

Jesus Christ's death, burial, resurrection and ascension to heaven opened our "door" to the throne of God. Jesus Christ ascended to the "right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven." Hebrews 8:1. John was told that he was about to see "what must take place after this." Revelation 4:1. He then beheld an awesome scene during which Jesus Christ was found to be worthy to open the seven-sealed scroll. Revelation 6 follows on from chapters 4 and 5. Jesus Christ, the *AVENGER* and *REDEEMER*, opens heaven's books of salvation and judgement. That which is revealed with the opening of the seven seals started with the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. It culminates in the return of Jesus Christ.

OPENING OF THE FIRST FOUR SEALS



Q1 **As Jesus Christ opened the first four seals, one of the four living creatures called John to "come." John saw four horses. What colours were they?**

- A Revelation 6:2
1. Revelation 6:4
 2. Revelation 6:5
 3. Revelation 6:8
 - 4.

The HORSES: The immediate context reveals that the seven seals concern the proclamation of the gospel and reaction to it. These horses represent the spiritual condition and conflicts of the Christian Church as it preaches heaven's message of salvation and judgement. A similar

imagery of coloured horses is used and explained elsewhere in Scripture. In Zechariah 1 coloured horses and their riders represent "the ones the *LORD* has sent to go throughout the earth." (Read Zechariah 1:8-10.) In Zechariah 6 we see horses identical to the ones depicted in Revelation 6. (Read Zechariah 6:1-8.) In both visions of Zechariah it is clear that the horses and their riders symbolise the agencies that God uses to accomplish His purpose in the world. These agencies, in the main, are God's faithful people who represent Him, and whom He has commissioned to "go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." Mark 16:15. (Read Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:21.) The first four seals, therefore, in a progression of symbols and colour, portray the varied reactions to heaven's *MESSAGE* and the diverse experiences of the *MESSENGERS*.■

FOUR COLOURED HORSES

I The FIRST SEAL – the *WHITE HORSE*

In the Bible white is a symbol of purity and holiness. (Psalm 45:1-7; 51:7; Isaiah 1:18.) In Revelation white is associated with Jesus (Revelation 1:14) and His faithful people (Revelation 2:17; 3:5,18; 6:11; 7:9,13,14.) Revelation 19 contains similar imagery in the vision portraying the coming of the King of these heavenly representatives. In verses 11-16 we read of Jesus coming on a "white horse" with "the armies of heaven . . . following him, riding

on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean." All that is white and clean in Revelation belongs to Christ and never to antichrist. Wicked powers are never referred to as white.



Q2 **What is the rider of the white horse intent on doing?**
Revelation 6:1,2

A

In Revelation 5 we read of the Lion who has triumphed and the Lamb who is worthy because He was slain. Now we read of the white horse whose rider is a *CONQUEROR*. The word "conqueror" could be translated as overcomer as it is in the promises to the seven churches. Jesus Christ is the Overcomer. (Revelation 3:21; 17:14; John 16:33.) Through the power of the Holy Spirit, that He provides as Saviour and High Priest, believers in Him will conquer and overcome.

The CONQUEROR CARRIES A BOW. In Habakkuk 3:8,9 and 13 the Lord is pictured as riding on horses uncovering His bow to deliver His people and crush wickedness. Then, every day, believers in Jesus Christ are involved in spiritual warfare against the forces of evil. Paul urged believers to "be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." Ephesians 6:10,11. of Psalm 45:4-6.

The CONQUEROR WEARS A CROWN. The crown is a symbol of victory and rulership. Jesus Christ has overcome Satan and is King. (Revelation 5:5; 14:14, 19:11-16.) He rewards His faithful people with "the crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:8; compare Revelation 2:10) and the crown of rulership. (Revelation 1:5; 3:21; 20:4.)

Jesus Christ came forth to overcome sin and Satan. He lived a perfect life and then died for us. He is the Overcomer and King. Through His faithful people this message of salvation is enthusiastically and aggressively shared so as to release people from Satan's snare and rule. This was the experience of the Christian church of the first century and also will be that of His people through to the end of time. Through Christ we are more than conquerors. (Romans 8:37-39.)

2 The SECOND SEAL – the RED HORSE

When considering the appearance of the One on the throne (Revelation 4:3) we noted that the colour red is symbolic of God's justice and judgements upon sin. Sin brings bloodshed and death. (See Isaiah 63:1-6.) Red is also symbolic of the sin that demands such terrible judgements. (Isaiah 1:18.) In Revelation, red is also the symbol of Satan the "enormous red dragon" who is the father of sin (Revelation 12:3,9 NIV), and also the world of sin called Babylon (Revelation 17:4,5).



Q3 **What weapon was given to the rider on the red horse?** Revelation 6:3,4

A

This "double-edged sword" is the Word of God. (Hebrews 4:12.) In Revelation 1:16 and 2:12 Jesus is pictured as the One who has the "sharp, double-edged sword." This sword is used as a weapon of judgement upon evil. (Revelation 2:16.) This sword of God's truth is also given to His representatives on earth who battle with the forces of evil. The sword is "makaira" or the

sacrificial sword. In the fifth seal those who were slain because of the Word are seen under the altar of sacrifice.

Preaching of the gospel of salvation from the Word of God always brings a twofold response: (1) It brings people to Jesus as it cuts into hearts and minds, and, (2) it causes a reaction from those who don't want sin cut from their lives. Jesus Christ was despised and cruelly treated. His faithful people, who preach the Word of God, are also often fiercely opposed by those who hold onto sin and reject the Word of God. They are judged by the sword - the Word of God. The witness of God's people, and the rejection of them by those who hold to sin, causes conflict. Peace is taken away as the gospel confronts rebellion and sin. (Also see Matthew 10:34; Luke 12:49-53.) Whenever the Christian church has faithfully presented the gospel it has been opposed with persecution and false teachings. This was the experience of the Christian church during the second and third centuries. It was a time of martyrdom and heroism. It was also a time of developing apostasy. Tragically, as false teachings came into the church, the church persecuted those who appealed to the Word of God as truth. The same reaction to the gospel prevails today. ■

3 The THIRD SEAL – the BLACK HORSE

The black horse stands in stark contrast with the white horse. It symbolises spiritual darkness (Jude 13) and is associated with the final warnings that God gives before His judgement with destruction and death. (Read Exodus 10:21-29; 12:29,30; Lamentations 4:8-11; Revelation 8:12 and 16:10.)



Q4 **What does the rider of the black horse hold in his hand?** Revelation 6:5

A

The rider of the black horse neither conquers nor kills. He does not hold a weapon. He holds a pair of scales which represents true measure, justice and judgement. Their use is to determine the worth people place upon the gift of salvation and the development of a Christlike character. (See Job 6:2; 31:6 and Daniel 5:27.)

Q5 **What is being weighed in the scales?** Revelation 6:6

A

Wheat and barley represent the living Word of God, Jesus Christ, and the written Word of God. (See John 6:25-59.) Wheat is also a symbol of believers in Jesus Christ. (See Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43.) Oil is associated with the sanctuary (Exodus 35:28) and with preparedness for Christ's return (Matthew 25:3-8.) The picture is obviously one of crisis and famine, for a day's wages could usually purchase about twelve times as much wheat and barley as offered here. This is a famine for the Word of God, not a famine for literal food. (Compare Amos 8:11.) The means of salvation - the oil (the Holy Spirit - Zechariah 4:2-6) and the wine (the sacrifice of Jesus - Matthew 26:27-29) - are available. They cannot be destroyed. The scales weigh the value which people place upon the Word of God and the gospel. Judgement is to fall upon those who reject the gospel and upon those who distort and restrict its preaching. Tragically, **the church of the fourth and fifth centuries** opposed and persecuted those who preached the Word of God and this continues on through to the end.

4 The FOURTH SEAL – the PALE HORSE

With the opening of the first seal we see the gospel going forward with power. The second seal reveals sin, persecution and bloodshed by those who rejected the gospel. The third seal portrays the spiritual famine that is produced by the suppression of the gospel and the warning of coming judgement and death. Now, with the opening of the fourth seal, we view a pale horse. This horse is the colour of a corpse. Here is revealed the result of sin and the rejection of the salvation of Jesus Christ.



Q6 **What is the name of the rider of the pale horse?** Revelation 6:7,8

A

Q7 **What was following behind the rider of the pale horse?** Revelation 6:8

A

Death is the penalty for sin. Hades is a Greek word that is synonymous with the grave.

Q8 **What were they given power to do?** Revelation 6:8

A

The same destructive agencies revealed here in Revelation are spoken of as God's "four dreadful judgements" against rebellious people. (See Ezekiel 14:21.) Because people refuse to accept the Word of God and His salvation, they remain under the control of evil and bring upon themselves God's judgement. Salvation is sure for believers. Damnation is sure for those who reject the gospel. Sadly, **the church of the Dark Ages** rejected the gospel and became a minister of death instead of a minister of eternal life.■

OPENING OF THE FIFTH SEAL



Q9 **Complete apostasy results in tremendous persecution for God's faithful people. When the fifth seal was opened what did John see under the altar?** Revelation 6:9

A

The imagery comes from the sanctuary (Leviticus 4:7; 17:11) to remind us that salvation has come through the sacrifice of Christ. These people will have life because of Him.

Q10 **These martyrs cry out to God. What do they want to know?** Revelation 6:10

A

These people have been slain because they have been faithful to the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Compare Revelation 12:11.) They are "under the altar," or the earth, which is where they have been sacrificed by angry and wicked people. To suggest they are literally in heaven is to ignore the context and the reason for their cry. (Compare the cries of other faithful people in Genesis 4:10; Daniel 8:12-14 and Luke 18:7,8.)

Q11 **What was God's response to their plea for judgement?** Revelation 6:11

A They were given

They were told

They cry out to Jesus their "kinsman" Redeemer and Judge. They wish to see the end of evil. The fifth seal reveals the experience of God's true people as they witness and wait both in life and death. This was the experience of the **Reformation church** and will be of all those who faithfully proclaim the truth as it is in Jesus.■

OPENING OF THE SIXTH SEAL



Q12 **What six events associated with the judgements upon the wicked are pictured with the opening of the sixth seal?** Revelation 6:12-14

A 1. Earth

2. Sun

3. Moon

4. Stars

5. Sky

6. Mountains & islands

These events are associated with the **return of Jesus Christ**. The awesome power of God is displayed as He judges the wicked who have refused to hear and obey. (Read Matthew 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28; Hebrews 12:25-29 and 2 Peter 3:10.)



Q13 **How will the wicked respond to these events?** Revelation 6:15,16

A

Q14 **What urgent question will they raise?** Revelation 6:17

A

This question is so important that the sequence of the seven seals is interrupted by chapter 7 which gives the answer. God's sealed (Revelation 7:3) and faithful people (Revelation 7:14) will stand.

OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL



Q15 **What is experienced in heaven when the seventh seal is opened?** Revelation 8:1

A

After the terrified cries of the wicked (Revelation 6:15-17) and the victorious praise of the saved and the angels of heaven (Revelation 7:10-12), there is silence. (Compare Habakkuk 2:20.) Heaven is silent as our great High Priest finishes His work of judgement. The martyrs have had their question answered. Those who have rejected the Word of God and the gospel have been silenced.■

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response...

The scenes portrayed with the opening of the seals progress from the proclamation of the Gospel to the persecution that comes from the reaction of the carnal mind to the revelation of Christ and His righteousness. This persecution results in spiritual famine that leads to darkness and death. The anguish of God's people in the face of oppressive opposition leads them to ask God for intervention. Those who have died for the gospel are symbolically portrayed seeking God's response to such violent rejection of the message and its messengers.

The seven seals give us a view of the details that Christ alluded to in Matthew 24:9-14. This vision is expressive of the experience of God's people in all ages and represents the progression of their witness through all its stages.



When Jesus comes there will be two groups of people - the people of God and those who reject the gospel and Bible teachings. Is there someone that you have a real concern for? How do you think you could encourage this person to live for Jesus and His Word?

