

Corresponds to Program 23

## THE FOUR HORSES STUDY GUIDE

### SUMMARY

#### Revelation 6:1-8

**B**efore we move on in the study of the seven seals, we need to recap the four horses, and to help with that we will compare them to a parable that Jesus taught, the parable of the sower.

**The White Horse** – The white horse represents the pure church that started in the Apostolic age, a time when the gospel went with great power, and many were brought into the church. This covers the period of the first Church, Ephesus, from A.D. 31 to A.D. 100. That church began to lose its first love for Christ.

**The Red Horse** – The red horse is noted by its color, red, representing the blood of persecution. Wherever the gospel is preached, there are those who will hear, and those who will not. Those who rejected the gospel were angered, and persecuted the new church of Jesus. This corresponds to the second church, the Church in Smyrna. The time frame for that event was from A.D. 100 to A.D. 313.

**The Black Horse** – The black horse was a time of emerging spiritual darkness, like the black of night. This period mirrors the Church at Pergamum, where many compromises began to come into the new church. In order to keep new converts, the church allowed new believers to keep some of their pagan doctrines. An important development was the so called “conversion” of the Emperor Constantine, who claimed to see a vision of the cross, and enacted a new day of worship on Sunday, in order to keep the worshipers of the sun happy. This period lasted from A.D. 313 to A.D. 538.

**The Pale Horse** – The pale horse is significant because of its peculiar color. It is described as pale, because it is now lacking in spiritual life, which happens when the gospel is not present. The teaching of the blood of Christ, shed for salvation alone, was replaced by a doctrine of faith plus personal works to earn salvation.

That church now contained so many errors that it became lifeless to take the gospel to the world, a far cry from the white horse! One of the most catastrophic errors brought in was the doctrine of an eternal burning hell, which defaces the true



“Others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” **MATTHEW 13:8**

picture of Christ’s mercy and pardon. The church of that age taught the terror and vengeance of God, not His mercy and goodness. People were taught that the way to save themselves was to obey the church fathers, and pay money for salvation. This period lasted from A.D. 538 to A.D. 1517, and corresponds to the Church at Thyatira.

Understanding this, let’s look at the parable of Jesus concerning the sower, found in Matthew, chapter thirteen.

In this parable, Jesus lays the “ground work” (no pun intended) for the understanding of the four horses, which John would receive later.

Look at the similarities of this parable to the four horses. Just as there are four horses, there are four kinds of ground. Just as one horse is good, so there is one good ground. Just as three horses are bad, so there are three bad grounds. Let’s see if the four different types of ground match up with the four different horses.

**Matthew 13:19** – “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who

### KEY SCRIPTURES

**1 Cor. 15:26** DEATH IS THE LAST ENEMY TO BE DESTROYED    **Mat. 13:22** CARES OF WORLD CHOKED THE WORD

**Matthew 1:21** JESUS SAVES PEOPLE FROM SIN

**Mat. 13:23** SEED ON THE GOOD GROUND

received seed by the wayside.” This is a picture of the gospel seed being sown, but those who receive it do not have a way to understand it. The evil one, Satan, by withholding the truth of the scriptures, causes a misunderstanding of God and His true character. This corresponds well with the pale horse that misrepresents the character of God through false doctrine like eternally burning hell.

**Matthew 13:20-21** – “But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.”

The stony ground parallels the red horse that brought a great sword of persecution to the faithful believers.

**Matthew 13:22** – “Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.” The black horse time fits this description because it represents a time of compromise with the world.

**Matthew 13:23** – “But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” This clearly points us to the white horse, and a time when the gospel in its purest form went in, and thousands were brought into the church in a day, as at Pentecost.

The parable, taught by Jesus Himself in the Gospels, is repeated in the symbolism of the four horsemen of Revelation to underscore the importance of the truth it contains. When the message of God’s love for a lost world is embraced in the fertile ground of understanding, much fruit will burst forth. As Jesus said, “But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” Matthew 13:16-17.

Revelation presents a powerful image of our history and future in four horses and riders. Jesus, in Matthew 13, represented every soul as one of four types of ground where the seed of God’s truth is sown. These four horses and four types of ground represent the response of all people to the Word of God. Today the white horse rider offers us victory over sin and death (see Matthew 1:21; 1 Corinthians 15:26). Christ rides forth conquering and to conquer while Satan attempts to challenge Christ’s work of grace upon our hearts through the three horses of persecution, worldly compromise and death. Yet the white horse and its rider will prevail. Christ and Christianity have unsealed our fate and altered our history. He will return to deliver His people from the sting of death. And that company of the saved, no man can number (Revelation 7:9). Won’t you, dear reader, choose to be among them? ★

