

## Chapter 5 Welcome to The Stone Age

Since the flood of Noah's time, God has provided a variety of governmental forms to protect humanity from destroying itself. The final system of this period was a series of five global empires prophesied in Daniel. Four of these empires have been identified and faded into obscurity. Even so, the remnants of the fourth empire continues to bring stability through judicial systems that we recognize today as "Roman Law."

The fifth and final empire of this series is described in Daniel chapter 2.

**41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43 And whereas thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron doth not mingle with clay.**

Notice It was indicated three times in these verses that this empire is unstable, in that the iron and clay do not mix well. It would appear that portions of this empire are reluctantly compliant, rather than willingly engaged.

Inasmuch as it is held together by some level of agreement between those with power and those without (iron versus clay), it will likely be one established through negotiation or truce, rather than brute force.

### *Where the end begins*

The first five chapters of the book of Revelation are rich in typology and spiritual lessons, but they do not get down to clearly telling of things to come until the first seal is opened in Revelation six. Verse 6:1-2 reads: **Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come!" 2 "I looked, and behold, a white horse, and the one who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer"**

The fact that this empire is brought on by the opening of the first seal, defines it as the beginning of a brand new era – the first step in God's final judgments upon the earth.

Although less than six months of time is mentioned incidental to events between the first seal and the beginning of the final 3-1/2 years in chapter 11, the total period could actually be years or even decades. At this point, we simply don't know.

It is interesting that no mention was made of bloodshed in this conquest (not even arrows for the bow). Furthermore, a bow is a long-distance weapon, whereas a sword is up close and personal. Until I learn more, I would expect that this conquest will be achieved through political maneuvering, rather than by force. Neither is there a time frame for the rise of this empire given; we don't know if it will arise overnight, or if it has already been building in scale and influence for centuries.

We are living in a time where the world is interconnected, and global treaties are increasingly replacing local governments. This trend is not a bad thing in itself, in that nations are increasingly bumping into each other in various ways. International treaties are sometimes helpful in promoting understandings and minimizing conflicts. Inasmuch as this is part of the God-ordained statue series this empire is due some level of respect and compliance – while it lasts.

There will come a point when this final empire ceases to serve God's interests in maintaining peace and security in the world, and it's reign will come to a close. We see multiple examples of this in Biblical history – some more blatant than others.

Israel was protected and developed as a nation within Egypt for four hundred years, but when a Pharaoh arose who began to persecute Israel, the exodus was on. Later there were multiple

cycles of rebellion against God within Israel itself. These periods were terminated by conquest and slavery.

We will see this happen on a global scale when civil war is initiated by a faction arising from within the final empire, and begins to persecute God's people. This action is described in Daniel chapter seven. In this chapter, Babylon is about to fall, and the remaining four kingdoms are portrayed as a series of beasts. The fourth and final (which would be the fifth kingdom of the series that previously included Babylon) is described as follows:

**Dan 7:7. After this I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, a fourth beast, terrible and powerful, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.**

**7:8. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.**

This chapter goes on to provide this vision with greater detail, in which we see it attacking God's people and subsequently judged by God. The civil war arising as it rips out three of the initial ten governing members of this final kingdom, is a good candidate for what we see beginning with the opening of the second seal in Revelation six. Besides the violence itself of verse 8, later verses in Daniel seven speak of this come-lately force persecuting God's people, and invoking God's wrath. At that point, the stone cut without hands as described in Daniel chapter two, lands upon the toes of the statue.

**Rev.6:3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come!"**

**4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that *people* would kill one another; and a large sword was given to him.**

This was spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 24:6-8.

**Mt.24:6 And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.**

The timing of this chaos as being related to the opening of the seals in Revelation 6 is further confirmed by **Mt.24:8 But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pains.**

In relatively modern times we have seen what happens when a government disintegrates. There is widespread bloodshed as various groups compete for turf and resources, and as opportunistic individuals and mobs plunder at will in the absence of law and order. Extreme famine and poverty follow, and there is nothing left to restrain the rampant spread of malnutrition and diseases. Seals 2, 3, and 4 cover these natural and historical results of collapsing governments.

As the Matthew 24 account continues we see that widespread persecution of Christians will be related to this collapse – and likely the reason for it.

**Mt.24:9 Then they will hand you over to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.**

So again, we see tribulation arising in response to persecution against God's people, and likely providing a measure of deliverance as happened during the exodus and other events.

When the final empire begins to target his people, the kingdom of God arises. We saw this shift of power prophesied in **Daniel.2:34 You continued watching until a stone was broken off without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed to pieces all at the same time, and they were like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the entire earth.**

Welcome to the stone age. The stone representing the kingdom of God has now matured to assume control – but first, just a little more cleanup is in order.

**6:5 And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. 6 And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A measure of wheat for a shilling, and three measures of barley for a shilling; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not.**

Famine is a consistent result in regions consumed with violence. It has also been historically used as a weapon of control, to wipe out entire populations in specified areas.

**6:7 And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come. 8 And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.**

Widespread malnutrition naturally leads to weakness and disease. We have an example of the rise of wild beasts in the former Soviet Union. Nature and wildlife have taken over in the region devastated and abandoned by the Chernobyl accident. Take note that the elimination of one fourth of humanity will be achieved by mankind itself – without the aid of natural disasters.

The disasters to this point have been the result of a world choosing to rule the cosmos on their own terms, rather than continuing to submit to God's protection. But this new world order then aspires to eliminate all that remains loyal to God. This pursuit brings on an entirely new league of catastrophes, that are clearly of supernatural origin.

**Rev.6:9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been killed because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; 10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who live on the earth?"**

If you're going to annoy someone, pick on someone a little smaller than God.

The destruction we have seen so far was the natural result of humans behaving like humans when God quits protecting them from each other. But here we see those killed by this system (and presumably others) calling forth judgments directly from God for persecuting and murdering them. Vengeance has long been due, and now it is about to come. Notice: This is believers that are asking for tribulation, and the plagues to follow will result from those prayers.

Again, we see that God's judgments are not directed at His people. Yes, we all need a little discipline from time to time, but *judgment* is aimed at the destruction of God's enemies, and protection of his people.

With the opening of the sixth seal, we go beyond what man is capable of doing, and demonstrate that God is in fact involved.

**6:12 And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became as black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood;**

**Rev.6:14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the eminent people, and the commanders and the wealthy and the strong, and every slave and free person hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they \*said to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the sight of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;**

By the time the sixth seal was opened one fourth of the world's population has been decimated by what mankind had done to themselves, and the age of empires is over. But there remain governments at various national, corporate, and military levels. With the sixth seal, all humanity will share a common terror of God, and there are no further debates about who is in charge of the earth. This chaos likely interdicts the systematic government led persecutions.

In the meantime, God's kingdom continues to grow and provide meaning and stability to those who will hear and obey Him. Indeed; God's kingdom will be alive and growing under God's guidance and

protection, as portrayed in Psalms 91 and various Biblical patterns. The rest will face a world battered by a new sequence of plagues that are not brought on through mankind, but clearly by God himself.

Like the plagues of Egypt that judged the oppressors of God's people, this wave of plagues will be selective upon those who refuse to submit to God. The intensity of these catastrophes continues to mount in chapters 7-9. By chapter 11, a third of those who survived the collapse of the fifth empire will also have died – totaling one half of all humans who were living before the first seal was opened. Jesus spoke of these times in **Mat.24:22 “And if those days had not been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”**

Amid the energetic debate concerning end times theology, consider this “for the sake of the elect” clause as a reference to believers being present while all this is going on. Even so, I am sure that people who are better at writing the Bible than John can come up with a great explanation for this.

There are also prophetic parallels to the days of Noah. But here things are going a little more gently – at first. In Noah's time a significant reboot of humanity was in order, but in this case we have weeds being removed to a burn pile, from among the wheat at a time when both are ripe.

In Mt.13:40-43 Jesus said, **“So just as the weeds are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, 42 and they will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH LIKE THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father...”**

So yet again, we see God's people being present, while God's enemies are being judged. Matt.13:43 fits nicely with **Daniel 12:3“And those who have insight will shine like the glow of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”**

The seventh seal releases another series of events that would be initiated through a corresponding series of trumpets. There are many things I don't understand in chapters 7 through 9. I am well capable of coming up with quasi-rational speculations as are many, but the danger in that, has been proven by countless end-times theorists.

Clearly, there are things in this book that will have more relevance to the lives of believers who will be alive and encountering them – even as we have seen prophesies clarified and become relevant as they were being fulfilled in the past. At least Daniel, the apostle Paul, and John were exposed to things that were not to be generally published at the time.

In addition to the ongoing encouragements to believers throughout the book of Revelation, I see relevance in connecting the related scriptures. These help clarify the framework upon which numerous popular and conflicting dogmas depend.

### *Don't fear the plagues*

As we wonder about the promised plagues of the end times, we need only to open our eyes. Many in the past two thousands years have already experienced the most brutal forms of persecution. God has long since equipped his church through the words of Jesus and the apostles. We need worry no more about what can come upon us from outside our bodies. Our responsibility is to focus upon cleansing our hearts and in being diligent with the work that God has already entrusted to our hands.

As far as the prophesied plagues are concerned, consider that the plagues in Egypt were only against the Egyptians, and that they set the children of Israel free from their bondage. When an angel of death slew 85,000 enemy soldiers in a single night, it protected Jerusalem under king Hezekiah. At the time Nebuchadnezzar conquered Israel, Jeremiah was in prison. But Nebuchadnezzar set him free, provided him with a pension, and told him that he could live wherever he wanted – from Babylon to Egypt and beyond.

Promises to believers such as **Mat.6:33** “**But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you**”, and Psalms 91 will still be alive and active (perhaps more so). May we be loving, giving, and witnessing as we observe the final meltdown of human empires among the rest of humanity. The Holy Spirit will continue to anoint his people with wisdom, spiritual gifts, and in some cases supernatural provision. But if not, we are to continue to stand and defy ungodly requirements as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego did in the very face of king Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. chapt. 3).

The guidelines of behavior given in gospels and in the letters to the churches in Revelation will remain in effect throughout the remainder of human history. These are covered by various exhortations concerning alertness, and diligence in fulfilling our respective callings. Mt.24:4-51 is a well known section that describes extreme times of persecution and hardships. The basic instructions involve being alert, and remaining faithful in the face of challenges. 1Pet.4:7-19 also speaks of faithfully ministering, enduring persecution, and standing firm during tumultuous times.

We are reassured of God’s sovereignty as we see ancient and modern prophecies fulfilled, while those not yet fulfilled will continue to guide and encourage us as we walk in their light. For this reason it is important to continue to study and prayerfully meditate upon the scriptures as they continue to illuminate the horizon.