

### INTRODUCTORY NOTES:

- The worship in Revelation chapters 4 and 5 is preparation for the beginning of the Tribulation (the wrath of God found in chapters 6-18, and part of 19)
- These next 14 chapters of Revelation are the “70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel.”
- Chapter 6 can be viewed as an “overview” of the conditions and events found in the following chapters. Some disagree and believe it is the beginning of the Tribulation. (That all of this is in consecutive order.)
- It is important to note that as the seals are opened, the **Church is not mentioned again until chapter 19**. The “Church” is a distinct entity made up of believers from the Day of Pentecost until the Rapture of the Church. They are uniquely different from the Tribulation Saints, or Martyred Saints found in these chapters.

<sup>1</sup> 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.”

- “...one of the four living creatures...” – When heaven is discussed, we hear it from the elders; when something about earth is discussed, one of the four living creatures speak. The four horses/riders are sent out by the living creatures.
- “come and see” - can also mean “Go!” (proceed, move on)
- **The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse** is the common description of these first four seals.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

### 1<sup>st</sup> seal: THE FIRST HORSE AND RIDER (Conqueror and Conquest)

- “white horse” – customary symbol for a victor
- “he who sat on it had a bow...” - notice no arrows. Some believe this implies a conquering through diplomacy, not actual war, but the bow is a sign of military power (the first half of the Tribulation may be somewhat peaceful, in comparison, during the initial acquisition of power. The 2<sup>nd</sup> half is NOT peaceful!)
- “and a crown was given to him...” – crown is the *stephanos*, victor’s crown, not the *diadema* or crown of king, authority. Jesus will wear the *diadema*.



- **Who is this?** Not Jesus! He may resemble our Lord, but this rider is NOT Him. He is called by one of the living creatures (a clue), he keeps very bad company (war, famine, hard economic times, death). He goes out to conquer. This is the one we call the AntiChrist. He is beginning his conquest of the world. He may be seen as a “Messiah” at the first. He will soon make his purpose clear.

<sup>3</sup> *When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.”*  
<sup>4</sup> *Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.*

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Seal: THE SECOND HORSE AND RIDER (War, Violence, Hatred)

- *“horse, fiery red...”* – red, color of bloodshed, war, violence.
- *“that people should kill one another...”* warfare, violence
- *“a great sword...”* – symbol of war
- This is not *just* war among nations, but hateful warring in the hearts of all mankind against each other



<sup>5</sup> *When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.* <sup>6</sup> *And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.”*

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Seal: THE THIRD HORSE AND RIDER (Scarcity, Famine, Economic Collapse)

- **Black** is often connected with famine, darkness, dark times
- *“pair of scales”* – symbol of economy, scarcity
- *“A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius”* (a day’s wages) – people will work only to survive.
- *“but do not harm the oil and the wine”* – oil and wine are symbols for luxuries. Shows more than famine, but a great polarization of wealth, and rationing, and control. Perhaps setting stage when no one can buy or sell without the beast’s mark (ch 13-14).
- Poor economic conditions often follow war



<sup>7</sup> *When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see.”<sup>8</sup> So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.*

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Seal: THE FOURTH HORSE AND RIDER (Death [physical and spiritual], pestilence, plague, etc.)

- *“a pale horse”* – “chloros” – color of death, ghastly color (color of leprosy in Leviticus)
- *Rider is “Death”* (Hades follows) – two personages here. Death is physical death, Hades claims the soul (spiritual death, reserved for unbelievers. Note: *Sheol* in OT is holding place for the dead). Death and Hades are frequently linked in Revelation.
- *“power...over a fourth of the earth...”* – With earth population over 6 billion now, that’s over 1.5 billion people. Could be a geographic area, or literal numbers.
- **Killing accomplished with 4 things:** 1) sword (violence); 2) famine; 3) plague; 4) wild beasts (not the living creatures in Revelation 4 and 5. This is a different word: *therion*, meaning wild animal.) *Have you ever seen a virus or bacteria magnified many times under an electron microscope? You don’t have to be able to see “beasts” with the naked eye for them to be deadly!* These 4 judgments also mentioned in Ezekiel 14:21
- These first four seals are the **“beginnings of birthpangs.”** The Great Tribulation (last half of seven years) hasn’t even begun yet. Revelation never mentions a 7-year period of time. It only mentions 3 ½ years (42 months). The last 3 ½ years of the seven-year Tribulation are considered the “Great Tribulation.” We assume 7 years because of Daniel’s “70<sup>th</sup> week” which is a “week” or set of 7 years.
- Chronology of the Seal Judgments: we don’t know if the 5<sup>th</sup> seal happens concurrently with first 4, or immediately following.



<sup>9</sup> *When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.<sup>10</sup> And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”<sup>11</sup> Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Seal: SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR (the martyred dead of Tribulation)

- These people died for their faith during the Tribulation. We don’t know when. They are the “Tribulation Saints.”
- *“slain for the word of God...”* – Word of God is a synonym for Jesus Christ.
- *“under the altar”* – altar is in heaven, note souls are conscious, not “sleeping” and their position denotes protection.



- They cried out ***“how long, O lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”*** These souls are calling out for vengeance (*not personal vengeance, but vindication of God’s holiness and God’s justice*). “How long” has been the cry of God’s suffering people throughout the ages. The “Avenger of Blood” (see Isaiah 61:1-2) tells them to wait, rest a bit longer. This cry for vengeance now signals a change from God’s grace, to God’s judgment and wrath.
- ***“those who dwell on the earth”*** (or “inhabitants of the earth”) – This is a phrase used multiple times in Revelation. It is to indicate those who have made earth their permanent home (do not hope for heaven). It is used of unbelievers. Believers are sojourning only through earth. Heaven is our permanent home.
- This seal indicates there will be a great harvest of souls during the Tribulation, terrible persecution and many martyrs (witnesses, literally) who die for their faith. It answers the question, “Will people be saved during the Tribulation?” YES! A number beyond counting...
- ***“white robe”*** – symbol of the believer’s righteousness, imputed only through Jesus.
- ***“until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.”*** There will be more martyrs joining them. God has a plan, and a number of martyrs in fulfillment of that plan.

*<sup>12</sup> I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. <sup>13</sup> And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. <sup>14</sup> Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. <sup>15</sup> And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, <sup>16</sup> and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup> For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”*

## 6<sup>th</sup> Seal: A GREAT EARTHQUAKE AND THE WRATH OF THE LAMB

- ***“a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.”*** This is the first of 3 earthquakes in Revelation. Note, in 1883 the volcano Krakatoa erupted, killing 36,000 people. Global temperatures fell for 5 years, and weather was chaotic in that time. The sun and the moon were darkened by ash, and appeared just as this description details.
- ***“stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.”*** Late figs are untimely, unripe figs, and are like rocks. Could reference meteors, other things falling from the heavens?
- ***“sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.”*** Is this the end, or just the beginning? There are other references in scripture to the heavens doing odd things. (Nahum 1:5, Isaiah 34:4, 40:22, 42:5, 44:27, 45:12, 51:13; Jeremiah 10:12, 51:15; Zechariah 12:1) Mountains are often a symbol for governments, so could be a symbolic reference to governments of man being destroyed, or literal movement of mountains. Either way, appears that we cannot continue in that state if skies roll up literally. The question remains, is this the end, or just the beginning of the end?

- This brings up the question of **timing of these seal judgments**. Is chapter 6 like an overview of the entire Tribulation, or a literal prelude to the trumpet and bowl judgments? Chapter 6 could be like those “nesting dolls” where one houses another. We will see in chapter 7 that the trumpet judgments are “housed” inside the 7<sup>th</sup> seal, and the bowl judgments are contained in the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet. We can’t be definitive about this timing. Some see the 7 seals and 7 trumpets as the first half of the seven-year Tribulation, then the 7 bowls as the last half because the AntiChrist is empowered and begins the really nasty stuff! (this is the Great Tribulation). At any rate, the seals of chapter 6 are conditions that will be in place throughout the Tribulation, not just happening in sequence and complete in this chapter. There will be dramatic changes to the earth and heavens throughout this time.
- All of the things in the **6<sup>th</sup> seal are familiar in Old Testament prophecies** (especially Amos, Ezekiel, Joel, Isaiah, and in Matthew 24 and Luke 13). What we see is nature in chaos. Everything that man (the inhabitants of the earth) trusted and thought he knew, worshipped, and put his faith in, is now dissolving! This is a time of sheer terror. Some see these disasters as natural and physical, others as a destruction of the current “order” and not literal. We have no reason to doubt the literal truth of God’s Word. There were ten literal plagues in Egypt. The plagues on earth during the Revelation will be just as literal and real.
- **“And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man...”** Note there are six types of people (the number for man=6), which represent ALL of mankind, with no distinctions. We have those in government, those who are powerful, those who are rich, those in the military, those who are influential, and those who are just ordinary folks here. “hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains.” These people are fleeing from something, not going toward something, or Someone. They said to the mountains and rocks, **“fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!”** It is interesting to note that these people KNOW who is causing this chaos and destruction, yet they still run from Him instead of turning toward Him. The martyrs in chapter 5 are crying out “avenge us” and these “inhabitants of the earth” are crying out “hide us!” Shows the basic difference between the two groups – their faith in God, or their lack of it (prohibited by their pride). The first human instinct to sin is to hide. **Quote:** “What sinners dread most is not death, but the revealed presence of God.” (Swete).
- **“wrath of the Lamb”** – seems paradoxical. The lamb is gentle, seemingly harmless. Our Lamb is both gentle and righteous. Righteousness calls for wrath, hatred of sin and all that is evil.
- **“for the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”** – power, rank, wealth or status will not save. Only faith in Jesus will save us from His wrath. We are told that believers are not subject to the wrath of God. These people running to the caves are unrepentant. Even judgment does not change the human heart.



- Later in this book we see that not only do they try to hide from God, they will blaspheme him and eventually try to go to war with Him. Talk about a completely idiotic, fruitless and vain endeavor! (see Psalm 2)
- *“the great day...”* – may not refer to a literal 24 hour period of time, but a season, a period of time that is referenced in the OT as the “Day of the Lord.”

**We can make a comparison between this chapter, and Matthew chapter 24:**

REVELATION 6	MATTHEW 24
1 <sup>st</sup> Seal, the White Horse and Rider (Rev 6:1-2) – AntiChrist, world conquest	False christs, deceivers, conquest of soul (Matthew 24:4-5)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Seal, the Red Horse – War and Hatred (v3-4)	Wars (v 6)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Seal, the Black Horse – Famine, Economic Collapse	Famines (v7a)
4 <sup>th</sup> Seal, the Pale Horse – death, physical and spiritual	Death (v7b-8)
5 <sup>th</sup> Seal, Souls Under the Altar – martyred saints	Martyrs (v9)
Earthquake, signs in the heavens (v12-17)	Earthquakes, signs in the heavens (v7b, 29)

In Matthew chapter 24 Jesus answered his disciples regarding what they would see as signs of the end. They had specifically asked him this question and Jesus provided the answers, which line up perfectly with what we see in Revelation, and also what we see happening around us today.

**Can you see shadows of the first 4 seals, what are called “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse?”**

- The Coming World Leader
- Wars, Hatred
- Famine, Economic Disasters
- Death from violence, famine, plague and wild animals

The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> seals are not far behind.

Consider current events, geo-political alignments and other current national and international conditions. Israel is central to correctly interpreting the times. The world currently hates Israel. ALL of the “signs” mentioned in Matthew 24 are now happening, concurrently. Yes, all of these things have happened before, but never with such increasing intensity and frequency, and *never all at once*. All of them are happening now. It appears we are indeed living in the times *of the signs*. Perhaps the signs are happening even more quickly than we think! Are we ready?

