

## THE GREAT TRIBULATION—REVELATION 6:1-21

### 1. Introduction

“According to the structural outline of the book, chapter 6 initiates the beginning of the tribulation period. This period ostensibly still lies in the future, as related to the church age. A series of visions portray the outpourings of the wrath of God upon unrepentant mankind. After man fails both under the Mosaic law of the Old Testament and the “grace and truth” of the New Testament, God must resort to justice that He might vindicate His holiness. This is of central importance if one is to be able to understand the measure of divine wrath. Nowhere else in Scripture does one meet up with such an ascending intensification of judgment. The Flood of Genesis 6-9 is of small proportions compared to Revelation 6-18. The plagues of Egypt, surely designed by and carried through under God, though, in many respects parallel with the last judgments of God, were nonetheless of a lesser extent. In each case where God acts in justice one needs to see the ultimate purpose, viz., a vindication of His holiness. Man’s rebellious heart cannot be left to continue in its devising of evil. Otherwise God Himself would admit defeat and would cease to be the Almighty.”

(taken from *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* by J.D. Smith)

“There is a remarkable similarity between the progress of chapter 6 as a whole and the description given by our Lord of the end of the age in Matthew 24:4-31. In both passages the order is (1) war (Matt. 24:6-7; Rev. 6:3-4), (2) famine (Matt. 24:7; Rev. 6:3-4), (3) death (Matt. 24:7-9; Rev. 6:7-8), (4) martyrdom (Matt. 24:9-10, 16-22); Rev. 6:9-11), (5) the sun darkened, the moon darkened, and the stars falling (Matt. 24:29; Rev. 6:12-14), (6) a time of divine judgment (Matt. 24:32-25:26; Rev. 6:15-17). The general features of Matthew 24 are obviously quite parallel to the events of the book of Revelation beginning in chapter 6”

(taken from *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* by John F. Walvoord)

- Notice three sets of seven: seven seal judgments, seven trumpet judgments, seven bowl judgments.

### 2. The Lamb Opens the Seals—Rev. 6:1

- The Lamb changes His attitude from a docile, yielding spirit to one of activated justice cf. Isa. 9:6-7
- The 7<sup>th</sup> seal introduces the 7 trumpets
- The 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet introduces the 7 bowls
- The Tribulation ends when the 7<sup>th</sup> bowl is poured out
- The Tribulation begins when the Antichrist confirms a 7 year treaty with Israel

<b>THE SEVEN SEALS</b>			
<b>Seal</b>	<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Scripture</b>
First	Rider on White Horse	Release the Antichrist	Rev. 6:1-2
Second	Rider on Red Horse	Removes Peace, Causes War	Rev. 6:3-4
Third	Rider on Black Horse	Economic Collapse and Famine	Rev. 6:5-6
Fourth	Rider on Pale Horse	Death of Unbelievers—¼ of World	Rev. 6:7-8
Fifth	Souls Under the Altar	Persecution & Death of Believers	Rev. 6:9-11
Sixth	Great Earthquake	Cosmic Upheaval (sun, moon, etc.)	Rev. 6:12-14
Seventh	The 7 Trumpet Judgments		Rev. 8:1-2

(taken from *The Book of Revelation* from the Smart Guide of the Bible Series by Daymond R. Duck)

### 3. **The First Seal**—Rev. 6:2

- A white horse
- The rider is the Antichrist—Dan. 9:6
  - conquering to conquer
- Voice of thunder—symbolic of coming storm
- Given a crown—the crown of a victor not a sovereign: a temporary victor

“From what has already been plainly found, the time here is that of the earliest stage of Antichrist’s times. It has been learned from 2 Thess. 2:7-8 that his open revelation succeeds the removal from the earth of the restraining agency of the overcoming saints. And from Dan. 7:8, 20; 8:9; and 11:40-43, it is made plain that Antichrist first conducts in the earth a period of sweeping, victorious warfare. The field of conflict will be the territories of the restored northern (Syrian), southern (Egyptian), and eastern (Mesopotamian) kingdoms of the old Grecian Empire. The figure of a white horse, and of his rider seated erect with drawn bow and with victor’s wreath upon his brow, is the favourite oriental symbol of the military conqueror”

(taken from *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* by John F. Walvoord)

### 4. **The Second Seal**—Rev. 6:3, 4

- Another horse—red
- Broken military warfare breaks out
- Peace is taken from the earth
- The hope of permanent peace by means of the UN and other human efforts is doomed to failure

### 5. **The Third Seal—Famine**—Rev. 6:5,6

- Black horse: the aftermath of war is famine
- A quart (1 meal) of wheat of one day’s wages
- 3 quarts barley—one day’s meals
- “do not harm”—still luxuries

“According to Charles, history saw something of this kind of situation during Domitian’s time. Men had given themselves to the cultivation of vineyards and the making of wine until the emperor ordered half the vineyards in Italy to be cut down and no new ones to be planted so that the cereal grains might be grown. However, the populace prevailed upon their ruler to reverse himself and to impose punishment upon those who had neglected their vineyards. So debauched can man become!”

(taken from *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* by J.D. Smith)

### 6. **The Fourth Seal—Pale Horse**—Rev. 6:7, 8

- Pale, a sickly green colour
- Rider is Death followed by Hades
- Power to kill ¼ of mankind by divine judgments—war, famine, disease, etc.
- God is seeking to arouse the consciences of sinful men
- Some believe this is a picture of the Antichrist as he has gained control of the world

**7. The Fifth Seal—Martyred Saints in Heaven—Rev. 6:9-11**

- The picture shifts to Heaven
- Those martyred for their faith in Christ
- From the Tribulation period
- Their cry shows their persecutors are still living
- White robes given
- Therefore an intermediate body for them
- “rest”—until end of Tribulation period

**8. The Sixth Seal—Day of God’s Wrath—Rev. 6:12-17**

- All the elements of a great catastrophic judgment are here
- Taking this passage literally, God is undertaking a direct intervention into human affairs
- v. 15—it affects all classes
- v. 17—day of His wrath: not just one day, really the whole period of the Tribulation

“The day of wrath is in contrast to the day of grace. Though God in every dispensation deals with believers and saves them by grace, the present age is supremely designed to manifest grace not only as the way of salvation but as the way of life. Today God is not attempting to bring divine judgment to bear upon sin. Though there may be some forms of immediate retribution, for the most part God is not settling accounts now. Neither the righteous are rewarded nor the wicked judged in a final sense today. This day of grace will be followed by the day of the Lord which feature early in its progress the day of wrath.”

(taken from *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* by John F. Walvoord)