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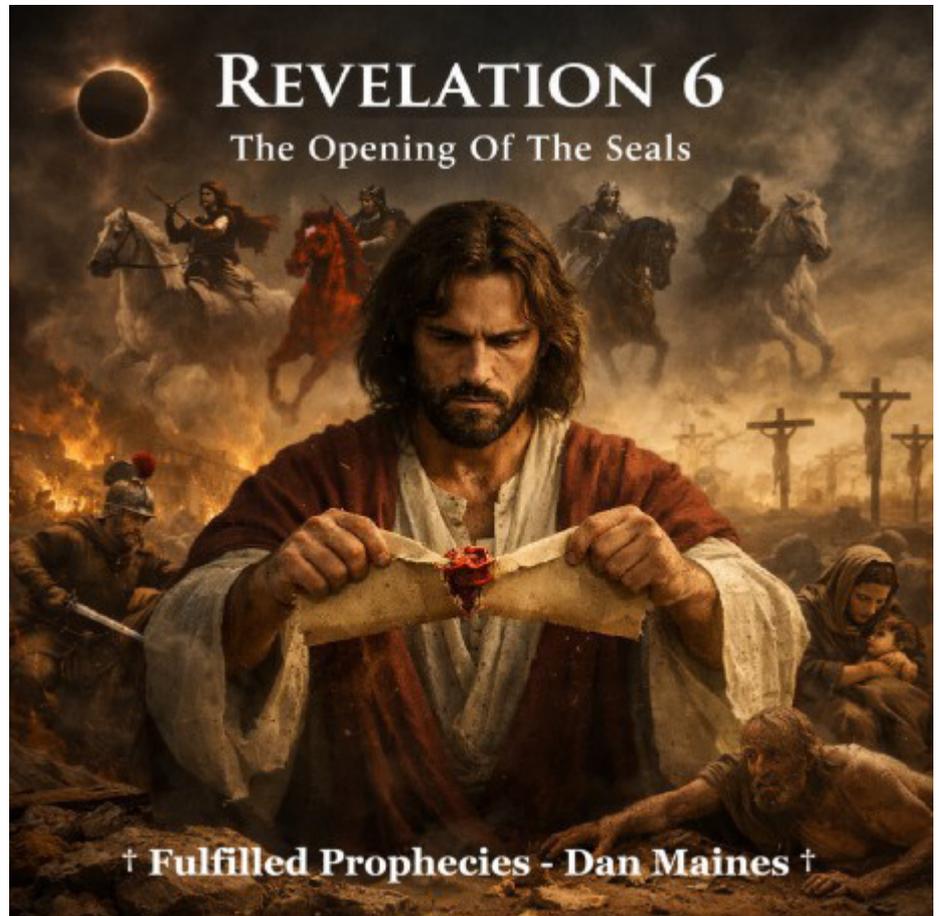
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## Revelation 6 The Opening Of The Seals



By Dan Maines

## Revelation 6 The Opening Of The Seals

### Introduction

† Revelation 6 begins the opening of the scroll that only the Lamb was worthy to open. Each seal reveals the unfolding judgments that lead to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the old covenant order. The Lamb who was slain is now revealed as the one governing history and executing covenant judgment.

† The sequence of the seals mirrors the order Jesus gave in the

Olivet Discourse. Wars, famine, pestilence, persecution, and cosmic signs appear in the same pattern. This agreement between Matthew 24 and Revelation 6 shows that both passages describe the same first century crisis that ended with the fall of Jerusalem.

† The Lamb's authority over the scroll proves that Christ was not a victim of history. He was the ruler directing events that would bring judgment upon the system that rejected Him.

### **Revelation 6:1-2**

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

† The rider is best understood as a figure of conquest rather than Christ Himself, since Christ is the one opening the seals, and the sequence follows the same order Jesus gave in Matthew 24, showing the riders represent unfolding judgments (Matthew 24:6-8).

† The crown is given to the rider, which shows temporary authority granted within God's judgment plan rather than the rightful kingship that belongs to Christ alone.

† Christ is later shown riding a white horse in Revelation 19, but there He bears many crowns and a sword from His mouth. The differences show that the rider in Revelation 6 represents conquest permitted within God's judgment rather than Christ Himself (Revelation 19:11-16).

† The horse imagery also echoes Old Testament judgment symbolism where mounted forces are associated with God's providential activity in the earth (Zechariah 1:8-11; Zechariah 6:1-8).

† The imagery of conquest fits the Roman advance across Judea as rebellion spread throughout the region. Josephus records Rome moving through the land suppressing uprisings before the final siege of Jerusalem (Josephus, Jewish War

2.18).

### **Revelation 6:3-4**

When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come. And another, a red horse, went out, and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that people would kill one another, and a great sword was given to him.

† The red horse represents bloodshed and internal violence spreading throughout the land. Peace is removed and civil conflict erupts among the people.

† The word earth can often mean land in prophetic passages, and in this context it fits the covenant land rather than the entire world.

† Josephus describes violent factional warfare inside Jerusalem where rival groups slaughtered each other even before the Roman siege fully began (Josephus, Jewish War 4.3-4.5).

† Jesus predicted these exact conditions when He warned that wars and rumors of wars would precede the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:6).

### **Revelation 6:5-6**

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

† The scales symbolize rationing and controlled distribution of food during a time of severe scarcity. Food must be weighed carefully because supplies are limited.

† A denarius was the daily wage of a laborer. The price described here means a man would spend an entire day's wage just to purchase enough food for himself.

† Siege warfare regularly produced extreme food shortages

because grain supply routes were cut off. This explains the measured rations and inflated prices described in the vision.

† Josephus records that famine inside Jerusalem became so severe that people fought violently over scraps of food as starvation consumed the population (Josephus, Jewish War 5.10.2-5.10.3).

† Jesus predicted that famine would follow warfare during the events leading to Jerusalem's fall (Matthew 24:7).

### **Revelation 6:7-8**

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

† The pale horse gathers the previous judgments into a combined catastrophe. War, famine, disease, and death sweep through the land together.

† Sword, famine, wild beasts, and plague follow the covenant judgment pattern already established in the Law and the prophets (Leviticus 26:25-26; Deuteronomy 28:21-24; Ezekiel 14:21).

† The phrase a fourth of the earth indicates a limited judgment rather than worldwide destruction, which fits a regional crisis centered in the land.

† Tacitus and Josephus both record massive death during the Jewish war caused by warfare, starvation, and disease (Tacitus, Histories 5.13; Josephus, Jewish War 6.9).

† The mention of wild animals reflects the breakdown of civilization as cities collapsed and populations were destroyed.

### **Revelation 6:9-11**

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been killed because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained,

and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who live on the earth. And a white robe was given to each of them, and they were told that they were to rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers who were to be killed even as they had been, was completed also.

† The martyrs appear beneath the altar because sacrificial blood in the temple was poured out at the base of the altar. Their deaths are portrayed as offerings presented before God (Leviticus 4:7).

† Their cry for justice agrees with Jesus' warning that the blood of the righteous prophets would come upon that generation that rejected the Messiah (Matthew 23:34-36).

† Early Christian history confirms widespread persecution before Jerusalem fell. Stephen was stoned, James was executed, and believers suffered repeated attacks for the testimony of Christ (Acts 7; Acts 12).

† Tacitus records Nero's persecution of Christians in Rome, confirming that martyrdom was already taking place during this period (Tacitus, Annals 15.44).

† The phrase a little while longer shows that judgment was near rather than thousands of years away.

### **Revelation 6:12-14**

And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake, and the sun became as black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

† The prophets frequently used cosmic language to describe the downfall of nations. This imagery signals covenant judgment rather than literal destruction of the universe.

† The collapsing heaven imagery reflects the overthrow of established orders, where heaven and earth language is used symbolically for political and covenantal upheaval (Isaiah 13:10; Isaiah 34:4; Ezekiel 32:7-8).

† Jesus applied the same cosmic language to the destruction of Jerusalem within the generation that heard Him speak (Matthew 24:29-34).

† Josephus reports unusual signs said to have appeared over Jerusalem during the war, including a star shaped like a sword (Josephus, Jewish War 6.5.3).

† Tacitus also mentioned prodigies reported in Judea during that time (Tacitus, Histories 5.13).

### **Revelation 6:15-17**

Then the kings of the earth, the eminent people, the commanders, the wealthy, the strong, and every slave and free person hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, and they said to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the sight 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 is able to stand.

† The cry for the mountains to fall on them comes from Hosea's prophecy concerning judgment upon Israel (Hosea 10:8).

† Jesus repeated this prophecy while warning about Jerusalem's coming destruction (Luke 23:30).

† Josephus records that people hid in caves, tunnels, and underground chambers during the Roman siege trying to escape the slaughter (Josephus, Jewish War 6.7.3; 6.9.4).

† The declaration that the day of wrath has come shows that the judgment long warned by the prophets and by Jesus was no longer future but had arrived (Revelation 1:1-3).

### **Historical References**

† Josephus provides detailed eyewitness descriptions of the Jewish war including civil violence, famine, and the destruction

of Jerusalem.

† Tacitus recorded disasters and unusual signs surrounding the Roman campaign in Judea.

† Tertullian described the blood of the martyrs as testimony to the truth of the gospel and evidence of the early church's faithfulness under persecution.

## **How It Applies To Us Today**

† Christ rules over history. The Lamb who opened the seals continues to reign over nations and kingdoms today.

† God's prophetic word is trustworthy. The agreement between Jesus' prophecy, John's vision, and recorded history confirms the reliability of Scripture.

† God sees the suffering of His people. The martyrs beneath the altar remind us that every sacrifice made for Christ is remembered.

† Faithfulness remains our calling. The early church endured persecution with courage, and believers today can live with confidence in the reign of Christ.

## **Q & A Appendix**

**Q:** How do we know the seals refer to the first century?

**A:** Jesus gave the same sequence of events and said they would occur within the generation that heard Him speak (Matthew 24:6-34).

**Q:** Why is cosmic language used if the world was not literally ending?

**A:** The prophets used cosmic imagery to describe the fall of nations (Isaiah 13:10; Isaiah 34:4; Ezekiel 32:7-8).

**Q:** Why are the martyrs under the altar?

**A:** The imagery reflects the sacrificial system where blood was poured at the base of the altar (Leviticus 4:7).

**Q:** Why does Revelation describe only six seals here?

**A:** The seventh seal opens in Revelation 8 and introduces the trumpet judgments which continue the unfolding judgment against Jerusalem.

**Q:** Why does the vision mention a fourth of the earth instead of the whole world?

**A:** The judgment is limited rather than global and fits the regional crisis centered in the land during the Jewish war.

**Q:** Is there Old Testament background for the four horsemen?

**A:** Yes. Zechariah uses horsemen and chariots connected with God's activity in the earth, and Ezekiel lists sword, famine, wild beasts, and plague as covenant judgments, which strongly parallels Revelation 6 (Zechariah 1:8-11; Zechariah 6:1-8; Ezekiel 14:21).

**Q:** Why do the people hide in caves and rocks during the sixth seal?

**A:** During the Roman siege many people attempted to escape death by hiding in caves, tunnels, and tombs around Jerusalem. Josephus records that people fled into underground passages and caverns when the city was being destroyed (Josephus, Jewish War 6.7.3; 6.9.4).

**Q:** What does it mean when the passage says the great day of Their wrath has come?

**A:** This statement marks the moment when the judgment that had been warned about by the prophets and by Jesus was finally recognized by the people experiencing it. The destruction of Jerusalem revealed that the wrath of the Lamb had arrived (Matthew 24:30-34; Luke 21:20-22).

**† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

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## Source Index

† Revelation 6:1-17; Matthew 24:6-34; Matthew 23:34-36; Matthew 20:2; Matthew 24:30-34; Luke 21:20-22; Luke 23:30; Hosea 10:8; Leviticus 4:7; Leviticus 26:25-26; Deuteronomy 28:21-24; Ezekiel 14:21; Isaiah 13:10; Isaiah 34:4; Ezekiel 32:7-8; Joel 2:30-31; Acts 7; Acts 12; Revelation 19:11-16; Zechariah 1:8-11; Zechariah 6:1-8

† Josephus, Jewish War 2.18, 4.3-4.5, 5.10.2-5.10.3, 6.5.3, 6.7.3, 6.9.4; Tacitus, Histories 5.13; Tacitus, Annals 15.44; Tertullian, Apology 50

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