



## 14. Revelation 6 – Judgement and The Seals.

### Revelation Chapter 6:1-17

The introduction to Heaven has taken place. We have an enlightening description of the majestic scene in Heaven as the Lamb, looking as though He had been slain, is identified as the only One worthy of opening the Scroll that was sealed with seven seals. The Lamb's identity is Jesus Who died to pay the price of the sin of the whole world – every sin, past present and future – and rose again to eternal life – the firstborn of many brothers, **Romans 8:28-30**. John sees these people and the people identified as 'the crystal sea' clearly as representatives of the Church

before the Throne of God as Jesus opens the first seal. When the Tribulation begins, the Church Company is standing in Heaven to observe the results!

All Heaven knew that the time for judgement had arrived. The Church was at home before her Lord, the angels' work amongst the Believers was complete. Jesus, Who was never willing that any should perish, is about to initiate the final harvest by unleashing calamities and the final evangelistic outreach on the earth, to bring home the last stragglers to Himself together with His chosen people, the Jews.

**Note** that the events we are going to study here do not occur before anything else can happen. The seals are opened sequentially, but the timing of the opening is spread over the entire 7 year period of the Tribulation. For example, the sixth seal's events do not occur until towards the very end of the Tribulation period.

The seals are the first of three judgements that are to be released on the earth, the trumpets (**Revelation 8; 9**) and the bowls (**Revelation 16**) are the other two. As each seal is opened, Jesus, the Lamb initiates the events that will bring about the end of human history. The breaking of the seventh seal finishes the opening of the scroll (**Revelation 8:1**) and what is revealed is mankind's depravity. It also shows God's sovereign authority and power over human events and history. He has been in it all, and is in it all from the largest worldwide changes (e.g. the Flood **Genesis 6 to 9**) to the smallest events in our life. Where Satan believed that he had won a major victory in any of these events, he quickly discovered that he had simply smoothed the way for God to fulfil His promises, **Romans 5:20-21**. Remember this when going through an attack of the enemy! Four horses and their riders appear as the first four seals are opened. These riders are often referred to as the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. They and their horses evidence God's judgement on the sin of the people of the world and their rebellion.

As the **first** seal is opened in Heaven, one of the living creatures called to John in a voice like thunder. We don't know the exact timing of the opening of this seal, but it may be on the same day that the Church is taken up into heaven (The Rapture). The seals are opened in Heaven by the Lamb, but the activity takes place on the earth. The first horse to appear together with its rider is a white horse.

In **Revelation 19:11**, Jesus is described as riding a white horse, but despite what many Bible commentators have suggested, it does not appear that He is the rider of this horse. The rider of this white horse is described as riding forth conquering and to conquer. Jesus has already conquered so it cannot be Him. He is at His Father's throne in Heaven



**The rider in this picture wears a crown of his own making, thus elevating himself in the eyes of men**

Also, the rider of the white horse does not wear a God-given crown, because one has to be given to him. Jesus already has His Crown as Ruler of the Heavens and the Earth. In fact He has many Crowns (**Revelation 19:12**), He does not have to be given one. This rider only carries a bow. He does not carry arrows. Nothing can be done with a bow on its own; it is not even a weapon, let alone a lethal weapon. When the writers of the books of the Bible describe Jesus as a warrior, they describe Him as having a sword (this is a two-edged sword and refers to the Word of God) as a weapon and never a bow, **Revelation 19:11-13**. The rider of the white horse in **Revelation 6:2** is the man who is a deceiver. He introduces blasphemous philosophies and tries to look like Christ but will be the antichrist. During the first period of the Tribulation, he is not described as the antichrist but as a great diplomat, however during the second period of the Tribulation, he *is* described as the antichrist. How very sad that a man should allow himself to be controlled in such a way!

The name and identity of the antichrist are not revealed but we do know that he gets his authority and power from Satan. Revelation teaches us about his plan, the final results of it and the way in which he will try to carry it out. The Bible describes the system which allows him to come to power and which sustains him. We shall see that when we study **Revelation 13 to 17**.

As Paul writes to the Thessalonian Believers, he teaches them that the antichrist cannot begin his satanically-inspired activities until the Holy Spirit is taken from the earth, and the only way in which that can happen is if the Church is gathered to the Lord Jesus in Heaven first. This occurs at the Rapture as we have seen. **2 Thessalonians 2:1-12**.

We can see how the world is being prepared by Satan for the time he thinks he will rule with his Messiah; the tempo is increasing as rebellion grows, all authority is defied and men are daily inventing evil things. Under the seal of judgement the world will be ruined by man. We can already see that events recorded here are an extension of the things that are evident in the world today, the main difference is the removal of the Church so all restraint will be withdrawn. Enough is happening to let us see a glimpse of what the judgement age will look like. The Restrainer is still here and the Scroll is still sealed. The equipment for a major worldwide anti-God propaganda offensive already exists and it is being enlarged daily.

### **Daniel 9:20-27**

This passage from Daniel introduces us to the concept of the 7 years of the Tribulation Period. As Daniel was praying, Gabriel appeared to him with the answer to his prayer. It came in the form of an explanation. God explained that the end of time would happen over a period of 'weeks of years' (i.e. seventy sevens or 490 years).

Some scholars state that this should not be taken literally but was a literary way of saying 'a period of time' just as when Jesus stated that we should forgive someone not just seven times but much more, in fact as many times as is necessary! **Matthew 18:21-22**. Others however state that it should be taken literally, as 70 weeks or 490 years, observing that Christ's death came at the end of the 69 weeks (i.e., 483 years later). One interpretation places the 70th week as the seven years of the great tribulation, still in the future. Consequently the number would symbolise both the first and second comings of Christ.

In reference to **Daniel 9: 26-27**, there has been much discussion on the numbers, times, and events, and there are three basic views:

- (1). the prophecy was fulfilled in the past at the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 168-167 B.C. (**Revelation 11:31**);
- (2). it was fulfilled in the past at the destruction of the temple by the Roman general Titus in A.D. 70 when one million Jews were killed; or
- (3). it is still to be fulfilled in the future under the antichrist (**Matthew 24:15**).

Given the description and teaching in Revelation and other books, it is extremely hard to take it from any other standpoint than that of item (3) above. This contradicts some amazing scholars, but we have more information on current world events that those scholars may have done when they chose their position.

**Daniel 9:27** refers to the covenant that the antichrist will make with the Jews (the many – v27) for seven years but he will break it in the middle after three and a half years. The last half of verse twenty seven refers to an event that will shock the Jews beyond belief. This has happened once before in 168-167 B.C when Antiochus IV invaded "the South", but enemy ships caused him to retreat. On his return to Greece, he plundered Jerusalem, desecrated the Temple, and stopped the Jews' daily sacrifices. The Temple was desecrated when he sacrificed pigs on an altar erected in honour of Zeus. According to Jewish law, pigs

were unclean and were not to be touched or eaten. To sacrifice a pig in the Temple was the worst kind of insult an enemy could level against the Jews. So the events to which the second part of Revelation (Chapter 4 onwards) refers is Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, the Tribulation Period (or the 'Time of Jacob's trouble') and we are looking at the very first part of that – perhaps even the first day – as Jesus opens the first seal of the scroll and the antichrist rides out!

This rider is very quickly followed by the **second, Revelation 6:3-4**. This rider is a warrior – a man of war given power to take peace from the earth. The fact that he rides indicates that from this time, there will be war and killing, murder and lawlessness throughout the Tribulation period. It is this rider who will initially cause the fragile peace between Israel and her Arab neighbours to disintegrate. Russia will mobilise from the North and attack Israel. There is good reason to watch what is happening now as a large natural gas field has been found in Israeli territory off-shore. Russia and her collaborators will be entirely defeated. Ezekiel describes these events, and he clearly indicates that this war will be at the start of the Tribulation period. **(Read Ezekiel 38 and 39).**

Russia's abject defeat and destruction will permit the antichrist (who is known as a man of peace) to begin his Satanic commission to conquer the entire world. He will, of course, be spectacularly unsuccessful (all evil men who have attempted to conquer the world have failed), but the Tribulation will be intense while he tries. It is this Warrior on the red horse who will do the bidding of the antichrist. He will have a devastating effect on the minds of the people of the earth. (Remember – The battlefield is always in the mind!). Jesus is the only person who has the power and authority to rule the world and He does it through Love and Peace. These events described in Revelation are the ones that will see the final overthrow of Satan, the author of lies, iniquity and division. 'Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.' **Luke 21:36**



Now it is time to open the **third** seal. The opening of this seal permits the riding out of the rider on a black horse.



We have seen the antichrist ride out, that war is released on the earth through the rider of the red horse, and now we see the rider of the black horse bringing famine as never seen before, during the Tribulation period, **Revelation 6:5-6**.

Famine always accompanies wars and upheavals in the natural kingdom and this happens during the Tribulation period. The famine will be severe – basically a loaf of bread for a day's wages! Today, it looks as if the foundation for this famine has already started with more than half of the world going

to bed hungry, and Jesus has not broken the seal! We only see a shadow of what is to come. There are limits set by God on what this bringer of famine can do. This famine, probably caused by war and drought will not damage the olive trees or the vines because their roots grow deeper. However, there is another possible meaning to this instruction to not damage the oil and the wine production, and that is that the Believers, will not be affected by the famine. Yes, some will have seen the error of their ways prior to the Tribulation period and will repent and become Christians during this time; but what a hard time that will be! God will miraculously supply their needs during this difficult period.

The result of the opening of the **fourth** seal is that death – the rider of the pale horse – is released. He is followed by Hell, **Revelation 6:7-8 (LB)** Over the seven years of the Tribulation period, these horsemen will destroy one quarter of the remaining population of the earth, perhaps well over one billion people in seven years! Twenty million people died in the flu epidemic of World War One and six million more died from typhus! Modern man has enough bacteria stockpiled today to infect people with many diseases and chemical agents that could wipe out whole nations. But the Bible is clear that it is not just death that stalks these people, it is also eternal separation from God in hell itself! Their death and destruction is of their own choosing for at any stage during their lives they could have turned to Jesus and lived – eternal life. They chose not to! What a lesson for us, to motivate us to let people know that the only way to eternal life is through Jesus Christ.

The **fifth** seal does not release a horse and rider. It shows us graphically what will happen to some of those who have become Christians during the Tribulation period. This time will not be easy. It is easier to become a Believer before the Rapture. Those Christians will now be safely with the Lord in Eternity, **Revelation 6:9-11**.

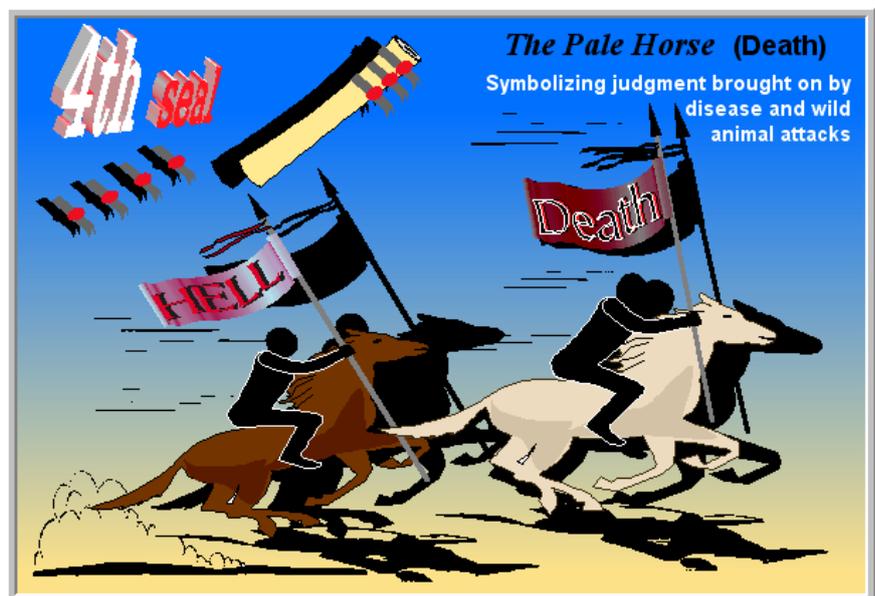
The kingdom inaugurated by the antichrist will be a worldwide kingdom, and its hallmark will be, like the name of its king, global and in total opposition to Jesus Christ. Its followers will hate Jesus and anything to do with His Kingdom, and they will do

everything they can to prevent His Name and rule from being mentioned on earth. It will, therefore be a difficult time for those who have become Christians post-Rapture There will be many of them, and as time goes on, an increasing number will become Believers. Some will have immediately seen the error of their ways, as loved ones who have spoken about Jesus and encouraged them to become Christians in the time before the Rapture, are taken home to be with the Lord before their very eyes. Others will think about the events and remember what their friends and relatives shared in the past and will become Believers, others will be affected by those who have just become Christians, or by the 144,000 Jews who we shall read about in **Revelation 7**.

Whichever way they become Christians, they will enter a time when just being a Follower of Jesus can be punishable by death. Some, but not all, will be martyred. It is important to note that being martyred does not guarantee that a person is a Christian. Only by believing in Jesus Christ, confessing our sins and repenting, then from our hearts, asking Jesus to be our Saviour and Lord will we ensure that we belong to Jesus and will spend eternity with Him in Heaven – just like now, pre-Rapture! Teaching that martyrdom is the way to live for eternity with God is not Biblical. The martyred Believers will cry out for justice and judgement, but Jesus' answer is to ask them to be patient, **Revelation 6:10**. He has a time when all things will be fulfilled; He will avenge all of their martyrdom at the same time, at the end of the Tribulation period.

### **Revelation 6:12-17**

Now for the **sixth** seal to be opened! The opening of this seal releases 'natural' disasters on the earth and cataclysmic events in the universe. Never forget that God created the Heavens and the Earth. They all belong to Him, and anything that Satan does to try to change that fact results in failure and judgement.



**Revelation 6:12-17.** John saw the great earthquake as it happened, like no other earthquake that has been witnessed on the earth before. Yes there have been earthquakes that have darkened the sun and made the moon look as if it were blood red, but there has never been an earthquake when the stars fell to the earth like fruit from a tree. In this earthquake, the entire creation is peeled back, as it were to reveal God the Father seated on His throne, far above all principalities dominions and powers, and Jesus, the Lamb of God beside Him. They were visible to everyone. This is a picture of blind panic; everything in the earth is shaken! What horror as they realised that this was the Day on which the One against Whom they had turned their backs had come to be their Judge! No one, small or great, poor or rich could escape. They all tried to hide from the wrath of Judgement. The One Who had died for their sins, and whom they had rejected all their lives as He called to them in love and longing, had now become their Judge. His wrath knew no bounds. Just as His love had known no bounds when He stretched out His arms and legs on the Cross to receive the cruel nails which would suspend Him on the wood of the tree, wood which He Himself held together in creation. He had paid the ultimate price so that these people would not have to pay the price for their own sins – the price of eternal separation from the One Who had loved them so much. Now it was time for God’s Justice, (as there must always be consequences to actions). All they could do was hide and call on the mountains and the rocks to fall on them so that they could escape the inevitable. We will all have to face the same Judgement from which these people were desperate to flee either when we die or when Jesus returns, whichever comes first.

We will never know when this Day of Judgement is to be. It is reserved for God the Father only to know, but we are encouraged to know when the season is right for these things to happen, **Isaiah 13:9-11; Matthew 24:26-44.** It is always up to us whether and when to ask Jesus to be the Lord of our life, but surely the right time to do it is **NOW!** The days of Noah are just like the days we are in now ‘the flood came and took them all away’. One day the door to eternal life will be shut, just like the door to the Ark. It is our responsibility to challenge our friends and family; to be led by the Holy Spirit and to share Jesus daily, with those whom we meet.

There appears to be parallels in **Revelation 6** with what is known as the Olivet Discourse. In **Mark 13**, Jesus talked a lot about two things: the end times and His Second Coming. Jesus was not trying to encourage His disciples to speculate about exactly when He would return by sharing these prophecies with them. Instead, He urges all His followers to be watchful and prepared for His coming. If we serve Jesus faithfully now, we will be ready when He returns.

**The Last Days: Mark 13:1-23; Matthew 24:1-28; Luke 21:5-24**  
**Old Testament references: Daniel 9:26-27; Daniel 11:31; Joel 2:2**  
**Other New Testament references: John 15:21; Revelation 11:2;**  
**1 Timothy 4:1-2**

**The Second Coming of Christ: Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28; Matthew 24:29-31**  
**Old Testament references: Isaiah 13:6-10; Ezekiel 32:7; Daniel 7:13-14**  
**Other New Testament references: Revelation 6:12; Mark 14:62;**  
**1 Thessalonians 4:16**

## **14. Revelation 6 – Judgement and The Seals – Challenge Questions**

Please try to answer all the questions as this will help you to participate more fully in the Group Discussions.

- 1. Read the Notes and the Bible Verses** referred to in them. Highlight the points that 'speak' to you and be prepared to share with the group.
- 2.** The seals are the first of three Judgements to be released on the earth. What are the other two called?
- 3.** To what do you think Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week refers, and why is it named such? What are the other 69? What arrangement does the antichrist enter into that he breaks half way through, and how will he break that arrangement?

**Read Ezekiel 37:21-28; also Chapters 38 and 39 (Message version very clear).**

- 4.** In what condition are God's people at the time of this prophecy according to **Ezekiel 37:21-28**?
- 5.** What amazing things has God done for Israel since 1948 that are prophesied in this passage?
- 6. Revelation 6** describes the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. In **Ezekiel 38**, which of these four horsemen are in evidence?
- 7.** A war is referred to that is described in more detail in **Ezekiel 38 and 39**. Who are the protagonists in that war, and what will be the outcome?
- 8.** The events in **Ezekiel 38** involve a number of nations. From which parts of the earth do they come? Can you identify them as nations that exist today?
- 9.** Are there any human reasons why Gog would wish to attack Israel?

- 10.** Can you think of two examples when Israel has been faced with overwhelming odds and yet defeated its enemies? Who was responsible for the victory?
- 11.** Do the nations have any choice in attacking Israel? God gives three reasons for setting up this battle prophesied by Ezekiel. What are they?
- 12.** Do you think that God is acting justly by bringing these nations against Israel? Explain your answer.
- 13.** Do you think that Ezekiel would have understood what he was writing about when he described this battle?
- 14.** How large is the army that is raised to fight against Israel? Will this army that comes against Israel succeed in its mission?
- 15.** Will the Jews have to fight this war in order to win it? What natural events will come against the invading army?
- 16.** How do you think that the world looking on will respond to the comprehensive defeat of such a vastly superior (humanly-speaking) army?
- 17.** How should you and I react to the knowledge that God has such immense power and is in control of even those nations that resist Him?
- 18.** Is it possible to have one short sentence to describe this very clear warning of the start of the Tribulation?