

**REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 12 APRIL 2009: MORNING SERVICE
(EASTER SUNDAY)**

Sing before: Psalm 144:4

Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Beloved grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Psalm of praise: Scripture Versification 2-7:1-3 (Revelation 15:2-4)

Confession of faith: Apostolic

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell, the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy catholic* Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting

Amen.

After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Scripture Versification 3-1:1

Law

Scripture Versification: 3-3:1 (Isaiah 9:1-9)

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation for the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises.**
- **General prayer**
- **Enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word.**

Amen

Scripture versification 7-1:1 (Revelation 19:11 –16)

Scripture reading: Revelation 6

Scripture text: Revelation 6:1,2

**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."
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. (Revelation 6:1,2)**

Today is the day of the resurrection. Therefore it is fitting that we consider, from the revelation of the Lord, again Who is the risen Christ and how, through His omnipotence, He directs and rules the historical unfolding of God's redemptive plan.

- John sees Him receiving the book of the Counsel of God and deploying the history according to this Plan.
- Seal after seal the book is opened and executed.

The first four seals form a cohesive group. They reveal what happened on earth during the preaching of the gospel. The first four seals are opened and the pounding hooves of the four horses are heard on earth.

- The colour of each horse and the task of its rider announce another facet of the end judgement.
- By every horse starting off galloping through time the Lord reveals His triumph over the forces of hell which became entrenched into this world and its history.
- This the Lord does by victories, wars and disasters, depicted by the different colour of the horses, just like the night-visions of the prophet Zechariah. (Zechariah 1:8 -17; 6:1 – 8; Zechariah 1:10 onwards)
- In the night-visions of Zechariah they strained against the reins to, when released, run across the earth with their chariots of war.

Let us consider our history as described here by the Lord.

- 1. The events pertaining to the Lord's Throne.**
- 2. The meaning of the white horse and its Rider.**

To understand the appearance and meaning of the various horsemen we have to explain the visions of Zechariah together with it – because it is the same revelation from the same God! (Zechariah 1:8-17 and 6:1-8)

However there is a difference between the visions of the horses as seen by Zechariah and that which the Lord revealed to John.

- In Zechariah the battle is shown first and the victory afterwards.
- Revelation 6 refers firstly to the victory and thereafter to the means and way by which the Gospel attained the victory.

The night-visions of the prophet Zechariah also deal with the victory of God's will.

- The Spirit of God also brings about the victory in the visions of Zechariah. (Zechariah 6:5, 6, 8.)

And the angel answered and said to me, "These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth. (Zechariah 6:5)

"The one with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them, and the dappled are going toward the south country." (Zechariah 6:6)

And He called to me, and spoke to me, saying, "See, those who go toward the north country have given rest to My Spirit in the north country." (Zechariah 6:8)

In the Night-visions of the prophet Zechariah the Lord executed his deed of victory through wars and disasters depicted by the different coloured horses – the same as in the book of Revelation.

- The fact of the book of Revelation mentioning the white horse first whilst the prophet Zechariah mentions it last, does not make any significant difference to the revelation of God Himself.
 - Zechariah firstly prophesies about the battle taking place, whereafter the victory is attained – because the Lord Jesus, at that time, still had to arrive!
 - Revelation firstly refers to the victory and then to the following battle – because at that time the Lord had already won the battle!

The Lord plucked John away to heaven where he saw the history from the viewpoint of the end of time. He wrote:

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." (Revelation 6:1)

The Lamb did not receive the scroll only to:

- possess it
- or to read/study it,
- or to make it public.

He received it in order to execute the contents. Therefore John saw the Lamb opening the first seal.

- Meanwhile the four living creatures stood at the throne.
- At first, together with the elders, the angels and the complete creation they honoured and praised the Lord.
- Now we see them partaking in the opening of the seals.

The question now arises: who are these four living creatures?

- The four living creatures are the representatives of everything living in the creation.
 - The figure of four is a symbolic number of the earth – think about the four wind directions adjoining this.
 - The first four seals deal every time with what is happening in creation – thus it concerns them, for they represent the creation.
- That is why the Lord uses them in the execution of the first four seals.
 - Every time one of the first four seals was opened they, in turn, called: **Go out!**
 - Not only was it a command, it was also a prayer of the earth that the redemption-council of the Lord should be executed.
 - It is a call for the fulfilment of God's council.

Take note that every time only after this command was given did John see the horse and its rider.

Immediately one of the four living creatures calls that what has to happen to come forward! : **Go!** (or: Go out!)

- Every time one of the four seals were loosened/opened the four living creatures acted in this way.
- The reason for that is crystal clear:

The living creature has a booming voice ...**heard one of the four living creatures like a sound of thunder, saying...**

- The voice of the living creature resonated like a clap of thunder throughout the universe.

- The power of his voice drew the attention of the whole creation to the fact that the Lamb was executing a passage in the history of God's Council.
 - This means that the call had reference to what must transpire from the opening/loosening of the first seal. The various horses *had* to appear.
 - There are also translations translating this text as: **Go out!**

2. The meaning of the white horse and its Rider.

With astonishment John saw a white horse appearing. Normally we consider a horse as an animal of labour, for example to be used for ploughing, or as an animal to ride or partake in racing sport.

- In the book of Revelation – as everywhere in the Bible – a horse is mostly an animal of war.
- For this, compare the following texts from the Old testament:

For the horses of Pharaoh went with his chariots and his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them. But the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. (Exodus 15:19)

A horse is a vain hope for safety; Neither shall it deliver any by its great strength. (Psalm 33:17)

The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But deliverance is of the Lord. (Proverbs 21:31)

- Texts from the New testament:

The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. (Revelation 9:7)

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. (Revelation 19:11)

The horse that appeared when the first seal was opened/loosened was a white horse.

- The colour of the horses indicates the type of work done by their riders.
- The first horse is white – white is the colour of victory (Rev. 19:11)

This rider did not have a sword. He had a bow.

He who sat on it had a bow;

- A sword is a weapon symbolising the unavoidability of death.
- A bow is a weapon that can kill,
 - But reflects the symbol of ability to hit over a long distance.
 - It can reach its target over a long distance and leave its mark.
- The gospel is like an arrow and bow finding the heart of the person won over to the Lamb.
- In this instance the arrow through the heart is not to permanent death, but to life forever.

The white horse with its rider symbolises the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ victoriously spanning the earth!

- As far as the white horse runs, new victories are attained –
- Until it spans the whole earth, reaching its fullness.
and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

The rider thus has over and above the bow, also a victor's crown (stefanos). This is already the sign/revelation/seal of his victory.

- Because time and eternity merge, therefore, in anticipation, the Victor has already been crowned as Victor.
- Literally it is written..... **and a victor's crown had been given to him. He went out as a conqueror to conquer!** (International Standard Version v1.2.1)
- The idea of **conquering** is thus as strongly put and accented as possible.

From the text it is clear that there was no moment of the Lamb not conquering or not busy conquering – until He at last finally conquered. There was no (noteworthy) resistance anywhere to be found during His tour of conquering.

Take Note!

- The fact that the victor's crown was, in anticipation, already given to Him also reveals the Godly disposition of this victory!
- God disposes and beforehand already decided on the victory and therefore it indeed happens as decided!

The rider carries a bow. He thus goes out to hit those coming into his field of vision.

- The rider's weapon is the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, spanning the earth penetrating people and winning them for Jesus Christ.
- Although a weapon of war attained the victory, the salvation of the believer is in fact revealed in this.

Where are we within this revelation? The Lord revealed that, through the ages, this white horse and its Rider has been gathering an army together.

- This group of horsemen, all following this Rider and His horse depicts the effect of the Lord's salvation that He executed on the cross for us.
- A crown was given to this Rider: **a conqueror's crown.**
 - This is already the sign of His victory. In a certain sense even before He and His horse rode away into world history, He had already conquered.
 - Of all the horsemen He is the only attaining a victory and gathering an army of conquerors!
- All the other horsemen only kill and destroy – because they only stand for death and destruction nobody conquers together with them. Their followers are killed at any rate!
 - The Lord shows us were they are all killed by Himself:

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, "that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

(Revelation 19:17-21)

In this revelation of God the accent is put as strongly as possible on *the victory of the Lamb!*

* Within this is also the revelation of God's disposal. *The directive of God is the victory – of which we are part!*

Therefore before He finalises His revelation the Lord showed us this white horse and its Rider again! He lets us see ourselves following this white horse and its Rider!:

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.

(Revelation 19:11-15)

The Lord lets us see our King – the Lord of lords – together with all of us as conquerors following Him, clothed in our own conqueror's clothes!

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 134:1-4

The Lord bless and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you, the Lord turn His countenance to you and give you peace.

Amen

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Reformed Church Bellville
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Scripture Modern King James Version