

Revelation: Chapter 6

First Seal

Rev 6:1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

- the Lamb opened-

“Up to this time only the Father knew the time of the destruction of Jerusalem (Mat 24:36).”

Arthur Ogden- Pg. 98

- The first five chapters prepare us for the revealing of the real apocalypse that we are about to see. The first of the four creatures is the lion. The thunderous call signifies judgement and sober tidings.
- Come! – (“and see” are added by the KJV but were not in the original text) calling to the first horse to come forth.

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Rev 6:2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

- white horse- indicates military triumph. “Derived from the fact that white horses were rode by conquerors on the days of their triumph... the triumphs granted by the Romans to their victorious generals...” (Barnes) The opinions on the person and nature of this rider are numerous but here he will be viewed from the following information that fits, not only the time in

which The Revelation was penned but, the context of the rider as it applies to “things that must shortly come to pass” (1:1, 19); which John did not know of since this was written **before** the destruction of Jerusalem (*Mat 24- 70 AD*). “The whole description, so far as it is a representation of triumph, is a representation of the triumph of war, not of the gospel of peace. ...all the consequences in the opening of each of the seals where the horseman appears, are such as are usually connected with war.” (*Barnes*) The rider of this white horse is therefore not to be mistaken as the Rider of the white horse in 19:11. (*Verses 4-8 depict the conditions within the city of Jerusalem before her fall in 70 AD.*)

- bow- represented an implement of war, thus military power: Jer 51:56.

- crown- of victory, not royalty. See Dan 4:17-37 since it was given to him.

Gk.4735-στέφανος-stephanos-*stef'-an-os*

From an apparently primary “stepho”
(to *twine* or *wreathe*)

(*Again, this is not the same horse and rider of 19:11-15*)

- conquering, and to conquer- Gk. "*overcoming and that he might overcome*". This had to do with the victorious military conquest given to Rome: Dan 7:21.

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Second Seal

Rev 6:3 And when He had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

- He- The Lamb (*v. 1*). The second of the creatures, the ox or calf, calls on the second horse and rider to come forth.

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Rev 6:4 And there went out another horse *that was red*: and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

- red horse- indicates civil war and carnage. Within the city of Jerusalem there was “unemployment, *unrest (particularly by the Zealots)*, hatred of the rich, hatred of Christians, strikes by Temple workers” and a “deep social rift between the rich and the poor.” *The Destruction of Jerusalem by Ray Murray, Jr.*

- was given to him- (*17:17*) God controls the events through chaos, civil war and upheaval. (*Job 1:12; 2:6*)

- sword- indicative of warfare. Jesus in Mat 24 spoke of the encroaching destruction of Jerusalem (*70 AD -at the time of this writing; future*) by the Romans. The mixing of kingdoms (*Dan 2:43*) due to Rome’s constant expansion through war and the effect that alien cultures would have on her government, had an effect on the Christians who lived among them. It may well be why Jesus said to “make disciples of **all** nations” (*Mat 28:19*) (*Emp. added*): Mat 24:6-10.

- God's people, through all of this, would be affected, thus the warnings here.

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Third Seal

Rev 6:5 And when He had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

- With the opening of the third seal, the third creature, who is the one with the face of a man, bids the third horse and rider to come.

- black horse- indicates deep distress caused by the lack of commerce and Rome's unrelenting siege against Jerusalem (*famine, pestilence, etc.*).

- scales- indicates scarcity, as in rations for things that are scarce during war.

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Rev 6:6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

- a voice- Not from one of the beasts but from their midst.

- A penny (*denarius*) was the wage for a day's work...

Mat 20:2 After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. (ESV)

...thus, a whole day's wages for a measure of wheat shows scarcity.

- oil and wine- elements used for medicinal purposes (*Lk 10:34*). They were not luxuries but ordinary products of necessity.

Deu 11:14 He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. (*ESV*)

- Famine here is real but not extreme yet. These things happened to the inhabitants of Jerusalem (*Mat 24:6-7*) as Jesus warned His disciples they would.

This is a seal, not a bowl (*16:3*), thus the "famine horse" is told to use restraint when commanded to hurt not the oil and the wine.

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Fourth Seal

Rev 6:7 And when He had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

- With the opening of the fourth seal, we see the fourth creature, the eagle that bids this horse and rider to come forth.

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Rev 6:8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

- pale- Gk.5515-χλωρός-chlōros-*khlo-ros'*

From the same as G5514; *greenish*, that is, *verdant, dun-colored*: - green, pale.

Although Jesus has “the keys (*authority/control*) of Death and Hades” (*1:18*) the rider (*Death*) takes lives while his follower (*Hades*) collected them (*20:13-14*). They were “given” authority but it was limited.

- Hell- Gk.86- ᾗδης- hadēs- *hah'-dace* (*not Gehenna- Gk.1067 or Tartaros- Gk.5020*)

From G1 (as a negative particle) and G1492; properly *unseen*, that is, “Hades” or the place (state) of departed souls: - grave, hell.

- fourth- incomplete, by means of:
- sword- war/murder.
- death- pestilence.
- hunger- famine/starvation.

- beasts- symbolized forces of judgment: Lev 26:22; Jer 14:12; 15; 2-3.

- These four just responses of judgment show how God deals with those who would not obey His will and who persecuted those who did. While Jerusalem was under siege the Jews were cut off from commerce which resulted in death and pestilence. Again, not being a “bowl” here shows the devastation within the city had not yet reached its peak.

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Fifth Seal

Rev 6:9 And when He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were

slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

- altar- of burnt sacrifice. The reason why these martyrs were here was because they did not take part with those Jews who persecuted the two witnesses of chapter 11. Their span of time under the altar was rewarded once Christ brought in the New Covenant (*Heb 13:10*) becoming the “great Priest over the house of God” (*Heb 10:21*): Isa 66:5-7.

- under the altar- Representing the Mosaic sacrificial system, they were where the ashes fell. The altar had a “grating” (*Ex 27:4*) through which the ashes of the sacrifice were sifted (*Lk 22:31*). Here it figuratively represents the place where atonement for sins, “committed under the first covenant” (*Heb 9:15*), had been made even though “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin” (*Heb 10:4*). Thus only “by a single offering [Christ] has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” (*Heb 10:14*). It was a safe haven for these martyrs until “the new and living way [came]... through His flesh” (*Heb 10:20*).

Lev 4:7 ...and all the rest of the **blood** of the bull he shall pour out **at the base of the altar** of burnt offering that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. (*ESV*) (*Emp. added*) (*Php 2:17*)

blood- life: Gen 9:4; Lev 17:10-14.

- The blood of the sacrifice was poured out as Paul related the same imagery concerning his own end: 2 Tim 4:6.

- These martyrs became such for the word of God and for the testimony which they held, not for “the testimony of Jesus” (1:9) indicating which Testament they were under during their persecution. See also Jer 15:15.

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Rev 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

- them that dwell on the earth- Those responsible for their persecution (*here the hypocritical carnal Jews*). Deu 32:35-43

- These particular martyrs, condemned wrongfully under the Mosaic system, cry for vindication (*Heb 12:24 “...that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel”; 11:4 “...though he died, he still speaks”*), not vengeance. Without which, the whole cause of redemption stands condemned in an unjust court. (*Heb 9:15, 26; 11:39-40*) The appeal is to the One Who is true to His piety and Who will not allow the oppressors to go un-punished. But for how long?

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Rev 6:11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

- white robes- indicates their ultimate victory over sin through death (*Rom 6:7*). They received their posthumous redemption here (*at Pentecost with the beginning of the thousand-year reign- 20:4*) since O.T. animal sacrifices were inadequate as compared to Christ’s sacrifice “in order to

sanctify the people through His own blood” (*Heb 13:12*). Under the N.T., Christians are clothed in such robes through obedience to baptism (*Gal 3:27*), “since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect” (*Heb 11:40*). See also *Mat 22:11-14*.

- rest- The martyrs are told to rest from their cry for vindication a little season, between 30 and 70 AD (*11:11-12*), until others (*fellow servants/brethren [converted Jews]*) who held the Christian faith were martyred. The temple was destroyed in 70 AD, thus ending the sacrificial system (*8:3-5; Mat 24:14; Rom 10:18*), at the hand of the Roman Empire (*11:7*). Since this was written sometime before the fall of Jerusalem, the churches of Asia were told that she would fall as a result of her disregard for the Law and Prophets (*chapter 11; Neh 9:26, 30*). How often God has used His enemies to accomplish His will! This was a warning to the churches of what would happen to them (*us*) if **they** soiled their robes (*18:4*): *Heb 2:1-4*.

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Sixth Seal

Rev 6:12 And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

Rev 6:13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

Act 2:20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:

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- earthquake- (*Isa 2:12-22*) great upheaval that would level mountains (*here concerning the nation of Israel*).

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- sun, moon and stars- (*Isa 13:9-16*) authorities and their positions, whether higher powers (*sun*) or the lesser ones (*moon, whose light is from the sun, and stars*). This concerns the ruling class of Jews living in Jerusalem at the time of her fall: Gen 37:9-10; Joe 2:10, 28-32; Mat 24:29; as sackcloth- has to do with mourning. Gen 37:34; 2 Sam 3:31; etc. as blood- as a result of calamity.

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- Speaking of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, even those highest up in Jewish authority suffered. When the higher powers lose their control/influence, the lesser ones fall also.

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- stars... fell- See Dan 8:9-10 concerning Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Jews (*stars*) of Palestine (*Dan. 12:3*).

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- mighty wind- (*Gk.3173 & 417- big wind*) workings of God (*7:1*).

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- untimely figs- untimely, without notice for these persecutors and those who supported them through negligence. (*Mat 24:29*)

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Rev 6:14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

- heaven departed- the loss of position of these authorities.
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- rolled together- God controls the powers that be: Exo 9:16; Isa 34:4; Dan 4:34-35.

- mountain and island- “things that are shaken, that is, things that have been made (*physical kingdoms*) in order that the things that cannot be shaken (*spiritual kingdom, i.e., the church*) may remain” (*Heb 12:27; Dan 2:44*). moved out of their places- Not one place of refuge remained for the commonwealth of physical Israel.

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Rev 6:15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

- Hiding themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains indicates they were seeking refuge in the O.T. system via its leaders, those in authority (*i.e., the priesthood along with the sacrificial system that once set them apart as God’s people*). This has always been a usual response to guilt but in these cases their repentance was too late (*22:11*). God knew the heart and saw here that it wasn’t genuine: Gen 3:8.

- All classes would be affected but it was too late (*Mat 24:30*). They “denied the Holy and Righteous One” (*Act 3:14*). To those “under the altar” this was vindication! (*Isa 2:10-22*)

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Rev 6:16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

- Read Gen 3:10; Hosea 10:8; Lk 23:28-31. This is an attempt to escape judgement. The One on the throne is God, the Lamb is Christ. Turning to the very system they corrupted (*Jewish kingdom*) showed that they did not recognize (*either by arrogance or ignorance*) the reason for their sentence. Such was the case with Elijah, in 1 Kings 19:10, 18, except for “the knees that have not bowed to Baal”.

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Rev 6:17 For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

- His wrath- combined with the wrath of Christ: Lk 21:22. This is the Divine response to the Jews for their lack of adherence to the Law and Prophets (*chapter 11*). Divine favor was not theirs.

- great day- the day God answered the prayers of the “souls under the altar” (6:9) via His judgment on Jerusalem. Salvation was offered (*to the Jew and Gentile-Rom 1:16*) and preached by the saints throughout the world (*Mat 24:14; Rom 10:18; Col 1:5-6, 23*) ...

...but was rejected by those "of the earth"
(*vs. 12*): 1 Cor 2:14.

- Jerusalem’s fall (*see chapter 11*) was a day of visitation or "coming" of Christ “on the clouds of Heaven” (*Mat 24:30*) thus a judgement. Christians here were forewarned (*Matt 24:1-22 pertained to Jerusalem as does Rev 18:4*) not to be seduced by sinful influence so that their suffering would not be eternal. (*See also notes on Hebrews as it*

pertained to Christians living in Jerusalem pre-70 AD.)

Who, then, could stand?

Revelation: Chapter 6

1. After “the Lamb opened” the first seal, which of “the four living creatures” bid the first horse and rider to “Come”? Why did it speak “with a voice like thunder”?
2. What was the color of the first horse and explain the rider’s weaponry and crown.
3. After the Lamb “opened the second seal” what was “the second living creature” that bid its horse and rider to “Come”?
4. What color was the second horse and what was its weapon and purpose?
5. Once “the third seal was opened” what does “the third living creature” represent?
6. What color was the third horse, what was in the rider’s hand and what did it represent?
7. The “fourth seal” being opened, what was “the fourth living creature”?
8. What was the color of the fourth horse, “its rider’s name” and what “followed him”?
9. Explain the fourth rider’s purpose?
10. The “fifth seal” being opened, what did John see “under the altar”?
11. Which altar and what does it represent?
12. How long were they “told to rest” and what does the “white robe” represent?
13. The “sixth seal” opened, what do the “earthquake”, “sun”, “moon” and “stars” represent?
14. Explain the “sky” “being rolled up” and the significance of “every mountain and island”.
15. What is meant in verse 15 of all classes of people hiding in “caves and among the rocks of the mountains”?

16. Whose “wrath” came on what “great day”
and upon whom did it “come”?