People take salvation today in such a cold, formal, matter-of-fact business-like sort of way, that it appears as though they are doing God an honor in condescending to receive His offer of Redemption. Their eyes are dry, their sense of sin absent; nor is there any sign of penitence and contrition…But oh, if there were conviction! If they came with hearts bowed down, yea! broken and contrite, came with the cry of the guilt-laden soul: "God is merciful to me a sinner!"—came trembling with the burning life and death question of the Philippian jailor: "What must I do to be saved?"—what converts they would be!

Oswald J. Smith

REVELATION CHAPTER SIX
OPENING OF THE FIRST SIX SEALS

Handout 12
Prayer Study #411
First Love Ministries of Perry, Georgia USA

As we have discussed earlier, Revelation is full of sevens. We have seen seven churches, seven angels, seven Spirits of God, seven eyes. Here we have the seven seals. We will see the seven trumpets, seven lamps of fire, seven horns, seven crowns, seven plagues, seven mountains, seven kings, seven bowls and more. Seven is the Biblical number for completion or maturity. The seven items, whatever they are, are normally in sequential and increasing intensity in order. There is normally a break between six and seven in the sequence, which will become more apparent in later chapters. The 4 horses in this chapter are called *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.* Actually, there is a fifth Horseman in Revelation, none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who as a Horseman, will show up in Chapter 19. Zechariah has a similar vision to John's vision. Zechariah sees the four horsemen driving four chariots in Zechariah 6:1-8, which bring vengeance to Babylon and Egypt and the nations which oppose the Living God. Thus, the four horses and their riders stand for great destructive forces which will be sent by God in His wrath to punish the evil world.

The White Horse of Conquest

1 *Then I saw as the Lamb broke open one of the seven seals, and as if in a voice of thunder, I heard one of the four living creatures call out, Come!*
2 *And I looked and saw there a white horse whose rider carried a bow. And a crown was given him, and he rode forth conquering and to conquer.*

Horses in scripture are usually symbols of judgment. (Some scriptural examples of this are 2nd Kings 6:15-18; Jeremiah 46:9-10; Joel 2:3-11; Nahum 3:1-7; Zechariah 1:8-11 and 6:1-7.) I think it is interesting that each time a different one of the four living creatures, which we have shown to parallel the Gospels, calls out, "Come!" While *come*

is translated in some transcripts as *come and see,* Barkley tells us that the more correct translations just use *come.* This is important because the four living creatures are not addressing John and asking him to come and see, they are summoning each one of the four horsemen to *come* forward on the stage of history. It is also important to note that John is seeing future events, not things that had happened nor are these things happening in real time then in history as he looks on.

The rider on the white horse is not Jesus who is opening the scroll by breaking the seals. This rider is an imposter. The crown is not a diadem that a king would wear but is a victor's crown. Notice that this horseman is carrying a bow. Some believe this was a intentional symbol used by the Holy Spirit to symbolize Nimrod the hunter, who is thought to have been creator of the occult, of secret organizations much like the Masons of today, and other evils. He is thought to have been the man behind the building of the tower of Babel and was in total rebellion against God.

The word used for *bow* here is interesting. It can mean a weapon or a rainbow. It is only used in Genesis 9:13 (as the rainbow covenant with Noah) and here in Revelation 6. This could be some kind of pun that the Holy Spirit is using to represent a false covenant, as the Antichrist will force Israel to accept a treaty or covenant, which he then violates. I think here of the fiery darts of the enemy in Ephesians 6:16: *...above all, taking the shield of faith with which, you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*

In any event it is clear that the white horse represents military power and conquest, bringing the terrors of the wrath of God.

The Blood Red Horse of Strife

3 *And when He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature call out, Come!*
4 *And another horse came out, flaming red. And its rider was empowered to take the peace from the earth, so that men slaughtered one another; and he was given a huge sword.*

The function of this second horse is to take peace away from the earth and bring strife. Isaiah 19:2 prophecies against Egypt, which is a type in scripture of the world: *I will set Egyptians against Egyptians; everyone will fight against his brother, and everyone against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom.* Barclay tells us: "In the Jewish pictures of the end time, an essential element is the complete disintegration of all human relationships. Many will be stirred up in anger to injure many, and they will rouse up armies in order to shed blood, and in the end they will all perish together. The vision of the end was a vision of a time when all human relationships would be destroyed, and the world would become a seething cauldron of embittered hate."

The Black Horse of Famine

5 *When He broke open the third seal, I heard the third living creature call out, Come and look! And I saw, and behold, a black horse, and in his hand the rider had a pair of scales (a balance).*
6 *And I heard what seemed to be a voice from the midst of the four living creatures, saying, A quart of wheat for a denarius [a whole day's wages], and three quarts of barley for a denarius; but do not harm the oil and the wine!*

Black in scripture is often connected to famine (Lamentations 4:4-8; Lamentations 5:10; Jeremiah 14:12) Soldiers were often given 2 quarts of wheat, per day. What seems to be implied here is that, when famine strikes the whole earth, it will take a full day's wages for a loaf of bread. Barley in this time was considered animal food. Yet some at this time will buy barley instead of wheat so that they can feed not just themselves but their entire family.

Notice that even in the time of famine there will be some luxuries available, such as oil and wine. The three main crops of Israel as described in the scriptures are corn (wheat), oil, and wine. Since the olive tree and the grape vine have roots that go much deeper than corn or wheat, they could withstand drought. Even Jacob, when there was great famine in the land, could send wine with his sons to Egypt to buy grain.

The balance that the rider had in his hand alludes to the Old Testament phrase, *to eat bread by weight.* This phrase always indicates the greatest famine. Leviticus 26:26: *When I have cut off your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall bring back your bread by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied.*

To look at this from a spiritual perspective is interesting. Amos 8:11 prophesies: "*Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord God. "that I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it."* If oil is symbolic of both the Holy Spirit and the anointing, and wine is a symbol of the joy of the Lord, and the olive tree and the grape vine are sustained because of deep roots, perhaps those who walk in the Spirit will enjoy the luxuries of peace and joy and spirit-filled living, while the rest of the world is starving for the things of God. Then the people will see the glory of the Lord on His spirit-filled ones and even kings will come to that light as Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 60:1-3. What a wonderful time of witness!

There is, however, a warning here. When people are starving, they will eat anything. Some believe that even now America is in a famine of the Word of God. That is why so many embraces false doctrines from the Kabala on the Jewish side to New Age on the Gentile side, and everything in between.

The Pale Horse of Pestilence and Death

7 When the Lamb broke open the fourth seal, I heard the fourth living creature call out, Come!
***8** So I looked, and behold, an ashy pale horse [black and blue as if made so by bruising], and its rider's name was Death, and Hades (the realm of the dead) followed him closely. And they were given authority and power over a fourth part of the earth to kill with the sword and with famine and with plague (pestilence, disease) and with wild beasts of the earth.*

The Greek word translated *pale* here could be translated *a vomit, pale green.* (Don't you love that imagery!) Here we actually see two riders at one time. One represents the death of the body, and the other represents the death of the soul. The first has *weapons of mass destruction* to kill a fourth part of the earth. This could be chemical warfare materials or microscopic organisms or bombs or any other WMDs. The latter part of verse 8 may be an allusion to Ezekiel 14:21: *For thus says the Lord GOD: "How much more shall it be when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem-the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence-to cut off man and beast from it?*

Barclay writes of this passage: "In Leviticus, there is a passage which tells of the penalties which God will send upon His people because of their disobedience. Wild beasts will rob them of their children and destroy their livestock and make them few in number. The sword will avenge their breaking of the covenant. When they are gathered in their cities, the pestilence will be among them. He will break the staff of bread, and they will eat and not be satisfied (Leviticus 26:21-6). Here, John is using a traditional picture of what is to happen when God lets loose His wrath upon His disobedient children. Behind it all is the permanent truth that no individual or nation can escape the consequences of sin."

The Cries of the Martyrs

***9** When the Lamb broke open the fifth seal, I saw at the foot of the altar the souls of those whose lives had been sacrificed for [adhering to] the Word of God and for the testimony they had borne.*
***10** They cried in a loud voice, O [Sovereign] Lord, holy and true, how long now before You will sit in judgment and avenge our blood upon those who dwell on the earth?*
***11** Then they were each given a [long and flowing and festive white robe and told to rest and wait patiently a little while longer, until the number should be complete of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed as they themselves had been.*

The scriptural number 5 symbolizes grace. Somehow, I see the grace of God in this 5th seal in that He graces people with the willingness to die for Him, and instead of being angry for what happened to them, they even wonder why they are worthy of such a

beautiful sacrifice.

The *Word of God* is a title for Jesus Christ who was the Word incarnate. The Greek word for *witness* can be translated *martyr*. What a wonderful thing it would be if we would begin to see ourselves, His witnesses, as martyrs ready to lay down our lives for Jesus, as He did for us, as a lamb to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7). *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* (Revelation 12:11).

This 5th seal has to do with avenging the blood of the saints who have died because of their allegiance to Christ. Jesus spoke plainly about the cost of following Him. In Matthew 24:9, He says: ***"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake"*** (CpMark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12, Luke 21:18). John recounts Jesus' words concerning this issue in John 16:2: "***They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service."***

The souls of those killed were beneath the altar. When a sacrifice was made in the Temple, the blood was offered at the foot of the altar. This passage means that the souls of those who died for the Lord had been poured out as an offering to God at the foot of the altar. Paul wrote of this kind of sacrifice when he said in Philippians 2:17: *Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.* The New Living Translation puts it a little clearer for modern readers: *But even if my life is to be poured out like a drink offering to complete the sacrifice of your faithful service (that is, if I am to die for you), I will rejoice, and I want to share my joy with all of you. And you should be happy about this and rejoice with me.* What a triumphant message!

The Shattered Universe

12 *When He [the Lamb] broke open the sixth seal, I looked, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun grew black as sackcloth of hair, [the full disc of] the moon became like blood.*
13 *And the stars of the sky dropped to the earth like a fig tree shedding its unripe fruit out of season when shaken by a strong wind.*
14 *And the* ***[****sky rolled up like a scroll and vanished, and every mountain and island was dislodged from its place.*

I know that I have quoted William Barclay extensively, but his work on this chapter is outstanding. He points out five elements in the end time when the Jews believe the earth will be shattered and there will be cosmic upheaval and destruction:

a. **There is the earthquake.** Amos 8:8: *Shall the land not tremble…* Ezekiel 38:19: *For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel.*

b. **There is the darkening of the sun and the moon.** Amos 8:9: "*And it shall come to pass in that day," says the Lord GOD, "that I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight.* Isaiah 13:10: *For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine.* Joel 2:31: *The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.*

c. **There is the falling of stars.** To the Jews this was especially troubling because they saw the unchanging heavens as a guarantee of the unchanging faithfulness of God. The end will be time when the most reliable things in the universe will become disorderly and terrifying chaos. The worse scenario for the Jew was a world of falling stars. What they failed to understand was that the faithfulness of God is eternally secure, but the falling of the stars had actually been prophesied to them and has nothing to do with His faithfulness.
Matthew 24:29: ***Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*** Isaiah 34:4: *All the heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; all their host shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, and as fruit falling from a fig tree.*

d. **There is a rolling up of the heavens.** The image here is of an open scroll which is cut down the middle and then both parts springs back and roll up. The heavens will be rolled up like a scroll. Isaiah 34:4: *All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll…*

e. **There is the moving of hills and of the islands of the sea.** Jeremiah 4:24: *I behold the mountains, and indeed they trembled, and all the hills moved back and forth.* Nahum 1:5: *The mountains quake before Him. The hills melt, and the earth heaves at His presence. Yes, the world and all who dwell in it.* Revelation 6:14 speaks of the islands being shaken.

John is taking every terrifying thing that can be imagined and putting them together to give a picture of the terrors of the end times.

The Time of Terror

15 *Then the kings of the earth and their noblemen and their magnates and their military chiefs and the wealthy and the strong and [everyone, whether] slave or free hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,*
16 *And they called to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on (before) us and hide us from the face of Him Who sits on the throne and from the* ***[****deep-seated indignation and wrath of the Lamb.*

17 *For the great day of His wrath (vengeance, retribution, indignation) has come, and who is able to stand before it?*

These last three verses in Chapter 6 give us one of the great climatic events of *His story* or history. Chuck Missler says that all of history is summarized in the words of Jesus in Matthew 23:37-39: ***"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'*** The purpose of all history is for Jesus to gather His children like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Remember Psalm 91! The tragedy of history is *you would not allow Jesus to do that.* But there is more to the story, and history ends with the triumph words:
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!

As history marches on and unfolds, I believe the time of Psalm 2 is upon us and will become even more apparent in the next two years. Let me give you the whole Psalm here, clarifying what is being said by giving you the speaker of each section:

PSALMIST: *Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath and distress them in His deep displeasure;*

FATHER GOD: *"Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion."*

JESUS: *"I will declare the decree: The LORD hath said to Me, 'You are My Son. Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for your inheritance and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.'"*

PSALMIST: *Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed , you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.*

This Psalm is, of course, *Messianic,* as every Jewish person would understand. What they did not understand was that this is speaking of the events leading up to His Second Coming. These precursor events include the Great Tribulation, which verses 15-17 are alluding to. The Great Tribulation is the outpouring of God's wrath on the world because of overwhelming iniquity and sin, with people doing what is right in their own

eyes. This was the key problem in the Garden. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil destroyed the moral innocence of Adam and Eve. The problem is that mankind does not follow the Lord's commands but decides in their own eyes what is good and evil. Since like begets like, Adam and Eve as sinners begot sinners, with every human, (except Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man), born into sin. As mankind has sown to and continued to sin, the world has become worse and worse, because what we sow, we reap, except in a greater measure (Hosea 8:7), by the Biblical principle of sowing and reaping. Only a relationship with Jesus can change what we sow. His blood covers our sin and washes us clean, but it is of no effect if we do not receive it.

The Great Tribulation is spoken of many times in the Old and New Testament. It is called the *Day of the Lord* twenty times in 8 books of the Old Testament and three times in the New Testament (Acts 2:20 quoting Joel 2:31; 1st Thessalonians 5:2, and 2nd Peter 3:10). I will give you a few more of the many titles in scripture of this day. It is called *Day of God* in 2ND Peter 3:12; *Day of Wrath* in Zephaniah 1:15; *Day of Lord's Wrath* in Zephaniah 1:18; and *Day of Darkness* in Joel 2:2 and Zephaniah 1:15.

Most Biblical teachers believe there will be a rapture that will take place before the Great Tribulation. They believe that the previous chapter of Revelation, the passage of scripture we looked at last week is evidence that the Church will already have been raptured away. They base this on many passages of scripture but specifically in Chapter 5, they believe that the 24 elders represent the Church. Remember the uncountable number, presumably the Church, who were praising Jesus, the only One who was worthy to open the scroll in verse 11 of Chapter 5: *Then I looked up and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.* This leads some credence to the pre-Trib Rapture, but I think the jury is still out on this.

Why is the Great Tribulation necessary? If it were just to punish sinners, the Lord could have just sent them on to an eternal Hell. Actually, it is in an odd way a love act. In Hosea 5:15, we read: *I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face. In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.* Of course, if the Church has been raptured, then these people must be Israel, whom the Lord loves with a measureless love.

One of the main characters of the Great Tribulation is the Antichrist. This is how Daniel describes him in Daniel 8:23-25: *And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power. He shall destroy fearfully and shall prosper and thrive. He shall destroy the mighty and also the holy people. Through his cunning, he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule, and he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human means.*

The Antichrist in the natural will be the most attractive guy the world has seen.

Chuck Missler has given us what we need to watch for, concerning identifying the Antichrist:

a. An intellectual genius (Daniel 7:20; Daniel 8:23, Ezekiel 28:3)
b. A persuasive orator (Daniel 7:20; Revelation 13:2)
c. A shrewd politician (Daniel 11:21; Daniel 8:25)
d. A financial genius (Revelation 13:17; Ezekiel 28:4,5; Psalm 52:7; Daniel 11:38, 43)
e. A forceful military leader (Daniel 8:24; Revelation 13:4, Isaiah 4:16)
f. A powerful organizer (Revelation 12:1-2; 17:17)
g. A unifying religious guru (2nd Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:3; Revelation 14; Revelation 15)

These chapters in Revelation should give us a great urgency to be about the Father's business. Time is running short.

In conclusion and summary, we have studied extensively about the Day of the Lord, which I believe is the theme of this 6th Chapter, at least the beginnings of this day. I have given this information to you in other studies, but I would like to remind you what this day is all about.

The Day of the Lord is a period of time (not just a day) in history at the end of the age in the last days when the Lord openly intervenes in the affairs of men. It is an apocalyptic term and also a prophetic term and is thought to be the Lord's outpouring of His wrath. The Day of the Lord will be characterized by catastrophic weather and earthly calamities such as plagues, famines, pestilence, and drought (see Isaiah 2:12, Isaiah 13"6-9, Amos 5:18-20, Jeremiah 46:10, 1st Corinthians 5:5, 1st Thessalonians 5:2, 2nd Peter 3:8-10).

According to Jay Atkinson of the Latter Rain Ministries, "It is a time between the age of evil, in which we presently live and which will be destroyed, and the golden age of peace and justice, the future Millennial Kingdom to come on the earth. It is the fall of the old order and the ushering in of the new."

Joel tells us that this will come as *a destruction from the Almighty* (Joel 1:15), a *day of wrath and fierce anger, trouble and distress, a day of gloom and thick darkness* for the proud, the rich, and the lofty (Joel 2). Joel also asked the question in Joel 2:11, "*Who can endure it?*" And indeed, if we are still on earth, we, without the fullness of the Holy Spirit, will not be able to endure it and will not stand. The Day of the Lord will culminate in the final shaking and sifting of the Church, the fall of the Babylonian World System, the fullness of the Latter Rain, and the coming of the Bride who has made herself ready. The Bride will come out of the closet and meet the Bridegroom. This day comes as a thief in the night. The scriptures emphasize that many in the Church will be asleep and unprepared. The Word says that they that sleep, sleep in the night. This is when the thief

comes. We must wake up from our spiritual slumber and be ready for whatever takes place.