Revelation 6

THE FIRST SIX SEALS &
THE FOUR HORSEMAN OF THE APOCALYPSE

REV. 6:1 ➢ OVERVIEW: “COME AND SEE .......”

This chapter opens with these words:

Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.”

One of the four living creatures (i.e., life forms), we are not told which one (lion, ox, man or eagle), with a voice like thunder\(^1\) says ì... come and seeï. See what? As we shall come to see, it is the \textbf{Day of the LORD} and His Fierce Wrath poured out upon mankind and the earth as it is written in Isaiah

\textit{Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it ...... "I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible}.\(\text{\textcyrillic} \text{Isaiah 13:9,11}\)

We see then, here begins another major section of the book of Revelation that covers chapters 6 through 16. This chapter introduces the \textit{Great Judgments} of the Tribulation period. These are divided into 3 sets of 7 judgments each comprised of the seven \textit{seals}, seven \textit{trumpets} and seven \textit{bowls of God’s wrath}. These items describe in detail the events and conditions during Daniel\(\text{’s} \text{ last division of seventy sevens-of-years end times prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27). In other words, these judgements pertain to the last or the 70th seven (\textit{6week’ of years}) in Daniel\(\text{’s} \text{ prophecy.}}

The pattern in this section of Revelation that will emerge is: (1) an \textit{introduction} gives details of the events and conditions preceding and during the subsequent seven judgments; (2) a \textit{description} of the first 6 of the 7 judgments; (3) a \textit{supplemental description} of conditions and events during the 6 judgments previously described and (4) the \textit{last or 7th judgment} is described. This pattern is outlined in Table 6-1 below.

I believe the seven \textit{seals} give a \textit{general} description of the entire seven year Tribulation Period, while the seven \textit{trumpets} and the seven \textit{bowls of God’s wrath} give a \textit{specific} description of events to take place during the last 3 ½ year Great Tribulation period. This is very similar to the pattern of the creation account given in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Genesis 1 describes God’s \textit{general} account of creation, including man. However, Genesis 2 goes back to give a \textit{specific} account of the creation of man and woman, the details of which were previously left out. I believe that is also the pattern Jesus Christ is using here in His Revelation to us!
The Seals, Trumpets and Bowls comprise a triad of information which ‘telescopes’ out, the content of each is contained in what goes before it. It should reveal to us the progressive plan of God’s judgment. 

It should be noted that the seven seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls of God’s wrath describe a ‘multi-layered’ progression of God’s judgments. Each of these three sets of judgments (seals, trumpets and bowls of God’s wrath) provide a progressively more intense account of what will happen during the seven year Tribulation Period. Refer to Table 6-1.

Figure 6-1 depicts this as a ‘telescoping’ process where the telescope has three tiers successively pulled out. The outer barrel represents the seven seals which contains both the trumpets and the bowls of God’s wrath judgments. Note carefully that the description of the 6th seal is primarily that of the ‘wrath of the Lamb’ and the ‘great day of His Wrath’. In other words, this seal is describing the Day of the LORD – the Tribulation period.

Table 6-1. The Pattern of Judgment in Revelation 6 - 16 w/ Scriptural References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judgment Type</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>1st – 6th Judgment</th>
<th>Supplemental</th>
<th>7th Judgment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seals</td>
<td>4:1-5:14</td>
<td>6:1-17</td>
<td>7:1-17</td>
<td>8:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6-1. The “Telescoping” Nature of the Tribulation Judgments.

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3 It should be noted also that in Greek theater at this time three levels of action sometimes took place simultaneously on a multi-level stage. John and his readers would have been familiar with this imagery.
Note especially the description of the Tribulation period given in the prophets Joel and Zephaniah, which help us identify the 6th seal with the "Day of the LORD".

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand: A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations. The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD."


The great day of the LORD is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers. "I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land." – Zephaniah 1:14-18.

Refer also to the following passages of scripture:

- Isaiah 2:10-21 "THE DAY OF THE LORD"
- Isaiah 13:9-13; 34:4; "THE DAY OF THE LORD & HIS FIERCE ANGER"
- Jeremiah 30:1-9; "TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE"
- Joel 1:14-20; 3:9-17 "THE DAY OF THE LORD & DAY OF DARKNESS"
- Zechariah 12:6-13:1; "THAT DAY!"
- Matthew 24:1-21 "DAY OF GREAT TRIBULATION"

Other clues identifying the 6th seal to the Day of the LORD include: a great earthquake; the sun darkened; the moon becomes like blood; the stars of heaven fall to the earth; the sky recedes as a scroll when it is rolled up and every mountain and island is moved out of its place; the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man becomes terrified. (refer to Revelation 6:12-17).

Since Day of the LORD is the subject of the trumpet and bowls of God’s Wrath judgments, the 6th seal expands into those judgments in successive chapters. It is important to note that "great earthquake" is associated with the 6th seal, 7th trumpet and 7th bowl of God's Wrath.

Revelation 6
SUMMARIZING:
The 7 Seals initialize the (7 year tribulation period) and give an overview of the general conditions which will characterize this time period beginning with the false messiah going forth to conquer (Daniel 9:27) and ending with the climatic events of the *Day of the LORD* (Great Tribulation) and Christ's second coming⁴ (Daniel 2:44,45).

The events to occur are determined upon Daniel's people (the Jews) and Daniel's holy city (Jerusalem)! See Daniel 7:19-27; 8:23-27; 9:23-27; 11:36-39. These seals are a general or "top level" description of what will take place during the 70th "seven" year (i.e. the last 7 years) of Daniel's prophecy.

The 7th seal represents God's complete plan to finish the transgression, make an end of sins and make reconciliation for iniquity and for bringing in the kingdom, everlasting righteousness and to anoint the most Holy (the Messiah) (Daniel 9:26).

The 7 Trumpets describe in more detail the prevailing conditions and events during the last half (3 1/2 years) of the tribulation period, also referred to as the *Great Tribulation* or *Time of Jacob's (Israel's) Trouble*.

The 7 Bowls of God's Wrath describe in much more detail the events covered by the 7 Trumpets. This order is very similar to that of Genesis where the creation of man is described in general terms (Genesis 1:26-31), but again, in much fuller detail in Genesis 2:7-25. (It is interesting to note that man was created on the 6th day) God rested on the 7th day, not because He was tired, but because He was finished - the work of creation was complete! In parallel, there is silence in heaven upon opening the 7th Seal.

Together, the 7 Trumpets and 7 Bowls of God's Wrath include the time from the manifestation of the 10-horned; 7-headed beast from the sea, (the anti-Christ, the man of sin, lawless one, the man of fierce countenance) to the battle of Armageddon, the destruction of the world's (Satan's) system and false religion and finally the second coming of Jesus Christ, the true Messiah!

Finally, Figure 6-2 is a chart giving the overview of the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy and summarizing the events of Revelation chapters 6-19. Basically, this chart depicts the last seven year period of secular human history corresponding to the seven year covenant the Man of Sin [anti-Christ] makes with Israel (Daniel 9:27). Also included in the timeline are the 1000 year reign of Jesus Christ and the events at the end of the Millennium period.

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⁴ The phrase *Day of the Lord* refers to the period of time beginning with Daniel's 70th seven (i.e., the last "week") and lasting to the end of the Millennium reign of Christ on the earth. The "Day of God" (2 Peter 3:12) refers to the time after the Millennium, during the period of a new Heaven and new Earth (Revelation 21:1).
Figure 6-2. Overview of the Seven Year Tribulation Period Depicting Events of Revelation 6-19.
The first four seals are referred to as the so-called *four horseman of the Apocalypse* and they are summarized in Table 6-2. All four horseman represent *destruction* and it is therefore appropriate that they are introduced to us by one of the *four living creatures* whom we have seen represent *creation*.

**Table 6-2. The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seal#</th>
<th>Horse Color</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>White</td>
<td><strong>False messiah</strong>: conquers (without arrows), given authority &amp; crown. Refers to the beast from the sea, the anti-Christ(^5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td><strong>War</strong>: violent killing, maiming &amp; slaughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td><strong>Famine</strong>: economy fails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yellow-Green</td>
<td><strong>Death &amp; Hades</strong>: ¼ mankind killed outright by sword, hunger, disease/pestilence and wild beasts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These first four seals are all prefaced by the living creature's invitation to:

\[\text{Come and see} \ldots \ldots \text{Let's see what they are.}\]

**REV. 6:1, 2 ➔ The 1st Seal is Opened.**

The first seal is represented by the *first horseman of the Apocalypse*. \[\text{White Horse}\]

(1) **FALSE PEACE** with a **FALSE MESSIAH** (Anti-Christ) conquering, given authority, a crown and bow but no arrows. He conquers with peace! White being a symbol of surrender or negotiated peace. Listen to the prophet Jeremiah describe such false peace (for which people are willing to give up their freedom and future):

\[\text{Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace} \ldots \ldots \text{For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace.} \]

\[\text{Jeremiah 6:13-14; 8:11}\]

The opening of the initial seal reveals the **False Messiah** on a white horse at the beginning makes an apparent peace treaty but who is also an imposter and imitation of the, true Christ (see **Rev. 19:11-16**). He begins his conquest at the beginning of the 7-year tribulation period. (see **Daniel 9:27**). The prophet Daniel gives us a detailed description of this person in the following scripture passages: **Dan. 7:19-27; 8:23-27; 9:27; 11:36-39**.

Note that the word \(\text{conquer/conquering}\) here is the same as \(\text{prevail/overcome}\) in **Rev. 13:7**

\[^{5}\text{See for example Revelation 13:1-8 and Daniel 9:27.}\]
A treaty or covenant (of peace) is made at the beginning and the "man of sin" is revealed in the middle of the 7 year tribulation period, when he receives power and authority for a period of 1260 days = 42 months = 3 ½ years, (see Rev. 13:1-10; Dan. 7:25, 9:27). This occurs after the departure or catching up of the Church which results in the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit being removed; refer to 1 Thessalonians. 4:13-18 and 2 Thessalonians. 2:1-12.

Refer to the Daniel 8:23-25; 11:36-39 notes for a more complete description of this person.

**REV. 6:3, 4 ➤ The 2ND SEAL is Opened.**

The second seal is represented by the *second horseman of the Apocalypse.*

1. **Red Horse**

   [Red Horse]

   The opening of the second seal reveals war, bloodshed, and violent killing. Warfare comes on a red horse and has the power to take peace from the earth and make people kill one another. Included here may also be an allusion to worldwide killing through the practice of abortion.

**REV. 6:5, 6 ➤ The 3RD SEAL is Opened.**

The third seal is represented by the *third horseman of the Apocalypse.*

1. **Black Horse**

   [Black Horse]

   The opening of the third seal reveals global famine and it comes on a black horse. Economic failure and food shortages possibly brought on by war and drought. In the Old Testament, drought was the outward sign or evidence of unconfessed sin, God's judgment and withholding of blessing (joy). A denarius was an average day's pay. The elements of sacrifice, oil and wine, are not to be affected.

**REV. 6:7, 8 ➤ The 4TH SEAL is Opened.**

The fourth seal is represented by the *fourth horseman of the Apocalypse.*

1. **Pale Horse**

   [Pale Horse]

   Death is revealed riding on a pale horse with Hades following after. Power is given to them over one-fourth part of the earth to kill with the sword (warfare), hunger (famine), death (disease, pestilence, suicide, drugs?), and the beasts of the earth.

These four judgments have their origins in the Old Testament, they are referred to in the same order in Ezekiel 14:12-21: the sword, famine, pestilence and the beasts. In Rev. 20:14 Hades is itself eventually thrown into the LAKE OF FIRE.

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6 ["caught-up" Gk. harpazo = to seize, grasp hastily, to catch-up by force, derivative of haireomai = to take for one's self].
7 "kill": Gk. "sphazo" = to butcher, slaughter or maim violently [as in a sacrifice].
8 "pale" Gk. "chloros" yellowish-green, the color of a dead body.
10 "kill" = Gk. apoktino = to kill outright, to put to death.
REV. 6:9-11 ➤ The 5TH SEAL is Opened.

{5} THE PLEA of the martyred Remnant, the souls of the servants of God under the altar slain⁷ [ὁφazoθ] for the Word of God and their testimony.

The souls of the servants of God who have been slain are below the altar and they cry out, Ἡ“How long, Oh Lord…” They plea for justice, for God’s judgment in avenging their blood on those who dwell on the earth in keeping with the teaching found in Deut. 32:35-36; Psalms 94:1, which is summarized in Hebrews 10:30:

“Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.”

Many Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Amos had similar questions and a passion for justice and righteousness {see e.g., Habakkuk. 1:1-4; Jeremiah 14:7-19; Lamentations 3:18-26 and Amos 5:24}. The Psalmist David also had similar pleadings {see e.g., Psalms 13:1-2; 74:9-10; 94:3}.

Here God’s saints are told to wait (rest, be patient) a little while until their fellow servants and brothers were killed¹⁰ [ἀποκτίνοθ] as they were. Refer to Matthew 24:29-36; Revelation 7:3-8; 13:4-7.

Refer to Rev. 16:5-7 for the answer to their prayer as part of the 3rd Bowl of Wrath Judgment and in fulfillment of Old Testament promises {see e.g., Psalms 96:13; 98:9; Isaiah 61:1-3; 63:3-4; Nahum 1:2-3}.

Likewise, we are also told to rest which can only be found in the finished work of salvation in Jesus Christ in Matthew 11:28-30 and Hebrews 4:1-11.

REV. 6:12-17 ➤ The 6TH SEAL is Opened.

{6} THE GREAT DAY OF THE WRATH OF THE LAMB! Tribulation Judgment prophecy is fulfilled.

This seal concisely summarizes the DAY OF THE LORD, DAY OF WRATH and DAY OF DARKNESS. Violent and dramatic upheavals in heaven and on earth are described. This is an overview description of THE GREAT TRIBULATION occurring in the second half of the 70th week of Daniel’s prophecy.

That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers.

† Zephaniah 1:14-15

The response of this impending final judgment is represented by the cry of the unbelievers as the great men of earth plea with the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them the WRATH OF THE LAMB. Note that they do not say, ἩWrath of the Lion for they know it is Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, that is bringing these judgments.

For those who know the Savior as the Lamb, He is a gentle, protective Lion. For those who do not, He is an angry Lion!

Note especially that the LAMB {Jesus Christ} is equated with Jehovah [Him who sits on the throne] in verses 16-17!
We learn from the opening of the 6th Seal that the DAY OF HIS WRATH has the features summarized in Table 6-3.

**Table 6-3. General Features of the “Day of the LORD” or the “Day of the Wrath of the Lamb”**.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A great (worldwide) earthquake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The sun becomes black as sackcloth made of hair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The moon becomes like blood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The stars of heaven fall to the earth, as a fig tree drops its ripened figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The sky recedes like a scroll when it is rolled up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Every mountain and island moves out of its place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hide themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The rebellious cry out to the mountains and rocks, FALL on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The great day of God’s wrath</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Thus, the DAY OF THE WRATH OF THE LAMB is the same as the DAY OF THE LORD. Violent and dramatic upheavals in heaven and on earth are depicted it is That Day prophesied in the following passages of scripture:

**Psalms 102:25-27** é é é é é é . the earth and heavens will perish, but the LORD remains the same. {Hebrews 1:10-12 quotes this passage}.

**Isaiah 34:4; 51:6** é é é é é é the host of heaven will be dissolved and the heavens rolled together as a scroll, for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke and the earth shall grow old like a garment {see also Isaiah 13:13}.

**Isaiah 2:10-12, 19-21** é é é é é é .men will go into caves of rocks and holes in the earth for fear of the LORD and the glory of His majesty.

**Joel 2:10, 30-32** é é é é é é .. the earth shall quake and the heavens will tremble.

**Matthew 24:29-31** é é é é é é .. sun and moon darkened, stars will fall from heaven and the powers of heaven shaken.
For further description of the ‘DAY OF THE LORD’ see:

- Isaiah 2:10-21; 13:6-16
- Jeremiah 30:1-9
- Daniel 9:1-3
- Joel 1:14-10; 2:1-10, 30-32; 3:9-17
- Zechariah 12:6-13:1
- Zephaniah 1:14-18
- Matthew 24:1-13
- 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10; 5:1-11
- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Now, although the next chapter is 7, the 7th Seal is opened in chapter 8, verse one, we will take a look at it here [chapter 7 is the ‘supplemental’ section between the 6th and 7th Seals].

REV. 8:1 ➢ The 7TH SEAL is Opened

For the last seal we jump ahead to verse 8:1 since, in keeping with the format of John’s narrative, chapter 7 represents one of the ‘supplemental’ sections (refer to Table 6-1).

{7} THE JUDGMENT is completed. Silence in heaven for about one half (½) hour speaking of rest. A silence which either represents the calm and peace AFTER the storm Ṣ after the destruction from the Great God Almighty and the dust has settled Ṣ It foretells the millennial reign of the Messiah, Jesus Christ on this earth.

This Ṣrest Ṣ is reminiscent of the rest by God on the 7th day after he had completed His work of creation. It is also comparable to Jesus’s last words on the cross Ṣ Ṣ It is finished Ṣ The 7th seal speaks of Judgment of God completed.

Oré é é é é .. this is an ominous silence of foreboding and awe representing the calm BEFORE the storm about to be unleashed upon the earth and its inhabitants.

I prefer the former interpretation because the 6th seal, and not the 7th seal, is identified through descriptive similarity with the 7th trumpet Judgment and 7th Bowl of God’s Wrath Judgment.

Bibliography