

# Opening The Six Seals

## Revelation 6 Notes

### ***The First Seal (vss. 1-2)***

- The thunderous call, indicative of a mighty voice capable of being heard in every realm, is to the horseman and horse to come forth on their symbolic mission, thereby revealing one part of this scene. This is true of each horse and rider to follow.
- It is evident that this vision represents conquest of some kind. Since white is the heavenly color and indicates holiness, the rider of the white horse symbolizes a heavenly mission of conquest.
- The crown given to the rider was a victory crown, indicating victory in the conflict as He went forth "conquering, and to conquer." From these symbolic uses of horses, bows and arrows, it is evident that this is a picture of the victorious Christ carrying out the content of the sealed book.
- Though Christ may lead the armies of earth in accomplishing God's purpose, He goes forth here not in military strength or war, but in the gospel to conquer the souls of men according to God's plan (cf. Ephesians 2:17).

### ***The Second Seal (vss. 3-4)***

- It is generally agreed that red indicates war and bloodshed. Again, however, the nature of the warfare here symbolized must be determined. The persecution that would follow the preaching of the gospel seems the best fit to the symbolic rider of the red horse (cf. Matthew 10:21, 34-39).
- The Jews had opposed Christ and the gospel and persecuted the saints; Nero had bathed Rome in their blood; Domitian was beginning a persecution that had the whole empire steeped in their suffering before Constantine issued his edict of toleration more than two hundred years later. Persecution has always been the lot of faithful Christians.
- The "great sword" given to the rider was a butchering sword or knife with which he would slaughter men in sacrifice; it was "great" because of the extent to which it would be used.

### ***The Third Seal (vss. 5-6)***

- The rider of the black horse symbolizes grief, woe and mourning, the lot of persecuted saints who followed the preaching of the gospel. The grief would result from scarcity of food, symbolized by the balance in the rider's hand and the eating by weight. As the balances in

the rider's hand indicates a period of scarcity, black indicates the grief and woe accompanying such a time.

- The source of the voice is not identified, but the fact that it comes from the midst of the four living creatures implies that it expresses the sentiment of the four. Wheat, barley, oil and wine were the staple foods of the period, but wine and oil were a bit more upscale. On such a meager salary one could provide only a bare living and would find it impossible to afford any of these luxuries. As the luxury items were not hurt, it appears that the rider of the black horse symbolizes hardship and suffering through prejudice against Christians.

### ***The Fourth Seal (vss. 7-8)***

- The rider of this horse personified Death, while Hades, the unseen realm of spirits, followed with him. He was and always is present with Death together his share of the booty. Each time Hades is mentioned in Revelation it is associated with Death (1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14).
- "The fourth part of the earth" includes a larger sphere of operation than the rider of the black horse. The sword with which Death kills symbolizes carnal or military warfare. The Lord permits, even uses the sword of nations to execute judgment upon the earth. Pestilence goes hand in hand with famine as both follow the destruction of war.
- The judgment symbolized by this rider is against the world of unbelieving people, falling upon them as a result of rejection of the divine message. However, in such judgments Christians must necessarily suffer with the rest.

### ***The Fifth Seal (vss. 9-11)***

- When the blood was poured out, it was the life that was being offered. The "souls" were the lives of those who had been sacrificed for Christ. they were being sacrificed for the same reason that John was on Patmos (cf. 1:9).
- "How long" suggests that this was not the beginning of the struggle but that it had been continuing for some time -- from the Jewish persecution in Jerusalem, through that of Nero and now the persecution in the days of Domitian.
- This cry had been on the lips of suffering and persecuted saints through the centuries. The cry is not for revenge, but for a vindication of their death and the cause for which they had died. They had to rest "a little time," during the period of persecution and tribulation through which the church was then passing. The speaker has in mind the present struggle rather than the total of time until the end

and coming of the Lord. The "little season" would end when Satan is defeated and bound (20:1-3).

### ***The Sixth Seal (vss. 12-17)***

- It is evident that the opening of this seal brings a judgment into view. The saints underneath the altar had cried out for an avenging of their cause and had been told to wait a little time. And now in the opening of this seal God gives assurance that He will avenge their cause by a judgment upon those that inflicted the saints' death.
- John draws heavily from Old Testament pictures and descriptions of final judgments brought upon heathen nations that had sought the destruction of God's people (cf. Isaiah 13:10, 13; 29:6; 50:3; Jeremiah 4:23-28; Joel 2:31). The power responsible for the saints' death is Rome, but this is not revealed until chapter 13.
- As a scroll is read it is rolled up; so when a nation comes to an end, its heaven is rolled up, no longer visible (cf. Isaiah 34:4). At the fall of Tyre, the great commercial power of its period, the isles would shake (Ezekiel 26:15, 18; 27:35).
- All classes, men of every degree and social standing, are brought into view. Drawn together by a common calamity, they seek refuge and hide in the caves and rocks of the mountains. Hosea, Isaiah and Jesus all use this language to denote a national calamity (Hosea 10:8; Isaiah 2:19; Luke 23:30).
- It is clear that the use of such symbols at the opening of the sixth seal points to the judgment of a persecuting world power. Later in Revelation it will be revealed that the Roman Empire suffered such a calamity. By judgment God will vindicate His saints.