

**Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas -- Sunday, November 17, 2019**

***“And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. (Revelation 6:5-6)***

We continue our examination of the seven seals of the Apocalypse, found in the writing of John in the sixth and seventh chapters of the Revelation. We previously examined the unstoppable display of God’s truth ... the mystery of the gospel with regard to election and reprobation ... the whole world over. That is a great victory at a time, in an age, when the society has so obfuscated the truth of this blessed Word that it is not recognizable and is treated like a fable or worse, a diatribe from racist, sexist bigots whose time has passed. We then examined the removal of all peace from the earth, bringing conflict of every form and bloodshed the world over. The white and red horses in this metaphorical vision prophesy of two glorious conditions that will fall upon the world and her inhabitants as Christ stakes His claim of lordship in this earth.

With the next seal removed, we turn to a more terrifying and vexing condition ... recognized as far worse even than death by violence ... where many inhabitants of the earth are robbed of the basics of sustenance, putting huge portions of the earth into a scarcity of food that is horrifically tormenting. The horse is black ... like the skin and faces of those inflicted with this new plague of starvation. This condition is brutal ... it seems irredeemably cruel to human eyes ... but is potently just in the face of what this world is come to with sin and blasphemy. Consider the smaller version of this condition when it was poured out onto the rebellious southern kingdom of Judah:

***“For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her. ... Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick. They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.” (Lamentations 4:6, 8-10)***

Dearth. Painful, slow, carcass-consuming, wasting, desperate dearth. Blackness covers the faces of many people in the earth, as they have lost the system that feeds them. They’ve lost the coordination of farmers, processors, distributors, retailers ... all of the components that make access to safe and reliable foods a thing we take for granted. Because peace has gone, so have all the processes that bring staples to their tables. Sporadic, swindling vendors sell a pittance of wheat or (worse yet) barley, the food of livestock, at ridiculously high rates. Emaciated bodies wander about displaying the inevitable result of a broken staff and stay (Isaiah 3:1). Black is the appropriate color for this horse, as it matches in color how the human body wastes when chronically starved; **“our**

**skin”** it is said of those ancient citizens of Judah **“was black like an oven because of the terrible famine.” (Lamentations 5:10).**

Sitting in this house today we may struggle to see such a dynamic. We don't live in what is called a “food desert” or have any day-to-day understanding of the idea of going hungry due to poverty or civil and political disruption. We may not be capable of envisioning how the world's population could be so overwhelmed by the conditions imposed by God that large numbers die for lack of basic nutrition (among other world conditions). The combined effect of the plagues unleashed under these seals is the death of a significant portion of humanity, which means that this poverty of food source becomes both a torturing and a deadly condition. People are not just starving, they're dying.

Presently, there are estimated to be 821 million people in the earth who go hungry because their food supply is either unstable or utterly broken. That's right around 11% of the earth's current population. That is an astonishing piece of math in itself. Around nine million die each year from starvation. Interestingly, one of my sisters shared with me a chart proposing to show the population of the earth over centuries – it's a bit suspect because it presumes human life before what we know from Scripture was when the human race was created, but it still provides some interesting population data in more recent times. It shows that until about 1800 AD there were fewer than 1 billion souls in the earth. When John was writing there were about 250 million. The point is, that John's temporal frame of reference could hardly contemplate the volume of starving and dying humans that this generation would likely see.

And yet, without research this group here would likely not even know about that frightening statistic. Why do not the starvation facts dominate the world's news cycles? When somebody enters a church or some public place and shoots a few dozen people to death (only around 350 victims each year in the US) it triggers spasms of sympathy and outrage for days or weeks on end, and incessant calls for action among the highest governmental bodies of the land. If nearly 900 million humans living in such dire straits from starvation – with nine million annually dying from it – does not capture the world's perpetual attention, how severe must this condition get before it does? Will 11 percent of humanity actually dying from starvation *en masse* do so? We have to get a lens on this situation so we can understand the difference between what we see now and what we will see when Christ's day is upon us with these plagues.

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But starvation among the people is only part of what we need to consider, if we want to have a credible understanding of the work broken loose under the third seal. Now we have to examine what is intended in the peculiar instruction given by Christ<sup>1</sup> to the rider of the black horse: **“and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.” (Revelation 6:6)** Peculiar, I say, because if we've got before us a paucity of food for the consumption and maintenance of life among a significant number of the earth's inhabitants, would not the source of oil and wine be just as scarce for that population? We

all, I trust, recognize that oil and wine are also commonly utilized in the preparation of meals. The expositor J.A. Seiss suggests that the distinction is with the nature of the agricultural product. With wheat and barley, there is a continuous need of watching over the crop to ensure there is a harvest – a personnel-intensive activity that falters when humans are so busy quarrelling with each other that they cannot attend to it. Olive trees and grape vines, on the other hand, once established are self-generating. They're the proverbial gift from God that just keeps giving without the need for humans to fuss over them. It's not a bad point, and I believe that it has at least partial merit. The truth is that the growth of wheat, barley, oil, wine, and every other thing that grows will not produce a single grain or single fruit without God's grace to provide it, so the answer limps a little in my mind.

The spiritual answer lies in the similitude with which this vision to John is engaged. The extreme expense to which the inhabitants of earth must go, to obtain wheat and barley is a symbol of the relative unavailability of all the staples of living. We are *NOT* to see that the only thing the earth's inhabitants have left to eat are wheat and barley – and that being available in untenable quantities – any more than it means we are to actually envision a black horse galloping about with a rider carrying scales in his hands.

Wheat and barley are metaphors for all nutritional necessities of simple living. These metaphors point to the difficulty of a significant portion of the population – due to the imposition of conditions under the red horse, conflict and war – getting nutrition and safe water. While the world watches, a notable number of mankind wastes away to a black rot until they die off and lay about in the open for their loved ones, friends, and mankind generally to observe the endless horror of it. Are they the weakest, poorest, least protected by the infrastructure of society? Perhaps. In any major economic or social upheaval, these are the ones most prone to consequences.

So, in *THIS* context we have to ask what the metaphor of the oil and wine bring to the picture ... and why the condition of scarcity will not spill over onto those symbols. We need to find what Scripture teaches us about what distinguishes wheat and barley – the necessities of nutrition – from the oil and wine. Expositors are not in agreement about this expression. Reading them shows that there is no certainty about what is intended. There are only two dominate notions expressed, which I believe for the sake of our edification need some examination. First, that oil and wine are referencing the gifts of the spirit granted to the saints. Second, that oil and wine are referencing more generally the temporal blessings provided at God's hands to humanity generally. The remaining speculations go too far afield from the evident context of the black horse and its rider, so we'll place our attention on these two and pray for better understanding from our Lord on what we should see here.

The idea with the first option is that the rider is being directed not to impact the ability of the saints among the earth's inhabitants to be capable of continuing their service to God ... continue to have God's graces poured out upon their heads ... continue to preach, pray, minister, prophesy, etc. So let's consider the validity of this option.

It is true that under the Levitical code the priests were to receive “[a]ll the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine” (Numbers 18:12) from the sacrifices presented in the tabernacle. The import of this, however, was not unique to the oil and wine, but rather it was to focus on the qualifier “*all the best*”, intimating that the priests would receive the *first fruits* of the offering. Like the requirement that we tithe the *first* ten percent of our gain in recognition that the Lord was the efficient cause of all we have been given. The passage includes more than oil and wine, and speaks as well to the first fruits of wheat, and similar passages even refer to corn and the firstlings of the herds or flock (Deuteronomy 12:17) further demonstrating that the focus is on the tithe, not the product.

It is also true that oil is used in scripture for anointing, symbolizing the presence of God and His goodness in the work being done (Exodus 40:9; 1 Samuel 16:13; Psalms 89:20; Hebrews 1:9; James 5:14). Oil and wine were used in the sacrifice required of the Israelites (Exodus 29:40; Deuteronomy 16:13). Wine is seen in metaphor for the beauty of the blessings and presence of Christ six times in the Song of Solomon (1:2, 4; 4:10, 5:1, 7:9, & 8:2), and we know well that it is a symbol of the remembrance we are to hold in the ordinance of Lord’s Supper ... of Christ and the spilling of His blood (1 Corinthians 11:25). These all help to suggest that oil and wine do indeed carry symbolism of the relationship in the earth between God and His elect; Christ and His church.

The difficulty I find with the use of this particular metaphor for the oil and wine – in this specific and cataclysmic context – is the symmetry of the metaphors. While the horse rides to inflict a specific and grievous plague upon the people of the earth, a metaphoric caution against harming two objects that are used in part for proper religious practice then means what? All of the actions with oil and wine required in service to God are literal uses. You literally make use of oil for sacrifice ... you literally use oil for anointing. You literally use wine for the Lord’s Supper.

More importantly, those literal uses also included at least one of the metaphoric staples that are being adversely impacted (i.e., wheat). For example, if the metaphoric intent is to preserve the practice of the Lord’s Supper at the time of this plague, do we not also need wheat for the unleavened bread? If oil and wine are symbols for the graces of God pouring out upon us, will the actual graces referenced be impacted by the presence or absence of these things (oil and wine in a metaphor)? This begins to feel forced, like we have to use metaphors within metaphors to simply say to the rider “leave My elect in the earth to continue serving Me!” The analysis sags under its own weight, so I cannot comfortably conclude from Scripture that this is the intent of the prophesy.

In examining the second notion – that oil and wine refer to the temporal bounties of God to humanity generally – there’s a much better and more compelling thing to grasp in this scene.

***“And [Israel] shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to [God]; for then was it***

***better with me than now. For she did not know that [God] gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.” (Hosea 2:7-8)***

In elliptically discussing this passage, the expositor Matthew Poole says of the “**wine, and oil**” “*these cheer the heart, and include all provision for delight and sweetness.*” Humans crave delight and sweetness in their lives. It secures them in the notion that all is well when they have much more than bare necessities for survival. When Hosea is prophesying about the excellence of the conditions that will prevail in the dwelling of the redeemed Israelites while they reign with Christ during His millennium, he says “**the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil**” (Hosea 2:22), where John Trapp indicates “*God’s dear children shall have the best of the best*”. Not merely will they live, but they will live sumptuously, and the earth will hear God’s commandment to respond to every desire and give freely of what they want without the need for hard labor to obtain it.

***“He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man’s heart.” (Psalms 104:14-15)***

Another passage where the bounties of God’s mercies toward His creation is expressed, helps to understand the enhancement of those bounties in the metaphor of the wine and oil. So these, and many more passages secure us in the knowledge that the metaphor of oil and wine are an enhancement of good things ... comfortable things ... excesses in living. In examining these words of Revelation 6:6, the expositor J.A. Seiss does a competent job of treating this decree to the rider regarding the oil and wine:

*“But the very reservation [of oil and wine] also reflects the intensity of the famine as respects the ordinary means of subsistence. It carries with it the intimation that, but for the preservation of the oil and wine, it would be impossible for men to find sufficient food on which to keep themselves alive. Nay, though a thing of mercy as regards men’s lives, it also bears with it a moral aggravation of the affliction. It is everywhere set forth as one of the characteristics of the last times, that people shall be given to luxurious habits, and inordinate appetency for superfluities of diet. “Eating and drinking,” and every extreme of carnal indulgence, is then to mark their modes of life. The staple food of mankind is despised, and every expensive luxury is impatiently pursued. Hence, God shuts them in to their luxuries, partly in mitigation of judgment, but at the same time also in aggravation of it. Just as Israel, lusting after flesh, and no longer satisfied with the bread Jehovah provided, was compelled to live on flesh until it became almost impossible for the people to swallow it (Numbers 11:19-20); so God in judgment takes away what men despise, and forces them to live on luxuries made loathsome because there is nothing else, that they may learn the folly of their wisdom, and taste the fearfulness of their guilty hallucination.”*

This isn’t a bad expression of the thought, though I think it is far undersold ... and because he was an American Lutheran, he cannot help but sprinkle in a bit of Arminianism; free willism. There is

indeed a judgmental component to preserving the excesses of the lives of the humans who remain, as God is expressly said to know how ***“to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (2 Peter 2:9)***. These who make use of the oil and wine are simultaneously less sensitive to the dearth and misery of those humans who perish in this judgment, and unmoved to repentance by that ghastly scene since they still have their pleasures; idolatry, fornication, adultery, sodomy, pharmacology, drunkenness, etc. Even in this solemn expression of God’s wrath against the rebellious inhabitants of mankind, there is a poisonous indifference put into the event that judicially blinds them all to where these traumas must eventually end.

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There is yet more to this doleful scene. The horseman rides not with a bow or a sword, but with that great symbol; ***“a pair of balances in his hand.”*** The expositors have indicated two distinct components to this part of the scene ... which I find to be consistent and therefore don’t believe we need to choose one over the other. The first is that these scales are what we in American jurisprudence proclaim them to be – symbols of justice and equity in the application of official judgment. This perspective focuses on the symbol of power wielding the scales, to reflect an intent to execute judgment in the resulting plague. The second notion is that these scales are a tool for the rider, reflecting how precise his work will be in parsing out what depletion of wheat and barley will impact where and whom. Scales, in times of scarcity, are used to distinctly measure food ... a fastidious application of the judgment this rider brings.

Either way, scales show how closely this plague is being watched over by that God directing this trauma. There is nothing accidental here. This judgmental horror is carefully weighed, precisely measured. As a double entendre, we learn both that the intent here is to mete out to affected humanity a precise measure of the staples of food (wheat and barley), as well as providing a just recompense to a violent, disputing, God-hating population. The punishment meets perfectly the error being addressed. But what is that error? Can’t we all generically say the rebellious earth dwellers are wicked and apostate? So, what is it about this particular recompense that so perfectly fits for the earth’s population at this dark hour?

***“To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.” (Isaiah 28:12)***

That leads us to an understanding of why this starvation would be utterly appropriate that the beast declaring “go” for this condition is represented as having ***“a face as a man” (Revelation 4:7)***. As I indicated in my first sermon on these seals, each plague is “unleashed” at the request of the saints in that Church of Revelation. The third beast is presented as having a face as a man. This is a thing about which it has taken some time for me to formulate a clear understanding. It is an important point that I believe we all see instinctively in the Scripture and apply it in our lives; but it is not a

thing that would readily come to your mind in this eschatological picture. The analysis begins with this scriptural statement:

***“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Romans 10:14-15)***

The mechanism that the Lord God of eternity has placed into this human creation ... for the dissemination of the mystery of the gospel ... is the *human* prophet. His servants are charged with the responsibility to deliver the Word of truth, each to his or her generation. That faithful deliverance of unvarnished truth from a human speaker to the unregenerate masses, as well as to the elect remnant, is a key part of our genuine charity. We demonstrate our love for God and our love for our fellow human creatures by disregarding their hatred, wrath, and violence – ***“tak[ing] forth the precious from the vile” (Jeremiah 15:19)*** – and delivering the precious seed to the people of the earth.

***“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” (Ecclesiastes 11:6)***

That’s our commission ... and that is the commandment to every human ambassador of Christ from the first prophet sent. As a sampling of my point, you can find at least 20 times in the Old Testament that the concept of delivering God’s word is expressed in the form of sending *His* human prophets as *His* servants to speak *His* words<sup>ii</sup>. Those of you exercised in Scripture can find scores more verses that express the same sentiment. I cannot believe that any would, therefore, dispute that an integral part of the mystery of the gospel is that God delivered His word to His servants and ... indeed ***“great was the company of those that published it.” (Psalms 68:11)***. So, more specifically, what do His servants deliver?

***“Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Matthew 7:9-11)***

The Bread of Life (John 6:35). The Fountain of Life (Psalms 36:9; Proverbs 13:14, 14:27). Living water (John 4:10). Christ said ***“man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” (Luke 4:4)***, demonstrating that what mankind eats to sustain physical life and health is far less important than what ***“proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4)***, so His servants are to faithfully deliver what is truly wholesome and heartsome to the generation in which they are to dwell with these infidels. Like the pure manna from heaven that supernaturally sustained the children of Israel

coming out of Egypt ... it is the pure Word of God that spiritually sustains and is the best thing any human can offer another in this dark wilderness. This is why the pot of manna was present in the ark of the covenant (Hebrews 9:4), and why this same John said: ***“Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”*** (John 6:31).

How fitting, therefore, that it would be those same noble men ... charitable men ... faith-driven and conscientious men who are represented in this beast that delivers the message to the God-hating, Christ-rejecting and mocking generation. They will not just lose all access to God’s blessed truth and gospel – manna from heaven – but they would also lose those essentials of life for which they changed the glory of God ... ***“the mammon of unrighteousness”*** (Luke 16:9). While every human being lives in the earth, each has a duty to expend all those things that have been given by our gracious King for the work of His ministry; not for the pursuit and worship of pleasure and personal agendas. When we don’t do so, we steal from Him ... and when He comes calling for recompense there is no capacity to pay.

So we see in this amazing work under the removal of the third seal, two horrible components unleashed by this rider of the black horse. First, that the misery of starvation grips the population like a black plague across the globe. Second, that they are spared their licentious pleasures to mitigate their misery and blind them from repentance. In my work I have seen more times than I can recount the sight of a person who – though starving, filthy, and rotting away in the most grievous distemper of the body – is still so committed to her next fix ... her next high ... that she is unable to even articulate the death displayed across her presentation. It is a most grim scene to behold the penniless, pitiful sight of all mankind literally unable to provide for themselves the essentials of life, though they pay all of their day’s wage for no more than it takes for one man to maintain it; ***“a measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny”***. (v. 6)<sup>iii</sup>. This is a plague that is at once judgment and a disabling maintenance for a world that has been left without a kind Master to provide.

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***“And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.”*** (Revelation 6:7-8)

“Unusual or extreme paleness, as from fear, ill health, or death.” That is the definition of the word I always get in my mind when I think of this scene; pallor. Strident pallor, with the inevitable expression of doom riding upon him and that hungry sidekick following him about to gobble up those who fall in the wake. This horse is a greenish, yellowish pale condition that expresses the motionless, rotting corpses found littering the landscape. ***“[T]here is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses”***

**(Nahum 3:3).** This is a perfect word picture of how gruesome the sight is to behold, though where Nahum's account is referring to the slaughter of Nineveh, it is a perfect type of the worldwide condition under this fourth metaphoric steed.

**"Death"** is the continuing ... unending ... condition of these who have lost temporal and eternal life; **"Hell"** is the place where those dead, hopeless bodies are held pending that great judgment day of God. Wherever and whenever temporal death comes to the unregenerate, hell is the certain residence ... and has been from the beginning of the human experience, since these two monstrous enemies were set loose upon the creation after Adam's fall (Romans 5:6-21). This will continue to be so until at God's certain appointment: **"death and hell were cast into the lake of fire."** **(Revelation 21:14)** So this scene is not to be understood as unique in the mere presence of Death and Hell. Rather it should be seen as unique because of the marked magnitude and worldwide certainty of it sweeping across the globe as a consequence to the previous two plagues – the second and third seals; the red and black horses.

Presently, the death rate per year is 52 million, about seven out of every thousand persons. Recognizing that there were specific world events partially responsible for skewing the numbers, there were 17 out of every thousand dying annually just 50 years ago. Humans are convinced that their wisdom has done this thing ... where the death rate reduced by more than half in 50 years' time. As two previous sermons in this pulpit have examined<sup>iv</sup>, death is a perpetually present reality in the earth, so for this event to be notable, what must the death rate be? They will give speeches and hold forums and pour accolades upon themselves for how their intellects did this thing. Christ's words **"they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded"** **(Luke 17:28)** include the metaphorical notion that the thriving condition – as this day approaches – includes what humans believe are miraculous reductions and delays in the death rates. Fewer people die ... the sickly and elderly, through medical wisdom, live longer. So then suddenly to have nearly two billion dead bodies lying about the landscape is a significant change in scenery. When that horrific number of carcasses is a result of conditions this arrogant world believes it has tamed through human evolution – **"with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth."** **(Revelation 6:8)** – it will be an even greater vexation.

Here's an interesting aside about this fourth rider. Each of the three previous riders of horses were described with instruments – white with a bow and crown, red with a great sword, black with a pair of scales. Each of the three previous riders of horses had a mission – white is conquering, red is sowing discord, black is meting out scarcity of essentials. From these descriptive instruments and missions, we glean what work each is bringing to this initial display of the power of Christ over the population of the world. Only the fourth rider has a name. The Greek word here for **"name"** is **"onoma"** (**"on'-om-ah"**). In Strong's you see this interesting description of the word: **"the name is used for everything which the name covers, everything the thought or feeling of which is aroused in the mind by mentioning, hearing, remembering, the name, i.e. for one's rank, authority, interests, pleasure, command, excellences, deeds etc."** What fearful thoughts or feelings are aroused in the

trembling heart of rebels when their wisdom and might and influence and spirituality are all reduced by this named rider that is named for his rank, his authority, his interests, his command, his excellences, his deeds ... Death?

A proper reading of this passage is that ***“power was given unto [Death and his companion Hell] over the fourth part of the earth.”*** A full quarter of the earth is brought to that hungry grave (Proverbs 30:15-16) causing those who still live in the earth – as the root word from whence *“onoma”* derives expresses – *“to learn to know, come to know, get a knowledge of, perceive, feel”* ... Death! Death and Hell, like never before seen or imagined among the earth’s inhabitants, has come to the arrogant and lofty generation of men. Remember, that until only recently we’ve experienced a number among humanity unheard of since what we competently understand existed before the flood<sup>v</sup>. No social upheavals, no war, no famine, no plague, no feeding frenzy of ravenous beasts has ever expressed itself in so much loss of human life. Where the preaching of pure gospel enraged ... where conflict and warfare terrified ... where starvation perplexed and tortured ... now Death and Hell are named and known across the globe. What a remarkably terrifying sight. It settles on me that when the crisis extends beyond the superlatives the English language offers, one has to simply stop trying and leave it to the Holy Ghost to allow it to settle on your ears, your hearts, your spirits.

The remaining thing to answer – about this fourth expression of Christ’s beginnings in dismantling the earth dweller in preparation of His return – is why this horse is sent forth by the beast who is said to be ***“like a flying eagle” (Revelation 4:7)***. Dr. Gill says that this nature of the saints *“sets forth the sagacity and penetration of Gospel ministers into the deep things of God, and mysteries of grace, and their readiness and swiftness to do the will of God, in publishing the everlasting Gospel”*. This is a good examination generally of the saints’ relationship to this symbol. What it doesn’t do satisfactorily is help to see why it would be this eagle-like nature in the saints to pray for, call for, and meticulously oversee the death of a full one quarter of earth’s malicious population. That requires a fuller examination of the creature itself, and then some relevant connection to widespread death.

I have considered the things written about the eagle in Scripture – which will always be a better answer about the nature of a creature than the words written by men ... even men who make their lives about the science of birds in the animal kingdom. Scripture is replete with expressing the perspicacity of the eagle. They see from afar with a clarity that distinguishes them. They are said to ***“dwell in the clefts of the rock” (Jeremiah 49:16)*** in their nests, and ***“mount up” (Isaiah 40:31)*** which means to *“ascend”*. I doubt any here would question this nature of the eagle beyond any other bird. The eagle’s ability to see afar off is expressly a part of the exercised Christian (Hebrews 11:13; 2 Peter 1:9), intimating that the target of their eternal soul is in sight and every bit as certain of possession as if it were present at hand. I like this symbolism about the eagle – though I’m not certain that we are seeing it in full. We capture the value in the idea that we see a long way away, because it helps to understand that the future – indeed even eschatology – is given to the saints to

take hold of, even while the blind of the race cannot. But there is more to the symbolism in Scripture about the eagle.

I'm not sure I'll capture this sufficient for all of the good hearts here. I have a strong desire to do so, and I hope that by putting this thought before you I can edify you and sharpen the iron that we collectively wield in dispersing God's word in the earth. We're talking about the eagle ... the spiritual symbol of the eagle. How are these "**beasts**" who shall occupy during this dispensation of the Day of the Lord like the eagle? They have the ability to see far – but to what end? There is a focus of the eagle with her acute and lengthy vision. She isn't renowned for her vision – for vision's sake! She doesn't see afar off, just for an academic understanding of the ability to see afar off! What is she looking at? What are we looking at ... in this metaphorical vision? Will that help us to see the work of this fourth horse and rider more completely?

***"Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she."*** (Job 39:27-30)

Joseph Caryl says about this underlined portion *"From [the rock] she seeks her prey. And 'tis conceived, that the reason why she builds so high is, that she may from thence with more advantage spy out and seek her prey. The Hebrew is she diggeth her prey from thence. That an eagle should dig, and dig in the air, is an elegant expression. Diligent seeking or searching, is signified by digging in the Hebrew language. They that dig for a thing seek it earnestly; and therefore to shew how earnestly the eagle seeks her prey, she is said to dig for it."* This eagle is hungry. She makes her business to seek out and find sustenance for herself and for those over whom she has care. This gives us both a better understanding of the eagle – and a better understanding of the beast who is said in our passage is **"like a flying eagle"**. It is not the perched, satisfied bird, but the searching and active one. There's a militancy about this behavior ... a bloodlust if you will.

The saints – represented in this beast who calls for the riding of Death and Hell across the land of violent rebels – is showing signs of militancy. They are watching for this grand opening event. Like the eagle that **"hasteth to the prey" (Job 9:26)**, these saints are **"[L]ooking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God" (2 Peter 3:12)**. This little band of believers stand in the place of many generations of God's servants who have preached that these things are coming. We have searched out the scriptures ... read the prophecies ... preached the warnings. Why would we come to the hour of fulfillment and say anything but **"go"**? Why would we not, with full heart and expectation watch over the opening slaughter of the rebel hordes, **"rejoic[ing] when [we] see[] the vengeance, and] wash[ing our] feet in the blood of the wicked"?** (Psalms 58:10). We see this slaughter far off, and when the prey is in the grips of stampeding Death and Hell we are there praising the name of our Lord and excitedly waiting for the necessary next steps in this unfolding fulfillment of the

promises that have moved every generation of saints from the first soul. It is the perfect expression of the saints as the flying eagle that can smell the impending judgment of Death and Hell.

There are yet three seals to discuss in this work of examination of Scripture. It is a most glorious array of Christ's engagement with the deceit-blinded men of the earth. What comes next will be a transition from focus on dealing with the apostate men of the earth to focus on preparations for the saints in a somber series of displays and glories. I hope the Lord will grant me wisdom and understanding – or perhaps bring to this work the heartened labor of another elder or friend here. It is all about being ready and preaching sound words to our generation so that we can share this glorious event with our Savior.

I love you all.

Amen

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<sup>i</sup> The *“voice in the midst of the four beast”* referenced in verse six of the chapter matches what Revelation chapter five says about whose voice it is:

***“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain [e.g., Christ], having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”***  
(Revelation 5:6)

<sup>ii</sup> Here are the verses from the Old Testament expressing God's delivering of His word via human prophets, his servants:

**1Kings 14:18** And they buried him; and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by the hand of his servant Ahijah the prophet.

**1Kings 18:36** And it came to pass at *the time of* the offering of the *evening sacrifice*, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant, and *that* I have done all these things at thy word.

**2Kings 9:7** And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel.

**2Kings 14:25** He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which *was* of Gathhepher.

**2Kings 17:13** Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, *and by* all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments *and* my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

**2Kings 17:23** Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

**2Kings 21:10** And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying,

**2Kings 24:2** And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets.

**Ezra 9:11** Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness.

**Jeremiah 7:25** Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending *them*:

**Jeremiah 25:4** And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them*; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear.

**Jeremiah 26:5** To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending *them*, but ye have not hearkened;

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**Jeremiah 29:19** Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them*; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD.

**Jeremiah 35:15** I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them*, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

**Jeremiah 44:4** Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them*, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.

**Ezekiel 38:17** Thus saith the Lord GOD; *Art* thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days *many* years that I would bring thee against them?

**Daniel 9:6** Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

**Daniel 9:10** Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

**Amos 3:7** Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

**Zechariah 1:6** But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.

<sup>iii</sup> Here is a good analysis by Joseph Seiss in his work *The Apocalypse* about what the language ***a measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny*** (Revelation 6:6) means in application:

*“The prices here given, are judgment prices, indicative of extreme scarcity and distress. A choenix is about a pint and a half of our measure, and is the ordinary allowance of wheat to a man for one day’s scanty subsistence. A denarius was the ordinary wages for a full day’s labour. And when a choenix of wheat costs a denarius, it is as much as a man can do to earn the bread he himself consumes, leaving nothing for his family or for his other wants.*

*But even at these ruinous rates, there is not wheat enough. People have to betake themselves to barley — the food of horses and beasts of burden. Yet the barley is as difficult of procurement as the wheat. In ordinary times, a denarius would buy twenty-four choenixes of barley; but here a denarius will buy but three — the scanty allowance for a day’s subsistence for a slave. The arrival of things at such a pass, accordingly argues a severity of hard times, distress, and want, almost beyond the power of imagination to depict. Yet, it is but the natural result of the state of things under the red horse. The two are closely connected as cause and effect. Take away peace from the earth, and inaugurate universal wars, civil strifes, and bloody feuds, and terrible scarcity of the means of subsistence must follow.”*

<sup>iv</sup> See sermons on May 22, 2016 *“Precious in the Sight of the LORD is the Death of His Saints”* <http://bit.ly/DeathSermon> and on January 27, 2019 *“Death and Grief and Mourning”* <https://tinyurl.com/WBC20190127PDF>.

<sup>v</sup> In his work called *“The Flood”*, writer Alfred Rehwinkel articulates with authority that based on the commodious pre-flood conditions, the lengthy lives of the population, and the prodigious rate of offspring combined to make the population that perished in that grand event was approximately 16 billion humans.