

The Seven Seals

Chapter 6

I. Introduction:

Everything that took place in chapters 4 and 5 focused upon heaven. In Revelation 6 John is still in heaven but he “sees” how the events in heaven are being played out on earth.

II. Introduction to the seven seals.

A. The seven seals extend to the entire period leading up to the Millennial Reign of Christ.

1. The seventh seal contains the seven trumpet judgements.

Revelation 8:1 (ESV) When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

Revelation 8:2 (ESV) Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

2. The seventh trumpet judgement contains the seven bowl judgements

Revelation 10:7 (ESV) but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

Revelation 16:1 (ESV) Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”

3. Thus the seventh seal contains all the trumpet and bowl judgements.

B. Basic observations:

1. The judgements of God grow increasingly worse with each succeeding judgement.

2. The judgements of God grow increasingly close together with each succeeding judgement.
3. There is a great intensifying of judgment just before the very end.

III. The Seven seals

A. The first four seals.

1. The first four seals have the rider images in common.
2. This section is commonly referred to as the four horseman of the apocalypse.
3. What is most significant in these seals is not to try to identify the identity of the rider but rather to note the characteristics of the rider.
4. What is significant is that the power that the horseman has is derived from God.

Revelation 6:2 (ESV) And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

Revelation 6:4 (ESV) And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

Revelation 6:8 (ESV) And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

5. One should note the strong parallels with this section of Revelation and Jesus' teaching in Matthew concerning His coming and the end of the age.

Matthew 24:3 (ESV) As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

B. The first seal (white horse)

1. The characteristics of the rider.

Revelation 6:1 (ESV) Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, “Come!”

Revelation 6:2 (ESV) And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

a. This individual has a crown and is thus a ruler.

Revelation 6:2 (ESV) And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

b. He has a bow and thus goes out to conquer.

Revelation 6:2 (ESV) And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

c. Notice the parallel with Matthew.

Matthew 24:3 (ESV) As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

Matthew 24:4 (ESV) And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray.

Matthew 24:5 (ESV) For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.

C. The second seal (Red horse)

1. The characteristics of the rider.

Revelation 6:3 (ESV) When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!”

Revelation 6:4 (ESV) And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

- a. He will remove peace from the earth

Revelation 6:4 (ESV) And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

- b. He will cause people to kill each other.

Revelation 6:4 (ESV) And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

2. The parallel with Matthew.

Matthew 24:6 (ESV) And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.

Matthew 24:7 (ESV) For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

- D. The third seal (Black horse)

1. The characteristics of the rider:

- a. Here the rider is given a scale to weigh out payment for goods.

Revelation 6:5 (ESV) When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand.

- b. At this time food and commodities will be very expensive.

Revelation 6:6 (ESV) And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!"

2. The parallel with Matthew.

Matthew 24:7 (ESV) For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

E. The fourth seal (Pale horse)

1. The characteristics of the rider.

Revelation 6:7 (ESV) When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!"

Revelation 6:8 (ESV) And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

2. Parallel with Matthew.

Matthew 24:7 (ESV) For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

IV. The fifth seal - martyred saints.

A. The scene changes from earth back to heaven.

Revelation 6:9 (ESV) When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.

B. The reason that the saints had been slain.

1. The saints had been slain because they remained faithful to the scriptures.

Revelation 6:9 (ESV) When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.

2. The saints had been slain because they remained faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 6:9 (ESV) When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.

- a. It appears that their souls are under the altar because they had given their lives in sacrifice to God.

Revelation 6:9 (ESV) When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.

- b. The apostle Paul spoke of his death in terms as a sacrifice to God.

Philippians 2:17 (ESV) Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

- C. The martyred saints ask the question, "How long it will be before God holds those on earth accountable for slaying God's servants?"

Rev 6:10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

1. It is worthy of note that the martyred saints (dead) are well aware of the events that are taking place on earth.

Rev 6:10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

2. Furthermore, it is worthy to note how the present events on earth are understood by the martyred saints (dead) in light of future heavenly and earthly events.

Rev 6:10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

3. Furthermore, it is worthy of note that the martyred saints (dead) remember what took place while they were alive on the earth.

Rev 6:10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

4. The martyred saints asked the question in a most respectful manner.

Revelation 6:10 (ESV) They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

It is by this very same title that Jesus refers to himself in the letter to the church at Philadelphia.

Revelation 3:7 (ESV) "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.

5. The martyred saints are provided an answer.

- a. The martyred saints are comforted in this answer.

Revelation 6:11 (ESV) Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

- b. The martyred saints are made aware that it has been appointed that more saints will be killed.

Revelation 6:11 (ESV) Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

Thus those who are slaying the saints are heaping up wrath upon their heads.

6. The parallel with Matthew.

Matthew 24:8 (ESV) All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

Matthew 24:9 (ESV) “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake.

Matthew 24:10 (ESV) And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.

Matthew 24:11 (ESV) And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.

Matthew 24:12 (ESV) And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.

Matthew 24:13 (ESV) But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

D. The sixth seal - Terror grips the earth due to the catastrophic events that take place.

1. Great catastrophic events take place.

Revelation 6:12 (ESV) When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood,

Revelation 6:13 (ESV) and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.

Revelation 6:14 (ESV) The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

2. Terror grips all classes of people who are on the earth.

Revelation 6:15 (ESV) Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,

Revelation 6:16 (ESV) calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

Revelation 6:17 (ESV) for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

3. The parallel with Matthew.

- a. The catastrophic events are described.

Matthew 24:29 (ESV) “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

- b. The terror of the people described

Matthew 24:30 (ESV) Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

- V. The Seventh seal is not described until chapter 8 and is separated in time from the first 6 seals.

Revelation 8:1 (ESV) When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

- VI. Conclusion:

