

## Revelation 6

### The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

#### 6:1 & 2- First seal= 'White Horse and Rider'

Possibly identified as Antichrist.

Others say that this white horse symbolizes "conquest" generally.

John Walvoord states:

The rider on the white horse is none other than the "prince that shall come" of Daniel 9:26, who is to head up the revived Roman Empire and ultimately become the world ruler.... He is Satan's masterpiece and the counterfeit of all that Christ is or claims to be ... the world ruler of the tribulation, same individual described as the beast out of the sea in Revelation 13.

READ Daniel 9:26-27

Discuss "Revived Roman Empire"

#### 6:3- Second Seal= 'Fiery Red Horse and Rider' = Warfare

The **fiery red** (v. 4) color of this horse suggests bloodshed, and speaks of a time of war that comes upon the earth as the Tribulation progresses. Walvoord writes that

the constant tension among nations and the ambitions of men have their climax in this period before Christ comes. Though 'wars and rumors of wars' (Matt. 24:6) are characteristic of the age, it is evident that warfare occupies a large place in the consummation of the age with a resultant great loss of life. There apparently is a series of wars, the greatest of which is under way at the time of the second coming.

Hal Lindsey identifies the rider on the red horse with Russia, with her Arab allies in the Middle East, attacking Israel (Ezek. 38; Dan. 11), and places this at the midpoint of the Tribulation. Lindsey writes: "The war escalates until it involves all the major powers on the earth and becomes the greatest battle in the history of mankind—the Battle of Armageddon."

#### 6:5- Third seal = Black Horse and Rider= Famine

Most *futurists* understand this horseman to represent famine conditions brought on by the warfare in the previous seal during the future Tribulation. Few fail to point out that the **quart of wheat** (v. 6) mentioned was a man's approximate daily need for sustenance, while the amount of money (a **denarius**) was what a common laborer would earn in a day. Thus the expression meant that it would consume a day's wages to buy a day's supply of wheat, or the same price could buy enough cheaper grain to feed a few more mouths.

Ray Stedman writes:

Another possible explanation of the third seal is economic upheaval—inflation, recession, panic.... Inflation may well be the justification the Antichrist will use to impose rigid controls over buying and selling, as we shall see in Revelation 13.

“do not harm the oil and the wine” (v. 6)

This reveals God’s mercy in the midst of judgment.

Ancient warfare included destroying the standing crops in the fields but not the vines and olive trees. This would have produced long range devastation of the local economies and negated the entire point of conquering the land.

It took about 17 years to raise olive trees to produce.

**6:7-8 Fourth Seal = Pale Horse and Rider-** Named Death with Hades following close behind.

Applying these seals to the end times Tribulation, Kuyper writes:

Death and Hell now attack human society, and the great destruction sets in, the first effect of which is bewilderment and general havoc, as a fourth part of the inhabitants of the earth is destroyed by the sword or by starvation or by deadly disease or by wild beasts.

Because of the current world population being so great, one fourth of the inhabitants would represent a number larger than those destroyed in Noah’s day. Therefore, this would be the “Great Tribulation” of unprecedented magnitude spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 24:21. Since “Great Tribulation” is the term that technically refers to only the final three and a half years of the seven-year Tribulation, some (e.g., Walvoord) believe that these seals apply strictly to that end period. Others place the beginning of the “Great Tribulation” at chapter 11.

This imagery of horsemen would have brought to mind the Parthians who were mounted archers. They terrorized wherever they travelled.

**6:9- Fifth Seal= Martyrs under the altar**

The souls **under the altar** (v. 9) are persons martyred during the Tribulation period. “The introduction of these martyred dead in heaven at this point immediately after the fourth seal seems to imply that these martyrs have come from the tribulation scene on earth” (Walvoord).

Whether the vision pertains to those slain only in the first half (Gaebelien, Ryrie) or the second half (Walvoord), or throughout the entire Tribulation period is a debated point.

## 6:12-17 Sixth Seal= A Great Earthquake

Mounce sees this seal, and the catastrophes that go with it, to be heralding the beginning of the last days through great cosmic disturbances. For example, the **earthquake** (v. 12) was a regular feature of divine visitation (cf. Ex. 19:18; Isa. 2:19; Hag. 2:6).

Gaebelein states:

Most of it is symbolical, yet at the same time great physical phenomena are also involved. The earthquake possibly means a literal earthquake.... Everything is being shaken in this poor world. The civil and governmental powers on earth all go to pieces; every class from kings to slaves is affected by it and terrorized. The political and ecclesiastical world is going to pieces.

Ryrie (in company with Walvoord, Morris, and others) takes this passage quite literally (except in the case of stars falling, which he thinks refer to a meteor shower). He identifies six catastrophic events calculated "to strike terror into the hearts of men living on the earth.... At this point men will know assuredly that the tribulation has begun, for they recognize it as 'the great day of his wrath.'" Henry Morris explains that:

the vast worldwide network of unstable earthquake belts around the world will suddenly begin to slip and fracture on a global basis and a gigantic earthquake will ensue. This is evidently, and naturally, accompanied by tremendous volcanic eruptions, spewing vast quantities of dust and steam and gases into the upper atmosphere. It is probably these that will cause the sun to be darkened and the moon to appear blood-red.

Still others say that these details are the result of nuclear weapons.

