

The Four Horsemen

Revelation 6:1–8 · Pastor Raul Granillo · July 19, 2026

Today's Text

“Then I saw the Lamb break one of the seven seals... **there was a white horse!** Its rider had a bow; a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer... **another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth... a black horse! Its rider held a pair of scales in his hand... a pale green horse! Its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed with him.**”

— Revelation 6:1, 2, 4, 5, 8

Big Idea

The seals are not the content of the scroll — they are the **exposure**. Before the Lamb reveals God's good and perfect will, He first exposes what has been happening on the earth. The Four Horsemen are not demons dispatched from a future apocalypse — they are humanity's own recurring pattern: conquest disguised as peace, war, exploitation of the poor, and death. This is a revelation of **reality**.

Key Truth

The white horse of military supremacy always produces the red horse of war. War always produces the black horse of famine and economic exploitation. Famine always produces the pale horse of death. Then humanity sends the white horse out again. **Rinse, wash, repeat.** Things have to be exposed before they can be dealt with. God is not causing this cycle — He is revealing it, so that the people of the Lamb can refuse to keep riding along.

The Four Horsemen — What Each Rider Really Represents

HORSE	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHAT IT REALLY IS
WHITE	A rider with a bow and a crown — comes out “conquering and to conquer.” At first glance, looks like Jesus.	Violence dressed up as Jesus. The bow is a distance weapon — stealth violence, blood off the hands. The crown is given, not intrinsic. A parody of Christ, not Christ.
RED	A great sword. Peace is taken from the earth. People slaughter one another.	Open, honest war. The pretense is gone. Rome called it Pax Romana — peace held together by armies and crosses. Christ never sits on the red horse.
BLACK	Scales in the rider's hand. A day's wage buys one day of bread. But do not damage the oil and wine.	Famine with exploitation. War collapses supply chains — the poor starve while the rich are protected. Luxuries are shielded; staples are priced out of reach.
PALE GREEN	A rider named Death — Hades follows him. Authority over a fourth of the earth.	The predictable end of the cycle. Not divine punishment from outside — the blowback of what humanity has already set in motion. “A fourth” = bounded by grace.

Define This

Ius Gladii — Latin for “the right of the sword.” The legal authority of Rome’s emperors and generals to execute without trial. The “large sword” given to the red horseman echoes this exact Roman symbol. John is naming the empire without naming it. And he is warning: any kingdom that governs by **ius gladii** — including a church that has picked up the sword — is riding the red horse, not the Lamb.

Quote To Remember

“War is a red horse, bloody and cruel, making life miserable and horrid... The perennial ruse is to glorify war so that we accept it as a proper means of achieving goals. But it is evil. It is opposed by Christ. Christ does not sit on the red horse, ever.” — Eugene Peterson

Take It Home — Reflection

- Where in my life am I riding a white horse — using force, coercion, or control while telling myself it looks like Jesus? What would it cost me to get off?
- The black horse protects the oil and the wine. Whose staple food is my comfort quietly built on? What small step could I take this week to close that gap?
- Revelation is meant to open my eyes to reality so that I can be the people of God in a fallen world. What is one atrocity of this world I have been avoiding naming — and how does the Lamb call me to name it?

My Notes