

THE SEVEN SEALS (6:1-8:5)

- At the time when John received his Revelation on the Island of Patmos, the Christian church was made up of many lower-class people, some who had lost their possessions because of the faith. They underwent religious persecution, not only physical, but also social.

What do you think their initial reaction may have been when John said that they were a kingdom who ruled over the earth? What do you think they may have expected?

- It is clear from God's Word that Christians will have to endure the same trials and tribulations of all people who live in a sin-infested world. Although it is the dream of all people, until we are in heaven there will never be a world that has no war, no sickness, no hunger, no social inequity. This is what we will learn in the vision of the Seven Seals.
- Chapter 5 introduced a scroll (or book) sealed with seven seals. The book was sealed because it contains God's plan for the future, which is a closed book to humans. Only Christ is worthy and able to open the book. This indicates future world history is in Christ's control.
- Rev. 6:1 – 8:5 describes the vision of the opening of the seven seals. The first four seals deal with events on this earth. The last three deal with God and his relation to earth and heaven. Together, the seven seals hold God's plan for the New Testament era (the time between Christ's ascension to heaven and his return on the Last Day). We see how God deals with both believers and unbelievers.
- Note that the seals picture the horror and terror of earth's history in all its severity; but the comfort of God's intervention and redemption for his Church is the overriding truth that captures our attention.
- There is a similarity between this vision (also, the next vision) and the Savior's words about the signs of the "end times" (again, this refers to the period from Jesus' ascension to heaven until his return on the Last Day).

Matthew 24:3-14

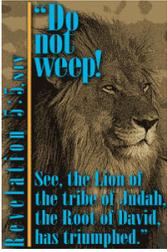
- ✠ false Christs vs. 5
- ✠ wars and rumors of wars v. 6
- ✠ famines v. 7
- ✠ pestilences (v. 7, cf. Lk 21:11)
- ✠ earthquakes v. 7
- ✠ persecution v. 9
- ✠ apostasy v. 10
- ✠ false prophets v. 11
- ✠ love growing cold v. 12
- ✠ the worldwide spread of the Gospel v. 14
- ✠ "then shall the end come" v.14

Revelation 6

- ✠ (vision of 7 Trumpets, which is the seventh seal – ch.8&9)
- ✠ the red horse (war) v. 3-4
- ✠ the black horse (famine) v. 5-6
- ✠ the pale horse (death) v. 7-8
- ✠ earthquake v. 12
- ✠ the souls under the altar v. 9-11
- ✠ (vision of the 7 trumpets, which is the seventh seal – ch.8&9)
- ✠ the white horse v. 1-2
- ✠ the end v. 12-17

These are the things that "must take place after this" in 4:1.

Conclusion: What John sees in this vision represented in symbolic form is no different from what Jesus spoke in simple, clear statements! In this chapter we have nothing new and nothing different from the Savior's teaching about the last things in Matthew's Gospel.



CHAPTER 6

The 1st Seal: The Rider on the White Horse

Vs.1-2

Remember who the Lamb is that opens the Seven Seals. Jesus

Who was the rider on the white horse?



There is some disagreement, even among orthodox commentators, about the meaning of the rider on the white horse. The two that fit with the rest of Revelation and the Bible:

- Jesus
- The Gospel message, personified

Some things to keep in mind:

- Throughout the book of Revelation what does white represent? holiness
- In ch.19 we meet a rider on a white horse who is definitely identified as the Savior. (Here the rider has one crown, but in 19:12 he is wearing many crowns.)
- “a bow” - Compare these verses with the Messianic words of Psalm 45:3-6. (What is the arrow that Christ uses to conquer nations? Mark 13:10)
- “While it is impossible to speak on this point with dogmatic certainty, yet the whole symbolism of the book of Revelation points to the conclusion that the rider on the white horse is Jesus; or, if not Jesus himself, the gospel, the Word of God. In the list of signs of the last times [which Jesus gave, recorded in Matthew], ... the worldwide proclamation of the gospel stands out as a bright ray of hope in a list otherwise composed wholly of calamities and catastrophes. This should dispose of the the argument which says that since all the other symbols of this chapter represent dangers that confront the church in this world, the rider on the white horse must also rpresent some evil thing. ... All this makes a strong case for saying that the white horse represents the worldwide preaching of the gospel.”

“With this identification of the white horse every one of the signs Jesus mentioned in Matthew 24:4-14 and the parallel passages in Mark and Luke is covered in the vision of the seven seals and in the vision of the seven trumpets, which is the vision of the seventh seal.”

What comfort is there in knowing that no matter what is going on in the world, the Gospel will still be riding forth around the globe conquering?

The 2nd Seal: the Rider on the Red Horse Vs.3-4

What does the red horse of the second seal symbolize? war

Let  interpret 

5:5-6 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." 6Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.

Let  interpret 

19 ¹¹I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. ¹²His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns.

Psalm 45 ³Gird your sword upon your side, O mighty one; clothe yourself with splendor and majesty. ⁴In your majesty ride forth victoriously in behalf of truth, humility and righteousness; let your right hand display awesome deeds. ⁵Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king's enemies; let the nations fall beneath your feet. ⁶Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.



The Distant Triumph Song
Siegbert W. Becker

What does the color red symbolize in Revelation?

Opposition to God: wickedness and evil

What should we be reminded of whenever we hear of a war on the news? These are signs Jesus spoke of happening up to the time of his coming on the last Day.

Although war is a terrible thing, and there will be wars until the end, what confidence can Christians have?

Victory / peace in the End.

Evaluate: since Jesus says there will always be wars, Christians should not be looking to create "peace on earth."

The 3rd Seal: The Rider on the Black Horse vs.5-6

"The voice is apparently offering for sale the equivalent of a loaf of bread for a day's wages" (Becker, p.108).

✠ During what sort of times does the price of food become unbearably high? famine

Instead of "don't damage the oil and the wine", perhaps it could better be translated "don't adulterate the oil and the wine".

✠ What temptation is there for merchants to do with such commodities in order to make them "stretch" (especially in times of scarceness or high demand)?

Cheating others

So, what does the black horse of the third seal symbolize? (Black is used only here and 6:12.) calamity

Once again, what ought to be recalled to our minds every time we hear of a famine?

These are signs Jesus spoke of happening up to the time of his coming on the last Day.

The 4th Seal: The Rider on the Pale Horse vs.7-8

The word "pale" is the Greek word that is related to the English word Chlorophyll. What color is Chlorophyll? Chlorophyll gives leaves their green color

"It was the word that Greek doctors used to describe the color of a sick person" (Becker, p.109).

In similar fashion, what do we mean when we say that someone is "green around the gills"?

So, what does the pale (green) horse of the fourth seal symbolize? Sickness.

What truth does the fact that Death is followed by Hades teach?

"Far more fearful than temporal death is the eternal death that threatens those who die without faith in the Lamb, who have rejected the gospel promises which the rider on the white horse proclaimed."

As time continues, death will carry away its normal allotted share of people. With that in mind, what comfort is there in the words "they were given power" and also in the words "over a fourth of the earth"?

Let  interpret 

Luke 21 ¹⁰Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

12 ³Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.

17 ³Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.

18 ¹²cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble... They will weep and mourn ¹⁶and cry out: "Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!

Isaiah 1 "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Let  interpret 

2 Kings 6:24-30 ²⁴ Some time later, Ben-Hadad king of Aram mobilized his entire army and marched up and laid siege to Samaria. ²⁵ There was a great famine in the city; the siege lasted so long that a donkey's head sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a quarter of a cab of seed pods for five

The 5th Seal: The Souls under the Altar Vs.9-11

- The opening of the fourth seal spoke of death. The opening of the 5th seal also speaks of death. Only in this case death is not accompanied by Hades.
- For the first four seals, one of the four living creatures (see 4:6-8) announced the opening of the seals. Here there is no living creature involved.

Can you see a shift in focus, or change in scene, that would make this significant?

- With this seal the general history of earth is no longer under discussion. Here the subject is Christ's Church and the martyrdom suffered by Christ's people as an ongoing part of earth's history.

Who were the souls under the altar? For what cause did they die while on this earth? Where are they now?

An aside somewhat: what do these verses say about the Christian's existence after death and before Judgment Day?

What did they pray for? Is it wrong to pray for the judgment of Christ's enemies? Explain.

What was God's answer to the martyr's question of how long? How long were they to wait? Why does God delay?

- ✠ Consider: to what period of time does "wait a little longer" refer? Practically speaking, what does God's delaying mean for us?

- ✠ A Christian preacher once said, "O Lord, give me souls, or take my soul." Agree or disagree.

What was the white robe that they were given?

The 6th Seal: The Last Judgment vs.12-17

What day is being pictured?

What will be severely changed/altered on that day?

What will the unbelievers on the earth prefer instead of standing before the throne of the Judge? Why are all the ungodly terrified by the signs of Christ's return?

Who will escape the wrath and be able to stand on that day? Compare Psalm 130:3-4. Think back to the white robes earlier in this chapter. Look ahead to the next chapter also and you'll see who will stand on that day.

Let  interpret 

2 Peter 3 ⁸But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

7 ¹⁴I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.

2 Peter 3 ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Matthew 24 ²⁹"Immediately after the distress of those days " the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken "