

Revelation (2020) – 6

- Tonight we begin our examination of the events of Daniel's 70th seven, better known as the seven-year Tribulation on earth
 - This is the culminating period of our current age
 - In this period of history to come, the Lord will carry out a series of world-shaking judgments
 - According to Daniel 9, its purpose is focused on the Jewish nation and their Old Covenant
 - So naturally much of what we can learn about this period is found in the Old Testament itself
 - Israel was warned repeatedly by their prophets of a coming period of judgment
 - This time of tribulation would bring the nation to its knees and ultimately to Christ
 - And that's its ultimate purpose...to bring the nation of Israel to a recognition that Jesus was and is their Messiah
 - And as we prepared to enter this part of the book, we studied the transition from the Church Age to this final seven year period of history
 - First, we learned Tribulation is the final seven years of the age immediately prior to Christ's Second Coming (Daniel 2 & 7)
 - Which told us that the Second Coming of Christ cannot be imminent...it must wait for tribulation to finish
 - Then we learned that the Church's time on earth would end prior to the beginning of these events
 - First, the book of Revelation tells us that the Church Age (the things that "are") must end before the next things begin
 - Secondly, we learned last week that these events are appointed for Israel by means of their Old Covenant
 - And since the Church is not party to that covenant, we are not appointed to that wrath, Paul says

- Finally, we saw John in Heaven witnessing Jesus preparing to open the scroll, the land deed, since He has the right to judge over the land of Israel and the world
 - The opening of the scroll will drive the events of Tribulation ahead, as those events are described in Chapters 6-18
 - As we move into Chapter 6 tonight, we have one more question to explore, one that holds a great amount of interest for Christians today
 - And that question centers on the timing of the end
 - We already learned that the timing of Jesus' Second Coming can be known precisely...it will be seven years after the signing of a covenant
 - Daniel 9 told us that a covenant will be signed between a certain world leader and Israel's leaders to permit Israel to have a temple
 - That covenant kicks off the start of Tribulation, Daniel's final seven year period
 - And we know that the Church must be removed prior to that time, but the timing of our removal (i.e., the rapture) is a complete mystery
 - Not even the Son Himself knows the day or hour of His coming for the Church...only the Father knows, Jesus said
 - But despite the fact that the church's removal date is unknown, we do know it's closely tied to the start of Tribulation
 - Because according to the outline of Revelation, the end of the church Age takes us into the things that happen after
 - So if there are signs that the end of the age is upon us, then it would also be an alert to the Church that our removal is approaching too
 - And as it turns out, the Bible does tell us of signs that we should look for to indicate the end of the age
 - We find them in a passage in Matthew 24

[Matt. 24:1](#) Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him.

[Matt. 24:2](#) And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

[Matt. 24:3](#) As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

- This scene occurs two days before Jesus’ trial and death
 - Jesus arrived in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and since then He’s been spending days teaching in the temple court
 - At night He leaves the temple and the city to spend it in Bethany on the other side of the Mt of Olives
 - That’s where He’s headed on this night, eastward toward the Mt. of Olives
 - Jesus was probably thinking about the end of His life and what He must endure, but the disciples were oblivious to what was about to happen
 - So they were sightseeing, remarking on the impressive Temple building
 - Keep in mind, that Herod’s temple was one of the most impressive construction projects ever undertaken in all history
 - The massive foundation stones are so large that we still have trouble conceiving of how they were constructed and moved so precisely
 - And that building took a long time to finish...it wasn’t completed until nearly 40 years after Jesus’ death...only to be destroyed a few years later
 - So naturally these men are so fascinated with it
 - But as they point out the building to Jesus, He responds with very serious words
 - Jesus provocatively says that this massive building would be torn down, stone by stone
 - That would be like someone telling us that the World Trade Center towers in New York would be turned down brick by brick
 - It was so hard to believe, and yet if it were true, it must mean that the end of the world had come, or so it would seem
- So Jesus’ comment resulted in the disciples going silent for the rest of the walk to Bethany

- But once they get to their resting place, the men decide they have to know more about these matters
 - So they ask Jesus a series of questions
 - Their questions become our outline for the passage that follows in Matthew 24 and 25
- In v.3 Matthew records three questions
 - When will these things (i.e., the temple destruction) happen?
 - What will be the sign of your coming?
 - What will be signs of the end of the age?
- In Luke's account of this conversation, he records an additional question

Luke 21:7 They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?"

- Luke adds an additional detail to the first question
- They wanted to know the signs that the temple destruction was about to take place
- Probably because they wanted to get out of the way when it happened!
- So putting both passages together, we end up with the following questions
 - 1. When will the temple destruction happen?
 - 1A. What are the signs of the temple's coming destruction
 - 2. What will be the sign of your coming?
 - 3. What will be signs of the end of the age?
 - We will not cover questions 1, 1A in this study (*see Matthew study for those*) and Question 2 is covered later in this study
- What follows in Matthew 24 are Jesus' answers to those question, but in order to interpret them properly, we must notice two important details
 - First, Jesus adds an additional question that the disciples didn't think to ask

- Jesus inserts a commentary on what are NOT signs of the end making for a total of five questions (1, 1A, 2, 3, 4)
- This makes sense, especially when you notice the types of signs Jesus gives
- Several of the signs are easily confused with ordinary, everyday events
- The second thing we must note is that Jesus doesn't answer these questions in the same order they are asked of Him
 - Instead, Jesus chooses to provide His answers in a different order which better suits Jesus' purpose
 - Specifically, He answers them in the order of (4, 3, 1, 1A, 2)
 - The context of the chapter reveals this different order, but only if we're paying careful attention to the text
- So Jesus then begins to answer the question the disciples didn't ask, what are not signs of the end

[Matt. 24:4](#) And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you.

[Matt. 24:5](#) "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.

[Matt. 24:6](#) "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.

[Luke 21:8](#) And He said, "See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them.

[Luke 21:9](#) "When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately."

- Jesus' first warning is that no one in the Church be misled into believing that Jesus had already returned
- It will happen that many will come in Jesus' name saying they are the Christ
- And they will succeed in misleading many, but we shouldn't be misled

- So people saying that Jesus has come are *always* going to be wrong, and so we can *always* ignore them
 - When Jesus does come back, He will bring us with Him, so we can't miss it
 - Therefore we can safely ignore such nonsense and it's not a sign of the end
 - False Messiahs are a constant presence in this age
- Next Jesus says don't be worried over wars or rumors of wars
 - There will be constant wars and rumors of wars in this age
 - But the mere presence of war is not a sign of anything
 - And rumors that a war will start between Iran and Israel or Russia and Israel or anyone are meaningless and should be ignored
 - These things are not yet the end and the end does not follow immediately
- So then Jesus begins to answer their questions, starting with question #3, what are the signs of the end of the age
 - Because of our Daniel study, we now understand what Jesus and the disciples meant when they said the "end of the age"
 - They were speaking about the age that Daniel defines for us, the Age of the Gentiles
 - So Jesus now begins to tell us what signs will announce that this current age is coming to its end

[Matt. 24:7](#) "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.

[Matt. 24:8](#) "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

- The signs of the end of the age will act like birth pangs, Jesus says
- So we should understand a little of how birth pangs work if we are to appreciate how these signs will work
- First, we know that birth pangs are painful, as my wife can verify

- They are intensely painful contractions that interrupt normal life for the woman
 - So are the signs of the end of the age...they will be painful experiences for the world
 - And they will interrupt normal life in every imaginable way
- Secondly, we know that birth pangs can start very mildly, even imperceptibly
 - Some women can think that their birth pangs aren't real at first
 - So it will be with the signs of the end of the age
 - They will start mildly, and many will not notice or recognize the significance of them
- Then thirdly, we know that birth pangs increase in severity as time progresses
 - The contractions get stronger and stronger
 - So it will be with the signs of the end of the age as the signs repeat themselves over and over
 - But as they repeat, they will get stronger and the more severe the damage will become
- Fourthly, birth pangs increase in frequency, that is they get closer together
 - The closer together the contractions, the closer the woman is to the end
 - So it will be with the signs also, as they repeat closer and closer together
 - And that increasing frequency is a sign that the end is approaching
- Finally, they ultimately lead to the birth of a new life, and that's where we are headed too in these signs
 - As the pains on the earth increase and the end approaches, so does Christ's return and the start of the Kingdom

- At that point, a new world and a new life for Israel and all believers will begin
- So that's the comparison Jesus offers for the signs of the end of the age, and now let's look at the specific signs
 - In v.7 Jesus says that nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom
 - This term sounds a lot like war, yet Jesus said not to look for war
 - There must be something different about this war
 - The answer comes from understanding this phrase in its historical context
 - In Jesus' day, this term was used in the culture as a euphemism for a certain type of war
 - The term means "world war" or a war involving all nations and kingdoms on earth
 - This is a rare and unique type of war, and in fact prior to the 20th century it had never happened before
 - In 1914 Europe entered into war but because of pacts and alliances, that war eventually dragged most of the earth into the fight
 - Altogether, 88% of the world's nations participated in WWI at some level
 - This was the first time such a war had been fought
 - In fact this war was so unique that it was considered the "war to end all wars"
 - No one had seen such a thing before nor imagined it could ever happen again
 - But they were wrong because not long after WWI we had WWII
 - That war was stronger, worse than the earlier war, involving 95% of the world's nations, like birth pangs would predict
 - Now we know why Jesus specifically ruled out wars in His earlier answer

- He didn't want us mistaking "ordinary" war for the unique world wars that would mark the end
- We've seen two so far, which means we have entered the period of the end and we should expect to see worse...far worse
- The next sign of the end of the age is famine in various places
 - Now famine is also common on earth, so to understand this sign we must consider it in light of the birth pang comparison
 - When the end of the age approaches, famines won't just be common, they will become the norm
 - And they won't just impact some people, but everyone
 - That's what Jesus means by "various places" – He means in places you weren't expecting to see it happening
 - And they will be more severe and painful than anything we've seen before
 - So it will be by the increasing severity and frequency that people can see famines as a sign of the end
 - But remember, in the beginning of birth pangs, they can be so mild that it's hard to notice
 - And so it will be with famine...the initial stages of this sign may be subtle and overlooked, at least at first
 - Today, there are indications that famine is growing in severity and frequency and impacting more people than ever before
 - Even some industrialized nations have begun to experience food shortages for various reasons
 - Food prices are steadily increasing and supplies are running short
 - Inventories in grocery stores are also limited and dependent on regular resupply
 - As we move further toward the end, this sign will only increase
- Finally, Jesus says look for earthquakes to increase...and since measuring earthquakes is a science, it's easy to track the fulfillment of this sign

- A search at the USGS website reveals trends in earthquakes in the U.S. and worldwide over the past century or more
 - The data shows a general rise in earthquake activity worldwide in recent decades
 - In particular, the number of high intensity earthquakes in the U.S. have increased dramatically in the past three decades
- States like Oklahoma and Arkansas have seen unexplainable rises in earthquake activity on an order of magnitude
 - These not normal variations and they have scientists stumped
 - And in looking at the previous decades compared to the prior century, the rise is especially dramatic
- The average number of high intensity earthquakes per decade in the prior century was 110 and remained consistent from decade to decade
 - But in the first decade of the 21st century the number increases to over 150
 - And in the second decade of this century we've already recorded 165
 - This is a 43% increase over the steady pattern of the 1900s
- So world wars, famine and earthquakes tells us we're near the end of the age, and they will follow a pattern of birth pangs, getting worse as time goes on
 - So what does that tell us about what to expect in the Tribulation?
 - We should expect to see these signs getting far worse
 - And in fact that's what we find as we look at the first events that start the Tribulation
 - Those first events will be more of the same as these signs, though far worse
 - So altogether before the Tribulation begins, we have seven signs that the world will receive to know they are at the end of the age
 - Jesus gave us World Wars, famines, earthquakes in the Olivet Discourse
 - And earlier we learned about the church experiencing apostasy

- And Daniel said there will be ten kings ruling and a covenant signed with Israel to allow sacrifice
- And of course, we know the Church will be removed at the resurrection
- But then there are two more signs that precede the Tribulation and announce the end of the age is near
 - First, Ezekiel tells us of the coming regathering of Israel

[Ezek. 20:33](#) “As I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you.

[Ezek. 20:34](#) “I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out;

[Ezek. 20:35](#) and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face.

[Ezek. 20:36](#) “As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you,” declares the Lord GOD.

[Ezek. 20:37](#) “I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;

- Ezekiel says that the people of Israel will be regathered from where they were scattered
 - And they will re-enter the land of Israel
 - And they are regathered specifically so that they might be there to endure the coming Tribulation
 - It will be a time of judgment against the people of Israel as when the Lord dealt with their forefathers in the desert
- And as a result of being made to pass under the rod of chastisement, the people of Israel will come back into the bond of the covenant
 - The covenant in view here is the Old Covenant, which is the agreement that mandates these penalties
 - So once again, we have evidence that the Tribulation is intended for Israel
 - So in preparation for that judgment, they are regathered

- Finally, Malachi tells us that a mysterious Old Testament character will return to Israel before the Tribulation

Mal. 4:1 “For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the LORD of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.”

Mal. 4:2 “But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.

Mal. 4:3 “You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,” says the LORD of hosts.

Mal. 4:4 “Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.

Mal. 4:5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.

Mal. 4:6 “He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

- Malachi tells Israel that a day of fire, burning and judgment is coming to the earth, which is a reference to the devastation of Tribulation
 - In v.5 the prophet calls this time the “great and terrible day of the Lord”
 - We learned earlier that the day of the Lord refers to the Tribulation
 - So we know this is a reference to that seven-year period
 - And Malachi says that he will send the prophet Elijah before that day
 - Elijah was perhaps the most revered prophet of the Old Testament
 - His life ended in a mysterious way, leaving the earth in a chariot of fire without having experienced physical death
 - That leads to much speculation about why God treated Elijah so uniquely
 - And Malachi tells us that the reason is because Elijah’s ministry on earth isn’t finished
 - He will return to Israel to restore the hearts of fathers to children and children to their fathers

- This cryptic phrase refers to Israel inspired by Elijah's appearance to return to orthodoxy
 - Today Jews are generally not following the Law and certainly aren't sacrificing animals as required
 - Without a temple, they can't sacrifice, but even if they had a temple today, few would embrace the notion
 - In fact, if mass animal slaughter took place again at the temple, we can imagine that many Jews would picket in protest
- And yet the reestablishment of a temple and of sacrifice will be very important in the last days
 - The Tribulation itself begins because Israel strikes a deal with a certain man to regain access to their temple mount to sacrifice
 - Unless Israel signs such an agreement, the Tribulation can't begin and the age can't end
 - And if Israel isn't interested in sacrifice, then they won't be interested in the opportunity to build a temple
- So the Lord brings Elijah back to His people to motivate them to pursue the Law zealously again
 - Elijah will move the hearts of the people back to their "fathers" referring to the ancients of Israel like Moses and David
 - The people's hearts will become like children in obedience to the Father, making a new commitment to the Law
 - The effect is a revival of orthodoxy among Jews worldwide with a new desire to seek for a temple and for sacrifice under the Law
 - That sets the stage for the signing of the covenant that starts the clock on the final seven year period of the age

- So altogether we now have nine signs to look for that tell us we've reached the end of this age
 - Among all these nine signs, how many have already come to pass in our day?
 - We can count 5 of the eight as fulfilled or in the process of fulfillment

- That leaves the ten kings to come to power and the church to be removed
- And of course, the final sign is the covenant itself, since that will start the Tribulation
 - Interestingly that event isn't captured anywhere in the Bible
 - We simply know that it must happen because Daniel says so
- And in Revelation 6 we see the effects of that moment though we don't see the moment itself
 - And that's where we go now into the start of Tribulation in Chapter 6
 - And by the way, the final question about Jesus' coming will be covered when we get closer to that moment in our study
 - And because I like roadmaps, it's time to introduce a new roadmap for our study of the Tribulation
- The Tribulation can be broken down into three parts: first half, middle and second half
 - Each part plays a distinct role in the events of the seven years
 - The first half is covered in Chapters 6-9
 - The events of mid tribulation (the dividing point in the seven years) are covered in Chapter 10-15
 - And the final events of the seven years called the Great Tribulation are covered in Chapters 16-19
 - We will study the book chapter by chapter, but we will also consider each section of the book according to these three parts
 - So we begin with Chapter 6 and the first half of Tribulation

[Rev. 6:1](#) 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."

[Rev. 6:2](#) I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

- John opens Chapter 6 with the word "then" (*kai*), which means this is the next thing he witnessed

- So we need to remember the scene we left at the end of Chapter 5
 - Jesus is in the throne room holding the land deed to the Earth
 - As Jesus breaks the first seal, one of the four living creatures, says to John “come”
 - The meaning in this context is to look away from his immediate surroundings and gaze down upon the earth
- This begins a common pattern in the book of Revelation
 - John is witness to events in Heaven
 - He has been transported there in a vision, so he describes what he sees there
 - But the events that happen in Heaven will usually result in a response on Earth
 - So when the angels want John to record the resulting events on Earth, they tell him to “Come” meaning to come look at the effect
- The opening of the first four seals will each result in the appearing of a different horse on earth, each a different color and with a different effect
 - These horses and their riders are commonly called the four horsemen of the apocalypse
 - We have no reason to doubt that John saw horses just as he wrote, but it’s also apparent that these four horses are symbolic
 - The variation in color and the description of what they do confirm they represent other events happening on earth
 - This will become apparent as we look at each one
- Looking at the first horse, John says it’s white and it carries an unnamed rider - only addressed as “he”
 - The last time we saw an unnamed “he” mentioned in an apocalyptic passage about the end of the age was in Daniel 9

Dan. 9:27 “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

- In that earlier passage, the “he” was a reference back to the little horn, the Antichrist of the last days
- So we need to see if there is any connection to this “he”
- John says the rider arrives with a bow, but curiously John never mentions arrows
 - That’s like someone pointing a gun without bullets
 - When someone waves a gun at you, you are intimidated because it suggests attack
- Since you don’t know if the person has the capacity to carry through with the threat, you must assume they can
 - So you’re persuaded to comply even though in reality they lacked the firepower
 - So in this case, the man with only a bow suggests someone who threatens harm but lacks the capacity to carry it out fully
- Next he also has a crown, a *stephanos*, which is a crown you earn or receive in recognition of your achievements
 - So he doesn’t have the crown of a natural born king, which in Greek would be the word *diadem*
 - And we remember that Daniel told us that the eleventh horn would not be one of the original ten world rulers
 - So in this case, a *stephanos* suggests a man of either military or political power
 - And a white horse is traditionally the type of horse ridden by a military commander or conquering leader
- So the very first act of Tribulation will be Jesus setting loose a man upon the earth who goes forth conquering and to conquer
 - Going out implies out into the world over all, and conquering and to conquer implies he begins to take control but the process takes time
 - He doesn’t finish his conquering in a moment, but he progresses toward that goal over a period of time

- All these details work in harmony to what’s happening on earth as the first seal is broken
- The man earns his authority over a period of time but more by the threat of conquest than by actual military power
- Since we know the Tribulation begins with the signing of an agreement brokered by a powerful world leader, this open seal fits perfectly
 - Here we have an aspiring world leader, who is not yet a king, but still possesses power to intimidate
 - And as he rides out conquering, his power base grows
- Back in Daniel 9 we learned that this man would come from a certain people

Dan. 9:26 “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

- The temple was foretold to be destroyed by the people of the prince who is to come
- The prince who is to come is the same man as the “he” in v.27 (the Antichrist)
- So the Antichrist is of the same people as those who destroyed the temple, which was the Roman army
 - Since the Roman Empire dissolved, we can’t identify the prince of this “people” except to say he must be a Gentile
 - He might also be European or Middle Eastern
- So when Jesus breaks the first seal, this man is launched on his career of conquest
 - And that moment begins with a signing of a peace covenant with Israel allowing them access to the temple mount
 - And it’s not hard to understand how that would launch a man’s world career
 - Imagine how the world would respond to a world leader who could broker peace in the Middle East between Jews and Arabs?

- But it's clear that Jesus is the true power here...it's His breaking of a seal that makes the peace come, if only temporarily
- What else can we learn from scripture about this man who launches the world into Tribulation?
 - The Bible gives this coming world leader a variety of names, from seed of Serpent to a little horn, to a prince, to the lawless one
 - But the title we all know best is one that the Apostle John gave us in his letters
 - John calls this man the Antichrist, or *antichristos* which means one who opposes Christ
 - In light of how many different ways the Bible describes this character, we need to take a moment to understand who he is
 - Even John himself uses the term antichrist in at least a couple of different ways
- So let's begin with John's famous term

1John 2:22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

- In this reference, John teaches that a person who denies Jesus is the Christ is the antichrist
 - So to say Jesus isn't the Messiah is to oppose Christ, and in that sense everyone who stands opposed to Jesus is a type of the antichrist
 - This is why Paul describes unbelievers as enemies of Christ until we are reconciled by grace
 - Or as Jesus says that those who are not with Him are against Him
 - Everyone who denies Jesus as Lord is acting as an antichrist
 - That's why in my English version, the translators chose not to capitalize antichrist in this passage
 - They knew John was talking generally
 - They understood he wasn't talking about The Antichrist
 - Next let's look at another mention by John

[1John 2:18](#) Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

- In this passage John uses both a singular and plural reference to antichrist
 - In the first instance, translators should capitalize the word Antichrist, though not all translations do so
 - This is not the same antichrist as the one John mentioned in the earlier verse because there he said many antichrists existed
 - Anyone who denies Jesus is Christ is an antichrist in that sense
 - But here John says Antichrist is coming yet he wasn't on the scene yet
 - This is a singular antichrist - someone that the church was told to expect
 - But then in the second instance the word becomes plural again, and John says there are already many antichrists in the world
 - This reference is similar to the earlier one: people who deny Jesus is the Christ are the antichrists of our world
 - But John says the fact that these people exist is proof that we are in the last hour, or in the end times
 - How is the presence of so many who deny Jesus as Christ proof we are in the last hour?
 - Because in the time of David or Solomon or Isaiah or Daniel, you couldn't deny that Jesus was the Christ
 - No one knew who the Messiah was, so it was literally impossible to oppose Him
 - You can't deny that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ until Jesus of Nazareth is known
 - But after the Messiah has been revealed, the writers of the New Testament say we are in the Last Days
 - And in these last days, we can have antichrists – those who deny Jesus is the Christ

- And ultimately, we will have one man who opposes Christ in a unique way and with unique power
- This one man will be THE antichrist
- So there is an Antichrist to come and in the meantime we have antichrists who deny Jesus is Christ
 - That leaves us with a couple of final mentions by John

1John 4:3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

2John 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

- John now mentions the spirit of the antichrist, a spirit that is both in the world now and is coming, he says
 - This spirit is the cause behind every person who does not confess Jesus is from God
 - We know that the spirit of a person who does not confess Jesus as Christ is corrupt, fallen, and therefore unbelieving
 - And what other spirit is responsible for producing this unwillingness to believe the truth, both now and in the future?
 - Look at the second verse from 2 John 7 to get your answer
 - Many deceivers have gone out into the world, but there is one Deceiver and spirit of the Antichrist
 - Clearly, John is talking about Satan, who is the spirit of the antichrist, both now and in the future
 - Today Satan is the spirit of the antichrist in the sense that Satan is responsible for producing generation after generation of God deniers
 - Now that Christ has been revealed, Satan has a specific target for their denials
 - So he works in the hearts of the sons of disobedience, as Paul calls unbelievers, so they will oppose God by opposing Christ

- He leads the world to deny that Jesus is the Christ
- But in a day to come, Satan will also be the spirit responsible for raising up one man above all others in opposing Christ
 - Paul tell us what this man will do as he rises to power

2Th. 2:3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 2Th. 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

- Paul says that the day of the Lord - or Tribulation - will not come unless the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction
 - He is called a son because he is the son or seed of Satan
 - And he exalts himself above every so-called god or any other object of worship
 - That means he will claim to be a god above Muhammed, Buddha, or any other pagan god
 - Eventually, he takes the seat in the temple of God, displaying Himself to be God
 - Now we see some themes converging, because this reminds us of what Daniel 9 told us
 - This same man will be responsible for allowing sacrifice to restart on the temple mount
 - That results in Israel building a temple, which Elijah has helped encourage the nation to use
 - But Daniel told us in 9:27 that this man, who brokered the agreement with Israel, will go back on his agreement after 3.5 years
 - And Paul says he will decide at that point that he is god, so he even takes his seat in the temple of Israel
 - We will study this moment later in our study, but for now we simply need to understand the arc of this man's rise to power

- He starts Tribulation as a man outside power but with the potential to shake things up
- And he's backed by a very powerful adversary, no less than Satan himself
- The man's end is also foretold by Daniel, since we know that he is destroyed by the arrival of Jesus at the end of the seven year period
 - Paul confirms this in another part of 2 Thessalonians

2Th. 2:5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

2Th. 2:6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.

2Th. 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

2Th. 2:8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

2Th. 2:9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

- There is a Restrainer in the world preventing the rise of the Antichrist
 - The Holy Spirit stands between Satan and his desire to raise up a false christ through whom the enemy might gain the world's worship
 - God's purpose in causing His Spirit to indwell the believer during the Church age is partly a result of the need to hold back Satan
 - Prior to Christ's revealing in the man Jesus, Satan didn't have enough information to produce a counterfeit
 - So the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit wasn't required to stave off the rise of the Antichrist
 - He couldn't put himself in the place of the Christ until there was a Christ revealed upon which Satan could pattern his counterfeit claims
 - Satan has been waiting like the rest of the world to see the Christ revealed
 - And now that Christ has come, the Church acts as a barrier to prevent Satan from deceiving the world with an antichrist

- This also tell us that the Church will never be in a position to identify this person
 - We shouldn't go around perpetuating false accusations that each new political world leader is the Antichrist
 - Scripture says he will not be revealed until the Restrainer has been removed
- So Satan is focused on counterfeiting Christ's death and resurrection
 - But the Holy Spirit indwelling the Church is obstructing his plan until the Spirit and the Church are taken out of the way
 - At that point, the lawless one will make his appearance upon the world in accordance with Satan's activity and power
- Ironically, the rise of the Middle East "peace broker" backed by Satan only serves to bring the opposite of peace to the earth

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

Rev. 6:4 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 men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

- Like the first seal, the opening of the second seal brings John a vision of another horse, of course, though a horse of a different color
 - This horse symbolizes something different, though it becomes apparent very quickly that the symbols are connected
 - The first white horse and rider symbolized the arrival of the Antichrist on the world's stage
 - And it conveyed the man's initial effect...he gained power by threatening war and intimidating other leaders
 - The horse was a symbol to communicate the arrival of something, or in this case someone
 - Similarly, the horse of the second seal also communicates the arrival of something on the earth
 - But the fact that it's another horse suggests we should see these horses as connected

- Elsewhere in the seals and the other judgments of Revelation, we don't see symbols repeated but they are repeated here
- So we should ask the question of how are these "horses" related?
- The second horse is red, the color of bloodshed, and in v.4 we're told that the effect of this horse and rider is to take peace from the earth
 - So like the first horse, the second horse had a solo rider this time carrying a sword
 - And we know there is only one antichrist in the Tribulation, so that leaves us to conclude that this second rider isn't a second person
 - It's the same person as we saw on the first horse: The Antichrist
- So the Antichrist's rise to power is progressing with each new seal
 - The first seal brought him on the world stage with the threat of war
 - And now the second seal has delivered on that threat with actual war breaking out
 - Men are slaying one another, as war erupts on earth, so this is WWII breaking out, a new birth pang
- Logically, it follows that the man who comes conquering and to conquer triggers wars
 - But we understand these events are being controlled in heaven by the Lord as He opens the seals
 - So the second seal is a second picture of the Antichrist as he consolidates power and begins to prosecute war on the world
 - He leads the world into widespread war and bloodshed, and of course we know what war brings...
- Next time we conclude the seals and move into Chapter 7