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Revelation 6

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Learn the Bible at Home

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Revelation 6.

Topics.

- The Lamb opens the first seal and a rider on a white horse appears.
 - The Lamb opens the second seal and a rider on a red horse appears.
 - The Lamb opens the third seal and a rider on a black horse appears.
 - The rider of the black horse with a pair of scales in his hand:
 - The lamb opens the fourth seal and a rider on a pale horse appears.
 - The lamb opens the fifth seal and those who had been martyred are seen.
 - The lamb opens the sixth seal and the sky vanishes like a scroll.
 - Every mountain removed, the sun became black and the moon like blood.
 - The great day of God's wrath has come upon the rich and the powerful.
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A personal note: though I have always loved reading and studying the Scriptures and have now walked with Christ and in God's grace for around fifty years the following studies should not be taken to be dogmatic, inflexible or the final word on the matter since I am fully aware that my mind is limited by mortality and that greater understanding of God's revelation is continually becoming clearer before our eyes as we move closer to the time of Christ's glorious return in glory.

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The previous chapter: began with John seeing God seated on His throne holding in His right hand a seven-sealed scroll. Around the throne were twenty-four elders, four living creatures and the angels. One like a Lamb that had been slain approaches the throne and takes the scroll from the hand of God. The chapter ended with the voice of myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands of angels saying, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!"

A VOICE LIKE THUNDER

REVELATION 6:1

The Lamb Opens the First Seal and John Hears a Voice like Thunder.

- **Revelation 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!"

A voice like thunder: (v1) signifies the great importance of the events about to be disclosed and the sovereign fearful and terrifying judgments that are contained within each seal about to be poured out. For information concerning the four living creatures, click or tap [Topics in Revelation](#) and select the title: Four Living Creatures.

This chapter: speaks of six seals, the first reveals a white horse, the second a red horse, the third a black horse and the fourth a pale horse. In the fifth seal, we see those who had been slain crying out for the LORD

to judge those who dwell on earth and the sixth seals speaks of a great earthquake and of the sun turning black and the moon becoming like blood, because the great day of wrath has come. These seals usher in judgments on the earth especially against the power that opposes the reign of Christ and his church, their primary purpose is judgment upon the world and upon the corrupt church, the secondary work is conviction, conversion and salvation. Most commentators agree that these horses and their rider refers to the period of the Roman Empire, but there is a difference of opinion as to what specific period of Rome's rule they apply to and which Roman Emperor the rider of the horse symbolises. During Rome's conquest of kingdoms their fierce and strong armies continually marched forward to conquer, destroy and expand the Roman Empire across the land. There were battles in which thousands were killed and Roman subjects who did not submit to Roman rule were treated miserably and with oppression. During the ten renowned Roman persecutions thousands of Jews were brutally mocked, cruelly beaten, imprisoned and killed as were multitudes of Christians. It is impossible in these notes to present a complete account of Roman history and of its Caesars and Emperors of this period, of time.

To discover which Emperor each horse and rider refers to would not only involve a very vast study of Roman history, but also fill many pages in this study, so to keep things simple and brief this study will simply accept the reality that each horse and its rider represents a specific period of Roman history. However, these horses and their rider are not limited to this period, of time, but can by extension prophetically be, seen as symbols of future nations, kings and events to come upon the world in the latter days. It could be said that the partial fulfilment of these four horses during the era of Rome was a prelude to far more powerful kings and their weapons of war (i.e., weapons of mass destruction) and events that will not be limited a partial area of earth, but affect the entire globe. Since this chapter covers a vast period, of time we will look at each seal separately as we travel through it.

For further information of Rome, its religion and the ten most renowned Roman Emperors that aggressively persecuted the Christian church, click or tap [Topics in Revelation](#) and select the title: "Rome, its Religion and Ten Emperors that Persecuted the Church."

I saw and behold: (v2) nothing is said by which it can be determined with certainty how these horses and their rider appeared to John in the vision. Following are the two most common thoughts:

1. Since John uses the word, "saw," in each of the things describe in the five seals, some suppose God caused a pictorial representation in form and appearance as John describes to pass before his eyes (much like a hologram).
2. Others believe what John saw was drawn in pictorial picture form on the parchment of the scroll that John himself read. Supporting this idea is the fact that the scroll is spoken of as being writing within and without and if nothing was pictured and written on the seven-sealed scroll all it would contain as it was rolled out would be a roll of blank parchment paper. Should this be so nothing would be revealed, but a succession of blank portions of paper. With these facts in mind the most likely interpretation seems to be that what John proceeds to describe was in some way represented in drawings in pictorial form on the parchment of the scroll, especially since all, of these pictures could be represented today in a pictorial form in a book.

THE FIRST SEAL: A WHITE HORSE

REVELATION 6:2

- **Revelation 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.

Generally, the colour of each horse signifies the mission of the rider. At the time, John was having these visions Rome was expanding its empire. Horses were used to carry military commanders, skilled warriors and chariots which means that the horse was a symbol of war, destruction, suffering, bloodshed and death, however, the horses of armies who won the battle became a symbol of triumph, victory, prosperity and happiness and were used in festivals that celebrated such victories.

Crown: in this verse comes from the Greek word (*stephanos*) and refers to the garland or wreath a conqueror wore. The white horse and its rider mentioned in chapter nineteen is spoken of as wearing on his head many crowns of diadems, (*Greek, diademata*) (Rev. 19:11-12), which are not a simple crown of wreaths, but a crown of royalty. The white horse and its rider is seen here in this chapter and again in chapter nineteen, amongst commentators there are three differing scenarios concerning this white horse and its rider, since all three have valid points we will look at each one separately.

1. The white horse and its rider are an emblem of Roman conquest and victory, as the next rider on the red horse represents war and of all following future secular kings and rulers (symbolised by the *stephanos* or wreath a conqueror wore) who continue to conquer kingdoms and nations through war until Christ returns on his white horse as King of kings and Lord of lords. (Rev. 19:11-15). This idea is certainly in harmony with the continuing history that followed the Roman Empire since every following generation has been marked by conquests, wars, bloodshed, famines and pestilence. The rider is armed with a bow (a symbol of weapons of war, but not final victory and triumph), the expectation is that war, famine, death and pestilence would continue until the true King comes (Rev. 19:11-16) and destroys the ten-horned beast, the antichrist system and the prostitute woman who corrupted the world and deceived nations by her sexual immorality. The white horse signifies the strong, warlike and conquering state of the Roman empire, and the rider with a bow and crown refers to one of its renowned Emperors crowned with great power and authority who not only went forth conquering kingdoms, towns and villages and subduing all people to submit to the rule of Rome, but also one that persecuted Christians with great cruelty and aggressively set about to destroy churches and the Christian faith. Prophetically and by extension this can also refer to a future king or world ruler of the same character, power and authority who rises-up in the latter days.
2. The white horse and its rider first going out in this chapter symbolises Christ (signified by the *stephanos* or wreath a conqueror wore) first going out with the Gospel during an age of great persecution to the Christian faith, whereas the white horse and its rider seen in chapter nineteen signifies the swift progress of the Gospel and its judgment upon the wicked in the latter days and the majesty, power, and authority with which it will come, when the lawless one is revealed, who the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming (2 Thess. 2:8). The return of Christ in glory will crush all hostile opposition made against him at the battle of Armageddon and bring about his final triumphant victory symbolised by the many crowns he now wears. Upon the opening of the:
 - First seal a rider on a white horse comes out conquering and to conquer. (Revelation 6:2).
 - Second seal takes peace from the earth. (Rev. 6:4).
 - Third seal brought great famine. (Rev. 6:5).
 - Fourth seal bought death. (Rev. 6:8).
 - Fifth seal those slain for the word of God cry how long before God will avenge their blood, they were given white robes and told to rest

a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants is complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. (Rev. 6: 9-11).

- Sixth seal the great day of wrath comes. (Rev. 6:12-17).

The idea in this scenario is that Christ first came with the Gospel and afterward he was killed and those who proclaimed the Gospel were greatly persecuted and put to death, but despite this great opposition to the church and the Gospel it prevailed through death, wars and famine and now Christ returns on the white horse, but this time not as a Lamb to be slaughtered, but as a king to bring victory and triumph the work that he started.

3. When Jesus first came he humbled himself and rode in on a donkey, a beast of burden (Matt. 21:1-7) as the Lamb of God to be slaughtered (symbolised by the stephanos or wreath a conqueror wore) Now he comes as the victorious King of kings and Lord of lords (symbolised by the many crowns he now wears). The horse was an animal used for war, while the donkey is an animal of peace. Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the donkey was the beginning of His reign in Jerusalem over the earth, as the Prince of peace, after all hostile powers have been overthrown. When world powers, and the distress of Christ's people have reached their highest point, the Lord Jesus will visibly appear in glory from heaven to put an end to the whole corrupt course of the world, and establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth. He will come with vengeance to judge and destroy the strongest antichristian world powers, and to gather his redeemed church to rule with him over the world. When Jesus disciples asked him, "What will be the sign of his coming and of the close of the age?" He answered them saying:

- As the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (Matt 24:27).
- As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (Matt 24:37).
- They were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (Matt 24:39).

And the final judgment:

- When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. (Matt. 25:31).

These verses (there are many others) show that powerful phenomena will accompany Christ's glorious arrival. Many paid little regard to him when he first came meek and lowly, riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, but at the end of our age the meek and lowly Saviour who was first seen riding a donkey into Jerusalem, will at the end ride as a mighty warrior into God's beloved city to save his people and establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth. There is no point in debating over which of these three scenarios is the correct one, since all can apply at different times in history and it is certainly true that wars, bloodshed, pestilence, famine and the Gospel will prevail until Christ returns to gather his people to himself and establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

However, since the New Testament begins at the fourth kingdom of Daniel's interpretation of the image of the metal man that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon saw in a dream is Rome, symbolised by the iron legs extending to the ten toes (Daniel chapter two), signifying the power and character of Rome will reach to the end of the age, though in a different form and shape, this study will also begin at Rome. For further information concerning the ten-horned beast, the antichristian system and the prostitute woman full of abominations: click or tap [Topics in Revelation](#) and select the title: Ten-Horned Beast and the Man of Sin.

REVELATION 6:3-4

- **Revelation 6:3-4:** When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" ⁴And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

For information concerning the four living creatures, click or tap [Overview of Topics in Revelation](#) and select the title: Four Living Creatures. The opening of this the second seal, the red horse and its rider signifies dreadful desolating judgments of war and persecution that takes away peace from the earth. One of the great tragedies of sin and mysteries of life is that humanity who should love and help one another, are set upon killing, oppressing and ruling over each another.

The red horse from the nature of the emblem and from the explanation added: "And power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another." Clearly shows that this emblem denotes a time of slaughter. It refers to those that ruled the affairs of the Roman empire at that time and to the fierce, powerful and cruel Roman Emperor (or General) capable of the most inhuman actions especially against Christians.

To take peace from the earth: (v4), refers to the Roman empire which, is sometimes referred to as the whole world, because of the multitudes of kingdoms and nations it conquered and the vast regions of land it ruled.

A sword: (v4) in Scripture is an emblem of:

- War, fighting, killing and death (Gen. 27:40) (Matt. 26:52) and God's punishment upon His people who deliberately live contrary to His word and His ways. (Lev. 26:25)
- God's judgment against the unrepentant (Psalm 7:12) and strength and power used to defend truth and righteousness and destroy the prideful. (Ps. 45:3-4).
- God's judgment, wrath and destruction upon corrupt nations and powers that are hostile to God's people universally and who He will destroy as soon as the cup of iniquity overflows with unbelief and wickedness. (Isaiah 34:5).
- God's judgment by war, famine and pestilence against hypocritical priests, ministers and teachers in Judah and Jerusalem who strictly adhere to outward religious works, but whose heart is far from him. (Jer. 14:11-12).
- God's judgment by pestilence, famine and captivity upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, because of their gross wickedness and idolatry. (Jer. 15:2) (Jer. 29:17-18).
- Division between believers and non-believers and division that divides families, in the sense that those who accept Christ are often rejected by family and friends. Even if they are not fully rejected there is a natural spiritual division, since one belongs to the Kingdom of heaven and the other to the kingdoms of this world. (Matt. 10:34-36)
- Authority of the law of justice to administer punishment on the wrongdoer. (Romans 13:4).

A principal of Bible prophecy: we are not told who the rider of this horse is, which leaves it open to prophetically apply to various kings and different periods of time. This principal is often seen in biblical prophecies. Often the names of places, town's countries and people are left out of a

prophecy allowing the message to transcend the era of the prophet to a future age or a future person. Many have a partial local fulfillment, but due to the lack of detail in the language and the vision or the prophecy it often allows a partial and local fulfillment to settle upon events that are very similar for a time, and then take up wings and soar through history to its ultimate, perfect and complete fulfillment.

THE THIRD SEAL, A BLACK HORSE

REVELATION 6:5-6

- **Revelation 6:5-6:** When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature (beast in KJV) say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales (a pair of balances in KJV) in his hand. ⁶And 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 (three measures of barley for a penny in KJV), and do not harm the oil and wine!"

For information of the four living creatures click or tap [Topics in Revelation](#) and select the title: Four Living Creatures.

Black: the following verses show that the colour black in the Scriptures can signify fear, famine and death.

- Our skin is hot (black in KJV) as an oven with the burning heat of famine. (Lam. 5:10).
- Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, ²A day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations. (Joel 2:1-2).
- Before them (a powerful army) peoples are in anguish; all faces grow pale (gather blackness in KJV). (Joel 2:6).
- Desolate! Desolation and ruin! Hearts melt and knees tremble; anguish is in all loins; all faces grow pale! (All, gather blackness in KJV). (Nahum 2:10).

From these verses, we learn that black symbolises severe suffering, sorrow, distress, anguish and torment because of extreme famine (Lam. 5:10), and great fear, because of war, invasion, calamity, desolation and ruin. The colour black also symbolizes pestilence and oppression, (especially by heavy taxation), and civil riots, tyranny and desolation and the woe, anguish, fear, trembling and mourning that follows all these things. Lack of light and utter darkness and gloom can refer to the day of the LORD's judgment unlike any that has ever been on earth before.

- When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. (Ezekiel 32:7).
- 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. 6:12).

Prophetically the black horse: signifies a spiritual famine of God's word especially of the Gospel that saves to eternal life, and of the practice of true faith and faithful teachers becoming scarce, because of affliction and persecutions, or because of the love of money, fame, power and importance. Spiritual blackness denotes the church gradually being filled with false prophets, teachers, superstition, schisms, heresies and errors corrupting much of the global Christian world.

A pair of scales (a pair of balances in KJV): (v5) the following verses show that scales are an emblem of justice, fairness, equity impartiality and scarcity (especially of food).

- When I break your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven and shall dole out your bread again by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied. (Leviticus 26:26).

Here food being weighed out by weight signifies such a lack that no one is satisfied by the portion they are given.

- Job prayed, "Let me be weighed in a just balance, and let God know my integrity!" (Job 31:6).

Here the scales signify the eyes of God perceiving Job's heart to determine what is good and what is bad.

- A just balance and scales are the LORDs; all the weights in the bag are his work. (Proverbs 16:11).

Here the scales symbolise the truth, God is in control of all things.

- Moreover, he said to me, "Son of man, behold, I will break the supply of bread in Jerusalem. They shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and they shall drink water by measure and in dismay. (Ezek. 4:16).

Here the use of balances signifies that the food and water supply is so scarce it had to be carefully weighed out to supply enough food to support a person for a day. By extension this would also carry the idea that all that is needed for the survival of human life was extremely scarce.

- A merchant, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress. (Hosea 12:7).

Here false scales signify the deceit, lies, deception and the oppression those who love riches use to increase their wealth and materialistic empire.

The rider of the black horse had a pair of scales in his hand: (v5) implies that food and water had to be rationed and measured out by weight in, order to distribute it fairly, because of the great scarcity of it. When there is abundance of food and water there is no need to weigh and measure what is drunk, eaten or given out, but when there is a famine it must be so. In times of great scarcity, famines and during wars it was normal to use scales to measure out the food and water supply by weight, to give everyone an equal share. By extension it carries the idea that all the necessities of life were very scarce and therefore had to be rationed.

A quart of wheat for a denarius: (v6) one quart of wheat was being sold for one denarius (penny in some versions) while three quarts of barley were being sold for the same amount of money, which means that the price of corn was much higher than barley. The most likely reason for this would be that barley was in greater supply and therefore could be sold at a lesser price. For many the denarius was the usual daily wage for labour (Matt. 20:2) (Matt. 20:9-10) (Matt. 20:13). One quart of wheat would sustain one person for one day, while three quarts of barley would sustain three people for a day, which means it took a day's wages to buy one day's supply of food. This would not only cause extreme hardship, but also means a single person could buy the more expensive grain, but the married person would have to buy the less-expensive grain in, order to feed his family.

Do not hurt the oil and wine: (v6) unlike bread and water, oil and wine are not needed to sustain life in times of famine for the body's survival, but would, during such time be considered luxuries. Since wheat, barley, oil and wine are products that the land produces and it is being sold, it maybe that the government of the land has control over the food supply much like Joseph had control of the food, during the seven-year famine and sold it to the people. Should this be so, the expression, "Do not hurt the oil and wine," would mean that those in control of the food and water supply would not be hurt, in the same way that Joseph, the Pharaoh of Egypt and his household were not hurt by the famine. By extension it would also mean that the rich and wealthy would not lack food as they would be able to purchase more than enough. We see this principal even

today, third world countries are suffering extreme famines, while those in Hollywood and the rich live an indulgent lifestyle of excessive luxury and extravagance. The command, "Do not hurt the oil and wine," may also carry the following ideas:

- The famine in the land will be so great that the price of food skyrockets so that only the wealthy are, able to buy more than they need, while all others barely have enough.
- The global money system collapses leaving only those with excessive wealth able to buy an abundance of food and water, while the average person struggles just to survive.
- Governments place such a heavy and oppressive tax on food and water, because of the shortage of it that most of the population struggle just to supply the necessities of life for their families, while the rich and wealthy are relatively unaffected.
- The rich (i.e., multinational corporations controlling the food supply) make food so expensive that the poor cannot afford it and, in this way, the rich increase in wealth (i.e., are not harmed) while the poor suffer.
- The population of the world has become far too large for the earth to sustain everyone dwelling on it, so governments put heavy taxes on food and water or multinational corporations controlling the food supply put excessive profits on it, because of the shortage and high demand for it and thereby the rich and those in power are not hurt by the famine.
- The money system is hit with hyperinflation putting great financial stress and oppression on those in debt and the poor so that they struggle financially just to afford food, while the rich remain at ease.

Prophetically: this seal predicts that as the rider of this black horse comes closer to the end of the age as we know it and to the return of Christ, the church should expect to see famines and distress in the world and the struggle and stress for the average family to meet the needs necessary for survival continuing to increase, while kings, rulers, governments, the rich and wealthy continue to live in excess. Luxuries will abound in, the midst of widespread poverty, which is exactly what we see on a global scale today. Multitudes live in extreme poverty, while others live lifestyles of pampered opulence and excessive indulgent luxury.

THE FOURTH SEAL, THE PALE HORSE

REVELATION 6:7-8

- **Revelation 6:7-8:** When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" ⁸And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades (Hell in KJV) followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence (hunger in KJV) and by wild beasts of the earth.

For concerning the four living creatures click or tap [Topics in Revelation](#) and select the title: Four Living Creatures. The Lamb removed the fourth seal and opened the scroll (Rev. 6:1) and a pale horse and his rider is seen. The name of this rider is death and Hades (meaning the grave). The King James Bible has Hell, but Hades is the better translation since the word Hell comes from the Greek word (*haidēs*) which means unseen and refers to the grave as the place of the departed. This does not mean that there is a real person named death, in the same way that the previous three riders have been symbolic personifications of a rider on a horse to symbolise a particular-judgment, this rider on the pale horse is a personification that symbolises calamities, misery, great slaughter devastation and widespread destruction, by which death takes multitudes

down to the grave. The period of this fourth seal is one of great slaughter and devastation, like the theme of a horror movie the vision increases in its scenes of fear terror, grief, wailing and sorrow. When the events of the first three horses combine, the outcome is widespread death amongst vast masses of the worlds' population. Since the human body drained of life becomes strikingly pale it is a very apt colour to signify the reign of death. When this seal is opened and the pale horse set free its rider will bring death by the following four judgments:

- Thus says the Lord GOD: I will send upon Jerusalem my four disastrous acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast! (Ezekiel 14:21).

God sent these judgments upon Jerusalem, because the people had turned to idols and pagan gods and had become so grossly corrupt that they brought judgment upon themselves by their rebellion and wickedness. In the latter days, when the cup of the world's inequity is full and the populations of the nations have turned to false religions and false gods and become so grossly corrupt, God will again allow these judgments to sweep across the earth. It could be said that the, human race as a collective whole, brings judgment upon themselves by their own rebellion, their denial of God who created them and their wickedness. We are told that death and the grave follow the rider of this pale horse. This carries the idea that when this seal is opened and the rider is set free the number of those who go down to the grave will be so numerous that it will be as though the sovereignty of death had come afresh on earth.

The fourth part of the earth: (v8) this does not refer to the church (as some believe), since the church is never called the earth in this book. Added to this the following verse shows that the church is distinguished from the earth:

- The earth came to the help of the woman (the church), and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. (Rev. 12:16).

Here we see that certain people of the earth protected those of the church (symbolized by the woman) from the wicked who were aggressively hostile toward them. It is unbelievers (i.e., those who love the world rather than the things of God) who are referred to as being of the earth. The expression, the fourth part of the earth, can refer to: -

- A very considerable part of the heathen world.
- Europe (being considered a fourth part of the world).
- A fourth part of the entire world's circumference and population.

The most likely one of these, is a fourth part of the entire world's circumference and population. We are told that the rider on this pale horse brings four different judgments, war, famine, pestilence and wild beasts over the fourth part of the earth which implies that the terrors this rider brings is not limited to one nation, but will affect the entire globe of the earth. It is also not necessary to understand this as extending exactly over a fourth part of the world, but that it extends over a great majority of it. Supporting this idea is the fact that four is often used to represent the four corners of the world (i.e., north, south east and west) and therefore the expression, "a fourth part of the earth," would simply mean these judgements will affect about a quarter of the earth's circumference or about a quarter of the earth's population and that far-spread severe calamity will sweep about a quarter of the earth's population to the grave. The calamities indicated by the riders of these four horses are not restricted to one time, but extend through the whole period of church history to the coming of Christ. Wars, calamities, famines, slaughter (violence) and widespread destruction will all reach their highest aggravation prior to the last great and terrible day of the Lord.

God's four judgments to kill: (v8) with a sword, refer to:

1. **War:** because it results in hunger and death.
2. **Famine:** because it leads to death.
3. **Pestilence and disease:** because they lead to death.
4. **The beasts of the earth:** that bring death.

In Old Testament prophecy, these are called the four sore judgments of God.

- Thus says the Lord GOD: How much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four disastrous (sore in KJV) acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast! (Ezekiel 14:21).
- Thus says the Lord GOD: As I live, surely those who are in the waste places shall fall by the sword, and whoever is in the open field I will give to the beasts to be devoured, and those who are in strongholds and in caves shall die by pestilence. (Ezekiel 33:27).

The meaning is, that the sword and famine, which were judgments of the previous seals, are continued in this seal, with pestilence added to them. Famine and pestilence (i.e., disease) is a natural progression of war and any other widespread disaster that leaves behind it mass destruction and death.

To kill by wild beasts of the earth: (v8) can refer to the following two periods of time:

1. The period of Rome during which many of its Emperors were aggressively hostile tyrants toward Christianity. These rulers of Rome appointed commanders of their armies to destroy Christianity from the land. During the period of Rome's ten most renowned Emperors who raged against those who proclaimed Christ their King churches were destroyed and those who held fast their faith were treated with the most inhuman persecution and brutal cruelty, that had never been seen on earth before Rome's rise to power or after its fall. By these ten historic Emperors many Christians were thrown into the Olympic area to be eaten by wild animals. Although there were times when Christians were persecuted for their refusal to worship the emperor, the primary reason for the general dislike for Christians arose from their refusal to worship the gods of Rome and take part in sacrifice to them. This was expected of all citizens living in the Roman Empire, because it was Rome's belief that their success in battle and prosperity greatly depended upon the favour of the gods they believed in, therefore it was important to pay homage to these gods for the well-being of Rome.
2. From this time, onward to the return of Christ. To be killed by wild beasts is one of the consequences of widespread war, pestilence, famine and of natural disasters that leave masses of people severely crippled and injured and multitudes of dead bodies lying on the surface of the earth. During such vast devastation and destruction there is not enough doctors and medical staff to attend to the injured or enough people to bury the dead bodies and therefore hungry wild animals and birds naturally gather to eat them.

During war, famine, and pestilence not only is the human population reduced, while wild animals increase, but also the food supply for man and animals is greatly diminished, and as a consequences wild animals and birds gather to eat the multitudes of bodies dying and dead lying on the earth. In chapter nineteen of this book John (in a vision) sees Christ returning on a white horse as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:12-16) to judge the nations and make war, and John says:

- I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, ¹⁸to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." (Rev. 19:17-18).

- The rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh. (Rev. 19:21).

Nothing is better suited to produce pestilence and disease than multitudes of widespread unburied bodies of the dead, either by war, famine or by natural disasters. The widespread pollution and filth left after such devastation and destruction often kills more than the actual war, famine and disaster does. This would be especially true with the chemical weapons of mass destruction we have today. Such a vast mass of decaying bodies would become a banquet for wild animals and birds, especially since their natural food supply would be greatly diminished.

A principal of Bible prophecy: we are not told who the rider of these four horses are, which leaves the prophetic vision open to apply to various kings and different periods of time. This principal is often seen in biblical prophecies. Often the names of places, town's, countries and people are left out of a prophecy allowing the message to transcend the era of the prophet to a future age or a future person.

Many have a partial local fulfillment, but due to the lack of detail in the language the prophecy often allows a partial fulfillment to settle upon a local period and then take up wings and soar through history to its ultimate, perfect and complete fulfillment.

NOTE: since the events of these four seals had no definite end and the changes are gradual with most overlapping each other and being mixed with the following seal, the exact times of these four seals cannot be established, with absolute certainty. Christ opened the seals and in doing so set these four horses and their riders free to roam the earth. They are vehicles of God's judgments and His power going out across the face of the earth and bringing widespread calamities upon it as He allows.

THE FIFTH SEAL, THE MARTYRS

11

REVELATION 6:3-4

- **Revelation 6:9-11:** 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. ¹⁰They 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?" ¹¹Then 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.

This fifth seal differs from the four earlier seals in that it is not introduced by the voice of the living creature and the cry "Come," but by the voice of the oppressed and troubled church.

Under the altar: (v9) why the martyrs are represented as being under the altar is not made absolutely, clear, and since there are two altars in the temple at Jerusalem.

1. The altar of burnt sacrifices which was outside the temple of God.
2. The altar of incense which was inside the Holy Place of the temple.

There are differing views amongst commentators as to which of these two altars these martyrs are under and since both have good reasons for their view whether it is the altar of burnt sacrifices or the altar of incense, we will look at both views separately.

The altar of burnt sacrifices: stood outside in front of the temple, it was on this altar that the daily sacrifice was made for sin. The high priest would put some of the blood of the sacrificial lambs and goats slain on the horns of the altar of incense inside the Holy Place of the temple and the rest was poured at the foot of the altar outside the temple.

- The priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense before the LORD that is in the tent of meeting, 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. (Lev. 4:7).

Those who believe the martyrs were under the altar of sacrifice outside the temple hold this view for the following four reasons:

1. The lives of those sacrificed for Christ's testimony are symbolically, represented as being under the altar of sacrifice, because they have sacrificed their lives and the life is in the blood (Lev. 17:11) and so it is very apt that this is where the martyrs should be pictured.
2. It was at this altar the sinner brought their sacrifice for the cleansing and forgiveness of sin, and since these redeemed martyrs were by Christ's blood cleansed and washed whiter than snow it is very appropriate that this is where John in this vision would see them.
3. This altar was the place where sin was atoned for and therefore it was natural to represent these redeemed martyrs as seeking refuge there.
4. While offering the sacrifice for sin it was usual to offer prayers and supplications at the altar.

The vision implies that the mission of the Christian church and its victorious triumph will be accomplished through much suffering and because the blood of animal sacrifices was poured out at the foot of the altar outside the temple of God those who were suffering persecution would naturally seek refuge in the place where atonement for sin was made and where prayer was offered.

Paul makes use of the same imagery in the following verses:

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

The altar of incense: (v9) those who hold to the view that the altar refers to the altar of incense inside the Holy Place of the temple, reason that, because the sacrificial altar was not in the temple, but outside of it and Christ's literal sacrifice and the sacrifice of the martyrs was also outside of the temple here on earth, the altar in heaven must signify the Old Testament altar of incense in the Holy Place of the temple on earth. Both, of these views have good reasons supporting them, therefore it is pointless to debate over which altar John saw in his vision for the following six reasons:

1. Though animal sacrifices were offered on the altar outside the temple and the blood poured at the foot of it, a portion of it was also carried by the high priest into the Holy Place of the temple and poured onto the altar of incense.
 - We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. ¹¹For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹²So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. ¹³Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. ¹⁴For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. (Heb. 13:10-13).
2. Since Jesus is the true altar, the sacrifice and the priest and it is through him that every sacrifice of prayer and praise arises up to God with acceptance, both altars symbolise Jesus in different ways.
3. The altar of sacrifice was the place where sin was atoned for and the people would offer prayers of praise and thanksgiving, and the altar of incense was the altar the high priest would offer prayers of supplication, before God on behalf of the people.

4. The martyrs being under this altar, signifies that they are being kept in the presence of Christ (referred to in Scripture as sleeping in Christ) and that their life is safe in the hands of him who they committed their lives to at death, as Stephen committed his life and then fell asleep:
 - As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:59-60).

Those who die in Christ, are spoken of as sleeping, because their death is only temporary, until Christ returns in glory and raises them from the dead and gathers them to himself.

5. The blood of the martyrs is precious in the Lord's sight, not a drop is spilt without his knowing, so it is very apt that they are symbolised as being under the foot of the altar in heaven, since it signifies that they are at the feet of Christ.
6. The blood being taken into altar of incense symbolises the life of the faithful being taken into the presence of God.

Finding comfort at the foot of the altar is not limited to martyrs only, but by extension applies to all the faithful who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and hold fast their faith despite whatever troubles, hardships, sorrows and grief comes their way. As the cup of the persecutors measure is filling up with their sin, so too is the number of the persecuted martyred servants of Christ and when these two cups are full, God will send His wrath upon those who murdered them. Regardless of whether it refers to the altar of incense or the altar of sacrifice the scene of this prophetic vision is of the martyrs resting under Christ and in his presence, until he returns in glory to raise those sleeping from the dead. They are told to rest until the number of their fellow servants is complete who were to be killed as they themselves had been (v11). This means they were to wait until the end of the age for those spoken of in the following verse:

13

- The dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (Rev. 12:17).

Christians are called to carry on Christ's work in the world to its end and suffer as he did should they be called to do so.

- I (Paul) rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. (Col. 1:24).

Both altars are symbolic of the true altar which is Christ crucified, as he is the altar that truly sanctifies and cleanses the sacrificed offering and makes us acceptable to God. The vision is showing that suffering accompanies the progress of the Gospel and that those who do suffer for Christ will be exalted and raised to the heavenly altar in the heavenly temple. The following verse shows that it was because of the word of God that John himself suffered:

- I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. (Rev. 1:9).

They cried with a loud voice: (v10) as though they were making an appeal to the justice of God, saying, "How long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" They knew their blood would be avenged, but did not know when. Both the holiness and justice of God require Him to execute judgment upon the wicked and especially upon those who are violently hostile toward His people. This desire for God's justice to be poured out is pure, and according, to the will of God and His Holiness. The cry, "How long before you will judge and avenge our blood," is not so much intended to express the desire of the martyrs that their good service should be vindicated, but to signify that the

cruelties exercised upon them were of such a barbarous, vicious and horrendous nature that they deserved to be judged, condemned and punished. Just as the blood of Abel cried unto the LORD from the earth (Gen. 4:10), the blood of the martyrs' cries from the earth from under the cross of Christ (the true altar), where they can be considered to have been martyred since it was for their faith in him that they were being put to death. It is from under this altar that the voices of the martyrs cry out. It is through Jesus and him alone that the incense of praise is accepted before God. Like these martyrs the heart of all who have committed their lives to Christ continually cry for God's justice, but not from any lust for revenge, but to advance Christ's Kingdom and bring peace to earth.

The souls of those who had been slain: (v9) for believing and professing faith in Christ and for their testimony to the truth of the Gospel despite persecution, suffering, hardships, sorrow and grief. Since this is a prophetic vision the martyrs John saw under the altar that were slain would not only include all the martyrs that were put to death during the fierce, aggressive, brutal and cruel Roman persecutions, but also embrace all those that would be martyred in all following generations. For this reason, there is no need to limit these verses to some particular-historical period of martyrdoms, that have been, as all who have gone before us can be, seen as partial fulfilments, until the blood of the last of the martyr is received at the foot of this visionary and heavenly altar. This vision is a picture of the martyrs from all generations crying out from the grave for God's justice and vengeance. Though the victims of righteousness do not live after their blood is shed and falls to the ground, it does not fall without God's eyes seeing and in this sense, those martyred can be spoken of as crying out for justice according, to the law concerning murderers, much like the blood (which contains the life) of Abel is spoken of as crying out to the LORD from the ground. (Gen. 4:10).

They cried, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long?" (v10) the cry, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood?" Does not arise out of any evil malicious attitude of heart, but is motivated by the desire that God's holiness and justice would be made manifest on earth and that in all things He would be glorified, and His church and people on earth would be protected and delivered from the wicked. The cry, "O Lord, how long can you abide iniquity, and watch the innocent suffer by the hands of prideful, greedy and ruthless men, before you come to judge the wicked and deliver your people is a cry that rises from the heart of all who love Christ. The following words that Paul wrote show that it was right and proper to pray such a prayer:

- Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (Rom. 12:19)

It is not right for God's people to avenge themselves or seek revenge upon the wicked who dwell on earth, but trust that at the appointed time the guilty will face the judgment of God. However, this does not mean that our hearts will not continually cry for such justice to come or that we should not have them brought before the courts of the land to face the law of justice and reap the punishment awarded to them by the courts of the land. These seals show that evil, wickedness, sorrow, war, violence, famine and pestilence, will continue to accumulate and increase in the world as Jesus said in the following verse that they would:

- Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines, earthquakes and troubles in various places. (Matthew 24:7) (Mark 13:8) (Luke 21:10).
- I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33).

The faithful church should expect to see, war, violence, social troubles, poverty, evil men, deceivers' oppressive worldly policy, selfishness, sorrow, grief and troubles continue to increase until the end of this world as we know it and the return of Jesus in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords to bring righteousness, justice, joy and peace to earth. Here in

this fifth seal we are presented with a picture of the voices of an agonising, persecuted church being heard in heaven crying, "How long, O Lord!" The complete fulfilment of these seals and the outpouring of God's judgment will not be until Christ returns to gather the faithful and destroy his enemies and those who persecute his people. This cry for justice is turned to a song of praise in chapter nineteen:

- His judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants." (Revelation 19:2).

These verses not only highlight the fact that after persecutors kill the body of the faithful there is nothing more they can do, but also shines a light upon the truth that those who remain faithful to the end will be resurrected to the heavenly altar in God's eternal temple and a better world. It should also be highlighted that it is not their own death that makes the martyrs worthy of heaven, but the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Jesus said:

- I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (John 10:11).
- Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends. (John 15:13).

The reason the faithful lay down their lives is not to gain entrance into heaven as only faith in Christ has the power to do that, but because they are Christ's friends and as such not only commit their lives into his hands, but also commit vengeance to him to who it belongs. As the persecutors cup of iniquity is filling up so too is the cup of the blood of the martyrs, when these cups are full God will pour out His judgment upon earth and great tribulation and affliction will follow.

OVERVIEW OF SLEEPING IN CHRIST

15

Souls crying out and sleeping in Christ: (v9-10), some claim that the following two expressions, "the souls of them that were slain," and, "they cried out with a loud voice," are proof that the soul is immortal and consciously continues to exist after death in the form of an immaterial invisible spirit without a body much like angels. Those who hold this view believe that though their bodies are dead their spirit remains consciously alive in a separate palace in heaven under the care of one appointed by God and based upon this verse believe they not only remember what had happened to them, but also have an interest in what is taking place on earth. The problem with this is that whenever angels do appear, they always appear with a body and there is nowhere in the Bible that teaches such a doctrine. This idea stems from a misunderstanding of Scripture. The word soul comes from the Greek word (*psuche*), and means breath, and by implication spirit, as the principal of life. It refers to the life within every living creature human or animal, once the body and brain is dead so too is its life, until the day of resurrection.

Sleeping in Christ: concerning the death of the faithful the, Bible says, that they have no knowledge and know nothing (Job 14:12), they are totally unaware of it and are therefore in a perfect state of peace, this state is called sleeping in Christ and because they have no consciousness there, is no time. It is very similar, to someone in a deep sleep there is no awareness of time, when the person wakes, they have no idea of whether four, seven or twelve hours have passed. Likewise, because there is no time in death the moment a Christian dies, is the moment they are in the Kingdom of God and with the LORD, for them it is instant, even though many years may have passed by in our world's time. David died thousands of years ago, but the moment he is resurrected will be like the moment he breathed his last breath, because for him there is no awareness of time, so it is for every Christian from death to Christ is instant.

Death to the Christian is similar, to a person in a coma: a person in a coma has no consciousness of time, time does not exist to them, when they wake, they often think only a day or so has gone by, when in actual, fact several years may have passed yet they think they are waking up, the same day, or next day after they went to sleep. The person in the coma or in death is totally unaware of any time that they have spent in the coma or being dead. Death to those who belong to Christ is much the same as the person in the coma, the dead or those who are sleeping in Christ have absolutely no consciousness of time so for them, the moment they die, is the moment they are instantly with the Lord, even though many years may have passed during the time they have been dead (i.e., sleeping in Christ).

It is the same principal as a person who goes into hospital for an operation: the patient is given an anaesthetic and put to sleep, surgeons cut them open and remove infected body parts over the next few hours, yet the patient is totally unaware of it they wake up and have absolutely no idea of the time that has passed, therefore when Paul says:

- We would rather be away (absent in the KJV) from the body and at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).

It is a true statement, even though he may have spent years sleeping in Christ. A second reason a Christians death is called sleeping in Christ is because their death is only temporary, being asleep in Christ means everyone who dies in Christ is kept in the eternal mind and memory of God. Jesus said:

- Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them falls to the ground without the father knowing it and even the hairs of our head are all numbered therefore we should not fear death because we are of more value than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29-31).

The entire person, (i.e., body, spirit, mind and consciousness) remains sleeping in Christ, until the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5) when all who are asleep in the Lord are woken up at the sound of the angels' last trumpet and raised from the dead to everlasting glory and clothed with an eternal and immortal body.

NOTE: some people find it difficult to comprehend God raising the dead, but think of it this way: we have super computers today that have in their memories literally trillions of bits of information and at the touch of a key any one of those bits is resurrected to us on a brightly coloured screen (in the future it is most likely they will simply appear in the air), then with another touch of the key it all vanishes into the super memory and is gone, until we resurrect it again. Knowing that God has given his creation a mortal mind and finite memory to be able to build such amazing computers should make it very easy to understand how God keeps us all in His immortal mind and eternal memory waiting for the right time to touch the supernatural keyboard of heaven and raise us once again to life. Added to this very few Christians have any trouble believing God created the universe that we live in so raising the dead in comparison is not such a difficult task for such an awesome, powerful and majestic God (Heb. 11:3).

For further information, click or tap [Death](#) and select the title: Sleeping in the Grave and Sleeping in Christ. It must be kept in mind that this is a vision that John is seeing, and that the things seen are not real, but signify and symbolise certain events. In these visions, we are presented with a picture of Jesus with feet like burnished bronze; a voice like the roar of many waters with seven stars in his right hand and a sharp two-edged sword coming from his mouth (Rev. 1:15-16), no one takes these literally, but recognize that they are all visionary symbols of real people and actual events. Just as the sharp two-edged sword extending out of Jesus mouth (Rev. 1:16) and the four living creatures, having the face of a lion, an ox, and of a man, and another as an eagle in flight. (Rev. 4:7) all represent real people and events to happen on earth, likewise this picture of the, "souls who had been slain under the altar." (v9) that John sees is a vision

that symbolizes the heartfelt cry of the martyred faithful much like the voice of the blood of Able is spoken of as crying out to the LORD from the ground of the earth. (Gen. 4:10).

THE SIXTH SEAL, THE SKY VANISHES

REVELATION 6:12-14

- **Revelation 6:12-14:** 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,¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.¹⁴ The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

When the disciples came to Jesus asking him to tell them what will be the sign of his coming and of the close of the age? (Matt. 24:3-4) he answered them saying after the earth has suffered wars, famines, earthquakes and great terrors and troubles:

- 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.³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matt. 24:29-31).

It appears that once the previous seals are open many of the events continue through history until they finally accumulate at this sixth seal which clearly has reference to the ultimate fulfilment and the day the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory to gather the faithful from the four winds.

The earthquake; the moon and the stars: (v12-14) the expression, "a great earthquake; the sun became black as sackcloth; the moon like blood; the stars fell to the earth, the sky vanished like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place." (v12-14) carry the following ideas:

A great earthquake: (v12) can refer to the following three things:

1. A massive earthquake that covers large parts of the earth and brings extreme suffering grief and sorrow to multitudes of people.
2. Extreme disturbances, upheavals and turmoil that unsettle great political powers, governments, kings, presidents, princes, rulers, commanders and leaders in high positions of authority and influence, especially false religious teachers who have global positions of influence power and authority over a world-wide following either being brought down from their positions of leadership or to utter ruin.
3. The collapse of our worldwide system of finance and oppressive credit system (totally opposed to the heart of God) and the breakdown of the world's global trade and commercialism.

The sun became black as sackcloth; the moon like blood: (v12) sackcloth was worn as an emblem of sadness, grief and mourning, which means that this expression symbolizes great bloodshed and fierce and bloodthirsty battles, great and powerful kings and their armies laying waste empires and nations and bringing them to utter-ruin and extreme calamities and disasters of all kinds. It also embraces the idea of the world's governments and political powers and its global banking system of finance, trade and commercialism collapsing.

As the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale: (v13) this expression echoes the following words of Isaiah:

- All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree. ⁵For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction. (Isaiah 34:4-5).

In this context, the expression, all the host of heaven shall rot away, symbolises all the dead bodies of the people of Edom's rotting away, while the words, the skies roll up like a scroll, symbolises, the nation of Edom being destroyed and, all their host shall fall as leaves fall from the vine, symbolises those of Edom who have great authority losing their power. These symbolisms are supported by (Isaiah 34:5) which says that the LORD'S sword descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people the LORD has devoted to destruction, showing that Isaiah is using lofty biblical speech and poetical language to highlight what he is saying. These verses show how closely John's vision has kept to Old Testament imagery; and that events, such as great calamities and changes in the world's history, are described by emblems similar, to those used before.

A violent wind shaking a plantation of fig-trees would naturally cause many figs to fall to the ground, the idea is that some great calamity, disaster and trouble would bring about the downfall of great and powerful rulers and bring grief and sorrow to those dwelling on earth. Winter figs, are a fit emblem of those who have not used the opportunity to produce fruit fit for God, because winter figs are figs that cannot be used, because they do not ripen at the proper season. As the catastrophes of the latter-days draws closer to their final-end the confidence of those who have put their trust in world powers rather than Christ will be utterly shaken. In this sixth seal, violent stormy winds had blown, and shaken the fig-tree causing its untimely figs to drop off the tree, representing those whose faith failed the crisis to which they were exposed, Jesus said:

- If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. (John 15:6).

The untimely figs refer to those who do not abide in Christ, but forsake their faith when the going gets tough, in contrast to those who forsake their faith are those who are spoken of in the follow verses:

- I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5).
- You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. (John 15:16).

These verses show that not all the figs were shaken of the fig tree (Rev. 6:13), but only those who produced no fruit, those who abided in Christ and produced fruit remained firmly fixed to the tree. It matters not how strong the stormy trials are that blow upon the faithful in Christ, they by their strong and enduring love and faith in him remain sealed with the seal of the living God.

The stars fell to the earth: (v13) symbolize great and powerful kings and their armies destroying empires, kingdoms and nations and the three things listed under earthquakes (above).

The sky vanished like a scroll being rolled up: (v14) a scroll is rolled up when the reader has finished reading it. We are not to suppose that the sky will literally vanish, but take it as a symbol that carries the idea that there would be global widespread and massive calamities, troubles and changes if such a thing did happen. The natural meaning of the symbol is that these calamities, troubles and changes would affect the entire earth and that those in power worldwide would be brought to ruin. It can symbolize the following three things:

1. Massive bloodshed, massive changes on earth and massive changes in the governmental powers that control nations, countries and the world.

2. Extremely violent winds and storms, floods, thunder and lightning and may also include the devastating effect the green-house effect will have upon earth and maybe even meteors falling from the heavens destroying vast parts of the earth or knocking out the world's satellite system of communication and thereby bringing the world to ruin.
3. After or during these things the climate and weather patterns changing for the better since Christ is returning to establish an entirely New Age that is not only safe, but is also just and fair without oppression and in which money and profit is not the king.

Every mountain and island, was removed from its place: (v14) can symbolise two things:

1. A worldwide violent upheaval and sudden change to the surface of the earth and a displacement of the sea. Perhaps preparing the earth for a better world when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.
2. A global shaking in the political and moral world, as great as the shakings that would occur in the physical world if every mountain and island was removed. Mountains and islands appear to be permanently fixed and immovable, therefore removing them symbolically carries the idea that long-established thrones and dynasties, political governments and institutions, powerful rulers and established morals and corrupt religious organisations and churches that have great influence over the populations of the world, will be moved out of their place overthrown and brought to ruin preparing the way for a new order of things to rise in their place.

NOTE: many of the symbolisms listed under the titles, a great earthquake; the sun became black as sackcloth and the moon like blood; the stars fell to the earth; the sky vanished like a scroll being rolled up and every mountain and island was removed from its place are interchangeable which means that the symbolisms listed under each title is not limited to the ones listed, but can embrace many of the symbolisms listed under the other titles. These verses show that many times Bible writers very skilfully and very beautifully use figurative language and colourful exaggerations and overstatements to amplify the story, the battle, the message, the moral, the teaching or to highlight God's power and glory, or to dramatize the event in focus. For further information concerning lofty language, click or tap [Various Topics](#) and select the title: Lofty Language and Figurative Language of the Bible.

REVELATION 6:15-17

The Day of God's Wrath has come, upon the Rich and the Powerful.

- **Revelation 6:15-17:** 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, ¹⁶calling 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, ¹⁷for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

The terror and dread of this event is so alarming that those dwelling on earth hide themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, and from great fear ask the mountains to fall on them. The following verses show that this was a common biblical expression used to denote the utmost terror dismay and dread of the LORD and fearful bewilderment:

- People and worshippers of idols shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from before the terror of the LORD, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth. (Isaiah 2:19-21).

- The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed, thorn and thistle shall grow up on their altars, and they shall say to the mountains, cover us, and to the hills, fall on us. (Hosea 10:8).

Aven: means, vanity it was the Egyptian city called "On" dedicated to the sun and idol worship, Hosea contemptuously likens the places of the golden heathen calves of Bethel to the high places of Aven.

- Then they (the inhabitants of Jerusalem) will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us," and to the hills, "Cover us." (Luke 23:30).
- Kings, the powerful, the rich and those dwelling on earth (v15), call to the mountains and rocks saying, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Rev. 6:15-17).

These expressions highlight the great fear and terror of mankind facing God, without Christ's covering and the triumph of Christ over his enemies and the enemies of his people. The statement, "kings of the earth, the great ones, the rich, the powerful and all others hide themselves in caves," denotes universal dismay, dread and fearful trepidation and alarm, as if the entire earth had been shaken, and the stars had fallen and heaven, had passed away. This alarm embraces all classes of people, and fill all dwelling on earth with fearful dread and alarm. Such graphic symbolic language expresses the idea that the crisis will be so widespread and horrific it will be as if the end of the world is coming.

The great day of their wrath has come: (v17) refers to the wrath of Him who is seated on the Throne and the Lamb. The judgments that the martyrs under the altar who had been slain for the word of God prayed for, now descend on the earth, the sea, and the trees.

- 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?" (Rev. 6:10).

Who shall be able to stand? (v17) this thought is drawn from the following words of Malachi which refers to the coming of the Lord:

- Who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. (Malachi 3:2).

Whether Malachi is referring to Jesus coming in the flesh or returning in glory matters little since each appearing of Christ is an appearing of One who will thoroughly purge his house. He judged and purged his heavenly Fathers House when he first came and when he returns in glory will not only judge and purge his house, but also judge all of mankind and purge the earth of the corrupt and the wicked. The apostle Paul's answer the question, "Who shall be able to stand?" by saying, "Only those who are strong in the Lord and put on the whole armour of God and stand firm will be able to stand in the evil day (i.e., the day of the Lords judgment). (Ephes. 6:11-13). The Lord will bring the good work he started to completion on the day of the Lord Jesus Christ for all who put on the whole armour of God and are partakers with Paul of grace. (Philip. 1:6-7). All who stand in the armour of God and abide in Christ and in God's love and grace:

- Can have confidence when the Lord appears and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. (1 John 2:28).
- Can have confidence on the day of judgment, because as he is so also are they in this world. (1 John 4:17)

The question, "Who shall be able to stand?" is also answered in the following chapter which states, those who are sealed with the seal of the living God. The confronting question, "who shall be able to stand?" Primarily refers to the last great day of judgment, after God has exhausted all His ordinary judgments mentioned in the first five seals, (i.e., the sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts), and sinners are still defiant

and unrepentant. This sixth seal brings us to the verge of the Lord's return in glory. The ungodly inhabitants of the earth tremble at the signs of Christ near approach, but before the final blow comes the faithful must be gathered out. It matters not how much courage one might have or how great their power, authority or wealth might be, without Christ's covering no one will be able to stand before the wrath of Him who sits upon the throne and of the Lamb.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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