Revelation: Chapter 6

First Seal

Rev 6:1 Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!"

- The first five chapters prepare us for the opening of the real revelation that we are about to see. The first of the four creatures is the lion. The thunderous call signifies judgement and sober tidings.

- Come! - give earnest consideration.

Rev 6:2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

- white horse - indicates military triumph. “Derived from the fact that white horses were rode by conquerors on the days of their triumph... the triumphs granted by the Romans to their victorious generals...” (Barnes) The opinions on the person and nature of this rider are numerous but here he will be viewed from the following information that fits, not only the time in which The Revelation was penned but, the context of the rider as it applies to “the things that you have seen” (1:19), which John knew of since this was written after the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD). “The whole description, so far as it is a representation of triumph, is a representation of the triumph of war, not of the gospel of peace...all the consequences in the opening of each of the seals where the horseman appears, are such as are usually connected with war.” (Barnes) The rider of this white horse is therefore not to be mistaken as the Rider of the white horse in 19:11. (Verses 2-8 depict the rise and fall of the Roman Empire.)

- bow - represented an implement of war, thus military power.

Jer 51:56 for a destroyer has come upon her, upon Babylon; her warriors are taken; their bows are broken in pieces, for the LORD is a God of recompense; He will surely repay.

- crown - of victory, not royalty. See Dan 4:17-37 since it was given to him.

Gk.4735-οἱ ραβδοί-τοι τοιχώματος -stef'-an-os From an apparently primary “stepho” (to twine or wreathe)

(Again, this is not the same horse and rider of 19:11-15)

- conquering, and to conquer - Gk. "overcoming and that he might overcome". This had to do with the victorious military conquest of Rome.

Dan 7:21 As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them,

Second Seal

Rev 6:3 When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!"
• The second of the creatures, the ox or calf, bids consideration.

Rev 6:4 And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

• red horse- indicates civil war and carnage. *(This is Daniel 2:43-44.)*

• was permitted- *(17:17)* God controls the events, even through the chaos, civil war and upheaval. *(Job 1:12; 2:6)*

• sword- indicative of warfare. Jesus in Mat 24 spoke of the encroaching *(at the time of this writing- past)* destruction of Jerusalem *(70 AD)*. The mixing of kingdoms *(Dan 2:43)* due to Rome's constant expansion through war and the effect that alien cultures would have on her government, had an effect on the Christians who lived among them. It may well be why Jesus said to “make disciples of all nations” *(Mat 28:19).*

Mat 24:6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. 9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.

• God's people, through all of this, would be affected.

Rev 6:5 When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand.

• With the opening of the third seal, the third creature, who is the one with the face of a man, bids John to peer into the vision. With all that Rome had to govern via the military conquests, the mixtures of cultures began to take effect according to Daniels prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's dream concerning the large statue *(2:41-44)*. Here, it began to take its toll.

• black horse- indicates deep distress caused by military influence *(famine, pestilence, etc.)*

• scales- indicates scarcity, as in rations for things that were scarce during the world wars.

Rev 6:6 And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!"

• A denarius was the wage for a day's work...
Mat 20:2 After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

...thus, a whole day's wages for a measure of wheat shows scarcity.

- oil and wine- elements used for medicinal purposes. They were not luxuries but ordinary products of necessity.

Deu 11:14 He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil.

- Famine here is real but not extreme yet. To the “souls under the altar” (6:9) they were soon to be vindicated by what had befallen Israel (70AD).

This is a seal, not a bowl (16:3), thus the "famine horse" is told to use restraint when commanded to not harm the oil and wine.

Fourth Seal

Rev 6:7 When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!"

- With the opening of the fourth seal, we see the fourth creature, the eagle, that bids consideration.

Rev 6:8 And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

- pale- Gk.5515-χλωρός-chlōros-khlo-ros'
  From the same as G5514: greenish, that is, verdant, dun-colored: - green, pale.

  Although Jesus has “the keys (authority/control) of Death and Hades” (1:18) the rider (Death) takes lives while his follower (Hades) collected them (20:13-14). They were “given” authority and it was limited.

- Hades- Gk.86-αδης-hadēs-hah'-dace
  From G1 (as a negative particle) and G1492; properly unseen, that is, “Hades” or the place (state) of departed souls: - grave, hell.

- fourth- incomplete, by means of:
- sword-war/murder.
- death-pestilence.
- famine-starvation.
- wild beasts-symbolized forces of judgement.
Lev 26:22 And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted.

(Lev 26:46 These are the statutes and rules and laws that the LORD made between Himself and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai.)

Jer 14:12 Though they fast, I will not hear their cry, and though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence."

Jer 15:2 And when they ask you, 'Where shall we go?' you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD: "Those who are for pestilence, to pestilence, and those who are for the sword, to the sword; those who are for famine, to famine, and those who are for captivity, to captivity.' 3 I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers, declares the LORD: the sword to kill, the dogs to tear, and the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy.

- These just show how God deals with those who would not obey His will. They are Old Testament prophesies that the Jews of that day understood. It was especially welcomed by those persecuted for their faith under the Law and the Prophets.

-- Fifth Seal --

Rev 6:9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.

- altar- of burnt sacrifice. The group addressed here is that of the faithful O.T. martyrs (possibly since Abel but definitely during the sacrificial system) known as spiritual Israel. Their span of time under the altar was rewarded once Christ brought in the New Covenant becoming the “great Priest over the house of God” (Heb 10:21).

Isa 66:5 Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at His word: "Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for My name's sake have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but it is they who shall be put to shame. 6 "The sound of an uproar from the city! A sound from the temple! The sound of the LORD, rendering recompense to His enemies! 7 "Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a Son... (12:2)

- under the altar- they were where the ashes fell. The altar had a “grating” (Ex 27:4) through which the ashes of the sacrifice were sifted (Lk 22:31). Here it figuratively represents the place where atonement for their sins, “committed under the first covenant” (Heb 9:15), had been made even though “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin” (Heb 10:4). Thus only “by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” (Heb 10:14). It was a safe haven for these martyrs until “the new and living way [came]... through His flesh” (Heb 10:20).

Lev 4:7 ...and all the rest of the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

blood- life.
Gen 9:4 But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

Lev 17:10 "If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. 11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life. 12 Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, no person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood. 13 "Any one also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among them, who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. 14 For the life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life. Therefore, I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.

The blood of the sacrifice was poured out as Paul related the same imagery concerning his own end.

2Ti 4:6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

These martyrs became such for the reason John was on Patmos. Only theirs was for the word of God and for the witness that they bore, not for “the testimony of Jesus” (1:9) indicating which Testament they were under during their persecution.

Rev 6:10 They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before You will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

those who dwell on the earth- Those responsible for their persecution. Anything that is not considered godly is earthly; whether Jew or not.

These particular martyrs, condemned wrongfully under the Mosaic system, cry for vindication (Heb 12:24 “…that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel”; 11:4 “…though he died, he still speaks”), not vengeance. Without which, the whole cause of redemption stands condemned in an unjust court. The appeal is to the One Who is true to His piety and Who will not allow the oppressors to go un-punished. But for how long?

Rev 6:11 Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

white robe- indicates their ultimate victory over sin through death (Rom 6:7). They received their posthumous redemption here (at Pentecost with the beginning of the thousand-year reign- 20:4) since O.T. animal sacrifices were inadequate as compared to Christ’s sacrifice “in order to sanctify the people through His own blood” (Heb 13:12). Under the N.T., Christians are clothed in such robes through obedience to baptism (Gal 3:27), “since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect” (Heb 11:40).
• rest- The martyred are told to rest from their cry for vindication a little longer, until their fellow O.T. Jews (spiritual Israel) suffered their like fate (which was finalized when the temple was destroyed, thus ending the sacrificial system-Mat 24:14/Rom 10:18), of which was at the hand of Rome (11:7). Since this was written sometime after the fall of Jerusalem, the churches of Asia were told that she fell as a result of her disregard for the Law and Prophets (chapter 11/ Neh 9:26, 30). How often God has used His enemies to accomplish His will!

Sixth Seal

Rev 6:12 When He opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake,
and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood,
Rev 6:13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.

Act 2:20 the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

• earthquake- great upheaval that would level mountains (here concerning Jerusalem).

• sun, moon and stars- authorities and their positions, whether higher powers (sun) or the lesser ones (moon, whose light is from the sun, and stars). This concerns the ruling class of Jews living in Jerusalem at the time of her fall.

Gen 37:9 Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." 10 But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?"

Joe 2:10 The earth quakes before them; the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

Joe 2:28 "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. 29 Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out My Spirit. 30 "And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. 32 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the Name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

Mat 24:29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

• Speaking of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, even those highest up in Jewish authority suffered. When the higher powers lose their control/influence, the lesser ones fall also.
• stars... fell-

Dan 8:9 Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them.

• This concerned Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Jews (stars) of Palestine (Dan. 12:3).

• gale- (Gk.3173 & 417- big wind) workings of God (7:1).

• winter fruit- untimely, without notice for these persecutors and those who supported them through negligence. (Mat 24:29)

Rev 6:14 The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

• sky- the position of these authorities.

• vanished like a scroll- God controls the powers that be.

Exo 9:16 But for this purpose I have raised you (Pharaoh) up, to show you My power, so that My Name may be proclaimed in all the earth.

Dan 4:34 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored Him Who lives forever, for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and He does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"

• mountain and island- “things that are shaken- that is, things that have been made (physical kingdoms) in order that the things that cannot be shaken (spiritual kingdom, i.e., the church) may remain” (Heb 12:27). removed from its place- Not one place of refuge remained for the commonwealth of physical Israel.

Rev 6:15 Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains.

• Hiding themselves in the caves and among the rocks and mountains indicates they were seeking refuge in the O.T. system via its leaders, those in authority (i.e., the priesthood along with the sacrificial system that once set them apart as God’s people). This has always been their usual response to guilt but in most cases their repentance was too late. God knew their hearts and saw here that it wasn’t genuine.
Gen 3:8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of
the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD
God among the trees of the garden.

- All classes would be affected but it was too late (Mat 24:30). They “denied the Holy and
Righteous One” (Act 3:14). To those “under the altar” this was vindication! (Isa 2:10-22)

Rev 6:16 calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him Who
is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,

Luk 23:28 But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but
weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For behold, the days are coming when
they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that
never nursed!' 30 Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the
hills, 'Cover us.' 31 For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen
when it is dry?"

- This is an attempt to escape judgement. The One on the throne is God, the Lamb is
Christ. Turning to the very system they corrupted (Jewish kingdom) showed that they
did not recognize (either by arrogance or ignorance) the reason for their sentence.
Such was the case with Elijah in 1 Kings 19:10, 18 but for “the knees that have not bowed
to Baal”.

Rev 6:17 for the great day of Their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

- Their- combined wrath of God and Christ.

Luk 17:1 And He said to His disciples, "Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to
the one through whom they come! 2 It would be better for him if a millstone were
hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of
these little ones to sin.

- This is the Divine response to the Jews for their lack of adherence to the Law and
Prophets (chapter 11). Divine favor was not theirs.

- great day- the day God answered the prayers of the “souls under the altar” (6:9) via His
judgment on Jerusalem. Salvation was offered (to the Jew and Gentile-Rom 1:16) and
preached by the saints throughout the world...

Mat 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole
world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Rom 10:18 But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone
out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

Col 1:5 ... the word of the truth, the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as indeed in the
whole world it is bearing fruit and growing--as it also does among you, since the
day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,
Col 1:23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel **that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven**, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

...but was rejected by those "of the earth" *(vs. 12).*

1Co 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

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- Jerusalem’s fall *(see chapter 11)* was a day of visitation or "coming" of Christ “on the clouds of Heaven” *(Mat 24:30)* thus a judgement. Christians here were forewarned *(Matt 24:1-22 pertained to Jerusalem and Rev 18:4 pertained to Rome)* not to be seduced by sinful influence so that their suffering would not be eternal. *(See also notes on Hebrews as it pertained to Christians living in Jerusalem pre-70 AD.)*

Who, then, could stand?

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