

# The Four Horsemen and the Signs of the End

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Throughout the history of the New Testament Church from the time of Christ and the Apostles up to our current day, I think one of the subjects that's oftentimes on the minds of Church brethren is how much longer do we have until the end? Until we see the events of prophecy and the book of Revelation playing out and Christ returning and the resurrection happening. We look forward to those events, and we're oftentimes curious how much longer do we have? And particularly what signs should we be looking for to know that that time is drawing near?

Well, when we look into that subject, we typically tend to look to the Olivet Prophecy because we know that's the question that Christ was responding to when He gave that prophecy to His disciples. We oftentimes look at the book of Revelation as well, and particularly what the book of Revelation refers to as the "four horsemen", because we can correlate the symbolism of the four horsemen with a number of Christ's statements in the Olivet Prophecy.

However, one of the things we oftentimes tend to skip over and not really pay close attention to is the fact that in the Olivet Prophecy, while Christ did give some definite signs that He said were absolutely signs that the end time was near, He also listed a number of things that He specifically said would be just events that would happen throughout human history that we shouldn't confuse with signs of the end. He said they definitely were NOT signs of the end. So, what we're going to do today is to look at this subject and, again, particularly paying attention to what did Christ say was definitely a sign of the end and what things did He talk about that He specifically warned us NOT to be confused about because they were NOT signs of the end. So, if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's:

## The Four Horsemen and the Signs of the End

Now to start off with, let's turn over to Mark's account of the Olivet Prophecy in Mark 13. Again, Mark 13, and we'll start reading in verse 3.

**Mark 13:3** *"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 4) 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?'" (NKJV)*

They're directly asking, what's the sign of the end? Now again, He gives quite a bit of information here following up on that question. But let's particularly pay attention to what did He say was a sign of the end and what did He specifically say was NOT a sign of the end. Now continuing on in verse 5.

*"5) And Jesus, answering them, began to say: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. 6) For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. 7) But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet.'" (NKJV)*

Now notice He's mentioned false religion. You're going to see conflicts, wars, and rumors of wars. But don't confuse that with a sign of the end because that's just things that are going to happen throughout history. That doesn't mean it's the end time. Pick up in verse 8.

*"8) For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows." (NKJV)*

Notice again, He listed a number of things that would happen that I think any logical person can say, yeah, that's happened a lot throughout history and even throughout our individual lifetimes. There's been wars. There's been natural disasters. There's been famines. But Christ specifically says, this is just the beginning of sorrows. In other words, these are NOT signs of the end. That is what He's saying. In verse 9.

*9) "But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues." (NKJV)*

Now, pay particular attention to that word synagogue. We're going to come back to that because that's a big clue on the timing here.

*"You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. 10) And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 11) But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. 12) Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. 13) And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved." (NKJV)*

Notice He listed a number of things here and even very specifically said they're NOT signs of the end. We read there a couple of statements of that as we went through this. But then when He was referring to persecution, He used the word "synagogue". Now what we're going to see here is, that's a reference that makes perfect sense to the early Church. Particularly, the first century, around that timeframe, because persecution in synagogues was definitely something that happened then. If we try to place that in our current day or even forward in the future, at the end time, it doesn't really make any sense.

Just to show you a couple of examples, turn over to Acts 22. I'm sure most of you are familiar with the fact that the Apostle Paul before he was called, he was a Pharisee. And

he was actively persecuting the Church. He is later struck down on the road to Damascus. And then he has a change of life there where he stops being a Pharisee persecuting the Church and becomes a faithful follower of Christ and then becomes an Apostle. But there's a couple of times in the book of Acts where he refers to his previous behavior of how he was persecuting the Church. And he specifically mentions doing it in synagogues. Notice this in Acts 22 and verse 17.

**Acts 22:17** *"Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance 18) and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.' 19) So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. 20) And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' 21) Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.' "* (NKJV)

See, Christ sent him specifically to the Gentiles because Paul didn't have a good reputation among a lot of the Jews because they remembered his previous behavior. They were afraid of him. But turn over to Acts 26 and we'll see another example of this. What I want you to see here is just, again, this is a very relevant reference to mention "synagogues" in the context of persecution in the first century Church. That was very much something that was happening. Pick up in verse 9 here of chapter 26.

**Acts 26:9** *"Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10) This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11) And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities."* (NKJV)

Notice Paul is specifically saying, he was actively persecuting them in synagogues because a synagogue is specifically a Jewish concept -- their place of worship. But think of that even in our current day or just projecting forward to the end time. Now, if you've heard my recent sermons, my view of the end time beast is that's going to be an Islamic power that rises up out of the Middle East. Now, the more popular theory is the end time beast is a revival of the Roman Empire, and the false religion attached to it would be Catholicism. Now you can go either route that you think is correct. It doesn't make any sense to talk about people being persecuted in synagogues in that context. However, it makes perfect sense if you're talking about the early Church in the first century and in that timeframe where synagogues were a common concept and persecution was taking place there.

What I want you to see here is that when you look at the Olivet Prophecy -- and this is true in Mark 13, in Luke 21, and in Matthew 24 -- the first section of what Christ addressed there are NOT signs of the end. He specifically says they are not. What He's talking about is events that would be troubling events that would take place throughout

the history of the New Testament Church, from the time He said that all the way up to the end. And He was warning them about this. But He specifically says, this is NOT the end. Don't be confused and deceived into thinking this is the end. This is NOT the end.

We're going to see in the latter part of these chapters He then starts addressing very specific things that He directly says ARE exact signs of the end. But the reason I bring this out is -- if you've been in the Church of God for many years like I have. I grew up from birth in the Church of God. I have seen Church of God publications all of my life. They'll write articles and say, well, it must be the end because, look there's wars in numerous places. There's lots of natural disasters. There are areas of the world where there's famine, and that's always interpreted like it's a sign of the end.

Well, if we just take Christ's own direct statements, He said the exact opposite. He said these things are going to happen. These are things you'll have to endure through. These are catastrophic things that'll take place throughout the history of the Church. But don't be fooled. Don't be deceived. Don't confuse that with the end because it's not. We're going to see later in this sermon, later in the Olivet Prophecy, He does start speaking about specific events you should look for that ARE signs of the end. But we have to understand those things that He's just warning us about that will happen throughout history.

Now, just to see that this is consistent throughout the Olivet Prophecy. There are multiple accounts in the Gospels of the Olivet Prophecy. So, turn over to Luke 21 and we'll see Luke's account of this and see it follows the exact same pattern that we just read in the book of Mark. This is Luke 21 in verse 7.

**Luke 21:7** *“So they asked Him, saying, “Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?” (NKJV)*

So again, they're asking Him that question. What's the sign of the end? What should we look for? Again, let's just pay attention to what He says is NOT a sign. Notice, this follows the exact same pattern that we just read in Mark 13. Now pick up in verse 8.

*“8) And He said: “Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and, ‘The time has drawn near.’ Therefore do not go after them.” (NKJV)*

Notice one of the deceptions that would come is people saying that it's the end and it wouldn't be the end because they would be misinterpreting the signs.

*“9) But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately.” (NKJV)*

Notice, He's directly telling us. He's listing things here that are NOT a sign of the end. These are just events that are going to happen all throughout history, and there's going

to be lots of times when these things occur. But don't get confused and think that's a sign of the end because it's NOT.

*"10) Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11) And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. 12) But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues..." (NKJV)*

Notice that word again.

*"...and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. 13) But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. 14) Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; 15) for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. 16) You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. 17) And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. 18) But not a hair of your head shall be lost. 19) By your patience possess your souls." (NKJV)*

Now, notice this follows the exact same pattern that we read in Mark 13. Now, just to address another concept here, I've noticed over the years that what's typically interpreted in the Church of God is, we will look at the things He just listed and think, "Well, we're seeing this a lot in the news. It must be the end!" You can point out to people, no Christ said these were NOT signs of the end. He said these were situations that would happen all throughout history. People will say, "Well, of course these things have happened throughout history. It's just when they're happening more often. When you see them a lot in the news. Well, THAT means it's the end!" Well, where did Christ say that? He didn't. He specifically said these are NOT signs of the end.

But now if we keep reading through the rest of the chapter, we'll see what He did say were definite signs of the end because He gives us some very specific events. And we'll see here, some of them are even a literal countdown for when the resurrection is going to take place. But now pick up in verse 20.

*20) "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near." (NKJV)*

In other words, now we're talking about specific events to look for that are definite signs of the end.

*"21) Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. 22) For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." (NKJV)*

In other words, THIS is a definite sign of the end is what He's saying. Now, continue in verse 23.

*"23) But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. 24) And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. 25) "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26) men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27) Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28) Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." (NKJV)*

Notice, He's directly saying, "THESE are the signs you should look for because these are definite signs of the end". Notice in the first section of the chapter, we read through a lot of things that have commonly happened all throughout history, and He specifically said these are NOT signs of the end. Unfortunately, what oftentimes happens and even in the Church of God is we lump it all together and we assume all of these are signs of the end because that was the original question that the Apostles ask Him. We don't pay attention when He makes the distinction and talks about the events that are NOT signs of the end, and He's very clear about it.

But now turn back over to Mark 13. I want you to see that this follows the exact same pattern that we just read. This time we'll pick up in verse 14. He's going to give us another very specific event to look for. He says it's absolutely a sign of the end. In fact, this one gives us an absolute countdown to the resurrection. This is in verse 14.

**Mark 13:14** *"So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 15) Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. 16) And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 17) But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18) And pray that your flight may not be in winter. 19) For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. 20) And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days." (NKJV)*

Just like in Luke 21, He first addresses all the things that are just going to happen throughout history. They're going to be common events, and He says don't be confused by those, they're NOT signs of the end. Then He gives us definite signs of the end. Because notice in verse 14, He talked about when you see the abomination of desolation, that's a definite sign of the end. He says, "Spoken of by Daniel the prophet".

Well, to understand what He's referring to, we just turn over to Daniel 12. What we're going to see here is, this gives us an absolute countdown to the resurrection. So, we know for an absolute fact that's a sign of the end. This is Daniel 12. Let's just start reading in verse 9.

**Dan 12:9** *"And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. 10) Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. 11) "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. 12) Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. 13) "But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days." (NKJV)*

Now, all we have to do is ask the question, "When does Daniel arise to his inheritance?" Well, that's at the resurrection of the Firstfruits. At the blowing of the seventh trumpet during the Day of the LORD. Well, if these days count down to when Daniel receives his inheritance, it's counting down to the resurrection. So, he is saying when you see armies surrounding Jerusalem. You see the abomination of desolation set up -- that's stopping the sacrifices and basically setting up idle worship in the temple. When you see that happen, that's a countdown clock and you know then that there's 1,290 days from there until the resurrection. That is definitely a sign of the end.

Because what we can see here is there's a pattern that plays out through all three accounts of the Olivet Prophecy. But oftentimes we don't make that distinction. I know you've probably made this observation yourself. I know I've seen it all of my life. Particularly growing up in the days of Worldwide when we had The Plain Truth magazine. Whenever there would be a lot of natural disasters that were happening, maybe a year where you had numerous natural disasters take place or there was famine in the news in various parts of the world and wars that were popping up. Articles would pop up saying, "Well, it's got to be the end. It's got to be close because look at all these signs." And they would ignore the fact that, no, these were the things that Christ specifically said were NOT signs of the end. We have to pay attention to that and, if we do, we won't be fooled by these things. We'll know specifically what to look for.

Well, another thing that we typically correlate with the Olivet Prophecy -- and I think rightly so -- is the four horsemen that are described in the book of Revelation. But oftentimes we make the same mistake in interpreting those because when we think about the book of Revelation, we think of it as a book just addressing the end time. We miss the fact that, yes, while it does have a strong focus on the end time and the Day of the LORD period and Christ returning and the millennium being set up and describing all of those things in detail. It's not the only thing that the book of Revelation addresses. Because if you go through the first chapter there -- I won't take the time to read that at this point. But John specifically says he was told to take this vision and write it to the seven Churches.

Now, these were seven Churches that existed on a mail route literally at the time that John was receiving this vision and he wrote the book of Revelation. But as we've taught for years, the letters we have in Revelation 2 and 3, they're not just letters that were written to the literal Churches on a mail route that all existed at the same time when John received the book of Revelation. It's also addressing the predominant themes throughout history. In other words, it was addressing what the Church of God throughout all the time from the time of Christ and the Apostles all the way up to the end. What they would be facing and the challenges they would face. The strengths they would have. The problems they would need to overcome. The predominant themes throughout Church history.

Well, if you take that into consideration, John wasn't just addressing the very end time Church. John starts off addressing the Church in Ephesus which is the first century Church. Then he addresses every phase throughout history, all the way down to Laodicea at the very end. See, if we keep that in mind and realize it doesn't just focus on the end time, then we can look at Revelation 6 which covers the four horsemen and know how to correctly interpret that. Because if you've ever studied this subject, you probably know we typically correlate the symbolism that's described with the four horsemen in Revelation 6 with Christ's comments in the Olivet prophecy. Which I think is an accurate way to interpret that. But again, if we're going to do that, let's pay attention to the fact that the correlations that we're making with those four horsemen is in the section that Christ specifically said are challenging or troubling times that are going to happen throughout history, but they're NOT specific to the end time. They're NOT signs of the end time. So, let's keep that in mind as we look at that.

So, now let's turn over to Revelation 6. We're going to go through these one at a time to unpack the symbolism that we'll find here with the four horsemen. So, if you have a ribbon in your Bible, you probably want to put it in Revelation 6 because we're going to turn back and forth to this chapter a number of times throughout the rest of the sermon. But let's start off with Revelation 6 and verse 1.

**Rev 6:1** *"Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, 'Come and see.' 2) And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer."* (NKJV)

Now, as we're going to see as we go through all four of these, with this one we have to do a little more you might say detective work of comparison here and a little more speculation to connect this one together because the other three just give us more direct statements to nail down exactly what it's talking about. But if you notice here, we have a picture of this rider is on a white horse. He's wearing a crown, and he has a bow, and he's going out to conquer. Now, this is very similar in a number of ways to a description we'll find of Jesus Christ in Revelation 19. But it also has some meaningful differences as well. If we compare these, we'll get an idea of what this is getting at.



So again, you'll probably want to put a ribbon in here in Revelation 6 if you have one. But then turn over to Revelation 19, and we'll see a description here of Jesus Christ when He's returning to the earth during the Day of the LORD period. But let's just notice the details of this description because we're going to find there are parallels here that are very similar to what we just read. But there's also meaningful differences too and that's going to give us more clues as to how to put this together. This is Revelation 19 and verse 11.

**Rev 19:11** *"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12) His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13) He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14) And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15) Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16) And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."* (NKJV)

Now, as we know, this is a description of Jesus Christ. He's riding a white horse. But notice He has many crowns, and it doesn't say anything about a bow. Because the description we read previously of the white horse in Revelation 6, it has a rider who has a crown, but he has a bow. So again, it's similar to Christ, but it's also meaningfully different. What we're going to see is this suggests it's a counterfeit version of Christ is what it's getting at. Because notice it's specifically mentioned in Revelation 6 that that rider had a bow, and the Bible doesn't ever describe Christ as having a bow. But also think about this. If someone is using a bow and they're going out to conquer, what are they going to shoot from that bow? They're going to shoot arrows. That's what typically goes with a bow is a bow and arrow. So, let's notice also another comparison in the Bible that gives us some insight on this. Turn over to Ephesians 6. We're going to start reading in verse 13.

**Eph 6:13** *"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14) Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15) and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16) above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one."* (NKJV)

So, this will give us some insight into that bow and what that bow is firing. Because notice it's referring to fiery darts and it's the wicked one. Well, the wicked one is an obvious reference to Satan, but it says he basically uses "fiery darts". That's how he attacks people. Obviously, it's a symbolic picture of his temptations and how he tries to trip people up. But let's look at the Greek word that's translated here as "fiery darts". Because what we're going to see here is it actually means "arrows" like you would shoot

from a bow. Now the Greek word here is transliterated into English as “belos”. It's Strong's # 956. The definition I'm going to read to you is from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates. He defines it as:

*“A missile weapon, e.g., a dart, arrow. In the NT used only figuratively for Satanic temptations (Eph. 6:16) where the expression, “the fiery darts,” seems an evident allusion to those arrows or javelins which were sometimes used in sieges in battles. Sometimes they were missiles fitted with combustibles, and so forth.”*

So, you can see it's talking about what Satan uses to attack us. It's symbolically pictured as arrows. Well, you see that fits with our picture of a rider using a bow and conquering because he would obviously use arrows with a bow. Again, what this is leading us to is the picture of this white horse and the rider on it going out to conquer with this bow suggests to me it's a counterfeit version of Christ because the description is very similar but also different. But now, turn over to Matthew 24. We'll see here a statement that Christ makes in this account of the Olivet prophecy that gives a detail that we didn't see there in Mark 13, in Luke 21. This is Matthew 24 and verse 4.

**Matt 24:4** *“And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. 5) For many will come in My name, saying, “I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.” (NKJV)*

See, He's not just referring to false religion. He's also referring to those who basically present a counterfeit version of Him. He's saying they'll come preaching that Christ is the Messiah. That He is who He says He is. But they're going to deceive many. They're presenting a counterfeit version of who He is and what His gospel message is. See, this is something not unique to the end time because these types of heresies are addressed in the New Testament.

In my last sermon I addressed the subject of Gnosticism and that the Apostle John in addition to recording his gospel account and the book of Revelation, he also wrote several epistles that we refer to today as 1 John, 2 John and, 3 John. One of the main themes he's addressing there is the heresy of Gnosticism, and he discusses what he calls the “spirit of antichrist”. He says it's denying that Christ came in the flesh. As I explained in that sermon, Gnostics would say that Christ was the Messiah, but they had a very perverted, twisted version of who Christ was and what His message was. Because they had this idea that He wasn't really a flesh and blood human being who had to go through the temptations and the torment the Bible describes. No, He just “seemed” like He was a physical human being. They even twisted His message of obedience into, well, the body is evil, and you connect with God through this ethereal knowledge that you have. It's just knowing this knowledge that gets you salvation. You can continue to sin as much as you want to because the body's evil anyway.

See, it was a very counterfeit version of who Christ is and that was occurring in the first century, and that has occurred all throughout history ever since. Because see, what we'll see here is that the first horseman correlates with the false religion that Christ

warned about in the Olivet Prophecy. But again, notice He wasn't saying that's specific to the end time. Yes, there'll be religious deception at the end time, but He wasn't saying when you see religious deception and false religion then you know it's the end. He's saying, no, that's something you're going to deal with all throughout the history of the Church and don't think just because you see it, that it's the end. Now turn back over to Revelation 6 and we'll pick up with the red horse here. This is Revelation 6, and this time we'll pick up in verse 3.

**Rev 6:3** *"When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, 'Come and see.' 4) Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword."* (NKJV)

Now, oftentimes we look at this particular verse here and we see that it mentions a "great sword" and we think, well, this is war. Well, I think that's definitely included in this. But let's notice there's a little more involved in this than just war. Because notice it mentioned it was to "take peace from the earth", and that "people should kill", and with a "great sword". So, what we're going to see is taking away peace, it results in violence and then also war. *It's including all three.* Now, just to share with you the Greek word here that is translated as "peace" here in this particular verse. It's transliterated into English as "eirene". It's Strong's # 1515. Again, the definition I'm going to read to you comes from Zodhiates. The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament.

*"Peace. Particularly in a civil sense, the opposite of war and dissension.... Among individuals, peace, harmony..."*

So again, it's not just the opposite of war. It's talking about taking away peace and harmony among individuals. Now, if we look at Christ's statements in the Olivet Prophecy, what we're going to see is He mentions all of these concepts. It's not just specifically war. He did mention war, but let's notice what else He mentioned. Turn back over to Matthew 24. This time we'll start in verse 6.

**Matt 24:6** *"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet."* (NKJV)

Again, just notice that again. He's specifically saying you're going to see these wars. You're going to see violence and that doesn't automatically mean it's the end.

*"7) For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places."* (NKJV)

Again, that's what we think of as formal wars. But also jump down to verse 10.

*"10) And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another."* (NKJV)

Now, if you have hatred between people, what does that do? That takes away peace. It takes away harmony and people getting along with each other and peace and tranquility in relationships. Well see, that's what typically happens before you get to violence or all-out war. What this is saying is that this horse encapsulates all of that. That all of these things are going to happen. But let's also notice again, when we correlate it with the Olivet prophecy, it's on the list of things that Christ said this is going to happen. It's going to be part of history from the time He gave this all the way to the end. But don't think that this is unique and specific to the end because it's not. So, now turn back over to Revelation 6 and we'll pick up with the black horse here. Revelation 6, and this time we'll pick up in verse 5.

**Rev 6:5** *"When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, 'Come and see.' So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6) And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, 'A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.'" (NKJV)*

Now, it's obvious from this description, this obviously has something to do with the food supply. Because it's particularly mentioning wheat and barley here, which were staple crops, and it has something to do with that. Now, notice it talked about holding a scale. A scale is something you weigh things on. The reason I mentioned that is the Bible specifically speaks about when grain is sold in terms of weight -- in other words, it's being portioned out -- that that is seen as a sign of scarcity and famine. To notice that, turn over to Ezekiel 4. It is Ezekiel 4, and we'll start reading in verse 16.

**Ezek 4:16** *"Moreover He said to me, 'Son of man, surely I will cut off the supply of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and shall drink water by measure and with dread, 17) that they may lack bread and water, and be dismayed with one another, and waste away because of their iniquity.'" (NKJV)*

In other words, it's referring to famine. When you have a shortage of food. But notice it is particularly correlating that when it says they're eating it by weight. When you're having to weigh it out. It's being rationed. That's a sign of scarcity of wheat. Again, this referred to wheat and to barley which were staple crops in Israel. But just to flesh out the rest of the symbolism there, I'd just like to read to you a quote from a Biblical commentary addressing these verses -- Revelation 6 verses 5 and 6. This is from Andrew's Bible Commentary. Let me just quote to you how they explain the rest of this because I think it adds some insight to the subject.

*"When Christ the Lamb opened the third seal, a black horse appeared. John saw the rider holding a scale for weighing food in his hand and heard an announcement from one of the four living creatures regarding the prices of wheat and barley. In ancient Israel, grain, oil, and wine were the basic necessities of life (Deut. 11:14; Joel 2:19), and to make and eat bread by carefully weighing the grain indicated great scarcity or famine (Lev. 26:26; Ezek. 4:16). In John's day, a*

*denarius was a daily wage (Matt. 20:2). In normal circumstances, a daily wage would have bought all of the necessities for an entire family. However, a famine would have enormously inflated the market price. In the scene of the third seal, it would have taken a whole day's work to buy just enough food for only one person, since a quart of wheat was the daily ration for one person."*

So, as you can see what it's describing here -- the symbolism here -- is clearly indicating famine and a shortage of food. Well, if we turn back over to Mark 13, we'll see this was in the list of things that Christ mentioned was going to happen. But again, let's just notice it's in the list of things He said were going to be the events that would happen throughout history. He was warning people it would take place, but He specifically said don't get confused with thinking this is a sign of the end because it's not. This is Mark 13 and verse 8.

**Mark 13:8** *"For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines..."* (NKJV)

In other words, a shortage of food.

*"...and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows."* (NKJV)

Again, notice He follows up with, don't think that this is a sign of the end. Because, yes, this is a sorrowful event. This is something that's going to happen throughout history and it's going to be a painful and difficult thing. But just because you see famine don't think that it's an absolute sign of the end because it's not. Now, to finish the last horse here, go back over to Revelation 6, and now we'll pick up with the pale horse in verse 7.

**Rev 6:7** *"When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, 'Come and see.' 8) So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth."* (NKJV)

Now, as you can see here, it refers to the rider here as "death". It says the grave, Hades, is following him. Then it gives us a number of means of which people are dying. Take note of the fact that it doesn't mention pestilence directly. The reason I mention that is all of my life growing up in the Church of God, I've heard the explanation given for this particular horse. They'll get to these verses and say, "This picture's pestilence". As if that is just solely what this is about. Notice, it never mentioned pestilence here directly. Now, as we're going to see here. When we unpack all the details of this, I think you could argue that pestilence is included in the overall picture of what it's talking about. But I just think it's interesting to take note of the fact that it does not say pestilence here anywhere. Oftentimes, how you hear these verses explained as just specifically that it means pestilence, and it just doesn't actually say that.

Now, to unpack what it's getting at. Again, it mentions the name of the rider of this horse as "death" and he's followed by the grave. So, obviously we're talking about death, but it says he's given power to "kill". Now, let me read to you the definition of the Greek word here for kill because this gives us some insight. It's transliterated into English as "apokteino". It's Strong's # 615. Again, the definitions I'm going to read here, all of these definitions are from Zodhiates. He defines this as:

*"To slay. To kill outright, put to death....Particularly, to put to death in any manner."*

The point I want you to see from this is this is involuntary death. This is not a situation where someone just lived to 80 or 90 years old. Their body just wore out of old age, and they died naturally. That's not what this is getting at. This is really referring to premature death. Now, if you look at what it listed here, as I pointed out, it doesn't specifically mention pestilence at all. When it gets to how this horseman is going to kill -- cause premature death -- the first thing it mentions is by "the sword". Now, that's obviously a reference to violence or outright war. But again, no mention of pestilence. Then next is with "hunger". Now, hunger here has obvious connotations because when you think of dying from hunger, you think, well, that's a result of famine. That is correct because the Greek word here that's translated as hunger here is "limos". It's Strong's # 3042. Again, this definition is from Zodhiates.

*"It refers to hunger, famine, want of food. It is spoken of single persons suffering hunger...; of cities or countries experiencing famine, scarcity of grain..."*

So again, it has the obvious implication of what you think of as "famine". But now notice it mentions death by the "beasts of the earth" and then it just says "with death". Now, if you look up the Greek word there translated as "death" in English. It has a very broad definition that can cover death by a number of sources and in a number of contexts. It's more of a generic term. But let's just place this in line with the context of everything else here. What we're talking about here is this particular rider who's called "death" and followed by the grave and given authority to basically kill a fourth of mankind through a variety of means. It's not just specifically pestilence. Now, I think we can include pestilence in the overall picture, but it gave us violence and the sword -- either individual violence or all-out war. It gave us death through famine and being killed by wild beasts. Then it just gave us the broad category of "death". Well, if you turn back over to Matthew 24, we can again correlate this with Christ's statements in the Olivet Prophecy. We'll see here that, yes, pestilence is something that we can put on this overall list. But let's notice here in Matthew 24 and verse 7.

**Matt 24:7** *"For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom."*  
(NKJV)

Again, this is the sword. This is war.

*"And there will be famines,..."* (NKJV)

Now that was directly mentioned.

*"...pestilences, and earthquakes in various places." (NKJV)*

So, see, now we have diseases and natural disasters that are being included. Of course, we could obviously include that in the generic term "death" there that we read in Revelation 6. But again, notice here the totality of this together is then followed up with in verse 8.

*"8) All these things are the beginning of sorrows." (NKJV)*

In other words, these are events that are going to happen all throughout history to the Church and to the world in general. But don't interpret this as a definite sign of the end. In other words, just because you watch the news and you see there's wars in various places and there's violence and there's shortages of food in various places and there's been a lot of natural disasters this year. Don't interpret that as it's got to be the end because these things are happening. No, He said don't be fooled. Don't be deceived by that. These are things that are going to happen and that doesn't automatically mean it's the end.

But see, there's another insight that we can pull from Revelation 6 there with the pale horse. Because notice it said it was a fourth of mankind. What it's referring to here is that God put a limit on how many people would suffer premature death through these means throughout history. He put a cap on it and limited it to one fourth. But see, oftentimes we interpret this we try to stuff it all into the end time and that's the exact opposite of what Christ said. He said all of these things would happen, but that's NOT the end.

But then notice in the latter part of the Olivet Prophecy, He gave us specific signs. He said when you see armies surrounding Jerusalem, they're about to have a military takeover. That's a sign of the end. When you see the sacrifices stopped and the abomination of desolation set up that's an absolute countdown to when the resurrection's going to happen. Those are definite signs of the end that we can look for.

But there's a more important lesson that we need to learn in all of this. As I stated in the introduction of this sermon, I mentioned that from the time that Christ gave the Olivet Prophecy to the Apostles all the way down to our time, one of the major focuses of Church members -- I know it's been true all of my life -- has always been how much longer until the end? We're always trying to figure out exactly when is the end and we're always trying to watch world events to see if we can see the signs for that to come about. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not saying for a moment you should bury your head in the sand and not pay attention to what's going on in the world. But we need to make sure that we have the right definition for what Christ was talking about when He said to "watch". What was He referring to? He was talking about watching our spiritual condition.

Because He repeatedly tells us. He told the Apostles -- and this was recorded for our edification today -- that we're not going to be able to know in advance. All of my life, I've always heard various people claiming "I've figured it out. I've got this chart and this formula to figure it out and here's the date Christ is going to return." Every time someone's tried to predict that, it's always failed because Christ said He Himself didn't know when He was going to return. He told us that was not for us to know. He told us there was more important things for us to focus on and that's what we need to take out of this.

Now, turnover to Acts 1, and we'll notice here Christ literally told the Apostles -- essentially to put it in modern day terminology -- when they asked about when the end was, He essentially told him it's on a need to know basis and you don't need to know. Then He told them what was more important to focus on. Notice here in Acts 1 and verse 4. Now, just to give you the time setting for this. This is at the end of the 40 days that Christ spends with the Apostles after He's already been resurrected and He's back to being a God being. So, this is about 40 days past His resurrection and about 10 days prior to Pentecost in Acts 2. The story where they receive the Holy Spirit. But notice the instructions He's giving them and the question they ask. What's on their mind. Because they're on massively different pages about what they think is important.

**Acts 1:4** *"And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; 5) for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."* (NKJV)

Notice, Christ focuses on them receiving the Holy Spirit so they can change their minds and their hearts and then they can be molded into the character of God the Father and Christ. That's what He's focused on. Now, let's notice what their focus was on.

*"6) Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"* (NKJV)

In other words, Christ, tell us when the end is going to come. How much longer is it going to be? That's what was on their mind. Now notice His answer.

*"7) And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority."* (NKJV)

In other words, it's on a need to know basis guys and you don't need to know.

*"8) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* (NKJV)

See, Christ was focused on them being converted and them spreading the gospel to help convert other people. Their focus is how much longer to the end? Again, we can



fall into that same trap as well. But see that the important thing for us to know is if we keep our spiritual house in order and we stay close to God, it's not really going to matter exactly when the end's going to come. Because that'll ensure we make it into the Kingdom regardless of whether the end comes in our lifetime or long after we're dead.

Turnover to Matthew 24. We'll notice that in the latter part of the Olivet prophecy Christ addresses this very thing. In fact, He even tells us that He doesn't even know the day or the hour of when He's going to come. It's on such a need to know basis that only the Father knows. This is Matthew 24 and verse 36.

**Matt 24:36** *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. 37) But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38) For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39) and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40) Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41) Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. 42) Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming."* (NKJV)

Notice, He didn't say watch so you'll know what hour He's coming. No, He said watch because you're not going to know what hour He's coming. He's not referring to watching world events or watching the news. He's referring to watching your spiritual condition so that you're ready and you'll make it into the Kingdom regardless of when it happens. But just continue in verse 43.

*"43) But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44) Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."* (NKJV)

See, He flat out tells us we're not going to know. He gives us signs at the very end. The abomination of desolation being set up, the sacrifices being stopped, the armies surrounding Jerusalem. He says, when you see that, it's happening. The end is now. It's all about to play out. But He said prior to all of this we're not going to know. We just need to keep our spiritual house in order and focus on our relationship with God. That way, it won't matter when the end comes.

Just to share with you a personal thing I learned a number of years ago. As a lot of you are probably aware, I grew up in the Church of God since birth. Well, my wife Linda did as well. We were both second generation Christians. Our parents were baptized before we were even born, and we both grew up really thinking the end's going to come before we have a chance to get old. It's just a few more years away. Well, that obviously hasn't happened yet. But growing up as Church kids, our definition of the end was when you see the events of Revelation happening.

But as I'm sure a lot of you are aware, Linda died of cancer back in 2008. Well, what happened then is on June 26th, we sat in an oncologist's office and found out she had months to live. It actually turned out to be 10 weeks and 2 days. It radically changed my definition of the end. Because once this kind of thing happens to you and you watch a 39 year old go from diagnosis to death in 10 weeks and 2 days, you totally change your definition of the end. Because growing up as a Church kid all of my life, you're thinking, how soon is the end going to come and where's the place of safety going to be? Are we going to be ready to have our stuff to go to the place of safety and this type of focus? Then you realize, what if you don't even live to see those events happen? Then none of that matters. The only thing that matters is that you have your spiritual house in order and have your relationship with God right so that you make it into the resurrection and into the Kingdom. That's all that matters once you put it into that context. So, that's a lesson that all of us need to learn.

Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not suggesting that we all bury our heads in the sand and not pay attention to what's going on in the world around us and looking for signs that the end might be coming. What I'm saying is, the much more important thing is making sure we have our spiritual life in order, because Christ flat out tells us it's going to be a surprise. We're going to be caught off guard when the end comes. But if we have our spiritual house in order, it's not going to matter because as long as our relationship with God is right, He'll take care of us. The most important thing will be taken care of, and that's whether or not we make it in the Kingdom of God. Because that is the purpose of life.

So, brethren, as we go forward from this Sabbath, and we look at this subject of wondering how long the end is going to be, how far out is it? I guess we all wonder that. I wonder it too. But as we look at that, let's make sure we pay attention to the things that Christ said were NOT signs of the end and the things that Christ said WERE signs of the end. Because that clears up a lot of the confusion. And that way we won't get fooled and think the end is coming every time we see bad stuff on the news. But let's also keep in mind the most important thing for us is to watch. When Christ said to "watch", He was not referring to anything we're going to see on Fox News or online or whatever news source that you're looking at. He was referring to making sure our spiritual house is in order. So, as long as we take care of that, then it's not going to matter exactly when the end comes, because we'll make it into the Kingdom of God regardless of when the end comes.