

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 7TH-8TH, 2024 // REVELATION

THE RIDERS (REVELATION 6:1-8) REMEMBER IT IS APOCALYPTIC WRITING

This is where it gets worse before it gets better. Many view chapters 6-16 as harsh, but with study, we see God's grace in the text (3:19).

- The symbolism, order, and fulfillment of the events are also a source of contention. Where one lands determines when they believe Christ returns (pre, mid, or post).

THE SEALS, TRUMPETS, AND BOWLS

Each series is divided into 3 parts: The first 4 are together, the 5th and 6th are together, and the 7th stands alone. The last 3 events in each series are called "woes," curses from God.

- Throughout the seals, trumpets, and bowls, there are insertions telling us about the state of the church.

INCREASINGLY INTENSE AND HARD TO FATHOM

During the **seals**, 25% of the earth's population dies from human infliction.

- During the **trumpets**, 33% who are left die from natural or environmental disasters.
- The **bowls** are supernatural events that will bring about God's wrath and the end of time as we know it.

THREE DIFFERENT VIEWS ON THE SEQUENCE

- That the events are simply in order
- 1234567, 1234567, 1234567
- That they are the same events that take place simultaneously
- The most probable is a combination of the first two views: The first six events happen after each other and the seventh is the same.

OPTION NUMBER THREE:

- 123456 (ch. 7 state of the church) 7
- 123456 (ch. 10-11 state of the church) 7
- (ch. 12-14 state of the church) 123456 7

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The four "living creatures" in chapters 4-5 summon four horses with riders on each one after Jesus starts to break the seals on the scroll from chapter five.

- John says their voices are "like thunder" as they command "Come!" to the riders of the horses.

THE RIDER ON THE WHITE HORSE

John was focused on the rider, not the horse. The rider held a bow and was wearing a crown as he was unleashed to conquer.

- This seal symbolizes military **conquest**. The crown symbolizes victory, and the white is not purity but the promise of peace though war is about to take place.
- Some think this represents Christ and Christianity conquering the earth. This is highly unlikely. **Many scholars believe this is the start of a "one world order" and many nations coming under one leader.**
- The bow with no arrows could **possibly mean intimidation vs. actual brute force.**

THE RIDER ON THE FIERY RED HORSE

The creature "like an ox" unleashes the horse and rider that symbolize **warfare**. This rider has the power "to take peace from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another."

- The red can symbolize bloodshed and the fire of weapons in battle after the brief peace from the first horse.
- Many believe this could also represent internal strife within nations; civil wars, rebellions, and revolutions. The "large sword" shows us that the conflicts will be bloody and large in scale.

THE RIDER ON THE BLACK HORSE

The creature "like a human" unleashes the black horse and rider that held scales. This seal represents **famine** and possibly **economic collapse**. Warfare usually leads to starvation and collapse for losing countries.

- Think of refugees from warring nations and the destruction of cities by extremists.
- The scales show us that food will be scarce and must be rationed. It may also mean that prices are inflated and food is being unethically withheld from needy people.
- **Common foods (wheat, grain) may be in short supply, but finer things (oil, wine) will still be enjoyed by the wealthy and greedy.**

THE RIDER ON THE PALE HORSE

The creature "like an eagle" unleashes a horse and rider the color of green-gray, similar to a corpse. This rider symbolizes **death, Hades**, and the grave. Wherever there is conquest, war, and famine, death follows.

- The pale green may also symbolize destroyed vegetation from the previous horses/riders.
- 25% of the world's population dies during this seal. The fact that Hades follows may indicate many will be eternally lost during this time.
- Ezekiel 14:19-23 mentions that we cannot undo this, but **Christians will be present to console those left alive and lead many to Christ (some hope).**

MARTYRS (REVELATION 6:9-11) TO DIE FOR HIS NAME

The fifth seal represents the escalation of Christian persecution. Persecution has always existed, but this indicates it **will get worse towards the end**. This scene shows all martyrs from history through the Great Tribulation.

- Jesus said **all Believers must be willing to "take up [their] cross"** (Matthew 10:38).

JUSTICE FOR THOSE WHO DIED FOR CHRIST

The souls of the persecuted Believers are symbolically under an altar in heaven (where the blood of OT sacrifices was placed). The martyrs petition the Lord to "judge those who live on earth and avenge our blood."

- Their robes are white (purity), so we know they want **justice, not revenge.**

"UNTIL THE NUMBER WOULD BE COMPLETED"?

The martyrs ask how long justice will take. The answer is when all people during the Great Tribulation have been given the chance to repent and all who are to be martyred have died.

- Jesus said He will not return until the gospel has been "proclaimed in all the world" (Matthew 24:14).

AN ISSUE WITH ONE VIEW OF PRE-TRIB RAPTURE

If the **5th seal takes place during the Tribulation, a chapter 4 rapture doesn't work. If Christians aren't present during the 7 years, who are the "fellow servants" and "brothers and sisters?" Who teaches the gospel and who is martyred?**

- **What about 1 Thessalonians 4?** Read N.T. Wright's article *Farewell to the Rapture*.

COSMIC DISTURBANCE (REVELATION 6:12-14)

ESCALATION

The first five seals were acts of humans, though God is in control. The sixth seal will be acts of God that affect not only people but the earth itself. The sixth seal is so violent that the sky, land, and waters are shaken.

AFFECTING THE EARTH

This is the first of five references to an earthquake. The "sun turned to black" is most likely referring to volcanic ash from multiple eruptions. The "moon became like blood" is more than likely the same thing.

- Joel 2:31 predicts this verbatim.

THE UNRAVELING OF THE UNIVERSE

The "stars of heaven" falling are probably meteorites (shooting stars) that will hit earth and affect its geology. The sky "split apart like a scroll" is tough to understand, but probably alludes to the unraveling of the universe.

- "Every mountain and island" will move from its place before He returns.

DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS

- **Symbolic:** Metaphorical "earth shattering" events.
- **Literal:** The sixth seal is the literal beginning of the end to life as we know it. Some believe this is the same event as Revelation 16:18.
- **Events since Christ was born:** The idea that these things have been happening between the two comings of Christ.

HUMANITY'S RESPONSE (REVELATION 6:15-17)

HOW MANY WILL RESPOND

The last two verses show us how many people will respond to the catastrophic events of the sixth seal. Virtually all people groups are mentioned: powerful, rich, royalty, slaves, and just average people.

- **All people will be affected. There will be no excuses or escape without Christ.**

THEY "HID... AMONG THE ROCKS"

The first response to the global disturbance is **self-preservation**. Hiding in the rocks is probably a metaphor for terror and looking out for self. Our natural response to adversity is selfishness.

- **Christians are to war against this! Ironically, self-centeredness is a catalyst for self-destruction.**

"HIDE US... FROM THE WRATH OF THE LAMB"

The second response is to **blame God**. Some people believe this passage is repentance, but that is unlikely. This is outrage and blame because **they believe God is wrong and they deserve better.**

- **But many will also humble themselves and accept Christ as their Savior.**

"WHO IS ABLE TO STAND?"

The answer to the rhetorical question of the people who view the seals as punishment is "nobody." The only people who will escape God's wrath are those who truly love Him.

- **Revelation is a wake-up call. God doesn't shake the earth because He hates us, but to provoke us to change!**

RESPONDING TO PRESSURE AND PROMPTING

- Revelation is judgment, and an act of grace. The extreme events are methods by which God is trying to get humanity's attention.
- Will we respond to pressure and hardships with self-preservation and selfishness? Will we blame God? Or **will we humble ourselves, repent, and take life more seriously?**

"WHO IS ABLE TO STAND?"

- Those willing to kneel in **humility** to God will be the only ones able to withstand the pressures of the future.
- This is why Jesus said, **"the first [will be] last," "whoever humbles himself will be exalted," and "go and sit in the lowest place, so...he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.'"**

ARE WE PREPARED TO STAND?

- If Christians are present during the times of extreme tribulation and persecution, are we spiritually prepared for what is to come?
- **If we're unable to be faithful and knowledgeable in our current freedom and prosperity, how can we possibly handle the pressure Revelation foretells?**

PREPARATION FOR STANDING

- We must deeply love Jesus, seek His will first, and love others as ourselves.
- Faith must be proactive, not reactive. This means prayer before pressure, learning before questioning, building shelter before the storm. In essence, we must prepare in this present comfort for the coming discomfort.