



Revelation

Chapters Six & Seven

John is now shown *the things which shortly to come to pass* through the opening of the seven seals. He is being shown things about the past, present, and future (1:19). Chapter six describes the events of the opening of the first six seals, while chapter seven is an interlude between the opening of the sixth and seven seal. Remember, that when the seven seal is opened the mystery of God will be finished as Jesus and the saints will be avenged.

Outline of Chapter 6 & 7

- I. **Six Seals Are Opened:** Judgment is executed, 6:1-17
 - A. **The Four Horseman**
 - 1) **The First Seal—White Horse:** 6:1-2
 - 2) **The Second Seal—Red Horse:** War, 6:3-4
 - 3) **The Third Seal—Black Horse:** Famine, 6:5-6
 - 4) **The Fourth Seal—Ashen Horse:** Death, 6:7-8
 - B. **The Fifth Seal—Martyrs:** 6:9-11
 - C. **The Sixth Seal—Terror:** 6:12-17
- II. **The 144,000:** The sealing of the Saints, 6:1-17
 - A. **An Interlude:** 7:1-3
 - B. **The Number Sealed:** 7:4-8
 - C. **The Great Multitude:** 7:9-17

First Four Seals: The Four Horseman, 6:1-8

The first four seals describe four riders on four different colored horses. The central Old Testament passage behind the imagery of the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" is Zechariah 6:1-7, which pictures the Four Winds as God's chariots driven by His agents, who go back and forth patrolling the earth.¹

Now I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming forth from between the two mountains; and the mountains *were* bronze mountains. ²With the first chariot *were* red horses, with the second chariot black horses, ³with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot strong dappled horses. ⁴Then I spoke and said to the angel who was speaking with me, "What are these, my lord?" ⁵The angel replied to me, "These are the four spirits of heaven, going forth after standing before the Lord of all the earth. Zechariah 6:1-5

¹ Chilton, pg 183

The White Horse: 6:1, 2; **JESUS CHRIST** This rider wears a crown (the *stephanos*, the victor's crown) and carries a bow. As in the Old Testament², here the horse is used to symbolize a heavenly mission of conquest³. Of the rider, the NIV reads, *'he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.'* This is a picture of **Christ** conquering the world just as He conquered death and now establishes His kingdom through the preaching of the gospel. Later, Christ is positively identified as this rider, being called the *Faithful and True* and the *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*.⁴ This action will result in His enemies rising up to battle the Saints.

The Red Horse: 6:3, 4; **WAR** Jesus will come against Israel by using the red armies of Rome to wage **war**. The red symbolizes the bloodshed in a 3 ½ year campaign against Palestine. *"For they have spilled the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink as they deserve"* (16:6). Josephus writes, "It was then common to see cities filled with dead bodies, still lying unburied, and those of old men, mixed with infants, all dead, and scattered about together; women also lay amongst them."⁵

The Black Horse: 6:5, 6; **FAMINE** Famine is indicated by this rider carrying a pair of scales. As Rome cut off all food supplies economic hardship came. A day's wages (a denarius) would support only one person, leaving the family to go hungry. Gloom and despair prevails. Josephus writes that while oil and wine were plentiful in Jerusalem, food was not.⁶ Jesus has promised all of this earlier.⁷ Again, Josephus writes, "As the famine grew worse, the frenzy of the insurgents kept pace with it, and every day both these horrors burned more fiercely...Nowhere was a table laid-the food was snatched half cooked from the fire and torn into pieces."⁸

The Ashen Horse: 6:7, 8; **DEATH** This pale green horse brings death, followed by the grave (Hades), even up to a quarter of Palestine. This is simply a summary of all the covenantal curses in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.⁹ Remember, it is Jesus who is bringing these judgments of wars, famine, and death to Israel, as His vengeance against them for killing the apostles and the prophets. We are nearing the end.

The Fifth Seal: Martyrs, 6:9-11

Jesus has promised His disciples that they would be persecuted, betrayed by members of their own household, and even be put to death for His sake. *"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword"* (Matthew 10:34). We are now shown the souls of those who were slain on the earth and now are before the altar. These would include the faithful from the Old Testaments and Christians who have sacrificed their life for Christ. They ask simply, "How long?"¹⁰ before they receive vengeance by their murderers being judged. St.

² See Jeremiah 4:13; Habakkuk 1:8; 3:8-13; Zechariah 1:8, 10; 10:3; Psalm 7:12; 45:5

³ Homer Hailey, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, pg. 189

⁴ Revelation 11:11-16

⁵ Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, ii.xviii.2;

⁶ Josephus, *Wars* 5:13

⁷ Matthew 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11

⁸ Josephus, *The Jewish War*, v.x.2.

⁹ Chilton pg. 191

¹⁰ Chilton writes, "How long?" is a standard phrase throughout Scripture for invoking divine justice for the oppressed (cf. Ps. 6:3; 13:1-2; 35:17; 74:10; 79:5; 80:4; 89:46; 90:13; 94:3-4; Hab. 1:2; 2:6)." Pg. 194

John's readers would not have failed to notice another subtle point: If the martyrs' blood is flowing around the base of the altar, it must be the priests of Jerusalem who have spilled it.¹¹ They are told to rest a **little while**, for the "the days of vengeance" (Luke 21:22) are coming. That time will come after the martyr of 'their fellow servants and their brethren' be completed. Israel's cup of iniquity was almost full.

The Sixth Seal: Destruction! 6:12-17

With the opening of the sixth seal we are nearing the end of the events which will bring about the end of the Jewish nation. All of the judgments promised in God's covenant with Israel is now about to be played out. He created this people as a kingdom for His own, and now their unfaithfulness will bring about their *de-creation* – God's judgments (and the revelation of His presence as Judge over a sinful world) are spoken of in terms of de-creation, the collapse of the universe.¹² Here we witness destabilization from a **giant earthquake**, followed by **sun** going dark, the **moon** becoming like blood and **stars** falling to the earth. This is all imagery of a nation's leaders falling, which now in turn affects the people. The **sky** is split and **mountains** are moved – leaving no place for people to seek safety except in caves.

Hosea's prophecy against Israel is being fulfilled:

“...the sin of Israel, will be destroyed; Thorn and thistle will grow on their altars; Then they will say to the mountains, “Cover us!” And to the hills, “Fall on us!” (Hosea 10:8)

When the women were weeping for Jesus as He was being led away to be crucified, Jesus quotes this very prophecy (Luke 23:27-30). He warns them that they should be weeping for themselves for *the days are coming* that it would be better to never had birthed children. The coming terror will have people wishing they were dead – for they will begin to say to the mountains, “*fall on us!*”

The Interlude: Sealing of the 144,000, 7:1-12

Christians saw themselves as the true descendants of Abraham¹³, the promised restoration of Israel, and the spiritual temple where God actually dwelled.¹⁴ With the nation of Jews about to be destroyed there is now a pause so the faithful servants of God can be sealed so as to not be destroyed with the wicked. "One of the most remarkable things about the siege of Jerusalem was the miraculous escape of the Christians. It has been estimated that over a million Jews lost their lives in that terrible siege, but not one of them was a Christian."¹⁵ How did this come about?

First, God holds back the **winds** of judgment: *After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth (7:1).*

¹¹ Chilton pg 194

¹² See David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: A Biblical Theology of Dominion* (Ft. Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1985), pp. 98ff., 133ff.

¹³ See Galatians 3:26-29

¹⁴ See Ephesians 2:19-22

¹⁵ J. Marcellus Kik. *An Eschatology of Victory* (Nutley, NJ: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 96f.

Winds were often used in the Old Testament to speak of God's judgment:

An east wind will come, the wind of the Lord coming up from the wilderness; And his fountain will become dry and his spring will be dried up; It will plunder his treasury of every precious article. Samaria will be held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God. They will fall by the sword, their little ones will be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women will be ripped open.
Hosea 13:15-16

Second, the bond-servants of God are **sealed** before God's final judgment comes upon the Jews.

A seal in the Biblical word signified:

- A mark of ownership
- A guarantee of protection
- A grant of authority and power over

Such imagery is found vividly in Ezekiel 9:1-7 where God is going to destroy Jerusalem but first every godly individual is first marked:

"Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst. Utterly slay old men, young men, maidens, little children, and women, but do not touch any man on whom is the mark." Ezekiel 9:5, 6

Third, the number of those sealed is **perfect** and **complete**, 144,000. God does not miss a single one of His people. Jesus does not promise to spare us from persecution, or even death. But He does promise to protect each of us:

... they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives." Luke 21:16-19

As part of Christ's church, we are citizens of a kingdom *which cannot be destroyed*, and of which the *gates of Hades cannot overpower*, and how much less so the kingdoms of men.

This complete numbering is signified by sealing all the faithful of the Old Testament – one thousand (a perfect number) from each tribe times twelve, giving us 144,000. These faithful Jews became the remnant from which the church began as the gospel was preached to the Jews first, and then the Gentiles. In this complete 144,000, all of faithful Israel is being saved.

Fourth, God seals all of those who are His, an innumerable multitude. Note that the text says John *heard* the number of those being sealed. But when he actually looked he saw a **great multitude** which no one could count, and from every nation! This 144,000 is not to be taken as a literal number, but a symbolic number of perfect completeness. Were we to actually see this great multitude, we would be no more able to number them than could we count the stars.

This great multitude is standing before the throne and before the Lamb. While may not know their number, be sure that God does, for He has written each of their name in the book of life. They are His people, past and present, who have found salvation in His blood. They are the 144,000.

The Great Tribulation: Where are they from? 7:13-17

Before the seven sealed is opened a question is asked of John:

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?". Luke 21:16-19

Being that John did not know, the answer is given:

- They have come out of the great tribulation on the earth
- This is the tribulation of which Jesus spoke (Matthew 24:21; Mark 13:19)
- They came out of the tribulation by dying (the only way to heaven is by leaving your body)
- They are Christians, obvious by the fact that they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb
- They currently live before God's throne (as do all Christians upon their death)
- They serve Him day and night (we will not be resting with nothing to do, but busy serving God)
- They are protected by God's presence
- They will neither hunger or thirst anymore
- They will not grow weary by the heat
- They will drink of the waters of life
- God will wipe away every tear from their eye

Can you imagine how encouraging this picture was for those who were currently enduring the great tribulation on the earth? To know that death is not a defeat, but a victory which places you right before the throne of God? To cry no more, but only rejoice in the presence of God?

This picture is for you and me, too. Let us just stay faithful unto death. Let us overcome.

Parallels between the Synoptic Gospels and the Book of Revelation

Revelation 6

1. War (v1-2)
2. International strife (v3-4)
3. Famine (v5-6)
4. Pestilence (v7-8)
5. Persecution (v9-10)
6. Earthquake; De-creation (v12-17)

Matthew 24

1. Wars (v6)
2. International strife (v7a)
3. Famines (v7b)
4. Earthquakes (v7c)
5. Persecutions (v9-13)
6. De-creation (v15-31)

Mark 13

1. Wars (v7)
2. International strife (v8a)
3. Earthquakes (v8b)
4. Famines (v8c)
5. Persecutions (v9-13)
6. De-creation (v14-27)

Luke 21

1. Wars (v. 9)
2. International strife (v10)
3. Earthquakes (v11a)
4. Plagues and famines (v11b)
5. Persecution (v12-19)
6. De-creation (v20-27)