

## THE OPENING OF THE SIX SEALS

### Chapter 6

The Lord Jesus received from His Father sitting on the Heavenly Throne the scroll fastened with seven seals which no one could open, except Him (Rev. 5:7). At the beginning of chapter six, as John watch the proceedings continue in Heaven, he saw the Lamb, - the Son of God, - open the first of the seals which marked the commencement of Divine judgment. *The breaking of the seals is preliminary to the actual opening of the book and the events which would follow.* It indicates the influences which will operate throughout history culminating in Christ's second coming and God's judicial purposes.

On breaking the first of the seven seals, a noise, - or voice, - of thunder bellowed out of one of the four living ones surrounding the throne. He beckoned to John, Come and see (Rev. 6:1). ... Those words were probably addressed as a command, - Come [*Go! CJB*], - to the first of the horsemen who were preparing to descend upon the earth.

The Lamb breaks the first seal, <sup>2</sup> And I saw, and behold a white horse: 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 white horse is identified with the victor, triumphant, majestic, powerful, as in **Rev. 19:11** And I saw heaven opened, and behold *a white horse*; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. ... <sup>14</sup> And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon *white horses*, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. ... That is obviously a description of the Lord Jesus nearing His Second Coming. ... However, the rider on the white horse in chapter six is not Christ since He is standing with the scroll in His hand in chapter six. Besides, the rider has a 'bow', whereas the Lord Jesus will have a sword, and will wear *many* crowns, - not just one.

Neither is this first rider on the white horse the Antichrist because, - as we shall see, - the other three horse riders represent impersonal forces (war, famine, and death), and not an individual.

There are two possibilities. Firstly, it might be alluding to Jesus' prophecy, **Mt. 24:14** this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come ... **Mk. 13:10** And the gospel must first be published among all nations. ... The rider on the white horse could well be a prophecy relating to the spread of the Gospel in the closing period of the age, directly prior to Christ's return. The Gospel will spread as never before, to nations for the first time, he went forth conquering, and to conquer. The phrase does not

necessarily mean complete and utter conquest, but it does indicate the Gospel will successfully make its impact in many parts of the world.

Another possibility is the rider on the white horse is introducing a false peace. The white horse is attractive, and so will be the message which he relays, and it will entice the gullible. What is being presented captivates the admirers, regardless of standards and morals. ... And this rider has a bow, without arrows which is a symbol of peace. He also wears a crown which was given unto him. We are not told who gave it to him, or where it came from, but we are told as a consequence, he made a real impact, he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

Whichever view you adopt (mine would be the former), this rider on the white horse is a *movement*, rather than a person. It is either the spread of the true Gospel going forth conquering, and to conquer, or it is a deviously subtle process whereby the scene is being set for an increasingly wicked and godless age.

The second seal is opened and the second living one, - like the first, - issues the same summons, <sup>3</sup> Come and see. A red horse gallops onto the scene <sup>4</sup> 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. ... Peace and honour were shattered! From tranquility to 'rivers of blood'. The rider on the red horse brings unprecedented devastation across the world through conflicts and wars.

When the Lamb broke the third seal, the third living one again beckoned the now familiar Come and see (v.3). Once again, John's attention was focused on what would happen next, <sup>5</sup> And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. <sup>6</sup> 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 black horse speaks of famine (*Lam. 5:10* Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine) and famine is the consequence of war on a worldwide stage. God has often used famine as a means of judgment, but this will be the most devastating in all of human history. ... The pair of scales in the rider's hand symbolises the severe rationing which results from the famine. ... And the voice John heard in the midst of the four living creatures, - since they were surrounding the throne, - was the voice of God in the centre and it stressed how this famine was direct judgment from Him.

The fourth seal was broken, and the fourth living creature summoned the fourth horse and its rider, <sup>7</sup> And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. <sup>8</sup> And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them

over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. ... This pale horse portrays the aspect of death on a massive scale, resulting from the famines and the wars. Death was the horse's rider, and the dead were his 'soldiers', and they were given the authority with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth to *destroy* a quarter of the world's population. ... *Billions* die due to this fourth seal!

In the first four seals, the 'forces' were war, famine, and death. Jesus said in His Olivet discourse, <sup>Mt. 24:6</sup> ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things *must* come to pass, but the end is not yet. <sup>7</sup> For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. <sup>8</sup> All these are the *beginning* of sorrows. Through His disciples Jesus prepares His people in the future who will be living during such perilous times. He also prophesied, <sup>9</sup> Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. ... The Church, - true believers, - will face persecution on a frightening scale, <sup>13</sup> But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. <sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. ... The faithful will remain faithful and win, but not before they face great oppression and opposition.

Within that context, the 'force' relating to the fifth seal is the prayers of God's saints, <sup>9</sup> And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God [*the Gospel*], and for the testimony [*their faithful witness*] which they held: <sup>10</sup> And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? <sup>11</sup> And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. ... Underneath the altar, seeking refuge from their persecutors, are God's people who have been witnessing by their 'testimony'. Hated by the world, many have been martyred. ... The altar is in the temple, at the nearest approach to God ... and that is where His people are seeking solace. ... As the Lamb had been slain on the 'altar' of Calvary, His servants were being slain on the world's 'altar' and their blood had fallen unto the ground, as it were (v.10).

From these souls sheltered under the altar, a loud and pleading cry is raised, <sup>10</sup> How long, O Lord [*Ἰδεσπότῆς, master!*], holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge [*vindicate*] our blood on them that dwell on the earth? ... The Lord is their only hope! In the meantime, He provides them with the 'white robes' to keep clean and pure because it is His will for them to continue witnessing and presenting the Gospel until He delivers them out and up into His holy presence.

Following the opening of the first four seals, the four living creatures deliver God's judgments. The sixth seal is opened by the Lord, as was the fifth seal (v.10) ... <sup>12</sup> And I beheld when he [*referring back to the Lord in v.10*] had opened the sixth seal ... The language John uses to describe what he saw is similar to the Old Testament prophecies. ... **Rev. 6:12** and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair; and the moon became as blood; <sup>13</sup> 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. ... **Joel 2:31** The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come ... <sup>3:15</sup> The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. ... **Haggai 2:6** For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land ... **Is. 13:10** For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. ... <sup>34:4</sup> And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. [*Also, Jer 4:23-28*]. ... Jesus also prophesied using these terms, **Mt. 24:29** Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

God has consistently demonstrated throughout the history of the world how He is the Master of His creation, and He will more forcibly exhibit that same power among the godless nations who instead of repenting, will panic, **Rev. 6:15** 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, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; <sup>16</sup> And said to the mountains and rocks [*praying to 'Mother Earth', not the Lord*], Fall on us, and hide us from the face of *him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb* ... That is an Old Testament prophecy too, **Is. 2:19** And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. ... And John hears the answer to the concluding question, **Rev. 6:17** For the great day of his wrath [*the day of the Lord*] is come; and *who shall be able to stand?* ... The answer is a definite and unequivocal, outside of Christ, *none!*