God comes as an escape from the death of the Wrath, but it does not represent an escape from the martyrdom or trial by fire that each Christian is called upon to undergo in defense of their faith. Jesus alluded to these trials when He said that *"the kingdom of God is to be subjected to violence, and by violence are all getting in"* (Mt.11:12, Lk.16:16).

Remember, the four horsemen came galloping out when Jesus broke the first four (of the seven) seals that have always hidden the truth of scripture from the people of the past. This means their hoofbeats represent an unveiling of the hidden truths of God. In this case - the spiritual death inherent in the second side of Jesus' sword. This mayhem is spiritual and it comes from God because the creation must be cleansed of Satan's contamination.

God has forced us all to take sides in this warfare. Whether or not the Church is the white horse that brings God's judgment to the earth, the fact of Jesus has forced everyone to fight for the life of their own soul. It is a life or death struggle that no one can avoid. To ignore His message and Gospel is to die. For most there are no second chances.

Man is constantly fighting wars against evil tyrants, they pop up with the frequency of ads on an internet screen, but no one wants to admit that God has a similar but far nobler purpose in mind. One that is accomplished through the peace of the Church using the sword of God's Word. The message is peace but the spiritual reality underlying it burns to a cinder the

scourge of sin and the tyrants who pursue it. Jesus said He came to set a fire burning across the earth and longed for it to inflame the land swiftly.

It is not that God wants to hurt us. On the contrary, He is rescuing us. But it is written that the wicked are to perish in their own violence. Were they not to impose that violence on the poor and downtrodden, they would have no guilt. As it is, they cannot deny their guilt. Christ addressed this dichotomy in His Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 5:1-12).

The whole vision is spiritual. It relates to spiritual life and death because it centers on the fate, not of the human body, but the eternal soul that occupies that body. In this respect, the two middle horsemen represent the power of sin to bring catastrophe to mankind.

The red horse represents Satan's warfare - his power to destroy souls - those who refuse to repent and be baptised. This warfare of destruction is his whole business. Everyone who fights against Jesus becomes an infantryman for Satan and is sure to fall against the sword of Christ.

The primary purpose of the vision is not to portray physical warfare or physical death, yet Satan's infection and it's malignant nature spills over into the physical world. As a consequence, war, plagues, floods and even earthquakes and tidal waves testify to the broken nature of this world because of Satan's existence, and the far-reaching consequences of sin's power to harm.

The black horse not only represents commerce, but centers its focus on business' long and uninterrupted history of trampling the poor in its rush to wealth across the ages. Jesus threw the gauntlet here when He said that man cannot serve money and God at the same time (Mt.6:24). Babylon, in scripture, is described as a commercial center. Money is the object of its whole purpose. "Babylon" in this case is not a geographic designation. The entire world is involved in its existence and perpetuation.

Paul wrote that the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10; Ti.1:11)

The novel, "A Christmas Carol" with Scrooge and Tiny Tim elaborated on the greed involved in money's pursuit and its damages in the 19th century. Today, with the world and all its nations in the grip of a handful of powerful corporate conglomerates and oligarchy's, the sins of Scrooge pale by comparison.

Scholars say the rations of corn and barely in John's descriptions of the black horse represent prohibitive pricing. Every day brings more disclosures of untold billions in public funds disappearing no one knows where, after it passes into the hands of private contractors. The corporate world is awash in such hordes of money that they cannot even keep track of it. This while Africans and others across the world are dying of starvation for the lack of a single loaf of bread. It is here and in circumstances like this that lies the truth of the violence by which the poor are saved. CEO's might laugh at such a claim, but the Sermon on the Mount testifies to the truth of it (Mat. 5:1-12).

Note Ezekiel's words *"Follow (the man in white) through the city, and strike...but do not touch anyone with a cross on his forehead."* (Ez.9:3). How similar that verse to this in the Book of Revelation: *"Do not touch the oil or the wine"*. That seems a symbolic representation pointing to the sacramental elements of Christ's Church: Key ingredients in baptism and communion. *"Do not touch anyone with a cross on his forehead."*

"While they were hacking them down, I stayed behind; I fell face downwards and exclaimed, 'Ah, Lord God, are you going to annihilate all that is left of Israel as you turn your anger on Jerusalem?"

'He said, 'The guilt of the House of Israel and Judah is immense, boundless; the country is full of bloodshed, the city overflows with wickedness...I mean to call them to account for all their behavior.'" The man in white with the scribe's ink horn in his belt then came back and made his report, 'I have carried out your orders'." (Ez.9:8-11).

Spiritually, the plagues brought by the fourth horse can be seen representing false teachings and world philosophies that infect the souls of the unawares and cause them to sicken and perish.

In a more concrete sense, the fourth horse of John's Apocalypse is the Wrath completed. This last horse has two persons or designations associated with it. The rider is called "Plague", with "Hades" following at its heel. The Parthian kingdom and its ten satellite nations are to have two critical rulers. They relate, according to Daniel, to the ancient figures Antiochus the Great and his son Antiochus IV Epiphanes (the Beast).

Brought in by a people from the Middle East - the scorching east-wind of scripture (symbolically a spiritually dessicating force) the future warriors of the End who rise up to fill the roles assigned to them by prophecy, will not only usher in spiritual termination (abolishing the perpetual sacrifice), but the physical termination of Babylon as well.

The fiery cataclysm the Beast launches will be mirrored by nature itself. This end will see the skies of the planet darkened by a dense blanket of black smoke. Then, just when all seems lost, the sign of Christ will appear in the sky and He will return as promised, rescuing everyone who had the faith to believe in Him and follow the path He defined that leads to eternal life.



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**"I Tell You Most Solemnly,
Whoever Keeps My Word Will Never See Death"**

John 8:51