

Opening 6 of 7 Seals

Rev. 6:1-17
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1. In chapter 6 seals are opened and war breaks out. Parallel verses: Matt. 24:6-8; Luke 21:9-11. This is not a tour of the end of the world.
2. The war is on particular “land” (6:4,8, 10).
3. The seals which open in Rev. 6 are not successive but concurrent from 6:1 to 8:5; followed by seven trumpets, 8:6-15:8; and seven bowls, 16:1-21.
4. This time of trouble and tribulation, God’s judgment and woe on apostate Jews, was predicted in Daniel and sealed in a book (Dan.12:1-4, 9).

1st Seal: White Horse (Rev. 6:2)—conquest.

1. Christ comes riding a white horse in Rev. 19:11-13 but that is not the same as here and the only thing in common with the rider here is that their horse is white (usually just a symbol of leadership and victory).
2. The white horseman here is more likely a sign of the approach of the Roman army in March of AD 67. It is not the Antichrist as futurists propose.

2nd Seal: Red Horse (Rev. 6:3,4)—judgement.

1. A declaration of judgement that the peace of Israel under Rome is taken away.
2. The word for “earth” in v.4 is better translated as “land” and it is the land of Israel that is referenced (v. 8 and 10 also).

The Land (“all who dwell on the earth [land]).” God promised to destroy the land specific to the Jews—the Promised Land—where all the twelve tribes of Israel lived (Rev. 1:7). The word “earth” is used 81 times in the book of Revelation and each time we must take notice of whether or not the “earth” in reference is referring to the global earth or the land of the tribes of Israel. In the phrase, “All the tribes of the earth” the word “earth” is a reference to the land of the Jews more than a reference to the entire global earth. The Greek word *ge* (γῆ) for “earth” is often translated as “land” referring to the land of the Jews, as seen in these texts:

- “land/earth of Judah/Israel” (Matt. 2:6, 20, 21);
- “land/earth of Naphtali” (Matt. 4:15);
- “the land/earth of Judea” (John 3:22);
- “land/earth of the Jews” (Acts 10:39).

In reading the Old Testament we come across the word “land” and “tribes” in relationship with each other 130 times and every time this is the case, “land” refers to the land of Israel and “tribes” always refers to the tribes of Israel.

3rd Seal: Black Horse (Rev. 6:5)—famine.

1. “Black” pictures famine and shortage of food and the worst times of war as seen in Lam. 4:8 (Black = dark consequences).

2. Similar declarations of judgment by God on the Jews for unfaithfulness are in Deut. 28:53-57; Lev. 26:26.

4th Seal: Pale or Ashen Horse (Rev. 6:8)—death.

1. This horseman was given authority over a fourth of the land to kill which is another sign of God's judgment.
2. God used similar judgment to destroy his national people by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (Ezek. 14:21-23).

5th Seal: God avenging the death of his saints (Rev. 6:9-11)—revenge.

1. This seal is a declaration of revenge from God.
2. The word "earth" (v. 10) is clearly referring to the "land" of Israel since the context is the place where the persecution of the martyrs occurred.
3. This is not a distant end-of-the-world context.

6th Seal: Reality of God's judgment (Rev. 6:12-17)—terror.

1. The declaration of terror is great, but notice how the descriptions fit a local place with mountains, caves, islands, and rocks like the territory around Jerusalem in AD 70.
2. These verses are a parallel to Jesus' words in Matt. 24:29; Luke 23:30.
3. The language of destruction uses metaphor to make the events of Jerusalem's destruction plain and clear.

Applications:

1. Remember God is still on his throne and he rights all wrongs. What we go through is his plan and he will use it to advance his church and kingdom. When it seems, all hell is breaking loose, we need not think that God is ignoring his kingdom but rather advancing it.
2. God's plan of victory includes certain judgment upon all who disobey his word. We are held accountable for our deeds against Christ. We do not have to weary ourselves with "where is the justice?" We can rest a little while and the righteous judge will bring judgment upon the evil and grant mercy to his children who have remained steadfast to his word.
3. When we are called upon to be martyrs for Christ as in Rev. 6:9-11, we will experience the delight of being valuable (v.9), victor (v.10, 11), and servants (v.11). Our sacrifices, though unnoticed by many, are being observed on the altar of God and will not be cast aside as mere rubbish. Should we ever ask if our sacrifices for Christ are worthy, when we get the white robe of victory and the rest of our labors, the answer is most assuredly "yes."
4. If disobedience to God's law matters enough to destroy the nation of Israel and to send Christ as our redeemer and to pour out his wrath (v.16), then we need to obey God's law and never forsake it. God's word should be our daily delight. God will clearly purge and purify his people and build his church.