

The Fourth Horseman

Revelation 6:7-8

By Phillip G. Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2016-03-06

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Text

7 And when He opened the fourth seal I heard a voice from the fourth living being saying, "Come!" 8 And I looked and behold, a sickly pale horse! and as for the one sitting upon it, his name is Death, and Hades follows with him. And authority was given to him over a fourth of the earth, to kill by sword and by famine and by death, even by the wild animals of the earth.¹

Introduction

Today we are going to be finishing off the four horsemen of the apocalypse. And it is probably a good place to break, so I will take three weeks break from Revelation, while Rodney preaches. And hopefully that will give me some writing time.

And this is the horseman that introduces us for the first time to Nero. And let me give a little bit of review of where we have come so far. By analyzing each phrase in the verses, we have seen that these horsemen are first and foremost demonic generals who lead demonic armies. When confronted with a ruler like Nero, the early church was not so foolish as to think that they were only fighting with flesh and blood.

And each of these demons was unleashed upon a particular emperor. So you don't just deal with demons and ignore the man. This book will deal with both.

And I won't review all of the hints in the first 11 chapters that force us to say that all four horsemen have to be before AD 66. If you weren't here, you will have to listen to the introductory sermon on chapter 6 that nails that down.

But we saw that even the immediate context give hints of exactly which emperor the demon influenced. And the time table of these events has to start in 30 AD because that is when chapters 4-5 end - with Jesus having just ascended to the right hand of the Father.

In verses 1-2 we saw that the white horse was a bold claim to deity by Tiberius, and a claim that the wars he engaged in were to enforce peace - the Pax Romana; the counterfeit peace. He was the man who did most of Rome's expansion during the period of the emperors, and coins show him to be the

¹ Translation of the Majority Text by Wilbur M. Pickering.

emperor with the victor's crown or the στέφανος crown. In fact, he almost never took that crown off because he had a superstition that it would protect him from lightning strikes. So of all the emperors, he is the emperor of the στέφανος crown. He's also the emperor of the bow. And huge changes took over Tiberius' personality the moment this demon was unleashed in AD 30. Now, it's clear that he was demonized before that, but something new happened. So verses 1-2 go from AD 30-37, when Tiberius was murdered by Caligula.

Of course, Caligula was the next emperor, who reigned from AD 37-39. So that would be verses 3-4. And we saw how the Senate very enthusiastically granted him a huge sword of power (verse 4), and how he used it in ways that destroyed the Pax Romana. He also used it in arbitrary and capricious ways to kill numerous wealthy and powerful people. So even the wealthy do not always escape from judgment. But the symbol of Caligula was a red flying horse. That was also the symbol of his new legion, stationed in Germanica. That was on his coins. So where the first seal dealt with a judgment of imperialistic expansionism, the second seal dealt with the judgment of conflict and death.

The third horseman was a demon who characterized the reign of Claudius. His reign was from AD 41-54. So that is what I have in my margin beside verses 5-6 - AD 41-54. And Claudius was a very gifted administrator in many ways. He promised to be a conservative promoter of liberty (thus the black horse) and to enforce fairness in the marketplace (and thus the commercial scales that were in his hands on so many of his coins). But we saw that he was also a war hawk (of course, in the name of peace). He was also the one who centralized government under bureaucracies to force the free market to be more "just".

So those scales of commerce that are on all of his coins were symbols of statist control of the marketplace. That was considered a good thing, but it was really a judgment, and it led to economic problems all over the empire, including several man-made famines. I didn't mention the dates of the famines last week, but the man-made famines that were severe enough to be recorded in the Bible and by historians occurred in AD 41-42, AD 45 (that's Acts 11:48), AD 50, and AD 52. And when we looked at his economic policies we saw that the state was constantly trying to fix problems that their previous interventions had created in the first place. That's the problem of looking to statism to fix statism. That's what our current election is all about - it's looking to statism to fix statism. Anyway, we saw that this demon of economic judgment has been at work in the systems of Mercantilism,

Socialism, Fascism, and Keynesianism. What all of those unbiblical systems have in common, is that they inject the state into the free market in some way. That is demonic.

I. Hints that Nero is being connected with this demonic rider

And before I dig into verses 7 and 8, let me show you how the original audience would have immediately recognized Nero as the emperor controlled by this fourth demon. It would be obvious first because he is the next emperor after Claudius. But look at the hints in these verses.

The first hint is the color of the horse. And to see what is going on here, I have to first of all contradict Pickering's translation that you have in your bulletins. And most commentators will back me up on my contention that the horse was green, not pale. Pickering translates it as a sickly pale horse, probably because he thinks it has to be literal, and there are no literal green horses. But the Greek word that he translates as "sickly pale" is *χλωρός*, from which we get the word chlorophyll, and is everywhere else translated as "green." For example, in Mark 6:39 it is the word used for green in the phrase, "green grass." In Revelation 8:7 it is again in that phrase, "green grass." In Revelation 9:4 it is translated as "green" in the expression, "They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree." In fact, there is not any other place where it is not translated green.

And the two reasons that people tend to translate it as "pale" or "sickly pale" in this verse is because 1) literal horses aren't ever green, and 2) second, they think it symbolizes death, and dead people aren't literally green (though people sometimes talk about them being green behind the gills). But they are pale. So a lot of people mistranslate this as pale.

Personally, rather than seeing the green horse as a symbol of death (though I can respect that interpretation), I see it as an obvious reference to how Nero had been quickly caught in the sin of debasing the currency. If you look on the back side of your outline you will see ten photos of coins that show Nero riding a horse, and all but one of those coins is green. The one that isn't green was cleaned and looks like a perfectly good silver coin. I put it there to show what the coin would look like when it was first issued. But Nero was the first Roman emperor to debase the coinage by putting in copper and other alloys. And it just so happens that all of his horse coins were debased with copper, and they very quickly turned a green color. He wasn't yet an expert at debasing coins. So he quickly got found out that he was stealing

value from the currency, what we call inflation.

If you were to ask just about any member of John's churches what coin shows an emperor riding on a green horse, they would have probably laughed and said, "Oh, I know. It's Nero. Here, let me show you a coin." Now, I have only shown you ten green horse coins, but you can find a lot more on the numismatic websites. And one of the principles of interpretation that we looked at in chapter 1 was, "What would have immediately come into the minds of the first century readers when they read these words?" I think they would have instantly thought of Nero. He's the only emperor riding on a green horse.

The second hint is that verse 8 says, "and as for the one sitting upon it, his name is Death, and Hades follows with him." There were many artifacts that associated Nero with Thanatos, the god of death. And the word for death here is Thanatos. Some of his coins had a θ on them, a symbol for Thanatos or death. He wasn't the only emperor who had that, but he was the first one who did. If you look at the image that has him in armor, you will see that it has a very prominent Gorgon on the front. A Gorgon was a monster of death associated with the underworld the Ancient Greek and Roman literature. In the Aenid, it talks about Gorgons living in the entrance to the Underworld. In the Odyssey, the Gorgon was a monster or beast of the underworld. For example, it says,

...and pale fear seized me, lest august Persephone [and for your information, she was thought to be the goddess of the dead - "lest august Persephone"] might send forth upon me from out of the house of Hades the head of the Gorgon, that awful monster...²

A Gorgon had an ugly face with hair made up of serpents. And whoever looked at the mythical serpents would supposedly die. And of course, serpents were associated with Nero from the time a serpent was found in his baby crib when he was a baby. The histories claimed that when the empress tried to kill the baby Nero in the crib, a large snake came out from under the pillow and protected him. And his mother took the skin of that snake and made a bracelet for her son, which he wore all the time. So the Gorgon associates him with death. And he loved it. It meant, "Don't mess with me." Many coins have Nero wearing an aegis, another symbol associated with death.

But perhaps the most significant artifact, and one which the members of John's churches would have seen in their pocket change, was the coin of

² See the Odyssey here: <http://www.theoi.com/Text/HomerOdyssey11.html>

Nero and Hades. There were two mints of this coin that I am aware of, and I've included one example near the bottom left side of the page. On one side of the coin is Nero (the human metaphor of death who was possessed by the demon of death and wore the symbols of death) and on the other side of the coin was an image of the god Hades abducting the virgin Persephone. And of course that sordid tale of the rape of Persephone made her the goddess of the dead and Hades the Lord of Underworld. So very literally you have a person who could be nicknamed Death on one side and on the other side of the coin you have Hades, and his sick abduction of Persephone. So the same rider of the green horse is on another coin Death followed (when you flip the coin) by Hades.

And just as a side note, everybody knew that Nero loved to dress up as gods and goddesses, and as a teenage emperor he would roam the streets with his teenage thugs and rob people and rape women - perhaps even imitating Hades rape of Persephone. In any case, he loved that story enough to mint two coins with that horrible image. He quite consciously identified with death and Hades.

And the British Museum and other numismatic authorities use the features of Nero on this coin to date its issue to early in his reign. And the reason for that is that it shows a very thin Nero on the coin. You see, the coin makers were very honest in their portrayal of what Nero looked like. I have put coin images of Nero side by side to show the progression of obesity as he ages from a very thin young teenager to a very stout and thick necked older man.

So this is yet another confirmation that during the time period when Nero associated himself with Death and Hades on a coin, it was early in his reign. And the rest of the seals will deal with subsequent times in Nero's reign. There are no more horsemen. The next seals just pick up the horrors of the later stages of this horseman's reign.

So if you are putting dates down, verses 1-2 are Tiberius and relate to AD 30-37, verses 3-4 are Caligula and relate to AD 37-39, verses 5-6 are Claudius and relate to AD 41-54. (It took a while before he was able to convince the Senate to vote him into office.) And verses 7-8 deal with Nero in AD 54-61. And verse 9 and following picks up at the beginning of the Great Tribulation against Christians in 62 AD.

So I think that is enough to clearly identify the emperor associated with this rider and the time period of his reign. Much of the rest of the book will be preoccupied with this character, Nero.

II. Jesus is sovereign over even Nero (v. 7a)

And though he was scary, the text indicates that Jesus is sovereign over even such a wicked person as Nero. Verse 7 says, "And when He opened the fourth seal," and the "He" is referring back to Jesus. So Jesus opened the seal. The demon could not emerge from wherever he was bound (whether in the pit or in some other location) unless Jesus opened a seal and let him emerge. A Nero could not climb the throne of Rome unless Jesus allowed him to climb the throne of Rome. Jesus is sovereign over all of history. He ordains who will win and who will lose in the elections in America. He chastens the nations with politicians and economic policies and bureaucracies, and He saves the nations. But not a thing can happen in history without His permission. And that doctrine of the sovereignty of God is a doctrine that should be gloried in by all true Christians. Charles Spurgeon once said,

There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that sovereignty overrules them, and that sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children ought to more earnestly contend to than the doctrine of their Master over all creation...

And I say, "Amen!" This book is more about Christ than it is about Antichrist. It is more about the emergence and miraculous advancement of Christ's kingdom than it is about Satan's attempts to thwart His kingdom. And since this demon emerges only at Christ's sovereign will, it logically follows that the demon is but a pawn in Christ's hands. Don't despair at the successes of the the demonic. Based on the knowledge that Christ rules, go forth and do your duty and leave the results in His hand.

III. The demonic Nero is no match for the cherubim of Jesus (v. 7b)

And of course, the angels model that *they* do not pit divine sovereignty against personal responsibility. Though Christ rules, they model that creatures have a role to play in His judgments on the world.

And I want you to notice that this demon doesn't question the power or authority of the fourth good angel. As soon as the seal was opened, John says, "I heard a voice from the fourth living being saying, 'Come!'" And what's the immediate result? The demon obeys. He has to obey. Demons are not omnipotent. If angels have power of demons, you know that we do too. Luke 10 shows that Jesus has given every believer authority to trample on

demonic scorpions and serpents and over all the power of the enemy. What happens when we resist the devil in the name of Christ and by the authority of Scripture? James says that he must flee. We too have power to restrict the actions of demons, assuming of course that our commands are done in the authority and name of Jesus and according to the pattern found in the Bible - the scroll.

Notice second that there is a progression in these judgments. Each seal unleashes more demons upon the empire and the miseries that were present under the previous emperors continue to exist, even though each emperor is described with what most distinguished his reign. As rebellion persists, God's judgments increase.

Also notice that it is not just Israel that suffers. Rome suffered under Nero's brutal regime as well. God judges all nations as He promised in Psalm 2, and America is no exception.

And one more thing to notice about this judgment is that it emerges from the seal, and the seal itself is affixed to the scroll, which we established before was the Old Testament canon. The Old Testament continues to be relevant to God's judgments of nations like Israel and Rome.

IV. The symbols

A. *The green horse (v. 8a)*

Now, let's look at the symbols a bit more. The green horse was an embarrassing expose of Nero's wicked policies of inflation. You couldn't hide the fact that there was copper alloy in the silver coins without constantly polishing them.

And so Christ allows this demon to motivate a king to engage in inflationary policies *as a judgment*. This is clearly a judgment. There were already economic judgments under Claudius, the previous emperor. Claudius had hugely centralized the government, had added bureaucracies and agencies that regulated industries and gave preferential treatment to certain industries, and tried to manage the economy with his propaganda of fairness. That's what the scales stood for. Well, Nero pretended to be for the little guy too, all the while robbing the little guy through inflation.³ And it is a form of

³ Martin Armstrong says, > Nero debased the metal content of the Roman currency to increase the money supply for the first time in the Empire's history. He reduced the weight of the denarius from 84 per Roman pound to 96 (3.85 grams to 3.35 grams). He also reduced the silver purity from 99.5% to 93.5% —the silver weight dropping from 3.83 grams to 3.4 grams. Furthermore, Nero reduced the weight of the aureus from 40 per Roman pound to 45 (8 grams to 7.2 grams).

robbery. If you don't think so, I would challenge you to read R. J. Rushdoony's book, *Larceny in the Heart*, or his book, *The Roots of Inflation*.

Now the thing I find interesting about John's embarrassing expose of inflation is that this inflation is considered by Jesus to be a judgment even though Nero's inflation was very moderate. He only debased the coins by 10%. In contrast, America has debased its money 2300% in the last 100 years. Since I was born (1955) the dollar was debased by 784% according to usinflationcalculator.com. So if God was offended with Nero's inflation, what would God say about America? If 10% is a judgment, what is 2300%?

I think the whole of chapter 6 would say that America has been under one kind of judgment or another for a long time. We've been under the judgment of imperialistic expansionism; we've been under the judgment of internal conflict; we've been under the judgment of the experiments of Mercantalism, Keynesianism, and Fascism. We are not waiting for judgment; it has already happened. The church just fails to recognize these statist problems as judgments from God's hand. But if you don't see God's hand working in history, you don't learn from history, and you needlessly repeat the same problems of history.

B. The rider named, Death (v. 8b)

But the next symbol is the name of the rider. Nero was an emperor who was constantly associated with the demon of death. Is there any historical background to this? Yes. Though his early reign was described as Golden by some, it was only golden in comparison to the madness of his later reign. Those who knew him said that he was a murderer, rapist, robber, transvestite, homosexual, a pedophile, pervert, and a sadist from the earliest times. His mother and his tutors (especially Seneca and Burrus) held him in check, but once he had killed them and they were out of the way, the great Neronian killings began in earnest in AD 62 (which is described in verses 9-11). But the evidence of this demon of death can be seen very early - long before he killed his mother, tutors, wives, and other close associates.

We will start with his torture and killing of animals. The numbers of animals that Nero killed or had his horse guard kill is astonishing. These killings were continuous. Michael Speidel said of just one such slaughter.

"In what to us seems an appalling slaughter, his horse guard, in one show alone, speared to death 400 bears and 300 lions."⁴

⁴ Michael P. Speidel, *Riding for Caesar: The Roman Emperor's Horseguard*, (London: B T Batsford Ltd, 2005), p. xxxiii.

And you might wonder, "Where did they get that many bears and lions?" There was a whole industry of importing animals to be killed. And there was a constant change-out of these dangerous animals (even hard to transport animals like hippos) that were used to satisfy Nero's lust for death. And the Scripture indicates that there is something demonic about that. Satan was not only a murderer from the beginning; he delighted in death from the beginning. Proverbs 12:10 says, "The just man takes care of his beast, but the heart of the wicked is merciless." The records that we have seem to indicate that Nero would get an adrenaline rush from torturing and killing an animal. But it didn't stop there. It was like pornography - it always required more to gain the same effect.

So in addition to killing animals, he would get his kicks by doing dangerous stunts like going into the streets after dark with his gang of teenage friends to beat up, rape, and abuse. One Senator who defended himself too vigorously when attacked in the street, was told to commit suicide by Nero. Well, he didn't even know it was Nero. He was just defending himself from a gang of youths. So Nero was a menace even as a teenager. In fact, his mother (who was no saint herself - she was a murderer) was so offended with the cruelty of his gang of teenage friends that she got furious with him, scolded him, tried to stop his behavior, and even threatened to get him deposed. That's one of the reasons Nero killed his mother. But in any case, he was an embarrassment to her.

She was one of three influences that remained to keep his wickedness in check. After Claudius, the only three who had this influence on him were his mother, Seneca, and Burrus. When the last of them was killed by Nero in AD 62, there was no more restraint. In 2 Thessalonians 2 Paul speaks of the demonic as being at work in Nero already in the early 50's, but said that there was someone that was restraining the unleashing of Nero's full evil. Yes, Claudius was a part of that, but so was Burrus. But ultimately it was probably referring to the fourth living being assigned to restrain Nero and make sure that this fourth horseman did not overstep his bounds. It would take more than a man to restrain this demon. In any case, Paul said that the mystery of iniquity was already at work in Nero long before AD 62, which is where the killings of verses 9-11 begin.

I've mentioned Nero's preoccupation with the death of animals, and his early escapades in the streets. But he also seemed to get a sick delight in the killing of gladiators in the Colosseum. One author said,

... the teenage Nero started to run wild. Wearing a cunning disguise, he would

venture out on the the streets of Rome as part of a violent gang, attacking and robbing passers-by. He developed sadistic tendencies, boiling some victims in hot oil and ordering executions often for no more heinous a crime than possessing a funny walk or a strange expression. As an alternative entertainment, he enjoyed watching women fight dwarfs.⁵

I've already mentioned the explicit connection that Nero himself made with the angel of death, only he used Roman mythology to describe these demons. And to see how he was characterized by death in his early reign you can read the ancient historians Suetonius, Tacitus, and Casius Dio. I won't describe all the killings that he did, but the fact that he killed his brother, his mother, his first two wives, his tutors, and anyone else who he saw as a threat shows the demonic at work in his early reign. Later I will read about the hundreds of thousands being killed. It was anything but the golden age that Seneca (his propagandist) described it as.

C. *The rider named, Hades (v. 8c)*

D. *Hades "follows him" (v. 8c) - several implications*

But verse 8 goes on to say, "his name is Death, and *Hades* follows with him." The Greek word for "Death" is Thanatos, the name of a Greek and Roman demon associated with the underworld. And the name Hades (sometimes translated as "Hell") is the name of another Greek and Roman god associated with the Underworld. And interestingly, the ancient Roman writers called these gods demons. And the Roman demons Thanatos and Hades are clearly associated with Nero. He proudly displayed them on his person and connected them with his reign, as you can see from the coins and images I have reproduced for you in your outline. But Thanatos seems to take the lead, and in the majority text, authority was given to "him" (singular). They both ride, but the authority is given to Thanatos. So Hades seems to be under his authority.

And there are a lot of implications to this clause. The first implication is that demons operate in a chain of command. Now, we know that obviously from other Scriptures, but it is illustrated here. If you can bind the head demon, many times you can bind all the demons. Jesus talked about binding the strongman, and then you can plunder his goods. And the church must bind the strongman over capitols and city halls if they are to make a large impact. It was one of the strategies that the apostle Paul used in the book of Acts.

But this clause also hints at something you see in other Scriptures - that

⁵ Fritz M. Heichelheim and Cedric A. Yeo, *A History of the Roman People* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 329.

demons tend to operate in groupings. This verse clearly indicates that there is more than one demon involved in Nero's life. But they are related. In fact, since we are bringing up more than one demon, I will briefly point out that later in the book I see Nero as being a beehive of activities as underling demons travel back and forth to receive orders from these two demons. That's the way I picture Washington DC - as a giant beehive of demons. Later in this book, God will make clear later that millions of demons are involved with these two. And there are even more under the leadership of the horrific demon that God unleashes from the bottomless pit in 66 AD. He calls that demon "the beast." All the evidence seems to indicate that "the beast" seemed to exercise far greater authority than even Thanatos and Hades did.

But when you start studying the spiritual kingdom of Satan in the book of Revelation (and I may sometime pull all the threads together in one sermon), it explains the deception that comes upon politicians shortly after they get elected. A lot of people are mystified by it. It doesn't make sense to them. But it is what Paul calls the mystery of iniquity. The demonic makes people act in mysterious ways.

It explains why so many can go into politics dead-set against abortion and homosexuality and within months are supporting both of those things, and are doing irrational things. Demons always go after the leverage points of society and try to control them. In politics the leverage points would be city hall, county commissioners, state legislatures, and the three branches of the national government. And if you haven't voted for a Christian, your conservative candidate is easy pickings for the demonic.

In religion the leverage point would be the leadership of denominations. Do demons try to go after the leadership of denominations? Absolutely. It's why so many denominations become liberal. Zechariah 3:1 showed Satan standing at the right hand of Joshua the high priest trying to oppose his work. And because Joshua engaged in spiritual warfare, Satan was not successful in influencing that leverage point. But that passage shows that he tried. And if pastors are not aware of the principles of spiritual warfare, they can easily be used and manipulated by demons without their even realizing it.

Since business is a leverage point, Satan tries to control the top executives of the Fortune 500 companies and other companies. If they are not governed by Christians, they are easy pickings. And demons love to try to gain control of these multinational corporations because they have a huge impact upon

society. When we get to the later chapters in Revelation we are going to be seeing how the demons use international corporations and even banking to try to control the empire. They have been pretty successful at that in America. You might not have thought of banking as a leverage point of society, but it is. So is education. So is entertainment. It's one of the reasons why I am so thrilled with the work of MovieGuide in being a missionary to that leverage point. For far too long Christians have backed away from these leverage points and Satan has had unfettered access.

It should be no surprise to see the evil insanity being promoted by the National Education Association in America. They too are a beehive of demonic activity, and their success in controlling the population has been phenomenal; absolutely phenomenal.

So at some point I may try to show the whole demonic kingdom that was at work under the leadership of demons like Thanatos and Hades. But in any case, this verse shows that there was more than one demon, that Thanatos has greater authority than Hades, but that they both cooperate in their work of destruction.

V. Controversy: the extent of the judgments in verse 8.

Now there is a controversy in these verses, and that is in the phrase, "over a fourth of the earth." How does that fit into the timing? We have already demonstrated that the Death and Hades coins and the green horse coins clearly tie this section to the early part of Nero's reign (AD 54-61). And we have been forced to a first century interpretation by the sequence of all of the seals and the trumpets - one historically follows after another. So identifying these four horsemen with the demonized Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero is pretty solidly rooted.

But there is a problem: there is no historical evidence that one fourth of the population of Rome or one fourth of the population of Israel or one fourth of the population of planet earth died off during the years 54-61. It doesn't matter how you interpret the phrase, "the earth," it doesn't seem like that many people died.

So that would be a good argument for the typical partial preterist viewpoint that mixes all of the seals, trumpets, plagues, and bowls into 66-70 AD. They don't show the sequence that I have been showing. And it is true that upwards of one quarter of Israel's population and apparently of the Roman Empire as a whole was killed by sword, famine, generic death, and wild

animals between 62 and 70 AD. Even though there were a lot of killings during the earlier reign (perhaps numbering hundreds of thousands) the great killings didn't start till the year 62. So that's the problem.

But there are two ways to reconcile that fact with what the text actually says. First, it doesn't say that that many people were killed during this time. It says that *authority* was given to him over one fourth of the earth to engage in his activities, which involve those four things. So you would expect the activities to *begin* during this period, but they wouldn't have to be finished during this period. After all, we have already seen how the work of the previous demons continues into the next regime. That's why things keep getting worse and worse. And we would expect that the same would be true here. The work of these demons will continue into seals five, six, and seven.

So one of two things could be meant, depending on whether you understand "the earth" as a reference to planet earth or Israel. First, it could mean that the authority to kill one quarter of Israel's population (or of Rome's population) was given to these demons at this time, but that it would take the next eight to nine years to accomplish it. So that is one possible way to take it. In fact, that's the way I take it. The killings start, but they don't finish.

Another possible way to take it is that the earth is a reference to planet earth, and it just so happens that historians estimate the population of the Roman empire under Nero to be somewhere between 20% and 25% of the entire world population. So this phrase *could* mean that they were given authority to move anywhere in the Roman empire to engage in their work of death and destruction, and since the Roman Empire was a quarter of the world's population, these demons have authority over one quarter of the population of the world to engage in these four things. That's a possible interpretation.

I favor the first interpretation - that they were given the authority to *start* killing Jews during the years 54-61 AD. And for the first time, that did indeed start happening. Felix killed 400 Jews and imprisoned 200 in AD 56 (Antiq 20.8.6; Wars 2.13.4-6), and Festus killed many Jews in AD 57 (Josephus Wars, 2.13.7). Josephus doesn't tell us how many, but he said that Festus "slew a great many of them." But the grammar does not necessitate all the deaths have to occur during this period of time, only that the authority to do so was given during this time. When did the demon who had this authority inhabit Nero? When he became emperor. And that would sedge-way nicely into the next three seals that documents these killings under Nero later in his reign.

And actually, you could combine theories one and two because these four

judgments began happening under Nero's early reign in both Israel and the whole Roman Empire. I'm not dogmatic, but I will show near the end of the sermon that even Rome faced these judgments.

A. Demons cannot do anything without God's permission (v. 8d)

But back to my first statement: *authority* was given to Death (to the demon Thanatos) for these judgments. To me this means that demons cannot do anything without God's permission. Satan does not have free reign; only Jesus does. The way some conspiracy books are written, they make it look as if the demonic organizations like the Illuminati, Bilderbergers, Bavarian Grove, and other demonic groups are unstoppable. These books act like the ten spies of Canaan in taking away all hope of fulfilling the Great Commission. They kill the church's faith by the way they describe the land. But with Joshua and Caleb we should say to our Christian friends,

7 “The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. 8 If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, “a land which flows with milk and honey.’ 9 Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them.”

If Jesus opens the seals, and if Jesus restricts demonic authority, then it is Jesus we should have faith in, not Satan. Rather than looking at the giants of Canaan as invincible, we should look to Jesus as invincible. Why are we having these judgments anyway? It is because the church is messed up. Think of the ship that Jonah was on. Why was that ship having so many problems with the storm? It wasn't because of Phoenecians; it was because Jonah was running from his responsibilities. The storm stopped as soon as God's man was thrown into the water, right? He was the problem. And in the same way, I believe America is facing the judgments of these four horsemen of the apocalypse because the church is running from the Lord and from its responsibilities. The whole nation doesn't have to repent for the Lord to bring healing. Scripture says, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2 Chron. 7:14). Reformation of the church is the key.

B. The four judgments of sword, famine, death, animals (v. 8e)

Let's quickly end with the four judgments that God was going to use against both Rome and Israel. And I think you will recognize that these are things

that have come against our society and one time or another as well.

First, the sword. As we saw in earlier sermons, the sword swallowed up millions of Jews and millions of Romans throughout the empire between 68 and 70 AD. War has always been one of God's judgments on a rebellious people. And America has lost a lot of lives due to war. But private weapons have killed a lot of people as well.

But the sword was already beginning to be unleashed during the early period of Nero's reign, while Seneca was still alive. I'll just give you one such account. Heichelheim and Yeo write about an incident in Britain. Their book says,

Roman procurators (acting on behalf of money lenders such as Seneca) confiscated farm lands and reduced the former owners to the level of serfs. They robbed the king's widow, Queen Boudicca (Boadicea), of her land, flogged her, and permitted the raping of her daughters. The outraged queen collected an army and captured the Roman colony of Camulodunum (Colchester). She destroyed the Roman legion sent against her and marched on London, where she caused the massacre of 70,000 Romans. Suetonius Paullinus defeated her army in battle by superior discipline and skill and stamped out the rebellion with ruthless efficiency. The vanquished Boadicea took her own life, and Britain thereafter remained quiet and peaceful, except for a few border raids.⁶

That massacre of the Roman legion, plus 70,000 Roman citizens killed in London, plus the Roman massacre of her followers is just one of many sword judgments that occurred during the period mentioned in verses 7-8. I'll give just one more example, this one in year 61. And this is just one of many examples of slaves being killed. Martin Armstrong writes,

After Secundus was murdered by his slaves in 61, the law allowed the execution of 400 slaves in his palace, although the urban commoners protested. The jurist Cassius Longinus proposed stronger measures to control slaves.⁷

Though it did not yet account for one quarter of the population of either Rome or Israel, the sword of these demons was constantly at work. And those around him (like Poppeia and the homosexual Tigilenus) were involved in the macabre use of the sword. For example, according to the Roman historian Tacitus, Nero's second wife, Poppaea wanted to see the head of Nero's first wife, Octavia, after he killed her.⁸ That is sick. And she loved death at the Colosseum, putting her thumb down - which meant, kill

6 Fritz M. Heichelheim and Cedric A. Yeo, *A History of the Roman People* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 329.

7 https://www.armstrongeconomics.com/research/monetary-history-of-the-world/roman-empire/chronology_-_by_-_emperor/imperial-rome-julio-claudian-age/nero-54-68-ad/

8 Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.61.

the gladiator; do not show mercy. So the sword was definitely a judgment seen by Nero in his early reign.

Famine is the next judgment, and famine is simply scarcity of food and products. These famines started under Claudius and were continued under Nero because he failed to get government out of the economy. Instead, he exacerbated problems by trying to be a better statist. Several authors have compared his public work projects to the WPA during the great depression. If you have a stagnant economy and a lot of unemployment then Nero thought you need to provide government jobs. Those bloated programs were designed to stimulate the economy, give jobs to the unemployed who were hungry, and create a greater centralization of the government. Martin Armstrong (though a Nero supporter and defender) describes him thus:

As the economy turned down sharply, Nero increased his spending in the classical Keynesian model, yet it failed to reverse the economic decline. As was the case with Caligula, it appears that during the reign of Nero, his administrators, turned to treason trials, confiscation of assets and raising taxes. The coinage was even debased setting in motion a long-term trend that would end only during the 3rd century. Nero debased the metal content of the Roman currency to increase the money supply for the first time in the Empire's history. He reduced the weight of the denarius from 84 per Roman pound to 96 (3.85 grams to 3.35 grams). He also reduced the silver purity from 99.5% to 93.5%—the silver weight dropping from 3.83 grams to 3.4 grams. Furthermore, Nero reduced the weight of the aureus from 40 per Roman pound to 45 (8 grams to 7.2 grams).

The result of his meddling was either gluts (which put people out of work) or shortages (which often resulted in famines). He discovered that you cannot mess with God's economic laws without feeling the negative consequences.

The next judgment is stated to be death. Death is taken by most commentators as death by natural causes such as disease, storm, earthquake, etc. And there was a great deal of this in Nero's reign. A massive plague struck the region of Turkey, especially where the church of Ephesus was located in AD 61. Earlier Nero's reign saw hurricanes devastating regions, numerous plagues and pestilences. Suetonius speaks of 30,000 dying of the plague during one of the Fall seasons during this period in the city of Rome alone.⁹ Death from natural causes significantly increased.

The last judgment is the wild animals of the earth. And Nero was famous for death by wild animals.

Conclusion

⁹ Suetonius, *Nero*, 39.1; cf. also Oros. 7.7.11

So why does God allow the state to go crazy? Why does He bring judgments such as these? It may be in part to bring the god-complex of the state some reality check. It may be in part a punishment of the population for their worship of Caesar. But I believe that many if not most of the New Testament judgments were redemptive judgments that brought multitudes into the kingdom. And as Christians ministered to each other and to those outside the church during earthquakes, famines, plagues, and other judgments, people were blown away by the love of Christ that they saw, and as a result multitudes came to Christ. They became jealous of the Gospel. The judgment became redemptive. Now, most history books of this period are negative - they focus on the multitudes that were martyred, and you get depressed. But you can't martyr multitudes of Christians if multitudes hadn't become Christian. The church militant was growing and was battering down the gates of Hades. And Satan didn't like it and was fighting back. But the church never let up, and eventually country after country became Christian until Rome itself was incorporated into Christendom.

But it was because the church was willing to take on demonic strongholds that it had success. Like Caleb of old, the saints of the first few centuries asked God, "Give me this mountain." They were willing to fight Goliaths. They were willing to take on the four horsemen. And they won because they had four things the modern church lacks. First, they had an eschatology of victory. That is so critical. If you don't believe God has promised victory, you won't try to win.

Second, they had Biblical blueprints to replace humanism with. The modern church for the most part doesn't care about the law of God, and so they don't have realistic answers to humanism's problems. They have no blueprints. Christians who get into politics don't use Biblical blueprints; they just do baptized humanism. They are part of the problem. Well, as Gary North has said, you can't beat something with nothing. The church must once again pull out the Biblical blueprints and begin using them.

Third, they had each others backs. The church stuck up for each other; they were united in battle. Love was one of the marks of the church.

Fourth, they believed in all the "alls" of the Great Commission. They did not have a truncated Commission like the modern church does. They believed that Jesus had all authority, not Satan, and that His authority extended not just to heaven but also to earth; not just to home but also to politics. They believed converting all nations was possible, so they attempted to convert all nations. They believed that Jesus wants us to live by every word of the

Bible, so they applied the whole Bible to all of life and refused to be merely New Testament believers like the heretic Marcion was. And they believed that Jesus was with them powerfully to the end of the age and that He had already given us everything needed for life and godliness and victory.

If the church as a whole were to regain a Biblical faith, a Biblical hope, a Biblical love, and a truly comprehensive vision of the Great Commission, they could effectively resist the four horsemen of the apocalypse. But instead of having our focus on Jesus, the church often focuses on the demons and thinks they are too much. If you really know the Christ who opens each of these seals, you will be convinced that if He is for us, who can be against us? Lord give us faith to resist the horsemen. Amen. Let's pray.

The Fourth Horseman Revelation 6:7-8

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 3-6-2016

Introduction

- I. Hints that Nero is being connected with this demonic rider

- II. Jesus is sovereign over even Nero (v. 7a)

- III. The demonic Nero is no match for the cherubim of Jesus (v. 7b)

- IV. The symbols
 - A. The green horse (v. 8a)
 - B. The rider named, Death (v. 8b)
 - C. The rider named, Hades (v. 8c)
 - D. Hades "follows him" (v. 8c) - several implications

- V. Controversy: the extent of the judgments in verse 8.
 - A. Demons cannot do anything without God's permission (v. 8d)

 - B. The four judgments of sword, famine, death, animals (v. 8e)

Conclusion

One of several techniques used for dating Nero's coins, all of which show great detail. Image to the right shows images on Nero coins from his teenage years to the end of his reign.

<https://finds.org.uk/romancoins/emperors/emperor/id/12>



Green horses (due to first inflationary debasement with copper) associated with Nero



Silver coin with discoloration removed

AD 63 Silver coin with discoloration due to copper alloy added - inflation

Coins with death symbols

Various mints of "Hades" death coin

Various coins with aegis, θ , and other symbols of death



There are at least two early Neronic coins with Nero on one side and Hades on other side abducting a virgin.

Nero identified with image of Gorgon, one of the gods of death



The symbol of the deadly Gorgon (with hair of serpents) was connected with the underworld (Hades) and was considered a lucky charm on Nero's chest (just as Zeus warded off enemies with this Gorgon on an Aegis, so too would Nero ward off his enemies). In much mythology the Gorgon is a symbol of death and connected with Hades. See other Nero busts & coins.