

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse Revelation 6:1-8**

This mural depicts the ancient Mayans; an ancient Mesoamerican civilization.

In the past they have been well known for their language, art, and architecture, as well as their mathematical and astronomical systems.

Recently they have become most well known for their advanced calendar cycles, which come to an end on December 21, 2012.

This has spurred worldwide speculation that 12/21/12 will be a catastrophic day of apocalypse for the entire globe.

These doomsday scenarios include destructive solar storms, massive earthquakes, a polar shift of the earth's magnetic fields, and total annihilation of the earth's population.

The Mayans are not the only ones with prophecies centered on 2012. Modern day scholars have also looked to the uncertain predictions of Nostradamus, Mother Shipton, and the ancient Sibylline Oracles to satisfy a need for truth.

Native American cultures such as the Hopi tribe of Arizona, and the Cherokee of Oklahoma are also cited in support of a coming doomsday on or near 2012.

Some scholars have even turned to the psychic prophecies of Merlin the magician or the *I Ching*, the Chinese Book of Changes, to discover what they have said about the end of the world.

This fascination with 2012 has led to numerous websites like: [2012endofdays.org](http://2012endofdays.org) or [apocalypse2012.com](http://apocalypse2012.com), which are full of information regarding these different scenarios. There are also programs on the History Channel such as: one I saw a couple of weeks ago entitled, "Decoding the Past—Doomsday 2012: The End of Days."

In addition there have been numerous books authored on the subject like: *Apocalypse 2012: An Investigation into Civilization's End*; and of course, let us not forget *The Complete Idiot's guide to 2012*.

It's no surprise that Hollywood has cashed in on the 2012 frenzy with Roland Emmerich's \$200 million blockbuster movie entitled, *2012*.

Missing from all of the 2012 hysteria is a biblical perspective!

Can we know the future? Can we know how the world will end? The answer of course is, YES!!!

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We must turn to the Scripture for a clear picture of earth's last days. And, the truth of the end of the age is detailed precisely for us in the book of Revelation as Christ reveals through a series of visions to the Apostle John what is to come and how things will truly end!

Remember that the Apostle John has been exiled on the Island of Patmos.

This Island was a prison colony off the coast of Asia Minor. While exiled on Patmos, John received a revelation from God through a vision of the glorified Christ.

Remember also that the key verse of this book was given in **Revelation 1:19**, which provides us with the outline/structure of the book of Revelation.

Christ says to John, “*Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.*”

- *The things, which you have seen* refers to John's vision of Christ in Revelation 1.
- *The things, which are* refers to the status of the church at the time of John's exile as described in Revelation 2-3.
- While, *the things, which will take place after these things* is a reference to the remainder of the book of Revelation (chapters 4-22) and these chapters speak of future things; the end times; the last days.

Remember as we examined in Revelation 4 and 5, that the apostle John was transported spiritually into the reality of heaven to witness the unfolding of end time events for the purpose of recording what he saw.

John first records a heavenly worship service focused on the worship of God the Father in His heavenly throne room, and on Christ the Lamb, Who was the only one found worthy to open the seven-sealed scroll of God's judgment.

**Now as we come to Revelation chapter 6, the focus shifts from worship to judgment as chapters 6-18 deal with end time events associated with a time of God's judgment known as the Tribulation Period.**

As you turn to Revelation 6:1-8, it is important to point out that the seal judgments of Revelation 6 parallel our Lord's chronology of the tribulation events in His Olivet Discourse given in Matthew 24.

So with this understanding, Revelation 6:1-8 would be parallel to Matthew 24:5-7. Let's Read, (Revelation 6:1-8).

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These first four seal judgments are often referred to as the four horsemen of the apocalypse because at the breaking of each seal one of the four living creatures calls a horse and rider to come forth, which is depicted here in this **picture**.

These first four seal judgments cover the period Jesus described as “the beginning of birth pangs” in Matthew 24:8.

**Just as a mother’s birth pains increase in frequency and intensity as the time to give birth approaches, so the judgments of God will intensify throughout the tribulation period until the arrival of Christ at His Second Coming.**

As terrible as these four judgments will be, they are just the preliminary outpouring of God’s final wrath.

In Revelation 6:1-8, John is given a vivid symbolic description of literal events that will take place on the earth during the first half of the tribulation period.

What picture of future events does John witness and describe for us?

### **1. With the breaking of the first seal, John sees a rider on a white horse representing a conquering through deception (Revelation 6:1-2).**

*1 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.” 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.*

At this point the Lamb breaks the first of seven seals. Immediately John hears one of the four living creatures from Revelation 4 and 5 speak.

Remember that we identified the four living creatures from Revelation 4 and 5 as Cherubim. This Cherub spoke with a loud thunderous voice.

This was a voice of power and authority. What does he say? He said, "Come!" As in each of the first four seals a horse and rider appears following such a command.

John witnessed a rider on a white horse, who possessed a bow without arrows and a crown that was given to him. The activity of this rider was to go out and conquer.

Most commentators believe that the horsemen of Revelation 6 are symbolic of events taking place on the earth. While the last three are easily identifiable, this first one is more debated.

In fact there exists a great deal of disagreement upon the identity of this particular horse and rider.

Some see it as Christ, but that is not possible since it is Christ who is breaking the seals.

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Others believe this horse and rider are directly representative of the antichrist. They believe that the rider on this horse is the antichrist.

However, it is important to note that the last three riders as we will discover represent an impersonal force such as war, famine and death. In other words, they are not representing literal individuals.

It would seem that since the language is the same here, this horseman also represents an impersonal force.

The best understanding comes from the harmonization with the parallel passage of Matthew 24:5 where Christ says, *“For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many.”*

With this in mind then the first seal symbolized by the rider on the white horse is the rise of false christs going out to mislead and conquer as many people as they can.

This will ultimately culminate in the rise of the antichrist, who will come onto the scene misleading many into a false sense of security as he will usher in a period of false peace.

The world’s desperate desire for international peace will serve as the bait for the satanic trap. This longing for security and safety will certainly play into the hands of Antichrist.

This future ruler will convince the world that he can provide them with the peace and safety they so desire.

Keep in mind that at this time the world is likely in complete chaos. The removal of the church at the rapture described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 will have widespread negative effects/consequences upon the earth.

People will be distressed by the disappearance of their loved ones. Such mourning, shock and distress will rule the day.

There will likely be a good deal of destruction in parts of the world resulting from the removal of believers (downed airplanes; car pile ups etc...).

It will throw much of the world into absolute chaos. People will long for a leader and look for someone who can make sense of the mess.

Many will claim to be Christ and will claim to have answers, but out of this group of false christs will rise a new leader.

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The fact that the rider has a bow but no arrows, and that he is honored with a crown that was freely given to him (the term here speaks of a victors crown) reveal that his conquering will involve bloodless victories.

He is not a real king, but has won a crown from the world for his triumphant achievements leading to world peace.

He will appear to be a man of peace not conquering the world through military force, but by cunning and deceit just as 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11 seems to indicate.

What others like Napoleon, Hitler, or Stalin have sought through military conquest, this future leader will achieve through peace and agreement.

The primary agreement will likely be a covenant signed with Israel for seven years as described in Daniel 9:24-27, which initiates the period often referred to as The Tribulation Period.

As the final doom of the world approaches, Antichrist will promise a golden age of peace and prosperity.

In gratitude the world will honor him and elevate him to a position of supreme leadership. Yet his promises and the peace that he seems to broker will be short-lived.

### **2. With the breaking of the second seal, John sees a rider on a red horse representing war.**

*3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." 4 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.*

The second seal is broken and a second horseman is summoned. This time the horse is red and its rider was given permission to take peace from the earth.

As a result of this judgment, there will be widespread bloodshed and likely war upon the earth. First of all the color of this second horse as a fiery red is symbolic of war and bloodshed.

Second the rider was clearly given permission to take away the peace from the earth; once again emphasizing conflict and war.

This is not speaking of something rare or abnormal, but of that which is common. After the breaking of this second seal, men slaying one another will become commonplace. Violent slaughters will be the norm.

When compared to the parallel passage of Matthew 24:6-7, it becomes apparent that wars will break out all over the face of the earth.

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Jesus says, “*You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.”*”

The false peace of antichrist will be short-lived as peace will turn to war.

Back Revelation 6, John also notes that a great sword was given to the rider. MACHAIRA (sword) refers to the short stabbing sword a Roman soldier carried into battle. It was also a weapon used by assassins.

The use of this sword in the vision describes the extent of the war. The false peace of Antichrist will dissolve into war, assassination, rebellion, revolt, and massacre. It appears that event the first half of the tribulation period will be violent, chaotic and tumultuous.

It is possible that during the period of the second seal judgment the invasion of Israel recorded in Ezekiel 38-39 takes place.

In Ezekiel 38:8 Ezekiel records these words, “*After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely, all of them.*”

This verse emphasizes that the Jews will be in the land having been gathered from many nations and living securely in the latter years.

The term latter years is a reference to the end times and the only period of the end times that Israel seems to be living securely is under the pseudo peace of the first half of the tribulation period.

This future battle will involve the invasion of Israel by a coalition of several nations such as modern day Russia, Turkey, Iran and others.

However their invasion will prove unsuccessful as God supernaturally protects Israel by completely wiping out the invading horde.

Whether or not this invasion should be included at this point, this will be an extremely difficult time on the earth as men will be fighting, and killing one another. War will be the rule of the day and rumors of war will spread across the globe.

### **3. With the breaking of the third seal, John sees a rider on a black horse representing famine.**

*5 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. 6 And I heard*

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*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.”*

In Revelation 6, the breaking of the third seal results in a third rider, this time on a black horse and this rider is carrying a pair of scales in his hand. This rider on a black horse holding the scales is representative of a world-wide famine.

According to Matthew 24:7 famines were also predicted by Jesus in His Olivet Discourse.

The Scales in the rider's hand picture the rationing that will take place as a result of the famine/famines across the world.

Food will apparently be rationed during this future time and more than likely food lines will be set up to distribute the food.

After the appearance of the rider, John heard a voice speaking forth in regards to this seal. This voice coming from the center of the four living beings could possibly be the voice of God as the living beings were stationed around the throne.

The pronouncements of this voice reveal how devastating the famine conditions will be. John records, *“A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine.”*

A denarius was a silver Roman coin. A quart of wheat is barely enough to sustain one person for one day, because the denarius was valued at the time as one day's wages for an average worker.

Those who are working will barely be able to provide enough food for themselves let alone for their entire family. Those with families will be able to purchase three quarts of barley for a denarius; that will provide food for their families, but barley is lower in nutritional value and during New Testament times was commonly fed to livestock.

A person's daily wages will barely feed three people with low quality food for one day, but it will not provide for shelter or clothing also.

This scenario provides us with a picture of hyperinflation. Such starvation wages signify severe famine conditions.

The Great Depression will not hold a candle to the widespread hunger during this time period.

The comment not to damage the oil or the wine emphasizes the scarcity of such items.

They were commonly used in the preparation and cooking process as well as in water purification, however they will be scarce during this future famine.

It is probably necessary to point out that hunger and famine are often the result of war.

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This will not be a pleasant time as many will face the atrocities of war, and suffer immensely from a severe hyperinflationary/famine condition across the world.

### **4. With the breaking of the fourth seal, John sees a rider on a pale horse representing death.**

*7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." 8 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.*

This fourth horse is an ashen color. CHLOROS (ashen), from which the English words *chlorophyll* and *chlorine* derive, refers to a sickly, pale, yellow-green color.

This is the color of death and this horse's rider is named death. It is here where 1/4 of the earth's population dies.

Death is not so uncommon after war and widespread famine. The world's population is currently between 6 and 7 billion. By today's standard that would mean at least 1.5 billion people would die as a result of this seal judgment. Obviously if the LORD tarries that number could be greater.

The mention of Hades is likely a reference to the grave and not to Hell. Death and Hades are also mentioned together in Revelation 1:18 and 20:13-14. They are essentially synonyms here.

It is important to note that authority was given to this rider to kill 1/4 of the population. That authority is obviously from the One who is sitting on the throne. God granted the authority for 1/4 of the world's population to be put to death.

Some may have difficulty thinking that a loving God would allow such a thing. Remember that God is pouring out His divine wrath upon a sinful unbelieving world.

At this point He is judging the world for its rejection of Him. He is in sovereign control and is exacting His righteous justice upon the world.

Through this judgment, death will utilize four tools in this grim task: the sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts.

The sword is likely a reference back to the second seal judgment and famine points back to the third seal judgment.

Pestilence translates THANATOS, the same word translated death in verse 8. Here it may primarily refer to disease as the cause of death (cf. Revelation 2:23; 18:8), but is broad enough to encompass natural disasters such as the earthquakes predicted by Jesus (Matthew 24:7), as well as floods, and volcanic eruptions.



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It could also refer to the effects of biological and chemical weapons. It is interesting that throughout history, disease has killed more people than war.

The inclusion of the term by wild beasts is a confusing one and almost seems as if it does not fit.

It could be attributed to the famine and that normally docile animals become wild from starvation or as John MacArthur notes, it could be a reference to rodents, which often carry disease.

In fact, it was during the fourteenth century in Europe when the most devastating occurrence of rat-borne disease wiped out one-fourth of Europe's population through the outbreak of bubonic plague.

Whatever the case 1/4 of the earth's population will perish from war, famine, disease, and wild beasts.

***Application:*** What should be our response as believers in light of these future events?

A knowledge of these future events should remind us of God's sovereignty!

In a world that often seems to be in chaos or in the grip of wickedness; we need to remember that God is in control of it all.

The Bible proclaims the power and sovereignty of God and reminds us that His purposes for the future will come to pass.

No one can thwart His mighty plans and purposes and certainly we see God's power on display in the book of Revelation as these future events unfold.

We should be comforted in knowing that He is in control. We should be driven to worship Him, because of His great power.

In **Isaiah 40:12-26** the prophet Isaiah declared that God our Creator is not impressed with the assumed power of men and nations, which is anemic in comparison to His sovereign power. In fact, he asserted that God regards them as dust on the scales, as a drop from a bucket, and as nothing and meaningless.

According to **Psalm 2:1-12**, God is the king of the universe and in absolute power now and in the future.

A knowledge of these future events should also provide us with comfort and hope.

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** is the key rapture passage and is written by Paul so that we as believers would offer comfort and hope to others in light of our future removal from this earth to be with the LORD.

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In fact **Titus 2:13** emphasizes that the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus is our blessed hope.

These future events should motivate us to long for Our Lord's return.

Lastly, A knowledge of these future events should compel us toward godly living.

Several passages emphasize a need to strive for personal holiness and godliness in light of future events.

- According to **1 Corinthians 15:51-58**, knowing that the Lord will return should motivate us to abound in the work of the Lord.
- The judgment seat of Christ in **2 Corinthians 5:10** should motivate us toward good works.
- **Titus 2:11-14** indicates that a focus on our blessed hope will move us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and drive us to live sensibly, righteously and godly.
- **2 Peter 3:14** is a command that we be diligent to be found in peace, spotless and blameless in light of future events.
- According to **1 John 3:2-3** in light of the coming of Christ we should be striving for purity just as Christ is pure.

### **Conclusion:**

In his book **Mein Kampf**, published more than a decade before World War II began, Adolf Hitler spelled out in detail his plans for conquest.

Incredibly, the Western allies (particularly Britain and France) persisted in believing Hitler's false claim to be a man of peace.

They stood by and watched as he reoccupied the Rhineland, the Sudetenland, and Czechoslovakia.

Desperate to appease Hitler and avoid war, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain met with the German dictator at Munich in 1938.

Upon his return to England, Chamberlain triumphantly waived a piece of paper containing a worthless pledge of peace from Hitler. Worthless because it was a false peace.

There will come a time in the last days:

- 1) When there will be a rise of false messiahs culminating in the rise of the antichrist and his

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pseudo peace through a covenant with Israel.

2) Then there will be world-wide warfare and bloodshed breaking out as supposed peace and prosperity will turn to conflict, killing and war.

3) As a result of this warfare a devastating world-wide famine will break out. A full days salary will barely buy food for one person for one day. There will be a strict rationing of food as well as long food lines and widespread starvation.

4) As a result of all the fighting and war, this world-wide famine will lead to widespread disease as  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the earth's population will perish.

These first 3 1/2 years of the tribulation period will be very destructive and devastating, but the worst is yet to come because these first four seal judgments, often referred to as the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, unleash the beginning birth pangs of God's judgment upon the world.

But as believers God does not want us to respond in fear and anxiety.

**As believers in Christ, may we be reminded of God's sovereignty, take comfort and hope in God's plan for the future, and strive toward holiness in our lives in light of God's coming judgment.**