

**"REVELATION MADE RELEVANT"**

*A verse by verse exposition of the Bible's most controversial book*

*Notes are Fr. Ward's personal observations with the exception of the historical background information*

**\*\*\*Brief Review of Revelation 4 & 5.**

The overarching themes of Revelation chapters 4 & 5 is on the one hand, the Holiness, Power, and Sacrifice of God the Father and God the Son, and on the other hand, and the angelic and human response to God - Worship. God is both Creator (chapter 4) and Redeemer (chapter 5). Jesus is shown to be the "*Lamb of God*" who is slain for the sins of the entire world. He alone, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit (the seven Spirits) is worthy of Worship. Hence, worship is shown to be the greatest expression of love by those who are created by God. Moreover, it is Jesus, as the Lamb of God, who has the authority to take the scroll from the Father's hand and break the Seven Seals on that scroll. In this latest study, we now will look in detail at the first Six Seals.

**III. Worship, Wrath and Witness (Revelation 4-8)**

**B. The First Six of Seven Seals (Rev. 6) – God's Judgments Unleashed**

We now shift from heaven to earth. The Seven Seals will be broken by the Lamb. Each seal deals with events that will transpire *before* Christ's return. The question remains, however, as to the timing of the events described by the seals. While they certainly take place BEFORE our Lord's return, are they concurrent throughout the church age? Do they occur sequentially? Are they part of the final years of this present age (actual Tribulation) or do they lead up to the Tribulation period? The most common Futurist interpretation is that the breaking of the first Seal marks the beginning of the Tribulation period. Those who believe in the Rapture believe that since the Church has been taken out of the world, the martyrs seen in the vision represent those killed during this Tribulation period. As we study each verse and look at other Biblical passages in God's Word, we will be able to get a better understanding of what is meant by the symbolism of each seal as well as their timing and relationship to Christ' Return.

**1. Seal 1: The Rider on the White Horse (6:1-2) – *"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." 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."***

The first four seals are distinct from the other three in that all are horsemen on horses of different colors. We can see parallelism with what the prophet Zechariah experienced during his ministry – **Zech. 1:7-21; 6:1-8**. In Zechariah's vision, the four horsemen and chariots are instruments of divine judgment on the enemies of God's people, while the colors represent geographical points of the compass. Here in Revelation, the four horsemen are also instruments of judgment. Note that for each of the four horsemen, one of the four living creatures calls them to "Come!" or "Go forth!" This shows again how these judgments come from the throne of Heaven, God, Himself. The first rider is on a white horse and carries a bow and he receives a crown. He goes forth to conquer. Some believe this is a reference to Christ and the spread of the gospel. They point to the color white as a symbol of righteousness and Christ throughout Revelation, the bow lacking an arrow, Jesus' Words that the Gospel would be preached to the ends of the earth before the end of the age, and the similarity with Christ on a horse coming in judgment in **Rev. 19:11-16**. However, there are some major problems with this view. First, Jesus is the Lamb who opens the seals. He has authority over all that will

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happen and gives the four living creatures the right to call forth each of the four horsemen. It would be a contradiction and inappropriate to have an angelic being to call forth the Son of God! Moreover, unlike the horseman in **Rev. 6**, the rider in **Rev. 19** has the words *Faithful and True* on his thigh and brings forth justice and makes war on evil. The rider here is conquering the world and what follows in the subsequent seals are the typical results of what happens when leaders of nations seek to impose their will on others – war, famine, and death. The bow has no arrow because this leader will first conquer through peaceful means. He wears white because like Satan, he will come first as a “bearer of light.” Finally, in Christ’s teachings on the signs of the end (see below), the first sign he warns us about is the rise of false Christs. In light of the above, this white horseman is therefore best viewed to be the greatest of all false Christs. He is the Antichrist. He will go forth conquering and, we will see, that he eventually will make war on the saints of God, and throw our world into complete chaos and disarray.

**2. Seal 2: The Rider on the Red Horse (6:3-4) – “When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come.” 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.”**

The next seal is the horseman on the red horse. What naturally follows after a strong ruler or rulers seek to overpower their neighbors? War! The red symbolizes the bloodshed that will result from war. The large sword means that very many will be killed. Although the Antichrist comes with supposedly “good intentions” the result will be actual war.

**3. Seal 3: the Rider on the Black Horse (6: 5-6) – “When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, “Come.” I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine.”**

The third horseman is riding a black horse. Black symbolizes the effects of war and bloodshed as well as sorrow and mourning. Economic hardship always results from war. In its worst manifestation it leads to famine. Thus, the rider has a pair of scales. What normally costs a small wage – a quart of wheat and three quarts of barley now will cost an entire day’s wage (about 10x the norm!). Think about that for a moment. A quart of wheat represented your food for the day. Now, one would have to work all day just to get the bare necessities. The phrase, “Do not damage the oil and the wine” is less clear. It can mean one of two things. Some believe it refers to the fact that the rich will still be able to have the more expensive things in life. Others believe that it actually means that there will be economic hardship but actually not famine – not yet, that is. For a drought affecting the grain *would not* be severe enough to hurt the grapevines or olive trees. Since wine and olive oil were considered staples in the Near East, the view then is that there will be poverty and partial famine, but the worse is yet to come – the fourth seal, the seven trumpets and seven bowls!

**4. Seal 4: The Rider on the Pale Horse (6: 7-8) – “When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come.” I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.”**

The fourth seal brings a rider on a pale or ashen horse. The color is “chloros” from which we get the word chlorine. It is a pale green of a yellowish or grayish hue that would be common of a severely sick or dead person. Unlike the first three, this rider has a name - Death (“thanatos”). The death that comes is probably from pestilence and plague, but also from the ensuing warfare, growing famine, and even from the beasts of the earth as the order and comforts of civilization break down. We are told that “Hades” followed right after him. *Hades* is the place of the spirit world where the souls/spirits of the dead who do not know the Lord go.

**5. Seal 5: the Martyrs (6:9-10) – “When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.”**

Now we come to the fifth seal – the martyred saints. They are mentioned several times in Revelation: the martyred saints in heaven (**Rev. 7:9-14**); those who refused to worship the image of the beast (**Rev. 13:15**); all who have been killed on the earth (**Rev. 18:24**); and those who have been beheaded (**Rev. 20:4**). They are seen under the altar and cry out for justice upon those who have murdered them, asking God, “How long?” which is really just another way of saying “Why?” John says he sees the souls (“psychas”) of those slain because of God’s Word their testimony of faithfulness to Christ. Some view this to mean the actual souls (a soulish body) or simply a reference to “persons” or “lives.” Regardless, John sees these martyrs as actual still living and before the Lord crying out for justice. They are under the altar in the temple of heaven which would parallel both the golden altar of incense that stood in or before the most Holy Place in the tabernacle, as well as the sacrificial altar where the blood would pool underneath. Hence, the reference the prayers of the saints going up to the Lord earlier in **Rev. 5:8**, but also the cry to “avenge their blood” here in **6:9**. Their prayer is one for vengeance on evil doers recognizing an important Kingdom principle of not taking revenge but to allow room for God’s wrath. In the Bible, the word, avenge, “ekdikoo” relates to punishment or retribution. The Apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 12:19**, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord.” They are told that they should “rest for a little while longer until the number of their fellow servants and brethren to be killed...would be completed.” In other words, they are to wait a little longer for God’s plan, which will mean more martyrs, to be fulfilled. The point here is that God calls on them to be patient recognizing that in the scheme of eternity it will not be long. Everyone will eventually die. God is reminding us that whether we live or die, we need to be living for Him and for His purposes. We are really not read to live, until we are ready to die. And there is no greater purpose than to live for the Lord and to die for Him. Martyrdom is simply the outward and visible manifestation of one’s inwardly dying to self, that we are called to do daily as followers of Christ. The martyrs are each given a white robe to symbolize God’s righteousness and His ensuing victory on their behalf.

**6. Seal 6: Signs in the Heavens and Dread on the Earth – (Rev. 6:12-17) – “I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”**

Christ the Lamb, breaks the sixth seal and there are signs in the heaven and on the earth. There is a great earthquake (shifting of the earth’s crusts) and the convulsions (possibly volcanic eruptions?) cause the sun to go dark and the moon turn red. Stars are falling, and there is terror on the earth. Some of the language used is figurative. Certainly, the ancient expressions, the sky rolling up like a scroll, or the stars falling from heaven like figs from a shaken tree all figuratively suggest cataclysmic occurrences in the heavens. A meteor shower, for example, would be described as “stars falling from heaven.” The point, here, is that there will be cataclysmic events in the skies and on the earth that will affect the climate and environment and cause

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worldwide destruction. Such language is also used by Christ in His final teaching on the signs of the times (the Mount of Olives will split in two!) in **Mt. 24:29-30** and **Lk. 21:26**. We find the same phenomenon predicted in **Is. 34:4; Joel 2:30-31; Zech. 14:3-7, and Acts 2:20** concerning the Day of the Lord and the end of the age.

In our final three verses, we have the reaction of the inhabitants in the world to the wrath of God and the Lamb. Notice the sevenfold breakdown of earth's citizenry described by John – 1) the kings of the earth (political leaders) 2) the great men (business/commerce leaders) 3) the commanders (military) 4) the rich (wealthy) 5) the strong (all of the above plus the middle and upper class) 6) slave (the poor) 7) free man – literally everyone!

God's judgments come as a result of people's unwillingness to repent of their pride, idolatry, and immorality (**Rev. 9:20-21; 16:6, 9**). Ironically, instead of repenting and crying for salvation, the people of the earth will call on the mountains and rocks to bury them from the sight of the Almighty! No one can stand before the One True Holy and Powerful Lord. If one rejects God's grace of a second chance, that individual has no hope of salvation and will not be saved.

Note the parallelism of Christ's teaching on the End of the Age in **Mt. 24** (c.f. **Lk. 21:6-28; Mk. 13**), with the Seals in **Rev. 6**. **Mt. 24:1-3**: ***"Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. 2And 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." 3As 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?"*** Note the three questions posed to Jesus, 1) "When shall these things be? 2) "What shall be the sign of Your Coming?" and 3) "and of the end of the age?"

### **Matthew 24**

vv. 4-5: "...many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ and shall deceive many."

vv. 6-7a: "you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars... For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom."

v. 7b: "there shall be famines..."

vv.7c – 8: "and earthquakes in various places

vv.9-13: "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name..."

v. 14: "gospel preached in all the world..."

vv. 29-30: "...immediately after the tribulation of those days the Sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky...and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

### **Revelation 6**

Seal 1 – False Christs

Seal 2 – War

Seal 3 – Famine

Seal 4 – Death

Seal 5 - Martyrdoms

Present Age of Grace

Seal 6 – Heavens and Earth shaken