

Thursday Bible Class

26th June 2025

The Lamb Opens the Seals

Revelation 6: 1-2



6 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.

² 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.

The historical setting, and context of this vision, being given to John on the Isle of Patmos, must not be forgotten, as the seven sealed scroll is opened, and its contents revealed. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, is probably one of the most well known aspects of the book of Revelation, with many artists and Bible commentators having something to say about it, with it even featuring in modern pop culture. Needless to say the great bulk of this is irrelevant rubbish, which bears little comparison to the actual text, and context.

The artwork shown on page one of this contribution, seems to match the text very closely, and so can be used as a reference point.

The giving of the book of Revelation was by Jesus who had been raised from the dead. It came after the sack of the city of Jerusalem by the Romans, and its complete destruction, after the end of the Jewish kingdom, in AD70, whereby its subjects were taken captivity, the temple completely burnt down, and not one stone left upon another.

John was exiled in Patmos during the reign of the Emperor of the Roman Empire, called Domitian. He was the son of Vespasian, and brother of Titus, who were responsible for the destruction and end of the Jewish State. This Domitian was a despotic ruler, and responsible for the passing of a law:

"That no Christian, once brought before the tribunal, should be exempted from punishment without renouncing his religion."



The above are coins which he had minted, and show his belief that he was a god. He is shown on the reverse of the coin on the right hand side as being seated, but holding a thunderbolt a Roman symbol of deity, the thunderbolt being associated with Jupiter/Jesus.

John on the isle of Patmos was personally a victim of this persecutor, being himself banished in exile to this rocky island.

He was actually included in the visions he received from the Lord Jesus, as we have shown in previous studies. They were relevant to him, and to those he was contemporary with.

The opening of the seals began in his day, while he was alive, as in the vision, he was present, when he who was worthy, would ensure the scroll was opened – (see previous chapter) The scroll itself, as we shall see contained the prophetic blueprint of the history of the Ecclesia of the Lord Jesus, and the history of the false church. It was the Divine masterplan for the times of the Gentiles, but with a particular focus on the ecclesiastical history (written on the back side of the scroll) and the political history (written on the front side of the scroll)

Many modern church leaders talk about the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, and many other aspects of the book or the Revelation, and take them completely out of their context, and like to relate everything to their own day, as if they and their generation are the singularly most important.

Avoiding this, we stay faithful to the context, and remember how that Jesus told John that the giving of the Apocalypse was to show his servants things which must shortly come to pass (Rev 1:1)

Revelation 6:1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder...

The beginning of the revelation of the scroll would take place in the lifetime of John, as we recall he wept much, seeing it being sealed. The revealing of its contents was a reward and encouragement to John.

Realising this, the opening of the first seal, was exposing the next set of major events which would befall the Ecclesia, the Body of Christians, during this the beginning of the times of Gentiles.

It is apt and ironic, that when the Lamb – the Lord Jesus opened the first seal, John heard the noise of thunder... One of the signature symbols used by the current Emperor Domitian were thunderbolts.

But it is the Almighty who rules in the Kingdom of men. (Daniel 5:21) And Domitian was just a mere man and no god. Thunder is literally a sign of a coming storm. Symbolically it is a sign of coming political storm.

When John heard the thunder, he also heard **one of the four Living Ones calling Come and see.**

When the great political change came, John was not the only one to witness it. There were others, faithful and true, who were watching and waiting alongside him. We were introduced to many of them, when we studied the seven letters to the seven ecclesias. All of them

would have been excited to notice how that as soon as they received the letters, events started to change, and the political arrangement within the Roman empire began to move, exactly as the vision given to John revealed. This would have given them great relief from the daily persecution that they would have suffered.

As we read through this sixth chapter we will notice that the four living ones say “Come and see” with all the first four seals. However, after that we do hear from them anymore. This is because by then, the Ecclesia had become overtaken by the False Church, so the Ecclesia no longer existed as a political body anymore, becoming sidelined, as the False Church stole their identity. Sidelined in the eyes of men, but not in the eyes of God.

What did John see?

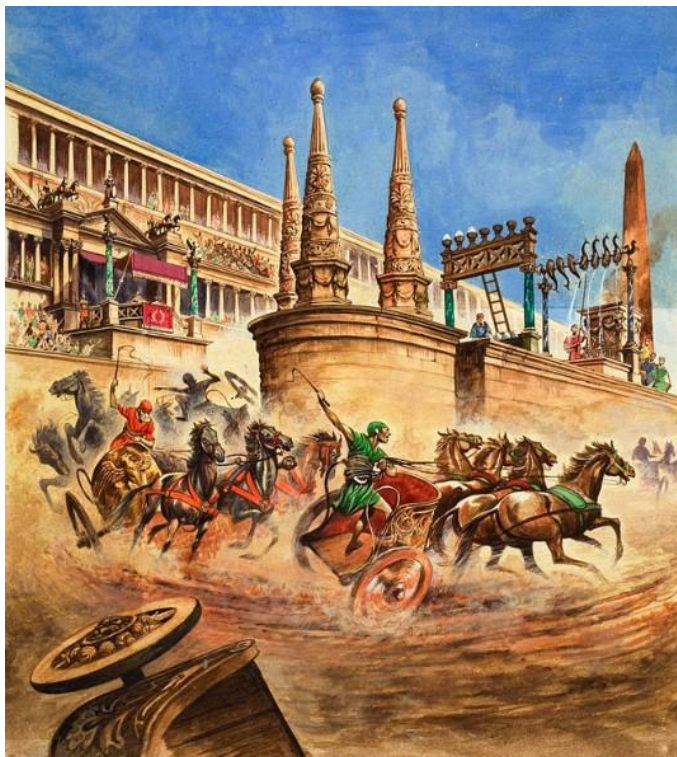


2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

What did this mean?



John was by now an old man. He knew all about the power of Rome. He had handled enough Roman coins to know that the Emperors and rulers of the Empire, liked to reinforce their power through propaganda, and one of the best ways to do this was by symbols on coins. John would know that the quadriga, four horses was a symbol

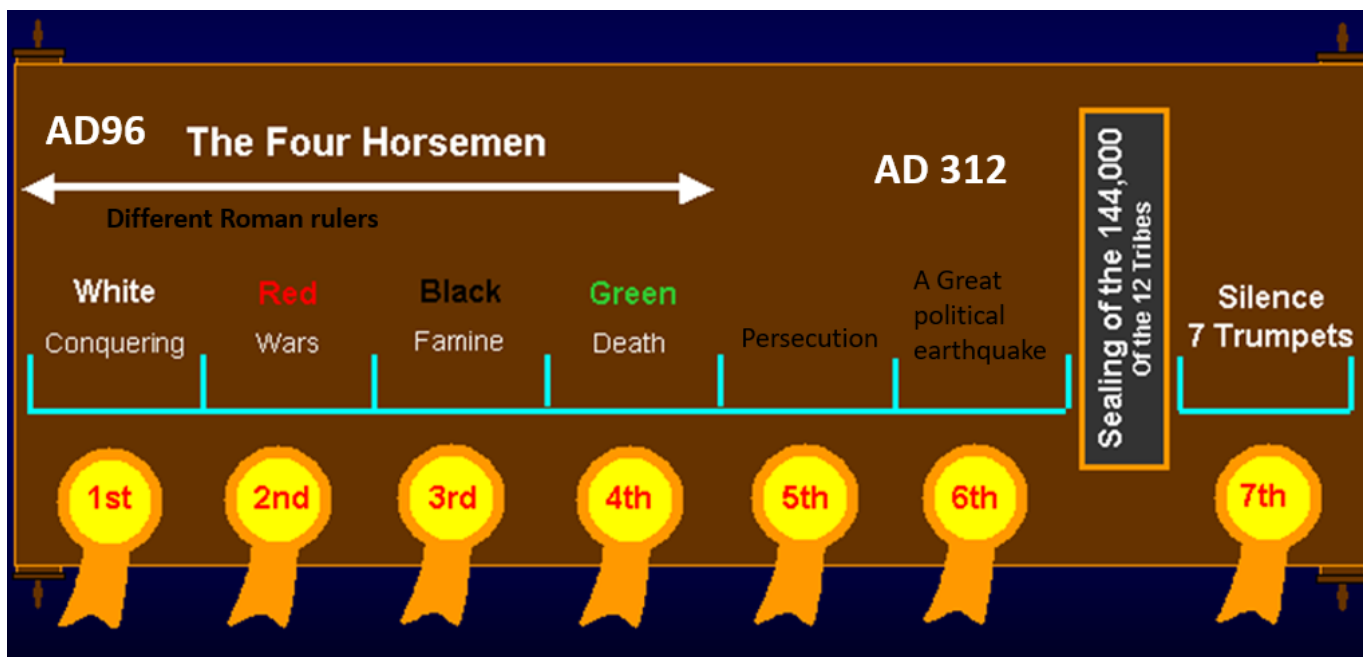


of Roman power. It was a potent symbol seen in the chariot races in every major city throughout the empire.

Here in the vision, believers in Christ Jesus would be reminded as they heard the whole city cheering the races, that *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill;*

but time and chance happeneth to them all. (Eccles 9:11) It is God who was ruling in the Kingdoms of men.

The first seal revealed a white horse, the second seal a red horse, the third seal a black horse, and the fourth seal revealed a pale/greenish horse.



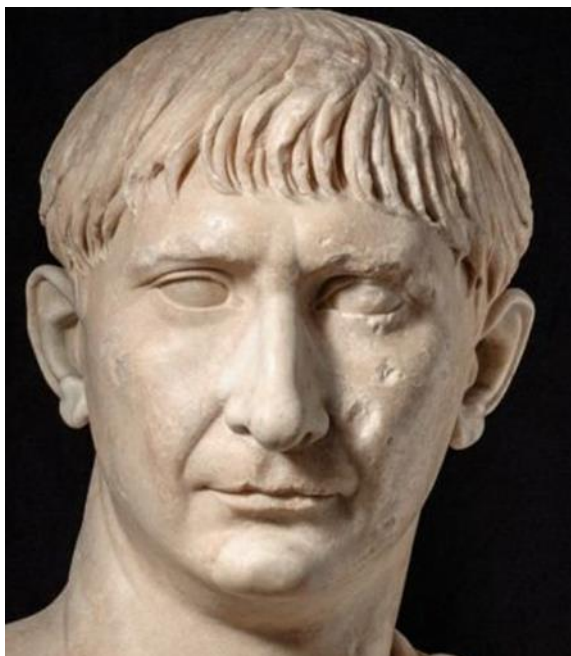
The wheels would eventually come off the Roman machine. But for now, John was just shown one particular phase.

- A white horse. White is often used in the Bible as a symbol of peace see Genesis 8:11, and righteousness (Daniel 7:9)
- The horse had a rider – which represented the ruler of the Roman horse, which had a peaceful characteristic to it.
- The rider was carrying a bow, but no arrow. It was as if the arrow had already been shot.
- The rider had a crown – not a golden one with jewels used for kings, but the Greek word *stephanos* is one made out of evergreen leaves used for victors
- The rider went forward conquering



John, and the Fellowship of Jesus Christ suddenly heard the thunder of political change. The Emperor Domitian who had been such a ruthless persecutor was suddenly assassinated, in AD96. He who boasted he was a god holding the thunderbolt was murdered by a group which included even his own wife.

The next emperor was called Nerva. He immediately promised an end to the tyranny of Domitian's rule. Although he only ruled for two years, he stabilised the empire, prevented civil war, and passed laws to help the poor and significantly abolished the *Fiscus Judaicus*, which was a tax on Jews. He died a natural death, probably old age.



We can begin to see why the horse is a white colour. The next emperor was Trajan. Under his long rule, the Roman empire enjoyed great peace and prosperity, and expanded to its greatest maximum territory. He began a massive program of public works, building bridges, harbors and aqueducts. Finally, he reduced taxes and started a new welfare program for poor children.

With the Christians, he ignored those who wanted them persecuted and, instead, treated them like other citizens, punishing them only when they deserved it. A white horse.

A Roman lawyer and magistrate called Pliny had written to Trajan. In his letter he wrote this: FOR THE CONTAGION OF THIS SUPERSTITION (CHRISTIANITY) HAS SPREAD NOT ONLY THROUGH THE FREE CITIES, BUT INTO THE VILLAGES AND THE RURAL DISTRICTS, AND YET IT

SEEMS TO ME THAT IT CAN BE CHECKED AND SET RIGHT. IT IS BEYOND DOUBT THAT THE TEMPLES, WHICH HAVE BEEN ALMOST DESERTED, ARE BEGINNING AGAIN TO BE THROGGED WITH WORSHIPPERS, THAT THE SACRED RITES WHICH HAVE FOR A LONG TIME BEEN ALLOWED TO LAPSE ARE NOW BEING RENEWED, AND THAT THE FOOD FOR THE SACRIFICIAL VICTIMS IS ONCE MORE FINDING A SALE, WHEREAS, UP TO RECENTLY, A BUYER WAS HARDLY TO BE FOUND. FROM THIS IT IS EASY TO INFER WHAT VAST NUMBERS OF PEOPLE MIGHT BE RECLAIMED, IF ONLY THEY WERE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY OF REPENTANCE.”

From this we can see that it was not only Trajan on the white horse that was conquering. It was Christianity. It was marching through the empire very slowly and invisibly, but the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ had been sent out, the message shot out like a bow from an arrow. This is a symbol used in Zechariah 9:13-14, and words are compared to arrows in Psalm 64:3. This is why the rider in the vision John saw had a bow and no arrow.

This success of the growth of the Christian Fellowship was possible because of the reduced persecution, but sadly, in times of prosperity, it is when Truth becomes compromised.

Next Revelation Class will reveal what the Lord Jesus revealed next to John, and we will see the next stage of the growth of Christianity, and the political turmoil of the time.

Brother Terry