

God's Master Plan In Prophecy

Lesson 7 – The Seven Seals

Key Scriptures: Revelation 6:1-8:1 and Zechariah 6:1-8

Introduction

Rev 6:1 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."

In our previous lesson, we learned of a book that was in the right hand of God that was sealed up with seven seals. In the vision found in the 4th and 5th chapters of Revelation, we learned that the seals could not be opened until the Lamb had been slain. The book represented the complete revelation of Jesus Christ and God's grand plan of redemption for mankind. Obviously, the "Lamb that was slain" is a reference to the cross and Jesus' death at Calvary so none of the seals could have been opened until after Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, died on the cross. In this lesson, we will look at the seals themselves and discover that they are either philosophies, ways of thinking, or events that must be unfurled throughout the earth before the complete revelation of God's plan to the world. All of these seven things are "seals" that are sealing up the final events and so for the final things to take place and for the book of God's complete redemption to be fully read, these seals must first be opened.

This vision that John saw of the seven seals is a bit narrower in scope than some of the others that we have studied in that a definite timetable is given. These seals must represent things that come after Calvary but before the Millennial Reign of Christ where the revelation of Christ is complete to the world. As we move through the remaining visions that John saw in the book of Revelation, we will discover that the visions become narrower and narrower in scope.

The 1st through 4th Seals: The Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Rev 6:2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

The first four seals are commonly known as "the Horsemen of the Apocalypse" they were horses with riders that were seen by John. Each of the horses were of a different color and each rider has different characteristics. The first seal was a white horse and someone was sitting upon the horse with a bow. A crown was given to him and set out "to conquer."

Rev 6:3-4 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." 4 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 men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

The second seal was a red horse to whose rider was granted "to take peace from the earth" and to cause men to kill each other. Fittingly, the rider had a great sword given to him.

Rev 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 he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 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 third seal was a black horse and the rider held a pair of balances in his hand. As John viewed the scene another voice came from around the throne uttering common sayings of the day denoting trade.

Rev 6:7-8 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." 8 I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he 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 with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

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The fourth seal was another horse, this one an “ashen” or pale color. The name of the one that sat upon this horse was “Death,” and “Hades” – meaning “the grave” – followed closely behind. They were given power over a fourth of the entire earth to kill with famine, war, and hunger.

Many theories have been proposed as to what has been represented by these four horsemen that John saw, but let’s try to allow scripture to interpret scripture by finding an Old Testament passage about the same vision. It turns out that the prophet-of-old Zechariah also prophesied about these horsemen and his record of the event gives us some additional information:¹

Zech 6:1 Now I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming forth from between the two mountains; and the mountains were bronze mountains.

Mountains in prophetic visions, as we have seen, are usually representative of leadership or kingdoms and things made of brass and bronze is always in scripture representative of sin.² It is obvious that these chariots – which we are told in the next verses are pulled by horses – came from earthly kingdoms of man and were not necessarily a direct product of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. That is they are earthy in origin and represent things that men would produce and bring forth on the earth.

Zech 6:2-3 With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, 3 with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot strong dappled horses.

These chariots came out together in Zechariah's vision so no particular order is given here, but the colors match the vision of John in the 6th chapter of Revelation: red, black, white, and “dappled” or “pale” colored horses! The fact that Zechariah saw them come out together seems to indicate that they are fulfilled in the same general time era and probably means that the first four seals that John saw would be revealed and opened close together time wise as compared to the later three seals.

Zech 6:4-5 Then I spoke and said to the angel who was speaking with me, "What are these, my lord?" 5 The angel replied to me, "These are the four spirits of heaven, going forth after standing before the Lord of all the earth,

Zechariah asked the question that we would have wanted him to ask: “what are these?” The angel responded by saying that they are “four spirits of the heaven.” In the original Hebrew, the term “heaven” is plural and actually reads, “heavens” indicating that it is referring to the sky and the atmosphere of the earth and not of the spiritual abode of God Almighty. These “spirits” have been standing before the Lord of all the earth” which is figurative language indicating that God has been restraining them and keeping them from going forth until an appointed time. The term “spirits” is literally “winds” or “breaths” and essentially this verse is saying these horses represent intangible things that have been held back by God until the time was right.

Compare this to the fact that the four horses of the first four seals in Revelation could not be opened or revealed until after the “Lamb had been slain” and the similarities then are obvious between John's vision in Revelation and Zechariah's vision in this chapter: both saw horses that represented something else, both saw four horses, the colors match, and they could not be released or have been “standing” until a certain time was determined by God! The angel goes on to give more information about the black, white, and pale horses which we will cover in a moment, but let's go back to Revelation and, beginning with the red horse and using the additional information already provided by Zechariah, see if we can identify “these spirits in the earth” that are represented by the horses. Keep in mind that because they came from a bronze mountain, they are likely spirits that govern earthly kingdoms.

Rev 6:3-4 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." 4 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 men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

Let’s begin with the second seal, the red horse. There is an international spirit that has moved through the earth today that is known as the “red power” and we call it “communism.” Nations that embrace this political “spirit” or philosophy are

¹ Zechariah’s vision is conveniently found in the first few verses of the 6th chapter of his book which makes it easy to remember because he saw the same thing that John saw in the first few verses of the 6th chapter of the book of Revelation. This is a coincidence because chapters and verse divisions are not found in the original languages and were added later by translators, but it does make for a handy memory aid.

² For example, everything in Moses’ Tabernacle that was outside where the sin sacrifices were offered was made of bronze.

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referred to as "red" nations. The three most prominent examples of Communism at the time of the writing of this study are North Korea, Cuba, and China. In fact, China is sometimes referred to as "Red China" because they are so drenched in communism. This spirit of communism teaches that the government should have complete control over the economic system of the individual and should firmly dictate all economic action. Disobedience to the system is usually punished severely and violently. Communism also teaches that, in times of unrest, people should violently rise up against their leaders and overthrow them. Therefore everywhere communism has sprung up, war and great bloodshed has been the result. This fits the prophecy perfectly that this "red spirit" would "take peace from the earth and kill one another." The time of the Cold War was brought on by fear of the then Communistic Soviet Union's development of nuclear warheads. Communism has always caused war and violence and unrest!

Rev 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 he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 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 third seal involved the rider of the black horse having a "pair of scales" in his hand as was commonly used in the market. Old time balance scales are today a very common international symbol of trade and commerce. There is an international spirit that embodies commerce, and it is called "capitalism." Capitalistic countries depend upon international trade and a competitive industrial market to balance the economy – that is, if you think that the food prices are too high in one store, then you can shop somewhere else because there are many places to choose from! Countries that are modern examples of capitalism are the United States, Germany, France, Spain, Great Britain, and just about every other wealthy nation.

A key aspect of capitalistic nations are their ability to buy and sell stocks and shares and commodities for profit at "stock exchanges." Verse 6 above sounds exactly like a stock market report as the voice dictated how much wheat and barley were selling for! The voice also said "do not damage the oil and the wine." The easiest way to get voted out of office in a capitalistic nation is to serve in a time when the economy suffers in that nation! In political columns and views, capitalism is often referred to as "the black power" especially when it is being contrasted with the "red" of communism.³ The amazing point is that both John and Zechariah saw that these political systems would arise thousands of years ahead of their fulfillment and yet the spirits of capitalism and communism did not arise until after Calvary!

Rev 6:2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

Much supposition has been given about what the white horse of the first seal represented and many people have been taught that this was the antichrist and others have taught that it was Jesus Christ, Himself. Jesus Christ's return is described with a horse and in great detail later on in the book,⁴ but, in view of the other horses and because Zechariah saw these things associated with the earth and as the product of sinful human beings, it would make sense for it to represent an international spirit that has influence in the whole earth before the coming of either the Antichrist or the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Although the book of Revelation as a whole is not in chronological order, the individual visions – particularly a vision such as this one where the seals are numbered – are likely in chronological order with themselves. That this is the first seal indicates that whatever is represented by this horse and rider comes forth after Calvary but before the advent of both communism and capitalism.

There is an international spirit which is represented by the color white and we call it the Roman Catholic Church. While parading as a religion, the Catholic church is actually extremely political in nature. The pope dresses in white, has a white car called the "popemobile," has a white helicopter, and a white jet plane! If he had a horse, then what color would it be? The rider also was given a crown. History teaches us that the first popes did not originally wear a crown but were given a crown in approximately 700 A.D. The other clue of this scripture is that the one on the horse "went out conquering and to conquer." The Roman Catholic Church's main agenda is to "conquer" countries through political power. They do not fight physically but capture from within. The pope is considered the "vicar of the universe" or ruler of the world and if a leader is catholic, they are supposed to obey and listen to the voice of the pope. Some of the main political problems in recent years between the Vatican in Rome and the Catholic church in America have been because the American church refused

³ Flip through some old *Time* magazines and you will see this symbolism often used.

⁴ See the 19th chapter of Revelation.

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to obey the political demands of the pope. Also, Catholicism did not arise until after Calvary but came many years before the concepts of capitalism and communism came forth so the time table fits the prophecy perfectly!

Rev 6:7-8 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." 8 I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he 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 with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

The identity of the fourth horse is given for us: it is Death with Hades, or "the grave" following closely behind. Here death is listed as having four primary tools:

1. "to kill with the sword" or war and crime
2. "famine" or hunger
3. "pestilence" or disease
4. "wild beasts" or wild animals.

All four of these things are most prevalent in third-world countries. Let's see if the rest of the information in Zechariah corresponds to our interpretations of the four horses in Revelation:

Zech 6:6-7 with one of which the black horses are going forth to the north country; and the white ones go forth after them, while the dappled ones go forth to the south country. 7 "When the strong ones went out, they were eager to go to patrol the earth." And He said, "Go, patrol the earth." So they patrolled the earth.

The black horses, representing capitalism, went into the "north country." It is interesting that the overwhelming majority of capitalistic countries are north of the earth's equator! The white horses, representing Catholicism, followed the black horses and, the primary religion of almost every capitalistic country is Roman Catholicism. Some of the dappled or "pale-colored" horse representing poverty, disease, and famine, went toward the south country, and indeed most of the third-world countries exist south of the earth's equator. Some of the other pale, strong horses, obviously representing death, went throughout the entire earth showing that death is not a respecter of persons, political climate, or region.

Zech 6:5 Then He cried out to me and spoke to me saying, "See, those who are going to the land of the north have appeased My wrath in the land of the north."

Then the angel talking to Zechariah "cried out" and told him that the horses that went into the north country "have appeased My wrath in the land of the north." This is not a good translation choice by the NASU and it gives the literal reading as a footnote. Literally the Hebrew reads, "have caused my spirit to rest" or, put another way, "have quieted my spirit" in the land of the north. It was the black and the white horses that went into the north country, and it is true that the economic blessings of capitalism and the formal traditionalism of Catholicism have indeed worked together to "quiet" the moving of God's Spirit throughout these countries! God's Spirit does not want to rest in this day and age but to work and to move and to flow and to bless. How come Ethiopia can have millions receive the Holy Ghost in a matter of weeks and yet in America most people do not even attend a church regularly, or if they do, they do their mass for one hour and walk out unchanged? It is because financial prosperity and the lies of a false religion have convinced people in America that they do not really need God but those in some of these third-world countries have no where else to turn for help but God! Even the Apostolic church in America must guard ourselves against becoming so caught up in having things and making money that we do not forget about the reason for living: serving God and spreading this glorious message!

The 5th and 6th Seal

Rev 6:9-10 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; 10 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 dwell on the earth?"

The fifth seal is not a horse and rider and is of an entirely different nature. It is the souls "underneath the altar" that "were slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony which they had maintained" crying out to God asking how long it would be before the judgment of His wrath was poured out! The term "soul" here refers to the eternal part of man that lives on after the body decays.

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There are many things about this seal that we do not know but several things should become clear: first, these souls were killed for what they believed in and were thus martyrs. Secondly, when they cry out to God and the fifth seal is fulfilled, the wrath of God cannot have begun to be poured out upon the earth at this time because they would not have to ask, thus this takes place before the Wrath of God is poured out after the Great Tribulation. Every year people are still killed for believing in this message and through the past thousand years of recent history, countless thousands of "Jesus freaks" have been martyred. In the first book of the Bible, we find that when Cain killed Abel, God said that Abel's blood was "crying from the ground."⁵ If the blood of one righteous man who was murdered cried out to God, then what are the blood of the thousands of martyrs doing today? They "are crying out to God" in reminding Him that He is a just God and that justice must be served. We know that blood does not have a voice but that this is a metaphor for the fact that God is in constant remembrance of the evil that has been done in this world.

Rev 6:11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

"White robes" signify righteousness and its product, eternal life⁶ and a white robe was given to each of the martyrs and yet they were told that they must "rest for a little while longer," until more Christians were killed "even as they had been." Obviously, the fifth seal cannot be after the Rapture of the church and the Catching Away of the Saints, because these righteous souls would undoubtedly go in the resurrection of the church and yet they are being told to "rest a little while longer" They must wait until a prophesied time of martyrs should be fulfilled. The only time prophesied about great persecution against the church yet to come is the time of the Great Tribulation which we have seen from Jesus' teaching in the 24th chapter of Matthew happens immediately *before* the wrath of God's judgment is poured out. The fifth seal, then either happens right before or during the Great Tribulation which is probably the time of waiting a "little while longer" that is mentioned here.

Rev 6:12-13 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.

In the sixth seal we have some of the same things that match every description of the wrath of God found in scripture and this is not the Great Tribulation because Satan cannot cause an earthquake or cause the sun to darken or stars to fall. These things are that which only the power of God Almighty can produce. Remember: the Great Tribulation is the wrath of Satan and the persecution of the Antichrist upon Israel and then the church, but the Wrath of God is God's judgment upon the Jews and the world for rejecting Him! We know that "God has not appointed us to wrath"⁷ but He has always allowed the church to go through persecution!⁸ That means that the sixth seal is the Wrath of God and happens after the Great Tribulation and after the Rapture of the Church and the Catching Away of the Saints.

Rev 6:14-16 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

When all of these events of the sixth seal unfold upon the earth, the people in the world will be trying to get away from the "wrath of the Lamb!" This is not the persecution of Satan or the Antichrist, and the next verse makes very clear what is happening:

Rev 6:17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Undeniably, this is the wrath of God! Before we go any further in our study let's take a quick peek at a side-by-side comparison of every major scriptural passage that describes the Wrath of God and doing so brings up a noticeable correlation.⁹

⁵ See Genesis 4:10.

⁶ See Revelation 19:8.

⁷ See 1 Thessalonians 5:9.

⁸ See, for example, the early Apostolic church in the Book of Acts.

⁹ This chart is similar to the one used by Irvin Baxter Jr. in his "The Sequence of Endtime events; Understanding the Endtimes – Level 3" but my wife's grandmother and father have been teaching from a chart similar to this for decades.

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A Comparison of Wrath of God Passages in the Bible

	6th Seal Rev 6:12-17	7th Trump Rev 11:15-19	7th Vial Rev 16:16-21	Jesus Matt 24:29	Ezekiel Ezek 38:18-22
Earthquake	Great Earthquake	An earthquake	Great Earthquake		An earthquake
Sun Black	Sun became black			Sun is darkened	
Moon Blood	Moon became as blood			Moon shall not give her light	
Stars Fall	Stars of heaven fell unto earth			Stars shall fall from heaven	
Mountains & Islands	Mountains and islands were moved		Islands fled away, mountains not found		Mountains thrown down, walls fall
God's Wrath	The great day of His wrath is come	Thy wrath is come	God's wrath		God's wrath
Great voices		Great voices in heaven	Great voice from temple in heaven		
Lightning, Voices, Thunders		Lightning, voices, thunderings	Voices, thunders, lightning	Powers of heavens shall be shaken	
Great Hail		Great hail	Great hail		Great Hailstones
The Context of the Timing	After martyrs of Tribulation	After sounding of last trump	Battle of Armageddon	Immediately AFTER Tribulation	First Battle of Gog and Magog

Obviously, these scriptures are all detailing the same event, the Wrath of God. Later in our studies, we will examine these scriptures in detail and devote an entire lesson to the Wrath of God.

Parenthetical Passages

The book of Revelation has what scholars call “parenthetical passages” between some of the numbered events of the visions. That is, between say, the 6th and 7th trumpets, or here between the 6th and 7th seals John pauses and gives more detail on some other things that are obviously occurring at this time. Identifying and taking those parenthetical passages are helpful because it teaches us much about the timing of those events described.

Revelation 7:1-8 is a parenthetical passage describing 144,000 Jews that were "sealed" at this time between the sixth and seventh seals. We will discuss these verses in detail with the other mention of the 144,000 Jews in Revelation 14:1-5.

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Likewise Revelation 7:9-17 is a parenthetical passage describing the redeemed church standing in heaven! So obviously by this time, the Rapture of the church and the Catching Away of the Saints has already taken place at the events of the 6th seal and before the opening of the 7th seal. We will discuss these verses in detail when we discuss the vision of the Simultaneous Harvest in the 14th chapter of Revelation. Let's complete our study on the seven seals by fast forwarding to the final one.

The 7th Seal

Rev 8:1 When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

The 7th seal is simply described as silence in heaven for about thirty minutes. We do not have any other information beyond the context of the verse to figure out why this silence comes. When we view this scripture in light of what we have already learned about heaven, this is actually a very remarkable event: the angels stop crying "holy, holy, holy" maybe for the first time since their creation; the twenty-four elders stop in their worship for something else.

From the immediate context of the event there are two possible explanations of this event that make sense: first, heaven could be silenced as they watch with awe the wrath of God upon the earth that He created. Secondly, heaven could be silenced as they watch with awe the arrival of the bride – the Apostolic church – for which God died, entering heaven. I tend to lean toward the second because the scripture makes sure to mention such things as the "marriage supper of the Lamb" as an event.¹⁰ When we study the wrath of God in detail we will find it lasts for a few weeks, so the fact that heaven is only quieted for thirty minutes would seem to point to the view that they are watching in awe the union of Jesus and His bride, the church! Think of the seven seal as the grandest wedding ceremony ever held.

Summary

To review what we have learned, a chart of the seven seals might prove helpful:

1st Seal	White Horse	Catholicism	Rev 6:2
2nd Seal	Red Horse	Communism	Rev 6:3-4
3rd Seal	Black Horse	Capitalism	Rev 6:5-6
4th Seal	Pale Horse	Death and Hell	Rev 6:7-8
5th Seal	Souls under the Altar crying out	Before Tribulation	Rev 6:9-11
6th Seal	Wrath of God	After the Rapture and Tribulation	Rev 6:12-17

Parenthetical verses with the sealing of the 144,000 Jews and the redeemed church standing in heaven (obviously after the Rapture of the church). Rev 7:1-17

7th Seal	Silence in heaven for 30 minutes	Probably the Marriage Supper of the Lamb	Rev 8:1
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¹⁰ See Revelation 19:9.