

KEEP THY HEART

A Bible-Based Devotional

Turn to: **Revelation 6**
“**The Beginning of the End**”

Have you ever wondered what the end of the world will *really* look like? It's a topic with a lot of public interest. It seems as if the entire world, including the unsaved, has this fearful anticipation that the end of the world is coming, even if they are wrong about how it will happen. Today, we will see what the actual "beginning of the end" will look like. It will start with the unrolling of a seven-seal scroll, and as each seal is broken, a dramatic event occurs.

Seal 1: White horse (v1-2). I imagine that when Jesus **opened one of the seals**, it did not yet open the scroll, but slightly more of the first page could be seen. When John **heard as it were the noise of thunder**, perhaps a low rumble mixes with the hoofprints of an approaching horse as it rears up and gallops toward earth. The angelic **beast** (I think the first one, which looked like a lion) tells John to **Come and see**. What a privileged "back-stage" invitation! Maybe John could see the first horse better from this beast's particular vantage point.

(v2) John **saw a white horse**, which is representative of war. Since this horseman **had a bow**, he could attack from far away, and silently; no arrows are mentioned, perhaps meaning that he uses threats without force (at least not yet), maybe with arrows hidden in his back pocket. Antichrist **was given a crown** (likely by Satan, Revelation 13:2). Land will change hands quickly as he goes forth **conquering** (truly taking lands) **and to conquer** (always involved in other campaigns to take yet more land). Cf. Matthew 24:6.

Seal 2: Red horse (v3-4). The **second beast** (which looked like a calf) now tells John to **Come and see**, a phrase associated with John's writings (cf. John 1:39, 46, 11:34).

(v4) The fact that this **red horse "went out"** implies, I think, that the horses aren't displayed as pictures on the scroll, but rather are galloping across the stage of heaven toward the

earth. I picture this shade of red to be a deep, blood-like hue. Interestingly, God is capable of dividing people by **taking peace from the earth** (cf. Judges 9:23, Exodus 7:13), or of uniting people (Daniel 1:9). Here, perhaps people will be "fed up" with the conquests of this ruler and will fight. No amount of negotiations will be able to stave off inevitable and catastrophic war. The fact that **they will kill one another** shows that it is not merely a war of diplomacy; and it also may hint that there is an overall climate of peace and non-aggression before this time. It's just speculation, but this **great sword** could perhaps be a nuclear bomb, or worse.

Seal 3: Black horse (v5-6). The **third beast** had the face of a man; and this **black horse** may not have been galloping full speed toward earth, and was instead perhaps more deliberate, as it would be difficult to ride with a **pair of balances in his hand**. People will struggle to survive; the vast majority will need to painstakingly weigh each expenditure.

(v6) Perhaps John didn't know where this **voice in the midst of the four beasts** came from; it's difficult to locate low sounds. But I believe this voice warns that it will take a day's wage (**a penny**, cf. Matthew 20:2) just to buy enough food for one person (**A measure of wheat**); thus, many families will choose to buy **three measures of barley** for the same price —not very good food (horse food, basically), but enough to hang on. Most people think that the rich (**the oil and the wine**) will not feel any of the effects (**hurt not**) of this depression and famine, as was the case for elites during famines in Communism (or other regimes). Cf. Matthew 24:7

Sometimes, I take for granted our current prosperity. I pray that we will never have to live through this time or another time like it; but if we do, we may better appreciate just how amazing it is to live in a country and in a time where nearly everyone has plenty of food and necessities, along with many other unnecessary fun things. We are certainly blessed right now in history.

Seal 4: Pale horse (v7-8). The **fourth beast** is the one that looks like a flying eagle. **(v8)** I think this **horse** was a sickly **pale**, perhaps slightly greenish. Perhaps **Hell** is riding

on its own horse, close behind **Death**; it's a reminder that as bad as these seals are, hell is much worse. Death claims the body, then hell claims the soul, to be reunited at the judgment (Revelation 20:13).

The plague is terribly widespread; **the fourth part of the earth**, or 25% of the global population, will die. The bubonic plague killed 25% to 60% of the European population by comparison. People will be killed many ways; some **with sword** (war and perhaps murder as supplies dwindle), **with hunger**, meaning that the famine is extreme as this is mentioned second, **and with death**, which I think refers to pestilence (cf. II Kings 4:40), **and with the beasts of the earth**, who may be starving as well and becoming increasingly bold. Disease may spread rampantly through rats or even sophisticated biological warfare.

Seal 5: Martyrdom (v9-11). It is sweet that these martyrs are "**under the altar**"—i.e., covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. The reason many hate them is **for the word of God**; simply reading certain passages of the Bible can uncover hatred from the world. **(v10)** We are often shocked that the **Lord**, Who is **holy and true**, can put up with sin for as **long** as He does without "blowing a fuse" and wiping the entire world out. But one day, He will **judge and avenge**.

(v11) God doesn't answer their question (and He doesn't answer all of ours yet), but simply gives them **white robes** (possibly matching the twenty-four elders) and tells them to **rest**. Living on earth is tiring and weary, especially for these martyrs; won't it be great just to lay down and rest **for a little season**, soaking in the incredible strength and health that will flood into our hearts and souls and emotions as we rapidly recover? I'm sure it will feel a thousand times better than the most refreshing night of sleep or the best-ever nap.

Seal 6: Day of the LORD (v12-17). To me, the **sun becoming black as sackcloth of hair** seems to indicate that possibly, people will still see the shape of the sun, maybe a dark eerie outline. If the **moon** is at its full phase, then basically the entire earth will always have either this sun or moon in its line of sight (if there are no clouds). Imagine the weird red tint at night

as this moon **becomes as blood**; maybe it will look like an infrared lamp. (Cf. Joel 2:31)

(v13) I can't imagine the awesome power of seeing **the stars of heaven falling unto the earth**, perhaps like a meteorite shower; not passively falling, but more as if they are being blown furiously of a **mighty wind**. Can you just imagine standing and watching all this in the sky?

(v14) Then to see **heaven departing as a scroll when it is rolled together**—probably as if springing shut, back into its natural "coiled" form, in a sense—as perhaps the entire skyline appears to be warping as stars almost appear to simply peel off; and the damage and tsunamis that shortly follow due to the earthquake and displacement of **every mountain and island**.

(v15) The only safe place for anyone, small or great, seems to be **in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains**, the only places that don't seem to be crashing down. Yet they say their goal isn't shelter from being buried, but the opposite; **(v16)** it may be difficult for us to imagine now, but they will *want* to be buried by the **mountains and rocks** rather than face Jesus once they see Him in the clouds; He will be so awesome and powerful and holy. The phrase **wrath of the Lamb** may seem contradictory, as lambs aren't typically frightening; but this Lamb that allowed men to kill Him in weakness has risen in power and will return in judgment (II Corinthians 13:4).

(v17) For all the street preachers and Christians who warned people of this day only to be mocked, **the great day of his wrath** is finally, literally here. And not even the most proud sort of person will **be able to stand** in that day; in a sense, they're all admitting defeat before Round 1 has even begun, but their pride will soon return.

The beginning of the end (Matthew 24:8) will be turbulent; but in one sense, it *has* to be to provide real closure to all the atrocities done over thousands of years by billions of people. But those of us who are saved can look forward to incredible, unimaginable restoration! And under the altar of the blood of Jesus Christ, our souls are perfectly and eternally safe.