

Revelation 6

THE WORLD IN CHAOS

BY DR. JERRY VINES

Student Guide

While godly people disagree on the details of interpreting John's numbers and symbols, most agree that the last days are marked by evil growing worse and worse, the rise of a world government and world ruler, and the pouring out of God's wrath on a rebellious, morally-defunct world. Consequently, not until God's wrath is thoroughly expended will Jesus Christ return to establish His kingdom on earth. The contrast between chapter five and chapter six is striking. John leaves heaven where worship is exciting and up-lifting, returning to earth where rebellious men are out of control. What he finds remains virtually indescribable. In fact, John struggles to find the language to record the coming judgment of God when the Lamb opens the seals..

1. Conquest on the Earth (vv. 1-2)

Over the next fourteen chapters, John describes in detailed fashion the judgments ahead for planet earth. Three series of pronounced judgments take place centered around three pictures—seals, trumpets, and bowls. When the Lamb opens a seal, judgment falls to the earth.

The first horse to appear is *white*, a symbol of conquest and victory. Some suppose the rider is Jesus Christ. However, the context does not support this interpretation. It seems clear the rider is a counterfeit Christ who imitates and deceives the world.

The weapon born by the rider is a bow but the picture projects a bloodless battle indicative of a rule given to him without a single shot fired. In short, he is Antichrist, Satan's counterfeit messiah who promises peace but delivers destruction.

Question: *Do you think it is possible that Antichrist is living on the earth today? Explain.*

2. Conflict on the Earth (vv. 3-4)

John saw a second seal opened. The color of the second horse was red. Red is the color of war and bloodshed. The world does not desire peace.

Since the world rejected the prince of Peace, they will reap the prince of pollution and disaster. No place will be found to hide because no place will be found without war. No prayer will be offered because the people who believed in prayer will no longer dwell on the earth.

3. Consumption on the Earth (vv. 5-6)

John records the opening of the third seal. A black horse appears when the command "Come" is noised. Black is the color of famine and mourning. Famine naturally follows war. However, this is actually a controlled famine. Antichrist's peace plan collapses, and a worldwide food shortage commences. Even so, the prosperous wallow in a surplus indicating the controlled nature of the shortage. "Oil" and "wine" indicate luxuries galore but judgment will soon wipe the smiles from the faces of the rich.

Question: *Reflect on the horrifying circumstances which will one day come to the earth. Will your loved ones be left behind to face these disasters? Pray for each of your friends and family by name, especially those who do not know the Lord Jesus as Savior.*

4. Carnage on the Earth (vv. 7-8)

John moves on to describe the opening of the fourth seal. Pale is the color of death. Its yellowish color indicates lack of oxygen and imminent expiration. Death inevitably follows on the heels of war and famine.

In addition, death could be translated “pestilence” and refer to a virus caused by biological weapons. While death speaks primarily of taking the physical body, “hades” follows to take the soul. Signs indicate the time is near when the church will be raptured and the world will be plagued.

Question: *Search as men may, Jesus is the only Savior. How do people respond when we suggest no other Savior exists but Jesus? Explain.*

5. Comfort on the Earth (vv. 9-11)

An interlude so to speak takes place when the fifth seal is opened offering a break from the scenes of terrible judgments poured out upon the earth. The “souls” of the martyrs are in a state of conscious existence beyond the grave. In fact, their souls must have some type of corporeal form since they were given “white robes” to wear. John’s language completely overturns the erroneous ideas that there is no consciousness after death or until the resurrection (i.e. “soul sleep”). And, being “under the altar” indicates their heavenly protection from all the earth’s plagues. But the price was high. Their faithfulness to Jesus and testimony to His greatness cost them their lives.

The cry for God to act in vindictive ways sounds strange to our modern ears because we are taught by our Lord to pray for our enemies. However, the church age—an age of grace—is over, and the age of law temporarily reoccurs during the Great Tribulation. The saints are praying for God’s justice to be expressed.

Consequently, the Omnipotent Lord God reassures the praying saints by robing them. They must be patient for a “little season” before their prayers would be answered. Suffering remains a mystery to our finite understanding even in the future.

Question: *If we are to pray for our enemies why were the martyred saints praying for vengeance on their enemies? Explain.*

6. Catastrophe on the Earth (vv. 12-17)

John’s vision of comfort for the martyred believers ends, and he continues with the horrible chaos on planet earth. He records a seven-fold description of the human race as the sixth seal is broken.

First, he describes what they see. The universe is plunged into cataclysmic chaos. Earthquakes shake the earth’s axis while a blackened sun rules the day and a bloody moon the night. Stars fall from the sky, and heaven rolls like a scroll depicting a subtle but real message—*time as we know it is no more*.

Second, John describes what they say. Every indication of self-security is driven from the minds of men. Instead of taking the lamb to the slaughter as they did when Jesus came the first time, now they hide from the Lamb as He is one who possesses wrath. No place exists to escape. Hence, they cry for the rocks crush them. Better to die in a cave than to face the Lamb.

Third, John observes what they sense. God is real, and sin separates us from Him. Judgment is swift for those who spurn God’s grace in Jesus Christ. No one can stand before Him without Jesus (Psalm 76:7). If one rejects the grace of the Lamb, then the only alternative is to face the wrath of the Lamb.

Wrap Up

In this study, we observed the horrors facing planet earth when the seals open during the Great Tribulation. The only ones who escape the grim realities facing this world are those who take seriously the Gospel. Christ died for our sins but rose again the third day to give us eternal life (1 Cor. 15:1-3). Will you not make your commitment to Christ today?