

The Unseen Sources of Suffering:

From the Biblical Text to a Sermon Manuscript on Revelation 6:1-8

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Introduction:

How many times have you talked to someone who said they did not believe in God because someone they loved died at an early age. I remember talking to one young person whose brother died in Viet Nam, and he could not understand how that could happen if there really was a good God. We see the pictures of starving children in third world countries. How can a good God allow that? I personally have had two very close relatives with Alzheimer's disease, who have lain in rest homes for years as virtual vegetables. How can a good God permit that? I know a pastor whose house burned down not long ago, and his library was destroyed. There have been tragic terrorist bombings around the world ever since 9-11, killing many innocent people. The recent tsunami killed thousands. How can there be a good God with all of these things happening in the world?

Likewise, some Christians in the first century may have wondered if Christ really was good and holy, and how disastrous circumstances related to him. For example, there was Nero's mass persecution on a cruel scale following the fire of Rome in 64 A.D.. He used Christians as human torches to light up his gardens at night. Christians also may have asked the same question about broader disasters such as the destructive earthquakes in 60 A.D., the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D., and the calamitous grain famine of 92 A.D. Revelation chapters 1-3 also reveal Christian's suffering exile, imprisonment, economic deprivation, and even capital punishment. Revelation 6:1-8 tells us about whether or not such suffering is merely part of a chaotic world and whether or not it happens indiscriminately or by chance. How can severe calamity exist in the same world with a good God. Let us read Revelation 6:1-8 for one of Scripture's answers.

[*Transition:* vv. 1-2. Begin to answer our question about how calamities can coexist in the same world with a good God.]

I. VV. 1-2 Begin to Explain Through the First Horseman *[Read v. 1]*

A. The Lamb unleashes the first horseman by opening the first seal.

1. The book contains predestined events of suffering and blessing for the future.
2. It is hard to know whether the book was in the form of a rolled up scroll or in the form of books as we have them today. As each seal is removed, it reveals a part of the decree of the book and begins to set that decree in motion. In fact, as with many ancient legal documents, the decrees of the book were summarized in abbreviated form on the seal itself, perhaps like when a king seals a document with his signet ring.
3. Therefore, in verse 1, the Lamb unleashes the first horseman by opening the first seal. When does this happen in world history? In the past, in the present, or in the future?

The relationship of chapters 1-3 to 4-5 indicate that the slain lamb who is approaching the throne in chapter 5 represents Christ, not at some future point directly preceding a yet-to-happen Great Tribulation, but it represents Christ's ascent to God's heavenly throne, after his redemptive death. The reason this is apparent is that first, Revelation 3:21 refers to his death and resurrection as "conquering" that led to his sitting on God's throne in the past, and this is the transition into chapters 4-5. Thus, when Christ is said to have conquered in 5:5, then portrayal of him in 5:6 as approaching God's throne likely represents the same past reality, as does 3:21. Second, Revelation 1:5-6 says that Christ's death and resurrection led immediately to Christ's making his people a kingdom and priests, and this is also the effect of Christ's conquering and approach to the throne in 5:5-6 and 5:9-10. Thus, Revelation 6:1 portrays Christ's breaking the seals of the book, which indicate that he began to unleash the book's contents of woe and blessing at the time of his ascent to God's right hand after his resurrection.

B. The opening of the first seal sets in motion the command of one of the guardian cherubim to the first horseman: "Come!"

C. Therefore, there is a chain of command from Christ to the cherubim to the horsemen.

[Transition: We find the horseman pictured now in v. 2 (Read v. 2). Who is this white horse and rider?]

D. Some commentators believe this horseman is Christ who is leading his church to victory, while others believe it is Satan or his servants trying to lead the forces of hell to victory. Which is it? Who is this man in the white hat? We will have to wait until the end to see. Therefore, let us look at the last three horsemen. We may better discover the identity of the first.

[Transition: Again, we ask our initial question: How can severe calamity exist in the same world with a good God?]

II. VV. 3-4 Explain This Through the Second Horseman [Read vv. 3-4.]

A. This horseman again comes not ultimately at the Devil's command but only at the command of one of the cherubim who carries out Christ's will. [Read again what verse 4 says].

B. This rider politically persecutes Christians when they do not compromise their faith. That the persecution of Christians is primarily in mind and not people in general is clear from the following:

1. The horse is red to symbolize that it sheds the blood of Christians when they remain faithful. Note that the dragon is red in Revelation 12:3, as is the beast in 17:3 for the same reason, as is Babylon the Great in 17:4 (and she is drunk with the saints' red blood in 17:6).
2. Christ promised suffering would come upon his followers when they remained faithful in confessing him before the world despite danger. [Read Matthew 10:28-39.] In fact, Revelation 6:4 [read] is directly based on Matthew 10:34 [read].
3. The word *slaughter* is used in Revelation to refer either to the death of Christ or to that of Christians.
4. Those slain in verse 3 are those mentioned in Revelation 6:9 as being slain.

Remember that John is addressing believers in Asia Minor with the imminent problem of facing persecution and even death if they do not also worship Caesar. [Read Revelation 1:9; 2:13; 13:9-11.]

The killing by the fourth horseman is also referred to in Revelation 6:9 with the very same word *kill*. The hymn of Revelation 6:9-11 comes immediately after verses 1-8, not coincidentally but to show that verses 1-8 primarily concern the suffering of Christians. The heavenly hymns in the book or subsequent prayers or declarations always explain the meaning of immediately preceding visions (as in 4:8-11, 5:8-14, and 7:11-17).

B. Therefore, the second horseman may symbolize civil wars by which God punishes unbelieving humanity, but above all this rider politically persecutes Christians when they do not compromise their faith.

1. God uses the persecution to strengthen the faith of the saints. This includes varieties of persecution all the way up to actual death (as Revelation 2:10b says, "be faithful even up to death," which there includes economic deprivation, then imprisonment).
2. Illustration: Job is the classic example of the kind of suffering that happens to us. Though Job's suffering in chapters 1-2 was not the result of direct persecution from human opposition as in Revelation 6:3-4, it was still persecution coming from Satan as a direct result of his faith. As in Revelation 6, it was suffering that originated from evil heavenly forces. [Read and Comment on Job 1:1, 6-12 22, and 2:1-10, emphasizing Satan's attempt to induce unbelief in him.] Thus,

Satan may persecute us by using human political forces to persecute us or he may persecute us through causing suffering by other means. He caused Job to suffer by killing Job's children and then by causing Job to become extremely ill. In the same manner, satanic persecution may take such forms against us today.

3. The same was true with Peter, though again this was persecution coming more directly from Satan rather than from earthly human forces. [*Read and Comment on Luke 22:31-34.*]
4. What areas of suffering are causing you to doubt God? We should have God's perspective, which we have seen with Job and Peter. God sends suffering so that we can realize our need of him more, not so we would become unbelieving. As with the case of Job, when we persevere faithfully through such suffering, God is vindicated (that is, the world sees that God does not need to bribe us with material blessings in order to keep our loyalty).

[Transition: What else does the Devil do when he is not allowed by Christ to persecute or to kill every Christian who lives? The third horseman shows the Devil's further attempts to get us to compromise our faith and to harm us when we remain faithful to Christ.]

III. VV. 5-6 Explain Through the Third Horseman What the Devil Resorts To [*Read vv. 5-6*]

A. This horseman again comes not ultimately at the Devil's command but only at the command of the cherubim who carries out Christ's will.

B. The horse's black color symbolizes famine (cf. Targ. Jer. 14:2), which is made clearer through the symbolism of scales denoting scarcity (as in Lev. 26:26, and Ezek. 4:16). Whenever anything is weighed, it is a sign of scarcity.

C. Verse 6 is a picture of a limited famine. [*Read v. 6.*]

1. The "voice in the center of the four living creatures" commanding the limited famine is none other than Christ's, showing that Christ is the ultimate instigator of this suffering for his own purposes.
2. In the Roman Empire of the first century, a quart of wheat was a day's ration and a denarius was a day's wage. This is an outrageously high price for that time. The limited nature of the famine is evident from the fact that not everything is affected: The oil and wine, staples of the ancient diet, will still be readily available.

D. The focus here is on economic persecution of Christians. In times of limited food supplies, Christians would be the first to be affected. The person's daily wage is enough to buy bread for one only, though one could get three times as much barley for the same price. Even this is a low subsistence diet for a family, and the price listed for the wheat

and barley is eleven to sixteen times the average price in the Roman Empire at the time. Nevertheless, Christians would still have easy access to the essential commodities of oil and wine.

1. Therefore, Christians are to remain loyal to Christ in the midst of economic persecution, which the readers were clearly facing. (*Read* Rev. 7:16-17, 13:16-17, and 2:9.) Their loyalty to Christ despite economic persecution proves that actual wealth is found in the midst of poverty, whereas compromising disloyalty to Christ shows the spiritual poverty of those who think they are rich. [*Read* Rev. 3:17.] Indeed, nowhere else in the book is there even a hint about unbelievers threatened with hunger.
2. God uses financial suffering and persecution ultimately to strengthen the faith of the saints.
3. Illustration: As the Psalmist says: [*Read* Psalm 73:1-5, 8-9, and 21-28]. What are some ways in which you are pressured in this way now?

[*Transition*: Why would Christians be tempted to be afraid of these red and black horses?]

IV. VV 7-8 Explain Through the Fourth Horseman Why Christians Can Become Fearful [*Read* vv. 7-8].

A. Verses 7-8 are a summary of the preceding three horsemen. Although the fourth is a distinct horseman, one of his purposes is to cause death through the work of the other horsemen. This is why Christians may be fearful. No one wants to die.

When my children were younger, I remember their watching the movie, “The Hiding Place,” about Corrie Ten Boom and her experience in a Nazi concentration camp, where so many people died from illness, including Corrie’s sister. I remember discussing the movie with my little daughter, Nancy, at dinner, and she asked if humanity was evil enough to ever do anything like that again. Tears began to well up in Nancy’s eyes as she began to think about this fearful prospect. We tried to give her comfort and change the topic because this was a little heavy for a six-year-old. However, even all of us as adults are fearful of death at times when we do not trust in the resurrected Christ and continually consider our hope in him.

B. This horseman again comes not ultimately at the Devil’s command but only at the command of one of the cherubim who carries out Christ’s will.

C. The horse’s pale green color evokes the image of death. He looked like death warmed over.

D. The rider called Death is the grim reaper. That he is the Devil himself or the Devil's right-hand man is evident because hell rides behind him.

1. He is probably the same figure of Revelation 9:11 called Apollyon, or the Destroyer, who is king over the demons arising from hell in Revelation 9:1-10.
2. That the ominous specter of Death cannot be a good angel is clear from Revelation 20:13-14, where both are thrown into the lake of fire, which is the second death.
3. Indeed, Christ is now in control of this devilish realm because he conquered it by his resurrection [Read Revelation 1:18; 3:7, and 9]. This observation further indicates that he was able to control such forces *directly* after his resurrection, so that we are looking at realities in Revelation 6 that are active during the church age and not just at the very end of it at some great tribulation.

E. The last part of verse 8 shows that believers as well as unbelievers are affected by this horseman. How do we know this?

1. This is clear because the last part of verse 8 is a quotation from Ezekiel 14:21. This Old Testament passage is the most important for understanding Revelation 6:1-8. [Read Ezekiel 14:12-23]. Ezekiel 14:21 is used here to summarize all of the horsemen. We know from Ezekiel 14 that the four punishments mentioned in Revelation 6 are sent by God on unbelieving nations, as well as upon Israel when it sins through idolatry. When Israel suffers, it is for two purposes: that the unbelieving majority be punished and that the believing remnant be refined in their faith. This is precisely what is going on in Revelation 6:1-8. In the Ezekiel 14 passage, God's punishments affect unbelieving nations, unbelievers within Israel, and true believers within Israel. Here in Revelation 6, death comes to punish unbelievers and translate believers to be with the Lord. Although some unbelievers are moved to belief by observing this, most unbelievers who remain alive are hardened against God by observing the death of others. Nevertheless, believers who remain alive are to trust God even more, knowing their permanent home is not here on this earth.

Illustration: I have some friends whose little daughter died of leukemia at the age of two months just a few years ago. At the time, the husband, with tears in his eyes, said, "I cannot wait to see my daughter again when I die and rise again from the dead." This father had hope and faith in the midst of tears.

However, there are many who blame God when such things happen or they cease to believe that there is a God.

2. The fact is that verse 8 is a summary of all of the sufferings brought by the preceding horsemen. The phrase, *authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth*, in verse 8 shows that the horsemen afflict people throughout the

earth. The number 4 indicates thoroughness. This is why there are four horsemen—to indicate that they go throughout the earth.

3. Yet, while, they affect people throughout the earth, the fourth does not strike every single person with death. Verse 8 says that he was given “authority over a *fourth* of the earth.” Thus, he strikes selectively, not universally.
4. While not all unbelievers are affected, most are affected within the church. This is evident because Ezekiel 14 shows that only *some* nations were affected by the four woes but *all* within the covenant community of Israel were affected. Revelation 6:9-11 shows that the woes of the horsemen are directed primarily toward the church. This is a picture of persecuted Christians making clearer the meaning of the horsemen. [*underscore* the “how much more” of Ezek. 14:21.]

F. The four woes of the fourth horseman in verse 8 sum up that of the red horse (sword), the black horse (famine), and the pale green horse (death or pestilence). [*Read* verse 8 again.] To what do “the wild beasts” at the end of verse 8 refer?

1. The wild beasts are satanic servants who will devour your faith by deception if you are not on guard against them. Indeed, everywhere else the word *beast* occurs in Revelation (thirty-four times), it refers to the beasts sent by Satan to deceive saints and persecute them. In Revelation 13:10, Christians are referred to as “being killed by the sword” swung by the beasts, who also deceive and who symbolize the Roman authorities. The beast in Revelation 13:16-17 also deceives people and persecutes Christians economically. It is likely not accidental that Jews at the time of Jesus identified the four afflictions of Ezekiel 14 and of the four horsemen of Zechariah 6 with the four, evil, satanic kingdoms of Daniel 7, symbolized by beasts, who persecuted believers (Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome).

[*Transition:* Who exactly is the white horse and rider? Is it Christ or Satan? How does this rider relate to the sufferings brought by the others?]

V. VV. 1-2. Explain This Through the First Horseman [*Read* vv. 1-2.]

A. Who is the first horseman?

1. Many do not think this horseman symbolizes suffering but rather Christ himself leading his spiritual forces to victory throughout history. The following reasons may be given: First, verse 2 may be an allusion to Psalm 45:3-5, which pictures a good Israelite king defeating enemies with arrows and “riding on victoriously.” Second, in Revelation 19:11-16, Christ, with diadems on his head, rides on a white horse and defeats his enemies. Third, white always in Revelation (fourteen times) refers to the holiness of God, Christ, or the saints. Finally, there is no explicit woe attached to the first horseman, as there is with the remaining three.

2. On the other hand, while the above arguments have weight, it is more likely that the rider on the white horse represents Satan or his servants who are oppressing people. The picture of the four horsemen comes from Zechariah 1:8-15 and 6:1-8, *where they all bring suffering on people*. The point is that they are all the same—they are not different. Likewise here, the first horseman must bring woe as do all the others. As we have already seen, Ezekiel 14 speaks of four severe forms of suffering coming on people rather than one good blessing and three woes. Indeed, whenever there are groups of four in Revelation (first four trumpets, first four bowls), they are always forms of suffering or woe.

Elsewhere in Revelation, Satan and his servants deceive through imitating Christ's appearance. The first beast appears "as having been slain" but healed again; the second beast appears like a lamb who does miracles. The deceptive imitation may be in mind here.

The prophecy of "false Christs and false prophets" who will come in Christ's name and mislead people is prophesied in Matthew 24:4-5, and in the Mark 13 parallel to Matthew 24 the same four woes (with false Christs first) are presented in the same order as the woes of the four horsemen are presented. The word for conquer in Revelation 6:1 is not only used of Christ and Christians but also describes Satan's servants oppressing Christians in Revelation 11:7 and 13:7.

3. *Therefore, the first horseman is a satanic figure who is attempting to defeat people spiritually through deception.*
4. The beasts mentioned at the end of verse 8 are another way of speaking of the first rider on the white horse: That rider will devour your faith by deception if you are not on guard against him. Just as the sword sums up the red horse, famine the black horse, and pestilence the pale green horse, so the beasts at the end of verse 8 sum up the white horse. Indeed, the emphasis of our passage is upon satanic deceptions because the portrayal of the horsemen begins and ends with this idea. As 1 Peter 5:8-9 says, "be on the alert. Your adversary, the Devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him. The Devil's forces, whether evil angels or demons or the spirit of the Antichrist (v. 2), sends forth his beasts (v. 8b) as his agents to arm and deceive us.

The meaning of the devilish figure in white is to portray the forces of Satan attempting to deceive by imitating Christ and appearing to be righteous. The same is true in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 *[Read]*.

The Devil's attempts to rob Christ of his people through deceiving them is doomed to failure because Christ is sovereign over the Devil in the first place, as is clear from his control over opening the first seal. Furthermore, the phrase, *it was given to him* in verse 2 must have as its subject God or Christ. For example, the same phrase occurs with God as the subject in Revelation 6:11, 7:2, and 11:2-3. The fact that these horsemen are ultimately com-

manded by Christ is clear because the four horsemen of Zechariah 6:1-8 are also commanded by the Lord to bring suffering. Satan's attempt to defeat God's people is but a feeble imitation of Christ who truly rides on a white horse to real victory in Revelation 19:11-16.

4. Therefore, Satanic deception is used by God to punish those who do not really believe in Christ and ultimately to strengthen Christians in their faith. Christians with this insight into the ultimate origin of false teaching and other forms of deception should be aware of being caught off guard by such teaching.

Illustration: One of my former professors under whom I studied at graduate school is still a very faithful Christian. He studied under professors at a secular university who did not believe in Christ or the Bible as God's Word. They were antagonistic to the Christian faith. He said that he experienced severe doubt during his own doctoral studies because of the continued teaching and influence of his professors and of the other unbelieving students. However, eventually he was able to find assurance as he continued to read God's Word and to submit to it. The unseen forces of evil were attempting to make his faith seem implausible and to cause him to doubt to the point of rejecting his faith.

Satan sends a deluding influence upon us to deceive us about the truth and to cause us to doubt. If we are genuine believers, however, such deception and doubt will repeatedly drive us back to God's Word to answer our questions and to reassure us regarding our doubts. That is, God intends that Satan's flaming darts of doubt shot at us will be transformed into shields of faith. Satan intends the arrows of deception to harm us, but God intends them for good.

I know a little boy whose parents are Christians and were attempting to raise him in the faith. When he was five and six years old, he kept saying that he wanted to believe but he just was not sure. He was not sure he could believe that Christ really did miracles and that he really came to life again. He said, "I don't see miracles like that today. Why should I believe that they happened back a long time ago." His parents would sometimes overhear him pray to God at night, agonizing over whether he was a Christian or not and whether or not he would go to heaven or hell. When he would sit with his parents in church, and the time for the Lord's Supper came, they would tell him that if he believed Christ died for him and rose from the dead for him as his Lord, he could take the Lord's Supper with them. He would say he just was not sure. So, he would not partake. When he learned to read, he started reading his Bible every day, and after about six weeks of doing this he was sitting in church with his parents again, and they again asked him the same question when it came time for the Lord's Supper. This time he said he did really believe that Christ died for him and rose from the dead.

You see the true believer goes to God's Word when doubt comes and eventually is reassured. God in his sovereignty uses the doubts from the Devil to drive us repeatedly to the Bible to reassure us of our faith and to bring closer to him.

It is not so with everyone, however. Unbelieving biblical scholars know the Bible backward and forward and read it all the time but do not place their faith in Christ and thus never find any assurance of the truth in the Bible.

[Now give a brief summary of what the true gospel belief is.]

The key to finding assurance of truth in the Bible is to place your faith in Christ, whose Spirit will assure you.

[Transition: What does the Devil do when he is not able to deceive us? Verses 3-8 show how he attempts to get us to compromise our faith and to harm us when we remain faithful to Christ. He tries to get us to doubt by persecuting us or causing various kinds of suffering (by the second horseman), by making us feel financial pressure (by the third horseman) or by threatening us with death and making us fear death (by the fourth horseman). The Devil makes us think that suffering is indiscriminate and by chance. If one believes his propaganda, it can lead to a loss of faith in God as good and sovereign. All that happens to us as believers is ultimately intended by the Devil to harm our faith, but ultimately God determines to build up our faith. The Devil means suffering for evil but God means it for good. "For God works all things together for good to those who love him, to those who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28; read also Gen. 50:20)].

Therefore, the main idea of Rev. 6:1-8 is:

VI. Christ Unleashes Trials Throughout History to Strengthen Believers and to Punish Unbelievers

VII. Conclusion:

The passage about the four horsemen is intended to show that Christ rules over such an apparently chaotic world and that suffering does not occur indiscriminately or by chance. In fact, this section reveals that destructive events are brought about by Christ for two purposes: redemption and punishment. John has said already that Christ has begun to reign over earthly kings (1:5; 2:6-27). Now in 6:1-8, he explains that this reign extends even over situations of suffering in which many Christians find themselves. It is Christ, sitting on his throne, who controls all the trials and persecutions of the church. The opening of the seals begins the actual revelation and execution of the contents of the scroll of chapter 5. The command for each of the four destructive horses and riders originates from the throne room, where Christ opens each seal. The cherubim around the throne issue commands to the horseman in response to the opening of each seal. Only then do the horsemen wreak their havoc. Therefore, our passage has described the destructive forces that were immediately unleashed upon the world as a result of Christ's victorious suffering on the cross, his resurrection, and his ascension to the Father's right hand. This means that the events involving the four horsemen are not reserved for a period only immediately preceding Christ's final coming but began immediately after his resurrection and are still happening now.

How can the righteousness and holiness of Christ be believed if he is so directly linked as the ultimate cause behind all four of these satanic agents of destruction?

In fact, this is so difficult that some scribes, copying the Bible hundreds of years ago, did not believe that John really heard the cherubim say “come” to each horsemen, so they changed it to have the cherubim say “come and behold” to John, as an invitation to see the vision of each horseman (as the King James Translation has). This would mean that Christ did not command the evil horseman, and it removes the problem of how he could cause the suffering that the horsemen bring. Others try to get around the problem by saying that Christ only permits these horsemen to wreak havoc. However, Christ issues commands not invitations or permissions.

The answer to the theological difficulty of how Christ can still be holy and yet cause such destruction through Satan’s servants lies in the ultimate purpose of the woes being that of punishing unbelievers and strengthening the faith of believers—making them ready by the refining fire to be the bride of Christ, holy, pure and without blemish (Revelation 19:7-8, 21:2).

Therefore, through his death and resurrection, Christ has defeated Satan and made the forces of evil his agents to execute his purposes of sanctification and punishment. The Cross saves those who believe but condemns those who do not. *One of the criminals crucified with Jesus was converted through his suffering, while the other was hardened through the same suffering. The dual aspect of the Cross is the model for understanding suffering in this age. The sufferings throughout the following age have the same double purpose.* God transformed the suffering of the Cross into a triumph (read Acts 2:23 and 4:25-28). As with Jesus, our apparent defeat of is our spiritual victory if we do not compromise our faith through suffering or persecution. Thus, Revelation 6:1-8 develops further the theme of Revelation 4-5: God’s sovereignty over the tribulation and kingdom of the saints is modeled after God’s sovereignty over the Lamb’s tribulation at the cross and his emerging kingdom. Revelation 14 says, “we follow the Lamb wherever he goes.” His destiny is ours.

[Read 1 Peter 4:12, 19.]

Final illustration: When our children were younger and had to go to Dr. White, who is also a friend of the family, he often had to inflict pain on them, such as giving them a shot, drawing blood, or other unpleasant things. Sometimes they were fearful about going to him for doctor visits. In fact, they should have hated him because he often inflicted pain upon them. Ironically, they even liked Dr. White, despite these apparently hostile actions. They liked him because they knew he wanted what was best for them and did not want them to get seriously ill. He let them know that by telling them. So, there was temporary pain and crying in the doctor’s office to bring about greater health. Christ does the same thing to us when he brings suffering into our lives. He loves us and wants the best for us. When he must inflict pain, we should not be

tempted to be bitter at him but to trust him as our loving physician. When we fail to go to his Word consistently, we do not hear him tell us that he does these things for our benefit, and we forget this. In one of his poems, T. S. Elliot summed up Christ's healing love for us in this way:

“The wounded surgeon plies the steel
That cuts the distempered part;
Beneath the bleeding hands we feel
The sharp compassion of the healer's art. . . “ (see J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation* (Pelican Series), 51, for the source).

Main Idea: Christ Unleashes Trials Throughout History to Strengthen Believers and to Punish Unbelievers