

Blessed is he who reads
and those who hear the
words of this prophecy,
and keep those things
which are written in it; for
the time is near.
Rev. 1:3

Verse by Verse Through the Book of Revelation

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Revelation Chapter 6

1. **And I saw** The vision continues with the same setting presented in chapter 4 and 5, but a new phase of action now begins. The seals of the book are being opened.

When the Lamb Jesus

Opened one of the seals, In symbolic form the history of the great controversy was presented before John until it reaches its great climax in the vindication of God's character at the time of the final judgment. (Chpt. 20:11-15) The fact that Christ "prevailed to open the book" (5:5) means that He is conqueror in the controversy and Lord of history. **The fact that the seals are opened sequentially and the results described before the next is taken up indicates that they portray historical progression.**



And I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. John is being told to come and see what the horses are doing or are going to do.

2. **And I saw, and behold a white horse:** This represents the church in the apostolic age (A.D. 31-100) when its purity of faith (suggested by the color white) in its zeal led it forth to make the greatest spiritual conquests in Christian history.

And he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him; and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. The bow in the rider's hand would

symbolize conquest, and the crown symbolizes victory. So swiftly was the gospel carried that when writing to the Colossians about the year A.D. 62 Paul declared that the good news had been “preached to every creature which is under heaven.” Col. 1:23. [The Christian population of the Roman Empire numbered 5 million at this time.](#)

3. **And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.** Note that in turn, each of the living creatures announces one of the four horsemen.
4. **And there went out another horse that was red:** The symbolism of the second horseman well portrays conditions under which the church found itself from about A.D. 100-313. (Corresponds to the Church of Smyrna). The violent persecutions it suffered at the hands of the Roman Caesars are well characterized by a horseman who carries a great sword and has power to take peace from the earth. [If white represents purity of faith \(6:2\) then red may be regarded as a blood and the slaughter of the saints.](#)

And power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword: Greek: machaira: a large knife or short sword used for fighting. This same word is used in Matt. 10:34 and in John 18:10.

5. **And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse;** If the white horse implied victory, or its color purity (see v. 2) so the black horse may be thought of as indicating defeat of faith or corruption of faith. Black also is the symbol of evil, error, moral and spiritual darkness. An enormous train of superstition gradually replaced true religion and genuine purity.

And he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. Greek zugos “a yoke” here used for the crossbar of a balance. This symbol may be thought of as characterizing the spiritual condition within the church after the legalization of Christianity in the 4th century, when church and state were united. There was a great desire at this time to blend pagan rites with Christianity. This is when church officials began to move toward the gaudy and ostentatious altars and priestly robes. And now an even more dreaded result follows—spiritual famine.

6. **And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.** The scales and the weighing denoted religious and civil power uniting in the person who would claim both church and state power: Bishop of Rome.

A measure was approximately equivalent to a quart. This amount of grain represented a day's ration of food for a working man. **A spiritual famine marked the church in this period.**

A penny Greek: denarios, a coin worth some 11 cents in terms of modern money. The Roman penny represented a day's wages for an ordinary laborer . (see Matt. 20:2).

Barley was a common food of the poor, and was used as feed for animals (see John 6:9). Wheat and barley were used to make bread. **During this period a cheaper grade of spiritual food was being fed to the people.**

Hurt not the oil and the wine: The voice that announces the high cost of wheat and barley also commands that oil and wine are not to be destroyed. The oil and wine represent faith and love, which were to be preserved in the face of persecution, spiritual famine and apostasy — and anything else that the devil might throw against the church of God.

7. **And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.**
8. **And I looked, and behold a pale horse:** The color of fear and death. With the pale horse the times of distress reach a fearful climax.

And his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. Death and hell (Greek hades: the abode of the dead) are here personified and represented as a rider on the horse and the other as following along.

And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, Probably signifying a wide area of the earth rather than an exact proportion.

To kill with sword, When applied to Christian history, the fourth horseman seems to portray a situation especially characteristic of the period from about 538 to 1517, the beginning of the Reformation. Millions were martyred for their faith.

And with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. It doesn't make much sense to say "kill with death" but the word translated "death" is Greek thanatos and means "Pestilence."

9. **And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar** The altar presented in this vision was probably reminiscent of the bronze altar of the Hebrew sanctuary, and the martyrs may be thought of as sacrifices presented to God. As the blood of the victims was poured out at the base of that altar (Lev. 4:7) and the life of the flesh is in the blood (Lev. 17:11) so the souls of those who have given themselves in martyrdom may be thought of as being beneath the altar.

The souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: Remember this is all symbolic. It appears that the symbolization of the fifth seal was presented to encourage those who faced martyrdom and death, with the assurance that despite the seeming triumph of the enemy, vindication would ultimately come.

Any attempt to interpret these “souls” as disembodied spirits of departed martyrs does violence to the rules of interpretation of symbolic prophecies. John was not given a view of heaven as it actually appears. There are no white, red, black or pale horses there with warlike riders. Jesus does not appear there in the form of a lamb with a bleeding knife wound. The whole scene was a symbolic representation of history designed to show the saints just what would occur on earth—so that none of us would have to guess the future.

10. **And they cried with a loud voice,** That is, in pictorial representation the souls are heard speaking.

Saying, How long, O Lord, The word used here for Lord means “master” as in Master and Slave. By giving their lives the martyrs have shown themselves true “slaves of God.” (Titus 1:1) and therefore He is their Master.

Holy and true, See Chapter 3:7 where these words are applied to Christ.

Dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? The martyrs do not seek vengeance for themselves; they seek, instead, the vindication of God’s name. See Rom. 12:19 and Rev. 5:13.

11. **And white robes were given unto every one of them;** Robe here is translated from the Greek word “stole” which means “a robe.” The stole was a long robe worn as a mark of distinction (see Mark 12:38). The robes symbolize that, although their deaths aren’t yet avenged by God, He still recognizes them as conquerors! In John’s day this assurance was particularly comforting to Christians who had seen their fellow believers destroyed in the persecutions of Nero (in A.D. 64) and who now faced persecution by Domitian.

And it was said unto them, that they should rest The command is given to those who in prophetic vision were agitated over the seeming long delay.

Yet for a little season, The time was not to be indefinitely delayed. Sin must be allowed to demonstrate its ugly character so fully that never again will there be a question as to God's righteousness and justice.

Until their fellow servants Greek: sundouloi meaning fellow slaves

Also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. That is, the number should be completed. This does not mean that Providence has decreed that a specific number should be martyred. It was necessary that a certain time elapse so that the true nature of Satan's program might be fully demonstrated.

12. **And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake;** The events of the sixth seal reveal the disjuncting of the physical universe. The prophet Joel had already used the figure of an earthquake to describe the upheaval of nature in the day of the Lord (Joel 2:10; Isa. 13:9-11; Amos 8:9)

This earthquake has been identified as the great Lisbon quake on Nov. 1, 1755. It was one of the most extensive and severe disturbances ever recorded. This prophecy also has a future application. Just before Jesus comes there will be severe disturbances in nature.

And the sun became black as sackcloth of hair The darkening of the sun is frequently mentioned in the OT prophecy in connection with the catastrophes that precede the day of the Lord. See Isa. 13:10. Jesus took note of this particular phenomenon in His prophecy of the end of the world, and said it would be one of the signs by which we would know His coming was near. Matt. 24: 29,33. Mark 13:24.

An unexplainable dark day occurred in New England on May 19, 1780. An unusual darkness happened around ten o'clock in the morning and lasted several hours. It occurred in an area where a remarkable revival of interest in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation was about to take place and was recognized by students of these prophecies as fulfilling the present passage of scripture. It is quite possible that there will be a more remarkable, world-wide fulfilling of this prophecy just prior to Jesus' coming.

And the moon became as blood. The night following the dark day, the moon was "blood red." Again, there could be a more remarkable world-wide fulfilling of this prophecy just prior to Jesus' coming.

13. **And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.** On November 13, 1833 there occurred a huge meteor shower that rained down for hours over all the united states. Many Bible scholars believe that these events fulfill the prophecy of the 6th seal.

14. **And the heaven departed like a scroll when it is rolled together**
 The picture here is of the sky being rolled up like a scroll of parchment.
 In ancient cosmology the sky was considered to be a solid vault above the earth. The prophet now sees the sky rolled back, that the earth may stand unshielded before God. Isaiah 34:4 presents the same picture. This may describe what Jesus meant when he said in Matt. 24:29 “The powers of the heavens shall be shaken.”

This event is yet future and is closely connected with the actual appearance of the Son of man in the heavens because following this there is silence in heaven...

And every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

In Chapter 16:20 these fearful convulsions are presented as events taking place under the seventh plague.

15. **And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man,** This list runs the gamut of social and political life as it existed in the Roman world in John’s day. Though the actual coming of Christ is not mentioned here, the context makes it clear that Christ is about to appear.

Hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

They were trying to escape the wrath of God.

16. **And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne,** It would seem that death is better than facing God. These people are not happy to see their Heavenly Father.

And from the wrath of the Lamb. Greek orge: See Romans 1:18 that says that the wrath of God will be revealed from heaven against all ungodliness.

17. **For the great day of His wrath is come;** Thousands of people believe that God is too loving and kind to ever exhibit wrath toward man. This is a false concept that can lull people into believing that sin isn’t so bad—and that tiny sins are not as terrible as big sins and that some sins are even cute and laughable. All sin results in death.

And who shall be able to stand? With this searching question the present scene comes to a close.

Each of the six seals that have been opened shows a different phase of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, and each helps to demonstrate before the on-looking universe the righteousness of God. Rev. 5:13.

Now...there is a pause in the opening of the seals, for a question must be answered. Thus far in the portrayal of the terrible events that precede the second advent, no indication has been given that anyone survives them. That's the reason for the dramatic question, "Who shall be able to stand?"

The next chapter, Chapter 7 breaks the sequence of the seals in order to present an answer:

**The question:
Who shall be able to
stand?
Revelation 6:17**

Chapter 7 is parenthetical. It fits into the picture as describing events that take place between verses 13 and 14 of Chapter 6 just before our Lord returns in glory. When those who have rejected salvation see the events taking place they cry in anguish, "Who will be able to stand?" But, some will stand. These will be the righteous who have prepared themselves to meet the Lord.

In confidence they look up into the radiant heavens filled with the angelic host and in praise exclaim: "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us." Isaiah 25:9. This is the climax of the ages. And those who live to witness our Savior's glorious appearing will need a special preparation of heart and lives.