

The Fourth Seal: A Pale Horse

6: 7-8

DIG: What was the name of the rider on the pale horse and who was following him? What progression is there from the first rider to the fourth? Will the world get better and better before the Lord returns? Why or why not? What means of destruction will be used? What do they represent?

REFLECT: Is the Devil still alive and well where you live? Has he been kicked out of your community? Do you struggle with suffering in the world? Who do you think is the cause of that suffering, God or Satan? Why?

Three horses had galloped into **John's** vision and, bearing their riders of judgment, had ridden toward the earth. Again, **the Lamb** moved to open **the fourth seal** holding the pages of **God's** great scroll in place. As before, **the fourth** cherub stepped forward to command the last rider, "**Come!**" And another part of the scroll was thrown back to reveal a **fourth** horse and rider. What did **John** see in that flashing moment? As a first hand observer, **he** wrote: **I looked, and there before me was a pale horse!** The Greek word for **pale** is *chloros*, or *yellowish-green*. The word by itself can mean vegetation, but it can also mean pale grey, or the ashen color of **death**. Thus, the fourth **horse** will be the color of a corpse.

At that moment **John's** eyes were confronted with a terrifying sight. The **pale horses' rider** and his inseparable companion **following close behind him** are personified as **Death and Hades**, the place of the dead. **Hades** will become the gravedigger, burying the remains of **Death's** victims.²⁰⁴ The Greek word **Hades** is a transliteration of the English word hell. The word means *the unseen*, and is meant to denote the invisible world of shadows. This was the technical Greek religious term used to designate the world of those who had died. The Septuagint, or the Greek translation of the TaNaKh, uses this word to translate the Hebrew word **Sh'ol**, which generally has the same meaning. The concept of **Sh'ol** in the Bible is divided into two parts, one called paradise (**Luke 16:22**), for the righteous dead, and the other part for the wicked dead (**Luke 16:23**). So here, **Death and Sh'ol** follow in the wake of famine, and **Sh'ol** is ready to receive the dead of the Tribulation.²⁰⁵

Of the dozens of artistic interpretations of the four horsemen, the most graphic might be the nightmare vision of a Japanese artist, Fujita, who painted **the fourth** horseman as a full skeleton grinning fiendishly, riding on the full skeleton of a horse across a battlefield strewn with skeletons. The entire charnel scene is framed in a chlorine green cloud of **death**. With Hiroshima being etched into the Japanese psyche, who could better portray the **pale horse?**²⁰⁶

Although **Death** will ride unbridled during the Great Tribulation, **YHVH** will allow it for **His** ultimate purposes. It is not **God's** desire that any should die (**Second Peter 3:9b**), but mankind refused **His** plan and **the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23)**. So a fourth of the **earth** will die so that the rest may see what rebellion brings and have the opportunity to repent. Satan will think he is gaining the upper hand, but **ELOHIM** will merely use his evil for good. We must always remember that it is **Christ** who **holds the keys of death and Hades (1:18)**. **Yeshua** once put it like this: **If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened (Matthew 24:22)**. This **rider** will not find the Church. The righteous of the TaNaKh and B'rit Chadashah believers will already be safe in heaven with **ADONAI**. No, **Death** will be hunting down more than one billion unbelievers who are destined to spend eternity in **Sh'ol**. What a harvest.

This obviously contradicts those who teach the world will get better and better. Will the religious people of the earth take dominion over cities, states and nations? Has the old dragon been kicked out of your neighborhood? Or is he still prowling **around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (First Peter 5:8)**? This is what the Bible teaches about the direction the world is going. **Death and Sh'ol were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword**. It is staggering to think that one-fourth of the world's population will be destroyed in a matter of days. That means one billion people will be killed. To put it in perspective, the number of people who will die every two days will equal the numbers who were killed instantly at Hiroshima.²⁰⁷

During the Great Tribulation, the world will have a counterfeit peace, then war, then economic collapse and famine. Things will grow progressively worse. Notice the progression. **The rider on the white horse** will only be partially armed. **He** will have a bow, but no arrows. **The rider on the red horse** will carry a single sword. **The rider on the black horse** will have two means of destruction - economic collapse and famine.²⁰⁸ However, **the rider on the pale horse will have four specific ways in which to kill**.

First, the sword signifies warfare. As I have stated before, **ADONAI** has an eternal purpose behind all the bloodshed. No one is more grieved at the killing than **Jesus**. It breaks **His** heart to see people, created in **His** own image, die. But as William Barclay, the famous Scottish professor at Glasgow University, warned, "At the back of it all there is the eternal truth that no person and no nation can escape the consequences of their sin."²⁰⁹

Secondly, famine signifies starvation. **Death** on a massive scale is the inevitable consequence of widespread war and **famine**. As in America during the Great Depression, in Europe after the Second World War, and today in many third world nations, there are starving people waiting in food lines. But they will not find enough food to live on and many millions will starve to **death**.

Thirdly, plague signifies disease. Throughout human history, disease has killed people on a far more massive scale than war. More Union and Confederate soldiers died from disease during the Civil War than were killed in battle. An estimated 30 million people died during the great influenza epidemic of 1918-1919. This was three times as many as the estimated 8.5 million soldiers who died in battle during World War I. In addition, several million more died at the same time in an outbreak of typhus in Russia, Poland and Romania.²¹⁰ There will not be enough antibiotics and vaccine's to go around during the Great Tribulation to stop it.

And lastly, by the wild beasts of the earth. This will be a strong message to the "politically correct" who worship Mother Nature and value the life of animals over unborn babies. ADONAI will show the world that it's wrong to worship Mother Nature. Hungry **wild beasts** will turn on the unbelievers of the world and PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) won't be able to help them!²¹¹

This prophecy is based on the **four dreadful judgments** found in the TaNaKh. The prophet **Ezekiel** heard **God** say: **How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem the sword, famine, plague and wild beasts to kill its men.** But even those promises of horrors had a glimmer of hope. ADONAI assured **Ezekiel** that **there will be some survivors - sons and daughters will be brought out of it.** That is the point. **He** told **Ezekiel** that **He** would be **consoled when He saw their conduct and their actions** (which were so different than before) for **Ezekiel** would then know that **God** had **done nothing without cause (Ezekiel 14:21-23).**

As a result, that's whom we see next: **survivors - spiritual survivors.** They will be the **martyred souls under the alter** in heaven (**6:9-11**), those saved out of a **worldwide revival (7:1-8)**, and a **great multitude standing before the throne** in front of the Lamb (**7:9-17**). What a harvest!