

## Revelation 6:1-17—The Seal Judgements

The tribulation is about to begin. Here is quick summary of chapter 6, the first six seals.

- **First Seal Judgement:** The antichrist is revealed and comes to power.
- **Second Seal Judgement:** He promises peace but the result is war, a world war
- **Third Seal Judgement:** The world war causes famine and disease
- **Fourth Seal Judgement:** As a result of the war, famine and disease and wild beasts a quarter of the world's population is killed.
- **Fifth Seal Judgement:** During this time there is a massive persecution of the tribulation saints, those who believe during the tribulation. Many are martyred or killed for the word of God and for being faithful in their testimony.
- **Sixth Seal Judgement:** There is a massive earthquake and other cosmic disturbances and the people of the earth recognise that these judgements are from God, and they fear God's judgements and God's presence.

### Revelation 6:1-17 NKJV

#### *First Seal: The Conqueror*

Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." <sup>2</sup> And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

#### *Second Seal: Conflict on Earth*

<sup>3</sup> When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." <sup>4</sup> Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that *people* should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

#### *Third Seal: Scarcity on Earth*

<sup>5</sup> When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. <sup>6</sup> And I heard 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 the wine."

#### *Fourth Seal: Widespread Death on Earth*

<sup>7</sup> When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." <sup>8</sup> So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

#### *Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs*

<sup>9</sup> 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 testimony which they held. <sup>10</sup> And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" <sup>11</sup> Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

#### *Sixth Seal: Cosmic Disturbances*

<sup>12</sup> I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. <sup>13</sup> And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. <sup>14</sup> Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its

place. <sup>15</sup> And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, <sup>16</sup> and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup> For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

## **The first Seal: The White Horse—The antichrist conquers through peace, deception, and intrigue**

The first four seals of the scroll bring four horsemen [6:1–8] These four horseman are often called the four horseman of the apocalypse (apocalypse means unveiling or revealing)

Let’s take a look at the first seal, the white horse brings a man of conquest in verses 1 and 2.

### **Revelation 6:1-2 NKJV**

#### ***First Seal: The Conqueror***

**6 Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.” <sup>2</sup> And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.**

Hal Lindsay says that one of the greatest tools you can have when studying the bible is a sanctified curiosity. He has six friends that help him understand. “Who, why, when, how, what and so what.”

I’m going to first give an overview or summary of what the first two verses mean, then go back and break it down phrase by phrase and look at the other scriptures that relate to this. It’s important that we get this right because there are many who start with the wrong starting point or assumption, and end up at the wrong destination or conclusion. Who is this rider on the white horse?

Now do you notice that he goes out to conquer, but he has a bow with no arrows? Why? And, he’s given a crown. The first seal is the revelation of who the antichrist is. There will most likely be a significant period of time for him to consolidate his power and set up his economic and religious systems.

#### **Who the rider on the white horse is not:**

Now, just for your information, and to forewarn you of an incorrect understanding or interpretation, some Christians think that the rider on the white horse here in Revelation 6 is Jesus, *but it can’t be*. Why? Because there won’t be any world wars or mass death or famines or judgements or false religious systems or evil world economic systems in Jesus’ kingdom, when Jesus returns to set up His kingdom on earth. It just doesn’t match what the Old Testament says about what Jesus Kingdom will be like. Jesus’ Kingdom is the only kingdom where there will be real peace and true justice. It just doesn’t make sense that Jesus would come back to earth and cause 1/2 of the people to die because of various judgements, with some of them demonic. We’ll come back to this later.

## What does it mean, “and he went out conquering and to conquer?”

In verse 2 it says “...and he went out conquering and to conquer.” Remember we asked the question, why the bow with no arrows? Well, the bow without the arrows means that he uses the *threat* of war, but not war itself. He uses the threat. He will most likely have most if not all of the world's weapons under his control as nations give up their sovereignty. He is given the wreath or victor's crown, a temporary crown, because God allows him to conquer—this is going to be Satan's masterpiece—we'll read other scriptures about this later. This guy is no ordinary person. There has never been on this earth, with the exception of Jesus, a man that will have the kind of powers this man will have. And we know several times much is said about this person. And often it says about him, “he was given a great mouth with which he would charm the people as well as blaspheme God” (See Revelation 13:1-8) In other words, he is going to be a mesmerising speaker. Every passage about him affirms that he will be someone who is electrifying as a speaker. If you watch Adolf Hitler, he mesmerised the Germans with his speeches. But he will have nothing on the antichrist.

It also says “and he went out conquering and to conquer.” So he is enjoying one success after another. It will be a rapid climb to the top. All of these seals are a judgement. So how is this a judgement? I think this is the worst judgement of all. This judgement is people falling under the spell of a man who is indwelt by Satan himself—this is mass deception. That's why I think that this is the worst judgement of all.

Okay, so now we have a basic understanding of who this is taking about—the antichrist, and how he will rise to power, let's take a closer look and also link this to other passages that describe the antichrist so we know for sure that he is the antichrist.

### Phrase by phrase study of Revelation 6:1-2

v 1 **I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals:** From the previous chapter, we understand this scroll is the history and destiny of mankind and creation—the title deed to the earth—and only Jesus—the **Lamb**—had the right to loose the seals on this scroll of the culmination of history.

Also, because the scroll details the culmination of history, especially the second coming of Jesus, then the judgements and signs associated with the removal of the seals must happen *before* the scroll is opened. These are not the fulfilment or consummation or final completion of history itself, but the *preparation* for it. The actual culmination will be detailed in Revelation 19 when Jesus comes back—the consummation.

As each seal is opened, it is carried out, with some of them showing progressive action, or cause and effect, as we will see later. The main point is that they are sequential, with one happening after the other. Another thing to notice is that Jesus is the One opening the seals. We know from here and the rest of Revelation that Jesus is in heaven for the entire tribulation.

v1 **And I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.”** Each of the first four seals are associated with one of the four living creatures that we learned about in Revelation 4 and 5

## Revelation 4:7-8 NKJV

The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. <sup>8</sup> The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying:

“Holy, holy, holy,  
Lord God Almighty,  
Who was and is and is to come!”

These living creatures or cherubim (very high ranking angels) are also described in Ezekiel 1 and 10 when Ezekiel saw a vision of Jesus. So the first living creature is responsible for giving the command for the white horse, the second living creature gives the command to the red horse and so forth.

Also in verse 1, the word “**come**” can also be translated “go forth”. So it’s like these 4 mighty angels are authorising or sending off these four horsemen.

I like what David Guzik says about “**Behold, a white horse**” in verse 2. He says, “If one were to take their interpretive clues more from cowboy movies than from the Bible, it would be easy to believe the rider on the **white horse** is Jesus. Jesus does return on a **white horse** in Revelation 19:11–16; but *this* is a satanic dictator who imitates Jesus.” End of quote. Remember that the prefix “anti” doesn’t mean opposite, but rather counterfeit. The antichrist, possessed by Satan himself, will imitate Jesus and so cause many to be deceived.

Also, there are actually quite a few differences between the riders of the white horses in Chapter 6 (the antichrist) and chapter 19 (Jesus), as well as many inconsistencies regarding Jesus’ mission or plans, which I won’t go into now.

Bible students take note: Here we reach an interpretive crossroads of the Book of Revelation. You can tell much about how a person understands this book and God’s prophetic plan by seeing how they understand this first rider. Those who interpret prophecy allegorically think Revelation is mostly a book of *history* believe that this rider is Jesus, the apostles, or the Roman emperors. Those who interpret prophecy literally believe that this is a *prophetic* passage, yet to be fulfilled, and so understand this rider to be the antichrist. We recently spent 2 weeks going through Daniel 9:24-27 and various other scriptures, showing that Daniel’s seventieth week cannot have been fulfilled already, and so must be still future. Those messages were titled, “the scriptural basis for the tribulation.” In summary, the last week or seven in Daniel 9:27 is the last 7 years allocated to Israel.

Just to remind you; A total of 490 years were allocated to Israel after the Babylonian captivity, at the end of which Jesus would return and set up His kingdom on earth (Daniel 9:24). 483 years of the 490 years have already come to pass, being completed on the very day Jesus rode in on the donkey, as predicted in Daniel 9:25, where it says there will be 69 sevens of years until messiah the prince. Then in Daniel 9:26 there is a gap or a pause when Jesus would be crucified or “cut off” and the temple destroyed, which happened about 27 years later in AD 70. We are still in that gap or pause. It’s called the church age. But soon, after the Rapture, when the antichrist confirms the covenant with Israel (Daniel 9:27), then the Israel clock starts ticking again, and God will once again use Israel as a “light to the gentiles,” and the last 7 years of history as we know it will come to pass and at the end of those seven years, Jesus returns with the church, all riding white horses.

v2 **He went out conquering and to conquer:** How will this one riding a white horse, carrying a bow, and wearing a crown of olive branches conquer? As a peacemaker.

Daniel 8:23–25 NLT paraphrase

“At the end of their rule, when their sin is at its height, a fierce king, a master of intrigue, will rise to power. <sup>24</sup> He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause a shocking amount of destruction and succeed in everything he does. He will destroy powerful leaders and devastate the holy people (Israel). <sup>25</sup> He will be a master of deception and will become arrogant; he will destroy many without warning. He will even take on the Prince of princes in battle, but he will be broken, though not by human power.

Isn't this exactly what Jesus prophesied when He proclaimed, “I come in My Father's name, and you receive me not. But another will come in his own name, and him you shall receive” (see John 5:43)?

John 5:43 NKJV

I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.

- How did Jesus come? Meekly riding on a donkey.
- What did the Israel and the world say? “We will not have this Man rule over us.”
- So who will Israel and the world get instead? Antichrist.

It doesn't get much clearer. Israel, as a nation, especially at the start of the tribulation, and also most of the world for the entire seven year tribulation, will embrace the antichrist as both a political and spiritual messiah.

So, taking the rider of the white horse in Revelation 6 to be the final satanic dictator over men, we see that he will be more terrible than all previous dictators were. He will rule over men, the whole world, as a false messiah, and lead man in organised rebellion against God, in the pattern of Nimrod, his first predecessor. This is why he is often called the *antichrist*.

Who has heard of Nimrod before? Well, the idea of a satanic dictator over men goes back all the way to Nimrod, the ruler over Babel in Genesis 10:8–14, where it says he was a *mighty hunter before the Lord*. This has the sense that he was a mighty hunter of *men*, and that this was offensive to the face of God. Nimrod attempted to unite all mankind in a false religion and economic system at Babel. He was in open rebellion against God. But God came down and confused the languages, and so prevented this from happening at the time. But these evil events will come to fruition during the tribulation. What Nimrod started, the antichrist, possessed and empowered by Satan, will finish. The world will get what it wants, and it will be terrible. Sometimes the worst thing that God can give us is what we want, because our sinful human nature naturally desires those things that hurt and kill us.

v1 **Come and see:** The modern political and social scene is certainly set for the emergence of such a political leader. All that waits is for the Lord to allow it in His timing after He takes His church from this earth. How do we know this?

**Paul explains why the antichrist cannot be revealed until after the Rapture in:**

## 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 NKJV

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ [the second coming] and our gathering together to Him [the rapture], we ask you, <sup>2</sup> not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ [that is, the tribulation or the Day of the Lord or Jacobs trouble] had come. <sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [the tribulation] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin (antichrist) is revealed, the son of perdition, <sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. <sup>5</sup> Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? <sup>6</sup> And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. <sup>7</sup> **For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.** <sup>8</sup> **And then the lawless one (the antichrist) will be revealed,** whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming [the second coming of Christ]. <sup>9</sup> The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, <sup>10</sup> and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. [see Revelation 13:13-17] <sup>11</sup> And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, <sup>12</sup> that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

This amazing passage gives so much information about the antichrist and what has to happen before he can be revealed during the tribulation.

Firstly consider verse 5 where it says, "Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?" Paul was only in Thessalonica for 3 weeks, and yet he was teaching end times, including the tribulation, the antichrist, the rapture and the second coming as a part of his basic or "bootcamp" doctrine. This tells us that these are things that every christian should know.

The background or context of this passage is that the believers were told by some false teachers that they were in the tribulation, which meant that they had missed the rapture. Paul tells them not to listen to such false teaching and then reminds them of what he taught them.

Verse 7 is the main verse I want to draw your attention to. "**For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.**" This is referring to the Holy Spirit. Today, the Holy Spirit dwells in believers. As believers we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Today, in the church age, the Spirit chooses to do His work in the world mainly through us, the church. *When the church is raptured, then the influence of the Holy Spirit is effectively removed from the earth.* David Guzik comments on this verse:

**"Taken out of the way:** We should not think that the Holy Spirit would *leave* the earth during the Great Tribulation. He will be present on the earth during the Great Tribulation because many are saved, sealed, and serve God during this period (Revelation 7:3–14 and 14:1–5), and this can't happen without the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is **taken out of the way**, not removed."

So, back to Revelation 6:1. The main point of the first seal is that the antichrist, this evil world dictator will be revealed. The first seal opened brings the world's most evil dictator to prominence. We learned last week that the seventieth week of Daniel 9 begins when this dictator will confirm a covenant with [the] many, referring to the Jewish people (Daniel 9:27).

Just to make it clear, these four horsemen of Revelation 6 are connected with the seventieth week of Daniel and the great tribulation itself. This initial emergence of the antichrist, connected with what we know about this leader from Daniel 9 shows that these four horsemen are connected with Daniel's seventieth week and the great Tribulation.

### **Revelation 6:2 (c)**

**...and a crown was given unto him...**

The Greek word translated "crown" is *stephanos*. A diadem is a permanent crown. A *stephanos*, on the other hand, is a wreath made of olive branches that only lasts a short while. Jesus, in contrast, according to Revelation 19, when He comes back He will be wearing a diadem, a permanent crown, in fact many of them.

The *stephanos* was given to athletes who won in the olympics.

v2 **And he went out conquering and to conquer:** As I said before, this means that the antichrist will have one victory after another. His rise to the top will be very rapid.

Now we come to the second seal judgement.

## **The Second Seal: The Red Horse—World War III**

### **Revelation 6:3-4 NKJV**

#### ***Second Seal: Conflict on Earth***

**<sup>3</sup> When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." <sup>4</sup> Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.**

The red horse following the white horse of Antichrist is war. Anyone who thinks there can be true political solutions to the world's problems is sadly mistaken. Politics is solely about gaining and maintaining power. "Where do wars and fights come from among you??" James asks. "Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?"—desires for power and property (see James 4:1, 2).

Notice that this rider didn't need to *bring* war and destruction. All he needed to do was **take peace from the earth**. Once this **peace**—God's gift to man—was taken, men quickly rush in with war and destruction. We must remember that Peace between men and among nations is a gift from God. It is not the *natural* state of relations between men.

v 4 **And it was granted:** This authority was **granted** to the horseman. This is, directly or indirectly, the judgment of God.

v 4 **That people should kill one another:** Our modern age is marked by war and conflict. Since World War II, there have been more than 150 wars of some kind in the world, and at any given time there may be some three dozen armed conflicts taking

thousands of lives yearly. The nations of the world often spend more than \$1 trillion on military expenditures a year. World war III will be a war like no other.

v 4 **and there was given to him a great sword.** This sword a symbol of war. It's the equivalent of a fighter plane or a tank today.

Now we come to the third seal judgement.

## **The Third Seal: The Black Horse—Famine**

**Revelation 6:5-6 NKJV**

***Third Seal: Scarcity on Earth***

**<sup>5</sup> When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. <sup>6</sup> And I heard 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 the wine."**

Biblically, oil and wine symbolise luxury. You see, the wealthy of the world somehow continue to get wealthier even in times of war and famine. This has been true also during Covid. The rich even profit from pestilence while the rest suffer.

v 5 **A black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand:** The scales symbolised the need to carefully measure and ration food. This speaks of a time of *scarcity*.

v 6 **A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius:** These prices are about twelve times higher than normal. It means that it would cost a day's wage to buy the ingredients for a loaf of bread. This describes "a time of famine when life will be reduced to the barest necessities." (Walvoord)

We often see great famine in the world today, yet fewer people suffer from hunger today than 100 years ago. However, understanding the world's precarious ecological balance, it would not take much to plunge many into the kind of scarcity and inequity mentioned here. A nuclear world war with all its pollution and destruction would easily disrupt the world's food supply.

v 6 **Do not harm the oil and the wine:** Yet, the nicer things will be available for those who can afford them. There will still be **the oil and the wine** that should not be harmed. World war III will not completely destroy the earth.

## **The Fourth Seal: The Pale Horse—Death by famine, war, pestilence and wild beasts**

**Revelation 6:7-8 NKJV**

***Fourth Seal: Widespread Death on Earth***

**<sup>7</sup> When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." <sup>8</sup> So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.**

v7 **A pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death:** This last rider shows that there will be a tremendous death toll from the dictatorship, war, famine and other calamities described by the previous three horsemen.

Our modern age has seen hundreds of millions killed by dictators, war, and famine. Yet all that will pale in comparison to the death toll coming in the wake of this ultimate dictator. Just imagine what it will be like when 25% of the earth's 8 billion people are killed—that's 2 billion people—2,000,000,000 people. No wonder Jesus said of this time *For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be* (Matthew 24:21).

v 8 **Power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill:** "Power was given to the horseman, and **given** by God. Though all hell breaks loose on the earth, God is very much in control. He still holds the scroll and opens the seals." (David Guzik)

Now we come to the fifth seal judgement

## The Fifth Seal: The cry of the Tribulation martyrs

Revelation 6:9-11 NKJV

***Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs***

**9** 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 testimony which they held. **10** And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" **11** Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

Things are going badly. The bow of the horseman on the white horse is broken. Blood flows. Famine follows. Disease and sickness run rampant. So who does the world blame? *The believers who come to Christ during the Tribulation.* This is not new. In the days of the Black Plague, one of every four people died. The one group of people spared was the Jews. Today, we know it is because they were simply following the biblical principles of hygiene. But their contemporaries, convinced the Jews were the reason for the plague, persecuted them.

The same will be true in the Tribulation. Amid sickness and blood, economic disharmony and war—believers will be martyred. Also keep in mind that the antichrist will be initiating a one world religion as a way to control people, we will see this later. Very likely, the penalty for noncompliance will be death.

v 9 **I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God:** That these souls were **under the altar** emphasises that their life blood was poured out as an offering to God. The idea is drawn from Leviticus 4:7: *And he shall pour the remaining blood at the base of the altar of the burnt offering.*

v 9 **Who had been slain for the word of God:** They died because they held true to the Word of God because they trusted in the living God.

v10 **And they cried with a loud voice:** These souls in heaven cried out for vengeance (**until You judge and avenge our blood**). We usually don't think of God's people crying out for vengeance, but here they made their cry to God, and leave the matter with Him. We must remember that when God's people are persecuted, He will set it right.

Psalm 116:15 NKJV

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

It isn't wrong for God's people to ask Him to do what He promised to do. The blood of Abel cried out from the ground for vengeance (Genesis 4:10), as did the blood of unavenged murders in the land of Israel (Numbers 35:33).

v 11 **It was said to them that they should rest a little while longer:** These saints were instructed to *wait*. How long must they wait? **Until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.** This may mean that they should wait until *all* God's appointed martyrs are killed.

There is another way of understanding this verse. The words **the number of** in v11 are supplied by the translators, not the text. Therefore, it may mean that they wait until the *character* of the remaining martyrs on earth is perfected and complete. It is character—the way that one *lives*—that makes a martyr or a witness, not the way that one *dies*. Either way, it will still be the end of the tribulation.

Now we come to the sixth seal judgment.

## **The Sixth Seal: Cosmic disturbances and a massive earthquake**

Revelation 6:12-17 NKJV

### ***Sixth Seal: Cosmic Disturbances***

**<sup>12</sup> I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. <sup>13</sup> And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. <sup>14</sup> Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. <sup>15</sup> And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, <sup>16</sup> and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup> For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”**

Just as a side note here, Hal Lindsay says:

“There are those who say the wrath of the Lamb, the real Tribulation, does not happen until midway into this seven-year period. They believe the church is raptured immediately before Antichrist enters the temple, demanding to be worshiped as God. Adherents to this view, called the Mid-Tribulation or Pre-Wrath Rapture, would do well to read Revelation 6 more carefully, because verse 16 makes it clear that the wrath of the Lamb occurs at the beginning of the Tribulation, not halfway through.

“Pray you may be found worthy to escape all of these things,” Jesus taught in His Olivet Discourse—not “that you may be found worthy to escape halfway through” (see Luke 21:36).

How is one found worthy?

Simply by being in Christ (Jude 24).” End of quote.

v12 **A great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth:** In the Bible, celestial disturbances are often connected with the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Zephaniah and Jesus Himself all described such things. Here are two examples:

Zephaniah 1:14-16 NKJV

The great day of the Lord is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers.

Joel 2:10–11 NKJV

The sun and moon grow dark, and stars diminish their brightness ... for the day of the Lord is great and terrible; who can endure it?

Just as a side note, those who regard these events as *history* have to greatly spiritualise or allegorise them. One example is Adam Clarke, who said this **great earthquake** was “A most stupendous change in the civil and religious constitution of the world. If it refer to Constantine the Great, the change that was made by his conversion to Christianity might be very properly represented under the emblem of an *earthquake*.”

v 12-13 **The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth:** It is best to regard these pictures as *real*, but *poetic*. John did not use technically precise scientific language, but he simply described what he saw. It's important that we understand that John is literally writing what he heard and what he saw. He is describing things to us that we may not have seen yet. We may not know what causes the appearance of stars falling from heaven to earth, but we do know that it will look like that. Whether this is a supernatural phenomena or a natural phenomena, we don't know. Suggestions include a meteorite shower—imagine the sky full of shooting stars, meteorites burning up as they enter the atmosphere and some of them hitting the earth. Another suggestion is that it describes a nuclear war, with the missiles streaking to the earth being the stars of heaven falling to earth and the atmospheric pollution causing the sun to be darkened and the moon to become like blood, just like a large bushfire does. Whatever causes this, we know what it will look like.

Also, the word translated earthquake is *seismos*, which means to shake. This is not the usual word used to describe an earthquake. The earth will shake greatly, as demonstrated by “every mountain and island was moved out of its place” (verse 14). This shaking may or may not be caused by an earthquake.

v15 **And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves:** All people are equally brought low by God's wrath. The judgment is all the more profound because it is the **wrath of the Lamb**.

v16 **Hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne:** They hid not only from the terror of the judgments, but **from the face of Him who sits on the throne**. “What sinners dread most is not death, but the revealed presence of God.” (Swete)

This tells us that the people on earth who don't believe will clearly understand that the judgements that are befalling them are of divine origin. Just like in Egypt, God will demonstrate His power and make it clear that He is God. People will have to choose to repent of their evil ways and follow God, or continue in their evil ways and follow Satan. Later this will mean taking the mark of the beast, which seals their fate—eternity in the lake of fire.

Summary: Here is quick summary of chapter 6, the six seals.

1. The antichrist is revealed and comes to power.
2. He promises peace but the result is war, a world war
3. The world war causes famine and disease
4. As a result of the war, famine and disease and wild beasts a quarter of the world's population is killed.
5. During this time there is a massive persecution of the tribulation saints, those who believe during the tribulation. Many are martyred or killed for the word of God and for being faithful in their testimony.
6. There is a massive earthquake and other cosmic disturbances and the people of the earth recognise that these judgements are from God, and they fear God's judgements.

Walvoord says about the second and third seals; "The wars and famines predicted in the second and third seals are not unfamiliar events in the history of the world, but never before since the time of Noah has a judgment so devastating been consummated as to destroy one-fourth of the earth's population at one stroke."

As far as the seals are concerned, they will be an *intense amplification* of bad conditions often experienced through history. God will give mankind over to his fallen nature—and *more!* But, this is not the case with some of the trumpet and bowl judgments of later chapters. They are completely unique manifestations of God's judgment.

## Conclusion and application

The sixth seal concludes with a valid question: *Who is able to stand?* Only the believer can stand before God and be spared His judgement, the one who is justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1-2 NKJV

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

1 Corinthians 15:1 NKJV

I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received and in which you stand.

1 Peter 5:12 NKJV

Testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand.

What this means is that the believer can stand in the face of this great wrath of God because Jesus already bore the wrath the believer deserved.

Again, but now referring specifically to the God's wrath poured out during the tribulation, Who can stand? We can. Because God has not appointed us unto wrath, but unto salvation

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 NKJV

<sup>9</sup> For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us, **that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.**

<sup>11</sup> Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

The context of these verses here is that God is promising that at the Rapture, whether alive or dead, we will receive our glorified bodies and live to together with Him. The comfort here is that we will be spared the extreme pain and suffering that will be experienced by those who go through the tribulation. Where is Christ during the tribulation? In Heaven, therefore, so shall we be.

Also remember the promise Jesus made to the church in Revelation 3:10:

Revelation 3:10 NKJV

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

So precious brothers and sisters in Christ, we'll be standing in heaven with Jesus. We are worthy to escape God's wrath, both eternal and the wrath poured out during the tribulation, because of what Christ has done for us and our acceptance of His gift of pardon and forgiveness. So comfort one another with these words.

Next week:

We're not the only ones standing. In chapter 7, we'll see three other groups who stand in the day of the wrath of the Lamb, but they will be in the tribulation, not kept out of it like the church.... Next week we see God remembering mercy in judgement. God is so Good.