

THE OPENING OF THE SIX SEALS: THE TIME OF DIVINE WRATH

The order of events in Revelation 6 and the order of events in Matthew 24 are strikingly similar: (a) war (Matt 24:6-7; Rev 6:3-4), (b) famine (Matt 24:7; Rev 6:5-6), (c) death (Matt 24:7-9; Rev 6:7-8), (d) martyrdom (Matt 24:9-10,16-22; Rev 6:9-11), (e) the sun and the moon darkened with stars failing (Matt 24:29; Rev 6:12-14), (f) divine judgment (Matt 24:32-25:26; Rev 6:15-17). It should be obvious that the events of Revelation have their background in these previous prophecies.

The lifting of the first four **seals** is portrayed in this section as four horsemen, an image likely drawn from Zech. 1:7-11.

REV 6:[1] I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come and see!" [2] I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

THE FIRST SEAL

Rev. 6:1-2. As John **watched** the events after the opening of **the first...seal** by **the Lamb**, he saw a **white horse** with a **rider** holding a **bow**, wearing a victor's **crown**, and going forth to conquer. Roman generals after a victory in battle would ride a white horse in triumph with their captives following.

All that can be said with certainty is that the **bow** indicates the horseman is a warrior and the **crown** shows the he is a king or ruler. This description seems to parallel Matt. 24:6-8, "[6] And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. [7] For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom... [8] All these are the beginning of sorrows." (KJV)

REV 6:[3] When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come and see!" [4] Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.

THE SECOND SEAL

Rev. 6:3-4. **When the Lamb opened the second seal** a **red** horse appeared with a **rider** empowered **to take peace from the earth**. In contrast with the first rider who has a bow this second rider carried a **large sword**. The **large sword** is the assassin's sword, used to cut the throats of humans. The **fiery red** horseman represents not only nations rising against nations but individuals fighting each other. The second seal brings war, bloodshed, slaughter, ethnic cleansing, civil war, strife, people killing each other.

Again, the description here strongly parallels Matt. 24:6-7. "[6] And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end

is not yet. [7] For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom... (Matt. 24:6-7, KJV).

REV 6:[5] When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. [6] Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"

THE THIRD SEAL

Rev. 6:5-6. With the opening of **the third seal** by the Lamb, a **black horse** was revealed with a rider carrying a **pair of scales in his hand**. At the same time a **voice** was heard from **among the four living creatures saying, A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!** This passage is saying that in this food shortage an entire day's work would be required to buy either a quart of wheat or three quarts of barley. If one bought wheat, it would be enough for one good meal; if he bought barley, it would be enough for three good meals but nothing would be left for buying oil or wine.

The daily wage for a laborer would ordinarily buy eight times the amount of wheat and barley as under these conditions. The **oil and the wine**, symbolic of luxuries, likely means the famine is viewed as limited. It does not depict worldwide, starvation. The black color of the horse speaks of famine and death.

Again this corresponds to Jesus words in *Matt.24:[7] And there shall be famines, and pestilences (plagues),...in various places.*

REV 6:[7] When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come and see!" [8] I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

THE FOURTH SEAL

Rev. 6:7-8. A **pale horse** was introduced when **the fourth seal** was opened. "Pale" is literally a pale green (cf. the same word used of vegetation in Mark 6:39; Rev 8:7; 9:4). John stated that the rider's name was **Death and that Hades** (the world of the dead or the place of the dead) **was following close behind him**. Here is the aftermath of war, famine, and death. With war and famine people fall prey to a plague and the wild beasts of the earth.

Sword means battle; death by **famine** is starvation; **plague** or pestilence means disease or epidemics; and **wild beast's** means wild animals. God gave **death** and **Hades** the power to use war, famine, epidemics, and wild animals to kill one quarter of the people on the earth. The startling fact is revealed that **a fourth of the earth**, or approximately a billion people by today's population figures, will be killed by these means. It should be obvious that this is not a trivial judgment but a major judgment. The first four seals may be considered as a unit and a general description of the beginning of sorrows (Matt. 24:8).

REV 6:[9] When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.

THE FIFTH SEAL (Rev. 6:9-11)

Rev. 6:9. With the opening of **the fifth seal** John had another revelation of heaven itself and his attention was directed to **souls** pictured as **under the altar** (Ex. 29:12; Lev. 4:7) and identified as those **who had been slain because of the Word of God and the testimony they had maintained**. These are obviously martyrs, faithful martyrs were seen as a sacrifice offered to God on the altar of the heavenly temple.

Rev.6:[10] They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" [11] Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.

Rev. 6:10-11. These martyrs cry out to the **Lord**, asking **how long** it will be before He will **avenge** them. In reply **each** is **given a white robe** and informed that others must be martyred before God's judgment on the wicked and deliverance of the righteous occurs at the Second Coming.

Again, this fifth seal corresponds to Jesus words in Matt. 24:9, 22: *[9] Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. [22] And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.* (KJV)

REV 6:[12] I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, [13] and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. [14] The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

THE SIXTH SEAL (Rev.6:12-17)

Rev. 6:12-14. As **the sixth seal** opened, John recorded that a **great earthquake** occurred. More dramatic than the earthquake was the transformation of the heavens with **the sun** turning **black**, the **moon** turning **blood red**, and **stars** falling like **late figs from a fig tree**. The heavens appeared **like a scroll** being rolled up. At the same time, due to the earthquake, all the mountains and islands were moved from their places.

REV 6:[15] Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. [16] They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! [17] For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Rev. 6:15-17. The practical effect of the judgment was fear in unbelievers from all walks of life. They called on **the mountains and the rocks** to **fall on** them and to **hide** them from God's **wrath**. Their fear was so great they would rather be killed by a falling mountain than to face the wrath of **the Lamb** and **Their wrath**, referring to the Father and the Son. This is a picture of great distress in this world.

The contents of chapter 6 should put to rest the false teachings that God, being a God of love, could not judge a wicked world. It also raises the important question contained in the closing words of verse 17: **Who can stand?** Only those who have availed themselves of the grace of God before the time of judgment will be able to stand when God deals with the earth in this period of great distress.

Again this six seal can be likened to Jesus words in Matt. 24:29-31,35.

MT 24:[29] Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: [30] And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. [31] And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. [35] Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. (KJV)

You know it is very interesting the six seals of God's judgment in (Rev. 6) and Jesus words of Matthew 24, how they parallel. The questions ask by the disciples was this:

MT 24:[1] And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple. [2] And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

MT 24:[3] And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? [4] And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

Then He mentions the things we read about in Rev. 6 - War (Matt 24:6-7; Rev 6:3-4), famine (Matt 24:7; Rev 6:5-6), death (Matt 24:7-9; Rev 6:7-8), martyrdom (Matt 24:9-10,16-22; Rev 6:9-11), the sun and the moon darkened with stars failing (Matt 24:29; Rev 6:12-14), divine judgment (Matt 24:32-25:26; Rev 6:15-17).

But the first thing Jesus said, "Take heed that no man deceive you." Matt. 24:4

But you might say, I can't be deceived because I go to such & such Bible School. I can't be deceived because I'm a Baptist, Assembly of God, Church of Christ, Nazarene, etc.

I don't know about you but I come from a place where:

“The Kingdom of God’ is used 54 times just in the Gospels but cannot be defined by the average pastor or Bible School professor.

Where “Repentance” (used about 180 times in Scripture) has been mocked and scorned.

Where “Faith” used about 786 times in Scripture is defined as only assent, rather than entrustment of one’s self to Christ.

Where “Tithing” has replaced giving to the poor and needy.

Where people set Scripture against Scripture instead of looking for its harmony.

Where “Baptism” is unimportant and secondary.

Where “Church Creeds” forbid the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Where “isms,” Calvinism, Arminism, has taken the Warnings out of Scripture.

Where doctrines have promoted loose living and to feel quite comfortable about it.

Where pastor worship has replaced body ministry.

Where repeating a prayer after someone has replaced calling on God from the heart.

Where being filled with God’s Spirit is divisive and cannot be mentioned.

Where “Communion” is symbolic rather than life-giving.

Where the practice of James 5 – call for the elders and anointing with oil for the sick is unnatural and unheard of.

Where “election” is presupposed instead of making one’s “election” and “calling” sure (2 Pet. 1:10).

Where phrases like, “ask Jesus into your heart,” or “ask Jesus to be your Savior” has replaced the necessity of repentance, faith and following Christ.

Where “Repentance for a believer” is unnecessary and legalistic.

Where “assurance of salvation” is given without the evidence of fruit.

Where “apostatizing” is impossible and unnecessary to mention.

Where the “Lordship of Christ” is secondary to His “Saviourhood.”

Where giving to God can only involve one's denomination, rather than people.

Where Scripture can be denied and twisted if it doesn't appeal to your creed.

Where Scriptures and context can be ignored.

Where becoming a Christian has replaced becoming a disciple.

Where listening to a pastor on Sunday has fulfilled one's duty to God.

Where following Christ daily has been replaced by, "I said the prayer 5 years ago."

Where "holiness" is mocked and spurned.

Where "evangelism" is unnatural and not practiced.

Where people are called "cults" because they are doing what we are suppose to be doing.

WHAT WOULD JESUS SAY TO OUR CHURCHES TODAY? Carry on your doing fine.

And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? (1 Pet. 4:18)

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? (1 Pet. 4:17)

For judgment certainly is going to fall on this earth (Rev. 6).

We will only be saved from wrath through Him (Rom. 5:9).

We got some thinking to do. We have some praying to do. We've got some Bible study to do.

****Questions****

1. What happens in the opening scenes of this passage? (6:1)
2. What did John hear after Christ opened the first seal? (6:2)
3. What is the nature and the appearance of the first horse and its rider? (6:2)
4. What happened after the second seal was opened? (6:3)

5. How are the second horse and its rider described? (6:4)
6. What happened at the opening of the third seal? (6:5)
7. How did the voice that John heard explain the meaning of the scales in the hand of the third rider? (6:6)
8. What were the fourth horse and its rider like? (6:7-8)
9. What did John see at the opening of the fifth seal? (6:9)
10. What question did the martyrs ask God? (6:10)
11. What answer was given the slain ones? (6:11)
12. What happened at the opening of the sixth seal? (6:12-14)
13. How did the inhabitants of earth respond to the events unleashed by the breaking of the seals? (6:15-17)
14. How will people try to escape from being judged by God? (6:15-17)
15. What does God want us to do as we wait for Him to judge the earth?

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