The rising cost of wheat coupled with ongoing political instability in the country is causing a severe flour shortage in Pakistan. Pakistani citizens have been queuing for hours to buy flour from government owned stores, while some can't even afford to do that due to increased costs in privately-owned shops. The government denies there is a shortage and has blamed smugglers and hoarders for exacerbating the problem. According to government figures around 1 million tonnes of flour has been smuggled across the borders, where it can be sold for much higher prices than in Pakistan. Around 1.7 million tonnes of flour has also been hoarded by those fearing further political unrest following the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. The government hopes the flour crisis will end in around 2-4 weeks. But market analysts have questioned these figures, and blame the government for the crisis which they say started a year ago.

Quote: *""Wheat problem started emerging in May last year and assumed crisis proportion by August," a well-known commodity trader said. Wheat prices had already crossed Rs1,500 for 100 kilogramme by August as the Government was delaying wheat releases from its stocks in Punjab and Sindh. The commodity brokers were moving in Punjab and Sindh villages with bags full of money to purchase wheat from growers at Rs1200 to Rs1300 for 100 kilograms. The Punjab-based traders diverted wheat consignments from Sindh to the NWFP and onwards to Central Asian States from where they were reaping hefty profits. Once purchased from growers, wheat was stocked in ginneries and government buildings in villages.*

The political instability in Pakistan is also causing problems for neighbouring states. The price of flour in Afghanistan has increased by roughly 50% compared to last year, and in some cities that figure is nearly 80%. The crisis has been compounded by the high price of oil which reached $100 a barrel for the first time last week, along with security concerns which have increased the cost for transportation of goods. It is estimated that the demand for bio-fuels in America will put an increased strain on an already poor wheat harvest next year. And in Afghanistan farmers are also finding it more lucrative to grow money-making crops such as poppies, rather than those destined for basic human consumption.

Quote: *"Afghanistan is forced to rely on imports from Pakistan as vast stretches of the country's fertile land in Helmand and Kandahar provinces are being used to grow lucrative opium and marijuana crops, instead of wheat, said Nisar Ahamad, a wholesaler of imported oils, flour and sugars at the Kandahar market. "If people weren't growing poppies then we would have our own flour," he said. "We wouldn't need to import so much. "We have fertile land, we have an irrigation system, but the people feel that they must grow the poppies because they are so poor."*

As we can see, the prophecy of Revelation is coming to pass. The Bible predicts that the price of wheat will continue to rise until during the tribulation period, a measure of wheat will cost around the equivalent of a day's wages. The price of wheat is already at similar levels in the country of Zimbabwe , following the government's eviction of the white farmers from their land. As we can see, with the increased price of oil and the advent of bio-fuels, perhaps the following verses may hold more prophetic significance than I first realized.

Revelation 6:5-6
And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and [see] thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

Source BBC , Dawn , Canada