Rev 6, The Seals



*December 15*

**REVIEW:** [Revelation, pt. I[[1]](#footnote-1)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nvVVcYD-0w)

**CONTEXT:** Ah the mystery of cracking the code of the seals! What are they, what is going on and when is this? While a futurist (someone who believes this chapter pertains to the future) would perhaps see this chapter as the beginning of the tribulation, I would see it in the lens of a field manual, providing Christians with cosmic understanding of the age in which we live; in this case on the subject of suffering and justice—that perennial question.

**FIRST, A.M. SERMON RECAP** (Rev 3:1–6, Sardis)

* What is important to remember when studying Revelation?
* What 4 different approaches are there to understanding Revelation?
* What 4 different views exist on the Millennium (Rev 20:1–6)?
* Why is Sardis’ context so important to understand?
* What is Jesus’ rebuke (v. 1b), warning (v.2), command (v. 3) and promise (vv. 4–5)?

**READ:** Rev 6

**QUESTIONS[[2]](#footnote-2):**

*\*These questions will follow one interpretation. Engage charitably with it while also charitably sharing your own views.*

1. *In ch. 4 there is a picture of the throne room of heaven. In ch. 5:1 a scroll (God’s plan of history) with 7 seals is seen (7 is the number of completion). Having Risen and Ascended, Jesus—the lion (5:5) alone is able to open it and unlock history.*
2. **Can you share a time when you suffered? How did this affect your view of God?**
3. **How do you understand suffering and the sovereignty of God?**
4. *We don’t hear the scrolls words but see them acted out. Because the Church only features in the 5th seal the suffering in view here is universal. To answer the question, will the church survive the suffering, we must turn to ch. 7.*
5. *Vv. 1–8 summons the four horsemen of the apocalypse, famous symbols from Revelation* *(see Zech 1 and 6).* **What historically did riders represent? What message do they bring?**
   1. Horse 1[[3]](#footnote-3)-
   2. Horse 2[[4]](#footnote-4)-
   3. Horse 3[[5]](#footnote-5)-
   4. Horse 4[[6]](#footnote-6)-
6. *They do not represent total destruction (notice the limits) nor the end of the world, but rather are present reminders of themes that have rolled out across sinful history. They point to a far worse judgement on sin to come.*
7. *The scroll is God’s will or plan for history. These seals represent suffering. In one sense they represent the curse of the Fall, but in another sense…* **Going back to Q-3, what does this speak about the mystery of suffering and sovereignty?[[7]](#footnote-7)**
   1. How else do we see God’s sovereignty in this passage?
8. **Faced with terrible suffering, even persecution (next), how is it reassuring as Christians to know that our God, in perfect wisdom and goodness, in in charge of it all (Ro 8:28)?**
9. *The fifth seal (vv. 9–11) moves from earth to heaven where we see martyrs (those who’ve borne witness to Christ with their lives) crying out for justice. The Church does not escape the tribulations of history. From Nero to the Middle East to Communist China, Christians have died for their faith by the thousands.* How does this seal mark persecution of Christians as the greatest injustice? Does the world see such persecution as unjust?
10. **What is the difference between their treatment on earth and in heaven?**
11. *In a cyclical pattern of history and consummation, the sixth seal finally represents what the Old Testament calls “the day of the Lord.” The saints finally get their answer!*
12. Vv. 12–14- How do we know this is symbolism for an event beyond John’s description? What is the essence of what he is describing?
13. Vv. 15–17- What is the response of ALL the residents of the earth to the Lord’s return? How is it fascinating that everything the world thinks is permanent comes unmoored? As the truth they always knew but suppressed comes true, what do they wish for? The clock is ticking. Where will you be on that day? *The wrath of God must be dealt with: either on the cross or on this day.*
    1. Why need Christians not fear in the face of any of the seals?
14. *Two questions remain:*
    1. In the picture of seal 6, where are the Christians? *Rewinding the scene, ch. 7 answers that question: they are protected and or secure in heaven.*
    2. What is the seventh seal? It comes in ch. 8:1, with a pause to receive the prayers of the saints, which consummate God’s justice in the completion of the day of the Lord—He hears our prayers!

**NEXT TIME:** December 22, Rev 13- The 1st Beast (\*Last Life Group until the New Year)

1. Earliest authorities state it was John, the beloved apostle. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For this study I am indebted to a friend’s commentary: Steve Wilmshurst, *Revelation: The Final Word*. UK: Welwyn Press, 2008. Apart from our view on the millennium our approach to Revelation is very similar. It sees the middle chapters as cyclical and not chronological. Giving different angles on history to help Christians conquer. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. White horses were part of the Roman victory parades. Bows were known to other empires. The aggressive symbols here speak of imperial conquest throughout history, from the Barbarian invasions to Hitler to modern conflicts. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A horse of aggression and war (red), with a large sword (great destruction), represents civil war to suicide bombers, this is violence. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A denarius was a day’s wage. The scales are not for justice but rations. Oil is a basic food. The picture is one of subsistence, even starvation. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. An unhealthy colour for death itself, death not by war or starvation or violence but disease. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Either God is incapable of dealing with suffering (or somehow self-limits himself to allow free choice), is directly responsible for suffering, uses suffering to accomplish His purposes, or is the author of suffering without being the agent of it. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)