

Revelation Chapter 6

Verses 6:1 - 19:21: This lengthy section details the judgments and events of the time of tribulation (see notes on 3:10). From its beginning with the opening of the first seal (verses 1-2), through the 7 seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments to the return of Christ to destroy the ungodly (19:11-21).

Revelation chapter 6 begins with the seals that represent the beginning of Christ's judgment of unbelievers on the earth during the Tribulation period. There is a close similarity between these judgments and the event predicted by Christ (in Matthew 24:4-31).

The purpose of the Tribulation period is to punish unbelievers for their sin and rejection of Christ and to bring the remnant to faith in Christ.

Revelation 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 here is Jesus Christ, the only one worthy to open the seals. This noise as thunder indicates God revealing something to His people. Many times throughout the Bible, God's voice has been mistaken for thunder. Here one of the four beasts, or four living beings, says "Come and see". Of course, all of the four gospels say "Come and see". We are invited to look into the heavenly stage and see things never told upon the earth until now. We will see in the opening of this first seal, the triumph of Christ and His church.

The "seals" represent the beginning of Christ's judgment of unbelievers on the earth during the Tribulation period. There is a close similarity between these judgments and the events predicted by Christ (in Matthew 24:4-31). The purpose of the Tribulation period is to punish unbelievers for their sin and rejection of Christ, and to bring the remnant to faith in Christ.

This part begins what is called "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse". The four horsemen present the picture of man's inhumanity to man. They seem to be a divine prediction of the affairs of humankind that will cause much human suffering. This is not new, for those in control of the affairs of this world have a history of causing their fellow human beings much suffering, with false hopes of peace followed by wars, famines, and death.

One of the worst horrors of the Tribulation is the many plagues that will strike the world's people, particularly those who reject the Savior and refuse to have their name written in the Lamb's Book of Life. The judgments are started with the 7 seals.

Revelation 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."

The First Seal: Initiates the worldwide conquest by the false messiah, the Antichrist (compare Matt. 24:5). He will be the final Gentile world ruler (see 13:1-7). This horseman is not the same as the one described (in Rev. 19:11), which is Christ at His second coming.

"A White Horse": The first of the 4 horsemen of the Apocalypse is white. The rider has a bow but no arrows, indicating that although he is militarily strong, in the beginning he does his conquering by diplomacy. Since he wears a crown, we know he is successful in his efforts. And who is the rider on the white horse? There can be no doubt that it is the "force" of the Antichrist, who through deceit and clever maneuvering will bring a false peace to the world. But that peace will not last.

The animal represents an unparalleled time of world peace, a false peace that is to be short-lived (see note on verse 4). This peace will be ushered in by a series of false messiahs, culminating with the Antichrist (Matt. 24:3-5).

"He that sat on him": The 4 horses and their riders do not represent specific individuals, but forces. Many identify this rider with Antichrist. Although he will be the leading figure, John's point is that the entire world will follow him, being obsessed with pursuing this false peace.

"Bow": The bow is a symbol of war, but the absence of arrows implies that this victory is a bloodless one, a peace won by covenant and agreement, not by war (compare Dan. 9:24-27).

"Crown": This word refers to the kind of laurel wreath awarded winning athletes. It "was given to him". Antichrist becomes king, elected by the world's inhabitants regardless of the cost, and will conquer the entire earth in a bloodless coup.

The Bible is spoken of as a two edged sword. We are told over and over that the flesh and the Spirit are in constant conflict.

Verses 3-4: The "second seal" brings war and a lack of "peace" (compare Matt. 24:6-7). The "sword" represents armed conflict. Perhaps the attacks on Israel mentioned (in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39; Dan. 11:40-44), are also in view.

Revelation 6:3 "And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see."

John is encouraged to "Come and see". We too, may get a glimpse through the eyes and the pen of John. This red horse means war. This war could be twofold in nature. There is a constant attack of the devil and his demons on Christians, but I believe this goes much further than this. This red horse (in my opinion), indicates a large war.

Revelation 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."

The Second Seal: John writes of the 2nd horseman. It was granted to the one who sat on the red horse to "take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword."

"Another horse that was red": Its blood-red appearance speaks of the holocaust of war (compare Matt. 24:7). God will grant this horse and its rider the power to create worldwide war. But as horrible as this judgment is, it will be only the "birth pangs", the beginning pains of God's wrath (Matt. 24:8; Mark 13:7-8; Luke 21:9).

We believe this seal represents a great conflagration we might call World War III. When Daniel's "three kings" oppose the Antichrist, he will respond in deadly fashion, swiftly crushing his enemies and bringing death to earth on a massive scale never before known. Only since the advent of the atomic age has it been possible to bring this kind of unimaginable, swift destruction to bear on widely scattered portions of the globe.

The power given to him that sat on the horse: "And power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another." This would seem to indicate that the condition immediately preceding this was a condition of tranquility, and that this was now disturbed by some cause producing discord and bloodshed.

"That they should kill one another": Violent slaughter will become commonplace.

His purpose is to cause "mankind to slaughter one another" The Greek word that is used, and the verb, means "to butcher, slaughter or massacre someone". This contains a purpose clause which reveals that peace is taken from the earth for the very purpose that mankind should butcher each other. And in the remainder of the Revelation's Seals, Trumpets and Golden Bowl Judgments, mankind does this to himself with ruthless skill.

"Sword": Not the long, broad sword, but the shorter, more easily maneuvered one that assassins often used and that soldiers carried into battle. It depicts assassination, revolt, massacre, and wholesale slaughter (compare Dan. 8:24).

We read in Zechariah about these four horses, and we can easily see what it is because the Bible tells us.

Zechariah 6:1 "And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains [were] mountains of brass."

"Brass" means judgment. The number "four" means that this is a universal message.

Zechariah 6:2-3 "In the first chariot [were] red horses; and in the second chariot black horses;"
"And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grizzled and bay horses."

This is a vision of the same horses that we are reading about in Revelation. To understand the entire message, you need to (read chapters 1 and 6 of Zechariah).

Zechariah 6:4 "Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What [are] these, my lord?"

When Zechariah asked the angel what this meant, this is the answer he got.

Zechariah 6:5 "And the angel answered and said unto me, these [are] the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth."

We see again the spirit of war in this red horse.

Verses 5-6: The "third seal" represents inflation and famine (compare Matt. 24:7). The "balances" or scales are related to commerce and trade. The word "penny", better transliterated "denarius", represented about one day's wages. "Wheat" and "barley" were considered necessities of life. "A measure" (Greek choinix), was 1.92 pints. The price given is about 10 times what was normal. The command "hurt not the oil and the wine" may indicate a restriction of the effects of the famine in this early part of the Tribulation.

Revelation 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."

The Third Seal: "A black horse": Black signifies famine (compare Lam. 5:8-10). Worldwide war will destroy the food supply which spawns global hunger.

"Pair of balances": The common measuring device, two small trays hung from each end of a balance beam, indicates that the scarcity of food will lead to rationing and food lines.

The "pair of balances" (scales) shows a weighing. We shall be weighed in the balance, and see if we stand or fall. This balance, also indicates a shortage of food. We see this in the color black, and in the balances. The famine will be so great, food will be weighed by the ounce and dispensed carefully. This famine will probably be as bad as the famine that was in Egypt in Joseph's time. Probably drought will trigger crop failures in many places. Only the very rich will be able to buy food. Personally, I believe, God will instruct Christians, who are totally sold out to Him. They will know when to plant and exactly what to do, as Joseph was told, of God, what to do.

Revelation 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 measure of wheat": The approximate amount necessary to sustain one person for one day.

"For a penny": One day's normal wage. One day's work will provide enough food for only one person.

"Three measures of barley": Usually fed to animals, this grain was low in nutrients and cheaper than wheat. A day's wage provides enough for only a small family's daily supply.

Since in biblical days a penny was a common wage for a day's work, and a quart of wheat or three quarts of barley are basically subsistence diets, John is indicating that a man will have to work all day just to get enough food to eat, with nothing left over for his family or the elderly.

In the parable of the vineyard (Matthew 20:2), a day's work was a penny. This "penny", in the verse above, means a full day's pay. I believe this means that a loaf of bread will be so inflated in price, because of scarcity of food, that it will take a whole day's wages of a man to buy one loaf.

We surely know that it is a "measure", which is a very small amount. Barley seems to be a third the cost, so perhaps a meager meal of barley for three could cost a whole day's wages. The famine will be so great, that food will be weighed by the ounce and dispensed carefully.

This is run-away inflation to its worst possible conclusion. In many parts of the world inflation is already to that terrible extreme.

When inflation is coupled with famine, we see a situation more horrible than we care to imagine. We must stay closely in tune with God. If He tells us to dig a very deep well, we must do that. If He tells us to plant a garden, we must do that. It is going to be very important to be able to take daily instruction from God. Not to question, just do it. I believe God is even now setting up places of refuge for Christians.

On the other hand, the call to not "harm the oil and the wine," are symbols of wealth, indicates that the rich will do just fine. Or it could mean something referring with Spirit-filled Christians. Oil and wine are symbolic of the Holy Spirit of God. That His Hand will be on the Tribulation Saints protecting them during the tribulation.

I cannot stress enough, that this famine may not be just physical but spiritual, as well. During this time, I believe that many churches will teach false doctrines. Even now there is a terrible famine of truth in the church. Never have so many denied: the virgin birth of Christ, the Red Sea parted, Jonah being swallowed by the large fish, God as Father, or Jesus is God with us, "Immanuel".

Many churches are ordaining homosexuals to preach. Secular Humanism makes man a god.

How much more famine of the Spirit can we take? Truly there will be a physical famine, as well. Stay tuned to the voice of God. He will see you through it all.

The third horseman of the Apocalypse, who rides out early in the Tribulation, will take a heavy toll in deaths and sickness. The black horse he rides is an obvious symbol of famine and disease, which often follow war.

This could be a message of hard times for all of mankind. "black" symbolizes:

1. Woe;
2. Mourning;
3. Terrible times;
4. Famine, physical or spiritual;
5. Evil;
6. Opposite of goodness;
7. Everything that opposes God.

Christian Saints will be saved "in" the famine and not "from" the famine. Noah was saved "in" the flood, not "from" the flood. God can rain manna from heaven if necessary. I believe God will set up places of refuge where believers can run, so they can have physical and spiritual food.

There is a great deal of difference in accepting Jesus as your Savior and accepting Jesus as your Lord. When He is Lord, He is totally in control, and we follow His instructions without questioning. The only thing required of us, for Jesus to be our Savior, is for us to believe. For Jesus to be our Lord, we no longer make our own decisions. He makes them for us. It is so much easier when He is Lord. God will not forsake the righteous.

Revelation Chapter 6 Questions

1. Who said come and see?
2. Who is the Lamb?
3. What is He able to do that no man can do?
4. What, throughout the Bible, was mistaken for thunder?
5. What two things will we see in the opening of this first seal?
6. The rider of the first horse had?

7. What was given unto Him?
8. What did He go forth to do?
9. We know the Bible is spoken of as _____.
10. We are told in the Bible _____ and _____ are in constant conflict.
11. What color was the second horse?
12. What kind of power did he have?
13. What weapon did he have?
14. What does the red horse mean?
15. What, besides, war does it mean?
16. In Zech. 6 the four horses are?
17. What color was the third horse?
18. The rider had what in his hand?
19. What does black symbolize?
20. What does the balance indicate?
21. What will cause crop failures?
22. Name two saved "in" their problems?
23. What was the pay for a day's work?
24. What could be bought for this amount in verse 6?
25. Besides Jesus being our Savior, what must He be to us?
26. What is oil and wine symbolic of?
27. What is the most difficult thing in your life to overcome? How do you plan to overcome it?