

Revelation

Chapter Six: Opening of the Seals

Introduction:

The scene shifts in this chapter from future scenes in heaven to future scenes on the earth. John is in heaven, after the rapture, viewing things on the earth.

The outline of these Tribulation Chapters are as follows:

- Chapters 6- 9 deal with the first 3 ½ years.
- Chapters 10-14 deal with events in the middle of the week.
- Chapters 15-19 deal with the last 3 ½ years.

Chapters 6-19 are Tribulation events that fit into Daniel's 70th week prophecies (Daniel 9) and Jesus' teachings at the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and therefore should be studied together.

There are three principal series of judgments: the seal judgments, the trumpet judgments, and the vial judgments. The action is carried forward by these judgments and the rest is mostly parenthetical, either anticipating or reviewing a phase of the action.

Emphasis is placed on the middle of Daniel's 70th week because that is where Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel. This is where Antichrist enters the rebuilt temple and declares himself God. Jesus calls this the "***Abomination of Desolation***" and Paul describes in 2 Thess. 2:3-4.

Jesus said that the persecution would be so intense, He labeled it "***The Great Tribulation.***"

John is not only writing prophecy, but he is also revealing the character of God and the principles of the Kingdom.

Keep this short outline:

- ❖ The rapture occurs (1 Thess. 4:13-18).
- ❖ Antichrist rises to power and makes a seven-year pact with Israel and other nations (Daniel 9:27).
- ❖ The seven-year judgment period and the Lamb opening the first seal (Rev. 6:1-2).
- ❖ Under the seal judgments, man **ruins** the world.
- ❖ Under the trumpet judgments, Satan **rules** the world.
- ❖ Under the vial judgments, God **rescues** the world.

OPENING OF THE SEALS!

A. **A rider on a white horse (conquest).**

1. One of the four living creature summons a rider on a white horse.
2. Events are taking place on earth under the sovereign direction of God.
3. Horse imagery is related to the vision described in Zechariah 1:7-17.
4. Jerusalem is the **epic center** of Antichrist activity.
5. Daniel 9:26-27 tells us “**A prince that shall come,**” will make a covenant with Israel to protect her.
6. Look at the Symbolism here: A **white horse** symbolizes a conqueror, the **bow** symbolizes power, and the **crown** symbolizes dominion.
7. Antichrist is **Satan’s false Messiah**. Daniel speaks of him in 8:25 as a consummate egotist. He carries a bow without arrows.
8. His peace is deceptive, as the world is lulled into a false sense of security.
9. Our world is desperate for international peace and will play into the hands of the Antichrist.
10. His deceptive character leads to blasphemous philosophies that prepare men’s mind to receive strong delusion (2 Thess. 2:3-12).
11. Shadows of this horse and rider are on every hand:
 - ❖ Communist ideology.
 - ❖ Humanism.
 - Evolution
 - Situation ethics
 - Moral freedom
 - Sexual permissiveness
 - Anti-religious bias
 - Etc.

B. **A rider on a red horse (war)!**

1. The world’s attitude of peace and harmony will be shattered as the second horse and rider appear.

2. John notes that **“to him...it was granted to take peace from the earth.”** Again, this represents God’s control.
3. The empty bow is replaced with a sword.
4. The Northern Confederacy (Russia) will oppose Antichrist plans and war breaks out (Matthew 24:6).
5. One of the great prizes Russia desires is the vast mineral deposits in the Dead Sea. It has been calculated that there is enough **Potash** in the Dead Sea to provide for the needs of the entire world for 2,000 years. Valued at one Trillion, two hundred and seventy billion dollars.

C. ***A rider on a black horse (famine)!***

1. He is speaking of food that is being rationed.
2. This prophecy tells of the time of limited productivity and economic deprivation. Famine is the logical consequence of world-wide war as food will be destroyed.
3. John hears a voice from the center of the four living creatures, indicating that it came from God and He gives instruction to ration the food and to be careful with the oil and wine that were too precious to replace.
4. People will starve because of the meager crops.

D. ***A rider on a pale horse (death)!***

1. Notice the chain reaction: Antichrist – war – famine - death.
2. Sin causes hatred and hatred causes war and bloodshed and war causes famine and famine causes death and after death there is hell.
3. The Greek word translated **pale** may also be translated **green.**
4. The rider is named and so is the one who follows him.
5. One fourth of the world population dies (around 1.972 billion).
6. Four tools are used in this death: sword, famine, and pestilence and the fourth is “wild beasts.” Many scholars believe these could be rats.
7. Now, more than ever, we can see how such a catastrophe could occur.

E. ***Martyred souls under the altar!***

1. This is a drastic departure from the first four.
2. Who are these tribulation martyrs? They are killed during the tribulation.

3. John gives two reasons why they are killed: Because of the Word of God and because of the testimony that they have maintained.
4. Compare the first five seals with the Olivet Discourse on Matthew 24:4-9.
5. Jesus refers to the first four items as "***the beginning of sorrows.***" The conclusion is that more martyrdom is soon to come. Verse eleven confirms this.
6. There are two elements that make up God's response to these prayers: A symbolic gift and a spoken word. The gift is "***white robes,***" and the spoken word is "***rest for a little while longer.***"
7. If Jesus came today multi-millions of people would remain and many of them would come to accept Christ. However, they would do that at a great price.
8. The ***ENVIRONMENTAL HANDBOOK*** adopted by the ***UNESCO*** convention of April 22, 1970, is just one example of this growing animosity towards the Bible and Christians.
 - Nations must be phased out as quickly as possible.
 - Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt for ecological problems.
 - Experimental living groups should construct their shelters from... church windows.

F. Catastrophic changes on earth!

1. This sixth seal shifts the scene of activity back to the physical universe. This is a judgment upon the earth.
2. God acts directly against the earth by a great earthquake, followed by the sun becoming black as sackcloth, followed by the whole moon becoming as blood and the stars (meteors) falling onto the earth. All of these are divine interventions.
3. These judgments are a sign of God's displeasure with the murder of His servants.
4. Hebrew 12:27 says, "***Once again, I will shake not only the earth, but the heavens.***"
5. In Matthew 24:29-30 Jesus describes this.
6. Incredibly, in the midst of such chaos, it will be business as usual for most people (Matthew 24:37-39). **Not repentance but panic.**
7. Their irrational reaction is to run to caves and mountains, the very places that are being shaken.

Conclusion:

Each of these seals describe direct acts of God against the universe. They disrupt everything that the world order has depended on. Violent men doing the will of God are thinking they are in control. Every level of human existence is now brought under judgment.

The scene closes with the rhetorical question, "***who is able to stand?***" The answer is "***no one.***"

The picture is not altogether hopeless. The Church will be delivered from that time (3:10). Great multitudes will be saved (7:9 and 11:26).