

The Seals

Revelation 6:1

On Nov 10th, 1942, Winston Churchill stood before the House of Commons in Great Britain to offer a glimpse of hope. In the midst of World War II, England had lost every battle so far. It looked as Adolf Hitler may just succeed in conquering the world.

Then the tide changed when Britain was victorious in Egypt. Churchill said *“This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”*

How does this phrase accurately describe where we are in the book of Revelation and in human history right now as well? We are not in the end times.....yet. This is not the beginning of the end, but it is the end of the beginning. There are lightning flashes signaling that there is a great storm on the horizon. It is the storm of God’s final judgement against sin on the earth. In Revelation 6, we see the first three judgements during the seven-year tribulation.

John is invited in Revelation 6:1 to “come and see”. What John is seeing is not a vision, not a dream, not a hallucination. He has been brought up to heaven, translated into the future, and is viewing what is to come.

The Seal Judgements

Is John dreaming, hallucinating, or seeing a vision? John is invited in Revelation 6:1 to “*come and see*”. What John is seeing is not a vision, not a dream, not a hallucination. He has been brought up to heaven, translated into the future, and is viewing what is to come. He is watching what will become a reality one day.

When does the seven seal judgements begin during tribulation? There is debate on whether the seals are opened during the first or second half, but regardless when it happens, the seals will be opened.

Does Jesus specify when it will happen? In Matthew 24, Jesus and his disciples had just left Jerusalem and were sitting on the Mount of Olives looking down on the city and the temple. The disciples questioned Jesus *“What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?”*

Did Jesus say not to think about those things? Did he say none of your business? No, He gave a detailed explanation of events that will lead to his return. He spoke of false messiahs, wars and rumors of wars, famine, death, and martyrdom. The seals that are opened and the results that we are fixing to discuss match right up with what Jesus spoke of as well as Daniel and other prophets of the Bible.

THE FIRST SEAL: THE ANTICHRIST OR THE LORD?

REVELATION 6:1-2

Who is on the white horse? There are two extremely different views on who this rider is. Either view may or may not be correct. I have my own personal opinion, but it does not change the fact either way; the seals will be opened by Jesus' commands with the same results whether you think the rider on the horse released in the first seal is Jesus or the Antichrist.

- 1. Support for the rider being Jesus Christ, riding forth at the beginning of his cleansing judgements on earth:**
 - a. This view paints the rider as the conquering Christ who is seen riding forth at the beginning of the judgements on the earth, and then against riding at their climatic completion.
- 2. Support for the rider being the Antichrist, who is the world leader that emerges after the rapture of the church, bringing the beginning of evil and destruction to the world:**
 - a. Jesus comes at the end of Tribulation, so it seems illogical that here He is riding down at the first of the judgements as well.
 - b. In Revelation 19:11-16, scholars agree that Jesus is obviously the one on this white horse. In Revelation 6, this rider on the white horse has a *stephanos* (victor's crown) but in Revelation 19, Jesus is wearing a *diadema* (royal crown). Furthermore, Jesus is carrying a sword in Revelation 19, but the rider in Revelation 6 is carrying a bow with no arrows. The different attire and weapons makes it appear these two white horse riders are not the same being.
 - c. All four horses in Revelation 6 represent evil and destruction on earth. Can Christ really be reduced to the same level as the other three horsemen?
 - d. Christ is the one opening the seals. It would be strange for Christ to open the seal and then have one of the four living creatures command HIM to "come". Christ is in charge of the angelic hosts, not the other way around.
 - e. Horses in John's days were war machines and the bow was the symbol of war. The rider in Revelation 6 has a bow, but strangely no arrows. When the Antichrist appears on the scene, he will make a treaty with Israel at first. The rider having a bow with no arrows seems to indicate war is held at bay initially, which matches up with the Antichrist's actions.
 - f. The rider in Revelation 6 is wearing a victor's crown and the antichrist will temporarily reign over the world during tribulation, but only because God Himself allowed him to.
 - g. The Antichrist will surely be the one to bring false peace into the world after the chaos that erupts after the rapture occurs. John mentions the Antichrist rode out "conquering", but remember his bow has no arrows. This rider will assume power at first without any bloodshed, which matches the beginning scheme of the Antichrist.

THE SECOND SEAL: WARFARE

REVELATION 6:3-4

What judgement does this rider on the red horse bring? Warfare including civil unrest, crime, anarchy, and bloodshed. Peace will be removed from the earth and people and nation's destructive instincts will turn them against each other.

Do you think red horse will actually be the CAUSE people fight and nations to go to war, or is it just humanity being humanity at its worst? In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, Paul spoke of the Antichrist and said the Lord is currently "restraining" him from his full ability. When this second seal is opened, the Lord's restraint will be removed and satanic powers will have full reign to influence humanity.

In the rapture, every current living Christian in the entire world will be removed all at once. What kind of effect will this have on the world they leave behind? The body of Christians world-wide were part of the restraining influence fighting against evil and unrest. With all Christians gone and the Antichrist not being "restrained", the evil in humanity will rule and with that will come civil unrest, crime, anarchy, bloodshed, and wars. Humanity, by free will, at its worst.

THE THIRD SEAL: FAMINE

REVELATION 6:5-6

This rider had a pair of balances in their hands. Based on the voice in verse 6, what were the balances used for? It is apparent they were measuring out food versus money. This was to determine how much you have to pay for food.

The penny is the *denarius*, which represented a day's wage for a laborer. A penny would normally be enough to buy eight quarts of wheat or twenty-four quarts of barley, which would last a family more than a week. At the time the seal is opened, food is EIGHT TIMES more expensive.

In a world of supply and demand, what must be happening in the world with things to cost eight times the normal price? Spike increases of this magnitude occur from major worldwide food shortages and famines.

What judgement does this rider on the black horse bring? Famine. Famine brings price controls and sky-high inflation.

The voice ironically says not to hurt the expensive luxury items of oil and the wine. What kind of people in those times were able to have such items as these? Oil and wine were luxury items that had little food value and were simply indulgences of the rich and wealthy. This verse indicates a shortage of necessary foods but not on luxury items. At this time, the poor will suffer while the rich thrive but the rich will not be able to hide from the judgements that are coming.

In a way, is this already happening in some places throughout the world? This out of hand price spikes occur often in socialist countries, where the government establishes price controls and free market competition is denied. The poor suffer while the rich thrive. This is the economy Satan loves.

Will the antichrist have his hand in the economy? Most definitely. In Revelation Chapter 13, we will be introduced to some sort of mark required to be able to buy and sell. The antichrist will control this.

THE FOURTH SEAL: DEATH

REVELATION 6:7-8

What judgement does this rider on the red horse bring? This horse is ashen like a decomposing body. John tells us he will bring death.

We have already talked about the world being ravaged by WARFARE and FAMINE. What effect do these things have on humanity? It brings death. Hunger, wars, murdering, fighting, famine, starvation, and diseases will bring death to one-fourth of the earth's population. If the current world population is 7.5 billion people, that would be almost 1.9 billion people. It will be a time of suffering "*such has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, or ever will*" Matthew 24:21.

THE FIFTH SEAL: MARTYRDOM

REVELATION 6:9-10

Who are these souls that were in heaven? These souls were not the same as any of the elders or angels mentioned earlier in John's vision. These cannot be those who were removed from the earth during the rapture either.

Will there be many multitudes of people that come to Christ during the Tribulation? Absolutely. Jesus specifically states this in Matthew 24:9 and Luke 21:12. For many, it will cost them their lives.

How will they come to Christ? All the church and all the Christians will be gone? You have to remember, there are many people that know about Jesus Christ. There are many people that even go to church or have been before, but are not true born again believers. They may believe in their head, but not their heart. There will still be Christian books, videos left on the earth as well as bibles. Lastly, many people will search for truth in Scripture as all this unfolds, while many will make excuses and refuse to accept.

By the time all of these seals are broken, will anyone have an excuse to not believe? At some point during tribulation, can someone really honestly say that there isn't enough proof as the world literally is ending in front of them?

So who are these souls that were in heaven? They are the tribulation saints who have been martyred and they are crying out for vengeance. They are wanting God to judge all the evil that is happening on the earth. They are asking “when”, not “if” the Lord will avenge them. God answers and tells them to trust Him and wait a little longer. The Second Coming is approaching.

THE SIXTH SEAL: COSMOLOGICAL DISTURBANCES

REVELATION 6:12-14

What is happening now back on earth? It seems like the universe is coming apart. Some great cataclysmic event will suddenly strike while the earth is still suffering under the famines, plagues, and violence that has rocked the earth. What kind of disasters could they be?

A list of maybes:

- Global earthquakes?
- Volcanic eruptions spewing vast quantities of dust particles in the upper atmosphere causing darkness
- Tectonic plates instabilities
- Asteroids or meteorites
- We don't really know, but it's going to be bad

Up to this point, who have the tribulation judgements mainly affected? The poor. Of course, the poor and rich alike that were not taken up in the rapture were unsaved. As said before, you are either on his side fully or not.

What about this seal? Who all does it affect? Now nobody is exempt from the wrath of God. People from the greatest to the lowest will experience these cosmic disturbances

REVELATION 6:15-17

What did all the people do, from the rich to the poor, from kings to slaves? They fled to the mountains to HIDE.

What were they all afraid of? They were begging the mountain and rocks to fall on them.

What were they so fearful of they would rather die than experience it? They didn't say “Hide us from the earthquakes” or “Hide us from the volcanoes” or “Hide us from the meteorites”. Those things were not what they were afraid of. They said, *“Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”* This has nothing to do with unbelief. They mentioned both “the one who sat on the throne” (God) and the “wrath of the Lamb” (Jesus)

There is a good possibility that could have actually saw Jesus sitting on the throne when the sky was ripped in two. This is just a personal observation

Let's say you were there. What would you do?

LESSON:

When the kings of the earth saw the Lamb of God, they could have said “Save us Lord, we repent, we confess our sins, we accept your free gift of salvation!” Instead, their hearts were so hardened they started praying to the rocks saying, “Kill us. We would rather be dead than face the presence and the judgement of God.”

What do you think is the greatest dread awaiting for an unrepentant sinner without Christ in their life? Is it death? Or is it the terrifying presence of a holy God?

THE COMING STORM

As horrible as the tribulation is so far, this is only a preview of what is to come. Some unbelievers will survive the tribulation and see the second coming of Christ. Everybody will believe then, but it will be too late for them.

Everyone will either face Jesus Christ as their savior, or face Him as their Judge. Everyone will either join Jesus in the new earth he sets up with all his other sons and daughters, or be sentenced to an eternity of separation from God in Hell.

Some say they will just wait until this rapture thing happens, and if it does, then they'll trust in Christ. What do you think about this approach? If someone is unwilling to trust in Christ today when it is relatively easy, if not extremely easy, then what makes you think they will make that decision during tribulation when believers are persecuted and martyred for their faith?

When does all this go down? We don't know. The Bible only tells us it is imminent, happening in the “twinkling of an eye”. We don't know when the moment will come, but we are to live as if it might happen today – because it might.

Why does the bible say “NOW is the day of salvation!” It's the message of Revelation. An unbeliever can accept Jesus' gracious offer of salvation TODAY, or they will face the certain wrath of Jesus SOMEDAY whether they are here during Tribulation or not.

Is their hope?? This is why Christ came for you. This is why God provided the Bible. This is why the church is here. This is why God has put other Christians in your life. God has laid the promise out there to all who put their trust in Christ.

“God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” Thessalonians 5:9