

Link to Lonnie Woodruff's *Revelation for Christians Today*, online:

<http://www.abiblecommentary.com/howtounderstandthebookofrevelation.htm>

A Study of Revelation 6

I. Outline.

1. Opening the first seal reveals a rider on a white horse (Revelation 6:1-2).
2. Opening the second seal reveals a rider on a red horse (3-4).
3. Opening the third seal reveals a rider on a black horse (5-6).
4. Opening the fourth seal reveals riders on a pale horse (7-8).
5. Opening the fifth seal reveals the souls of faithful martyrs crying out HOW LONG? (9-11).
6. Opening the sixth seal reveals an earthquake and other catastrophic events, which led to the second question: WHO SHALL BE ABLE TO STAND? (12-14).

III. Summary. [From Lonnie Woodruff, *Revelation for Christians Today*, pp., 97-98].

Before studying the vision of the seven seals, it is important to have an overall understanding of the entire vision. As Christ opens each of the first four seals, one of the four living creatures introduces the vision. Four horses of different colors are revealed and are ridden by four different riders. The horse is a symbol of war. In order for armies to be strong during this period of history, they had to possess many horses. These horses are symbolic of the different types of wars Christians must fight, and their color determines the type of war being described.

In keeping with the use of the number “4” in Revelation, the events of these four seals are physical events which must take place upon this earth during the entire Christian age. The fifth seal shows that God is aware of the physical persecutions and trials that Christians must suffer. It also shows that if Christians remain faithful through these trials, they will have a home in heaven with God. The sixth seal goes to the end of time. It represents an end to all physical things here on earth and describes the total destruction to take place on that last day.

Chapter 7 answers the question asked in verse 17: “Who shall be able to stand?” It assures us that if we remain faithful, when that last day comes, we will be able to stand. We will not have to hide from God, as sinners are pictured as doing in verse 16. Rev. 7:9 says that the redeemed “stand” before the throne of God.

The seventh seal then goes into the time of judgment. All sinners will have their place in total destruction as symbolized by an earthquake, which would be a great shaking of the people of the earth. Therefore, this vision of the seven seals is a picture of the entire Christian age and judgment.

Many commentators have difficulty with Revelation, for they seek to make it a chronological order of events. They fail to see how the time of judgment could be so early in the book. Because of this, they avoid interpreting anything as meaning the time of judgment until they get into the latter part of chapter 19. The reason we are at the judgment scene so soon in the book is that the vision of the seven seals is complete within itself. It covers the entire Christian dispensation, the end of time, and judgment. The next vision in Revelation, the seven trumpets, will follow this same pattern. The obvious question would be: If we have covered all of time and judgment, why would we have another vision covering the same time period? The answer is this: The subjects being discussed are different. The seals deal with physical matters, and the trumpets deal with spiritual matters. This is an important concept to keep in mind while studying Revelation.

III. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: The Period of the Church.

If you are not familiar with the 15 Bible Periods, please click here:

<https://maplehillchurchofchrist.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/15bibleperiods.pdf>

IV. Words/Phrases to Study

- Chapter 6... “The highlight of chapter 5 was the Lamb’s taking the sealed book from the hand of the One on the throne (5:7). John may have thought that he would read what was written in the scroll or someone would read the words to him. Instead of reading or hearing words, he first saw horses galloping into view. The scroll turned out to be an ‘illustrated’ volume whose ‘pictures’ leaped from the page and thundered across John’s vision” [David Roper, *Revelation 1-11*, Truth for Today Commentary, p. 243].
- 6:4... **...GREAT SWORD**—“The Roman short sword was also ‘great’ because it was the triumphant weapon which enabled Roman armies to destroy the ingenious phalanx, the military device perfected and used by Alexander the Great in his conquest of the world. Just as the French crossbow overcame and vanquished the English long bow, the Roman short sword was supreme over every other weapon for an extended period of history” [Coffman].
- 6:12-17... “...the question of whether the passage speaks of temporal or eternal punishment is relatively unimportant. If the passage primarily refers to the destruction of the Roman Empire, it is prefiguring the last great day and is a warning to ANY who would try to stand against God. If it speaks of the last great day, it teaches that ANY who oppose the Lord—including the Roman Empire—will ultimately taste His wrath” [Roper, p. 272].

V. Lessons & Applications.

- No Surprises! (Rev 6:1-8). “... One possible reason for starting the body of Revelation with the ominous vision of the four horsemen was so there would be ‘no surprises’ for first-century Christians regarding ‘the fiery ordeal’ ahead. We STILL need to understand what is involved when we commit our lives to Jesus. Regarding problems, there are ‘no surprises’ for the Christian who reads the Book of Revelation. The first four seals remind us that trouble is inevitable. Greed, war, economic hardship, and death are part of the panorama of life, the dark side of a world tainted by sin. This fact does not mean that Christians should despair. ‘With God on our side ... how can we lose?’ (Rom 8:31)” [Roper, pp., 275-76].
- Death and the Soul (Rev 6:9). “One of the clear matters is the fact that man’s soul never dies (Rev 6:9-11). It is true that the word ‘soul’ sometimes does not mean man’s immortal nature. Indeed, when ‘man became a living soul’ (Gen 2:7), Paul affirmed that Moses in that statement was only speaking of man’s biological nature: his breathing in a physical body (1 Cor 15:44-45). When breath left Adam’s body his corpse was a dead soul (cf., Num 5:2, nephesh, soul, the dead). This restricted meaning of the word ‘soul’ Charles T. Russell attempted to make as the full meaning. In so doing he was ignoring the most important significance of the word. Man’s spiritual soul, his immortal substance, cannot die (Mt 10:28). Russell asserted ‘that man does not possess an immortal soul, that he is a soul.’ True it is that man is a soul (Rom 13:1; Acts 2:41; 1 Pet 3:20), but it is also true that he possesses a soul (Ps 103:1; Gen 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21; Rev 20:4), an immortal one. That God will destroy souls in hell (Mt 10:28) is sometimes mistakenly understood to mean extinction. However, biblically a soul can never be put out of existence. The word translated ‘destroy’ in Mt 10:28 is the same as that translated ‘lost’ in Mt 10:6; Lk 15:32; 19:10, which citations show that ‘lost’ people are not extinct. Russell taught that ‘death means destruction’ in the sense of becoming non-existent. But biblically one can be dead yet not annihilated: Gen 2:17; Mt 8:22; Rom 6:11; 7:4, 6; Gal 2:19; 1 Tim 5:6; Rev 6:9-10” [Hugo McCord, *The Royal Route of Revelation*, pp., 34-35].

- The Problem of Evil (Rev 6:10). “This is clear case in Scripture of the ‘problem of evil’ being posed in a most unusual setting. If there is a loving and powerful God who oversees his people, why does he allow them to be subjected to such awful conditions? The answer to that question is not easy to provide in each specific case. We trust God to act rightly in every case and commit ourselves to him to see us through hard times. When the time is right, he will bring it all to a halt and reward his faithful people. At the same time, he will destroy the wicked and their devices. Until that time comes for each suffering saint or church, it is our responsibility to wait and to trust the Lord. In the drama of the Apocalypse, the ‘How long?’ question of 6:10 is not answered in full until the complete overthrow of 19:2 has come about” [Shelly, p. 50].
- There’s a Great Day Coming (Rev 6:17). In our songbooks (Sacred Songs of the Church), #461 is Will Thompson’s hymn, “There’s a Great Day Coming.” Consider the words of that song. “When the Lord returns, will it be a ‘great day,’ ‘a bright day’ for you, or will it be ‘a sad day’? Are you READY for that day to come? If you are still in your sins, then you are not ready. Sin will take you farther than you want to go. Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay. Sin will cost you more than you want to pay. Sin will harm you beyond what you can imagine. When people try to hide from God’s wrath, the rocks of this world are woefully inadequate. The only protection from the wrath of God is the Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ (see Romans 9:33; 1 Cor 10:4; 1 Pet 2:8). It is ‘Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come’ (1 Thess 1:10)” [Roper, p. 291].

VI. Questions.

True or False

01. _____ The pale horse had two riders.
02. _____ At the opening of the first seal, there was an earthquake.
03. _____ The rider of the white horse had no weapon.
04. _____ This chapter ends in a question.
05. _____ In this chapter, wheat was cheaper than barley.

MATCHING

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| a. fig tree | f. crown |
| b. integrity | g. balances |
| c. oil and wine | h. seven |
| d. a sword | i. word of God |
| e. five | j. mountains |
06. _____ How many groups of men are mentioned after the 6th Seal is opened?
 07. _____ Used to illustrate the stars falling to the earth.
 08. _____ The rider of the white horse had one.
 09. _____ Warning is given not to hurt this.
 10. _____ Certain ones had been slain for this.

WHO SAID IT?

11. _____ “Come and see.”

12. _____ “How long?”
13. _____ “Fall on us”
14. _____ “Three measures of barley for a penny”
15. _____ “Who shall be able to stand?”

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week’s handout

ANSWERS to Revelation 5 Questions... **01**—False (8); **02**—True (13); **03**—False (1); **04**—False (5); **05**—True (9); **06**—a (14); **07**—h (11); **08**—f (7); **09**—e (2); **10**—d (4); **11**—power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, blessing, (12); **12**—loose, seals (2); **13**—worthy (4); **14**—28, (8-9); **15**—Amen (14).

Questions on Chapter 6,

Revelation for Christians Today, by Lonnie Woodruff--page 111-113... Answers supplied by DRL

1. Define a seal.

In Old Testament times, a seal or signet was used as a SYMBOL OF AUTHORITY. A king would place his seal upon a document to signify its authenticity. Esther 3:12 gives an example of a letter being sealed with a king’s ring to show that it definitely came from the king. Another purpose of a seal would be to preserve or secure something. We seal packages and envelopes to secure their contents. 99

2. What is the significance of this book being sealed by God?

If these meanings of a seal are applied to this book sealed by God, it shows: (1) that God has written and preserved the contents of this book, and (2) it is definitely a message from God. Just as a king would place his seal upon a document to make it a law, God has placed His seven divine seals on this book to show that the events contained therein will definitely occur. 99

3. Who introduces each of the first four seals?

As Christ opens each of the first four seals, one of the four living creatures introduces the vision. 97

4. Why is the horse used as a symbol in the first four seals?

The horse is a symbol of war. In order for armies to be strong during this period of history, they had to possess many horses. These horses are symbolic of the different types of wars Christians must fight, and their color determines the type of war being described. 97-98

5. What period of time does this vision cover?

This vision of the SEVEN SEALS is a picture of the entire Christian Age and Judgment. 98

6. Who opens these seals (5:5; 6:1)?

The Lion of the tribe of Judah; the Root of David; the Lamb, thus JESUS opens these seals. 99

7. What does WHITE symbolize?

The color WHITE is always used to represent purity or holiness. 100

8. Compare the first seal with 19:11-16.

The symbolic white horse is also used in 19:11, and in that passage its rider is definitely identified as Christ. In 19:19-21, the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies make war with Christ Who sits upon the white horse. In 19:14, the army of Christ, Christians, are also pictured as sitting upon white horses and following Christ. 100

9. By making the comparison above, who is riding this white horse?

The rider on the white horse is Christ. 100

10. What would a bow symbolize (6:2)?

The bow carried by this rider indicates great strength in battle. 100

11. What would it mean to receive a crown (6:2)?

The crown He wears represents power and authority. 100

12. What type of war would the rider of this white horse be waging?

The battle which Christ and His followers will fight on this earth. It is a war against evil. Cf., Matthew 24:14. Christ is fighting this war against evil through His followers as they spread the gospel throughout the entire world. Christ conquers evil every time a person becomes obedient to the gospel. Christians have a powerful weapon to use in this battle as symbolized by the bow. It is the gospel (Romans 1:16). We also have great authority as represented by the crown. Our authority comes from God through His Word. TODAY, Christ sits upon a white horse leading His followers who also sit upon white horses spreading the gospel throughout the world. 100-101

13. Briefly give the meaning of the FIRST SEAL.

Christ is leading His army (the church) in spiritual battle against evil as He rides on that white horse. As we take the powerful gospel to the lost souls on earth, we are riding our white horses alongside our Lord Jesus. When we convert a lost soul to Christ, it is a great victory for Christ. This war definitely is taking place and will take place because God has sealed it! 101

14. What does RED symbolize?

RED symbolizes bloodshed. Since red is the color of blood, it is symbolic of bloodshed or death. 101

15. What power does the rider of the red horse possess (6:4)?

The rider of the RED horse has the power to take peace from the earth and cause people to kill one another. 101

16. Who would the rider of the RED horse symbolize (6:4)?

We should not identify this rider as any one specific person. He represents any force on this earth which is responsible for wars that cause people to kill each other. Cf., Matthew 24:6-7. 101

17. Briefly give the meaning of the second seal.

Throughout history, men have been at war with one another, and it is no different today. We hear or read of conflicts somewhere in the world almost daily. This is one form of physical persecution through which Christians must remain faithful in order to be acceptable to God. These physical trials will be present as long as the world stands because God has sealed it! 101

18. What does the BLACK horse of the third seal represent (6:5-6).

The color BLACK is representative of mourning or death. Therefore, the events described by this seal will bring severe hardships and possibly even death to those affected by it. 102

19. What would it mean to sell food according to weight at extremely high prices (6:6)?

To weigh food would indicate that it is in short supply. This shows that throughout the Christian Age, there will be times of food shortages upon the earth. During these times, food will have to be measured or, as we might put it, rationed (see Leviticus 26:26). 102

20. According to this seal, what type of hardships will many people of the earth have to suffer (6:6)?

*Food shortages, famines, possibly even starvation. According to William Barclay's figures, the prices mentioned would be equivalent to a working man's wages for an entire day. If you have to pay all of your wages to purchase food, this would indicate **POVERTY OF A SEVERE NATURE!** 102.*

21. What would a PALE color represent (6:8)?

Death would be the symbolic meaning of the PALE color. 103

22. Who rides the PALE horse (6:8)?

*Its rider is identified as **DEATH!** **HADES** is the place of the dead. 103*

23. What power did the rider of the PALE horse possess (6:8)?

The rider of this PALE horse is given power over the fourth part of the earth to kill by the sword, hunger, death, and beasts of the earth. 103

24. What is the symbolic meaning of the FOURTH part of the earth?

The number “1/4” is used to designate a part of something. This is exactly how it is used in this verse. We know the earth is used to symbolize those people who live upon it because it is people who are killed by the sword, not the actual earth. Therefore, this rider on the pale horse, death, had power over the fourth part of the earth.

The problem many people have in interpreting the “fourth part” is that they make it a literal number instead of figurative. This number is no different from most other numbers in Revelation—it is descriptive. It describes the part of man which the rider of this horse controls. In order to understand this, we must first recognize that man, unlike animals, has two parts to his being. He has a physical body and a spiritual soul. We often use this concept in our prayers as we ask for both physical and spiritual blessings. The number FOUR is used to designate the PHYSICAL THINGS of this world. 103-104

25. Did the rider of this horse have the power to destroy the spiritual part of man (cf., Matthew 10:28)?

The part of man this rider of the PALE horse had control over was the PHYSICAL. He can never destroy our spiritual life if we remain faithful throughout these physical persecutions! In Matthew 10:28 Jesus makes it clear that we should NOT fear the one who can destroy our physical bodies. That is not the one to fear! 104

26. Briefly give the meaning of the FOURTH seal.

The purpose of the FOURTH seal is to show that throughout the Gospel Age we will be subject to physical persecutions, maybe even to the point of physical death. However, there is no power that can kill us spiritually. We can kill ourselves spiritually by yielding to Satan’s devices, but there is NO power strong enough to defeat us spiritually if it is our will to succeed (1 Corinthians 10:13).

It is likely that the term BEASTS also has a figurative meaning in this passage. In Daniel 7:17 , the term BEAST is used to symbolize worldwide earthly kingdoms. This is the meaning which must be applied to the beast with seven heads and ten horns in chapters 13 and 17. Since that is the meaning of the BEAST in those passages, it probably should be applied here also. The BEAST would then represent those ungodly civil governments of all ages which torture and kill anyone who is disobedient to their laws, even though they may conflict with God’s laws. Whether this term refers to persecuting governments or actual WILD BEASTS which have been used to kill Christians for the pleasure of great audiences, the lesson remains the same. All through the Gospel Age, Christians will be subjected to many physical persecutions. We must be careful never to deny our faith, even in the face of certain death! 104

VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle. The words may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. -DRL



ANOTHER	BEAST	BEHELD	BEHOLD	BLACK
COME	CONQUER	EARTH	EVERY	FOUR
FOURTH	GIVEN	GREAT	HEARD	HORSE
KILL	LAMB	MEASURE	MOUNTAIN	OPENED
POWER	SEAL	SECOND	SWORD	THERE
THIRD	VOICE	WENT	WHEN	WHITE

