

Revelation 6

“How Long, O Lord?”

Adventure to Travel w/ Children > Plan, Expectation, Packing > EXCITEMENT
BEGIN before long > “WHEN are we going to get there?” “How much Longer?”

Spiritual Children of Jesus > Disciples > also stuck on the WHEN Question
Jesus & Disciples see Herod’s Impressive Temple > All Coming Down Someday
“Tell us,” they said, “*when will this happen*, and what will be the sign of your
coming and of the end of the age?” Matthew 24.3

AFTER Resurrection, Just BEFORE Ascension: “Lord, are you *at this time* going
to restore the kingdom to Israel?” Acts 1.6

Perhaps WHY here NOW > Hear Message of Revelation > When WORLD END??
Now that G.W. Bush is Re-Elected will Kingdom of God come on Air Force One?
Jesus often ANSWERS our QUESTIONS > by ASKING MORE QUESTIONS

TODAY’S Question > If the Lion-Lamb has Conquered, already enthroned,
then WHY is the World still a place of Evil, Violence, and Misery?

1. God’s Judgment revealed in Pictures
2. God’s Judgment follows His Plan
3. God’s Judgment is Patient
4. God’s Judgment begins in the Present
5. God’s Judgment is Perfect
6. God’s Judgment is Particular
7. God’s Judgment is Purifying

1. God’s Judgment revealed in Pictures

Revelation to be SEEN & HEARD > TECHNICOLOR and SURROUNDSOUND

“Since the church never knows when Christ will return, each generation must live
in expectancy of His coming. Therefore the Book of Revelation must be able to
communicate truth to each generation, not just the people alive when these events
occur. This explains why the apostle used so much symbolism, for symbols never
lose their meaning.” Warren Wiersbe

From GOD’S THRONE ROOM to TURBULENT EARTH > Under Sin’s Siege
WELL KNOWN PICTURE > 4 Horsemen of Apocalypse > Gk. for Revelation

Scroll with 7 SEALS > Each one is UNLATCHED by the LAMB
 Breaking Seals > PREPARATION to Reveal Contents > Builds SUSPENSE

- v. 1 “I watched as the Lamb opened”
- v. 1 “I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!"
- v. 2 “I looked”
- v. 3 “I heard”
- v. 5 “I heard”
- v. 6 “Then I heard what sounded like a voice”
- v. 7 “I heard the voice”
- v. 8 “I looked”
- v. 9 “I saw under the altar”
- v. 10 “They called out in a loud voice”
- v. 12 “I watched”

“Revelation gave first-century Christians insight into the purposes of God in their time. Thus, interpretations of the visions that lie completely beyond the original readers’ frame of reference are suspect. If we begin our inquiry with the assumption that God intended first-century believers to get the message of Revelation, we should read its visions against the backdrop of Old Testament imagery rather than forcing them into the template of twenty-first century technologies or politics.”

Dennis E. Johnson

Structure of Message > FOUR Colored Horses from Prophet Zechariah
 Substance of Message > // Jesus’ Sermons about End Times in Synoptic Gospels

2. God’s Judgment follows His Plan

7 Seals > 7 Trumpets > 7 Bowls >> Pattern 4, 2, Interlude, Final: 7th CLIMAX
 7th One – Seal, Trumpet, & Bowl >> SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Plan BEGAN in ETERNITY PAST > Continues throughout ETERNITY FUTURE

Christ is FOCUS OF PLAN: “when Christ came into the world, he said:... `Here I am--*it is written about me in the scroll*-- I have come to do your will, O God.”

Hebrews 10.5,7

500 years before Jesus became Man > God told Prophet Daniel: “you, Daniel, *close up and seal the words of the scroll* until the time of the end” Daniel 12.4

NOW > Christ has Come, Christ has Died, Christ has Risen > He OPENS Scroll!

- v. 1 “the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals”
- v. 3 “the Lamb opened the second seal”
- v. 5 “the Lamb opened the third seal”
- v. 7 “the Lamb opened the fourth seal”
- v. 9 “he opened the fifth seal”
- v. 12 “I watched as he opened the sixth seal”

NOT ONLY does He OPEN Scroll > He ORCHESTRATES their EVENTS

v. 2 See Rider on White Horse: “he *was given* a crown”

v. 4 Fiery Red Horse: “rider *was given* power...To him *was given* a large sword”

v. 8 Pale Horse > Tandem Riders Death and Hades: “They *were given* power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts”

4 HORSEMEN race Across Earth > Conquest, Bloodshed, Famine, Death
NOTHING NEW > Story of Fallen Humanity > from Cain and Abel in Eden

5th Seal > SCENE Shifts to God’s ALTAR > SOMETHING NEW! > CHURCH!
NOT Classical Apocalyptic Style NO HOPE! > HOPE for People of God in Him

PLAN of God > FOCUSED on Christ > Christ forever United with His Church
“They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and *with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.*”
Revelation 17.14

vs. 9-11 “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, ‘*How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?*’ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, *until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.*”

“The days on God’s calendar are marked off, one by one, in the blood of the martyrs.”
Dennis E. Johnson

Two Altars in Jewish Temple > both Represent Covenant Relationship with God
 Their SACRIFICE // Altar of Burnt Offering > Their PRAYERS // Altar of Incense

“under the altar” > God sees their Untimely Deaths as Pleasing Sacrifice
 “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” Psalm 116.15

“John knows nothing of a ‘rapture’ of the church by which Christians are spared the tribulation that normally accompanies a godly life. They ascend to heaven through suffering and death, as Jesus did: they are not taken to heaven to escape the sufferings of earth.”
 Robert H. Mounce

QUOTIENT of Suffering must be FULFILLED by God’s Servants:
 “Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.”
 Colossians 1.24

LACKING? NOT in Christ’s Accomplishment of Salvation > FINISHED WORK
 LACKING in Suffering > Task of ANNOUNCING that Salvation to the WORLD

Martyrdom > Not Tragic Accidents > TRIUMPHANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS
 God not WAITING for Martyrs > PLAN will not be HASTENED or DELAYED

3. God’s Judgment is Patient

vs. 10,11 "How long, Sovereign Lord... they were told to *wait a little longer*"

We ask SAME QUESTION > How Long? God, WHAT are you WAITING FOR?
 WORLD: Terrorists kill Children > Car Bombs > Sex Slaves > Corrupt Politicians

Send LIGHTNING BOLTS from Heaven? GROUND OPEN UP Swallow them?
 SLOW PACE > 7 Seals > followed by 7 Trumpets > followed by 7 Bowls

“In the last days scoffers will come...They will say, "Where is this `coming' he promised?...Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation” 2 Peter 3.3,15

TESTIMONY of TERRORIST > “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.”

1 Timothy 1.15,16

4. God's Judgment begins in the Present

4 Horsemen > God's INSTRUMENT to Judge those who Oppose Him & Church

"It is good to place oneself back in one of the seven churches and listen to the visions as they are being read...those first listeners would undoubtedly have recoiled in terror as war, bloodshed, famine, and death galloped furiously across the stage of their imagination. Visions at best are to be experienced rather than analyzed. Those who approach Revelation with a sympathetic imagination are most apt to understand its true meaning." Robert H. Mounce

v. 2 "I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest."

Symbolizes the Spirit of Conquest and Militarism

// Parthians: Feared enemies of Rome > Famous Archers who rode White Horses

v. 4 "Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword."

Symbolizes Slaughter and Bloodshed

Single year, A.D. 68-69, Rome ruled by 4 Different Emperors > Bloody Coups
From 67-37 B.C. 100,000+ Died in Revolutions and Rebellions in Palestine

FRIGHTENING Truth about OURSELVES > Peace is not our Nature > from God
Remove Peace > Reveals what we are without Restraining Grace of God

"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men." Romans 1.18

FAR FROM PEACE LOVERS: "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know." Romans 3.13-17

vs. 5,6 "When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"

Black Horse > Rider holds Scales > Voice Announces Famine: Wheat & Barley
 Time of Scarcity > Basic Food at Greatly Inflated Prices > Not yet Starvation
 Prices 10 to 15 Times Higher > Day's work = Loaf of Wheat Bread > Scarcity

Roots of the Olive Trees & Grape Vines go Deeper > RESILIENT, SURVIVE
 Feast AND Famine > Poor get POORER > Rich get RICHER

v. 8 "I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth."

PALE = word for Chlorine > Pale Green > Ashen Color of Death
 GRIM RESULT of Conquest, Bloodshed, and Famine > DEATH

ONE of MANY > Historical Expressions of BIBLICAL TRUTH:

"In 165, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, a devastating epidemic swept through the Roman Empire. Some medical historians suspect it was the first appearance of smallpox in the West...During the fifteen-year duration of the epidemic, from a quarter to a third of the empire's population died from it, including Marcus Aurelius himself, in 180 in Vienna" Rodney Stark

"The first four seals form a unity. They show us the self defeating character of sin. When the spirit of self-aggrandizement and conquest is abroad all God needs to do is let events take their course and sinners will inevitably be punished." Leon Morris

God's Judgment begins in the Present > "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe *stands condemned already* because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." John 3.18

5. God's Judgment is Perfect

"The blood-thirsty terrorist or warmonger may seem to be all-powerful as he robs people of peace and security and causes them to engage in killing and destruction; but the control of human affairs remains with God, the righteous Judge."

Philip Edgcumbe Hughes

v. 10 "How long, Sovereign Lord, *holy and true*, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"

God = "holy and true" > Totally Separate from all Evil > Vindicates with Integrity

From under Altar > Plea for Vindication > Not Revenge > Reputation of God
 “Why should the nations say, ‘Where is their God?’ Before our eyes, make known among the nations that you avenge the outpoured blood of your servants.” Ps 79.10

“The inhabitants of the earth” = Human race in Hostility to God > Worship Beast

“It seems strange to us that worship and wrath should go together, but this is because we do not fully understand either the holiness of God or the sinfulness of man.”
 Warren Wiersbe

Abraham Confessed: “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Genesis 18.25

6. God’s Judgment is Particular

v. 12 “I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake.”

EARTHQUAKE Announces the COMING OF GOD > just as He shook Mt. Sinai

Great Cosmic Disturbances > End of Time at Hand

Chaos in Heavenly Bodies = Collapse of God’s Providential Control

Crashing of Universe > OT quotes > Apocalyptic ‘day of the Lord’ > not Scientific

“The Mediterranean sea was a primary element in Roman culture...sun, moon, stars, mountains and islands are basic points of reference which enable accurate positioning and safe travel. If these points of reference are lost, total disorientation results—the whole structure of life comes apart.” M. Robert Mulholland, Jr.

Some UTTERLY CONFUSED > HOPELESSLY LOST > SHOCK and PANIC

vs. 15-17 “Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

Those who normally have Reason to Feel Secure > Will be Utterly Undone
 High and Low Will Panic in Wild Confusion

People of Roman Asia > Recently Massive Earthquake > Saw Pompeii BURIED

God will send a SKYQUAKE and an EARTHQUAKE > Everything will Shake!

People Cry to Mountains for Death > rather than face Wrath of the Lamb

Southern Calif > Homes in Hillsides > Summer Fires burn Protective Vegetation
 Winter Rains > Pour Down barren Hillsides > Hurling Mud and Boulders
 Homes down below sometimes CRUSHED > Unsuspecting Occupants Smothered

Now No Place to Hide > Better a Crushing Avalanche than Wrath of the Lamb

All Humanity Responds to LAMB > FLEE in PANIC > or FALL in PRAISE

7. God's Judgment is Purifying

vs. 9,11 "I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained...each of them was given a white robe"

White Robe = Blessedness and Purity

God's Judgment > PUNISH SINNERS AND PURIFY SAINTS

Wait > Rest in your Blessedness > more Brothers and Sisters are Coming to Join
 "How long?" > Clear Answer: It will get Worse before it gets Better

"John is not trying to terrify the saints. He is using familiar apocalyptic imagery to reassure them that their God is over all. God is bringing his purposes to pass, and he will do so though it means that this world order, and indeed this whole mighty universe, pass away."
 Leon Morris

Saints Not Unhappy or Insecure > How could they be? > at Home with the Lord
 "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on...they will rest from their labor"
 Revelation 14.13

"I have decided to assemble the nations, to gather the kingdoms and to pour out my wrath on them - all my fierce anger. The whole world will be consumed by the fire of my jealous anger. Then will I purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD and serve him shoulder to shoulder."
 Zephaniah 3.8,9

"Who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears?... he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness"
 Malachi 3.2,3

“As Christians see societies crumble and collapse, our response should not be terrified alarm, as though our security were bound up with a fragile human network of law and order, but anticipation and confidence: the Lamb is now on the throne, with God’s plan for history firmly in hand.” Dennis E. Johnson

“We wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” Titus 2.3-14

Most IMPORTANT QUESTION is Not WHEN, but WHO > Who Can Stand?

“O LORD, God of Israel, you are righteous!..Here we are before you in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence.” Ezra 9.15

v. 17 “For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”
PRESENT > HAS COME > NOW He Rules and Reigns > Savior & Sovereign

New York Yankees > ALL WINTER thinking of Boston Red Sox > 1 more Out
John Kerry > Spend REST OF LIFE thinking of Election of 2004
LIFE GOES ON > Opportunities will COME AGAIN

NOT WITH GOD > Miss Opportunity of Salvation > Spend ETERNITY in Regret

No SECOND CHANCE > NO Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda > ALL Ends at Death
“man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” Hebrews 9.27

Will you HIDE under Rocks from His Wrath?
Will you DWELL under His Altar by His Grace?

“Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; the rocks are shattered before him. The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him” Nahum 1.6,7

Revelation 6

1. I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!"
2. I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.
3. When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!"
4. Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.
5. When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand.
6. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"
7. When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!"
8. I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.
9. When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.
10. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"
11. Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.
12. I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red,
13. and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind.
14. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.
15. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.
16. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face 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 can stand?"