

The Book Of Revelation

Week 5

Chapter 6, The 7 Seals

The book of Revelation begins with the vision of Jesus in chapter 1, and progresses to the letters to the seven churches, in chapters 2 and 3. Following that is the awesome suspense as we see the scene in the throne room in chapter 4, and the Lamb taking the scroll from the Father in chapter 5.

Once we get into chapter 6, it is like putting a vehicle into gear. The rubber hits the road, and things start happening on earth.

At this point, from understanding the back drop of who the antichrist is, all the criteria for the unfolding of the tribulation period are most likely in place.

The birth pains described by Jesus have most likely run their course, and to coin a phrase, "it's showtime".

The seal judgement events are released by the lamb of God, as he opens the seals on the scroll one by one. Apart from the sixth seal event, they are not cosmic in nature, or things that would typically be labelled as acts of God. Rather, these events can be traced back to the initial seal, which is widely regarded to be the release of the antichrist. All the killing, economic failure, famine and disease can be traced back to the man of war who will rise up as a tyrant to rule the world.

Seal 1. White horse.

Chapter 6 verse 1. Then I watched as the lamb broke the first of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!". And there before my eyes was a white horse, and its rider, held a bow.

He was given a crown, and he rode forth, conquering and to conquer.

Let's look at the various interpretations of the white horse, and settle on the most likely of these.

Our Lord Jesus.

Pre-trib adherents may teach that the rider on the white horse is our Messiah Jesus. They may teach that he rides out to receive the church in the pre-trib rapture. There are many problems with this interpretation.

1. Firstly there is no scriptural evidence that the lamb departs heaven on the white horse, receives his church, returns, and resumes his mission to open the remaining seals.
2. Jesus continues to release the scrolls, it wouldn't make sense for him to release himself on a horse and then continue in heaven to seal 2.
3. The pre-trib rapture is not directly evidenced in scripture, but only by inference.
4. If this is the pre-trib rapture, why is Jesus holding a bow? The bow represents war. If Jesus is riding out to receive his church in the air and return to heaven, what is the purpose of the bow?
5. Similarly, it says that the rider went forth conquering and to conquer. If this represents Jesus riding out to receive his raptured church in the air, who is he supposed to conquer?
6. Jesus is crowned with many crowns. He is already a king. He told Pilate "my kingdom is not of this world". Why would Jesus be given a crown at this point?
7. We don't see any other record in the Bible where an angel instructs The Father or the Son to take an action. Yet here we see the living creature shout. "Come!". And then the white horse goes forth.
8. Finally, the opening of the seals are judgement events. The other three riders bring calamity, therefore it makes no sense that the opening of the first seal signifies the rapture, and not a judgement event.

COVID. This is a new interpretation popular among historicists that has been circulated since 2020. Historicists seek to identify major current events, and link them to the narrative of the book of Revelation.

This teaching explains that the crown represents the corona virus. The bow shoots arrows, which represent the hypodermic needle used to give the vaccine. And the white horse represents the colour of a doctors coat. Again there are issues with this.

1. If the white horse represents covid, which begin in 2020, then in 2024, we are already past the midway point of the seven year period, so we should have already seen the building of the third Jewish temple, and we should already have witnessed the antichrist stop the offerings and set up the abomination that causes desolation.
2. Finally, for most people, COVID was not a conquering event. It was dangerous to the elderly and vulnerable, but ultimately it was contained.

The Antichrist.

If the rider on the white horse is not Jesus, who else could it be? We know that the devil appears as an angel of light, to deceive. In answer to the disciples' question in Matthew 24 verse 4, about the end times, the first thing that Jesus said was "Watch out that no one deceives you, for many will come in my name, claiming, "I am Messiah", and will deceive many...". If the book of Revelation is following the same sequence of events as Matthew 24, then a false Messiah appears first.

1. Jesus will ride out of Heaven on a white horse in Revelation chapter 19, to return to earth. You can see why the antichrist is also represented by a white horse, as his mission is to deceive.
2. The rider held a bow, and went forth conquering and to conquer. The antichrist is described in Daniel as a man who wages war.
3. The rider of the white horse is given a crown. This agrees with Revelation chapter 13 verse 7. The beast was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.
4. The opening of the first seal is not likely to represent the birth of the antichrist. However it could represent his coming to power as a leader. Or it could represent his transition from peace covenant maker to invading covenant breaker.

Let's look at the detail of these last two options.

5. If the opening of the first seal represents the antichrist coming to power, making a covenant with Israel, and appearing to solve the middle east crisis, then it would place the first seal event at the beginning of Daniel's seven year period. He will have to wait three and a half years to show his true colours, invade Israel and desecrate the temple.

After the Jews have fled into the desert, he will then turn his attention to persecuting the church according to Revelation chapter 12. In this case the seal, trumpet and bowl judgements will take seven years to play out. But the persecution will not start until half way through the period.

6. If the opening of the first seal represents the antichrist breaking his covenant with Israel, then this would place the first seal event at the halfway point of Daniel's seven year period, in which case all the seal, trumpet and bowl judgements will take only three and a half years to play out.

In this scenario, the leader who becomes the antichrist will already be in power and will have already brokered a peace deal with Israel to enable them to build their temple. The rider on the white horse will signify his transition into a man of war, hence the words "he goes out conquering and to conquer".

This would also explain why Revelation 13 says that the beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies, and to exercise his authority for forty two months, which is three and a half years, not seven years.

The implication of this scripture is that the blasphemies and the power to conquer God's people is only given to him in the second half of Daniel's seven year period. In the first half, he deceives the world, and Israel, by apparently bringing peace to the Middle East.

During this first half, he would not yet appear to be the antichrist, and therefore many will not recognize him as such, therefore when he transitions to the blaspheming monster who breaks covenant with Israel and starts persecuting Jews and Christians throughout the world, it will catch many off guard.

This transition would maximize his ability to deceive. If in the first three and a half years he does not behave in any way that would cause people to recognize him, he will manage to bed himself into the international scene as a good guy, possibly solving the Middle East crisis. Beware of being dogmatic when considering who the antichrist might be.

Seal 2. Red horse.

Chapter 6 verse 1. When the lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say "Come!". Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword.

It would be true to say that there has never been peace on the earth. There are continually wars in different parts of the world, and always have been. So how do we explain the opening of the second seal? Does it represent more war? We already have war.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is an ongoing significant war at the time of writing. The Ukrainians may feel that they have already had their red horse. But it seems that the red horse represents something even more sinister than war.

The phrase "to make people kill each other" could refer to a huge rise in random killing, rather than the broader and more predictable nature of war. If this rider takes peace from the earth, it implies that now we have peace. Not military peace world wide, but as far as the average person going about his daily business, there is peace.

On a daily basis, you don't fear that you will be killed. Could the red horse bring an end to this peace by releasing such a surge of random attacks that every day can be a matter of life or death. That would certainly rob peace from our lives in the West.

You may ask, what could cause such a massive rise in killing? We see the polarization of society, an increase in distrust, disinformation and violence between groups with opposing ideologies. This may well contribute to the unfolding of the second seal. And doubtless there will be an increase in wars as the antichrist expands his empire.

Seal 3. Black horse.

Chapter 6 verse 5. When the lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say "Come!". I looked and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying "Two pounds of wheat for a days wages, and six pounds of barley for a days wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine".

Given the context, it is likely that the pair of scales do not represent a problem with the justice system, but rather a problem with trade and commerce. Therefore it is likely that the

black horse represents worldwide economic collapse.

This is not surprising if war and terrorism have spread all over the earth previously, as economic issues always follow war. However the details of this collapse need some inspection.

Two pounds of wheat for a days wages. The original Greek says a denarius, which was apparently a minimum day's wage, hence the more modern translation.

A quick bit of research tells us that 2 pounds of wheat is needed to bake 4 loaves of bread. Therefore, we can derive that inflation will be so extreme that it will take a days wages to cover the basic food requirements for a family.

We should also be aware that the detail given about the price of wheat probably represents all basic commodities. It would not be a judgement event if the price of bread rose sky high, but rice and potatoes all remained at stable prices.

Therefore although the text is not explicit, the black horse most likely represents an enormous price inflation on all commodities.

What is meant by "Do not touch the oil and the wine"? There are many theories.

1. The price of fossil fuel will not be affected.
2. Worship will not be prevented. This theory is based on the interpretation that oil and wine are elements of certain sacrifices in Temple worship.
3. The anointed followers of Jesus will be protected. Oil speaks of the anointing.
4. While the price of commodities will be inflated, the price of luxury items will remain stable.

The last theory is the most likely, and we should expand on that. In the book of proverbs, oil and wine represent luxury. Proverbs chapter 21 verse 17 says "He who loves pleasure will be a poor man, he who loves oil and wine will not be rich".

This proverb teaches that if you become addicted to a luxurious lifestyle, you will not build savings, and will end up poor.

It is also likely that, although the text is not explicit, the price of all luxury items will remain untouched by inflation, just as it is likely that the price of all commodities, not only wheat and barley, will be inflated.

Given that God has designed these judgement events, what is the purpose of inflating only the price of commodities? The effect on the rich would be minimal. The price of cars and houses would remain stable, meanwhile the absurd price of commodities will not rock the boat for the wealthy, rather it will be an annoyance.

On the other hand, the effect on the poor will be catastrophic, for whom the luxury items of life are already out of reach. However, the hugely inflated price of commodities will destroy their finances, and many will go hungry.

Why would God design a judgement which squeezed the poor within an inch of their lives, but left the rich untouched?

Could it be that the purpose of this judgement is to bring people to their senses, like the prodigal son, so that there is repentance and turning to God. But as you can appreciate, only the poor will be affected. This means that only the poor will be driven to repentance. Why not the rich?

To answer we must turn to the parable of the banquet in Luke 14 verses 15 to 23. In this parable, many pillars of society were invited, business men and newly weds, but none of them accepted the invite. Finally the master of the feast gave up on the well to do, and commanded his servants to compel the poor, crippled and homeless to attend the banquet. He ended the parable with this. "Not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet".

Is it possible that the black horse judgement is sent to compel the poor to come to their senses under extreme measures, repent, and enter the kingdom of God? And what of the rich? Maybe they have already had their invite. Maybe their hearts will not be open to God, and that is why the focus is now on saving the poor, as it was in this parable.

Remember the judgement seal events are not sent to punish the world, but to bring them to their knees, if only some will repent and be saved.

Seal 4. The Pale Green horse.

In Greek, the word for "pale" can also mean "green". Verse 7 says, when the lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say "Come!".

I looked and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

The pale horse amplifies the effect of the previous seals. Now the numbers killed in random attacks will increase exponentially, now the absurd inflation will affect food distribution. Food will not only cost you everything, it will be scarce, and there will be world-wide famine. People will die of starvation in huge numbers. Plagues will spread rampantly in this already dire situation, compounding the desperation.

The final nail in the coffin will be when wild beasts who are starved of their regular food supply, will start to attack humans in order to survive.

This sounds like a horror film, and you can be forgiven for thinking that I am painting an exaggerated picture here, until you consider these words. "Death and hades were given power over a quarter of the earth". We may try to wriggle out of this.

Perhaps the quarter of the earth they have power over, has very sparse population. We may hope that this refers to Antarctica, Alaska and Siberia. But we need to think again. What is the point of a judgement event that has power over lands which are largely empty? We may also argue that it does not say a quarter of the world will die.

It simply says that death and hades will have power over a quarter of the world. Ultimately, our arguments are pinned up against the wall. If death and hades has power over someone, surely the point is that they will die, and be condemned to hell. Remember all these events are in Gods sovereignty and nothing is allowed to happen unless it is passed by God Himself.

So finally, we have no choice but to come to this appalling conclusion. Going by population figures in 2024, the pale horse rider will cause over two billion people to die.

Seal 5. Martyred saints.

Verse 9 describes this seal event. When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they held. And they cried out 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?".

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.

We might hope that since an altar is usually only a few meters in length, only a few martyred saints will be implicated. But this is not in keeping with the figures we have understood from the previous seals. It is likely that huge numbers of Christians will decide that it is better to stand up for Jesus than deny him.

Jesus said "if anyone wants to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it". Jesus also said everyone who confesses me before men, I will also confess him before my Father in Heaven. But whoever denies me before men, I will also deny him before my Father in Heaven".

The decision to stand up for Jesus in these times may be aided by the knowledge that the seal events are unfolding, and that by denying Jesus you will not only lose your salvation, but also since civilisation as we know it will soon come to an end, you will only gain a few years of life on earth, which will be fraught with further tribulation events. In these times, the church will have two options.

Rise up in prayer and boldness, not loving our lives unto death, or hide away and deny our faith, lose our salvation, and meet our end anyway through some end time event. Let us choose wisely.

Not that we should think that the decision to lose our lives for his sake is an easy decision, despite the eternal reward. Hear the cries of the martyred saints under the altar. They do not cry "Praise God for saving us from persecution, and receiving us into heaven".

No, their minds are still on the earthly home that they have been brutally evicted from. They cry out for justice and vengeance on those who have killed them. They are aware that the brutality may well affect their loved ones next, and the trauma of this causes them to cry out for the madness to end.

However, the answer given to them is not an easy one. Instead of wrapping up this time of intense persecution. God says that it must continue, until the number of every soul who would be killed, is complete.

At first, this seems harsh, but the implication is that this is a necessary process in order to give those believers an opportunity to stand for what they believe in, and for their heart to be refined. It is very hard for us in the comfortable West to understand this, but maybe we have been living an imaginary life of selfless sacrifice up to now. We know that our lives bear no resemblance to that of the disciples. Maybe this is our time to step up to the plate.

Seal 6: Great earthquake.

Verse 12 to 17 tell the details, as we move away from outcomes of the antichrist's brutality, towards cosmic events and natural disasters. "I looked when he opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake, the sun became as black as sackcloth, and the moon became like blood. 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.

Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved from its place. 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, 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! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

So the first question is this. Is this sixth seal the same as the seventh trumpet, which also announces the day of the Lord, and triggers an earthquake? Then we might ask, does the sixth seal also coincide with the seventh bowl, which also triggers an earthquake?

It is easy to see similarities between the different judgement events, and come to conclusions that they all describe the same event.

On the face of it the text is clear, the seven seals come first, and the trumpets begin after the last seal. In the same way, the bowl judgements begin after that last trumpet. Therefore, the sixth seal cannot coincide with the seventh trumpet or the seventh bowl.

There are different viewpoints of the sequence of these events which can be argued by using different bible texts.

The temptation is to teach that because the book of Revelation contains many symbols, and some sections provide background information, then we can also re-order the events that are sequentially laid out in the text. In other words, we don't need to take their sequence literally. This can lead to confusion.

The best approach when reading this book, is to take the text literally where it is reasonable to do so.

In the sixth seal, the mountains and islands are moved. In the seventh bowl event, the mountains and islands are not just moved, but removed. The seal earthquake is unprecedented, the bowl earthquake is totally catastrophic.

What about the sun going black, and the stars falling? Does that not prove that the sixth seal is in fact the same as the trumpet events, which include cosmic events like an asteroid falling to earth, and a third of the sun, moon and stars turning dark?

The most logical answer is this. Rather than attempt to re-arrange the sequence which is so carefully described in this book, the best interpretation is that there are cosmic disturbances caused by the sixth seal, and again by the first four trumpets, and then again by the fifth and seventh bowls.

Where we trip up in our interpretation is by assuming that since cosmic events are so rare, when the bible describes such events three times, it surely cannot refer to three different cosmic events. We neglect to understand that the great tribulation will unfold in so unimaginable a way, that disasters will come one after the other, to leave the people who remain in no doubt that these events do not follow natural order, but that God is judging the earth.

We know that according to the natural order, cosmic events are rare. However when three or more such events occur within a three and a half year period, even the most hardened atheists must surely begin to consider the possibility that the book of Revelation is playing out before their eyes.

We present this interpretation of the seal events not to provide a story line to entertain, not for its adrenaline value, but simply to say, the day of the Lord is approaching, now is the

time to repent of timidity and fear, to repent of loving our own lives too much, so that we would be those who are ready to stand for Jesus.

To leave you with a sobering thought, consider this verse which explains what happens to those who are not willing to stand boldly and bravely at the end.

Revelation chapter 21 verse 8 says "But the cowardly, unbelieving, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters and liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death".

The death and suffering brought about in the seal judgements will be completely off the scale. The number of people killed in world war, 1 and 2 together, which totals less than 100 million, is one twentieth the number of people that will be killed in the seal events.

The survivors of the seal judgements will either understand that God is humbling the world, and they will fall to their knees in repentance, or they will become convinced that God hates the world, in which case they will become hardened in their anger against Him.

As the judgement events progress to the trumpet and bowl events, scripture only mentions the latter group who do not repent. So as we go through the seal events, we must become a people of constant prayer, and help as many as possible to repent. It is also a time when the church will see many fall away, and deny their faith.

It will truly be a time of distress like no other. But remember the words of Jesus. He who endures to the end will be saved.

What do you think?

If the first seal is the release of the Antichrist, which of these makes more sense: A = Birth of the A/C, B = A/C forms 7yr peace treaty or C = A/C invades Jerusalem half way through 7yr period?

What is your understanding of the economic details given regarding the 3rd seal (black horse) and can these be taken literally?

What is the difference between sensible preparation and obsessive stockpiling when we believe that the black horse is near?

What is your understanding of the sixth seal, do you think it represents the return of Jesus?