

The "beginning of birth-pangs" (Matt. 24:8; Mark 13:8) The first half of the Tribulation					
Matt. 24:4-5	Mark 13:6	Luke 21:8	Antichrists	Rev. 6:1-2	First seal
Matt. 24:6-7	Mark 13:7-8	Luke 21:9-10	War	Rev. 6:3-4	Second seal
Matt. 24:7	Mark 13:8	Luke 21:11	Famine	Rev. 6:5-6	Third seal
Matt. 24:9	Mark 13:12	Luke 21:16	Death	Rev. 6:7-8	Fourth seal
Matt. 24:9-13	Mark 13:9-13	Luke 21:12-19	Martyrdom	Rev. 6:9-11	Fifth seal
		Luke 21:11	Earthly & heavenly phenomena	Rev. 6:12-17	Sixth seal
The "abomination of desolation" (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14) The middle of the Tribulation					

The First Seal—Rider on White Horse

1. Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come." 2. I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

Whatever ones interpretation might be of this chapter it is clear that the wrath of God is being unleashed upon the earth. Take note that the braking of the seals are done by the "Lamb" who stands before the throne as slain (5:6). Not until the Lamb gives the order (by the braking of the seals) is the wrath of God unleashed. God's timing is impeccable. The question is often asked by skeptics, "why would God allow such bad things to happen." It is because of His sovereign will. He desires for none to perish, but for all to come to repentance. Now the time of His calling is coming to an end and those who do not heed His call will incur His wrath.

The braking of the first seal signals the beginning of the end. One of the four living creatures shows John a white horse with its rider carrying a bow with a crown and moving forth conquering and he will conquer. Some believe this person to be Jesus coming back to conquer as He is seen in chapter 19:11 coming back on a white horse. Roman generals after a victory in battle would ride a white horse in triumph with their captives following.¹ Though white horses were used as a sign of victory after a battle this person cannot be Jesus because of the timeline.

¹ Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 947). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Remember, Jesus' return is post Tribulation and this is at the beginning of the Tribulation period; the riders who are mentioned here are all related as they each bring judgment to the earth.

The person represented here is a future world leader who will replace all ruling authority in the world becoming the leader of the entire world ("and a crown was given him"). This future leader is known as Antichrist though the book of Revelation does not use that title (Dan. 9:26). He will set himself up as ruler of the world by subduing the nations without violence. He will usher in a time of peace as never seen before on the earth. There will finally be a peace treaty with Israel and wars in the Middle East will be at a standstill. After he is set in authority over the earth his true nature will be revealed (1 Thes. 5:3). This will be a clear indication that the "day of the Lord" is upon us and the end of the age is near.

The Second Seal—War

3. When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come."

4. And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that *men* would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

The breaking of the second seal introduces the rider on the red horse. To this rider was granted to take peace from the earth (cf. the red dragon, 12:3). This rider represents great political power; the first rider conquered through peace. Though he was armed with a bow there were no arrows. He possessed the ability to use military tactics but choose not to at that time. The rider on the red horse however, removed peace from the earth. It appears as though this rider had a very persuasive way of getting things done. His influence over the men of the earth was great in that by his direction they slayed one another; this was probably because of his great military tactics as seen by his great sword. The sword represents his political power over the world. Similar horses were seen in Zechariah 6:2 and most like represents a similar type of judgement.

2. With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, 3. With the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot strong dappled horses.

In Zechariah and Revelation we see what appears to be a consistency in with the use of horses representing divine judgment on the entire earth. Each color seems to have great significant with red most likely symbolizing bloodshed, black symbolizing death and famine, white symbolizing triumph and victory, and dappled symbolizing pestilence and plagues.

The Third Seal—Famine

5. When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6. And I heard *something* like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine."

The first two riders demonstrated their military capabilities with bring peace then war. The third rider sits on a black horse with a pair of scales in his hand. This looks a lot like the scale Lady Justice has in her hand and the horse symbolizes famine which comes as the result of the second rider war. After war there is always a down turn in the market and this rider displays his power over commerce as he controls commodity prices over the earth as it was just ravaged by war. It is going to be a trouble time, but the poor will be more effected at this point because of the high cost of food. "A quart of wheat for a denarius and three quarts of barley for a denarius" is a clear demonstration of how expensive the cost of food will become. A denarius was the amount of one day's wages that will only be enough to buy one meal of wheat, or three meals of barley. Though it is going to be a very difficult time on the earth the rider was instructed not to damage the oil and wine demonstrating that at this time it will not be a bad as it is going to get.

The Fourth Seal—Death

7. When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." 8. I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

When the fourth seal was broken an ashen horse appears with its rider called death. The color ashen (pale) is literally a pale green (cf. the same word used of vegetation in Mark 6:39; Rev. 8:7; 9:4). After the first three riders conquer, war and famine, death is the likely progression. But where ever death is it is usually accompanied by Hades (Rev. 20:13, 14). Remember that death is takes the material part of the body and Hades takes the immaterial. Just as the first rider had authority over the earth, the second rider had authority to take peace from the earth, and the third rider authority to bring famine over the earth, the fourth rider has authority to bring death and destruction. Notice that the fourth rider was given authority over a fourth of the earth to kill with the sword (rider 2) and with famine and with pestilence (rider 3) and by the wild beasts of the earth. Due to this war that will take place a fourth of the earth becomes a living nightmare which is followed by hunger, famine and attacks by wild beast. A fourth of the earth is approximately 1.88 billion people that will be killed by this rider (cf. Jer. 15:2-3; 24:10; 29:17-18; Ezek. 5:12, 17; 14:21). This rider makes a clear case that the Great Tribulation has begun and the time of trouble is upon the earth (cf. Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21–22).

The Fifth Seal—Martyrs

9. When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; 10. And they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11. And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.*

When the fifth seal is open there are no more riders, John is back in heaven where he “saw underneath an altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, because of the testimony they had maintained” (Ex. 29:12; Lev. 4:7.) Here we find those who were saved and martyred for the word of God (Chap. 7) during the time of the Great Tribulation. Notice this unique look into heaven. Those who are dead in Christ Jesus, who now resides in heaven are asking the Lord, “**How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?**” The tribulation saints in heaven are asking the Lord to avenge them. The Lord answers them by giving each of them white robes and letting them know that His plan is not yet complete and that there are more who must suffer for His name sake before His second coming. This is an indication that the time of the Great Tribulation is not yet complete. Walvoord states that, “Spirits without any substance could not wear robes. The fact that they will be given robes supports the concept that when believers die they are given temporary bodies in heaven which are later replaced by resurrection bodies at the time of resurrection (cf. 20:4).”²

The Sixth Seal—Terror

12. I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13. And the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16. And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17. For the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

When the six seal is open it brings about even more misery to the earth. It begins with a great earthquake and the sun becomes black as sackcloth and the moon became like blood. The stars of the sky fell to the earth (indicating a meteor storm like never seen before) and the wind becomes so strong that unripen figs are falling from the tree. The sky is split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up (indicating some catastrophe to the ozone layer) and every mountain and island were moved out of their places (this is more than a tectonic shift, this is literally the earth crying out.) Nothing like this has ever occurred on the earth at this point. Remember, a fourth of the earth has already been slain. Now the entire planet is in chaos. Rather than running to God, mankind (unbelievers) will continue to ‘be the captain of its own ship.’ Everyone, whether rich or poor, king or peasant, slave or free it does not matter for this judgement is upon the entire earth and there is no place to hide. Rather than running to the One who sits on the Throne mankind will run to hide from Him, but will find no place to hide. They realize that this is the wrath of God upon the earth and yet they will not turn to Him. Where is the God of love

² Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 948). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

here that everyone always talks about, the one who is going to save all, who will place all in haven? Chapter six reveals a pivotal point in human history and condemns bad theology.