

**The Great Pretender
The First Seal
The Rise Of The Antichrist
Revelation 6:1 – 2**

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Revelation 1:19

“Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.” (NASB95)

We are in the last part of the outline that we saw in Revelation 1:19, since chapter 4 we have been in the world of “things which will take place after these things.”

We entered the court of the Universe and have witnessed the deed to planet earth being taken by the Lamb since only He is the one who is worthy having personally paid the price.

We have also learned what loud worship results in and witnessed, along with John, the first incident of unbelievers worshipping. The worship though was not done because of changed hearts.

We begin to see Jesus now begin to exercise His ownership privileges. This is done by beginning to open the scroll, the deed to planet earth, and as He comes across each seal, we will see that there are some conditions attached to that seal. Each seal and the actions to be done are in preparing the planet for takeover by its rightful owner, Jesus Christ.

The end game the Father has always had is, Eden on earth. On top of that, He intends to live among men. For that to happen, there are some things which must take place first.

From 10,000 feet, we see this in the outline.

We are going to witness, along with John, Jesus opening the seven seals on the deed.

When He opens the seventh seal, we are introduced to seven trumpets. These are trumpets that no one on earth wants to hear being played.

Prior to seventh trumpet playing, we find out we are 3 ½ years into the Tribulation. With the seventh trumpet, we are introduced to seven bowls of judgement.

We see a pattern of 4, 2 and 1 with each of the groups of judgement.

The first four judgements are followed by two more that turn things up a notch or two, followed by an interlude and then the seventh judgment.

The seventh seal = seven trumpets

The seventh trumpet = seven bowls

...both the trumpets and the bowls clearly echo the plagues of Egypt—a matter the earliest readers could scarcely have missed—while the bowls themselves also echo the trumpets. (Fee 2011, 90)

The period of time more directly covered by these seven seals, is that which lies between the assumption of the resurrected and translated saints of the first class, and the full instalment of the millennial order, when Satan is bound, the first resurrection completed, and the blessed and holy who have part in it reign with Christ as his kings and priests. (Seiss 1901, 301)

We do not know or are we told how long the period of time is for the seals.

Because there is not a time frame given, there are different views of the seals. Some say the seals start off the tribulation and give a high-level history of the seven-year period.

The preterist view believes the seals provide history and all took place during the life of John, we do not hold to a preterist view here at Calvary.

There is a spiritual view that spiritualizes everything about the seals. We also do not hold that view either.

There is also the view that the seals give the set up to the tribulation and conclude in the tribulation.

Preterism - A method of interpreting the book of the Revelation as a description of conditions in the 1st century A.D. Preterists see the book as a protest in apocalyptic terms against the tyranny of imperial Rome, not as a prophecy of end-time conditions and events. (Cairns 2002, 342)

In His teaching Jesus divided the time into two periods, the beginning of birth pangs (Matt. 24:8) and the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21). The former part closely parallels the first four seals in particular. So an important key in fixing the time period of the seals in this message was given by Christ some sixty-five years earlier when He taught about the future time of trial on earth. (Thomas 1992, 416)

With that, we see that the seals begin as a set-up, post rapture, to events that take place in the tribulation.

Revelation 6:1–8

Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come." I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him. When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine." When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth. (NASB95)

Again, we need to remember the context of John who is writing at the end of the first century. Imagery is being used that would be familiar to him and to most of his readers of the time. Our problem is that we

read this in the 21st century and we do not have the memories or history that John and his early readers would have had. There are events and conditions that for them, they would immediately know about, because of familiarity. We also need to remember that there is an assumption on John's behalf that we fully know our old testament and are fully conversant with the images that he takes from there as well. For most 21st century Christians, knowledge of the old testament alone is going to be a problem. Throw in a bit of history and suddenly you have a book that some say is difficult to unpack. But once we account for all of that, this book becomes much easier to unpack.

John starts off by letting us know he is still an eyewitness. He is seeing the Lamb break the first seal and hearing one of the throne guardians, with the voice of thunder, say "Come." For John, this is a visceral experience.

Your Bible may say "Come and see," and that does show up in a few of the Greek texts, but not all of them. The command here is not to John. We will see though that for the first four seals, each throne guardian will speak and issue the command, since the word is in the imperative in the Greek, to come. When the command is issued, John sees ride up, a horse with a rider.

The text of the ancient Greek uncial manuscript Sinaiticus (Ⲛ) adds "and see" (cf. KJV), but Alexandrinus (A) has only "come." In context this command (PRESENT IMPERATIVE) does not refer to John or the church, but to the four horsemen (cf. 6:3, 5, 7). (Utley 2001, 60)

The four horsemen we see here are referred to commonly as the four horsemen of the apocalypse. As soon as we read this we begin to think back to the book of Zechariah and the four horses in chapter one and the four chariots in chapter 6.

Zechariah 1:8–11

"I saw in the night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen, and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses. Then I said, 'What are these, my lord?' The angel who talked with me said to me, 'I will show you what they are.' So the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered, 'These are they whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth.' And they answered the angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees, and said, 'We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest.'" (ESV)

Zechariah 6:1–7

"Again I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four chariots came out from between two mountains. And the mountains were mountains of bronze. The first chariot had red horses, the second black horses, the third white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled horses—all of them strong. Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, 'What are these, my lord?' And the angel answered and said to me, 'These are going out to the four winds of heaven, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth. The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the white ones go after them, and the dappled ones go toward the south country.' When the strong horses came out, they were impatient to go and patrol the earth. And he said, 'Go, patrol the earth.' So they patrolled the earth." (ESV)

Looking at the first seal and the first horse, there are numerous commentators who say that this is a picture of Jesus; if it is, He is hanging out with a really bad crowd.

For the second through fourth seals, we are also told of who the throne guardian is that makes the commanding announcement, here, we are simply told "one of the four living creatures."

Looking back at the order John gave in Revelation 4, we can extrapolate just which of the living creatures this is, it is the first living creature from verse seven, the one who was like a lion.

Lion – Messiah
Ox – Servant
Man – The Son of Man
Eagle – The Son of God

Matthew

Theme

Jesus is the Messiah

All that He said

Lion

Mark

Theme

Jesus is a servant

All that He did

Ox

Luke

Theme

Jesus is the Son of man

All that He felt

Man

John

Theme

Jesus is the Son of God

Who He is

Eagle (McGee 1997, 931)

With that background, we now see that the first living creature, the one who is like a lion, just as Jesus is the lion of the tribe of Judah, is the one making the command regarding the white horse.

And we shall find a correspondence in each case between the living being and the one who comes forth at his call. (Grant 2005, 59)

Here, it is the Lion.

If the living beings represent characters of God's government, and characters also which are found in Christ, we can find here a double reason why, Christ being rejected, the judgments come forth at the cherubim's call. A rejected Saviour calls forth a destroyer. The voice of the lion summons to his career the white-horsed conqueror. (Grant 2005, 60)

2 Corinthians 11:13–15

"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds." (ESV)

Isaiah 14:13–14

"You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'" (ESV)

The throne guardian who has the appearance of a lion is the one making the command, the one on the white horse is **the great pretender**, the one who is like the Messiah but is not the Messiah.

Jesus called it back in John 5:43

John 5:43

"I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me. If someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him." (NET)

This is the one that Daniel warned about when he wrote about the 70 weeks decreed for the nation of Israel.

Daniel 9:25–27

“So know and understand: From the issuing of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until an anointed one, a prince arrives, there will be a period of seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. It will again be built, with plaza and moat, but in distressful times. Now after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one will be cut off and have nothing. As for the city and the sanctuary, the people of the coming prince will destroy them. But his end will come speedily like a flood. Until the end of the war that has been decreed there will be destruction. He will confirm a covenant with many for one week. But in the middle of that week he will bring sacrifices and offerings to a halt. On the wing of abominations will come one who destroys, until the decreed end is poured out on the one who destroys.” (NET)

The horse was white symbolizing righteousness and holiness. It gave an appearance of purity, but that does not necessarily mean the rider was righteous. (Constable 2003, Re 6:2)

The preferred interpretation is that the first horseman of Revelation 6:2 represents the Antichrist or else a trend or movement of which he would certainly be the chief example. (Wong 1996, 222)

Geopolitics Post Rapture

To understand the events a little better, let's pause and take another look at the rapture of the church and what the ramifications of that are on the world geopolitical picture

Jesus Himself pointed out that He comes like a thief, we can know the season, but not the exact day and hour.

The season is outlined for us in Matthew 24 and we see that the primary indicator of the season starting is Israel returning to the land.

It was not necessary for Israel to be in the land for the rapture to occur, but once the event did happen, we now can view with our eyes wide open and understand fully the times we are living in.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

“Now we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also we believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep as Christians. For we tell you this by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not go ahead of those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.” (NET)

2 Thessalonians 2:11

“Consequently God sends on them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false.” (NET)

2 Thessalonians 2:11

“καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πέμπει αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς ἐνέργειαν πλάνης εἰς τὸ πιστεῦσαι αὐτοὺς τῷ ψεύδει,” (Nestle, et al. 1993, 2 Thess 2:11)

The Greek is very clear, those who remain after the rapture will believe “the lie.” The word in the Greek is singular and is preceded with what is translated as the article “the.”

As Christ removes His church from the world, what is the impact?

Much will depend upon the penetration of the gospel in a culture and the number of those who truly believe. We learned from the church in Laodicea that the actual number is much smaller than we think as there are many cultural Christians but not those who truly are believing in the work of Christ on the cross and have confessed "...with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;" (Romans 10:9, NASB95)

We are also told that prior to His return for the church, there will be apostasy.

2 Thessalonians 2:3–4

"Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not arrive until the rebellion comes and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, and as a result he takes his seat in God's temple, displaying himself as God." (NET)

Two steps

Apostasy and then the man of lawlessness revealed. (Revelation 6:1-2)

When Christ returns for His church, He is returning to a world that, for the most part, is not looking for Him and is busy doing other things. This will be during a period in which the Church is rich, and predominately, apostate. This is now.

The rebellion of Babylon has carried on throughout history. The people of those days sacrificed their children to pagan gods; we sacrifice our unborn children on the altar of convenience. We do not bow down before stone idols; we give wholehearted allegiance to the gods of money, power, and sex. Too often our devotion to God is an "add on," something done in church once a week. Christians are a minority in an increasingly hostile culture. We are exiles, not geographically, but morally and spiritually. (Lutzer 2018, 31)

Suddenly and without notice, millions disappear. All who know and love Jesus. Who will go to work tomorrow morning in the millions of workplaces that now have unfilled positions? What happens to those companies and governments where key positions were filled by believers and now there is no leadership showing up for work? Who will pay the bills, and buy the goods that were manufactured for a marketplace that suddenly is millions, perhaps over a billion short?

Suddenly, now there is an oil glut as the consumers are gone. Now there is a temporary food surplus as those who would consume it are gone. Temporary because of a seal yet to be opened, but there will also be no one in many cases, to bring in the harvest.

Short term, there would have been air crashes and auto accidents all because suddenly there are missing flight crews and drivers. Hospitals are missing staff too as doctors and nurses are not available to be recalled to work, just as there will be many in law enforcement missing.

Let's add one other potential factor. In the scriptures, we understand that there is an age at which a person passes from innocence to responsibility for their sinful condition. David hinted strongly at that.

2 Samuel 12:22–23

"He replied, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept because I thought, 'Perhaps the LORD will show pity and the child will live. But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Am I able to bring him back? I will go to him, but he cannot return to me!'" (NET)

Matthew 19:13–14

"Then little children were brought to him for him to lay his hands on them and pray. But the disciples scolded those who brought them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not try to stop them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'" (NET)

Conjecture this, as the church is raptured, Jesus also takes to Himself all the children, from everywhere, all at once. Suddenly every hospital on the planet has no children in the nursery or in pediatrics. Every nation, every island, everyplace on the planet will be touched as the children are all taken.

But in some nations, that would be the only effect as most of the population is still there. Some of those nations have political ambitions and they also have weapons and the means to deliver those weapons. But the question on everyone's mind, "what just happened?"

The churches will be filled the next day and, unfortunately, there will be folks showing up to explain it.

Some will tell the truth, but many will not have a clue. Into this environment comes "the lie." Possibilities as to what this lie will be are only as good as one's imagination. One area where we see activity currently and a ready-made explanation is in the realm of those who say they have been abducted by aliens.

Aliens make predictions of an imminent period of global chaos and destruction. They say that a certain number of humans...will be "rescued" from the planet in order to continue the species, either on another planet or back on Earth after the destruction is over. Many abductees report they don't believe their alien captors and foresee instead a much more sinister use of the "rescued" humans. (Ruffino and Jordan 2010, Kindle Locations 577-580)

We forget that Jesus has provided us a warning of this time period.

Mark 13:21–22

"And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and **perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.**" (ESV)

Into all of this comes an individual, who we see, has a set up for us in the symbol of the rider on the white horse. This is the only seal in which it is the throne guardian who speaks and sounds like thunder.

Revelation 6:2

"I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer." (NASB95)

John watches as the white horse comes in with someone sitting on it with a bow, but no arrows. The Greek word for bow is used only here in the new testament and nowhere else.

Horse

In Scripture, horses are generally mentioned in connection with the concept of strength, warfare, and conquest (Isa. 30:16; 31:1; Job 39:19–25; Ps. 76:5–6; Prov. 21:31; Rev. 9:7; 19:11), and horsemen are often associated with an omen of the end. White is the color of light (cf. Matt. 17:2), the color of the heavenly world, and the "eschatological color." In the Apocalypse, however, the color is normally used to portray righteousness. This same idea may also be implied here. Such an understanding may seem strange and even raise the question, How can the idea of righteousness be applied to this rider if he is the Antichrist? The answer is that it can if he is merely an imitation of righteousness, a counterfeit of the true. In fact the concept of a feigned righteousness is most fitting here because Matthew 24:5, to which the first seal seems to be parallel, says, "Many will come in My name, saying 'I am the Christ,' and they will mislead many." In view of this, it is not astonishing that in order to accomplish this deception the Antichrist will imitate the true Messiah of Revelation 19:11–20. This consideration seems to be consistent with the wider context of Revelation, which refers to other satanic imitations of Christ and His conquest, including the crowns of 12:3, as well as the victories of 11:7 and 13:7.

The horse may also be depicted as white because the Antichrist is a great leader, and ancient military leaders sometimes rode white horses in order to stand out conspicuously in rallying their forces. (Wong 1996, 223)

Bow

Revelation 6:2

“καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἵππος λευκός, καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ἔχων τόξον καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ στέφανος καὶ ἐξῆλθεν νικῶν καὶ ἵνα νικήσῃ.” (Nestle, et al. 1993, Rev 6:2)

Τόξον (toxon) - This is the only appearance of this word in the New Testament, “the bow as an archer’s weapon” (Arndt, et al. 2000, 1010)

...one of the most extensively employed and (among primitive nations) efficient implements of missile attack. (M’Clintock and Strong 1880, 863)

The reference here in Revelation 6 makes no reference at all to arrows, only the bow, only the tool for launching the missile. We have to remember that John is looking at the world through a first century Jewish lens, we can make assumptions about the modern meaning of a missile launcher without reference to the actual missiles, but is that the correct view to have? The bow, referenced with no arrows, opens the potential for various interpretations of what is implied by this being here.

It is possible that a kind of bow for shooting bullets or stones is here alluded to, like the pellet-bow of India, or the “stone-bow” in use in the Middle Ages, and to which allusion is made by Shakespeare (Twelfth Night, ii, 5), and which in Wisd. 5:22, is employed as the translation of πετροβόλος. This latter word occurs in the Sept. text of 1 Sam. 14:14, in a curious variation of a passage which in the Hebrew is hardly intelligible—ἐν βολίσι, καὶ ἐν πετροβόλοις, καὶ ἐν κόχλαξι τοῦ πεδίου: “with things thrown, and with stone-bows, and with flints of the field.” If this be accepted as the true reading, we have here, by comparison with 14:27, 43, an interesting confirmation of the statement (13:19–22) of the degree to which the Philistines had deprived the people of arms, leaving to the king himself nothing but his faithful spear, and to his son no sword, no shield, and nothing but a stone-bow and a staff (Auth. Vers. “rod”). (M’Clintock and Strong 1880, 864)

The bow is frequently mentioned symbolically in Scripture. In Psa. 7:12, it implies victory, signifying judgments laid up in store against offenders. It is sometimes used to denote lying and falsehood (Psa. 64:4; 120:4; Jer. 9:3), probably from the many circumstances which tend to render a bow inoperative, especially in unskilful hands. Hence also “a deceitful bow” (Psa. 78:57; Hos. 7:16), with which compare Virgil’s “Perfidus ensis frangitur” (Æn. xii, 731). The bow also signifies any kind of arms. The bow and the spear are most frequently mentioned, because the ancients used these most (Psa. 44:6; 46:9; Zech. 10:4; Josh. 24:12). In Habak. 3:9, “thy bow was made bare” means that it was drawn out of its case. The Orientals used to carry their bows in a case hung on their girdles. (M’Clintock and Strong 1880, 864)

The bow is used to launch missiles (arrows, stones, small pieces of metal.) It implies victory, judgements, lying and falsehoods. It implies any kind of arms.

The horse archers were the “atom bomb” of the ancient world. No one knew how to defend against their attack. The Scythian horse archers were dreaded (Col. 3:11). These savage nomads conquered whole empires. The horse meant that they could overtake any enemy; the bow enabled them to strike at a distance and remain out of reach of sword or spear. The Roman Empire, relying on the foot soldiers of the legions, fell in A.D. 455 to the Vandals, but the eastern empire in Constantinople, relying on the horse archers, lasted a thousand years longer. The use of gunpowder ended the advantage. (Custer 2004, 76)

The rider on the white horse, who is carrying a bow only, implies that this ruler will be armed to the teeth with the most modern weaponry of his day. He has the military capability to take down anyone who stands opposed to him, and he can do so without having to rely on a massive mobilization of troops. The

rider of this horse has the most modern WMD's, nuclear, biological, chemical, space based, artificial intelligence empowered drones and genetic based weapons, available to him. He will conquer from a position of power.

John is a witness to this rider being given a crown, this is a στέφανος (stephanos) crown and the rider only receives one possibly indicating a single victory. Notice the crown "was given." "The aorist passive verb form was given (ἐδόθη) occurs here for the first time in Rev. It occurs 21 times in Rev. (3 × 7) and in every instance reveals the sovereign control of God over all persons and circumstances in this conflict of the ages (6:2, 4 [twice], 8, 11; 7:2; 8:3; 9:1, 3, 5; 11:1, 2; 13:5 [twice], 7 [twice], 14, 15; 16:8; 19:8; 20:4)." (Custer 2004, 76)

This rider points to the great pretender, the anti-Christ and this seal is post rapture but more than likely prior to the beginning of the tribulation, This verse is speaking to the rise of the antichrist.

This points to the rise of an individual ruler who will conquer with the threat of force but without having to use it, at first. He will have the answer to the questions of the age post rapture. He will be in full alignment with and will be promoted by a religious leader who we will see rising to power elsewhere in the book of Revelation.

Daniel also discussed this in Daniel 7

Daniel 7:7–8

"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." (ESV)

Revelation 6:2

"So I looked, and here came a white horse! The one who rode it had a bow, and he was given a crown, and as a conqueror he rode out to conquer." (NET)

We will see later in Revelation that there is another rider on a white horse, not the imposter, but the real. That rider will not have a bow but will have a sword, the sword of the Word since He is the Word. The thing we must remember is that Satan is a liar and an imposter, this shows us that and as we move forward in Revelation, Satan will even attempt to have a false trinity.

This rider will conquer and "It is complete in the sense that the counterfeit Christian forces of the future will attain worldwide domination, but that domination will be only temporary." (Thomas 1992, 424)

Revelation 19:11–16

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.'" (NASB95)

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