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Revelation
Chapter 6 - Revealing the Coming Forces
Breaking the 7 Seals (vs. 1-6)

Revelation 6:1-6: 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." 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. When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." 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. 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. And I heard 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."

You know, the thing that I want to do more than anything else when we look at these passages in Revelation is to demystify them. It's very easy to go into a passage like this and to read into it things that are not there and to complicate it. The message is to the churches. We know that the very beginning of Revelation tells us, and the question you have to ask yourself is, "How does this message reveal what God wants for the church?" So, as we go through, hopefully we'll see the clarity of that because God is not wanting to hide from us the things that He has in store for us nor that which He wants us to do. So as we go through this wonderful passage, we begin to reveal God's plan and purpose in all things.

The very beginning of Revelation, just by way of review, is unveiling to us that God desires for the world to know about His love. At the very beginning of Chapter 1, if you go all the way back just to make reference to this, that this message is to the seven churches. (verse 4) The seven spirits are proclaiming the faithful witness of Christ, (verse 5) who was first born of the dead. And then it says,

(Revelation 1:5) “... To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood.”

It's a great and wonderful message, as Paul declares it as the power of God; the love of God, as John 3:16 would tell us that He so loved us. It's that wonderful light that has come into the world. Therefore, it should not be confusing that the imagery that He chooses to use to describe the role of the church is a lampstand, because, as Matthew so aptly puts it, you are the light of the world. So, in each case there is an imagery that's given. When you get to heaven, don't be disappointed that you didn't see the lampstand. But the imagery that's given is given so that it might reveal to us what God's purpose is for the church and reveal to us the heart of God, and so the imagery does that. A picture is worth 1,000 words, and as you begin to see these pictures, hopefully it's begun to stir in your heart and mind. So, the first thing that should be stirred in our mind is what should we as a church be doing? Proclaiming the light of the glorious gospel. It's very important, too, that the church realize that its greatest role is not as much in what it says, but how it

acts. There is really great power in our reputations and the things that we do. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify God in heaven. So, everything we do should be pointing to Christ and it is by the things that we do that afford us the opportunity. People will say, "Well, why do you do that?" And we go, "I'm glad you asked." Instead of you just assaulting them with maybe a verse right off the bat and which they don't know where you're coming from. But as they begin to see the love of Christ, then they begin to ask, "How can I have more of this?" And the woman at the well began to ask, "How could I have this living water?" And that's what you want them to ask.

So, as we go through, what we're going to see is the different imagery, of course, God revealing to the seven churches that which eradicates darkness or overcomes darkness. So, the one phrase that He'll use over and over to the seven churches is, "I want you to overcome. I want you to have victory in this." And we realize that different people groups, different churches, different people and individuals wrestle with different things. We're all good at

something and we're all really bad at something else and it's different for all of us. So, you see these seven churches and the different things that they're struggling with, and He says, "You can't take on the persona of the world and think that you can be lights. Like the church of Smyrna, if you're afraid, then they can't see the light. If you're exploiting people, they can't see the light. If you're trusting in the riches of the world, like Laodicea, they can't see the light. So, in every case, He's revealing those things that would, as Matthew would say, hide the light under a bushel. So, those are the things that He begins to deal with.

When you finally come to Chapter 4, He wants you to see the picture of what is the most valued thing in the heavens, and He wants you to see the great powers in the heavens and how they are perceived on the earth as God has literally through creation, demonstrated different kinds of strength. The eagle has a different strength than the lion; the calf has a different kind of strength than man. So, in every case there are these different kinds of strength. But the question in the heavens is, what is the

greatest strength? And much to our surprise, it is a Lamb between the throne that comes out as if slain. This is the greatest strength in all of the heavens, and you begin to see all the powers of the universe bow down to the Lamb that was slain. Strangely enough, you begin to realize that God perceives that force in Him as the grandest force, the force of love. So, the love of God is that which takes the seat of the greatest power in the heavens, and I'm so thankful for that, aren't you?

So, throughout Revelation, these pictures are revealing in a very picturesque way, in the great imagery, these truths. I remember certain books my mom would read to me, "The Little Train that Could"; I still have pictures in my head of him trying to make it up that hill and the imagery sticks with you, and hopefully the imagery of these things will stick with you as well.

As we come to Chapter 6, as we saw there is this book and the book or the scroll, which is an interesting picture of the title deed of sorts of all of creation. Who is worthy to reign over all of creation? Who is worthy to purchase this creation? Who is? And the Lamb of God says, "I

purchased it with my blood.” And so, the Lamb is worthy to take it. The Lamb is worthy, at the end of Chapter 5, to receive all glory and honor. Of course, it says in verse 12 everyone began saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory,” and you have all the strengths that are covered in that phrase. Basically, everything is subjected to the Lamb that loved with the love of God. So, it reminds me of John 17, in which Jesus begins praying to His Father and He says, “Father, this is the moment that You're glorified. People are going to see what You're really like.” And that's when He goes the cross. There's a lot of ideas about what God is like, how He responds and what He really is feeling, but the cross says it all. “This is what He's like and this is how much He loves you.” And you go, “I never thought He was like that. I mean, I knew He was great and powerful, and He created all things but that this is what's at the focus of everything that He does, is just unimaginable. So, the Lamb takes control of this, and now He begins to open up this title deed.

Now, in many respects, as we were talking about, it is the title deed to all of creation. So, you have these seven seals that He begins to break. Of course, the seal is there to reveal that only the owner, only the possessor can break the seal. If the seal is broken and the owner didn't receive it, then it's null and void. But if the owner breaks the seals, then it is now being claimed. In the claiming of the document, each seal is revealing what He is claiming. What you'll begin to realize is that when Christ purchased back creation; now, let's just clarify this, it was given away in Genesis. God puts man in the garden, He says, "Ok, rule over the earth. You'll be like Us. It is yours." And man gets in the garden, and he goes, "Here, snake." And turns it over to the serpent. So, Scripture says that the whole power of the earth is under the evil one, and if you want to know why things are chaotic and why people are afraid of themselves and things like that, it's because the evil one is in control; the spirit of fear. It's the prince of the power of the air. We relinquished control to one that wants to bring hurt and pain and sorrow, and of course, much of the world is in that. So, the Lamb came and purchased by His own blood the creation back and now

He takes it under control. The question is, what did He inherit? What did He buy? Well, you begin to open this up, and it doesn't look too good. So, the things that are being revealed of the earth are going to be revealed; interestingly enough, He's going to reveal them to begin with using horses. So, the apocalyptic horses we oftentimes make mention of, and the first four are the four apocalyptic horses that are going to be conveyed. There is probably four because as you'll see later on in Revelation as well as throughout Scripture, oftentimes referred to the four corners of the earth. Which, once again, there were four living creatures which represent the four different kinds of powers. So, we know that there are different influences throughout the earth; in those different influences, we're going to see what they are. So, we're going to start off with the white horse within the passage and we're going to see the Lamb of God taking and opening the seal and claiming this. If you look at the very beginning of Revelation 6, it reads this way,

(Revelation 6:1) “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.””

Now, in each case, you're going to hear one of the four living creatures say this. In each case, whether it's the first horse or the fourth horse, they're going to say, “Come” and they're going to be the introducers of this. The question is, why is it not specific? Well, it's probably not specific because it's already given us the order of the four living creatures. The first creature is the lion.

If you back up in Revelation 4:7,

“The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle.”

So, you have the four living creatures, once again, representing different kinds of power.

So, if you look in this, if you drop on down to verse 3, (Revelation 6:3) “When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature...”

So, He's actually giving the order of these creatures. So, to clarify to you, the created being that begins to roar out with this voice is the voice of the lion. Of course, lion is that picture of innate power and sort of a majestic kind of power; an awe-inspiring strength and power, and it just comes naturally. I mean, if you ever walked up close to a lion, and hopefully, you had something between you and the lion, but nobody was ever wondering when they were standing around the lion, "I wonder if he's strong."

Nobody ever wonders. It's just kind of innate. It's just "Ok, that's a really scary guy and I'm going to kind of back up."

So, it's not like he has to sit down and convince you about his strength. I oftentimes told Connie, "Those animals, they don't jog, they don't work out, they don't do anything. They just get up and they kill you and it's no problem." Just where did they get all this strength? Well, once again, it's just innate. So, the picture is this power. Now, in each case, He's going to reveal this power; not only is this first power announced by a lion, but now it's described as a horse.

If you look with me in verse 2, it reads,

(Revelation 6:2) “I looked, and behold, a white horse...”

Now, there's somebody who sits on it. So, he's not going to describe as much the person who sat upon it except what he has, and then it's going to talk about what he does.

So, it reads this way,

“I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him...”

“*Stephanos*” is a word for crown, which makes mention of victory. So, a victorious crown. He's going to win. He's going out to win.

In fact, we know that, if you look at the text,

“... and he went out conquering and to conquer.”

So, he's out to win. There's no mistake about this particular picture.

The phrase, “Behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow,” if I could just be specific about the bow and then we're going to focus on the horse in just a minute.

“Bow” is a very strange word. In fact, if you go a little bit further, you're going to see that on the second horse, at

the end of verse 4, a great sword was given to him, and he used a sword. He didn't use a bow. "Bow" is a very interesting word in the sense that it has its root, that sort of has a connotation, and I don't want to get too much into the etymology of it, but of giving. It's probably even one of the reasons why you kind of have a picture of rainbow, but it has that connotation as well. So, the interesting picture is kind of dichotomous in the sense that you have this picture of a war machine that has an intent to give. So, it almost seems to be, "Ok, I don't understand how you can put the two together." Now, the other picture that you have here with this is it's a white horse, and the term makes reference to kind of where we get our word "Lucifer," like light. It gives a picture of bright and shiny. So, it has, once again, not unusually so, a connotation of purity.

Why use a horse? Well, if you go back in the Old Testament with me, it's best to see the imagery and understand the imagery, so let's just look. Some of you, I probably don't have to explain horses too much to you, but others, ok, you may have lived in the city. So, Job 39.

Let me just say this, I've ridden horses. I'm not an expert, but I've ridden them before. If you've ridden horses at all, you kind of get it. These are pretty powerful animals. I mean, if they choose to rear their head back, you're going to have a bloody nose. I learned that. I don't know how that thing could be so strong, but it is. If they choose to go and they're not that tamed or broken in, they're going to go, and if you're lucky, you'll go with them. But they are quite a beast and the description in Job really is more of a war horse and much has been written about them. But these horses were not only massive beings, but they were also afraid of nothing. When they hear the trumpet, they're trained to hear certain things. So, when they hear it, they go. You don't sit down and have a conference to the horse. You don't say, "Well, you know, I might put my spurs in you, and you'll giddy up." No, no. The horse hears it; he starts panting to go and he goes; he's going to war. Man might be looking in the realm of, well, bullets are flying, or arrows are going or spears, and the horse goes, "I don't care. The sound is coming. I'm going." So, interesting picture and it's described here in Job 39, and God gives the picture as well.

(Job 39:19) “Do you give the horse his might?

Do you clothe his neck with a mane?

(Job 39:20) “Do you make him leap like the locust?

His majestic snorting is terrible.

(Job 39:21) “He paws in the valley, and rejoices in his strength;

He goes out to meet the weapons.

(Job 39:22) “He laughs at fear and is not dismayed;

And he does not turn back from the sword.

(Job 39:23) “The quiver rattles against him,

The flashing spear and javelin.

(Job 39:24) “With shaking and rage he races over the ground,

And he does not stand still at the voice of the trumpet.

(Job 39:25) “As often as the trumpet sounds he says, ‘Aha!’

And he scents the battle from afar,

And the thunder of the captains and the war cry.”

You can just see it. He's ready. He's moving. The one thing that's going to be emphasized over and over again with

the horse is his strength, and we're going to define this a little bit better.

If you look with me in Psalm 33, and we'll just drop on down to just one verse that I mainly want to give you. Of course, if we could take into context verse 16,

(Psalm 33:16) “The king is not saved by a mighty army; A warrior is not delivered by great strength.

(Psalm 33:17) A horse is a false hope for victory; Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength.”

Now, I just want you to see a little bit of a pattern here. The horse is known as a source of strength. It is repeated in Job; it is now repeated in this Psalm 33. It will repeat it again, if you look with me in Psalm 147, and hopefully by this, I'll define the imagery that we're seeing in Revelation.

(Psalm 147:10) “He (God) does not delight in the strength of the horse...”

Once again, the strength being the emphasis.

“... He does not take pleasure in the legs of a man.

(Psalm 147:11) The LORD favors those who fear Him,
Those who wait for His lovingkindness.”

Therefore, the horse is a source of strength. I’m not trying to rhyme, it just happened. The horse is a source of strength, of course, of course. Some of you old people will get that. You have to be old to get that one. It is relied on and controlled by man, and that's the picture. You have this source of strength that's relied on as a source of strength, and as well, controlled by man. That's the picture you're seeing in Revelation. There is a source or a force of strength that is coming and it is not being held back. It's coming, and it is this that is being controlled by one who is sitting on it, who has a perception in his mind of giving something. Now, ultimately, what he's giving is a bunch of arrows, and it's very destructive. He has in his mind, “We're going to win, we're going to conquer this thing.” And of course, that's the crown on his head. The victors crown. “We're going to win and we're going to conquer.” And it's all conquering and to conquer. The picture is religion. The picture is because it's on a white horse, is coming in this persona of, “We're going to do

good. We're going to make good happen.” But it's coming forcefully. The interesting thing, and really if you understand that we're in a way going through history with these horses, because we're galloping through history, so to speak. But if you understand what's happening, He's saying to the church, “Now, the first thing that's going to happen is there's going to be this force.” Now, that there's this change and the Roman government starts actually embracing, strangely enough, about the 2nd century and into the 3rd century, Christianity, which I even hate the word itself, because why don't you just say you love the Lord? But anyway, they began embracing it and it becomes a state religion, which Jesus is very clear to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world.” But what happens is the Roman Government starts bringing it into the world of governing, and of course, power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely. It was probably one of the most corrupt times of religion. The one thing that began to come out of this is crusades, and these crusades began to basically rule the world in the sense of that they were going in places and they were conquering lands. They were coming with this thought of, “We're going to

better the land, we're going to better the people by conquering them. Look, it's a white horse, and we're doing good stuff, right? We're bringing good stuff. So, it's worth killing people for.” Of course, that was never the message of Jesus Christ. His message was, “I came to die for you, not for you to die for Me” and our faith was never based on conquering people and souls for God. What we're doing is setting them free in the Spirit of Christ. So, it's a very different message, but what Christ is finding, as He's opening up and taking the world back to Himself, was one of the first things that happened from the time of His crucifixion and resurrection, and that was that the world started going into this crusade mentality and it was all under the guise of, “We're bringing better into the world.” It's not just religion, but it's anything that goes with a good cause and forcefully tries to make it happen, whether it's socialism or communism or democracy. Once you start forcing, then that's you trying to control and bring about a change by virtue of the force that you have. It's not winning souls for Christ in the sense of setting them free. It's saying, “You don't do this, you're going to get this.” And good intentions? Yes, good

intentions. White horses, there's plenty of them going around. But it's an interesting picture of the world.

Now, we see this throughout the New Testament.

Actually, you asked me if I was going to make it through the three horses. I'm not sure we're going to make it through the first, but if you look with me, just to kind of give you a picture, some of these passages are very familiar to you. But if you look with me in Matthew 23, I'll just begin with that particular passage. Matthew 23 is Jesus coming head on with religion, and specifically, it's the religion of Judaism, which is bizarre because He's a Jew. So, initially, of course, Judaism, going all the way back to Abraham, the purpose that Abraham was called was so that he might be a blessing, and that he might be blessed. But God says, "I'm going to bless you, and then the world's going to see that blessing, and then they're going to ask you, and then you're going to encourage them in the same way." It wasn't exclusivity. It was inclusive. He said, "I want the world to know about the blessing that they can have. But the only way we're going to preserve this blessing, because obviously, the flood

revealed that humanity isn't going to go the right way. So, the only way we're going to convey this is if I preserve and show people that blessings come if you do the right thing and follow Me.” So, He's called Abraham to do that. Well, it not only went into a realm of exclusivity, but it also went into a realm of boastful pride and “I'm better than you,” and before long, as Romans 10 says, they established their own kind of righteousness which demeaned people and made them look like nobodies. Of course, they were holy people kind of floating and walking on air. So, in Matthew 23, Jesus begins to speak to the multitudes and His disciples, and He says,

(Matthew 23:2) “... The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;

(Matthew 23:3) therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them.

(Matthew 23:4) “They tie up heavy burdens...”

This is what religion does.

“...and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.

(Matthew 23:5) “But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.”

Which actually have Bible verses on them, largely.

(Deuteronomy 6)

(Matthew 23:6) “They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues,

(Matthew 23:7) and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.

(Matthew 23:8) “But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.

(Matthew 23:9) “Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

(Matthew 23:10) “Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.

(Matthew 23:11) “But the greatest among you shall be your servant.

(Matthew 23:12) “Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”

Then He goes into throughout the chapter,

(Matthew 23:13) “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites...”

(Matthew 23:14) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers...”

You know, I've slept through many a long prayer, I'm sure God has too if He were tired, but He's not.

“... therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

(Matthew 23:15) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”

He’s talking about religion, and don't you think it's interesting how He describes them, in verse 27?

(Matthew 23:27) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on

the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."

So yeah, religion looks like it's giving something really wonderful to somebody, but it's just an arrow in the heart, and it's just man forcefully trying to make somebody like them or put them under them, which obviously was never meant to do that.

Jesus makes mention of something similar to this in John 16. John 16, if you'll read with me, reminds us of this thing that is going to be happening. In fact, Jesus is warning them ahead of time. So, it's one of the reasons why it's the first thing that Jesus begins to inherit as He begins, because you have to look at the timeline. Christ had died; He's risen. Now, the church has just begun. What's the first thing they're going to have to contend with? Believe it or not, the first real problem that the church is going to have to contend with, are going to be people killing them from synagogues. That's the first problem that they're going to face. But then, before long, the world will hop on the bandwagon, and the Roman Government will use Christianity to kill people. That's bizarre.

So, John 16, reads this way,

(John 16:1) “These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling.

(John 16:2) “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue...”

That's religion. That's a church gathering place.

“Synagogue” just basically means meeting together in Hebrew.

“... but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.”

This is Jesus warning us.

(John 16:3) “These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me.”

What you have is religion that's really not interested in knowing God. They're interested in using the power.

They're going, “Hey, here's a power, and we can look like the good guys by using it.” So, that makes a lot of sense, doesn't it? So, that's exactly what happens really through 300 probably all the way to 800 and maybe even obviously later. Of course, you have the Protestants that

were protesting against what the church was doing under the name of God and selling of indulgences and all kinds, and we'll talk about that as we go through. But the bizarre thing is that they're coming across initially as a knight in shining armor.

In fact, if you look with me in 2 Corinthians 11. I was talking to somebody just after the first service and I said, "Our faith is very simple. If you're a father or mother and you've had children, especially when they're young, I mean, there are a lot of things that they might have picked up or learned. They can do somersaults. You know, maybe they can do maybe one sit up, maybe. But they do things to kind of impress you, and you're kind of sitting there watching them, and then they may ask you something like, "What else do you want?" I remember saying something like, "Well, I would like a hug." So, to me, it wasn't like I really wanted them to do a somersault. Of course, religion is everybody doing those things. But God is speaking to us through the scenario of Mary and Martha, and He's saying, "Martha, I know you're really busy cooking these meals and everything and dusting and

everything but very few things are important. Really, only one, and Mary, just sitting at My feet and just enjoying the time with Me is what I've been looking for.” So, we complicate things.

His point in 2 Corinthians 11 is,

(2 Corinthians 11:3) “But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”

This is not a complicated thing, He says. You just love the Lord your God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself. I mean, what's so complicated about that?

You know, once you begin to walk in love, you don't really have to go through all the laws, because, Romans says, love fulfills the law. So, if you love somebody, you're not jealous of them. If you love somebody, you want to give them things, you don't want to kill them. So, thou shall not kill. So, you're not trying to steal things from them. I mean, if you love somebody, it just works, doesn't it?

So, if you drop on down to verse 13, it reads this way,

(2 Corinthians 11:13) “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.”

“Oh, they say they love Jesus.” “Ok. I still would like to know them a little bit better. Because if they're not acting like Jesus, they're not disciples of Jesus.” People will use the name, “I am an apostle of Christ.” But that doesn't mean you are.

It goes on and says,

(2Co 11:14) “No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”

On a white horse in shining armor. Yeah. That's what religion does. That's what the government does. Like the Roman Government, they learned that “Hey, you put on this armor, people begin to think that we're the savior, and then they'll give us their money, and we'll control them.” So, ok, yeah, the government is so wonderful. Yeah. They're taking your money. God warned you about the government. We're all under authority. So, God has so ordained that we get what we wanted, but you realize that's not my hope. You see commercial after

commercial, “We’re your help. We’re your help. If you come to us, we'll help you. We'll help you. We'll help you. We'll help you.” I mean whether it's the banks, whether it's the hospitals; whoever it is, they're telling me that I can trust in them. But I can tell you if you don't have the money, you're not going to be able to trust in them. I can tell you if in fact it becomes more of a bother to them than an asset that they're going to get rid of you, but they come as a knight in shining armor. So, whatever force that is, it really began with religion, and then the government took it up, and of course, Christianity became the state religion of the Roman government. Which as one Bible scholar said, was probably the worst thing that ever happened to the church, that Christianity became a state religion in some places.

But he says,

(2 Corinthians 11:14) “No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”

(2 Corinthians 11:15) Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of

righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.”

All the way through, many of the epistles are dealing specifically with those false prophets. Jesus will say, “In the last days, there going to be a lot of people that are going to be coming in My name, saying that you should do certain things. Don't listen to them if it doesn't match with Me.” So, there's a tremendous influence. Of course, Peter talks about that there are going to be preachers that will exploit you in greed. So, if you've ever heard a preacher say, (he might not use these particular words.) “Follow my teaching and you're going to be wealthy, and we're going to get you a new house and a new car.” I remember hearing one church actually had a kind of a raffle thing to where under the seats, whatever seat you were sitting on, you didn't know, but they actually had a special number, and you got a Mercedes-Benz. It would be terrible if on that particular day, nobody sat on that one seat. But anyway, they would have contests with it. What is that doing? It's encouraging greed. Now, listen, you don't need any more encouragement in that. The

world's already doing that for you. What you need in church is for us to encourage your heart to love one another and to let go of the things of the world, to not see those things as important. It doesn't mean that money in itself is evil. Scripture never says money is evil. It says the love of money is evil. But why is that guy at that pulpit exploiting greed? To exploit you, and once again, it becomes all about filling the pews. Well, they're knights in shining armor, but it doesn't mean that they're from God. That's the picture. They're carrying a bow, saying they're giving you something, but they're going to put something through the heart. They're going to take something from you. It's all about them conquering and wearing a crown and saying, "We won" rather than about helping you and bringing you to Christ. It's a terrible picture of the way that the world has gone.

Of course, Colossians says that religion is going to wear all kinds of garb, and we talked about it earlier. So, I'm not going to go into a lot of detail about it, but if you just turn with me to Colossians. I'm not going to get past the white horse, am I? But if you just look at Colossians here, you

begin to see the different kinds of garb that religion wears. In Chapter 2 in particular, we talked about this; if you look at verses 16 through 23, which we read earlier, it talks about those that are judging. Of course, that's kind of a harsh religion. It talks about self-abasement. Of course, that kind of aesthetic living, but it's a kind of control, and you can feel the force of the horse pushing people. It's people feeling like they have to do something, and they just keep pushing, and the lion roaring. So, you can't really question it. If you've ever walked in a monastery, if you've ever walked in some religious halls; I went to one of the Sikh temples, actually went to a number of temples in India, but one of these large, large Sikh temples; you walk in, and you just feel darkness. I mean, I did. I just felt tremendous darkness and these guys began to look at you. Of course, they could tell I wasn't from India. But they begin to look at you and you could tell that they don't want you there, and the mean and the hateful and oppressive stares begin to come on you, and the austerity of even the building and the way it is. You have these wise men. Sikhs actually worship wise men of old and the carvings of them around the building. I

mean, it's just a very ominous place. Of course, I went to the monkey temple, where you don't want to stay there too long because the monkeys will tear you up. It's their temple. So, I can understand them not wanting me there, but the hostility that you feel in these places and you're not feeling like you can question. You're not feeling like you even have a say in anything. It's an oppressive force, and yet it's wearing white garments. So, the oppressive force that you begin to read here, the self-abasement and judging and the festivals. It's like coming to a Jewish festival and you're supposed to be joyful and everybody's sitting around doing their Passover thing, because it's something you're supposed to do. But this is supposed to be bringing you into the presence of God with joy.

So, he goes through this list. He talks about visions. Of course, if you've ever been at church where people are conveying these visions that they've had, you can't walk up there and question them. You can't question them. It's a force and a power that is so ominous that you can't have a dissenting view in the text. It happens, and he says, these are all elementary things that people are

telling you, you have to do. When he talks about elementary, he's saying it's like you walk in there like a kid and they're telling you what to do and what not to do, and they're wearing their white garments doing it. They're supposed to be setting you free, but they're not.

But if you look, I just want you to see the contrast in Colossians 3.

It says this,

(Colossians 3:12) “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved...”

Look at our garments. Look at what we wear. It's not an intimidating garment that we're wearing. It's not a long robe. It's not my phylacteries. I don't have some crown on my head that makes me look grand. What's the garment that I'm wearing?

“... put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

(Colossians 3:13) bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

(Colossians 3:14) Beyond all these things put on love..."

What a different kind of garment. It doesn't look anything like the bow that the guy has on the horse, but he's going in "Jesus' name".

It's like 2 Timothy 3:5,

"Holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power..."

The power of our faith is the love of God, and it should be that which we're moving and breathing in, and unfortunately, man pushes his agenda. Strangely enough, he uses all kinds of means to do it, whether it's money, or even Jude talks about flattery. But religion comes in and it's hard to question because it comes in with such a force and it's on a white horse and it seems like that they're doing something good.

Once again, I was talking to somebody, and they go, "Yeah. I just don't understand. It seemed like it was a good place, and yet I felt more depressed than I ever felt before." And I go, "Yeah. That's because it's not of God." So, we get confused by the external. So, the very first

horse is a white horse and it's understandable as you begin to go to the very beginning of the histories from the time of Christ coming to earth; as we go through, we'll see the progression of forces coming into play. Just to let you know, the horses don't cease at any point in time, they're still a part of the package. So, the first horse comes in, but it comes in first, but it still continues. You're still feeling the force of the knight in white. You're still feeling that force. It's still with us, and it takes on all kinds of different personas, but it's still with us, whether it's in religion or it's with the government or it's with institutions, it's still here, and they're telling you, "You need to believe in me, and if you don't, you're going to get it." Connie told me, "You have to sign up for Social Security, Medicare." And I said, "I have to?" She goes, "Yes, you have to." I said, "Well, what will happen if I don't?" She says, "Well, they penalize you." So, it's nice to be penalized for something that you have to do that's good for you. But that's the world that does that. But we tell people, "Come. Come. All you who are weary and heavy laden, come. I will in no way cast you out. I stand at the door knocking, and if anybody will hear My voice and you'll let Me in." He

doesn't barge in the door. He'll ask you, "Will you let Me in?" And that's our faith. It's so different.

So, we're going to go through history and we're going to see how history has messed up this world, and yet, the Lamb purchased it because He loves us.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for this wonderful passage, as we began to go through history and began to look at the things of this earth that we have messed up, and the god of this world not only having allowed it but encouraged it. But Your grace, that You would even purchase knowing this, well, it's amazing to us.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed. Yes, religion is messed up. Yes, yes, it's been misconstrued and abused and even used in the name of Jesus. But the one thing that they don't understand is that Jesus never proclaimed Himself to be a religion. He proclaimed

Himself to be a Savior. So, with your heads bowed, just come to the Savior. Come in simplicity. Come with a heart that just wants to embrace His love and never leave Him, for He will never leave you. Enjoy the time together with Him. If you're feeling pushed to read the Bible or to in some way do something impressive for other people, even in the church, you're in the wrong place. You're doing the wrong thing. You're being pushed by a horse. Get off the horse. God is not impressed by the strength of a horse, but in those who fear Him and trust in His loving kindness.

Father, we give You thanks for Your people, and Lord, we are looking forward to the time tonight in which we just share about the comfort that we receive from You; just knowing you're with us and You've got our life in Your hands. Such a wonderful comfort to us. We give You thanks in Jesus' name. Amen.