

Current Affairs #53 – The Nature of the Four Horsemen

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Now we have begun to open the reference, in the sixth chapter of the book of Revelation, to the four horsemen of the apocalypse. As I have said, all of these signs are meant to tell us where we are in the advancement of human history, which is destined to accommodate the purposes of God to see it through to its ripening fullness, and also to accommodate the advance of the opposition to the Kingdom of God in all of its grotesque perversion.

Right after the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals and the four living creatures announced, “Come and see,” we are introduced to the rider on the white horse,¹ who is different from the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. So we are attempting to unpack here who or what is the rider on the white horse. We had talked about how he who sat on it had a bow [Refer to Current Affairs #52-The Authority of the Four Living Creatures]. I had set that aside for a moment because I wanted to come back to it, and I focused on the fact that it was given a crown, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

I was explaining the difference between the crown he was given and the crown that is typically associated with royalty and hereditary monarchy. Again, the diadem is the crown of hereditary monarchy, which means an orderly accession to power—a hereditary transfer of power and authority of a kingdom from one ruler to another ruler and some sense of the orderly designation of that. This one, however, was given not a diadem, but a *stephanos* (Strong’s Greek 4735), or a laurel or a wreath. I spoke about how the *Victor Ludorum* in the Greek Games was the most powerful of the athletes, the one who was consistently a winner. For example, Hercules would have been said to be one of the types of those who were the victor of praise—*laudorum* is praise—the celebrated athlete analogous to the decathlon in the modern Olympics. “He was given a crown.” It indicates that he did not, obviously, have a hereditary right to possess it, but he was given one on the basis of his personal accomplishments, what he could do. With that crown, “he went out conquering and to conquer.”

You will note that Jesus was not given all authority in heaven and on earth, nor was Jesus given all the nations as His inheritance, because of His ability to subdue by the force of His own personhood. Jesus was given the authority by God. He was given the diadem, the power to rule

heaven and earth, because of His obedient life. Immediately, we have the juxtaposition between the Lamb who had overcome and the rider on the white horse who goes out conquering and to conquer.

In the word “conquering,” it is the word *nikaó* (Strong’s Greek 3528). We get the word *nike*, like the swoosh, Nike, from that. It was, of course, the report that the Greek athlete, the Athenian athlete, brought back from the plains of Marathon where the Athenians went out to engage the Persian hordes. Pheidippides, the athlete, collapsed as he brought the word of the victory of the Athenians on the plains of Marathon, and he uttered one word, “*Nike*”—we have overcome, we have conquered. This is more like it is understood ordinarily.

It is not the conquering Lion of the tribe of Judah who overcame, as we are to overcome, by the submission of our lives to the purposes of God. Jesus is not the devouring lion. He is greater, and He can destroy the devouring lion. But the manner of the overcoming of the Lion of the tribe of Judah—and I am referencing Revelation chapter 4 and chapter 5, just before this in which it is said, “For the Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed, has overcome, and He is worthy to take the scroll and to open the seals”—His overcoming is by His obedient life. In the same way we overcome, which is by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and that we choose not to save our own lives.² We submit. And it is the power of God, the *histémi* (Strong’s Greek 2476) of God, that rises up within us when we are in a position of submission that overcomes. This is the foundation of faith. This is our epistemology.

But *this* is not *that*, so this is not of the Kingdom of God in the nature of its conquering. It overcomes by the terror of its might, by its ability to subdue and to conquer. In this sense, this is a conqueror whose nature and character are like the great beast of Daniel, the seventh chapter, concerning which beast it is said that he crushed and devoured his victims, and he oppressed and tread down the whole earth.³ This is this kind of conqueror.

Now part of the manner of his conquering is, he has a bow. Compare this to the sword that comes out of the mouth of the rider on the white horse.⁴ The bow is associated with a man in the Old Testament in the book of Genesis, the tenth chapter, called Nimrod. Nimrod is described in chapter

10 of the book of Genesis as a great hunter,⁵ as one who hunted with a bow; and, he is the founder of the city known as Babel,⁶ where the rebellion against God in the ancient times, following the flood, was again reformulated on the earth. He hunts men as prey, *this* conqueror, like Nimrod of the Old Testament. The bow, his method of conquering, connects the rider on this horse back to Nimrod, who opposes God and subjugates man by his own strength.

Because, you see, the kingdom of darkness has had multiple signs, multiple types along the path of human history. Those types would fold into each other, and like a snowball going down a mountain, it would gather mass as it continued through history. The earliest indication of this wicked kingdom that would suppress the whole earth, this fourth beast of Daniel 7, one of the earliest indications of that kingdom was Babel. Because what is in the kingdom of Babel that God came down to see their works and said, “There is nothing that they cannot do,” in the manner in which they have contrived to burn bricks and to build a tower on the plains of Shinar, and to conceive of how to go forward in the post-diluvian period (after the flood) in the same manner and with the same spirit with which they opposed God prior to the flood. So, Nimrod and Babel are pictures of how this opposition to God that has been in the earth since the enemy came in was reconfigured and how it was again re-engaged.

The character of Nimrod was he was a suppresser or subduer of people. He brought them together in opposition to God, and he was known for being the hunter with the bow. In connection with that, therefore, we see that this spirit on the white horse who goes forth—why does he have a bow again? what is his mission? —conquering and to conquer. This bow is not decorative. This is a war bow. I have jumped ahead and I have said, “This is a spirit.” So what I want to do before I unpack any more of the four horsemen of the apocalypse is to show you that all four, indeed there are five, are spirits. They are all spirits. To do that, I want to look at verse 7 of Revelation 6, because in the identifying of horsemen, it is unmistakable that they are demonic spirits, powerful demonic spirits, in which case they are the prime agencies for the rolling out of the kingdom of darkness, this great beast in that form as it is coming forth even now upon the earth. Verse 7 says,

When He [the Lamb] opened the fourth seal [We were at the first seal; now when He opens the fourth seal], I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see.” So

I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades [Hell] followed with him. And power was given to them [Death and Hell] over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth (Revelation 6:7-8 NKJV, comments added in brackets).

Now, I am not unpacking the fourth horseman yet. All I came here to show you—and I am going to observe that and stay with it because I have two others in between that I need to go back and unpack—I came here only to show you this: That the rider on the fourth horse was called, what? Death, and Hell followed after him. Who or what are Death and Hell? Well, we know about them in Scripture.

- In Revelation, the twentieth chapter, at the conclusion of the great white throne judgment it is said, “And Death and Hell were cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death” (cf. Revelation 20:14).

There is a pattern, you see. And two may not necessarily create a pattern, but I will show you a third example. Death and Hell work together, and they are evil demonic spirits of great importance in the kingdom of darkness. I will unpack that in a moment, but let me show you the third example of Death and Hell.

- When Jesus first encountered John on the island of Patmos, right here in the beginning of the book of Revelation, John turns to see the One who was speaking to him, and the voice that spoke to him had said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last; He who was dead and is alive forevermore. And I hold the keys of Death and Hell” (cf. Revelation 1:11,18).

So what does he do? He tells us that Jesus went into the domain of Death and stripped the authority of Death and Hell to imprison the righteous. That is why the moment Jesus died, as was recorded in the closing chapters of Matthew, the earth shook, it said, and the graves of the righteous dead were opened. They came back to life, and they walked around the city of Jerusalem for the forty days prior to His ascension.⁷ Then, when He ascended, the Scriptures are plain, He took captives in His train.⁸ He took them with Him to heaven. That is why the prophetic Psalm says, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates.” As He was going into heaven, He speaks to the gates of heaven and says,

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates! Be lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory might come in.”⁹ That was when the Lamb was ascending to the throne following His resurrection and leading captives in His train.

Ten days later He would release the Holy Spirit and the day of Pentecost would come. That Kingdom that He received—having come back to His place of authority before He had a body that He came in into the earth, He was given a Kingdom—and that Kingdom came forth in its initial stages on the day of Pentecost. And of the increase of that Kingdom there has been a steady increase. When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, the rider on the fourth horse, the pale (the word green or dun) horse was called Death, and Hell followed after him. Jesus had already stripped Death and Hell of the power to imprison and to contain the righteous, even as they were waiting for the accomplished work on the cross.

Now in the matter of Death and Hell, I wanted to point out that the spirit is called Death, and the condition of separation from God is also called death because that is the seat of the authority of the spirit of Death. When people have separated themselves from God and live in a condition apart from Him, therefore, living in their souls, their spirits not having been brought to functionality by the Holy Spirit, they live in a condition described as death. In that condition, a man is dead while he is yet alive. This death, then, is not the physical expiration of the body. Physical expiration of the body is a condition where there is a separation of the spirit from the flesh, from the body, and in that case, the death that is described is the death of the flesh. That is when the silver cord, according to Ecclesiastes, is broken and the pot is dashed at the wheel—when the spirit returns to God who gave it. That person, the only aspect of that person that is dead at that time is his body, because his body is no longer viable. But the person continues in life in the spirit, purely as a spirit.

When the Bible refers to, “I hold the keys of Death and Hell,” it is talking about two spirits—not human beings, not earthly potentates. It is speaking about demonic spirits who are key to the operation of the kingdom of darkness. The condition known as death results from this spirit by that name, and the authority of that spirit is to arrest and imprison in the domain of hell, under the rule of the spirit known as Hell, those who have been separated from God. That is why they work together, Death and Hell. And that is why Jesus took the keys of Death and Hell. But that is why

we see them together. Hence, it is a pattern. Uncontrovertibly, it is a pattern. That is why they show up together as the riders on the pale horse.

The lead is Death because the authority of death is the wages of sin. It has the authority to assign the punishment that comes from a life of sin, where the person is not redeemed by the blood of Christ. They are subject to the authority of the spirit of Death, who effectuates an arrest and delivers the souls of men—the bodies go into the dust of the earth in the grave—but the souls are subject to the control of the spirit of Death. And he delivers them into the custody of the spirit known as Hell, who rules over a domain by the same name.

What is my point? I did not mean to spend time talking about Death and Hell, except to establish this one point: the rider on the fourth horse is a spirit, and the one with him is also a spirit, Death and Hell. What spirit am I talking about? I am talking about one of the most powerful, in terms of the authority to arrest and imprison, of all the demonic spirits. I do not know what rank they occupied prior to their fall, but they are the last ones to be destroyed because of the power that they have regarding the domain of darkness and sin. When men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil, they are dead while they are alive. They are in the control of the spirit of Death and on their way to being confined in the domain of hell upon their deaths. So these four horsemen are four spirits, evil spirits of powerful rank. Because, look, when they go out upon the earth, they have power to do things, like the fourth horseman has power over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, hunger, death, and by beasts of the earth.

Because they are evil spirits, they are invisible. Do you see? Because they are evil spirits, they are invisible. How, then, are spirits and the activities of spirits ever to be detected upon the earth? Simple. By what they motivate men to do to themselves and to each other when such men are under the control of these spirits. The only way you know what a spirit is doing on the earth, whether it is the Holy Spirit or evil spirits, is by their activities through humans. So, what I am telling you is this: You are not going to be able to say, “Oh, there is the rider on the white horse, conquering and to conquer!” But when you see the effects of mankind doing things to each other for which there is no human explanation, that shocks the conscience, that goes above and beyond

anything that is normative for human beings in its wickedness and in its perversion, you ought to be able, uncontrovertibly, without question, to say, “That is the activity of an evil spirit.”

There are five spirits. Though there are four horsemen, the fourth horse is riding double; it carries the spirits of Death and Hell, because they will eventually perish together. Death and Hell are cast into the lake of fire. They are viewed as one because they function in the unitary fashion of oneness. As I have mentioned before, the authority to seize being given to the spirit of Death and the authority to imprison being given to the spirit known as Hell.

When we continue, I want to look at the rider on the red horse.

Endnotes:

1. See Revelation 6:1-2 NKJV: “Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, ‘Come and see.’ And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.”
2. See Revelation 12:11 NKJV: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”
3. See Daniel 7:7 NIV: “After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast--terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.”
4. See Revelation 19:11-16 NKJV: “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And

He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

5. See Genesis 10:9 NKJV: “He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.”
6. See Genesis 10:10 NKJV: “And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.”
7. See Matthew 27:51-53 NKJV: “And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”
8. Ephesians 4:8 NKJV: “Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.’”
9. See Psalm 24:7-10 NKJV:
“Lift up your heads, O you gates!
And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
The Lord mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, O you gates!
Lift up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
He is the King of glory. Selah”