

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Session 11,

Revelation 6: Scroll Seals

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I forget the feeling, like the world's kind of gone off the rails a bit. Oh, yeah. Well, today we're diving into a text that speaks to that feeling: Revelation chapter six.

Okay. We'll be looking at a lecture by Dr. Dave Mathewson. Okay.

And he argues that this chapter, which is full of all this wild symbolism, might actually be a reflection on the Roman Empire. Interesting. Yeah.

It is fascinating because Revelation is what we call apocalyptic literature. Right. Yeah.

And it uses all these really intense, vivid symbols to talk about these big, sometimes scary themes, like power, good versus evil, and whether justice will win in the end. Right. And I feel like you don't get much more symbolic than the four horsemen of the apocalypse, which we meet right here in chapter six.

These figures are super famous, but what do they actually mean? Yeah. How do people living under Roman rule understand them? Yeah. That's where Dr. Mathewson gets really insightful.

He suggests each horseman actually points to a specific way the Roman system was, well, messed up, despite all its claims of peace and prosperity. Okay. So let's break this down.

Yeah. We've got a white horse, a red one, a black horse, and a pale horse. Right.

Each bringing a different kind of judgment. What's the white horse all about? Well, Dr. Mathewson connects this one to conquest. Okay.

Rome was famous for its military, right? Oh, yeah. And it used that power to expand constantly. They called it Pax Romana, the Roman peace.

Right. But the irony is that peace was built on war. It's like saying you're promoting peace, but you're constantly threatening to punch somebody.

Exactly. Yeah. And it makes you wonder: how often do powerful nations today use the same tactic? Is peace through force really peace? That is a good question.

Okay. So how about the red horse? Yeah. What's its deal? Well, the red horse is bloodshed and violence.

Okay. Dr. Mathewson points out that this wasn't just about Rome's external conquest. It was also about the violence inside the empire itself.

Yeah. I mean, their history is full of assassinations and coups, emperors battling for power. Right.

You don't become the emperor of Rome without making a few enemies. Exactly. And things rarely end peacefully for those guys.

Yeah. Okay. On to the black horse.

Okay. What's its flavor of judgment? The black horse brings famine and economic injustice. Right.

Dr. Mathewson highlights this detail from Revelation. Okay. Where a voice says, a quart of wheat for a day's wages.

Wow. Think about that. You work all day.

All you can afford is like a tiny bit of wheat. That's crazy expensive. And the passage goes on to say that oil and wine were still plentiful.

Right. It's like a snapshot of this crazy economic inequality. Yeah.

Where, like, you know, the stuff people need to survive is super expensive. Right. But like, you know, luxury goods are like easy to get.

Yeah. It's like, what? And Dr. Mathewson suggests this shows us how the Roman economy worked. Right.

You know, they're taking resources from all these conquered places. Yeah. Enriching the capital.

Right. But people out on the edges are struggling. So the black horse is less about an actual famine and more about the system being rigged.

Exactly. Yeah. And you combine that with the constant warfare from the red horse.

Uh-huh. You get the pale horse. The pale horse is death.

Right. Right. And it's followed by Hades.

Mm-hmm. That's pretty grim. It is.

The pale horse is like the result of the other judgments. Right. War, violence, economic hardship all lead to death and suffering.

Yeah. Like, this is the reality check of chapter six. Yeah.

It's like the first three create the conditions for the fourth one to thrive. Right. But here's a question.

Okay. If this was God's judgment on Rome, did the Christians living under Roman rule experience it differently? That's a question Dr. Mathewson addresses directly. Okay.

And this is where it gets interesting. Dr. Mathewson suggests that Christians wouldn't have been immune to these hardships, the wars, the economic struggles. They lived in the same world.

Right. Yeah. But their faith gave them this different way of looking at things.

So instead of seeing it as just random chaos, they saw it as part of a bigger plan, like God's judgment on this messed-up system. And suffering wasn't just like meaningless pain. It was like a refining process, a test of faith.

Okay. And a call to live differently. Right.

Right. It's not about escaping the hardship. Yeah.

But about how you face it. Exactly. Okay.

And that brings us to the fifth seal, which shifts our focus from the earthly consequences to what's happening in the spiritual realm. This is where we meet the souls of the martyrs. Yes.

Right. Those who died for their faith in Christ. Right.

And Dr. Mathewson really brings this scene to life. Yeah. He's like, imagine these souls gathered under God's throne in heaven.

Wow. And they're crying out for justice, for God to avenge their blood. It's a powerful image.

Yeah. These people who died for what they believed in. Yeah.

But it raises some questions for me. Yeah. Isn't vengeance kind of, well, an unchristian concept? It's a fair point.

Yeah. And Dr. Mathewson unpacks this idea of vengeance really carefully. Okay.

He explains it's not like personal revenge. Right. Wanting the people who hurt them to suffer.

Right. It's about longing for God to set things right. Gotcha.

To expose evil and prove that their deaths meant something. So it's less about punishment and more about wanting God's justice, you know. Yeah.

To win in the end. Exactly. It's trusting that good will triumph over evil.

Right. Even when it doesn't look like it. Okay.

And he points out this desire for vindication goes way back. Like, think of the Psalms. Yeah.

People crying out for deliverance from their enemies. Okay. That makes sense.

So the fifth seal is this intense moment of mourning. Yes. But also a declaration of faith.

Yeah. That God will make things right. It is.

And it brings us back to that bigger picture. Okay. God's power and control even amidst the chaos.

But here's a question that I keep coming back to. Yeah. Is this all just about Rome? Right.

Like Dr. Mathewson keeps making these connections between the horsemen and Roman power. Yeah. But is there a bigger message here? Something beyond just Rome? That's a key question.

Yeah. And it's something he addresses directly. Okay.

He argues that while the imagery might be tied to Rome- okay. The message goes beyond that. Okay.

He calls it a prophetic cap. A prophetic cap. That can fit any nation- interesting.

That follows in Rome's footsteps. Gosh. That embraces violence and greed and injustice.

So Revelation is holding up this mirror- yes. To humanity. Yeah.

Warning us about consequences. Exactly. Not just for individuals, but whole societies.

It's a timeless warning about unchecked power. Yeah. And the need for different values.

Okay. Justice, compassion, faithfulness. Earlier you mentioned that Dr. Mathewson talks about decreation in this chapter.

Right. That sounds kind of intense. It is.

Can you explain that? So he's talking about these judgments in Revelation. Okay. The unraveling of systems.

Right. It's part of God dismantling the old order. Tearing down what's broken.

So it's not just destruction. Yeah. It's about clearing the way for something new.

Exactly. Like rising from the ashes. It ties into the hope that Revelation offers.

Okay. The hope of a new creation. Where everything's made right.

Where God's reign is fully established. Okay. And there's no more suffering or injustice.

I'm starting to see how all this connects. Yeah. You've got the horsemen exposing the cracks in the system.

Right. The cry for justice from the martyrs. Yeah.

And this theme of decreation. Leading to something new. It's pretty mind-blowing.

It is. Makes you think about the systems we're part of today. Like, are we paying attention to the horsemen on the horizon? Are we making the same mistakes as Rome? Yeah.

That's a sobering thought. Yeah. I think that's the power of Revelation.

It's not just history or predicting the future. Right. It's a call to look at our own lives, the world around us.

Yeah. And ask: are we building systems that lead to life or to death? You know, I've always found Revelation a little intimidating. Yeah.

But hearing it explained like this, connected to history, it now feels less like a puzzle and more like an urgent message. Exactly. That's what Dr. Matthewson wants.

He doesn't want us to get lost in the symbols or predicting events. Right. He wants us to get the core message.

Which is? Our choices have big consequences, both individually and as a society. So it's less about knowing when the world ends. Right.

And more about understanding how our choices are shaping it now. Exactly. Are we moving toward a new creation? Right.

Or are we part of the decay of the old? Okay. It challenges us to think about what faithfulness means. Yeah.

In a world that seems to reward greed and violence. Speaking of faithfulness. Yeah.

This de-creation idea. Yeah. It's still with me.

Mm-hmm. What kind of world do you think God wants to create, you know? Right. In place of the one being taken apart.

That's the question Dr. Matthewson leaves us with. Yeah. I think it's a perfect way to end.

Okay. He doesn't give a blueprint. Right.

But he points us in a direction. Okay. What needs to change in us and in our world?

Yeah. To make way for a world that reflects God's heart. Okay.

A world of justice and righteousness. Powerful question. Feels so relevant right now.

It is. Revelation isn't just about the end. No.

It's about a new beginning. Yeah. And we get to play a part in that.

Beautifully said. That's the heart of it. Yeah.

Revelation calls us to act. To join in this story of redemption. Even when things are chaotic.

Exactly. Well, thanks for guiding us through this deep dive. It's been challenging but really insightful.

Glad to be here. We hope you've gained some new perspectives on Revelation chapter 6. Mm-hmm. And that you'll keep exploring it.

Yeah. For your own life and for the world around you.