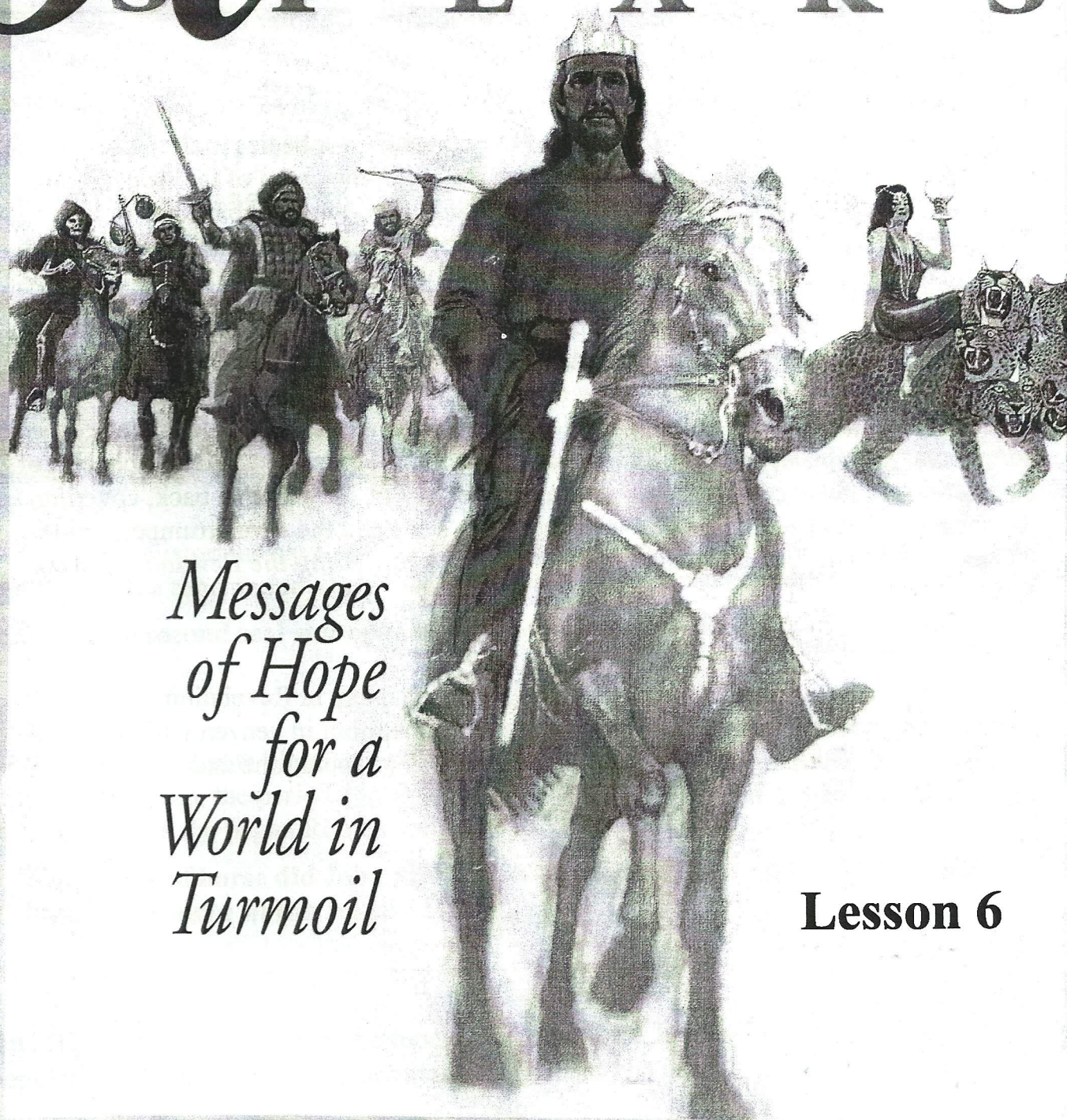


Revelation

S P E A K S



*Messages
of Hope
for a
World in
Turmoil*

Lesson 6

Breaking the Unbreakable Seals

[This chapter is based on Revelation, Chapter 6]

Probably the four horsemen, symbolized in this chapter, have received more interest and extravagant interpretations than any of the dramatic prophecies in the Book of Revelation. Almost everyone has heard about the "four horsemen of the Apocalypse." God, in His unique way, uses cartoon-like animation to describe the history of the Christian church and how it was affected by what was transpiring in the world during specific time periods.

"As far back as the third century A.D., persecuted Christians were drawing much comfort and inspiration from this chapter. It was impossible, however, for this book to be fully understood until the unfolding of the events. Nevertheless, Victorinus, who was martyred in A.D. 303 during the Diocletian persecutions, wrote a complete commentary on the Revelation. This commentary is still extant. . . . The prophecies of Revelation are not successive, they are repetitive; that is, they double back, covering the same periods of time. For example, the seven seals and the seven trumpets cover the same period of time as do the seven churches." -*Unfolding the Revelation*, p. 60.

READ: Revelation 6:1-8.

This chapter is a continuation of the two preceding chapters in Revelation. In the previous chapters we found John describing the throne room in heaven with Jesus, as the slain Lamb, standing by His Father, who is seated on the throne and surrounded by the other creatures and beings. Then we see John weeping!

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1. Why was John weeping? Revelation 5:4.

2. Why was Jesus worthy to take the book and open the "seven seals"? Revelation 5:9.

3. What did one of the beings invite John to do when Jesus the Lamb opened the first seal? Revelation 6:1.

4. What did John see? Revelation 6:2.

NOTE: Here we find a beautiful symbol of the early Christian church. This was the church of the apostles, or "Ephesus" in Revelation 2:1. White denotes purity, and the pure white church went forth conquering and to conquer! The opponents of Paul, the disciples, and early followers of Jesus Christ said that these "have turned the world upside down." To the Colossians Paul wrote that the gospel of which he was a minister was being "preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Colossians 1:23).

Some church historians have said that if Christianity had continued to progress as it had during this time period, the whole world would have been converted.

5. When the second seal was opened, what did John see? Revelation 6:3, 4.

NOTE: Red represents blood and persecution. This time period corresponds to the church of Smyrna, the period of pagan persecution of the Christian church. Literally millions died as the pagan Roman emperors tried to wipe out Christianity.

6. What color of horse did John see as the third seal was opened, and what did the rider have in his hand? Revelation 6:5.

NOTE: Now we are taken to the time of Constantine. Christianity had become popular. In blending with the teachings of paganism, the pure doctrines of the church

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became polluted. Instead of the church turning the world upside down, the world turned the church upside down! One author, commenting on this era of Christianity, wrote:

"As the stream of Christianity flowed farther from its fountain, it became more and more corrupt, and as the centuries advanced, superstition advanced with them . . . tales of purgatory, and pious frauds, and the worship of saints, relics, and images, took the place of pure and simple Christianity: till at length, the Book of God being laid aside for legendary tales, and 'traditions of men,' all these corruptions were collected into a regular system of superstition and oppression." -*The Apocalypse*, p. 146.

Here we discover that, indeed, the black horse-symbol of apostasy and corruption and subjection to the powers of darkness-is a fitting description of the church of Pergamos.

7. What do the balances, or the yoke in the rider's hand, represent?

ANSWER: Some prophecy scholars believe the balances or yokes signify that religion and civil power would be united. This was true of the Roman emperors from the time of Constantine until the reign of Justinian.

The wheat and barley seems to appropriately designate, as many scholars believe, that a cheaper form of religion was being taught-as barley is cheaper than wheat. Just so, a cheaper form of spiritual food was being offered to the people, and they were only allowed the smallest amount of food from the Word of God.

"Tradition and the teachings . . . were being taught rather than the pure doctrines of Christ. This corrupted religion was being sold or bartered as a commodity. But pure religion cannot be purchased by either pence or penance. . . The foundations for the whole system of apostate Christianity were laid during this period. "*Unfolding the Revelation*, pp. 66, 67.

8. What color was the fourth horse that John saw? Revelation 6:7, 8.

NOTE: The color of this horse is the color of death. If you hit your thumb really hard with a hammer it hurts a lot and it turns black, but it is still alive. But if your thumb loses all its color and feeling, it dies. Now we come to the "dead church," the pale horse.

9. What was the name of the rider who sat on this horse? Revelation 6:8.

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NOTE: During the Middle Ages millions of faithful Christians who dared to prefer death to the sacrifice of a good conscience, were martyred. God's church had to go underground. . . . No longer were pagans persecuting Christians, or Christians persecuting pagans. Now "Christians" were killing other Christians! Only priests were allowed to own and interpret the Bible. Those who should have been ministers of life actually became ministers of death during this time. J.A. Wylie stated it well when he said: "The noon of the papacy was the midnight of the world." -*The History of Protestantism*, vol. 1, p. 16.

10. What power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth?
Revelation 6:8.

NOTE: Horrible indeed were the deeds done in the name of the meek and lowly Jesus. Millions of people were murdered during the Inquisition and Medieval Church wars. Religious leaders, inspired by the spirit of antichrist, invented the most inhumane methods of torture. Even a casual reader of the gospel would quickly say such outrages were not the work of Christ, but the work of the antichrist.

11. What promise does God make to those who are faithful unto death?
Revelation 2:10.

My Response

___ It is my desire to follow Jesus and the truths of the Bible.

___ Regardless of the cost, with God's help, I choose to be faithful unto death.