

# San Juan church of Christ

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## What Does God's Word Say About...

### Four Horsemen of Revelation

Our text in today's article will be taken from Revelation 6:1-8. Remember that the book of Revelation is written in symbolic language [communicated it] (Rev. 1:1). Four horses of different colors are revealed and ridden by four different riders. When this book was written a horse was a symbol of war. In order for armies to be strong during this period of history, they had to possess many horses. These horses are symbolic of the different types of wars [spiritual] Christians must fight and their color determines what type of war is being described.

Only the Lamb [Jesus] could break open the seals of the four horsemen (6:1). The apostle John saw a vision, "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" (6:2). This verse refers to those who are in Christ [Christians] and the white horse they are riding symbolizes purity and holiness. The white horse signifies a righteous war which Christians will have to fight on this earth throughout the Christian age. Isaiah the Prophet spoke of this day when he said, "The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; and you will be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord will designate. You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God" (Isa. 62:2-3). The apostle John also wrote in Revelation 5:10, "You have made them [Christians] to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they [the church] will reign upon the earth." Notice that this is a spiritual battle fought with the symbolism of having a bow. Paul agreed with the apostle John when he wrote, "in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you [Christians] will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one" (Eph. 6:16). The apostle John spoke of "the armies" which are enrolled in the book of life, "clothed in fine linen [baptism], white and clean, were following Him on white horses" (Rev. 19:14). This verse represents Christians spreading the gospel, which is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16).

With the help of Christ and the gospel message, the Christian conquers evil when a person is obedient to the gospel. Our authority comes from God through His word.

When the second seal was broken "a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted [God allowed] to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him" (Rev. 6:4). The horse in this seal is colored red, which symbolizes blood shed or death. The rider of this horse has the power to take peace from the earth and cause people to kill one another. It is not possible to identify this rider as a specific person, for he represents any force on this earth which is responsible for wars that cause people to kill each other (Matt. 24:6-7).

When He broke the third seal, "I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, 'A quart of wheat for a denarius, and 3 quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine'" (Rev. 6:6). This third seal represents a black horse. The color black is symbolic of mourning or death and this seal will bring severe hardships. This horseman has a pair of scales in his hand. The scales are used for weighing food which indicates that it is in short supply. During the Christian age there will be times of food shortage on earth and it will have to be weighed or rationed. The "quart of wheat and three quarts of barley" represent the ancient world's ration, per person, for a day. This means that a man's complete wages for a day would be needed in order to feed himself, an indication of great poverty. The oil and wine would not be hurt, which means that items of great value and people who are wealthy will always be a part of this world. While some are near starvation, others will be living a life of luxury.

When the Lamb broke the fourth seal John wrote, "I looked and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death...Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and with wild beasts of the earth" (Rev. 6:8). Here we need to understand that "a fourth" is used to designate a part of something. Remember, the number 4 symbolizes everything physical in the Bible (Rev. 7:1). The rider of this horse has the power to kill with the sword the physical "part" of man but that it does not have the power to take the spiritual "part" of man. What is being symbolized here is that this rider only has control over physical life but he can never destroy a man's spiritual life if the man remains faithful throughout these physical persecutions (Matt. 10:28).

It is important to be reminded that God has said these events must take place. They are sealed. The purpose of the vision that John had of the four seals of the horsemen is to show that these events must occur all through the Christian age until Christ returns.

Please send any comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to:  
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