

Six Seals

Revelation Chapter 6

Introduction

God will judge. You can count on it. The question most people struggle with, is not whether the world will end, but how will it end? Science fiction writers may envision a comet or other heavenly sphere on a crash course with destiny. Mankind will go the way of the dinosaur; a victim of celestial fate. Others envision the collapse of peace and a global thermonuclear war. Scientists envision a time of resource collapse when human beings will riot for the basic things needed to sustain life. The Bible predicts judgment on a world that has rejected its Messiah, a nation that has failed to accept God's provision. Like the calm before the storm, we get mixed messages from the world. Are we on our way to global peace and economic prosperity, or are we on a crash course for global conflict and the end of civilization as we know it? **People are desperate for a leader who will guarantee world security, global integrity, and hope for peace.** We are floating down the stream of time and the stream leads to judgment.

Chapters 6 through 19 of the book of Revelation outline the end of the world. These chapters contain three sets of seven judgments. There are 6 seals opened from the "title deed" of the earth. The 7th seal (chapter 7) introduces us to 7 angels with 7 trumpets. Each trumpet brings another judgment as the Lord visits judgment on the earth. Judgment increases with intensity and frequency as we make our way through the book of Revelation. The sounding of the 7th trumpet leads to a vision of seven more angels holding seven bowls which contain the final wrath of God. Remember 3 is the symbolic number of the Godhead, and 7 is the numeric symbol of perfection or completion.

"The worship described in Revelation 4-5 is preparation for the wrath described in Revelation 6-19. It seems strange to us that worship and judgment should go together, but this is because we do not fully understand either the holiness of God or the sinfulness of man. Nor do we grasp the total picture of what God wants to accomplish and how the forces of evil have opposed Him. God is longsuffering, but eventually He must judge sin and vindicate His servants" (Warren Wiersbe p.586).

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

The book of Daniel describes the fantastic prophecy concerning Christ's first coming. God has unfinished business with Israel. Daniel 9:27 speaks of a covenant that the antichrist will make in the final week of God's calendar. **I believe the first seal represents the** beginnings of the Antichrist, the man of sin the lawless one. In Daniel's prophecy 70 weeks of years (shabua) are extended to Israel. 69 of those weeks were fulfilled. Daniel was given a timetable or timeframe beginning with the decree to rebuild the temple by Artaxerxes Longimanus. Sir Robert Anderson, the former head of the Scotland Yard, helped devise the timetable. He calculated that the decree was made in 445 B.C (Neh. 2:1-8). Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt and 62 weeks places us in 30 AD where the Messiah was cutoff. Then we were told the people of the prince who

would come would destroy the temple. In 70AD Titus and Vespasian did just that. The end came "like a flood". 69 weeks have been accounted for but one has yet to be fulfilled. That week is the final seven years prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. 7 years still in the future. One third of the NT is devoted to the final week of Jesus' earthly life. Chapters 6-19 of Revelation is devoted to the final "week" of human government prior to Jesus Christ's return. It is a week filled with wonder and terror as God judges the earth.

Seal #1 (vv.1-2) The Antichrist

1. Each of the four living creatures cry "come". In other words, events that take place on the earth are under the sovereign direction of God (Wiersbe p.587). The horse symbolism is related to Zechariah 1:7-17. Horses represent God's activities on earth, the forces He uses to accomplish divine purposes (ibid.587). God's focus at the end of the world will be the Jewish people and Jerusalem (mentioned 39 times in Zechariah).

2. Who is the rider on the white horse? Some have suggested that this is Jesus Christ. They point to Rev. 19:11 as proof. The only thing they have in common is the white horse. The rider is summoned by the living creature. Jesus is subordinate to the Father, but does answer to anyone! Both are crowned and both are bent on conquest. This suggests that in many ways the rider in chapter 6 is like Christ but is not Christ. (Mat. 24:24). Jesus told the Jews, "I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him.

I believe this person is none other than the antichrist! Yet this is more likely the personification of the antichrist (the riders are not people) We would expect the antichrist to look like Jesus Christ. This person is none other than Satan's great counterfeit.

3. The word for crown in verse 2 is *stephanos*. In 19:12 Jesus Christ wears the *diadema* (the kingly crown). Antichrist could never wear such a crown. He has a bow but no arrows which indicated a bloodless victory. He seduces and deceives the world. But he will quickly exchange his empty sword for a bloody sword.

The antichrist will dupe and deceive the world, and then consume it. Antichrist will succeed by overpowering the minds and wills of human beings by playing on man's fears and insecurities, but then appealing to their pride. The globalization of the planet will take place not so much by force, but by deceit. "It is interesting to note that in Matthew 24 the first word Jesus says to his disciples is, "Watch out that no one deceives you." (John Phillips)

The fact that so many traffic in deception leads many people to believe we are living in the final moments prior to the rapture of the church. Outrageous lies of people against people and country against country defies the imagination. Turn on the television and

listen to the radio and the depth of lies will stagger the imagination. Ray Stedman writes: "You may remember the that immediately following the liberation of Kuwait by UN forces in Feb. 1991, the government of Iraq claimed victory even though its army had been destroyed. Across Iraq and wherever the Jordanian and Palestinian supporters of Saddam Hussein lived, wild rumors sprang up: Four hundred Jews were killed when an Iraqi Scud missile exploded at Ben Gurion airport. The Scud missiles were so effective they shot down almost every American Patriot missile. Over 100,000 Americans killed by Iraqi forces, but fewer than a hundred were reported by the Western Press. Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait was not retreat but a tactical redeployment, for Saddam has a secret weapon that he will use to destroy Israel. Outrageous lies, every one--yet they are believed by hundreds of thousands of Muslims in the middle East.

The list goes on and on--evolution the lie that God does not exist and we are the chance encounter of matter meets enzymes. Situation ethics--man is the final authority for his own actions--there are no absolute rules. Moral freedom--everyone including children should be exposed to all viewpoints that are realistic--including vulgarity, immorality, and perversion--all seen as acceptable methods of self expression. The christian gospel is not realistic--so it has no place in the system. Self-sufficiency--man is not accountable to higher powers--he is responsible to self alone. Sexual permissiveness--all forms of sexual expression are acceptable and should be taught in schools free from the archaic restraints of the Bible! What lies!

Look at what the public consumes--UFO, Astrology X- Files & Occultism. "Notice how eagerly the public laps up claims that we humans can have secret god-like powers, that we can rule and manipulate others, that we can order the world according to our own wishes. Such deception is continually fed into our society, and our society hungrily devours the lie." We are living in an age of runaway deception. SEE 2 Thess. 2:9-12

Seal #2 (vv.3-4) Global Anarchy &War

1. This kind of war is not limited to opposing armies. This is slaughter. Like what has taken place in Africa and Bosnia. This slaughter on a personal and national basis. This is civil anarchy when governments collapse or loses control. Riots in LA, killing in Sri Lanka, brutal murders in the captals around the world. We have seen rioting, looting and and all hell breaking loose, but it is only the beginning. When this seal breaks, lawlessness and civil collapse will follow. Governments will collapse--

What we have seen recently in the mass murders, in Scotland, Australia will seem like nothing. In John's day people could not even imagine the bloodshed we are able to unleash with nuclear, chemical and conventional weapons. This does not even take into consideration biological warfare or the use of plagues like Ebola.

2. **Red** is the color of war and bloodshed. Note: (1) peace is removed from the earth; (2) human beings kill each other (3) The rider is given a large sword. This is not the

Greek word **rhomphaia** which is the sword of judgment. This is the Greek word "machaira" the sword of military conquest. This sword is clearly a weapons of devastation. The time of the tribulation will be a time of intense war, and military activity. Read Ezekiel 38 and 39 and you will see a vivid account of warfare on a global scale. Does the Bible predict a global war of such devastating proportions? If you approach the prophecies in Ezekiel and Revelation with an open mind, you will see that it has only been in this century--and in most of our lifetimes that such global catastrophe was even possible.

A book entitled Report from Iron Mountain was an alleged government report some said it was a hoax others said it was real. The study was allegedly containing the findings of 15 scientists--, a historian, political theorist, professor of international law, an economist, a sociologist, etc. the group was told not to waste any time over cultural and religious values. The first conclusion was that all war would cease if the will for war would cease. But that war was in the very fabric of our social system. It is not likely that peace will ever be a serious goal. No substitute is known that can better stabilize and control national economies. War is the foundation of stable government, every governing body that has failed to sustain the appearance of external threat has lost control of its people. War provides a means for a nation to control its youth; and provides an effective means for controlling its population.---NO wonder God has said "the way of peace they have not known ROM. 3:17.

This global anarchy sets the stage for the appearance of the third horseman.

Seal #3 (vv.5-6) Global Economic Collapse

1. The pair of scales is an OT symbol; Whenever a time of economic deprivation or scarcity occurred, they were said to "eat bread weighed by the measure" (see Lev.26). The scales were a symbol of scarcity.
2. The living creature says a quart of wheat will cost a denarius, the average day's wage for a working man (this was before the International Brotherhood of the Teamsters). A quart of wheat was the bare minimum food requirement to make bread for the family. Three quarts of barley was the equivalent of a quart of wheat. The symbolism seems to indicate that you will have to work the entire day, simply to eat. When John wrote this, in Rome in the first century, a denarius would buy 8-16 quarts.
3. **"Do not damage the oil or the wine"**-Oil and wine were a luxury---luxuries are plentiful but necessities are scarce. This might be portraying a time because of global economic collapse where the normal person will have to struggle just to stay alive but the super rich will still have an abundance.

Famine will follow war--but the real famine is still future. Here we see I believe a global economic collapse. Monetary systems will have no meaning. Inflation, recession--panic.

This may be just the excuse the Antichrist needs to bring a global system of buying and selling (that we will see in Revelation 13). There will come a time when the economy is so devastated that no one will be able to buy or sell unless they have the Mark of the Beast.

Today 1/2 the children in the world go to bed hungry. 1/2 the children of preschool age are so severely undernourished they will suffer physical or mental retardation. Their death rate is 60 times greater than in developed nations. 10,000 people died today of starvation. In the US we throw enough food away to feed a family of 6 in India. One researcher estimates that 15% of all edible food in the US winds up in the trash. (17.5 billion dollars a year. The average American dog consumes more protein than most people. While we sit down to dinner 400 people will starve to death. When we wake up in the morning there are 203,000 additional mouths to feed.

Seal #4 (vv. 7-8) Catastrophic Death

1. The Greek word for "pale" is *chloros*. We get the word "chlorine"--this is putrid green, the color of decaying flesh. This rider is named death. Floating behind is a figure called Hades (or Hell). One destroys the body the other the soul. There are four forms of death mentioned in the seals: (1) the sword which refers to murder rather than to war--people taking the law into their own hands. People killing one another on the basis of perversity, sin and vengeance. (2) Second comes famine and widespread starvation. (3) plagues--these are epidemics--widespread diseases that wipe out whole people groups. (4) wild beasts multiply and begin preying on the humans. Verse 8 says that 1/4 of the earth's population will be destroyed. Imagine that today. If we combine the total population of China and the United States--everyone wiped out. **1.3 Billion dead.**

2. With the collapse of civilization--comes the collapse of sanitation, drinking water, **sin is allowed to ripen to fruition.** These four seal judgments are already at work in our society, but imagine when all restraints are removed. Sometimes God allows evil to work, the evil that human beings have allowed to come to full fruition. God allows the evil that humans commit and then allows them to bear the full consequences. Romans 1 talks about people being given over to a reprobate mind. **"God confronts us with the unpleasant truth about ourselves by giving us what we demand." If people want to believe a lie, then God will send "powerful delusion".**

3. **Human** beings want "unlimited freedom?" People want mob rule, they want to kill, they want mob rule, he may even give them over to nuclear destruction. People want power--then they will get what they want, intrigue, murder, disease, and desolation upon the earth. GOD will judge. He must. Judgment is the inescapable consequence of unrestrained evil.

Seal #5 (vv.9-11) The Slaughtered Martyrs

1. The nature of the judgment changes. We saw four horseman.

2. **How is it that the saints of all the ages appear in heaven at the same time?** We live in time. These events are taking place in eternity. In eternity time does not pass moment by moment--in eternity time ceases--there is only now. Past and future are concepts that belong to time--in eternity.

Seal #6 (vv.12-17) Global Chaos and Judgment

1. **This is a picture of nature in chaos.** The planet goes into a state of shock. SEE Matthew 24:29-30. These six seals carry us almost through the period called the tribulation. This is a telescopic or condensed version. It would appear that nature itself will be upset by some catastrophe. Perhaps some Cosmic body or gravitational pull. There will be an earthquake of such proportion that the fabric of the earth will tear. There have been many thousand of earthquakes but this will be the most severe in earth's history. The most destructive earthquake ever recorded killed more than 1 million Chinese in 1556. The worst quake in American history occurred in San Francisco and killed 700 people (April 18th, 1906) Volcanoes will erupt, mountains removed, mountains formed, islands sink, land masses thrust up from beneath the sea. The sun and moon will darken, perhaps from ash, or what Carl Sagan describes as "nuclear winter". Jesus describes the events in Luke 21:25-27.

Hal Lindsey writes: Do you know what happens in a nuclear explosion? The atmosphere rolls back on itself. It's this tremendous rush of air back into the vacuum that causes much of the destruction of a nuclear explosion. John's words in this verse are a perfect description of an all out nuclear exchange. When this happens, John continues, every mountain and every island will be jarred from its present position. The whole world will literally be shaking apart."

2. v.16: Look at the expression "the wrath of the Lamb". They begin praying in the largest prayer meeting in history. But they are praying for the wrong thing. The only thing that can protect us from the wrath of the lamb is the righteousness of the lamb. (Willmington's Guide to the Bible) What a paradox. You would expect wrath from a lion but not from a lamb. But God will judge. We live in an age where people either ignore the God who judges or they think that somehow they will be exempt because they have a "good heart." Not so! God's wrath is evidence of his holy love for all that is right and his hatred for all that is evil. Only a person who is deluded or experience emotions with no sense of commitment would want to worship a God who does not deal justly with evil in the universe.

Also note these people will not repent. They will hide (like Adam and Eve in the Garden) but they do not repent. They refuse to comply with God's will. **They would rather run from Him in fear than run to Him in faith. "They are proof that**

judgment by itself does not change the human heart. Not only will men seek to hide from God, but they will blaspheme Him as well! (Rev. 16:9,11,21) "(Warren Wiersbe p.589).

Matthew 24 Revelation 6

False Christs (vv.4-5) White Horse Rider (vv.1-2)

Famines (v.7a) Black Horse-war (vv.3-4)

Death (vv. 7b-8) Pale Horse--death (vv.7-8)

Martyrs (v.9) Martyrs under the altar (vv.9-11)

Worldwide chaos (vv.10-13) Worldwide Chaos (vv.12-17)

Who can stand? No one. This is the end of civilization. The people who refuse Christ, refuse grace will be exposed to these catastrophic events. Some will literally die of fright. These scenes were envisioned by Isaiah the prophet "They will flee to caverns in the rocks in the overhanging crags from the dread of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth. Isaiah also wrote; "Though grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness, they go on doing evil and regard not the majesty of the Lord.

How strange! The unbeliever is convinced that death is an escape-that takes away pain or the consequence of sin. People commit suicide in a desperate attempt to escape their sins. They believe that guilt will die with the body. Not so.

Why has God shown us these things? The answer in part is to inspire to warn our family and loved ones. Another reason is to let us know how the world around us is going to end up. Rather than bemoan the government, the state of affairs in the world, sound the trumpet, sound the alarm, grace and mercy are still available in Jesus Christ.