

## Notes on the 7 Seals

**6:1** Then I saw the Lamb open one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, “Come!” **2** I looked, and there was a **white horse**. **The horseman on it had a bow**; a crown was given to him, and he went out as a victor to conquer.

### Possibilities:

1. Christ – Rev. 19:11-16 pictures Christ on a white horse. 14:14 Christ sits on a white cloud. Christ conquers elsewhere in the gospel 3:21; 5:5; 17:14. It would be his conquering message.
2. A satanic being – conquering appears in 11:7 and 13:7 by the beast. Rev. 12-13 Satan imitates Christ. This could be the intention of the illustration. This horse is connected to the other three and the other three are bad things.
3. It could be any King trying to conquer others, i.e. introduce war – Here is where we need to really consider Rome. The rider is under the rule of God, but Paul tells us in Romans that all the leaders of government are ordained by God. This would be a judgment from God because free-will people by nature hate tyrannical leaders.

### Other interpretation issues:

1. We need to consider Zech 1:8-15, 6: 8-12 There we see a horse and rider and four chariots
2. This rider is under the control of God.

## The Second Seal

**3** When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” **4** Then another horse went out, **a fiery red one**, and its horseman was empowered to **take peace from the earth**, so that people would slaughter one another. And a large sword was given to him.

### Possibilities:

1. The second rider rides forth in direct response to the angelic command. He is inflicting international strife of some kind.
  - a. Persecution of believers – the word for slaughter is used by John without exception to refer to the death of Christ or his followers (5:6, 9, 12; 6:9; 13:8; 18:24).
  - b. War in general – “the phrase sleigh one another” would make one think of war rather than persecution of believers. War would be a judgement from God because the unrighteous are caught up in it. Everyone is impacted by war

## The Third Seal

**5** When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” And I looked, and **there was a black horse**. The horseman on it had a set of **scales in his hand**. **6** Then I heard something like a voice among the four living creatures say, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius—but do not harm the olive oil and the wine.”

### Possibilities:

1. Famine – metaphorically represented by scales in the rider’s hand. In the ancient world food was distributed by rationed amounts (using scales) when it became scarce. (also see Lev. 26:26; 2 Kings 7:1; Ezek. 4:10, 16).

### Other interpretations:

1. The command describes further the severity. A denarius was a day's wage and a quart of wheat was about enough for one person for one day, although three quarts of barley was enough for three days or for a typical family for one day. The prices listed here are about 8 – 16x's the average prices in the Roman empire at the time. Therefore, those suffering from the famine will only be able to buy limited food quantities for their family, and there will be nothing left over to provide for any of the other necessities of life.
2. In AD 92 Domitian made an edict ordering half of the vineyards in Asia Minor to be destroyed. This could be standing in the background of this horse.

### **The Fourth Seal**

7 When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!"

8 And I looked, and there was a **pale green horse**. The horseman on it was **named Death**, and Hades was following after him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill by the sword, by famine, by plague, and by the wild animals of the earth.

Possibilities:

1. We are given the name of this horseman, Death.

Other Issues:

1. Hades is the sphere that imprisons the dead. The LXX uses death and Hades in combination almost synonymously in reference to the region of the dead. This rider may summarize the previous three or is the result of the previous three. See Ezek 14:21 <sup>21</sup> "For this is what the Lord God says: How much worse will it be when I send My four devastating judgments against Jerusalem—sword, famine, dangerous animals, and plague—in order to wipe out both man and animal from it!
- A. It is possible that there is a sequence to these four horseman or it is possible that the fourth summarizes the impact of the unrelated first three. They could all be sent at the same time. The repeated occurrence of the fourfold formulas of Judgement outside of Ezekiel 14 enforces the idea that Rev. 6:8 is a broad summary of the previous three horseman and, therefore, that all four are to be identified as essentially the same.
  - B. These four horseman are sent out at the scene when Christ the lamb sits on the throne. Therefore, Christ sent these things at his glorification in Heaven. Meaning, these started when Christ entered into heaven, not at some point in the future.
  - C. There is a theological problem. How can God be the author of so much horror and evilness and death? The answer to the problem lies in the ultimate purpose of the woes, which is to refine the faith of believers and to punish unbelievers. Chapters 4-5 describes an effect of Christ's death and resurrection. He transformed the suffering of the cross into a triumph. Chapters 4-5 use the lens of Daniel 7 and Ezekiel 1 to explain that Christ defeated the evil powers and was exalted over them. Therefore, Christ has begun to fulfill Daniel's prophecy of the son of Man's exaltation over the evil, beastly kingdoms, which John explicitly alludes to in 12:3 and 13:1-2. Christ's sovereignty over the four horsemen shows this, so that the 4 horsemen are equivalent to the four evil kingdoms of Daniel 7.

### **The Fifth Seal**

9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar **the people slaughtered** because of God's word and the testimony they had. **10** They cried out with a loud voice: "Lord, the One who

is holy and true, how long until You judge and avenge our blood from those who live on the earth?" **11** So a white robe was given to each of them, and they were told to **rest a little while longer** until the number would be completed of their fellow slaves and their brothers, who were going to be killed just as they had been.

This is an appeal to God by persecuted and gloried Christians to demonstrate his justice by judging their persecutors will be answered when all his people complete the suffering that he has determined for them.

This is a human response to suffering.

It is possible this only has in mind killed believers. But it could be symbolic for all Christians everywhere who suffer because of their faith even if it does not end in death.

The mention of the altar here in association with those slain evokes the sacrificial nature of their suffering. This is not the brazen altar but the golden altar of incense, which stood in the vicinity of the holy of holies. The sacrificial blood of the day of atonement was poured on this altar, and incense was burned on it.

Them being under the altar is probably a reference to God's protection.

Zech 1:12, the suffering ask "How long" in relation to the four horses there.

The answer is a little longer, rest now.

The white robes reference the idea of a purity resulting from persevering faith tested by the refining fire of tribulation. The robes are not given as a reward for purity of faith but as a heavenly declaration of the saints' purity or righteousness and as an annulment of the guilty verdict rendered against hem by the world.

### **The Sixth Seal**

**12** Then I saw Him open the sixth seal. A violent earthquake occurred; the sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair; the entire moon became like blood; **13** the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree drops its unripe figs when shaken by a high wind; **14** the sky separated like a scroll being rolled up; and every mountain and island was moved from its place.

**15** Then the kings of the earth, the nobles, the military commanders, the rich, the powerful, and every slave and free person hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. **16** And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, **17** because the great day of Their wrath has come! And who is able to stand?"

#### Possibilities

1. This references the final judgment of God upon the earth and unbelievers. Not upon Christians. This is the second coming of Christ – Everything is over at this point.
2. (But it is probably this first before it is option 1) This is the humbling judgement of the men responsible for the four horseman of war. And death.

#### Other Issues

1. There is a sequence of **7 of creation items**. in 12-14: Earthquake, sun, moon turns blood, stars of heaven, sky rolled up, every mountain/island moves. This is saying all of creation is affected by this sixth seal.
2. Then there is a sequence of **7 groups of people judged**. Kings, nobles, commanders, rich (where are the poor?), powerful, slave, free person. – These are war terms. People who would be responsible for the four horseman of war.
3. **See Isa 34:4** “and the powers of the heavens will melt, and the heaven will be rolled up like a scroll; and all the stars will fall . . . as leaves fall from a fig tree.
4. Earth-dwellers appeal desperately to the mountains and the rocks, fall on us and hide us! The petition alludes to Hos. 10:8 which, like Isaiah 2 speaks of judgment on idolaters and portrays them seeking refuge from divine wrath in mountains and rocks: “They will say to the mountains, cover us, and to the hills, fall on us). The similar imagery in Jeremiah 4:29 is also included in the allusion, which enforces further the idea of judgment on idolaters who try to hide from God’s anger. – Pagans were referring to their idols, “to their mountains and their rocks”. So these 7 groups of people are calling out to their idols to protect them from God.
5. Who is able to stand?

### **The Seventh Seal**

**8:1** When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

**2** Then I saw the seven angels who stand in the presence of God; seven trumpets were given to them. **3** Another angel, with a gold incense burner, came and stood at the altar. He was given a large amount of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the gold altar in front of the throne. **4** The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up in the presence of God from the angel’s hand. **5** The angel took the incense burner, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it to the earth; there were rumblings of thunder, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

This begins the 7 trumpets.

Silence of Rev. 8:1 can be taken as a metaphor with multifaceted meanings associated, all of which revolve around the notion of judgment.

Zeph 1:7, Hab 2:20, Zech 2:13 – These three announcements of judgement from the minor prophets are perceived by their writers as cosmic eschatological expectations, as implied by the pregnant word all.

Silence as an indication that God has heard the saints prayers

Silence as an indication of a revelatory announcement by God.

Silence in relation to the temple liturgy

The lack of description of the event contained in the seventh seal should not lead to the conclusion that the seal has no content. About a half hour means it is not a precise time. It is unclear what this might mean.

## Chapter 7

### Where is Dan in the 144,000?

Description of Dan:

Gen. 49:17 He will be a snake by the road,  
a viper beside the path,  
that bites the horses' heels  
so that its rider falls backward.

Dan is going to be a thorn in the side of Daniel.

From the testament of Dan in the Pseudapigrpha: For I know in the last days, you Dan will defect from the Lord. You will be offended at Levi and revolt against Judah. You will not prevail over them. An angel of the lord guides them both because by them Israel shall stand. To the extent that you abandoned the Lord, Dan. You will live by every evil deed committing the revolting actions of the Gentiles.

- A. 6:9-11 (in heaven) martyrs in Heaven
- B. 6:12-17 (on earth) 5<sup>th</sup> seal
- B'. 7:1-8 (on earth) the 144K
- A'. 7:9-17 (in Heaven) the great multitude.

The meaning behind this is the point of the location and the message to stand firm for the believers who are suffering.

What are the 144000 sealed and protected from?

- Not dying. We've already seen Christians dying.
- It is from the 2<sup>nd</sup> death.

The great tribulation?

This word is used in 1:9, 2:9, 2:10 2:22, 7:17. It is talking about intensity of the tribulation not a specific one. The 1000 year reign and the tribulation are the same thing.

Never in revelation is 7 attributed to the word tribulation.