

The Coming of World Peace

Revelation 6:1-2

We come now to the time of the study of God's Word and I want you to open your Bible to Revelation chapter 6. Revelation chapter 6 begins for us the future element of the book of Revelation. Now we get into the prophecy regarding the time of the end. We're going to be learning so much as we go through chapter 6 right on to the end of this great book. There is truth and application abundant in every verse. It is not just a mystical trip into the future, it is not just a fascinating look at something that doesn't have relevance for now, it is very practical. And we're going to allow the Spirit of God to apply it as we go.

Tonight I want to speak to you from the two verses of chapter 6 because this is the first seal that is opened on the subject, the coming of world peace...the coming of world peace. In verse 1 we read, "And 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.' And 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."

Now you will remember that the scenes in chapter 4 and 5 are in heaven. And we see in the scene in chapter 4 God seated on His throne. Then as we come into chapter 5, God holds out His hand and in His hand is a little scroll sealed with seven seals. Those seven seals basically were for the purpose of hiding what was in the scroll. It could not be broken without manifesting that someone had done that. It could not be read unless it was broken, it couldn't be broken legally except by the one who had a right to open it.

I told you that little scroll was the title deed to the universe and the only one who was worthy and able to open it was the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, the lion from the tribe of Judah, the root of David as He is described in chapter 5 verse 5. The scene then is God and God is about to unleash judgment. Around His throne is lightning and thunder. In the midst of this there is glorious worship of God by the redeemed and raptured church and by the angels. And in the midst of all of this glorious worship as God gets ready to act in judgment and as all those glorified beings celebrate His coming judgment for it is right and just and will be exaltation of Christ and the glory of the saints, as they celebrate that God puts out His hand and in it is the little scroll which symbolizes the title deed to the universe. It has to be taken back from the usurper Satan and all his cronies.

The Lamb, the Lion of the tribe of Judah comes forth and takes the scroll. He is worthy and He is able. He has a right to inherit the universe, He has the power to take it.

Written in this scroll is a description of the judgment by which the Lord will take back the earth. It is sealed seven times, as often ancient documents were, to keep it hidden until the rightful heir opens it. And the opening of each seal we will see drama portrayed, the drama of the coming judgment as the wrath of God unfolds and He takes back His universe.

Now the first seal is opened as we read in chapter 6. And when that seal is opened a drama

plays out. One of the four living creatures, you will remember them from chapters 4 and 5, says as with a voice of thunder, "Come, and I looked and behold a white horse and He who sat on it had a bow and a crown was given Him and He went out conquering and to conquer." Here is the first seal. This then is the description of the first event, the first feature of the end when the Lord takes back His world.

For many years many Christians have been taught that things in the world are heading inexorably toward final war. We have all been told that we are headed for Armageddon, that we perhaps are headed for a nuclear holocaust, maybe that's what Peter had in mind when he says the elements will melt with fervent heat. That everything in our society and our world is going to deteriorate and deteriorate and deteriorate until the holocaust breaks loose. The world, we've been told, is going to fall into deeper and deeper chaos, confusion, disaster and death. We have all heard the gloom and doom message, the message of escalating war, crime, financial collapse, etc. We know and even the Scriptures says it, there will be wars and earthquakes and famines and plagues. We look at the world around us and we see people concerned about the character of society, concerned about finance, concerned about food and the food supply, concerned about fuel and the fuel supply, concerned about pollution and environment.

We all have been told that we face in these areas, the areas of our social order and our money and our food and our fuel and our environment, we face doom's day. We face insurmountable dilemmas that will drive the globe into an ultimately living hell. We're on the slide to destruction.

But is that really the scene? Yes, ultimately, but no, temporarily. Actually before the worst comes and it will come, there are going to be good times. I believe we are headed for worldwide peace, worldwide prosperity, safety, security. Before things get bad, they're going to get better. In fact, many world leaders are convinced of this. Many world leaders, and you can read them if you just listen to what's going on on the television and read the news magazines and even the newspapers, many world leaders are convinced that the problems in our world, problems of food and fuel and society and environment, these problems are so serious and they are so compelling that they are driving the attention of nations away from the military field and all of the ingenuity that has been poured into space travel, all of the ingenuity that has been poured into weapon development is going to be moving toward society and economics and environment and food and fuel and the wonderful genius of man is going to pull us out of this dive. The world as you watch it today is setting aside its arms. Oh there are skirmishes here and there, and there always will be some of those. But the world is really laying down its arms because it has to focus on what it deems to be more serious problems. Money, social order, food, fuel, environment, people are frightened that our future is threatened. They're very concerned about the quality of life. They're not so concerned about national borders.

Oh, as I say, there are some places where that is still an issue, there are some bitternesses that run very deep and we see places like that. But for the most part the great powers of the world are moving away from separation to unification. We're seeing the unification of Europe, something we perhaps thought we would never see. We all assumed the Soviet Union would stay in tack until the very end and be the king of the north that came down and destroyed and overpowered Israel. We have watched western and eastern Europe come together in unification. We are

watching even now the pulling down of trade barriers. They're talking about common currency. They're talking about eliminating all of the trade barriers to facilitate a common economy so that the rich can help the poor become richer.

They're concerned about medicine. They're concerned about health. They're concerned about all of those things and driven by those concerns they want to pull down all the barriers they can, even in our own northern part of the western hemisphere where we live we're very close to having a trade bargain, or whatever you want to call it, pact with Mexico and Canada to pull down all barriers so that the economies flow back and forth so we can all take advantage of strengths and compensate for weaknesses.

Tremendous, tremendous effort going on in the various think tanks of our world to come up with means by which the unification of the world can occur. Robert Mueller has been called the philosopher of the United Nations and its prophet of hope. Mueller has served the United Nations for thirty-three years and has performed diplomatic missions all over the world. Today he is the assistant secretary general to the United Nations, he's in charge of coordinating the work of thirty-two specialized agencies and world programs for the U.N. He's got to be one of the best informed men in the world. And Mueller is convinced, and I quote, "That there will be no third world war between the big powers," end quote. But instead, he says, "We're headed for a new age and a new world, a new Genesis, a true global, God-abiding, political, moral and spiritual renaissance to make this planet at long last what it was always meant to be, the planet of God," end quote.

He claims to be a good Catholic. His God, however, is not the personal God of the Bible, but the cosmic force who is pulling together unification all over the globe. You see, people believe that this is all we've got. They believe that the earth is all there is. You understand that? They believe we've got to hang on to this deal because it is all there is. Those who are evolutionists think we've got to preserve it. They worry about what you do to it. And I thought to myself, as I was studying this, if you think we mess up this earth, wait till you see what Jesus does to it. This is a disposable world. But they don't know that. This is a consumable planet, but they don't know that. It was designed to be consumed, it was designed to be disposed of, and it was designed to be used up and when it's used up the Lord Himself will create a new heavens and a new earth.

But these people believe that this is it. And the fear of losing the planet is sublimating the fear of having all the territory you might need or keeping your traditional borders, or losing them. Herman Cahn(?), head of the Hudson Institute, a New York research organization dedicated to predicting the future, says, quote: "Even with all the problems we now face, mankind in the U.S. have a great future." He says, "Many of the fears plaguing Americans today will be all but forgotten in coming years." He says, he predicts, "The population explosion will soon fizzle. The birthrate will drop and the world population will stabilize about ten billion. The world is not running out of natural resources, since vast supplies lie untapped in space and in the earth's oceans. We have plenty of energy and will never run out of fossil fuel since there's enough coal alone to last hundreds of years. In addition to nuclear power there is also solar energy and thermal heat beneath the earth's surface in an almost unlimited potential that we have scarcely begun to develop. All of the pollution problems that now seem so serious will

eventually be solved. The inflation rate will drop below five percent and there will be a worldwide economic boom. Computers will be the key to much of the above and a genetic engineering will make food plentiful and cheap by developing new edible plants that can be grown in salt water," end quote.

He's not alone. There are many like him, leaders and analysts who believe that all the energy and all the attention and all the creative juices flowing to problem solving in our world are going to bring us to an age that man may think is an age of utopia, an age of peace and an age of prosperity. We've gotten a little taste of that, haven't we, with the ending of the cold war. When that age comes, when that time of world peace comes, earth's war weary inhabitants are going to greet the peace with ecstasy. They're going to be convinced that utopia has arrived. It's going to look as if all the problems are solved. Finally, international peace and a certain degree of prosperity for everyone. We've watched as the iron bars of communism have crumbled to dust. We've watched as the invincible communist power has fallen, willingly. We've even heard communist leaders apologizing for their past conduct.

No less than Pope John Paul II looked at all this dramatic change and announced that the world was, quote: "At a very special moment as if awakened from a nightmare and opened up to a better hope," so says U.S.A. Today in December of 1989. The Pope says we're coming to a better day. People are talking as if the candle or the flame of hope has never burned brighter. Is there peace on the horizon? Will there really be worldwide peace? Will we really miss a third world war and enter into an age of prosperity with falling trade barriers and facility to move in and out of the places in this world and be accepted? Will there be such an economic flattening out that the rich will share with the poor and the wise with the foolish? And the answer is yes.

The Bible predicts such a time. The Bible predicts that there's coming a world peace, it will come. But listen, it will be a deceptive peace. It will be a false sense of security. It will be the most subtle and the most deceptive trap that's ever been set because it will catch the world in it. And they'll be caught and they'll be destroyed. The trap is being set right now, psychologically, socially, politically, economically and religiously. And it is luring the world right in. International peace is the bait. It's the bait for the trap in which the human race will be caught to feel the full and final unleashing of God's wrath. We're headed for peace.

In a speech to the American people, President Bush said this, "We're beginning a new era. This new era can be full of promise, an age of freedom, a time of peace for all peoples. But if history teaches us anything, it is that we must resist aggression or it will destroy our freedoms, appeasement does not work." He is saying we have to maintain some kind of strength in this but we're headed for peace.

Months before that, Mekial(?) Korbechev had already optimistically said, quote: "We see a budding world order in which peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial cooperation based on goodwill will be universal norms." Everybody is talking about world peace.

We would do well to remind ourselves that an optimistic confidence that peace was assured characterized Europe precisely before World War II. Sir Winston Churchill never did buy in to Hitler's offer to sell peace. William Manchester's biography of Sir Winston Churchill confronts

us with the unpleasant and haunting reminders of Hitler, a man who came extremely close to being the Antichrist, yet deceived the world with his promises of peace. Listen to what Manchester wrote, "Thomas Jones who had been in and out of Whitehall for a quarter century wrote in his diary, `All sorts of people who have met Hitler are convinced that he's a factor for peace. He doesn't seek war but friendship. Meeting the press after he had been closeted with Hitler for an hour, Lloyd George said he regarded him as the greatest living German. A year later he wrote, "I only wish we had a man of his supreme quality at the head of affairs in our country today."'" He's talking about Hitler.

Nazi goals were even applauded by Anglican clergymen, a group of whom expressed, quote: "Boundless admiration for the moral and ethical side of the Nazi program, its clear stand for religion and Christianity and its ethical principles," end quote.

Sir John Simon, his majesty's foreign secretary from 1931 to 1935, saw in Hitler not arrogance but a man rather retiring and bashful and unconcerned with affairs in Western Europe. Later he described Hitler to King George, quote: "As an Austrian John of Arc with a moustache."

Arnold Toynbee(?) equally spellbound by the reich chancellor declared, "That he was convinced of Hitler's sincerity in desiring peace in Europe and close friendship with England." Talk about getting sucked in.

Churchill was never deceived by Hitler. But he stood almost alone. The deception was practically universal. Almost everybody misread Hitler and they walked right into his false peace and were slaughtered.

It's going to happen again only it won't be Hitler, it will be Antichrist. And everybody will think he wants peace and he'll be the next Joan of Arc, with or without moustache.

I really think that the political openness of eastern Europe, the political openness of the world is more surely a move toward the false peace of Antichrist than the true peace of Jesus Christ. Religion will also be a factor, religious ecumenism will also be a factor in this global unity, everybody coming together for the purposes of science and medicine and economics and food and all of those things we talked about. But I think also religion has got to get involved in this because religion can keep people apart, so there's got to be somehow a barrier coming down between religions. Religious ecumenism is a very key player in this global unity. Religion has divided people. There has been deep running animosity between Catholics and Protestants and Hindus and Moslems and on and on. And if this is going to happen, a global tolerance in a worldwide peace, religions are going to have to openly accept each other. They're going to have to ignore doctrine and they're going to have to ignore traditional differences. And they're going to have to form sort of one religious force...particularly if it's all going to be sort of controlled by Antichrist.

Well it's happening. There are so many illustrations that we could be here for hours just giving you practical illustrations of the move toward a one-world religion, toward tolerance for everything. And by the way, at the same time I have to say parenthetically, intolerance for true Christianity. Intolerance for true Christianity will escalate in this process. Hostility toward us

will escalate. But I believe, as I've noted for you, that the church is raptured before the false peace comes so we'll be out of the way and they'll think that the biggest barrier has been removed.

Let me give you some illustrations. Mother Theresa whom you know I have met and spoken with, and those who work with her never attempt to convert dying Hindus to Christ. I've been in her home for the dying over in Calcutta and gone through it. She showed us through it, spent some time with her in the sisters quarters there as well as in that very place. She never tries to convert dying Hindus to Christ. She says, quote, "If in coming face to face with God we accept Him in our lives, then we become a better Hindu, a better Muslim, a better Catholic, a better whatever we are. What God is in your mind you must accept," end quote. She really doesn't care whether you're a Hindu, a Muslim, a Catholic or what you are, as long as you come face to face with God...whatever that is.

One of the most widely read Catholic writers of our time is a man by the name of Thomas Merten. If you have hung around any Catholics who are sort of in to the mystical end of Catholicism, they've talked about him. He's a very, very influential writer. And he has a warmth and a passion about him that makes him very believable. A month before his death, Merten told an ecumenical gathering of representatives from numerous religions in Calcutta, quote: "My dear brothers, we are already one, but we imagine that we are not. And what we have to discover is our original unity." What he is saying is we have artificial barriers, we're all really just one, all of us whatever religion. He was echoing the sentiment of Mother Theresa and what many other Catholics, including Popes, have long been saying.

There are many Catholics who today are involved in intolerant of Transcendental Meditation, Zen and Yoga and Eastern Mysticism. A man by the name of Cardinal Ratzinger, a Vatican guardian of Catholic orthodoxy, issued a twenty-three page letter in mid December 1989 to three thousand Roman Catholic bishops. And in that letter the statement that he gave, which was approved by John Paul II, did not condemn eastern mysticism or New Age medication or Yoga technique but in fact suggested, quote: "Taking from them what is useful." John Paul II has publicly encouraged such a syncretistic attitude. At the Universities of Calcutta and New Delhi in his 1986 visit to India, the Pope told the Hindu audiences, and I quote, "India's mission is crucial because of her intuition of the spiritual nature of man. Indeed, India's greatest contribution to the world can be to offer it a spiritual vision of man. And the world does well to attend willingly to this ancient wisdom and in it to find enrichment for human living." That's an incredible statement, isn't it?, from one who is supposed to be the head of the true church, regarding a idolatrous demon-worshipping religion in India.

Another very important world leader is a man by the name of, or by the title of Dalai Lama. His holiness, the Dalai Lama, who is God to most Tibetan Buddhists has been well received, of course, by Roman Catholics around the world. He has twice met with Pope Paul VI, has met five or more times with his good friend John Paul II. Says the Dalai Lama, quote: "Both of us have the same aim." At the start of his first U.S. tour they call him the God-king. He was fated in 1979 at St. Patrick's Cathedral and the relationship between the Buddhists and the Catholics, the Pope and the Dalai Lama has continued to go on. And I could give you all kinds of insight into that.

You have somebody like Sun Mung Moon(?) and the Moonies, founder of the International Religious Federation for World Peace, by the way, he says, "All men and women of religion should now tear down the walls of sectarianism for the greater goal of world peace."

Gorbechev, by the way, personally hosted Moon in the bowels of the Kremlin and Moon responded that the Soviet Union which he formerly acquainted with Satan was now going to play a major role in the plan of God to construct a world of peace.

You've got probably nearly a hundred inter-faith councils in American that are trying to pull everybody together in some kind of a global peace. In the state of Washington, we think of Washington as a fairly American place...Washington state. Let me read you a quote from the Washington State Interfaith Council. "Swami Boskerunda(?), a Hindu, chanted a prayer to God in their Interfaith Council. Ismail Amad, a Moslem recited a short prayer to God. Trust, the members agreed, was their most important short-term goal. Meeting at the Vendanta(?) Society on Capital Hill, those who signed the council's charter expressed their hopes for the group as they stood in front of an altar adorned with pictures of Sri Rama Krishna, Jesus Christ and Buddha. My support and heart is in this group, says Pasha Moha JerJasbee(???), a member of the Bahai faith. Boskerunda told the group that Hindus believe in the harmony of all faiths."

And the Pope has declared, and I quote, "Christians must work with all other religions to secure peace."

These are just samples of what's happening in religion, as it moves toward a global ecumenicity. The New Age Movement fits into this, mysticism. President Bush, you remember, after the Helsinki meeting in September of 1990 expressed the hope that the plan worked out in Helsinki was to bring the new world order. And President Bush said, this is Time Magazine, September of 1990, "If the nations of the world acting together continue as they have been, we will set in place the cornerstone of an international order more peaceful than any that we have known."

I don't think our President understands what's coming.

All of this drive for peace has nothing to do with the Prince of Peace. But it has to do with a false delusion, a trap. The prophet said, "For the wicked there is no...what?...peace." No peace. "But their passion for peace will lure them into the trap of Antichrist as God uses peace as the bait for the kill."

Jesus warned about this. Turn to Matthew chapter 24. In Matthew chapter 24 I want to draw you to verse 3. Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives and the disciples came to Him privately and said, "Tell us, when will these things be and what will be the sign of Your coming and the end of the age?" When will come the final end? When will come judgment on the world's system of evil and darkness? When will come the beginning of a new and eternal age of light and righteousness? When is the end? They ask with eager and hopeful anticipation. And Jesus answers them, quite interestingly, and Jesus answered and said to them, verse 4, "See to it that no one misleads you for many will come in My name saying, 'I'm the Christ,' and will mislead many." Stop right there.

When is it going to happen. When is the end? When is the final judgment? Well Jesus says it starts with a deception. It starts with someone who comes to mislead, who says I am the Christ, and I bring peace. I am your deliverer. I am your savior. I am your messiah. A very deceptive, very misleading proclamation. And it won't just be one, please notice verse 5, "Many will come." Many will be saying this. There will be many saying we've come to bring world peace. We've come to bring the new order. I can just see the world leaders all lining up and chiming in, all saying that they represent the deliverance, they represent the global peace, they represent the new day, the new dawn. They promise to deliver the world from its trouble. They promise peace. They are the architects of the false peace that begins the end time judgment.

Doesn't last very long, look at verse 6. "And you'll be hearing of wars and rumors of wars." And verse 7, "Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom." And the result, famines, earthquakes will follow. And then in verse 9, "There will be tribulation and persecution and you will be hated by all nations on account of Me."

Now what you have here, and we won't go into all the detail, is Jesus saying when is it going to happen? First there's going to be a deception. That deception will be followed during the time that we all the tribulation with wars, with famine, with natural disasters, with persecution. And even with all of that going on, now follow this, verse 11, "Many false prophets will continue to arise and mislead many." They'll still come along and what they will say? Just like the prophets of old, they will come along and they will say...peace, peace...when there is no peace. This will always be their message. Peace is just around the corner. Even far into the final judgment, you come down to verse 21, and you're now in the second half of the seven-year period in what's called the Great Tribulation...the first half is called in verse 8 the beginning of birth pangs. The second half is called the Great Tribulation. And even in that time, verse 23, people are going to say, "Here is Christ, there He is." And verse 24, "False Christs, false prophets are going to arise and show signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect." Then He says in verse 25, "I've told you in advance." If they say to you...here He is in the wilderness...don't go. Here He is in the inner rooms...don't believe it.

Listen, from the time of the beginning of the tribulation period, the time of the end after the Rapture of the church on, it's going to start with a false peace, the false peace will crumble into war rapidly as God reeks havoc in judgment, but even in the midst of that, the false prophets will still be crying peace...peace. Even with all the signs that proceed the final day of the Lord, which is at the end of the Tribulation, when the full fury of God is unleashed, even with all of the signs leading up to that with the wars and with the famines and with the pestilence and plagues and with the natural disasters, even with all of the holocaust flying around everybody's head everywhere, people are still going to be deceived about peace. It's such a desperate cry.

And I'll tell you this, once they get a taste of it at the beginning and then it crumbles, they're going to be desperate to get it back. First Thessalonians chapter 5 takes us right up to the brink of the day of the Lord at the end of the Tribulation. And it says in chapter 5 verse 3, "While they are saying peace and safety, then destruction will come. And it will come suddenly like birth

pangs upon a woman with child and they won't escape." They'll be all saying peace and safety, and the destruction will come, the day of the Lord.

Matthew chapter 24 takes you from the beginning of the time we call the Tribulation right on through to the return of Christ. The first phase of it, just so you understand, is this deceptive peace by deceptive would-be saviors and peace bringers, deceptive Christs that crumbles into war. But even as the whole period escalates from war to famine to natural disasters and pestilences, even through the abomination of desolations, the desecration of the temple, even through the persecutions that come right on down to the brink of the day of the Lord when the sign of the Son of Man appears in heaven and Jesus is ready to come back and the sky goes black and all the people cry for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them before the face of Christ to hide them from Him, right up until that moment, the people who thought they orchestrated the first peace will be crying...peace is coming back, peace is coming back...and there will be people who believe it.

Back in Jeremiah's prophecy, he prophesied about a historical day of the Lord. The historical day of the Lord was a day in which God was going to judge Judah in the past. He was God's prophet to warn them, and did it with tears. He told them about coming horror, coming divine judgment and he even said, you ought to know it because there are some present signs. I mean, there's some things happening that are precursors to the actual day of the Lord and you ought to know about them. You ought to warn people. He says, chapter 6 verse 1, "Already evil looks down from the north and a great destruction is there, you can see it coming, so blow a trumpet, warn people, it's coming."

But in spite of that, in spite of everything that Jeremiah said about the overthrow of Judah and the overthrow of Jerusalem, despite all the precursors, despite the imminent judgment, despite the power right there visible to them, they could see it right on the brink, they kept believing everything would be fine, everything will be fine. Why? Over in chapter 6 verse 14, because false teachers came and false prophets and they said...peace, peace...they kept telling them peace was coming, peace was coming. Chapter 8 verse 11, they kept saying, "Peace, peace, but there is no peace." Chapter 14 and verse 13 and 14, the prophets, and what do the prophets say, "Peace, you won't see the sword, you won't see famine, I'll give you lasting peace."

They're prophesying falsely, he says. There isn't going to be any peace. There's going to be the day of the Lord...fury of God's judgment. False prophets always say peace. They'll always talk about the new order, the new world of peace. So when you come to the end time, you can go back now to Matthew 24 for just a moment, when you come to the end time, it's going to begin with a false peace. False prophets, false Christs and one great Antichrist, one great ruler and leader and we'll say a lot more about him in our study of Revelation, this one great Antichrist will be over all these other false Christs and false prophets and false teachers. They're going to try to orchestrate this peace. It's going to work for a while and then it's going to crumble.

So, you see, the world's movement toward a global peace really does fit this scenario. A deceptive peace is coming. It's coming led by false Christs and the Antichrist. And it is the first signal that the scroll has been unrolled and the first seal has been opened..false peace.

Now go back to Matthew 24 and let's follow a little bit the sequence. Verse 6 and 7 then describes war, wars, rumors of wars, nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom. The second thing that's going to come is war. The third thing that's going to come, famine...famine. The fourth thing that's going to come in verse 7, earthquakes, which are representative of massive natural disasters. First peace, then war, then famine, then death through natural disaster.

Now hold your finger there in Matthew 24 and go over to Revelation 6 and you see the same sequence. Here the first horse is a white horse, he represents, as we will see in a moment, peace. The second horse is a red horse, and he represents...what? War, he took peace from the earth and men slaughtered each other. The next horse is a black horse and he represents famine...the scales and the balance and the wheat and all of that, the barley, talking about famine conditions. And then the fourth seal and a pale green, or ashen horse, and he represents death, natural disasters, plagues that are also mentioned even earlier.

So you see, the parallels are exact. Peace, war, famine, death. Those are the horses and Jesus said, "Peace, war, famine and natural disaster," of course implies massive death. And Jesus said, "These things...in verse 8...are merely the beginning of birth pangs," just the beginning.

Then you notice verse 9, "They will deliver you to tribulation, kill you, you'll be hated by all nations on account of My name." You say, "Who's He talking about?" I believe He's talking about redeemed people. "Well," you say, "I thought the church was raptured." Yes I believe they are, but I also believe that as soon as that time period begins there is going to be conversion taking place. People are going to be redeemed during that time. And I believe they're going to be persecuted and they're going to be maligned. In fact, throughout the whole period of the Tribulation, you see it down in verse 15, from the abomination of desolations on, woe to those who are with child, those who nurse babies because of what's going to happen. And this certainly relates to Israel because the Jews are going to be persecuted as well. But it does mention the elect down in verse 24, those who would be redeemed who also will be under the persecution. So there will be an onslaught against true believers and against Israel.

Now I want you to note here that there's a very important sequence. You have the parallel of the first four in Matthew as the same as the first four seals in Revelation 6. The fifth seal in Revelation 6 is the martyrs under the altar. And the fifth component here in Matthew 24 is delivering you to Tribulation and killing you. It's the same. It's the killing in chapter 24 of Matthew that yields the martyrs in Revelation 6, so the sequence is the same...peace, war, famine, death, martyrdom. It's that way in Matthew 24, it's that way in Revelation 6. What triggers the persecution, what really spins it full-blown is verse 15, "The abomination of desolation which was spoken of by Daniel, the prophet." That is when the Antichrist shows himself for who he really is and desecrates the temple and starts to try to destroy the Jews along with any others who are identified with God.

So the five seals take you all the way down to the sixth seal which introduces the Second Coming of Christ and the seventh seal is His coming and His final judgment. So the parallels are identical. If you read Revelation 6, the first four are the same. The fifth there, martyrs under the altar, the fifth component here is martyrdom. The sixth seal in Revelation 6, as we shall see, the

sky goes black, the sign of the Son of Man, that is exactly what you see here in verse 29. So the sequence is the same, absolutely consistent.

Now first there will be peace. That's what we want to focus on. Let's go back to Daniel 9 for a moment, we'll try to wrap this up. Daniel 9, in verse 24 to 27 you have a very important text and it says in Daniel 9:26, "After the sixty-two weeks," and these are weeks of year. You remember our study of Daniel, you remember we related back to Daniel in our study of 1 Thessalonians also, sixty-two weeks are gone, the Messiah will be cut off. Sixty-two weeks of seven years. God had prophesied, back in verse 24, seventy weeks decreed on Israel. Seventy weeks to bring in everlasting righteousness. It started, you remember, with the king named Artaxerxes, and it went seventy times seven, or 490 years. Four hundred and eighty-three years from that decree to the very day Jesus came into the city of Jerusalem, the first sixty-nine weeks were accomplished.

Now, that leaves one week left...one period of seven years. There were the seven weeks and then the sixty-two weeks, as he notes in verse 25. And after the seven and the sixty-two are complete, the Messiah is cut off, He is killed. The city is destroyed. The sanctuary is destroyed. You remember that happened a little later in 70 A.D. And there's still a week that hasn't happened. Verse 27 picks it up. "He will make a firm covenant with the many for one week." Who's he? He is the prince who is to come of verse 26, the prince who is to come. He's the Antichrist. He's also called in Daniel "the little horn," chapter 7 verse 8. He's called "the king of fierce countenance," chapter 8 verse 23. He's called "the willful king," or the king who does whatever he wants, chapter 11 verse 36. The Antichrist comes. Now watch this. And he makes a firm covenant with the many for one week. But in the middle of the week he puts a stop to the sacrifice and the grain offering and commits the abomination of desolations, as it's called.

What is this? The Antichrist, remember now, he's the leading orchestrator of peace. He is a false Christ. We went over him in detail, remember, in 2 Thessalonians, we followed his career all through there in chapter 2. The Antichrist comes, he leads all the other false Christs and false Messiahs to bring this world peace. He makes a covenant with Israel. Yes, certainly Israel is a key player and the many certainly focuses on Israel since they are the nation in view here. But it extends beyond Israel. It is a covenant that involves the protection of Israel from all of those who might harm them. So it is a kind of major peace pact. Who knows how many nations may be involved in it? He makes a peace pact.

That's how the period of Tribulation is going to begin. Peace, global peace. And the Antichrist specifically makes a peace treaty with Israel...a covenant to be their protector, their peacemaker, their deliverer, their Messiah, their Savior. But, in the middle of the week, in the middle of the seven years, that's why we know it's a seven-year period, it's called a week of years, in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrificing and grain offering. You know what's going to happen? That peace treaty with Israel is going to be so comprehensive and so complete that they're going to be back in their sacrificial system. They're going to be back making sacrifices. They're going to be back offering grain offerings. They're going to have their temple. And in the middle of it, he's going to come in and desolate the place, he's going to make it desolate and he's going to try to destroy Israel and conquer the world.

I think by the middle of the week war will already have broken out. I don't know that the peace is going to last the whole three and a half years. The wars and the rumors of wars may have already begun. But for sure it will all break loose then as Antichrist desecrates the Holy of Holies, sets himself up as God, and we'll see more about that in the future of Revelation, to be worshipped by the whole world and that leads the world into massive warfare that ultimately ends up in Armageddon. But it all starts with peace, peace is coming for the world, for Israel, prosperity, safety, it's a trap followed by war, famine, natural disaster, fierce persecution, the blackening of the sky, the appearing of Christ, devastating judgment and then His Kingdom.

This is the future. The labor pains are going to come starting with peace. And as labor pains do, they get harder and harder and closer together and closer together so there is a movement through that seven-year period of escalating trauma, escalating pain, increasing rapidity until the event happens. And then finally when the sign appears, the Son of Man comes and in the last blast of fury pours out the trumpet judgments and the bowl judgments.

Now all of that brings us back to Revelation 6. Let's go back there briefly. You say, "You haven't said anything about these two verses." I know. But do you understand what I've said so far? Okay. "And 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.' And 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." Heaven's praise was so glorious in chapter 5, so glorious in chapter 4, and now all of a sudden silence. The scene shifts from heaven to earth. The Lamb unrolls the first seal, opens the scroll, the title deed to the universe, and John sees as the Lamb breaks the seal and the contents are revealed, that legal document which represents the rightful heir and His power and authority to take back the earth, and as He opens it he sees a white horse, but not until one of the four living creatures calls that white horse and rider. One of the four living creatures, we've already noted in chapter 4 that the four living creatures are angels, cherubim, same kind described in Ezekiel 1, that are around the throne of God. And one of them says loudly, like thunder, and after all, thunder and lightning is coming out of that throne, as we remember from chapter 4 verse 5, it's a throne of judgment and his voice is a voice of judgment. He says, "Come...come." And immediately a white horse comes and a rider.

And you say, "Well what is this?" Well horses were associated with war. I wish we had the time to do a little horse theology, we don't. Horses are representative of power, magnificence, majesty, conquest. And here comes this horse and the one who sat on it...a rider. It's not necessarily a person because the red horse and rider and the black horse and rider and the pale or ashen or green horse and rider, as some have designated it, are not a person either, these are representatives of something and we'll see that.

Just a note, the Lamb broke one of the seven seals to remind you that seven is a number of completion. That's why there are seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls because that completes the judgment. When all of them are complete, the universe is Christ's the Kingdom has come, and the Millennium is here. All of these events also occur in a period called the Tribulation which is a week, the seventieth seek of Daniel, a period of seven years. Jesus, as I said, divided it into two parts, the birth pangs, the first half, and the Great Tribulation, the second half, separated the abomination of desolations which is when the Antichrist desecrates the temple

in Jerusalem and heats up the persecution and tries to destroy Israel and set himself up as God to be worshipped by the whole world.

As we saw in the first half, generally you have the four seals which is peace, war, famine, and disaster bringing death. The fifth seal, the abomination triggers the persecution, and then the sixth and seventh seal bring the end. Half of this period is designated as forty-two months in Revelation 11:2 and Revelation 13:5 and even designated as 1260 days in Revelation 11:3 and 12:6. So the time period is pretty set, it has to be seven years because we're even given months and days to note what half of it is...multiply it by two and it's seven years. Our Lord returns, Scripture says, Matthew 24:29, immediately after the Tribulation of those days. So at the end of the seven years Christ comes back.

Now having given you the context, we're at the beginning. The seal is opened, the voice of the cherub says come and he comes. Who is this? Some say it's Christ. No, it can't be Christ. Why? Because Christ is opening the seal. It can't be Christ, this rider has a stephanos, that's a crown that you win as a prize, Christ wears a diadema for a crown, that's a kingly crown over in chapter 19 when we see Him. It can't be Christ cause Christ doesn't come at the beginning, He comes at the end. It can't be Christ, He doesn't carry a bow, He carries a sword. Some say it's Antichrist. Well, he's certainly there, I mean, it's certainly encompasses Antichrist. But the horses don't represent individuals, they represent a force...war as a force, famine as a force, and so is death.

Certainly Antichrist is the main man in the peace, but the horse and rider represents the peace. He's not alone, there are many antichrists, many false Christs, many impostors. And this horse and rider represent the false peace headed up by Antichrist.

You say, "How do you know it represents the false peace?" Well the fact is he has a bow, that's a symbol of a warrior. But if you have a bow you also need something else, what? An arrow, he doesn't have any. The absence of arrows speaks of a bloodless victory. Worldwide peace brought by this covenant maker and his cohorts in a bloodless way. And then an interesting phrase, "A crown was given to him." He is sort of democratically crowned here, it doesn't seem that he took it, it was just given to him, like he's been honored by the world and elevated and given prominence. This peace has been made king by the world, everything is subservient to peace, and since the architect of peace is primarily the Antichrist, everything is subservient to him. He is rewarded with the crown which is a reward, stephanos, rather than a diadema which is a king's crown that belongs only to one who is in the rightful line of the king. Peace is king. And peace is crowned king by the world. He went out conquering and to conquer. He's rung up a long series of triumphs in bringing world peace. This is the deception that Jesus talked about when He said many would be misled, this is the golden age, this is the utopia that Antichrist helps to establish with his covenant with Israel that Daniel spoke about, peace...misleading, deceptive, false peace...orchestrated worldwide by many false messiahs and led by the Antichrist.

And, of course, once the peace is established, the Antichrist rises to the top. In fact, in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 it says he will come with all power and signs and false wonders and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish and God will send a deluding influence so that

they might believe what is false. Why? In order that they may be judged. God's going to delude the world. He's going to let the delusion run. They're all going to fall into the false peace, bow down to this great world ruler who epitomizes it. And it's a trap in which they will be caught and killed. The world is headed for war, but first it's headed for peace.

Father, thank You for this insight, help us to be able to read the signs of the times and see the way our world is headed. So much talk about peace, so much movement about peace, we could be very near the time when you come for Your church. We thank You that in this all we have no fear for our hope is not to look for Antichrist but for Jesus Christ Himself who will take us to the place prepared for us in glory. We thank You that we live with an eternal hope of heaven, but also knowing what is coming we have the responsibility to warn the world, they're falling for a false peace and the only one who can give them real peace is the Prince of peace, even Jesus Christ. In the days that we have, may we preach the true peace in our Savior's name. Amen.