

HOW WE ARRIVED WHERE WE ARE REVELATION 6:1-8

Today's sermon is the second in a three-part series that I began last week and today I wish to address "How We Arrived Where We Are".

The Scriptures for today focus on **dictators, nations, famines, plagues – especially wars**; one cannot read the First Testament without gaining insight into the reasons for war: **greed, lust for power – i.e. sin.**

War involving any nation is God's judgment on that nation.

To assess why we are where we are as a people and a nation, I wish to review some history.

I There are some **significant dates** that have brought us where we are, the first being **612 A.D.** when a man named Mohammed asserted that he had received a call from the Angel **Gabriel** and thereupon began his career as the prophet of Allah and the apostle of Arabia.

II Mohammed's **religion, known as Islam**, contains practically nothing original;

It incorporates native Arabian heathenism, Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism.

III Having traveled to **Syria and Palestine**, he became imperfectly familiar with Judaism and Christianity **rewriting the two Testaments** and developing the other parts of the **Koran** which some biographers believe was the result of his **epileptic seizures or catalepsy**.

IV **Uniting Arabia under one emblem and one religion**, he became essentially the first caliph of the theocracy.

V **In succeeding years,**

- The weakness of the **Byzantine Empire**,
- the **rivalry** between the Greek and Latin Churches,
- the **failing power of the dynasty of Persia**,
- the power of the **sword and of fanaticism**,
- the hope of **plunder** and the love of **conquest**
- these factors combined with military genius produced the conquest of **Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, North**

Africa, S.Spain, Persia, Afghanistan, and a part of India.

VI Fast forward to the Ottoman Empire centered in Constantinople, and we find that it endured from 1299 until 1918 – a caliphate that ISIL wishes to replicate.

VII Subsequent to WWI, British and French aristocratic empire men, drew straight lines producing the chaotic, convoluted nations of today in the Middle East.

VIII The result of forcing tribes, sects, religions and ethnicities together resulted in disaster.

A Additionally, the British and French divided the land among themselves violating a promise to the Arabs that if they would assist them during WWI against the Ottoman Empire which had allied itself with the Axis powers, they would have independence.

B This travesty of justice was a key factor behind the rise of militarist regimes in Arab countries culminating in the Arab uprisings of 2011.

IX **Iran** reached a climax in **1979** when the dictatorial Shah of Iran who had been lifted to power in **1953 by the CIA** fled leaving the **Ayatollah Khomeini** to assume power as the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic.

A The following year **Iraq invaded Iran lasting until 1988**.

B Although **Iran was working through Syria to support a Shia movement in Lebanon**, the U.S. shifted sides to aiding Iraq {intelligence} while also selling arms to Iran via Israel.

X And the **tyrant named Bashar-al-Assad** continues the civil war in Syria with support from **Putin & Hezbollah**.

XI Plus the **United States** continues to be embroiled in the Middle East in **Afghanistan** – the land that **defied Alexander the Great**, and Genghis Khan, the British and the Russians abandoned their military offensives.

XII **Briefly, that is how we are where we are**; there are, however, other **factors** as outlined in our **Epistle** reading from Revelation.

XIII **Revelation 6** brings us into the middle of the **opening** of the **7 seals that secure a scroll** handed to our Lord Jesus Christ.

A **The Scroll contains the future history of the world** – that which we may expect and should not be astonished when they occur.

B The Scroll may be **seen in the nail-scarred hand of the Lamb of God who had just ascended into Heaven.**

C In the **Heavenly courtroom**, He was handed the **verdict in the Roman form which was a scroll with waxen seals.**

XIV The four horsemen are emblematic of the woes of humanity.

XV The first horse was **white** and the rider held a **bow**; a **crown** was given him and he went **forth conquering.**

A This horseman represents the **tyrants** that the world spawns incessantly such as **Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Saddam Hussein, Mao, and Tojo.**

B If you have viewed a picture of Emperor **Hirohito** on a white **stallion** he perfectly portrays this image.

XVI The **red horse exemplifies war and bloodshed**. Jesus said in our Gospel reading that there would **be wars and rumors of wars**.

XVII The **black horse refers to hunger and want through economic deprivation**.

A **Famines and economic turmoil arise** as well as brought about by the tyrants and their wars.

B We should not, however, **omit capitalistic greed** that fosters **income inequality and perpetuates ignorance and poverty**.

XVIII The **fourth horse is pale or ashen**, the color of **impending death or of a corpse** expressive of **pestilence, plague and disease** that bring about death.

XIX Nonetheless, remember the other Scripture readings:

- **Zechariah 12:5 – The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the Lord of hosts, their God. We are the new Israel and Jerusalem is our home.**
- **Psalm 33 - No king is saved by the size of his army**
- **No warrior escapes by his great strength**
- **But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him**
- **On those whose hope is in His unfailing love.**
- **To deliver them from death & keep them alive in famine.**

XX Our Lord Jesus Christ was a **Man of peace**; He rode no horse and had to **borrow a donkey**.

- His crown was a crown of **thorns**
- He was acquainted with **bloodshed** but it was His own streaming from His beaten, bruised, crucified Body
- He said: **My peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.**

XXI The same Jesus who was crucified, died and was buried **rose in victory over all the horsemen** and was seen at the right hand of God by John.

XXII Baptized into Him, we possess His victory.

XXIII **In Heaven, He awaits us with our crown of righteousness – the free gift of eternal life in Himbj.**