

Revelation 6:1-17  
The Seals Opened

**Introduction**

This chapter shows how the world will be judged. The Worthy Lamb has taken the sealed book and is in the process of opening each seal. These seals will bring the seven years of tribulation on the earth. At this present time this world is under the control of Satan, but soon Jesus will step in and take control. John is invited to “come and see” what will take place, and he records it for us.

**I. The Seals Opened, v1-8**

**A. The First Seal, v1-2** - The white horse symbolizes a conqueror. Many think that the rider of this horse is Jesus. This is incorrect for the following reasons.

1. The weapon of this rider is a bow with no arrows. This pictures peaceful conquest. The Antichrist will initiate the Tribulation with a seven year peace treaty with Israel.
2. Jesus appears in Rev. 19 with a sword and He conquers the armies of the world.
3. The rider in v2 has a crown, *stephanos*, which is the victors crown. In chapter 19, Jesus has the *diadema*, which is the kingly crown.

**B. The Second Seal, v3-4** - The Rider in these verses is on the Red Horse. This rider symbolizes war. This rider carries a great sword. There are two types of swords mentioned in Scripture.

1. The *hromphaiai* - This is the sword normally carried by a soldier going to war.
2. The *machaira* - This is the word used in this passage, and it is a sword used by an assassin. It is a weapon used for murder. This gives us the idea that this will not only be a time of war, but of great violence in general. There will be war, murder, assassination, revolution, and bloodshed on a scale never seen before.

**C. The Third Seal, v5-6** - This seal shows a rider on a Black Horse. This rider pictures famine. Warfare and famine usually goes together. This is shown by the price for food given here. A penny or denarius was the standard daily wage in John’s time. A measure of wheat is approximately one quart. Doctors tell us that this is the least amount of food that will sustain a person for one day. Oil and wine are normally associated with the well to do. The idea here is that the rich will not be greatly affected by what goes on, but the masses will suffer greatly.

**D. The Fourth Seal, v7-8** - The Rider on the Pale Horse is death. Death and Hell follow this rider. They carry swords, hunger, death, and wild beasts. This Rider will bring death to the Earth on a scale never seen before. They will kill one quarter of the world's population. This is a terrible time, but according to Jesus in Mt. 24:3-7, This is just the beginning.

**II. The Souls Under The Altar, The Fifth Seal, v9-11**

**A. The Cause of Their Martyrdom, v9** - The Souls under the Altar are the Christians who will be killed during the Tribulation. They are killed for “the word of God and the testimony which they held.” As people are saved in the Tribulation, they will preach and warn people of more judgment to come. They

will be killed in this ministry. The fact that they are under the altar, pictures a complete sacrifice. They are justified and protected by the blood of Christ.

B. The Cry of the Martyrs, v10 - The age of grace is over during the Tribulation. The passages written to the Church requiring prayer for all men, were written during the age of grace. The age of grace ends at the Rapture, so these people are within their rights to call for vengeance. They cry out with the word Lord, *despotes*, which means a ruler with absolute and supreme authority. They are looking forward to the end of evil on the earth.

C. The Comfort to the Martyrs, v11 - God answers the cry of the Martyrs. He tells them to wait, the time for the judgment is not quite ready. Until that time the Lord does three specific things for them.

1. He gives them a robe, v11 - This is a gift from God showing their purity.
2. He gives them rest, v11 - Rest in the presence of Christ.
3. He gives them refuge, v9 - They are under the altar. This speaks of the protection of Christ. In the OT when a person sought mercy or refuge, they would go to the altar and hold on to it.

### **III. The Sixth Seal - The Shaking Of The Earth, v12-17**

A. The Wrath of the Lamb, v12-14 - This world has seen many great earthquakes, but the greatest is yet to come. The earthquake of the sixth seal is sent by the wrath of the Lamb.

1. The power of the quake - Notice the sun and moon are darkened. This is probably from the volcanic activity that will accompany this great quake. The mountains and islands will all be leveled. We are describing the most powerful earthquake ever. Verse 12 describes the earth as being shaken, not just locally, but the entire planet!
2. The projectiles from heaven - The “stars” here obviously are not literal stars. The sun is a star, and it would destroy the earth from its heat before it impacted. These stars are probably meteorites or asteroids. The dust from their impact and from the quake will darken the light from the sun and the moon.

B. The Reaction of Men, v15-17 - This judgment will get the attention of all men from the smallest to the greatest. There are three great truths here.

1. We see the cost of sin. No one is exempt from the judgment of God during this time. The Tribulation will be a time of God’s great wrath, v17.
2. Even in judgment man will still try to hide his sin instead of repenting, v15.
3. Sin hardens the heart. These people would rather die than repent, v16.

### **Conclusion**

The first six seals bring terrible judgment on the world. Many people will be saved during this time, but many more will die without Christ. As terrible as these judgments are, they are only the beginning. In future lessons we will study the trumpet and bowl judgments.