

**Chapter summary** - *The worship described in Revelation 4–5 is preparation for the wrath described in Revelation 6–19. It seems strange to us that worship and judgment should go together, but this is because we do not fully understand either the holiness of God or the sinfulness of man. Nor do we grasp the total picture of what God wants to accomplish and how the forces of evil have opposed Him. God is long-suffering, but eventually He must judge sin and vindicate His servants.*<sup>1</sup>

*The seal judgments of Revelation 6 bring us to that section of the book which deals for the first time with the future of earth. The seal judgments are successive and chronological. They pertain primarily to the first half of the tribulation period. They are introductory and preliminary judgments. They also provide a kind of summary of the judgments which are distributed over chapters 8-19.<sup>2</sup> (The six seals extend to the entire end of the seven year tribulation period. The seventh seal contains the seven trumpet judgments, of which the seventh trumpet contains the seven bowl judgments.)*

*Turmoil reigns on earth. People wander through rooms, looking for loved ones. The only churches that could offer any solace are empty. Ethical standards are replaced by vague value systems and truth is relative.*

*After the mass disappearing act of millions, those who remain will be tense, wondering what will happen next in this time of uncertainty. Some may cry, "God, where are You?"*

*God is on His throne in heaven. In His right hand He has a record of the sequence of events for the next seven years. The Father is holding a scroll with writing on both sides, containing seven seals which will reveal the sobering judgments to come upon the world before Jesus returns to earth.*

*Only One is worthy to take the scroll and reveal its contents, and that is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, the Lamb. John, his old eyes filled with tears, watches while Jesus takes the scroll from His Father, and breaks the first seal. The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders are so overcome that they fall down to worship. Then heaven echoes with a new song:*

*You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.*

*You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9).*

*As the scroll unrolls, one seal is removed to disclose the first in a series of judgments. When successive seals are removed, the scroll unrolls again, each time revealing a worse horror. Altogether, there are three series of judgments: the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls.<sup>3</sup>*



### COMMENTARY:

<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 1997, Logos Library System.

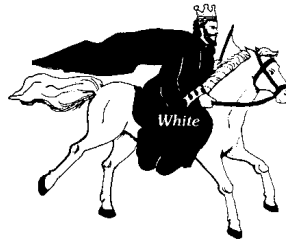
<sup>2</sup> John L. Benson, *Revelation: The Final Countdown*, p. 33

<sup>3</sup> David Jeremiah, *Escape the Coming Night*, pp. 95, 96

## IV. the vision of the Final Days, (Chs. 6-22)

A. **THE SEAL JUDGMENTS** - (6:1-8:5) -- "*AN INSURANCE COMPANY'S WORST NIGHTMARE*"

## 1. The first seal, (1, 2)

📖 **INTERPRETATION:**<sup>4</sup>**The White Horse, Peace & Safety**

- <sup>1</sup> **Now** (after receiving the scroll), **I saw when the Lamb** (Jesus Christ), **opened one of the** (seven), **seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures** (that surrounded God the Father's throne), **saying with a voice** (that sounded), **like thunder** (summoning one of four horsemen to), "**Come and see.**"<sup>5</sup>
- <sup>2</sup> **And I looked, and behold, a white horse**, (symbolizing peace or victory answered the command). **He who sat on it had a bow** (but no arrows); **and a crown** (not of kingship, but a victors wreath)], **was given** (awarded), **to him,**<sup>6</sup> (e.g., Nobel Award) **and he went out** (into the world with only a bow), **conquering and to** (continue to), **conquer.**<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> **Two interpretations.** The *premillennialist* [Christ returns before the millennial age], links this passage with Matt. 24:5–8 and sees it as describing events preceding the appearance of the Antichrist. These preliminary judgments are thought to continue from Rev. 6 through 12. Amillennialists [no millennial age following Christ's return], take this as a symbolic representation of the struggle of the Gospel in a hostile world, to culminate in God's final judgment over sin. The chapter thus is a "nutshell" view of history from the Cross to the Second Coming. Richards, Lawrence O., *The Bible Reader's Companion*, 1997, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

<sup>5</sup> The command is not addressed to the Lamb nor to John (the correct text omits *kai ijde* [*kai ide*] "and see") as in 17:1; 21:9, but to one of the four horsemen each time. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Logos Library System.

<sup>6</sup> Some, seeing a parallel with 19:11, identify the one **who sat on** the white horse as Christ. But since Christ opens the sealed scroll, He cannot be the rider. Further this rider wears a *stephanos*, a crown won as a prize; in 19:12 Christ wears many *diademas*, royal crowns. Unlike this rider, who carries a bow, Christ carries a sword (19:15). Finally, Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation, not at its beginning.

Others identify the rider as Antichrist. But since the other three riders represent not individual persons but impersonal forces (war, famine, and death), it is best to view the first one as a force as well. That force is best defined as a worldwide peace, shattered during the second seal by the second rider; 6:4). MacArthur, *Revelation* 1-11, p. 178 [This may refer to Matthew 24:4, 5]

The horse and the rider are to represent some event or circumstance not a person. We are not given the information needed to identify the riders; only information to identify what they and the horses symbolize.

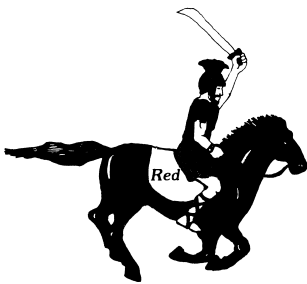
<sup>7</sup> That the rider **had a bow** but no arrows, and that he was honored with a **crown that was freely given to him**, reveals that his **conquering** will involve bloodless victories. His crown (*stephanos*) is a winner's crown. He is no real king and has no real monarch's crown (*diadema*), but has won a crown from the world for his triumphant achievements leading to world peace. He will not **conquer** by military force, but by cunning and deceit (cf. 2 Thess. 2:9-11). His conquest will be a "cold war" victory, a peace won by agreement, not conflict (Dan. 9:24-27). MacArthur, *Revelation* 1-11, p. 179

F APPLICATION:

Revelation 6:1, 2 could be the period of time when the initial seven year covenant will be established which Daniel speaks of in Daniel 9:24-27. This is a covenant that a single person or a particular group of people will establish at the tribulation time. If the establishment of peace by this rider on the white horse is the covenant of Daniel 9, then it is also the covenant that the Roman Prince will confirm at the middle of the tribulation period. The initial establishment of the covenant will probably be instituted through political conquest; via various types of treaties depending upon the strengths and weaknesses of the nations involved. This would also agree with Christ's description of this period of time in Matthew 24:4-8; not only with this horse, but with the other three as well. This sounds exactly like what God describes in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3 when everyone is proclaiming a time of peace and safety, but in truth sudden destruction is just around the corner.

"It should be remembered that any ordered, peaceful life on earth is purely the result of God's gracious intervention. The 'hinderer' of II Thessalonians 2 is holding back human passions. But there will come a day when all murderous evil of the human heart will be unleashed and 'they will slay one another.'"<sup>8</sup>

## 2. The Second seal, (3, 4)


 INTERPRETATION:
The Red Horse, War

<sup>3</sup> **When** (the first rider accomplished his task), **He** (Jesus Christ), **opened the second seal, I heard the second** (of the four), **living creature[s] saying,** (or summoning the second horseman to), **"Come and see."**

<sup>4</sup> (And sure enough), **Another horse, fiery red,** (symbolizing war and death answered the command and), **went out,** (into the earth). **And it was granted** (i.e., power and authority was conferred), **to the one who sat on it to take** (to snatch or remove) **peace from the earth** (to reverse the temporary peace that the first rider established), **and that** (as a consequence), **people should kill** (lit. slaughter or butcher), **one another** (there will be great carnage); **and there was given to him** (this rider on the red horse), **a great sword,** (with which to massacre [Mat. 24:6, 7a]).

F APPLICATION:

This rider on the red horse could possibly depict the King of the North in Daniel 8:23-25 and in 11:40-45, when he makes his bid for the Middle East against the King of the South; (although I believe that the time period for this fight fits better in the middle portion of the seven year tribulation period).

<sup>8</sup> Newell, *The Book of The Revelation*, pp. 103, 104

This war could also depict countries who stand opposed to the person or organization represented by the first rider in his political conquest for world peace. Possibly when the first rider takes his final count of all of the "yeas" and "nays," the second rider organizes the "yeas" to attack the "nays" in an attempt to force them to comply with the design of initial conquest. Part of the "nays" would probably include the believers who came to salvation after the rapture and realize what is going on. They may be some of the martyrs in verses 9-11.

Whether or not either of these possibilities apply at all, or in part, what is obvious is God's sovereign hand over men's affairs. John MacArthur brings this insight out wonderfully. He says, "*All that happens will be under God's sovereign control. He allows the false peace, and He ends it and brings war on the earth. Contrary to the teaching of some, the judgments of the Tribulation do not reflect the wrath of men or the wrath of Satan; they can only express God's wrath poured out on the world. It is He who holds the seven-sealed scroll and the Lamb who unrolls it.*"<sup>9</sup> To add to John's argument, it is God's four living creatures surrounding His throne that act to execute the judgment when Christ breaks a seal. It is from God the Father's throne that the riders of these horses originate and leave to carry out the will of God contained in the instructions under the seal. It is by the Father that the riders are "given" their power and authority, (Rev. 6:2, 4, 8). These judgments don't pertain to God's permissive will concerning choices and actions he allows the human race and Satan to make and perform, using them ultimately to accomplish His will. These judgements pertain to God's decreed will. That means He is making the decisions and performing the actions personally!

### 3. The Third seal, (5, 6)

#### INTERPRETATION:

#### The Black Horse, Famine



<sup>5</sup> **When** (the second rider accomplished his task), **He** (Jesus Christ), **opened the third seal, I heard the third** (of the four), **living creature[s] say**, (or summon the third horseman to), "**Come and see.**" **So I looked** (I continued to watch the unfolding drama), **and behold** (this time appeared), **a black horse** (symbolizing mourning and famine in answer to the command), **and he who sat on it had a pair of scales** (to measure by), **in his hand.**

<sup>6</sup> **And** (then something different from the previous horses and riders happened), **I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures** (presumably God the Father since He is Spirit and since He is surrounded by these living creatures), **saying**, (as a result of the black horse and his rider), "**A quart of wheat** (a daily ration for one person), **for a denarius** (a days wages), **and three quarts of barley** (which could feed a few people, but has less nutritional value), **for a denarius** (a days wages); **and do not** (the rider is commanded), **harm the oil and the wine,**" (the olive trees and the grapevines [Mat. 24:7b).

<sup>9</sup> MacArthur, *Revelation* 1-11, p. 180

F APPLICATION:

It will take an entire days wages to adequately supply a persons daily food need. He can curb the acute hunger pains of three or four if he buys barley, but none of them would receive the nutritional quota they need. This is to say nothing about having enough money to buy other necessities of life! It will be a time of great hardship for the average person.

## 4. The Fourth seal, (7, 8)


 INTERPRETATION:
The Pale Horse, Death

<sup>7</sup> **"When** (the third rider accomplished his task), **He** (Jesus Christ), **opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth** (of the four), **living creature[s] saying,** (or summon the third horseman to), **"Come and see."**

<sup>8</sup> **So I looked** (once again), **and behold,** (there was), **a pale horse,** (greenish yellow horse - symbolizing death and terror who answered the command). **And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him,** (Death did the killing and Hades swallowed up his victims). **And** (following in the wake of the black horse and his rider--terrible famine), **power** (authority), **was given** (conferred), **to them over a fourth** (a quarter), **of the earth, to kill** (put to death), **with sword** (by war), **with hunger** (by starvation), **with death** (by disease), **and by the beasts of the earth** (by diseased animals [*e.g., rabies or the bubonic plague*]).

F APPLICATION:

If the worlds population was 6 billion, 1.5 billion would die as a result of this judgment alone. The result of Death and Hades is going to yield a catastrophic number of deaths. On top of those who actually died during the war and famine period! What a contrast to the peace and safety the world thought it possessed.

As is commonly the case, one's perception of truth and the reality of truth are vastly different from one another. This vast difference can often times turn our world, and the world of those around us, upside down and inside out.

 **INTERPRETATION:****The Tribulation Martyrs**

- <sup>9</sup> **"When** (the fourth rider accomplished his task), **He** (Jesus Christ), **opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls**  
<sup>10</sup> (disembodied believers ["*absent from the body, present with the Lord*," 2 Cor. 5:8]), **of those who had been slain** (probably during the tribulation period so far by the ecumenical church [Rev. 17]),<sup>11</sup> **for** (on account of), **the word of God** (their insisting upon God's claims on man and warnings to them to which the prophets of old and the disciples bore witness), **and for the testimony which they held**, (for not keeping quiet that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God - who died, rose again and is now interceding for the saints and will soon come again as the King of kings [cp., 1:9]).<sup>12</sup>
- <sup>10</sup> **And they** (the martyrs), **cried with a loud voice** (their concern - not if God is going to avenge them, but), **saying, "How long, O Lord,** (because You are), **holy** (and must judge sin), **and true** (and must keep Your promises as well [e.g., Num. 23:19; Luke 21:33]), **until You judge** (condemn), **and avenge** (requite), **our blood** (the taking of our lives), **on those who dwell on the earth"** (that took our lives [*Imprecatory prayers, {e.g., 2 Chron. 24:22; Psa. 79:6; 54:5; 68:22, 23; 143:12}*])?<sup>13</sup>
- <sup>11</sup> **Then** (before a word was said to them), **a white robe** (symbolizing the imputed righteousness of Christ), **was given to each of them** (verifying their profession of Jesus Christ as Savior); **and** (then), **it was said to them that they should rest** (suspend their righteous anger), **a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants** (those who continue to be slain for the word of God and their testimony), **and their brethren** (in general), **who would be killed as they** (already), **were, was completed**, (until the last martyr ordained to be martyred dies). (Mat. 24:8-14)

<sup>10</sup> When the Old Testament priest presented an animal sacrifice, the victim's blood was poured out at the base of the brazen altar (Lev. 4:7, 18, 25, 30). In Old Testament imagery, blood represents life (Lev. 17:11). So, here in Revelation, the souls of the martyrs "under the altar" indicates that their lives were given sacrificially to the glory of God. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Logos Library System

<sup>11</sup> The ecumenical church (the woman in Rev. 17), will be persecuting the church in the first half of the tribulation period. Following the mid point of the tribulation the Beast (the little horn of Daniel seven, the Roman Prince), will rise to power and destroy the ecumenical church. The Roman Prince will then take over the martyrdom of the saints. The seals again show us that they comprise of the entire seven years of the tribulation period giving us an overall view.

<sup>12</sup> They had offered their lives as a sacrifice, having clung tenaciously to the testimony which they had received concerning the Christ and salvation in Him. Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, p. 106

<sup>13</sup> These imprecatory prayers would not only cry out for retribution for the wrong committed to them personally, but they would also and primarily pertain to God vindicating His holiness and establishing His kingdom.

F APPLICATION:

This fifth seal exhibits especially three things: First, the patience of God--"He proceeds slowly and reluctantly from mercy to judgment." Second, the change of dispensation evidenced in the character of the prayers of these martyrs for vengeance. Third, the utter wickedness of the earth which is plainly expected to go on *martyring the* full complement of God's saints.<sup>14</sup>

Every believer in Christ ought to be prepared for martyrdom; for Christians ... cannot express their priestly communion with their Lord more perfectly than when they accept the suffering and the glory of martyrdom.<sup>15</sup>

### 6. The sixth seal, (12-17) -- "*COMING SOON: COSMIC DISASTER!*"

#### INTERPRETATION:

#### The Earthly and Heavenly Disturbances

<sup>12</sup> **I looked** (again at Jesus Christ), **when He opened the sixth seal, and behold** (right afterwards), **there was a great earthquake** (an earthquake of incredible magnitude [Mat. 24:7]); **and** (as a result of the dust, steam, and gases of the earthquake) **the sun became black as sackcloth of hair** (usually worn by mourners), **and the moon became like blood**, (it had a blood like appearance).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> **And the stars of heaven fell to the earth** (probably a horde of shooting stars), **as** (in the same way as), **a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind**.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Newell, *The Book of The Revelation*, p. 107

<sup>15</sup> Gaebelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 12., p. 475.

<sup>16</sup> Whether the crust consists of great moving plates is a current matter of controversy among geophysicists, so the ultimate cause of earthquakes is still not known. In all likelihood, the entire complex of crustal instabilities is a remnant of the phenomena of the great Flood, especially the breakup of the fountains of the great deep.

In any case, the vast worldwide network of unstable earthquake belts around the world suddenly will begin to slip and fracture on a global basis and a gigantic earthquake will ensue. This is evidently, and naturally, accompanied by tremendous volcanic eruptions, spewing vast quantities of dust and steam and gases into the upper atmosphere. It is probably these that will cause the sun to be darkened and the moon to appear blood-red.

Morris, *The Revelation Record*, p. 121

The violent shaking, the covering of debris, and the absence of sunshine alone would have a devastating impact upon the earth and man's need for its resources.

<sup>17</sup> This cannot mean the literal stars in the heavens as many of them are even bigger than the earth, and even if they weren't their mass alone would obliterate the earth at the very onset. Also, we find the stars in the heavens in Revelation 8:12. Meteorites, comets or asteroids seem most likely to be represented here.

- <sup>14</sup> **Then the sky** (itself - with all of this extra destruction and debris in the air), **receded as a scroll when it is rolled up** (the sky was rolled up in the billows of dirt, smoke and gases as they rolled across the sky), **and** (not just a few or a region, but), **every mountain and island was moved out of its place**, (the mountains shifted and the islands sank).
- <sup>15</sup> **And the kings of the earth** (the rulers), **the great men** (the politicians), **the rich men** (the wealthy), **the commanders** (the military leaders), **the mighty men** (the influential), **every slave and every free man**, (anyone and everyone left), **hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the** (fallen), **mountains**
- <sup>16</sup> **and said** (in earnest and with urgency), **to the** (unstable), **mountains and rocks**, **“Fall on us and hide us** (conceal us), **from the face** (the presence), **of Him** (God the Father), **who sits on the throne** (of the universe), **and from the wrath** (the divine indignation), **of the Lamb** (Jesus Christ, God the Son -- Rather than cry out for God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ, they cried out to God's creation to hide them from Jesus Christ.)
- <sup>17</sup> **“For** (there was no question now as to the fact that), **the great day of His** (God's), **wrath has come** (has truly arrived), **and who is able to stand?”** ("Who could face a just, holy, sovereign God and be left standing?")

#### F APPLICATION:

Everyone is on equal ground now and as Pharaoh tried to withstand the ten plagues of God's judgment and failed, so will anyone who thinks he can withstand the seven seals judgments of God.

The sixth seal described here in Revelation 6 is referred to in Isaiah 2 as well. For example, they try to hide from God in the rocks (v. 10, 19; 21); all people, no matter who they are, are humbled (v. 11-18 [the mountains and different trees symbolizing the different kinds of people groups]); and the earth shall shake terribly (v. 19b, 21b).



F APPLICATION:

 INTERPRETATION:

 COMMENTARY:

NOTES: