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<sup>3</sup>When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" <sup>4</sup>And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

For 3 ½ years, the world will lay in a state of euphoric, powerfully controlled peace brought by the first rider and horse, under the control of this charismatic world leader. Here is one who finally seems to have the whole package & persona – wisdom, charm, eloquence, diplomacy, authority, leadership qualities and people to lead who are willing to be led.

Notice the biblical groundwork which shows how this “peace” will endure for a short time but will come tumbling down: Daniel 7:23-26 ( esp. v. 25 ); 9:26-27 ( esp. v. 27 – note point where peace ends – 3.5 years in ); Rev. 13:5; Daniel 11:31, 36; Mark 13:14-23.

Not all theologians agree that the peace apparently garnered by the rider on the white horse is worldwide in scope for 3 ½ years. Some see the 4 horsemen as concurrent. Some see them as occurring before the 7 year tribulation, so that as the seals end, the Tribulation begins. Some see the 3 ½ years as times of civil war, unrest & crime, with only Israel protected from it due to the pact that the Antichrist will make with Israel. ①

However long this peace lasts, and whatever scope you care to apply to it, it is certain that the rider on the red horse is “permitted to take peace from the earth” ( Rev. 6:4 ). Whenever this rider is called forth in the time sequence, up to that point, from the time the white horse & rider appeared, there will have been peace, and apparently peace never really known in recorded history up to that point. It is my contention that the red horse is called forth 3 ½ years into the Tribulation period – at the half-way point.

The thing that apparently begins the conflagration from an earthly viewpoint is “the abomination that causes desolation”. We have already looked at some of the verses where this is mentioned.

Let’s think through what is happening here from a world purview. Antichrist has come and brought with him ( in fact, his claim to fame is this ) deceptive but apparently everlasting peace. He has ‘bloodlessly’ conquered the world and has held worldwide power under the control of Satan, who is under the control of God Himself – for 3 ½ years. The peace all comes tumbling down when the Antichrist decides that it’s time he went for all out worship and proclaims

himself to be God, and sets himself up in the Temple and commands people to worship him. This action of supreme blasphemy – called “the Abomination that Causes Desolation” - effectively breaks his covenant with Israel and all out war breaks out.

One of the things that creates a problem for many is this very fact that a national Israel will apparently exist when this takes place ( so he can even have a covenant with them ) and there will be a literal temple where the Antichrist can enter and defile it by claiming to be God, whom the Jews know he is not. For any temple to be viable in Judaism, it must stand on the Dome of the Rock – the very place where Abraham sacrificed Isaac ( Gen. 22 ) and which place David purchased – II Sam. 24:18-25. The problem lies in the fact that Israel had not been a nation since AD 70, and even the nation now existing since 1947 as Israel may not be the final national Israel God has in mind, although I think it is. The thorniest problem is that where the Temple once stood, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, a great holy site of Islam ( their 3<sup>rd</sup> greatest site ) stands since 1193, and given the state of terror & totalitarianism that now exists within Islam, it is not conceivable to us how Israel will ever take this site over and reconvert it to a Judaistic Temple into which Antichrist will come and disgrace it. One possible scenario is that it may be a bargaining chip to create a peace between Israel and its’ mostly Muslim enemies. This potential scenario grows in possibility if the Antichrist & the reigning world political – religious power happens to be Islamic – only they could ever peacefully turn over the Mosque to the Jews. If they did, it would have huge strings attached.

This mosque is one reason why many interpret Revelation as preterists, seeing it all as history, and the abomination of desolation as the sacrificing of a pig on the temple altar in between the testaments, an event which does fit Daniel’s prophecy, and caused the Maccabbean rebellion. However, a preterist interpretation of Revelation falls flat in too many other areas to accept it biblically.

By the time this abomination of desolation occurs in the future, many people on earth may very well have grown tired of the rules & regulations of an Antichristian rule. Remember, Satan is not by nature peaceful or truthful, so the 3 ½ years will be marked by firm but not righteous government, and likely capital punishment as a regular way of deterring rebellion. Peace – especially under Satanic rule - does not have to mean idyllic joy across the world. Although there will be many conversions to Christ during the first half of the tribulation, there will also be many martyrs – Christianity is too counter-cultural to be allowed to challenge world wide ecumenical or Islamic rulership.

By this time, Christians ( those saved after the Tribulation began ) will be being rounded up, imprisoned and killed because their lack of willingness to follow Antichrist will be too much of a risk to let their actions go unpunished. The fifth seal judgment highlights this. ‘Peace’ under Antichrist would be an uneasy peace in a lot of ways. There would be millions on earth not raptured, but who

( because they had been church-goers, or were close family / friends to those who were raptured ) would have some understanding that this leader was likely the Antichrist and so would not give him their allegiance any more than would be necessary to allow them to survive. Many of these will even get saved, making them instant enemies of the state.

The bright red horse symbolizes blood, battle, war, & killing. The “another” in Greek means that this horse & rider is another of the same sort as the first horse & rider; different in purpose, but still a judgment from God. This rider is not Antichrist because we believe he rode the first horse. Some say he is the False Prophet, the religious ‘beast’, but that does not fit the facts, and if accepted, makes the identification of the next 2 riders extremely difficult to figure out.

It makes much more sense to recognize this rider as representative only of war and bloodshed – as a power unleashed to make war and remove peace. On earth, this heavenly symbolism will play out as a natural course of events that fit into the history of those times and as a result of the actions of the Antichrist as he pushes his agenda towards proclaiming himself to be deity.

Notice the very important verse 4b – “It’s rider was **permitted** to take peace...”. Permitted by whom? Well, who has such authority? Who is holding & opening the scroll? The answer is obvious – this rider, as all the riders – is appointed by God for specific purposes to fit into God’s plan:

- To take peace from the earth
- So that people would slay one another

Whatever restraints had still existed up to this point as Antichrist ruled under God’s authority, it is the red horse & rider’s mandate to remove them, and that “from the earth”, not localized, but worldwide.

The people slaying one another is not just people being martyred, because the context of this does not appear to be limited to one group, but seems more universal in scope. The rider was given a great sword, symbolic of bloody death – as compared to the rider of the white horse who was given a bow but no arrows. Unlike the diplomatic conquering of the world by Antichrist, this rider conquers by bloodshed, by military power, although conquering is not mentioned in the text – it seems more like senseless, purposeless slaughter, although God will certainly have purpose behind it.

Since this is yet future, the sword is most likely symbolic – as there is very little use of swords in warfare today. In some cultures, machetes are a weapon of choice for uprisings by the common people, but in the context of modern warfare, as waged by professional soldiers, the actual use of swords is unlikely. So the bloodshed will undoubtedly be the result of all kinds of modern weapons of war.

Does it bother you that God is using war here which will be the cause of the demise of millions of people all over the world? Isn’t one of the 10

Commandments, “Thou shall not kill”? And yet, here, God is decreeing war to go on for His purposes. The desire to kill and to hate others is built right into all people as a result of the imputation of Adam’s sin. It is Satan’s natural realm of power – Christ told the Pharisees in John 8:44 that Satan was a murderer from the beginning and there is no truth in him. The result of Satanic activity coupled with human pride, greed, self-preservation, jealousy & covetousness will fuel the fires of war. God has often used war as a judgment on wicked people. Some examples are the entire book of Joshua, Isaiah 10; Habakkuk 1, etc.

Just as the white horse & rider come onto the scene in a world providentially prepared for peace at any cost, the second horse & rider enter a world ready for war – ready to bash each other’s brains out. Perhaps sick of totalitarian control by Antichrist, sick of meaningless religion, sick of sharing, sick of feigned love for one another...an under current of anti-God; anti-Christian, and anti-Semitic hatred lies below the surface of false peace. This false peace will be the calm before the storm.

We see this as we follow the parallel found in **Matt. 24:4-7a**, and **v. 8** says this is just the beginning of birth pains!

Next lesson – Lesson # 21

Rev. 6:3-4...The Third Seal Judgment / Rider on a Black Horse