

Newsletter November 2017

In our October 2017 newsletter, we had moved on in our study of the book of Revelation into Chapter 5, in which we saw a seven-sealed scroll offered in the right hand of God the Father. Under the protection of a mighty angel, no man or other creature was even allowed to look upon it. Then, we saw Jesus suddenly appearing, as a lamb as it had been slain, to stand in the midst of the worshipers before the throne. Jesus took the scroll from the right hand of his Father, which carried with it momentous implications of power and authority. Again, the question regarding the identity of the elders arose in verses 5:9 and 5:10. After an involved technical discussion regarding various Greek texts and English translations that centered upon the proper use of pronouns in these verses, we concluded that the redeemed of the Church was most definitely in view in verse 9, but that the elders who spoke in verse 10 were most likely Old-Covenant believers.

In this newsletter, we continue on into Revelation Chapter 6, and in doing so, we shall utilize edited excerpts and illustrations taken from *CRC*, Book III, Chapter 20.5. In this chapter we shall observe Jesus as He breaks open the seven seals of the scroll taken from the hand of his Father in Heaven to claim his glorious inheritance within. As each seal is broken, a momentous event occurs upon the earth, as Jesus Christ starts a process to bring this current age to an end, thus making way for his glorious kingdom age in which He will reign as its sovereign King and presiding Judge over all the earth. These seven events are seen to parallel Daniel's seventieth week, and Jesus later spoke of events occurring within this seven years in his Olivet Discourse.

The first four seals encompassing the first three and one half years of that seven-year period have been placed along a timeline of Daniel's seventieth week as is shown in Illustration 1 below. Relevant verses of the Revelation, of the book of Daniel, and of the Olivet Discourse are noted as they relate to each seal. Each of these first four seals when they are broken sends forth a rider upon a horse having a distinctive color, which indicates the rider's intent and purpose. These riders are commonly referred to as the "four horsemen of the Apocalypse" because of the great calamity that they will bring forth upon the earth. While dispensationalists commonly refer to this 3 ½ year period as the first half of a seven-year tribulation period, it was labeled by Jesus in his Olivet Discourse as the "beginning of sorrows" (cf. Mt. 24:8). He did not speak of a time of great tribulation until much later on in verse 21 of that same chapter, as we shall see later on in this study.

Let us now begin our study of Revelation Chapter 6, as we observe Jesus breaking open the first seal:

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see" (Re. 6:1).

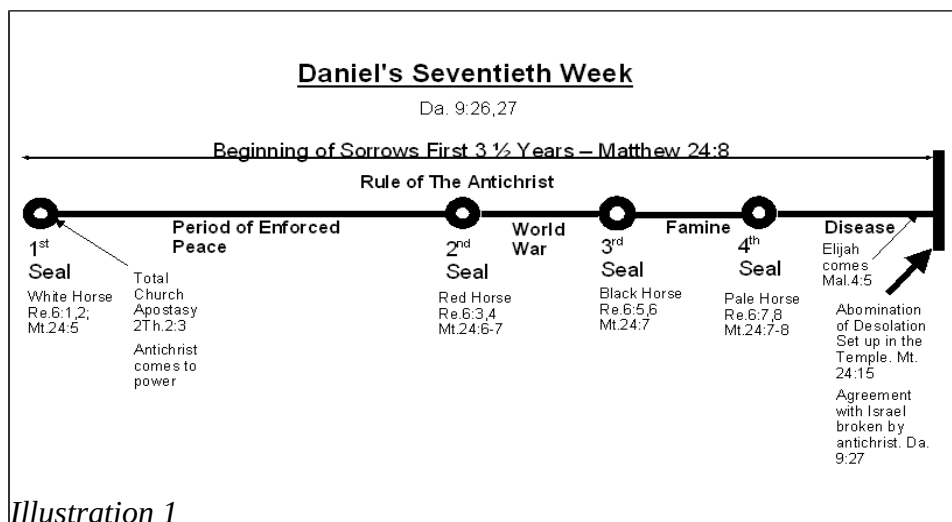


Illustration 1

Whereas before we observed one of the elders speaking to John to console him, here we find that it is one of the four living creatures who speaks to him out of the throne in a thunderous voice saying, "come and see. This may be the same voice that John heard calling him up to Heaven in Revelation 4:1.

At this very moment, Jesus is at the right hand of God his Father in Heaven, and He has already received the scroll from his Father's hand when He

ascended. Nevertheless, Jesus has not yet begun to set things into motion on earth that must ultimately lead to his triumphal return. The precise time of his victorious arrival on earth has been preordained by his Father, but the actions to carry it out have been delegated to his Son to implement at the appointed time – a time which is known only to the Father (cf. Mt.24:36). In this verse, John now sees the Father's directive given to his Son to prepare the earth for his return as Jesus breaks open the first seal of the heavenly scroll; the time for his return is now

close at hand. As John records this event, we find that he is no longer writing about “the things which are,” but has begun to write about “things which shall be hereafter” (cf. Re.1:19).

“And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Re. 6:2).

The white horse is both a symbol of authority and of peace. This man will threaten and boast of his great power, but as we can see, his boast is empty inasmuch as he carries no arrows for his bow; the power he exercises is empty threats and mass deception that leads to a delusion of peace gained through power. He wears a crown by which he claims to have sovereign authority over the entire earth, thus usurping the authority of the true Christ. In the human sense, his rise to power has come about because of human sin leading to the moral degeneration of societies, religious institutions, and governments culminating in political and moral chaos and anarchy causing mankind to become desperate for peace. However, the rule of the Antichrist has been preordained in Heaven to come about as Jesus Christ breaks open the first seal of this scroll. We shall have a much more detailed description of the Antichrist and his nefarious activities in a future newsletter, as we study Revelation Chapter 13.

“And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword” (Re, 6:3.4).

This time, it is the second living creature who speaks. During this time, the Antichrist will have gained full control over the entire earth. Nevertheless, he has only brought about a tenuous delusion of peace, inasmuch as evil and corruption will grow in the world like a festering sore until an eruption of violence becomes inevitable. The consequence of that underlying rebellion is revealed to John as Jesus Christ opens the second seal. This time, a red horse (red signifying war) will go forth upon the earth, and “power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.” We are not told in this text what specific human events on earth have led up to the start of this great war. We are merely told that one individual or perhaps an organized group (the horseman) has been given a formidable weapon. Whatever that “great sword” is, whether nuclear, chemical, or something far more destructive and deadly, is not stated. That this is a global war is indicated in the words: “take peace from the earth.” This war will occur somewhere near the end of the 3 ½ year reign of the Antichrist, as we have indicated on our timeline of Daniel’s seventieth week.

The great global war could be over in a very short time assuming that very sophisticated weapons are utilized. The two horsemen that are yet to follow would most likely go forth in rapid sequence as the inevitable aftermath of this highly destructive world-wide war is realized.

“And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine” (Re. 6:5,6).

Now it is the third living creature that bids John to “come and see.” The black horse of famine must then inevitably go forth. Although it is probable that a large percentage of the earth’s population will have been destroyed by the weapons of war, there will still be a very large population remaining, many of which will starve to death because the processes of food production and delivery will have been destroyed. A black market will also spring up such that essential items as well as luxury items can still be obtained by the rich and powerful, who can afford the exorbitant prices, while the poorer classes will starve to death for want of bread.

“And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth” (Re.6:7,8).

Now, the fourth living creature speaks to John. War brings forth more than famine, the pale horse represents plagues and death. This horseman’s name is “Death” and the grave (Greek: *Hades*) follows after him. Even the wild beasts of the earth, driven by hunger, will add to the death toll. Those wild beasts may very well be literal wild animals whose populations have grown enormously – perhaps through institutional animal activism supported by the false religious philosophies of evolutionism and environmentalism.

They could, of course, metaphorically represent evil gangs of men and women motivated by hunger and greed to kill for food and medicine like wild animals, because men will kill others in order to stave off hunger and starvation. Twenty-five percent of the earth's population will die of starvation and the violence associated with it. Considering the immense population likely living on the earth at that time, the death toll from the violent global war and its aftermath would be enormous, and the time ahead for those that survive will be extremely bleak.

The culmination of this great global war and its aftermath brings us near to the mid-point of the seventieth week of Daniel. This is noted at the end of the timeline shown in Illustration 1 above, and it is shown again at the beginning of the timeline in Illustration 2 below, which depicts the last 3 1/2 years of this prophetic period. In a desperate attempt to regain control of this disaster, the Antichrist will break his earlier agreement with Israel (cf. Da.9:27) and establish himself as God in Jerusalem. He will place an image representing himself inside a rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem; the abomination of desolation will then be standing where it should not in the Holy of

Holies (cf. Mt.24:15). The Jews who had originally looked to the Antichrist as their messiah for protection from their many enemies will finally recognize him as the "man of sin" that he truly is (cf. 2Th.2:3).

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood

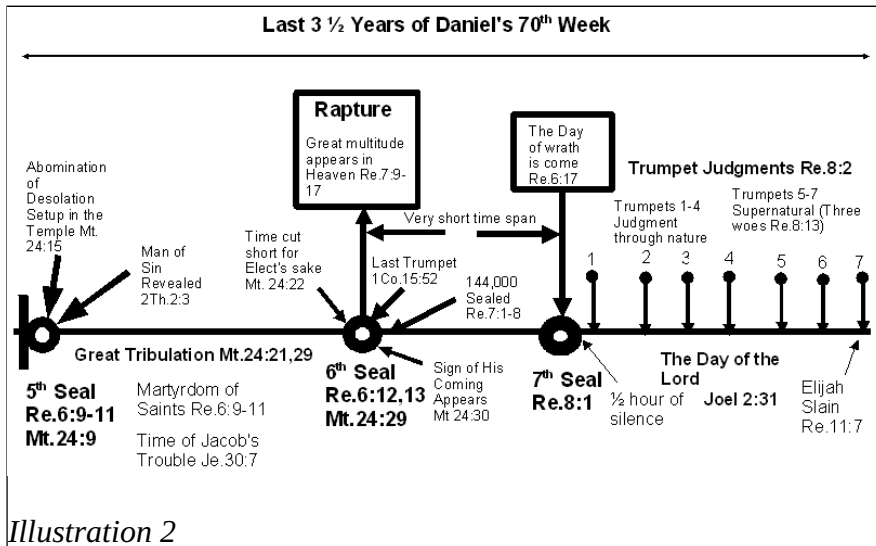


Illustration 2

on them that dwell on the earth?" (Re.6:9,10)

When our Lord opened the fifth seal, John saw those souls that had been martyred because of their strong witness and because they held firmly to God's Word. These are not recent arrivals, as we see from their words, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Undoubtedly, those spoken of in this verse are the countless God-fearing Jews who have been despised, mistreated, and systematically massacred by Gentile nations over many centuries, as is evidenced by the fact that they have been kept under an altar. The Judaic Temple had two altars. the brazen alter of sacrifice and the altar of incense. The altar referred to here is the altar of sacrifice, signifying devout Jews who had been slain for the Word of God and their unyielding testimony to it. It is they who cry out pleading for vengeance, not martyred Christians as some maintain. If as we have asserted, the true Church is still hidden away upon the earth at this time in underground enclaves, its believers will also be killed as they are discovered, but when Christians die they go directly into the presence of the Lord to forever remain at his side; they are not held hidden away beneath an altar.

"And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Re.6:11).

These Jews kept under the altar were given white robes of righteousness as assurance of their future redemption and were told to patiently wait until their brethren and fellow servants of God should join them. The brief interval of time between the fifth and sixth seal was labeled a time of Great Tribulation by Jesus when He said: "for then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be" (Mt.24:21). Thus begins the time of a mass slaughter of Jews world-wide, as many others of their brothers join these martyred Jews during the period of intense tribulation that lies ahead. This time of great tribulation is also noted in Old Testament Scripture as the "time of Jacob's trouble" (cf. Je.30:7). Of all the persecution that the Hebrew people have suffered, including the severe persecution under the Russian Czar and later during the German Holocaust under Hitler, this time will be far worse for them (cf. Mt.24:22).

Semitic Jews have been tormented to this day because of their rejection of the Messiah and by Satan's anger against them as the ones who brought Him forth into the world (Re.12:1-5; cf. Ro.9:4,5; Ge.37:9,10). Satan will at this time attack Israel in all his fury; it is at this point that Russia will lead the charge as she and various Islamic allies mount a failed attack upon Israel with formidable force. So severe will be the distress, persecution, and slaughter in the remaining time of the great human upheaval that none could survive if the Great Tribulation were to last any longer than a short while. For the sake of God's elect, both Jew and Christian, Jesus will bring the chaotic violence to a swift conclusion as He breaks open the sixth seal of the scroll (cf. Mt.24:21,22).

“And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places” (Re.6:12-14).

Up until this point in time, although preordained by God, the terrible events of the last days have been carried out by Satan through the evil nature of men themselves. Global war has taken a terrific toll through direct destruction and indirectly through famine, and disease. Now however, men will have no doubt regarding the heavenly source of future judgments as our Lord breaks open the sixth seal. Immediately, a violent earthquake will severely shake the entire earth. This massive earthquake will be so severe as to move mountains and islands out of their previous locations. The sun will go completely dark, and the moon will turn blood red in color before going dark (cf. Jl.2:30-31). A great display of falling stars will be followed by a total blackening of the sky, as the heavens roll up as a scroll when the reading is finished (cf. Mt.24:29). It is then that Jesus Christ will become clearly visible against the backdrop of darkness to be recognized by the multitudes, as He before had predicted in his Olivet Discourse: “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Mt.24:30; cf. Re.1:7). While the reprobate moan, the hidden remnant of Christian believers looking up will rejoice knowing that the hour of their final redemption is very near (cf. Lu. 21:25-28).

“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:” (Re.6:15,16)

Every depraved man living upon the earth will give up on his insane acts of violence to see to his own personal safety. Those who have the opportunity and means to do so will hide themselves in caves or in the rocks of the mountains (cf. Is.2:19-21). It is obvious that caves and mountain projections actually represent more danger than safety against earthquakes, but the unsaved “said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb.” These men will be so angry and fearful of the visible presence of the face of Jesus Christ whom they see coming in the clouds of heaven, that they will prefer to be buried in the rocks of the earth rather than submit and bow down before Him whom they had so long opposed, cursed and hated. The reprobate show no evidence of repentance, nor will they appeal to God for mercy.

“For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Re,6:17).

Indeed, as the old testament prophet Nahum asked, “Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him” (Na.1:6). The visible sign of Jesus Christ's coming in heaven signals the beginning of a period labeled in both the Old and New Testaments as the “Day of the Lord,” in which the Lord Jesus will prosecute the fierce wrath of God upon the earth's rebellious population through seven cataclysmic disasters, each of which is heralded by an angel blowing a loud trumpet. This period is shown at the right end of the timeline in Illustration 2 above. The trumpet judgments will begin soon after Jesus breaks open the seventh seal and starts to unroll the scroll in which He receives ownership of the earth and full authority to judge it in preparation for his return as its rightful King.

However, two very important events first must take place within a very brief interval of time that we find between the sixth and seventh seal. The first is the sealing of 144,000 elect Jews to act as witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ on earth during these severe judgments, and the second is the removal of the faithful Church to a place of safety along side their Lord in heaven. These two events will comprise the subject matter of next month's Newsletter as we move on in this study into Revelation Chapter 7. © Arthur J. Smith November 2017.