

Revelation 6

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

The First Seal—Rider on White Horse

6:1 Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come."

I. Context

- A. God holds a scroll
 - 1. It symbolically represents John
 - 2. It is completely sealed with seven seals
 - 3. Jesus is the only one worthy to open the seals
 - a) because He bought John through His blood.
- B. Jesus opens the first seal
 - 1. One of the beasts - that represents nature - cries out "COME!"
 - a) The first seal begins to break John out of his human nature.

II. Notes

- A. John 1:29 - *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*
- B. The living beings cry "Come," and their cry is responded to by the appearance of the several riders. What is the spiritual meaning of this? The living beings represent, as we have seen, animated nature—that nature and creation of God which groans and travails in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God - *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*

6:2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

I. Context

- A. Jesus opens the first seal
- B. Jesus comes out of the first Seal
 - 1. He conquers the heart of John
 - a) He now owns John and can open the other seals.
 - 2. The first seal is the conversion of a sinner into a saint
 - a) The acceptance of Christ as KING of his life.
 - (1) He conquers the sinner
 - (2) and moves to conquer more through the transformed life.

II. Notes

- A. Revelation 14:14 - *And I looked and saw a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was One like the Son of Man, with a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.*
- B. Revelation 19:11 - *Then I saw heaven standing open, and there before me was a white horse. And its rider is called Faithful and True. With righteousness He judges and wages war.*
- C. The crown (stephanos) is the crown of triumph. The horses used in Roman triumphs were white. On the white horse of triumph the crowned rider goes forth conquering, and that he might conquer - *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*
- D. It is the symbol of Christian victory. It was thus their hopes saw Christ: though ascended He went forth in spiritual power conquering. - *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*
- E. Evidently Christ, whether in person, or by His angel, preparatory to His coming again - *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*

The Second Seal—War

6:3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come.”

I. Context

- A. Jesus is opening the seals from the scroll that represents man
 - 1. The first seal brought a rider on a white horse.
 - a) This is Jesus - who conquers the heart of the man.
- B. Now the man is ready for Jesus to break the second seal.
 - 1. When He does, a living creature on earth gives the command for something to come.

II. Notes

- A. the second living creature — Which was like an ox, and had his station toward the west;
- [Benson Commentary](#)

6:4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that *men* would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

I. Context

- A. Jesus begins opening the seals of the scroll
 - 1. The first seal brought a white horseman
 - a) Jesus, Himself - who conquered a man's soul.
- B. The second seal is opened
 - 1. A red horseman
 - a) Signifying war
 - (1) removing peace from the person's life
 - 2. Here a person, who has accepted Christ as His king, must go to war with others who try to influence him (including his own family).
 - a) He must be at war with those that would put a barrier between the man and His God.

II. Notes

- A. Zechariah 1:8 - I looked out into the night and saw a man riding on a red horse that stood among the myrtle trees in the hollow. Behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses.
- B. Zechariah 6:2 - The first chariot had red horses, the second black horses,
- C. Matthew 10:34 - Do not assume that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.
- D. the color of blood. The color of the horse in each case answers to the mission of the rider. - [Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary](#)

The Third Seal—Famine

6:5 When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, “Come.” I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.

I. Context

- A. Jesus is opening the seals that close a man from God
 - 1. The first seal is a rider on a white horse
 - a) This is Jesus, who conquers our heart.
 - 2. The second seal is a rider on a white horse
 - a) This is the war that we must wage with the people that tries to block us from God.
- B. When the third seal was open, a rider on a black horse came out.
 - 1. He was holding a set of scales, which would indicate that he was famine.
 - a) Here a man must weigh what he needs - to become disciplined in life.

II. Notes

- A. Ezekiel 4:16 - Then He told me, "Son of man, I am going to cut off the supply of food in Jerusalem. They will anxiously eat bread rationed by weight, and in despair they will drink water by measure.
- B. Zechariah 6:2 - The first chariot had red horses, the second black horses,
- C. Zechariah 6:6 - The one with the black horses is going toward the land of the north, the one with the white horses toward the west, and the one with the dappled horses toward the south."
- D. the third living creature — Which was like a man, and had his station in the south; - [Benson Commentary](#)
- E. And he that sat on him had a pair of balances, or scales, in his hand — Implying that men should eat their bread by weight, and drink their water by measure, or that there should be a great scarcity. For when there is great plenty men do not think it worth their while to weigh and measure what they eat and drink; but when there is a famine or scarcity they are obliged to do it - [Benson Commentary](#)

6:6 And I heard *something* like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine."

I. Context

- A. Jesus is unsealing the man before God.
 - 1. The first seal was the white horseman
 - a) that represented Jesus conquering the heart of man.
 - 2. The second was the red horseman
 - a) that represented the war man has with those that draw him from God.
 - 3. The third was the black horseman
 - a) that carried a scale and made the man measure the things he needs in his life.
- B. This horseman is usually identified with famine
 - 1. which often follows war.
 - 2. While the words of the man are about scarcity - there is still the ability to buy.
 - a) It may be more about discipline - budgeting resources so that the man can buy what he needs - and no more.
 - b) This is about living humbly and relying on God to provide.

II. Notes

- A. Matthew 24:7 - Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.
- B. While making food scarce, do not make it so much so that a chœnix (about a day's provision of wheat, variously estimated at two or three pints) shall not be obtainable "for a penny" (denarius, eight and a half pence of our money, probably the day's wages of a laborer). - [Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary](#)

The Fourth Seal—Death

6:7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come."

I. Context

- A. Jesus is opening the seals that keep a man from God
 - 1. The first seal - the white horseman - is Jesus Himself.
 - 2. The second seal - the red horseman - war against those that block us from God.
 - 3. The third seal - the black horseman - famine against stuff that we do not need.
- B. Now the fourth seal is opened.

II. Notes

- A. the fourth beast... The flying eagle - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)

6:8 I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

I. Context

A. God is opening the seals that reveal a man to God.

1. The first seal - White horseman - Jesus conquers the man's heart.
2. The second seal - Red horseman - Jesus conquers the influences in the man's life.
3. The third seal - Black horseman - Jesus conquers the needs a man has.

B. The fourth seal is opened.

1. A pale rider - the color of a corpse - comes out.
 - a) This rider is not described (beyond color) but is said to have the power to kill.
2. Hades followed him
 - a) meaning the place of the dead - not the place of eternal punishment.
3. Jesus has conquered death
 - a) So here man must face his own mortality
 - (1) death is the fate of all man and hades follows
 - (a) unless the man is saved by Christ.

II. Notes

A. Proverbs 5:5 - *Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to Sheol.*

B. Hosea 13:15 - *I will ransom them from the power of Sheol; I will redeem them from Death. Where, O Death, are your plagues? Where, O Sheol, is your sting? Compassion is hidden from My eyes.*

C. The color here would be an appropriate one to denote the reign of death - as one of the most striking effects of death is paleness - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)

D. Death - No description is given of his aspect; nor does he appear with any emblem - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)

E. It is used here to denote the abode of the dead, considered as a place where they dwell, and not in the more restricted sense in which the word is now commonly used as a place of punishment. - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)

F. Over the fourth part of the earth - That is, of the Roman world. It is not absolutely necessary to understand this as extending over precisely a fourth part of the world. - [Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)

The Fifth Seal—Martyrs

6:9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;

I. Context

A. Jesus is opening the seals the divide a man from God

1. 1st Seal - white horseman - Jesus conquers the man's heart.
2. 2nd seal - red horseman - Jesus conquers the man's influences.
3. 3rd seal - black horseman - Jesus conquers the man's needs.
4. 4th seal - pale horseman - Jesus conquers the man's death.

B. Now the 5th seal is opened.

1. Prayers of the saints are offered up to God
 - a) uniting the man who Jesus conquered with the church that is sacrificing for the world.
 - (1) He is connected with the people of God in the work of saving the world.
 - (a) He is suffering for those that are broken.

II. Notes

A. Genesis 4:10 - *"What have you done?" replied the LORD. "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground."*

- B. The voice which is now heard is not the cry of the groaning world, but of the oppressed and troubled Church. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)
- C. The seal indicates that the mission of the Christian Church can only be carried out in suffering. An altar is seen, and at its foot tokens of the martyrs who had laid down their lives upon it. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)

6:10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

I. Context

- A. Jesus is opening the seals that separate man from God.
 1. First seal: White Horseman - Jesus conquers the man's heart.
 2. Second seal: Red Horseman - Jesus conquers the man's focus.
 3. Third seal: Black Horseman - Jesus conquers the man's needs.
 4. Fourth seal: Pale Horseman - Jesus conquers the man's death.
 5. Fifth Seal: The prayers of the saints - uniting the man with the Church of God.
- B. The man takes a part in the suffering of the church as they wait for the return of Jesus to take them home and punish those that hurt them.

II. Notes

- A. Genesis 4:10 - *What have you done?" replied the LORD. "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.*
- B. Deuteronomy 32:43 - *Rejoice, O heavens, with Him, and let all God's angels worship Him. Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His children. He will take vengeance on His adversaries and repay those who hate Him; He will cleanse His land and His people."*
- C. Psalm 79:10 - *Why should the nations ask, "Where is their God?" Before our eyes, make known among the nations Your vengeance for the bloodshed of Your servants.*
- D. Psalm 119:84 - *How many days must Your servant wait? When will You execute judgment on my persecutors?*
- E. Daniel 8:13 - *Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, "How long until the fulfillment of the vision of the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host to be trampled?"*
- F. Zechariah 1:12 - *Then the Angel of the LORD said, "How long, O LORD of Hosts, will You withhold mercy from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which You have been angry these seventy years?"*
- G. By a dramatic figure the persecuted and slain ones are represented as crying for retribution on their oppressors - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)

6:11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

I. Context

- A. Jesus is opening the seals that separate man and God.
 1. The first seal - the white horseman - Jesus conquers the man's heart.
 2. the second seal - the red horseman - Jesus conquers the man's focus.
 3. The third seal - the black horseman - Jesus conquers the man's needs
 4. The fourth seal - the pale horseman - Jesus conquers the man's death.
 5. The fifth seal - unites the man in the Church of God.
- B. The believers that are lost will be taken care of by God
 1. and the church will endure until all the work is done.

II. Notes

- A. Luke 15:22 - *But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.*

- B. Acts 20:24 - But I consider my life of no value to myself, if only I may finish my course and complete the ministry I have received from the Lord Jesus--the ministry of testifying to the good news of God's grace.
- C. 2 Timothy 4:7 - I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
- D. Hebrews 4:10 - For whoever enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His.
- E. The white robes, the glistening apparel of the saints...for those who wear them are like God, seeing Him as He is, reflecting His image; they are acknowledged to be His, as they have acknowledged Him to be their God. Persecuted on earth, they are honoured in heaven - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)

The Sixth Seal—Terror

6:12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth *made* of hair, and the whole moon became like blood;

I. Context

- A. God is opening the seals that separate God from man
 - 1. First seal - Jesus conquers his heart.
 - 2. Second seal - Jesus conquers his influences
 - 3. Third seal - Jesus conquers his needs
 - 4. Fourth seal - Jesus conquers his life (and death)
 - 5. Fifth seal - Jesus unites the man to his church
- B. Then god opens the sixth seal
 - 1. The world as the man knows it is destroyed.
 - a) Everything that he relies upon collapses.

II. Notes

- A. Isaiah 13:10 - For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light. The sun will be darkened when it rises, and the moon will not give its light.
- B. Isaiah 34:4 - All the stars of heaven will be dissolved. The skies will be rolled up like a scroll, and all their stars will fall like withered leaves on the vine, and foliage on the fig tree.
- C. Isaiah 50:3 - I clothe the heavens in black and make sackcloth their covering.
- D. Ezekiel 32:7 - When I extinguish you, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars. I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give its light.
- E. Joel 2:10 - Before them the earth quakes; the heavens tremble. The sun and moon grow dark, and the stars lose their brightness.
- F. Joel 2:31 - The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.
- G. Joel 3:15 - The sun and moon grow dark, and the stars no longer shine.
- H. Matthew 24:29 - Immediately after the tribulation of those days: 'The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.'
- I. Mark 13:24 - However, after the tribulation of those days, 'The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,
- J. Revelation 8:12 - Then the fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun and moon and stars were struck. A third of the stars were darkened, a third of the day was without light, and a third of the night as well.

6:13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.

I. Context

- A. Jesus is opening the seals that separate a man from God.
 - 1. First seal - Jesus conquers the man's heart.
 - 2. Second Seal - Jesus conquers the man's influences.
 - 3. Third Seal - Jesus conquers the man's needs
 - 4. Fourth seal - Jesus conquers the man's life
 - 5. Fifth Seal - The man aligns his heart with that of the church.
 - 6. Sixth seal - God tests the man's faith
 - a) Everything that he put his confidence in is destroyed.
- B. Those things that guided the man (the stars) and the things he relied on for strength (figs) are removed from His life to test his faith.
 - 1. Nahum 3:12 - *All your fortresses are fig trees with the first ripe figs; when shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater!*

II. Notes

- A. Isaiah 34:4 - *And all the host of heaven will wear away, And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; All their hosts will also wither away As a leaf withers from the vine, Or as one withers from the fig tree.*
- B. Nahum 3:12 - *All your fortresses are fig trees with the first ripe figs; when shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater!*
- C. Mark 13:25 - *the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.'*
- D. This is but another phrase signifying a great change: the whole verse is much the same with Isaiah 34:4. Literally these things were never yet fulfilled. It is a phrase signifying the fall of great and mighty men.- [Matthew Poole's Commentary](#)

6:14 **The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.**

I. Context

- A. Jesus opens the seals that separate a man from God
 - 1. First: Jesus conquers his heart
 - 2. Second: Jesus conquers his influences
 - 3. Third: Jesus conquers his needs
 - 4. Fourth: Jesus conquers his death
 - 5. Fifth: The man becomes part of the church of God.
 - 6. Sixth: The man's faith is tested as all he has looked to for strength is removed.
- B. The things that seemed immovable will be moved, so that the man's world will be confused and his faith will be tested.

II. Notes

- A. Isaiah 34:4 - *All the stars of heaven will be dissolved. The skies will be rolled up like a scroll, and all their stars will fall like withered leaves on the vine, and foliage on the fig tree.*
- B. Isaiah 54:10 - *Though the mountains may be removed and the hills may be shaken, My loving devotion will not depart from you, and My covenant of peace will not be broken," says the LORD, who has compassion on you.*
- C. Jeremiah 4:24 - *I looked at the mountains, and behold, they were quaking; all the hills were swaying.*
- D. Ezekiel 38:20 - *The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that crawls upon the ground, and all mankind on the face of the earth will tremble at My presence. The mountains will be thrown down, the cliffs will collapse, and every wall will fall to the ground.*
- E. Nahum 1:5 - *The mountains quake before Him, and the hills melt away; the earth trembles at His presence--the world and all its dwellers.*

- F. 2 Peter 3:10 - But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be dissolved in the fire, and the earth and its works will not be found.
- G. Revelation 16:20 - Then every island fled, and no mountain could be found.

6:15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains;

I. Context

- A. Jesus is opening the seals that separate a man from God
 1. First - Jesus conquers the man's heart
 2. second - Jesus conquers the man's influences
 3. third - Jesus conquers the man's needs
 4. fourth - Jesus conquers the man's life
 5. fifth - Jesus unites the man with His church
 6. sixth - Jesus tests the man's faith
 - a) He takes away everything that the man held as support so that he has only the Lord to lean on.
- B. All men will face this test
 1. where the things they have relied on are removed and their world is in chaos.
 2. Some will run from God and try to hide.
 3. The test of this seal is to see if the man will run TO God and be saved.

II. Notes

- A. Genesis 3:8 - Then the man and his wife heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the breeze of the day, and they hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.
- B. Isaiah 2:10 - Go into the rocks and hide in the dust from the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty.
- C. Isaiah 2:19 - Men will flee to caves in the rocks and holes in the ground, away from the terror of the LORD and from the splendor of his majesty, when He rises to shake the earth.
- D. Isaiah 24:21 - In that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven above and the kings of the earth below.
- E. In the list of the great ones here we may notice the descending order—kings, magnates or statesmen, generals, rich men, strong men, bond and free men. The terror strikes into every class: monarchs and their advisers, the statesmen and diplomatists, the commanders of troops, the merchant princes, the men of ability, as well as the obscurer orders of society. Neither royalty, nor rank, nor force of arms, nor opulence, nor talent, nor strength, either of intellect or frame, avail in that crisis; neither does insignificance escape in that day when God brings to light the hidden things. The tests of God are spiritual, as the weapons of God's war are not carnal. Men who have relied upon wealth, rank, or power, have prepared themselves against one form of trial, but find themselves unarmed in the day of spiritual testing. - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)

6:16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

I. Context

- A. Jesus is opening the seals that separate man from God
 1. First: Jesus conquers the man's heart
 2. Second: Jesus conquers the man's influences.
 3. Third: Jesus conquers the man's needs
 4. Fourth: Jesus conquers the man's life

5. Fifth: Jesus unites the man with His people
 6. Sixth: Jesus tests the man's faith
 - a) To see if the man will run TO Him or away FROM Him when the man's world falls apart.
- B. All mankind will face a day of testing
1. Some will chose death rather than face Christ and Judgement
 - a) This is the choice of Adam and the trees of the garden.

II. Notes

- A. Psalm 2:12 - Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish in your rebellion, when His wrath ignites in an instant. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him.
- B. Isaiah 2:10 - Go into the rocks and hide in the dust from the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty
- C. Hosea 10:8 - The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, will be destroyed; thorns and thistles will grow over their altars. Then they will say to the mountains, "Cover us!" and to the hills, "Fall on us!"
- D. Luke 22:30 - At that time they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"
- E. They chose death rather than life. - Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

6:17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

I. Context

- A. Jesus is opening the seals that separate man from God
 1. First: Jesus conquers the man's heart
 2. Second: Jesus conquers the man's influences.
 3. Third: Jesus conquers the man's needs
 4. Fourth: Jesus conquers the man's life
 5. Fifth: Jesus unites the man with His people
 6. Sixth: Jesus tests the man's faith
 - a) Everyone will face this test.
 - (1) Some will hide from God and seek death to avoid judgement.
 - (2) Some will run to God and be saved.
- B. Jesus said that apart from Him, we can do nothing.
 1. In the final test that opens us to God, those that are united with Christ in life and death and who have had their seals opened before God by Jesus, will survive and be saved.
 - a) Those that have avoided Jesus and tried to live by their own power will not be saved because they are not connected to God who gives life.
 - (1) They have not been transformed through Jesus.

II. Notes

- A. Psalm 76:7 - You alone are to be feared. When You are angry, who can stand before You?
- B. Psalm 110:5 - The Lord is at Your right hand; He will crush kings in the day of His wrath.
- C. Psalm 130:3 - If you, O LORD, kept track of iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?
- D. Jeremiah 30:7 - How awful that day will be! None will be like it! It is the time of Jacob's distress, but he will be delivered out of it.
- E. Joel 1:15 - Alas for the day! For the Day of the LORD is near, and it will come like destruction from the Almighty.
- F. Joel 2:11 - The LORD raises His voice in the presence of His army. Indeed, His camp is very large, for mighty are those who obey His command. For the day of the LORD is great and very dreadful. Who can endure it?
- G. Nahum 1:6 - Who can withstand His indignation? Who can endure His burning anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; even rocks are shattered before Him.

- H. Malachi 3:2 - But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner's fire, like a launderer's soap.
- I. Luke 21:36 - So keep watch at all times, and pray that you may have the strength to escape all that is about to happen and to stand before the Son of Man."
- J. The thought is derived from [Malachi 3:2](#), which spoke of a coming of the Lord. Every advent of Christ is the advent of One whose fan is in His hand, and who will thoroughly purge His floor. Whether it be His advent in the flesh, He tested men; or whether one of His advents in Providence—such as the fall of Jerusalem, the overthrow of Pagan Rome, the convulsions of the Reformation and Revolution epochs of history—He still tests men whether they are able to abide in faith and love the day of His coming; and much more, then, in the closing personal advent, when these visions will receive their fullest illustration, will He try men. "Who is able to stand?" It is the question of questions. Christ's answer is: "Apart from Me ye can do nothing." - [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)