

White Horse to White Horse

Orientation

What was judicially begun in Daniel 7:9-10 is consummated in Revelation 4 and 5. The “Ancient of Days” initially described by Daniel (7:9) can only be described by John at the end by His glory (Revelation 4:2-3). In each area He is **sitting** on a throne, suggesting judicial proceedings are in progress (Psalms 9:4, 122:5; Judges 5:10; Revelation 20:4).¹

- The outcome of Daniel’s vision was the destruction of the antichrist “*little horn*” and the “*beast*” which carried it (7:11).
- The outcome of Revelation’s throne activity is a seven-sealed scroll. Christ, depicted as a “*bleeding lamb*,” takes that scroll from the Father’s right hand (5:5-7) in preparation to open each seal.

That scroll cannot be read until all the seals are broken. God designed sequenced drama to occur with the breaking of each seal, all moving toward the eschaton at the sixth and seventh seals.

- Each seal contains a “sign” that announces the Second Coming is getting closer.
- Each seal event is a warning that *time is running out* – prepare for His return.
- Each seal is broken by Christ, the legally worthy Lamb, now holding the scroll.

This study begins with the opening of the first seal. There, an active **white horse** initiates an end-time prophecy. This story ends when another **white horse** descends from heaven, culminating a major segment of end-time prophecy. Between the two horses, most events outlined in Revelation occur.

Most of the first white horse “saga” is a time of mercy. Later, when the heavenly entourage descends, that has ended.

The First Seal is Broken

“I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, ‘Come!’” (Revelation 6:1 – NIV).

John is observing Christ, as a highly symbolic Lamb, open this seal. Four angels, symbolized as “*living creatures*” intimately associated with God’s throne, introduce each of the first four seals. These were introduced in Revelation 4:6 to 8.

- Each was “*covered with eyes*,” suggesting that they are *all-seeing* or *all-knowing* of God’s purposes.

¹ SDABC, vol. 7, p. 767.

- They are apparently the highest or next to the elevated “*covering cherubs*” in the heavenly order of God’s administration.

John described the first “*creature*” as a “*lion*” (4:7), symbolic of the lead tribe of Judah. Through another study, evidence suggests that these beings communicate God’s wishes to mankind and also lead out in praise worship in the heavenly courts.

- This lion-like “*living creature*,” or angel, makes its debut at the breaking of this first seal.
- John hears it speak, “*Come!*” That is not described as a lion roaring but like “*thunder*.”

John had earlier seen and heard lightning, thunder and voices coming out of God’s throne (4:5). That display echoed the terrible manifestation of God’s glory and power observed at Sinai (Exodus 19:16).²

- “*Lightning*” symbolizes the absolute authoritative power of God.
- “*Voices*” indicates that heavenly decisions are underway.
- “*Thunder*” announces that a judicial decision or decree by God has been activated.

All three can occur singly or together in such a manner as to highlight events happening in heaven’s throne room.³ In the next verse of this first seal, we will see His saints on earth enter that end-time period as God’s final witnesses! There are many apocalyptic events that initiate this last three-and-a-half-year appointed time, called by some a “time of trouble” or “little time of trouble.” This is one.

The White Horse of Seal One

“I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest” (Revelation 6:2 – NIV).

John is already observing the Lamb opening this seal. But seemingly as a surprise, right in front of him appears this white horse.

- This initiates the final events, leading to the whole world being divided into two camps – for Christ or for Satan and his antichrist.
- It will be a time of great confusion, conflict, famine, pestilence, and decision.⁴

Ezekiel makes it clear that those four creatures are fully under the Spirit’s control. “*Each went straight forward; wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go, without turning as they went.*” (Ezekiel 1:12) The invitation John hears from them is exactly the same as the Spirit gives. Since they are filled with the Spirit, they enjoy intimate association with God and His Son.

² *Patriarch and Prophets*, p. 339.

³ Wood, Robert, M.D.; *Revelation 1* (Prophecy Research Initiative document, 2002), pp. 4-5.

⁴ *The Review and Herald*, July 21, 1851.

White

The “*white robes*” of Revelation 6:11 represents Christ’s character. “The ‘*white stone*’ [of the Pergamos church] (Rev. 2:17) represents Christ’s ... [pure nature] which is freely offered [to the overcomer]. The promise is made to the ‘few’ in Sardis that ‘they shall walk ... in *white*’ and ‘be clothed in *white raiment*.’ (Rev. 3:4, 5) The members of Laodicea are urged to ‘buy ... *white raiment*,’ (Rev. 3:18) representing Christ’s holy character. The ‘four and twenty elders’ were ‘clothed in *white ...*’ (Rev. 4:4). The members of a ‘great multitude’ depicted in Rev. 7:9 are ‘clothed with *white robes*.’”⁵

White symbolizes Christ’s innocence, purity, and holiness (cf. 18:8). It is also a metaphor for victory of God’s chosen (Isaiah 1:18, Psalm 51:7, Revelation 7:14).⁶

Horse

A “*horse*” is often used as a symbol for people in, or going into battle. That applies especially here: its mission is conquering and to conquer. “‘I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of *horses* in Pharaoh’s chariots.’ *Song of Solomon 1:9*. ‘That led *them* (the Israelites, God’s people) through the deep, *a horse* in the wilderness, that they should not stumble’ *Isaiah 63:13*. ‘Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats; for the Lord of hosts hath visited *His flock the house of Judah*, and *hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle*.’ *Zechariah 10:3*.”⁷ (cf. Joel 2:1-4).

The white horse represents those who have accepted Christ’s character; they are a holy people. These typify the 144,000, wearing white robes, going forward to battle Satan’s influences (cf. Revelation 7:4, 9-10, 13-15), and who will shortly be translated.

Breaking that seal begins a Little Time of Trouble – and, to many, begins the onset of the Battle of Armageddon (separate studies).

Who is leading God’s victorious people? “Only Christ can ride a horse that is white, the color of righteousness.”⁸

Conquering – Overcoming

“This rider on the white horse goes out ‘conquering and to conquer.’ The word translated as ‘conquer’ here is the exact same word that is translated as ‘overcome,’ ‘prevail,’ or ‘gotten the victory’ approximately 30 times throughout the New Testament. This is the only case where it is translated as ‘conquer.’ It is the same word that is used in the Introductory Sanctuary Scene when one of the elders tells John ‘the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has *overcome* so as to open the book and its seven seals.’ – Rev 5:5. This ‘conquering’ is therefore more appropriately ‘overcoming’ and is consistent with the *stephanos* crown that is given to the rider. One more point – there is a repetition of the word in the Greek. *This*

⁵ Nicholas, C. L.; *The Bridegroom is Coming*, p. 284 (1995), p. 208.

⁶ Thiele, Edwin R.; *Outline Studies in Revelation* (Emmanuel Missionary College; Berrien Springs, MI), p. 122.

⁷ Wade, Ted; *The Throne, the Lamb and the Hymns* (Prophecy Research Initiative document, 2002).

⁸ Thomas, Robert L.; *Revelation 1–7 – An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. I (Moody Press, Chicago – 1992), p. 419.

construct conveys a very strong sense that the action will continue until it is complete. This rider, therefore, goes out to overcome, and continues to overcome until his work is complete."⁹

The motif portrays Jesus leading His remnant people onward to finish the work and to help others overcome.

"Although ... [expositor White] says nothing specifically about the 'white horse,' she does paraphrase 'conquering and to conquer' some thirty-three times. For example: 'After gaining one advantage, you must do battle again; you must go on conquering and to conquer, gathering fresh struggles' (ST9-7-91). 'Your leader goeth forth, conquering and to conquer. Never forget that you are fighting the battle of the Lord of hosts, in full view of the invisible world' (RH 3-15-98). 'Clad in the armor of Christ's righteousness, the church is to enter upon her final conflict.... she is to go forth into all the world, conquering and to conquer' (RH 7-1-15). 'In the power of Him who rides forth conquering and to conquer, weak, finite man may gain the victory' (SD 358)."¹⁰

- This all portrays the white horse's key mission as spiritually overcoming.
- Christ leads His people forward to guaranteed victory over evil.

The Crown

In Greek, this "*crown*" is a *stephanos*, a crown of victory (not that of a king). As the horse and rider go out, victory is assured. The crown is in the rider's hand. It was given to him. It is a promise of victory to all of God's engaged people.

The Bow

Isaiah 5:25-30; Jeremiah 6:22-30; Jeremiah 50:44-46; Jeremiah 4:27-31; Jeremiah 50:13-15, 29; Hebrew 3:1-19; Psalms 11:1-7; and Zechariah 9:8–10:1 – all contain one or more linguistic ties to the seals, which mention a bow.

Here, the *Lord* is carrying a bow without arrows as He leads His purified people forward. Drawing all the illustrations together, this bow represents God's Spirit-filled truth. Its arrows have already left the bow, symbolizing that they have already hit their mark!

The Power

The first seal initiates heaven's final move to engage, spiritually, earth's honest hearts with a message of saving truth.

Christ is leading these saints, the 144,000, forward to finish the gospel of grace under the power of the Holy Spirit. This inaugurates divine assistance in a last call to turn earthlings' minds heavenward. It is expressed in battle language – "*going out to conquer.*" This was

⁹ Canter, Bryan; Revelation – A Study of the Eschatological Application of Prophecy – Part 3, "The Seven Seals" (Prophecy Research Initiative document – 2002), p. 40.

¹⁰ Wood, *Op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

prophesied by Joel when the “*latter rain*,” as a special endowment of the Holy Spirit, comes to God’s people (Joel 2:1-11, 28-32; cf. Hosea 5:13). It is a “battle” to overcome the forces of evil!

“In the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.’ ‘And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ [Acts 2:17, 21.] The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel, are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close. Here are ‘the times of refreshing’ to which the apostle Peter looked forward when he said, ‘Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus.’” [Acts 3:19, 20.]¹¹

“Near the close of earth’s harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain; and it is for this added power that Christians are to send their petitions to the Lord of the harvest ‘in the time of the latter rain.’ In response, ‘the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain.’ ‘He will cause to come down ... the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain,’ Zechariah 10:1; Joel 2:23.”¹²

The Last White Horse Mission

In the first white horse prophecy, there is no portrayal of actual war; their “activity” leads to a triumphant end, revealed in Revelation 19 and 20.

An “Open Door”

“Then I saw heaven opened and here came a white horse! The one riding it was called ‘Faithful’ and ‘True,’ and with justice he judges and goes to war” (Revelation 19:11 – NET).

The NIV emphasizes the word “*opened*” by stating, “*I saw heaven standing open.*” This phrase also appeared in Revelation 4:1, when Christ, with a trumpet-like voice, invited John into the precincts of the throne room through an *open door*. It had also been a unique message to the Philadelphia church. Direct access to God’s throne room is depicted.

- *“I know your deeds. (Look! I have put in front of you an open door that no one can shut.) I know that you have little strength, but you have obeyed my word and have not denied my name”* (Revelation 3:8 – NET).
- That Philadelphia church (representing the 144,000) has direct access to that heavenly throne room.¹³ That door had previously been opened!

Suddenly, John sees another white horse descending from an opening in heaven. It also symbolizes God’s people actively on another mission. The focus now, however, is on the rider.

¹¹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 611.

¹² *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 55.

¹³ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 679.

He is introduced as the *“faithful and true.”* Christ told John within the Laodicean church message that He was the *“faithful and true witness”* (3:14). Christ is seen as an accurate witness of what God revealed to Him (1:1-4).

He is also identified as one who judges and conducts war justly (cf. 16:7). At the Second Coming He is called a righteous judge (II Timothy 4:8). His imagery is detailed further:

“His eyes are like a fiery flame and there are many diadem crowns on his head. He has a name written that no one knows except himself” (Revelation 19:12 – NET).

When conveying the Thyatiran message, Jesus had previously said of Himself, *“These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire”* (2:18). That imagery was also described in 1:14, *“and his eyes were as a flame of fire.”* Daniel was given a similar visual encounter with Jesus, *“a certain man,” “his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire”* (Daniel 10:6).

Those eyes are all-knowing and penetrate every thought and motive. He especially knows the spiritual condition of those who claim to be members of the covenant community but are not. Nothing escapes the notice of this Warrior.

The flame-of-fire analogy indicates that His knowledge is being judicially weighed. He is incapable of judgment by deception or fraud. His decisions accord perfectly with reality. The flaming eyes are a metaphor for His omniscience, all-seeing discernment, and the fiery judgments as the Sovereign Judge.

“All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Hebrews 4:13). He *“is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hebrews 4:12).

The Rider is Now a King

In the first picture of Christ on a white horse, He was given a crown of victory (6:2). Here, He is wearing many royal, kingly crowns. Between the two events, a victory was achieved, and Christ becomes ruler of the redemptive kingdom.

- *“And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed”* (Daniel 7:14 – KJV).
- *“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever’”* (Revelation 11:15 – NIV).
- *“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory”* (Matthew 25:31 – KJV; cf. vs 34).

Christ’s imagery in Revelation 19 is of a:

1. Judge: *“His eyes were as a flame of fire”* (Revelation 19:12 – KJV; cf. *“And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left”* – Matthew 25:33 – KJV).

2. Warrior: *“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army”* (Revelation 19:19 – KJV). No battle, however, is described. We are told: *“These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful”* (Revelation 17:14 – KJV).
3. King: *“On his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself”* (Revelation 19:12 – KJV). The Greek word for “crowns” here is *diadamos* – those of a ruling king.

The Timing

The weight of evidence suggests that this time is immediately preceding and/or at Christ’s Second Coming.

Imagine, “Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror. Not now a ‘Man of Sorrows,’ to drink the bitter cup of shame and woe, He comes, victor in heaven and earth, to judge the living and the dead. ‘Faithful and True,’ ‘in righteousness He doth judge and make war.’ And ‘the armies which were in heaven’ (Revelation 19:11, 14) follow Him. With anthems of celestial melody the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng, attend Him on His way. The firmament seems filled with radiant forms – ‘ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.’ No human pen can portray the scene; no mortal mind is adequate to conceive its splendor. ‘His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the light.’ Habakkuk 3:3,4. As the living cloud comes still nearer, every eye beholds the Prince of life. No crown of thorns now mars that sacred head; but a diadem of glory rests on His holy brow. His countenance outshines the dazzling brightness of the noonday sun. ‘And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.’ Revelation 19:16.”¹⁴

The wicked are then judged and destroyed in the *“winepress of God’s wrath”* (Matthew 14:19).

Isaiah prophesied of this time: *“Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come”* (Isaiah 63:2-4 – KJV).

- *“And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean”* (Revelation 19:14 – KJV).
- *“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army”* (Revelation 19:13 – NIV).

¹⁴ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 640-641.

Matthew 25:52 tells us that many saints were resurrected when Jesus was raised from the tomb (cf. Ephesians 4:8). The attire of these riders is that of the bride of Lamb Jesus (19:7-8). These appear to be saints who were already in heaven since the resurrection of Jesus.

The Victory

Again, though no battle is described, the outcome of Christ's coming with all the angels (Matthew 25:31) and these saints is death to evil: *"And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming"* (II Thessalonians 2:8 – KJV). Sinners cannot exist in the presence of His glory.

- *"Understand therefore this day, that the Lord thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the Lord hath said unto thee"* (Deuteronomy 9:3).
- *"For our God is a consuming fire"* (Hebrews 12:29).

"From his mouth extends a sharp sword, so that with it he can strike the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod, and he stomps the winepress of the furious wrath of God, the All-Powerful" (Revelation 19:15 – NET).

"The 'sword of the Lord,' which is mentioned frequently in the OT (Deut 32:41; Isa 34:5-6; Jer 12:12; 47:6; Ezek 21:3-5; 30:24; 32:10; Zech 13:7; Ps 17:13; 1 Chr 21:12), becomes a metaphor for eschatological judgment (Isa 27:1; 66:16; 1 QM 6:3; 12:11-12; 15:3; 19:11)."¹⁵

The sword is not in His hand. It is in His mouth. He has been called the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 says the Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword, convicting the heart and judging the thoughts. Here, it becomes a weapon against the wicked. *"And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked"* (Isaiah 11:4). *"The word that Christ spoke will judge me at the last day"* (John 12:48). *"I have hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth"* (Hosea 6:5).

There is conflict among scholars as to the meaning of *"he shall rule"* (Revelation 19:15). Some interpret it as when He will set up His kingdom and govern with a rod of iron. Others add the interpretative word "shepherding" because of the rod with its symbolic protection. But the setting is destruction associated with His coming. Thomas defines the phrase: "will destroy them with the rod of iron"¹⁶ as preserving the textual continuity. The Messiah's kingly authority, His scepter, will bring justice. As iron, it is unyielding in "His mission of judgment."¹⁷

God's reaction to evil and wickedness is expressed as destructive wrath.

¹⁵ Aune, David E.; *52C World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 17–22* (World Books; Dallas, Texas), 1997, p. 1061.

¹⁶ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 389.

¹⁷ Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977), p. 355.

The Rider Detailed Further

Taking nothing for granted, John identifies who this rider is. His name is given as a description of His supreme authority. *“He has a name written on his clothing and on his thigh: ‘King of kings and Lord of lords’”* (Revelation 19:16 – NET).

This is the fourth name mentioned in this discourse of Christ. There is a distinctive flow of theistic connotations. These develop a functional progression of Christ’s redemptive mission.

Faithful and True	Jesus was loyal and devoted to His rescue of man. He paid the ransom price. The red-stained garments were His covenant signature. Now He comes to execute justice and win the last battle.
Unknown Name	Written likely on His crowns. It is very personal and referred to <i>between</i> the names of service to man and service to God.
Word of God	Jesus has been the embodiment of God’s thoughts and wishes. He is the Word of God. He is the ambassador designee to this little world.
King of Kings, Lord of Lords	Above all, He is sovereign ruler of His kingdom.

The garment that was stained with blood (19:13) – His legal authority – now bears His official title. All legal issues have been met for Jesus to receive His kingdom, noted from these kingly titles and the wearing of those crowns. Thus, His coronation and kingdom reception must occur just before His coming.

The Victory over Evil

From this point on, there are two visionary inserts. They represent *outcomes* of Christ leading that charge with His heavenly armies.

1. The death of the wicked in gruesome imagery. This is a generous interpretation of Ezekiel’s oracles on Gog (Ezekiel 39:17-20) (Revelation 19:17-18).¹⁸
2. The death of the key leaders (beast and kings) that opposed God’s people and the final gospel work (19:19-20). This appears to be Christ formally entering into the Battle of Armageddon, bringing it to an end.

“Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army” (Revelation 19:19 – NIV). *“These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings”* (17:14).

This is a different battle from that described later in 20:7-8. There, it is post-millennial.

Revelation 19 is eschatological, a single momentous event, with the antichrist and his forces ushered to their demise. The reaction of the wicked was described under the sixth seal, crying for

¹⁸ Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

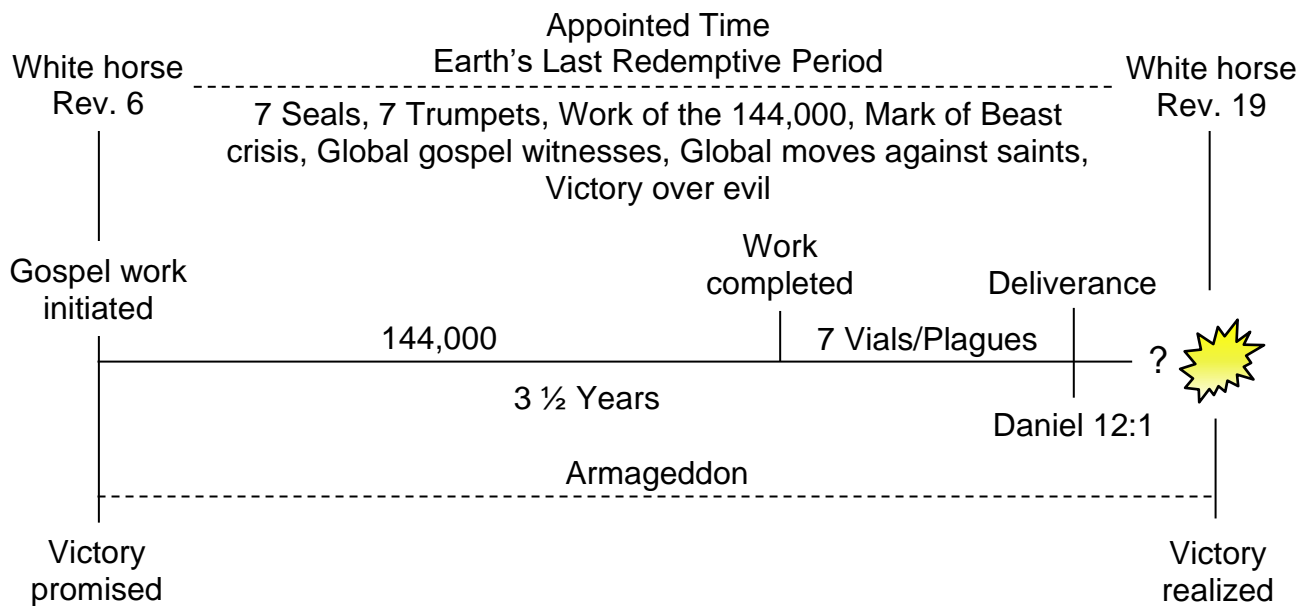
the rocks and mountains to hide them from the face of the Lamb (6:15-16). Early in this book, it was noted that when Jesus does come, “every eye will see Him” (1:7). That’s all it will take, and the agents of evil will be defeated.

“We are nearing the battle of the great day of God Almighty. That which has been held in control is to be let loose. The angel of mercy is folding her wings, preparing to step down from the throne, and leave the world to the control of Satan. The principalities and powers of earth are in bitter revolt against the God of heaven. They are filled with hatred against those who serve him, and soon, very soon, will be fought the last great battle between good and evil. The earth is to be the battlefield – the scene of the final contest and the final victory. Here, where for so long Satan has led men against God, rebellion is to be forever suppressed.”¹⁹

“For six thousand years the great controversy has been in progress; the Son of God and His heavenly messengers have been in conflict with the power of the evil one, to warn, enlighten, and save the children of men. Now all have made their decisions; the wicked have fully united with Satan in his warfare against God. The time has come for God to vindicate the authority of His downtrodden law. Now the controversy is not alone with Satan, but with men. ‘The Lord hath a controversy with the nations;’ ‘He will give them that are wicked to the sword.’”²⁰

“Now the beast was seized, and along with him the false prophet who had performed the signs on his behalf – signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. Both of them were thrown alive into the lake of fire burning with sulfur” (Revelation 19:20 – NET).

A Summary



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¹⁹ White, *The Review and Herald*, May 13, 1902.

²⁰ *The Great Controversy*, p. 656.