

## The Seal Judgments

Revelation 6:1-17

**Rev. 6:1** And 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." 2 And 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.

3 And when He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." 4 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 should slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

5 And when He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." And I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard as it were 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 harm the oil and the wine."

7 And when He broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." 8 And I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. And 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.

9 And when He 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; 10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 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, should be completed also.

12 And 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; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were

moved out of their places. 15 And 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; 16 and 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; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?”

**Intro:** Let me just say after reading this, now you know why most preachers do not preach through the Book of Revelation. This is an extremely challenging book. The judgments described in these verses are frightening. We concluded last Sunday with a magnificent chorus of praise to God and to the Lamb who is worthy, sung by every living creature in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and on the sea and under the sea, and all things in them (Rev. 5:11-14).

Whereas worship of God and of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, was the subject of chapters 4 and 5, wrath is the subject of Revelation 6 through 19. This morning we commence our study of God’s judgments on this wicked world, filled with rebellious men and women who have rejected the Savior Jesus Christ’s gracious offer of salvation. ***Please understand, that we, God’s redeemed*** have been removed from this earth and taken home to be with God—preserved from these coming judgments. This is the reason we should be pleading with those who do not know Christ to accept Him before its too late. Anyone who refuses to repent and accept Christ will go through these horrible judgments. May God help us to get busy sharing Christ with lost loved ones, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and with anyone else God might arrange for us to share with.

Chapter 6 introduces us to extended section, chapters 6–19, that record God’s wrath being released upon this Christ-rejecting world during the future Tribulation period. This extended section is usually divided into three series of sevenfold judgments: the 7 seal judgments (6:1-14); the 7 trumpet judgments (8:1–9:21); and the 7 bowl/vial judgments (15:1–16:21).

#### **Film clip: 7 Seals (stop at 2:05)**

Interspersed between these three narrative sections depicting God’s judgment on a world filled with Christ-rejecters are four *literary parenthesis* (7:1-17). These parenthesis do not advance the prophetic narrative, and in fact they can either look forward or backward. They can at times speak of results that have not as yet taken place in the narrative section as though it had already taken place. These *parenthesis* are designed to provide the reader with additional information.

Another issue concerns *the sequential ordering of these judgments (handout)*. In other words, do the seal judgments in chapter 6, the trumpet judgments in chapters 8–9, and the bowl judgments of chapters 15–16 follow each other in succession, or do the trumpet and bowl judgments simply magnify the seal judgments. Are all three series of judgments depicting the same thing (*simultaneously*), or do they all follow in *successive order*? A third view, and the one I favor, refers to the judgments as **“telescopic.”** That is, the 7<sup>th</sup> seal introduces the seven trumpet judgments, and is explained by them; and the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet judgment introduces the final seven bowl judgments and is explained by them.

Dr. Walvoord explains: “Each of the seven scroll’s seven seals represents a specific Divine judgment that will be poured out sequentially on the earth. The 7 seals encompass the entire period of the Tribulation culminating with the return of Jesus Christ. It seems best to understand the first 4 seals as taking place during the first half of the Tribulation, the fifth seal stretching from the first half into the second half, called the Great Tribulation, covering the final 3 ½ years, and seals 6 and 7 also taking place during the final 3 ½ years of the Tribulation.” “Apparently,” he adds, “The 7<sup>th</sup> seal contains the 7 trumpet judgments, and the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet contains the 7 bowl judgments” (*class notes*).

So, it may be concluded: the 7 seal judgments contain all the judgments leading up to Jesus Christ’s return, and the establishment of His Millennial Kingdom.

### **The First Seal: The White Horse Rider, Antichrist (6:1-2)**

Let’s look at the first seal judgment, verse 1 of Revelation chapter 6. John watches as the Lamb breaks the first seal, and hears one of the living creatures saying in a voice that sounded like thunder, Come.” The angelic creature is not commanding John to come, he was already there. The Greek word “*erkou*,” translated here as “come,” can also be rendered “go” or “proceed.” Taken in this way, the angel is commanding the rider on the horse to proceed, to go forth and release God’s judgment upon the earth.

The “voice of thunder” symbolizes the coming judgment. Much like thunder and lightning proceed an approaching storm, so here, each time the thunderous voice of one of the living creatures cries out “*erkou*,” a rider goes forth to release God’s judgment upon the earth.

v. 2 Following the angel’s thunderous command for the rider on the horse to go forth, John looked and “beheld 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.”

While some interpret the rider on the white horse as Christ because of the reference in 19:11, this is clearly a reference to Antichrist. The rider on the white horse is Antichrist who rides onto the world stage as a peacemaker, and the man with the answers to the world’s perplexing problems.

Notice that Antichrist will come forth with a bow, but no arrows, and a crown will be given to him to go forth and conquer. The Antichrist will be given great power and authority by Satan, and the world will hail him as their Messiah and deliverer. According to Daniel 9:24-27 Antichrist actually begins the Tribulation period by making a seven-year peace treaty with Israel (Dan. 9:24-27).

**Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12** that this man of lawlessness, “that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, [who comes forth] with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved, and for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”

Like all dictators in history, Antichrist will be embraced by the masses. Having brought peace and stability to the Middle East, and financial stability to a world that has gone bankrupt, he will win the hearts and minds of billions.

### **The Second Seal: The Red Horse Rider, All Out War (6:3-4)**

With the opening of the second seal in verse 2, John watched as a red horse went forth; and to him who sat on it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men should slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

The rider on the red horse symbolizes war and bloodshed. The pseudo-peace that Antichrist ushered in will be taken away, resulting in all out warfare and carnage. The sword described here is not the *hromphaiiai*, the large sword used in battle. This is actually the *machaira*, the dagger used by assassins to cut the throat of a man. Thus the red horseman signifies not only nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom, but man fighting against man. The breaking of the second seal will usher in a time of anarchy, murder, assassination, bloodshed, revolution, and war worse than anything the world has ever seen.

### **Third Seal: The Black Horse Rider, Famine (6:5-6)**

When Christ broke the third seal, John heard the third living creature saying, “Go Forth.” And I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard as it were 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 harm the oil and the wine.”

The third horseman on the black horse symbolizes famine and economic chaos. Famine usually follows on the heels of war. The scales in this rider’s hand depict food shortages, rationing, and starvation. Notice that a measure of wheat will cost a penny or a *denarius*. The *denarius* was a Roman coin that in John’s day represented a laborer’s normal day’s wage. It would normally purchase eight measures of wheat, or twenty-four measures of barley. The global food shortage will drive food prices up so much that it will take a whole day’s wage to buy a mere quart of wheat, or three quarts of barley. Starvation will ravage the globe, but notice, the famine will not impact the rich man. Oil and wine, considered the rich man’s luxuries, were not to be harmed.

### **The Fourth Seal: The Pale Horse Rider, Mass Death (6:7-8)**

7 And when He broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Go forth.” 8 And I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following after him. And 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 color of this fourth horse is described as ashen, a pale or yellowish green. The word chlorophyll or chlorine gas is derived from this word. This fourth horseman is named Death, and Hades follows closely behind. While death claims the physical part of man, Hades or Hell claims the immaterial soul. Hell is where the souls of unbelievers will be held between their physical death, and consignment to the Eternal Lake of Fire at the Great White Throne Judgment.

Notice that Death and Hell will be granted authority to kill a staggering one-fourth of the earth’s population. If the current population is around 6 billion, this judgment will claim around one-and-a-half billion people. This mass carnage will be brought about by sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts.

### **The Fifth Seal: Martyrdom of Tribulation Saints (6:9-11)**

The opening of the fifth seal shifts the focus from earth to events taking place in heaven. 9 And when He 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; 10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” 11 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, should be completed also.

The first four seals focused attention on the unleashing of God’s judgment on the earth. Now the action shifts to a group of martyrs in heaven, who cry out continuously for God to vindicate their martyrdom. These martyrs are not Christians of the Church Age, for all born-again Christians will be Raptured before the Tribulation begins. Paul affirms this in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9 that “the lawless one, the Antichrist cannot be revealed until the Restrainer is taken out of the way.” The Restrainer is a reference to the Holy Spirit, who indwells believers comprising the church. His removal is a reference to the Rapture of all born-again believers when Christ comes on the clouds and calls us home (1 Cor. 15:51-58 and 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

These martyrs, whose souls are residing underneath God’s altar in heaven, and cry out with a loud voice for God to judge those on earth who killed them, indicates that these martyrs have come out of the Tribulation on earth. These believers were put to death for holding fast to the Word of God in the midst of a degenerate world, and for their allegiance to Jesus Christ.

The Lord gives each martyr a white robe, which symbolizes their redeemed state and the gift of righteousness supplied by Jesus Christ. Further, they are told to “rest for a little while longer.” Until the full number of their fellow brethren, who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed. This promise, that God would shortly vindicate these martyrs deaths, highlights God’s divine providence, and serves to remind them, and us, that they/we are not forgotten or outside of God’s concern. For “precious” in the sight of the LORD is the death of His godly ones” (Psalm 116:15).

### **The Sixth Seal: Physical Disturbances (6:12-17)**

John must have gasped at the extent of the universal havoc that God unleashed with the breaking of the sixth seal. John says in v. 12, “And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a cataclysmic earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, and the moon became like blood; 13 and stars fell out of the sky to the earth. 14 And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.”

The effect of this catastrophic judgment is such that it causes all of mankind from kings to slaves to recognize that God the Creator is releasing His Divine wrath upon the world, and no one will be able to escape, verse 15-17.

15 And 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; 16 and 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; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?”

With such catastrophic judgments being unleashed upon the earth, the damage and effects on the minds and hearts of men and on the topography and structure of this planet are astronomical. **Thank God Christian that you will not be here!** For those on earth who experience these horrific judgments, there seems to be no turning to God in repentance, but only an attempt to hide from His holy presence.

“The sixth seal is now over on earth and silence in heaven follows for about a half an hour, like the quiet while in the eye of a hurricane. But then suddenly a new wave of judgments will begin to be poured out on the earth, the seven trumpet judgments (8:1f). Chapter seven is parenthetical, it does not carry the chronological sequence forward, but adds some important details regarding the saved of the Tribulation, many of whom are martyred” (J. Hampton Keathley, III, downloaded from his series on *Revelation*, available at Bible.org).

Conclusion:

In summary, if we have understood the teaching of chapters 4 and 5, then we know that as believers we will be Raptured to heaven and surround God’s throne, and join with all of creation in ascribing praise to God, and to the Lamb who is worthy.

In light of the coming Tribulation, and the Divine judgments to be unleashed on this earth, as described here in chapter 6, we need to get busy sharing the Lord Jesus Christ with our loved ones, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and anyone else that God might lead to us. As David Jeremiah says, “Prophecy, correctly understood, should be the greatest motivation to evangelism” (*Escape the Coming Night*, vol. 2, 35). May God help us to get busy praying for the salvation of lost souls, and empower us Spiritually to win lost souls to Christ.

### **Closing Movie Clip: Evangelism**

Perhaps you're here this morning and you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior from sin and death. Judgment will come, but thank God there is still time for you to come to the Savior. Accept Christ as I close in prayer, so that you will not have to face the coming Tribulation. As I pray, speak to God in the quietness of your own heart, and invite Christ to come in to your heart and life, and He will.

Closing prayer: