

Revelation 6 Commentary

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Revelation 6:1

Having taken the scroll from the Father, the Lamb now begins to open theseals. As each seal is opened, a new judgment comes upon the earth. John is shown the judgments associated with the first six seals.

Now I saw

The chapter break is unfortunate here. Recall that the previous chapter ended with the exaltation of the Lamb and the recognition of His unique worthiness to open the scroll sealed with seven seals (see commentary on [Revelation 5:5](#)). The scene of worship and praise which John beheld is an important *precursor* to the scenes of judgment to follow. “After five chapters of rather elaborate preparation, ‘the things which must happen soon’ (Rev. 1:1[±]; 4:1[±]) begin to unfold.”¹

when the Lamb opened

The *Lamb* had been slain to redeem men and the world (Rev 5:9[±]). Having paid the ultimate price, He is now worthy to *open* the first seal and initiate the steps which will lead to His global rule on earth. “Each time, with the opening of a seal, nothing is read from the scroll (Lenski), but actions occur that unquestionably match the corresponding part of the scroll exposed through each consecutive seal.”² None of the horrendous judgments about to take place transpire *until* the *Lamb* opens a seal. Human history records a litany of wars, natural disasters, famines, and the like, but what is about to come forth upon the earth is *completely unique*. What has transpired up to now is the routine manifestation of human selfishness, sin, and the fallen world in which man lives. As Jesus explained, “all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet” (Mat. 24:6). But with the opening of the seals by the *Lamb*, a divinely-initiated series of judgments begin which are historically unique in a number of aspects:

1. **Severity** - The judgments are more severe than any previously experienced in history. This coming day is *unique* so there is “none like it” (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Mat. 24:21; Mark 13:19; Rev 3:10[±]). (See [Jacob’s Trouble and the Great Tribulation](#).)
2. **Wrath of the Lamb** - Unlike previous times when God the Father has manifested His wrath upon nations, this is the time of the “wrath of the Lamb” (Rev. 6:16[±]). It is the *Son*, the *Lamb of God*, Who’s wrath is being manifested.
3. **The Final Flowering of Sin** - Humanism and Satanism will be at their apex on a global scale. The *ascent of man*, as humanists view human history, will have reached its apex—which is in reality its lowest point since the *ascent* is really a *descent*. At this time, there will be a full flowering of sin unique in all history for its depravity and extent.
4. **Ushering in God’s Kingdom on Earth** - The wrath of the Lamb which comes forth is not merely a disconnected judgment of sin. It is part and parcel of the sweeping away of the systems of man to make way for the promised [Messianic Kingdom](#) on earth—the only kingdom which will never pass away.

This last point, the ushering in of God’s earthly kingdom, can be seen in the similarities between the events found in this book when compared with the events leading to the establishment of the first Theocratic Kingdom on earth—when Israel was delivered from Egypt.

There is a definite parallel between the supernatural preparation for the kingdom in history under Moses and the supernatural judgments which shall be poured out upon a rebellious world in preparation for the future Millennial Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ at His second advent. There is the same insolent challenge to the true God on the part of the Gentile powers (Ps. 2:1-3). There will be a similar gracious but infinitely greater preliminary miracle [like Ex. 7:12]—the Rapture of the Church—warning men of the supremacy of Jehovah and the ultimate defeat of all who rebel against Him. There will be the same swift progression in the severity of the divine judgments which follow, and even a striking parallel in the nature of the judgments (cf. Rev. 6:1-17[±] through

18). There will be the same victorious outcome, the destruction of the antichrist and his armies in the judgment of Armageddon, and deliverance of the people of Israel (Rev. 19:1-21⁺). There will be another song of victory, significantly referred to as 'the song of Moses... and the song of the Lamb' (Rev. 15:1-3⁺).³

Everything which transpires from this point forward is **completely within the control of God**. For it is the *Lamb* Who initiates these events and there is no judgment, famine, or plague of demons which does not ultimately serve God's purpose in what unfolds. This is seen by the frequently found phrase, **it was given** which attends both good and bad events recorded here (see commentary on Revelation 6:2⁺). Since it is the *Lamb* Who unleashes the events about to transpire, we are not surprised by the close correlation between the sequence of events here and those which Jesus, the Lamb of God, taught would come (see [The Synoptic Gospels](#)). They include:⁴

1. False Messiahs: Mat. 24:5, 11; Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8; Rev. 6:2⁺.
2. Wars: Mat. 24:6-7; Mark 13:7; Luke 21:9; Rev. 6:4⁺.
3. Famines: Mat. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:10; Rev. 6:5-6⁺, 8⁺.
4. Pestilences: Luke 21:11; Rev. 6:8⁺.
5. Persecution: Mat. 24:9; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-17; Rev. 6:9-11⁺.
6. Earthquakes: Mat. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11; Rev. 6:12⁺.
7. Cosmic Phenomena: Mat. 24:29; Mark 13:24-25; Luke 21:11; Rev. 6:12-14⁺.

one of the seals

Concerning the significance of the seals, see commentary on [Revelation 5:1](#).

Each of the scroll's seven seals (cf. Rev. 5:1⁺) represents a specific divine judgment that will be poured out sequentially on the earth. **The seals encompass the entire period of the Tribulation** (Rev. 3:10⁺), culminating with the return of Christ. It seems best to understand the first four seals as taking place during the first half of the Tribulation, the fifth stretching from the first into the second half, (called the "great tribulation" in Rev. 7:14⁺ and lasting three and one-half years; Rev 11:2⁺; Rev 12:6⁺; Rev 13:5⁺) and the sixth and seventh taking place during that "great tribulation." Apparently the seventh seal contains the seven trumpet judgments (Rev. 8:1⁺-11:19⁺) and the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15⁺) contains the seven bowl judgments (Rev. 16:1-21⁺). The seven seals thus contain all the judgments to the end when Jesus Christ returns.⁵

As the Lamb opens the seals, a sequence of events are initiated which are closely parallel to Matthew 24 (also Mark 13 and Luke 21). The first four seals are set apart from the final three in their common representation *by riders on horses*.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

[6](#)

Showers equates the birth pangs "beginning of sorrows" of Mt. 24:4-8 with the first four seals of Revelation 6:1-8⁺ and places them during the first half of the 70th week of Daniel.⁷ He also observes that the *Day of the Lord* includes the notion of birth pangs (Isa. 13:6-10; 1Th. 5:3), so the first four seals are probably included within the first half of the 70th week (see [The 70th Week of Daniel](#)).

Since the beginning of birth pangs of Matthew 24 and the first four seals of Revelation 6⁺ are the same thing, and since the broad Day of the Lord will include the beginning of birth pangs, we can conclude that the broad Day of the Lord will also include the first four seals of Revelation 6⁺. . . . Since the beginning of birth pangs of the first half of the 70th week and the first four seals of Revelation 6⁺ are the same thing, the divine wrath, anger, and destruction of the Day of the Lord will also be associated with the first four seals.⁸

living creatures

See commentary on [Revelation 4:6](#).

voice like thunder

Some speculate that the *voice like thunder* of the living creature may be the source of the seven thunders which John is prevented from recording (Rev. 10:3⁺). However, the description of this voice is probably meant to be an indication of its imposing volume to connect its command with the judgment to follow. See commentary on [Revelation 4:5](#).

Come and see.

[ῥχου κα δε](#) [Erchou kai ide] ([MT](#)) or [ῥχου κα δου](#) [Erchou kai idou] ([TR](#)). This phrase occurs in the TR and MT texts in conjunction with the loosing of each of the first four seals (Rev. 6:1⁺, 3⁺, 5⁺, 7⁺). These translations understand the living creature to be *speaking to John*. The [NU](#) text omits [κα δε](#) [kai ide], *and see*, understanding *come* as a command issued by the living creature *to the rider of the horse* bringing him forth in judgment. This would accord well with the emphasis found on the judgments being subject to divine control.

The cry itself is very brief—[ῥχου](#) [Erchou]! It may be equally rendered *Go*, or *Come!* Our translators give it about as often one way as the other. It does not alter the sense here whichever way we take it. It is not an address to John, as many have regarded it, and as the questionable addition to the text—“*and see*”—would seem to require. John was already on the spot, beholding all that was transpiring, and did not need to be called any nearer, or to remove any further off. And if his nearer approach or further departure had been needed in the case of the first horseman, it could not have been needed for the succeeding ones. But we find the same command repeated in each successive instance. Neither can we explain why it should be such a voice of thundering power, if it was simply to call to the seer.⁹

Revelation 6:2

white horse

This *white horse* is the first of *four* horses of different colors, similar to the horses seen by Zechariah (Zec. 1:8; 6:2-6).¹⁰ See [Zechariah's Horses](#) for a discussion of the relationship between Zechariah's visions and the horsemen shown John. Within the context of the book of Revelation, white represents righteousness. “The white horse . . . emerges as an emblem of righteousness, though there is no guarantee that the righteousness is more than apparent.”¹¹

he who sat on it

The similarities between this rider and Christ are striking:

1. **Riding a White Horse** - Both ride upon a white horse indicating victory (Rev. 6:2⁺; Rev 19:11⁺).
2. **Wearing a Crown** - Both wear a crown (Rev. 6:2⁺; Rev 19:12⁺). (But Christ wears *multiple* crowns.)
3. **Overcome** - Both are “overcomers”—victorious in their pursuits (Rev. 6:2⁺; John 16:33; 1Jn. 4:4; Rev. 3:21⁺; Rev 17:14⁺).

Even so, this is not the *white horse* which carries He who is Faithful and True in Revelation 19:11⁺. For it is *the Lamb* who has just loosed the first seal sending this horseman out. It violates all logic for the same person to be opening the seal and sending himself forth.¹² “Moreover, it would be inappropriate to have an angelic being call forth Christ or his servants.”¹³ If Christ rides forth here, who is it that remains in heaven to open the remaining seals?¹⁴ This rider carries a **bow** whereas Christ's weapon is a **sword** (Rev. 2:12⁺; Rev 19:15⁺). This rider is *alone* whereas Christ is followed by the armies in heaven also riding on white horses (Rev. 19:14⁺). Finally, this rider sets forth at the beginning of the Tribulation whereas Christ rides forth at its end. In light of related passages, it seems best to understand this rider as representing a movement which ultimately culminates in the one whom Jesus described:¹⁵ “I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive” (John 5:43+). To an unsuspecting world he *looks* like Messiah, the political savior of mankind, yet he is a deceiver, the *anti-* or *pseudo*-Christ. Here is documented the initial appearance of the figure of the [Antichrist](#) upon the stage of world history. Although there will be numerous false messiahs down through history, none as convincing and successful as this final figure.¹⁶ The **Restrainer** has been taken out of the way so that the [Antichrist](#), the son of perdition, might be revealed in his own time (2Th. 2:6-7+). He is the one who will be destroyed with the breath of the mouth of the Lamb (2Th. 2:8+; Rev. 19:20⁺). The church has already been taken up for she watches for Christ, not Antichrist. See [Rapture, Imminency](#).

The **beginning of birth pangs** of Matthew 24:8+ and the first four seals of Revelation 6:1-7⁺ are the same thing and will occur during the first half of the seven years of the 70th week. In light of the fact that the **beginning of birth pangs** will involve false messiahs, it would appear that the rider of the first seal will be a false messiah. . . . Since, . . . God's Holy Spirit has the function of restraining humanity's lawlessness, and since the Antichrist will be the ultimate expression of human lawlessness, it would appear that Paul was indicating in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8+ that the restraining work of the Holy Spirit is the restraint that prevents the [Antichrist](#) from being revealed until the right time. The Holy Spirit will continue that restraining work until He, as the restrainer, is removed, at which time the [Antichrist](#) will be revealed. Since, as noted earlier, only God has the authority to remove the Holy Spirit's restraint, and since the [Antichrist](#) will be revealed once that restraint is removed, we can conclude that it will be through divine activity that the [Antichrist](#) will be turned loose to conquer the world. . . . It is important to note that God declared He will raise up the foolish, idol shepherd (Zec. 11:16).¹⁷

The rider on the white horse is more probably to be identified as the [Antichrist](#). If this is not [Antichrist](#), then Revelation does not place

[Antichrist](#) on the scene of events before the middle of Daniel's Seventieth Week (in Rev. 13+), and the rider is virtually unidentifiable.¹⁸

Pre-wrath [rapture](#) advocate Marvin Rosenthal finds the idea of God's release of the Antichrist to be "preposterous:"

If the seals are God's wrath, then God alone must take direct responsibility for a counterfeit religious system and the emergence of the Antichrist, for that is precisely what the first seal depicts. To attribute the emergence of the Antichrist to God is obviously preposterous. . . . To suggest that the first four seals are God's wrath is totally unfounded. It strains reason to think that once God begins His Day of the Lord wrath, the Antichrist is able to assume control of the world.¹⁹

But to take any other view—that the manifestation of [Antichrist](#) is under the control of Satan or man—is opposed to biblical teaching. Even if the *restrainer* is taken to be something or someone other than God Himself (a view we do not hold), who is it that takes the Restrainer "out of the way" so that the "lawless one" is revealed (2Th. 2:6-7+)? If the revealing of [Antichrist](#) is *not* subject to the precise timing and permission of God, then what are we to make of a tremendous number of biblical passages which assert the absolute sovereignty of God over all things? Rosenthal lacks an adequate view of the sovereignty of God and how He redirects sin and the depravity of man toward His own ends. There are many examples where sin accomplishes God's purpose (cf Ge 50:20), yet those who sin remain fully responsible for their actions. God is not the *author* of sin (Jas 1:13+), but all things *serve His purpose* in the end (Mt. 24:26+; Mark 14:21+; Luke 22:22+; Acts 2:22-23+). See [Who is the Restrainer?](#)

The first six seals. . . are thus set here, in order to show us that these judgments do not arise from chance, but are all under Divine control. The great False Messiah of the first Seal cannot be revealed until the appointed moment shall have come and the voice from the throne gives the permissive command "Go!" The judgments cannot fall until the same command is given.²⁰

a bow

The **bow** is a symbol representing strength (Job 29:20; 30:11; Eze. 39:3). Some understand the mention of *abow*, but no arrows as an indication of his initial deception by peace and agreement (Da 9:27+). "The [Antichrist](#) is seen riding a white war-horse, and with **bow** in hand, but with no arrow fitted to it. The symbol suggests bloodless victories.²¹ Like [Antiochus Epiphanes](#) before him, he would "come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue . . . and after the league *is made* with him he shall act deceitfully" (Da 11:21-23+).

And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and *also* the holy people. Through his cunning He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; and he shall exalt *himself* in his heart. He shall destroy many in *their* prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without *human* means. And the vision of the evenings and mornings which was told is true; therefore seal up the vision, for *it refers* to many days *in the future*. (Da 8:23-26+)

There is no question among expositors that [Antiochus Epiphanes](#) is in view in this prophecy. What was prophesied was fulfilled literally through him. However, the prophecy looks beyond Antiochus to a future person (the Antichrist) of whom Antiochus is only a foreshadowing. This coming one is said to "stand against the Prince of princes" (Da 8:25+). This can be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the prophecy must go beyond Antiochus and look forward to the coming of one whose ministry will parallel that of Antiochus. From Antiochus certain facts can be learned about the forthcoming desecrator: (1) He will achieve great power by subduing others (Da 8:24). (2) He will rise to power by promising false security (Dan. 8:25). (3) He will be intelligent and persuasive (Dan. 8:23). (4) He will be controlled by another (Dan. 8:24), that is, Satan. (5) He will be an adversary of Israel and subjugate Israel to his authority (Dan. 8:24-25). (6) He will rise up in opposition to the Prince of princes, the Lord Jesus Christ (Dan. 8:25). (7) His rule will be terminated by divine judgment (Dan. 8:25). So it may be concluded that there is a dual reference in this striking prophecy. It reveals Israel's history under the Seleucids and particularly under Antiochus during the time of Greek domination, but it also looks forward to Israel's experiences under Antichrist, whom Antiochus foreshadows.²²

So before the terrors of the Tribulation break loose and lead to the battle of Armageddon **there will come a period of world peace**. But it will be a deceptive peace, as the world is lulled into a false sense of security followed by war, famine, and death. The world's desperate desire for international peace will serve as the bait for the satanic trap. That longing for security and safety will play into the hands of [Antichrist](#), Satan's ruler (Rev 13:4-5+), who will convince the world that he can provide them. He will particularly deceive Israel, whose people have for so long desired peace, and he "will make a firm covenant with the many [Israel] for one week" (Da 9:27+). Antichrist's peace pact and protection of Israel will not last, however: "in the middle of the week [the Seventieth Week of Daniel's prophecy; the Tribulation] he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate" (Da 9:27+, cf Mt 24:15+, Da 7:25+, 2Th 2:4+). The false peace that [Antichrist](#) brings will come to an abrupt halt at the midpoint of the Tribulation when he desecrates the temple in Jerusalem, betrays the Jewish people, and launches deadly attacks on them (cf. Mt.

24:4-10). There can and will be no peace until the Prince of Peace sets up His earthly kingdom (Rev. 20:1-6[±]).²³

Like Antiochus before him, the [Antichrist](#) plays a special role in relation to Israel during the events to come:

God will have specific purposes for bringing [Antichrist](#) on the world scene. One purpose will be the punishment of Israel. . . . [the] desolation of Israel by the Antichrist will be part of God's judgment of the nation because it rejected its Messiah in His first coming [John 5:43]. . . . A second purpose will be the repentance of Israel. . . . God will bring the Antichrist on the world scene to play a major role in shattering [Israel's] rebellion [Dan. 12:7+]. . . . A third purpose will be the judgment of the world. . . . God will judge the world by giving it the kind of ruler it deserves. . . . A fourth purpose will be the exposure of the world's unbelief. God will bring the [Antichrist](#) on the world scene and permit him to make his claim to be God to demonstrate mankind's unbelief, . . . A fifth purpose will be the instigation of the final showdown between Christ and Satan's forces and the defeat of those forces (Rev 19:15-21+).²⁴

a crown

[στέφανος](#) [[stephanos](#)], generally used of a victor's crown or wreath, *but not always*. A widespread, but erroneous teaching is that this crown, being a [stephanos](#) and not a diadema, indicates that the rider cannot be Christ.²⁵ Not so, for Christ is also found wearing such a crown (Mt. 27:29; Mk 15:17; Jn 19:2, 5; Heb. 2:9). Evidence that this rider is other than Christ must be derived from other factors (see above). See [Crowns](#).

was given to him

[δόθη](#) [edothē], passive voice. Although the rider likely believes he has gained his own crown for himself (cf. Isa. 45:1-4; Pr. 21:1; Da 2:21; Da 2:37; 4:25, 31-32; 5:21), it is only his by *permission*. Everything which proceeds from the opening of the seals is subject to the permission of the one seated on the throne and the Lamb. The sovereignty of God is heavily emphasized throughout the book of Revelation—there is *nothing* which transpires that God Himself does not grant authority for it. This is seen in the frequently-found phrase **was given** which denotes the granting of permission to an agent from another, namely God (Rev 6:2[±], Rev 6:4[±], Rev 6:8[±], Rev 6:11[±]; Rev 7:2[±]; Rev 8:3[±]; Rev 9:1[±], Rev 9:3[±], Rev 9:5[±]; Rev 11:1[±]; Rev 13:5[±], Rev 13:7[±], Rev 13:14-15[±]; Rev 16:8[±]; Rev 19:8[±]; Rev 20:4[±]). The first horseman is **granted** his crown (Rev. 6:2[±]), the second horseman is **given** to take peace with a great sword (Rev. 6:4[±]); Death and Hades, who ride with the third horsemen are **given** authority to kill a fourth part of the earth (Rev. 6:8[±]), the four angels are **given** the power to hurt the earth and sea (Rev. 8:3[±]), the star from heaven is **given** the key to loosen the demonic locusts from the abyss (Rev. 9:1[±]) who were themselves **given** power to torment men (Rev. 9:5[±]), the beast is **given** authority to continue for forty twomonths (Rev. 13:5[±]) and to make war against the saints and overcome them (Da 7:25+; Rev. 13:7[±]), the fourth bowl is **given** the ability to scorch men (Rev. 16:8[±]). All of these horrific and terrible realities—the very manifestation and flowering of sin of which God is not author—are harnessed for His purposes. The troubling and yet comforting reality is that there is *no creature* which ultimately does not *serve God's purpose*, either willingly or unwillingly. Troubling, because in the inscrutable purpose of God such evil is allowed to continue. Comforting, because everything we suffer is subject to God's approval and purpose (Job 2:6; Ro 8:28+). "How irresistible the grasp of Omnipotence on the powers and forces of evil. They are effectually bridled till the plans of God are ripe and ready for action."²⁶ Once the reality of God's sovereignty is understood, the bondage of Satan is seen for what it is. For Satan has *less freedom in rebellion* against God than he once had in obedient service of the Master.

he went out conquering and to conquer

[νικων και να νικηση](#) [[nikao](#)] - nikōn kai hina nikēsē], both *conquering* and *conquer* are from [νικόω](#) [[nikao](#)], the same root as **overcomer**. Thus, he is *another overcomer* (Rev. 11:7[±]) to be contrasted with the True Overcomer Who is Christ (Rev. 5:5[±]; Rev 17:14[±]).

ED: See Overcome (conquer) [\(3528\) nikao](#)

He will be endowed with the most extraordinary powers, so that "he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people" (Dan. 8:24). Before his exploits the fame of Alexander and Napoleon will be forgotten. None will be able to stand before him. He will go "forth conquering and to conquer" (Rev. 6:2[±]). He will sweep everything before him so that the world will exclaim, "Who is like unto the Beast? who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13:4[±]). His military exploits will not be confined to a corner, but carried out on a vast scale. He is spoken of as the man who will "shake kingdoms" and "make the earth to tremble" (Isa. 14:16).²⁷

Ezekiel 34:23-30 says that when God establishes His covenant of peace with Israel, the covenant will result in safety, peace with nations, and the elimination of harmful beasts by famine. By contrast, when the Antichrist establishes his covenant of peace with Israel [Dan. 9:27+], God will inflict the world with conditions opposite of those His covenant of peace will bring. He will unleash war (the sword) [the second seal, Rev. 6:3-4[±]], famine (the third seal, Rev. 6:5-6[±]), and harmful beasts (the fourth seal, Rev. 6:7-8[±])

upon the earth to demonstrate that the Antichrist's covenant of peace is not the covenant of peace that will bring true safety, as foretold in the Old Testament.²⁸

ADDENDUM COMMENTS ON IDENTITY OF THE RIDER ON THE WHITE HORSE

John Walvoord - Because Christ in His second coming is pictured (Rev 19:11) as riding on a white horse, some have taken it that this rider in 6:2 also must refer to Christ, as the white horse is a symbol of victory. Roman generals after a victory in battle would ride a white horse in triumph with their captives following. The chronology, however, is wrong, as Christ returns to the earth as a conqueror not at the beginning of the Tribulation but at the end of the Tribulation. Also the riders on the other horses obviously relate to destruction and judgment which precede the second coming of Christ by some period of time. A better interpretation is that the conqueror mentioned here is the future world ruler, sometimes referred to as Antichrist though Revelation does not use this term. He is probably the same person as the ruler of the people mentioned in Daniel 9:26. This ruler has a bow without an arrow, indicating that the world government which he establishes is accomplished without warfare (see Rev. 13:4). The future world government begins with a time of peace but is soon followed by destruction (1 Thes. 5:3). In general, the seals, trumpets, and bowls of divine wrath signal the terrible judgments of God on the world at the end of the Age, climaxing in the second coming of Christ. (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

Charles Swindoll - The rider on the white horse (6:1–2) most likely represents bloodless conquest—false peace and security. Notice that he carried a bow without arrows. The type of crown on his head is the *stephanos* [4735]—not a crown of regal authority but a victor's crown.[70] The Tribulation period will begin with a deceptive peace accompanied by a counterfeit spirituality and false religion. Paul describes this same general condition in 1 Thessalonians 5:3: "While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape." The coming of false religion is seen also in Christ's own description of the end times in Matthew 24:4–5. (See [Insights on Revelation](#))

Charles Ryrie - Evidently a reference to Antichrist. See note on •1 John 2:18. His method of conquest at first does not seem to include open warfare, since peace is not removed from the earth until the second seal is opened (Rev. 6:3). This corresponds to the description of delusion in 1 Thes. 5:3. ([Ryrie Study Bible Expanded Edition](#))

Robert Thomas - Nonetheless, as many pluses as this view has (**ED: THAT THE RIDER IS CHRIST**), its weaknesses are even more impressive. The major one is contextual: the Messiah cannot be put on the same plane as the three riders to follow. The four have an essential likeness to each other, clearly belonging together as part of *archē ōdinōn* ("the beginning of birth-pains") (Mark 13:8) (Moffatt; Charles). The Messiah is out of place in this company. In addition, the differences between this rider and the one in Rev. 19:11–16 are pronounced. The latter one is called "faithful and true," but the former one is not so characterized in that his goal is unjust conquest (Johnson). The rider in 19:11–16 is none other than the Lamb who opened the first seal, negating the possibility of His also being the rider revealed by that seal (Moffatt; Beckwith). In 19:11–16, the rider is present in triumph, followed by the host of heaven, but here the rider works in bodily absence, being only a symbol rather than the embodiment of His victorious kingdom (Alford). This rider wears a victor's wreath and carries a bow, but the one in chapter 19 is crowned with many diadems and has a sharp sword issuing from His mouth (Mounce). Finally, it is out of keeping with the dramatic plan of the book for the triumph of Christ to transpire until a long series of judgments have run their course (Beckwith). If the first rider is not the Messiah, then, he must be someone resembling the Messiah. He has been closely identified with the world ruler who is pictured as the first beast of Revelation 13.35 He will come as a counterfeit Christ. The general accuracy of this explanation is verified through comparison with the parallel accounts of these end-times in Matt. 24:5; Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8 (cf. also Matt. 24:24) (Bullinger; Johnson). First in sequence among the signs spoken of earlier by Christ was the emergence of many "impostor" christs. It is futile to turn elsewhere for an understanding of this first rider. This conclusion agrees with the character of the other three riders also. All of them are associated with the great end-time impostor and his forces. The book is full of satanic imitations of Christ and His conquest, including the crowns of 12:1, 2 and the victories of 11:7 and 13:7 (Sweet; Ford). This rider is one of them. Yet to identify him as the world ruler himself is not quite accurate. This rider, like the other three, is not an individual, but a personification of a growing movement or force that will be at work during this future period. Christ spoke of many impostors. These will join hands in a concerted effort to unseat Him from His throne. The beast out of the sea (cf. Rev. 13:1–8) will be a part of this movement and on his way to the top, but at the time represented by the first seal, he will not have risen to be the pre-eminent one of the movement.

At the very beginning of the period, called "the beginning of birth-pains," he will be one of many impostors who constitute this antichristian force of which this first rider is an emblem. ([Revelation Exegetical Commentary](#)) (Thomas discusses at least 8 interpretations that have been offered for the rider on the white horse - [click this link and scroll up and down](#) which may visualize all the candidates)

Robert Mounce - The arguments against Christ as the rider of the white horse, however, are of sufficient strength to make the identification unlikely. A comparison of chapters 6 and 19 shows that the two riders have little in common beyond the fact that they are both mounted on white horses. In 6:2 the rider wears a victor's wreath and carries a bow; in 19:11ff. he is crowned with "many crowns"⁷ and armed with a sharp sword coming out of his mouth. The context of 6:2 is one of conquest, while that of 19:11ff. is righteous retribution. Another difficulty is that the identification brackets the proclamation of the gospel with a series of devastating calamities following one another as the inevitable results of human sinfulness (war, scarcity, death).⁸ There is also the confusion involved in the Lamb's opening the seals while at the same time being the one who rides forth when the first seal is broken. A final and fatal objection is the repeated use of "there was given," which normally in Revelation refers to "the divine permission granted to evil powers to carry out their nefarious work."⁹ The other prominent interpretation of the white horse and rider is that they symbolize the spirit of conquest and militarism. ([The Book of Revelation](#))

John Phillips - Who is this mysterious rider on the great white horse? In the Scripture, a horse is often used as a symbol for war. At the end of the Apocalypse, for example, the Lord Jesus Himself returns on a great white horse to settle the issues of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11-16). The white color of the horse suggests that the rider wins victories without bloodshed. Peaceful victory is implied-what we would call "cold war." The bow intimates that far-reaching objectives are in view, and the crown makes it clear that whatever is represented under the symbolism of this seal will be successful and victorious. At the command to come, the rider spurs forward both conquering, and to conquer. But who is he? Some believe him to be the Antichrist. Others claim that he is Christ Himself. Some think he represents the gospel, its power, its goals, its peaceful conquest of the globe. Obviously he cannot be all of these. The context provides the needed clue, for the Holy Spirit Himself interprets the symbolism of the fourth horseman: he is Death, and Hades follows hard on his heels. The horsemen, therefore, are not persons, but personifications. Moreover, they are personifications of things most unpleasant indeed. ([Exploring Revelation](#))

Warren Wiersbe - Antichrist (vv. 1–2). Daniel states that there is a "prince that shall come," who will make a covenant with Israel to protect her from her enemies (Dan. 9:26–27). In other words, the future world dictator begins his career as a peacemaker! He will go from victory to victory and finally control the whole world. Some have suggested that the rider on the white horse is actually a symbol of the "conquering Christ" who today is defeating the forces of evil in the world. They point to Revelation 19:11 as proof, but the only similarity is the presence of a white horse. If this rider is indeed Jesus Christ, it seems strange that He should be named at the end of the book and not at the beginning! We would expect the Antichrist to resemble the Christ, because Antichrist is Satan's great imitation! Even the Jews (who ought to know the Scriptures) will be deceived by him (John 5:43; 2 Thes. 2:1–12). This great deceiver will come as a peaceful leader, holding a bow but no arrows! (Our Lord's weapon is a sword; Rev. 19:15.) Antichrist will solve the world's problems and be received as the Great Liberator. The word for crown in Revelation 6:2 is stephanos, which means "the victor's crown." The crown that Jesus Christ wears is diadema, "the kingly crown" (Rev. 19:12). Antichrist could never wear the diadem, because it belongs only to the Son of God. ([Revelation Commentary](#))

Alan Johnson - The identification of the first rider seated on a white horse has given interpreters great difficulty. Essentially, the difficulty is whether the rider on the white horse represents **Christ** and the victory of the gospel (Alford, Ladd) or whether he represents the **Antichrist** and the forces of evil (Beckwith, Bruce, Caird, Mounce, Swete, Walvoord). In favor of the first identification is the striking similarity of this rider to the portrayal of Christ in Rev 19:11-16, the symbolism of white throughout Revelation always being associated with righteousness and Christ (e.g., Rev 1:14; 2:17; 3:4-5, 18; 4:4; 7:9, 13-14; 20:11), and the references in the Olivet Discourse to the preaching of the gospel throughout the world before the end. Support for the identification of the white horse with the Antichrist and his forces is the parallelism with the other three horses, which are instruments of judgment. The references in Rev 19:11-16 to the rider on the white horse as "Faithful and True" and of whom it is said that "with justice he judges and makes war" may stand in contrast to the rider in Rev 6:2 who is not faithful or true and who wages war for unjust conquest. As for the Lamb, he opens the seals and would not be one of the riders. Moreover, it would be inappropriate to have an angelic being call forth Christ or his servants. Again, the "bow" would most naturally be connected with the enemy of God's people (Ezek 39:3; cf. Rev 20:7-8). Finally, the parallelism to the Olivet Discourse shows that the first events

mentioned are the rise of "false Christs and false prophets" (Matt 24:24). It must be admitted that the problem of the identity of the rider on the white horse may be solved either way, depending on the presuppositions one brings to the passage. The evidence, however, seems to favor slightly the second solution, which identifies the white horse with the Antichrist and his forces that seek to conquer the followers of Christ. John sensed that these persecutions were already present in his day and that they would culminate in a final, more severe form (1 John 2:18; Rev 13:7). ([Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

Revelation 6:3

come and see

"The 'living one' who introduces this second horse does not use a voice of thunder as did the 'living one' who dispatched the first horse. This is significant, for it indicates that the first horse brings the other three horses in its train as a sequential consequence."²⁹ See commentary on [Revelation 6:1](#).

Revelation 6:4

fiery red

[πυρρός](#) [pyrros]: "As a color fiery red, red (as fire)."³⁰ The same color as the dragon in Revelation 12:3⁺.

was granted

Ultimate power rests with God who allows the judgment for His purposes. See commentary on [Revelation 6:2](#).

take peace from the earth

Although the rider on the white horse appears to conquer by means of negotiation and avoids bloodshed, this does not last. Eventually he shows his true colors as the second rider joins the ride—bringing war and death. This may correspond to the point in Daniel's vision where another "*horn* which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows" (Dan. 7:20). It appears that the [little horn](#) may only progress so far by means of peace before he is forced to go to war and assert his position with violence. Shortly after this point: "I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them" (Dan. 7:21+ cf. Rev. 6:9-10⁺). This is the time of the "beginning of sorrows" which Jesus spoke of (Mt. 24:6-8+). See [The Synoptic Gospels](#).

should kill one another

[σφάξουσιν](#) [sphaxousin]: "To slaughter . . . Of the killing of a person by violence . . . *butcher or murder someone*"³¹. The same root described the Lamb "as though it had been *slain*" (Rev. 5:6⁺). This will be a time of unprecedented bloodshed which will forever puncture the naive view of humanism that man is inherently good.

a great sword

This sword is wielded by the second horseman, but it is *sent by God*.

For thus says the LORD God of Israel to me: "Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them." Then I took the cup from the LORD'S hand, and made all the nations drink, to whom the LORD had sent me. (Jer. 25:15-17)

This is the pattern of God's judgment to nations who reject Him—He makes them *mad* and turn upon one another (Eze. 38:21). "While Scripture does not give the details, the advances in modern weaponry suggest a terrible, unimaginable holocaust."³²

Revelation 6:5

a black horse

Black is [μέλας](#) [melas] which is used "Of clothing used in mourning . . . as the color of evil."³³

a pair of scales

Here the black speaks of judgment and famine, for the rider carries a pair of scales (balances) used to weigh food and indicating its scarcity.

Revelation 6:6

a quart

“The measure spoken of here is the Greek measure of capacity of very ancient usage, the choenix. As early as the time of Homer it was indicated as the amount of wage given to a workman for a full day’s work (Odyssey XIX:XXVIII). Herodotus also gives this as the measure of wheat consumed by each soldier in the army of Xerxes (VIII:CLXXXVII).³⁴

wheat

[οἴτου](#) [sitou], used of wheat in the context of hardship “as an indication of severe famine and rising prices . . . Ignatius, in his fervent longing for martyrdom, uses this symbolic language . . . *I am God’s wheat* and will be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts.”³⁵

a denarius

That famine is intended here is evident for this amount “was a workman’s average daily wage.”³⁶ Men will work an entire day and barely procure enough to stay alive. “Ordinarily, from sixteen to twenty measures were given for a denarius.”³⁷

do not harm the oil and the wine

[δικήσῃς](#) [adikēsēs], second person *singular*, imperative mood. The voice from the midst of the four living creatures is *commanding* the *one* on the black horse not to harm the oil and wine. Again, we see the judgments which pour forth are precisely under the control of God. See commentary on [Revelation 6:1](#). Some attempt to understand this verse in relation to an edict of Domitian restricting vine production in favor of corn:

It is argued that Rev. 6:6⁺ refers to Domitian’s edict against vines in AD 92, a measure which may have been intended as a drastic means of increasing corn production, but which hit Philadelphia with exceptional severity because of its dependence on viticulture.³⁸

Because of the earthquake, which drove them from the city proper, and because of the fertility of the soil, many of the people had turned to farming as a means of livelihood, specifically to the cultivation of vineyards. Apparently, because of famine, in A.D. 92 Domitian issued an edict that at least half the vineyards in the provinces be cut down and no new ones planted. This action was designed to increase production of corn which the Empire needed badly. This crisis affected Philadelphia more critically than any other, because no city of Asia depended on the fruit of the vine more than it. Dionysius, god of wine, was the principal deity.³⁹

This seems unlikely for the four horsemen ride out after the Lamb begins opening seals—something which remains future even to our own day. Moreover, it appears Domitian’s edict was not motivated in response to famine.⁴⁰ Others have understood the reference to *oil* as pertaining to the marking upon the foreheads of the servants of God who are anointed for protection during this time (Rev. 7:3⁺; Rev 9:4⁺; Rev 22:4⁺), but this seems unlikely since the context concerns food supply and famine. Another suggestion is that the common commodities are hard to come by, but luxury items will remain available for the upper classes.

This intimates that the famine is by no means universal: yea, it suggests that side by side with abject suffering there is abundance and luxury.⁴¹

Some interpreters have suggested that the brunt of the suffering falls upon the poorer classes, but the rich are left largely untouched, but this is a less likely interpretation, for while fine wine and oil could be understood of the luxuries belonging to the rich, the poorer quality product may be in view here as descriptive of the ordinary provisions used by the common people.⁴²

One of the great criticisms of the present time is that there is scarcity in the midst of plenty. This is the situation which will be accentuated a thousandfold when the Antichrist begins his reign. It is a social maladjustment.⁴³

Still another idea is that the oil and wine denote medicinal supplies. That although food will be lacking, there will be an abundance of medicine.⁴⁴ This seems unlikely in view of the catastrophic conditions (medicinal supplies require careful storage and efficient distribution) and the number of deaths inferred. Others suggest another possibility. They point to a similar passage in 1 Samuel which records famine conditions caused by rainy conditions which destroyed the grain crop, but under which vineyards and olive trees would flourish:

The proper understanding of the phrase “do not damage the oil and the wine” is found in an event recorded in 1 Samuel 12. . . . Samuel was threatening to call upon the Lord to bring thunder and rain as punishment. Why? . . . Heavy rains at the time of harvest would destroy the wheat, thereby bringing famine. . . . As Nogah Hareveni of Neot Kedumim, the Biblical Gardens of Israel, has pointed out: “The ripe, heavy-eared wheat can suffer from a downpour not only through physical damage from the force of the wind-driven rain, but also by rotting from the sudden moisture combined with the high temperatures that prevail in Israel by *Shavuot* (in

late May-early June). This interpretation explains why the Israelites cried out to Samuel ‘pray. . .to save us from death’ (1S. 12:19)—from death by starvation that would follow the destruction of the grain crop.”. . . “the oil and the wine,” will not be affected by this rainstorm because they will have already been pollinated. In fact, the water might even help them, thus giving oil and wine for all, rich and poor alike.⁴⁵

The reverse scenario might also be possible: that of drought. “Since the roots of the olive and vine go deeper, they would not be affected by a limited drought which would all but destroy the grain.”⁴⁶ However, the nature of the famine which attends these “beginning of sorrows” (Mat. 24:8) is probably uniquely severe in history and argues against understanding the distinction between food items as denoting a limited famine. This situation contrasts with a locust-induced famine, such as that of Joel, in which *all* crops were ruined: “The field is wasted, the land mourns; for the grain is ruined, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails” (Joel 1:10).

The problem with taking this as a reference to limited famine is that it underrates the severity of the seals. This famine will be serious enough to make it unique in history up to that time. The world has already seen many limited famines, but never one like this. . . . So it is wrong to take a major feature such as this prohibition against hurting the oil and the wine and interpret it as a limitation on human hardship. It indicates rather the inequity that will prevail. The poor will have it extremely hard while the wealthy will experience no interruption to their luxurious lifestyle.⁴⁷

Both oil and wine are listed among the commercial wealth of Babylon at the time of her destruction (Rev. 18:13[±]). See commentary on [Revelation 18:13](#).

Revelation 6:7

fourth seal

This is the last seal which will loose a horse and rider. The first four seals are to be understood as a group, four being indicative of their global effects. See [Four: the Entire World, the Earth](#).

come and see

See commentary on [Revelation 6:1](#).

Revelation 6:8

pale horse

Pale is [χλωρός](#) [chlōros] from which we derive *chlorophyll*, which denotes the green pigments found in plants. It may denote a mottled appearance, like the sorrel or dappled horses in Zechariah’s vision. See [Zechariah’s Horses](#). Here it denotes “the color of a person in sickness as contrasted with the appearance of health,”⁴⁸ for the name of the rider of the pale horse is *death* ([θάνατος](#) [thanatos]).

Properly, “greenish-yellow,” like young grass or unripe wheat. Homer applies it to honey, and Sophocles to the sand. Generally, “pale, pallid.” Used of a mist, of sea-water, of a pale or bilious complexion. Thucydides uses it of the appearance of persons stricken with the plague (ii., 49). In Homer, it is used of the paleness of the face from fear, and so as directly descriptive of fear (“Iliad,” x., 376; xv., 4). Of olive wood (“Odyssey,” ix., 320, 379) of which the bark is gray.⁴⁹

The word to describe the fourth horse’s color, chlōros (“pale green”), is the color of grass and other vegetation in Mark 6:39 and Rev. 8:7[±]; 9:4[±], but in the present connection, designates the yellowish green of decay, the pallor of death. It is a pale ashen color that images a face bleached because of terror. It recalls a corpse in the advanced state of corruption (Ford).⁵⁰

Death, and Hades followed

Death and Hades are here personified (cf. Isa. 28:18 where Death and Sheol sign a covenant). These two are often found together in Scripture for *Hades* is the destination of the unsaved upon passing through the gateway of *death*. This seems to be their relationship here because Hades *followed* behind Death—taking in the soul and spirit of those who had first died. Elsewhere, the appearance of *Death* with *Hades* may denote the destination of the *material* and *immaterial* parts of man, respectively. For the body molds in the grave (*death*) while the spirit and soul enter the underworld (*Hades*). Thus, “Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them” may refer to the release of the spirit and soul of the unsaved from imprisonment in Hades to be joined with a bodily resurrection from the grave in order to stand before God in judgment (Rev. 20:13[±]). The eventual casting of *death* and *Hades* into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14[±]) may describe the total victory over these unsavory realities brought about by the cross of Jesus (Hos. 13:14; 1Cor. 15:21-26, 54-55; 2Ti. 1:10) or denote those destined for the lake—the unsaved dead whose bodies remained in the grave and souls remained in Hades until the Great White Throne Judgment. Jesus has the keys of *Death* and *Hades*. See

commentary on [Revelation 1:18](#). **Death and Hades** either both ride the same horse, or **Death** is the horseman and **Hades** follows on foot. In either case, the two are inseparable as **Hades** takes in all that **Death** supplies.

power was given to them

Ultimate power rests with God who allows the judgment for His purposes. See commentary on [Revelation 6:2](#).

over a fourth of the earth

A staggering judgment when seen in relation to today's population:

If today's [1992] world population figure of five billion is used, . . . "one fourth of the earth" means that Death and Hades have authority, which they apparently will exercise, to take the lives of one and a quarter billion people. The magnitude of this catastrophe can hardly be grasped because nothing comparable has happened throughout history (Swete). If limited to two continents, which it will probably not be (Beckwith; Lenski; Mounce), it will amount to the elimination of people from two of the world's most populous ones (Walvoord).⁵¹

Since Thomas wrote, the world population has risen to over 6 billion [December 2003] which would result in the death of over 1.5 billion people.⁵² This number would be reduced by the believers in Christ who are taken in the [Rapture](#) prior to this period.

sword. . . hunger. . . death. . . beasts

The fourfold source of judgment hints at its global scope. See [Four: the Entire World, the Earth](#). *Sword* is [ομφοι](#) [hromphaia]: "A large and broad sword, used by barbaric peoples, especially the Thracians."⁵³ As has frequently been the case in the past, hunger follows war: the second horseman took peace from the earth and the effects of his ride contribute to the effectiveness of the fourth horseman. Although the third horseman brought great famine—the greatest experienced to that time—the famine now becomes even more severe. The listing of alternative forms of death pictures inescapable judgment. Those who escape death by the *sword* may die of *hunger*. Those who survive the *hunger* are likely to perish from disease (*death*).⁵⁴

Throughout human history, disease has killed people on a far more massive scale than war. More Union and Confederate soldiers died from disease during the Civil War than were killed in battle. An estimated 30 million people died during the great influenza epidemic of 1918-19—more than three times as many as the estimated 8.5 million soldiers who died in battle during World War I.⁵⁵

Those who survive the first three will be so weak as to be unable to defend themselves from wild *beasts* which will become emboldened and attack them.

So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment, unto the nations that are round about thee, when I shall execute judgments on thee in anger and in wrath, and in wrathful rebukes; (I, Jehovah, have spoken it;) when I shall send upon them the evil arrows of **famine**, that are for destruction, which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the **famine** upon you, and will break your staff of bread; and I will send upon you **famine** and **evil beasts**, and they shall bereave thee; and **pestilence and blood** shall pass through thee; and I will bring the **sword** upon thee: I, Jehovah, have spoken it. (Eze. 5:15-17) [emphasis added]

Thus says the Lord GOD: "Pound your fists and stamp your feet, and say, 'Alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! For they shall fall by the **sword**, by **famine**, and by **pestilence**. He who is far off shall die by the **pestilence**, he who is near shall fall by the **sword**, and he who remains and is besieged shall die by the **famine**.'" Thus will I spend My fury upon them. (Eze. 6:11-12) [emphasis added]

From these passages we understand that what seem like intensified *natural* disturbances (war, hunger, death, attack by beasts) are in fact expressions of God's judgment. Thus God's wrath is *already* seen in the fourth seal—well in advance of the sixth and seventh seals.⁵⁶ The picture being drawn is one of no escape. No matter which group or location a man finds himself in, there is a God-ordained judgment which will result in death:

For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: "How much more when I send **my four sore judgments** upon Jerusalem, the **sword**, and the **famine**, and the evil **beasts**, and the **pestilence**, to cut off from it man and beast!" (Eze. 14:21) [emphasis added]

Thus shalt thou say unto them, "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: 'As I live, surely they that are in the waste places shall fall by the **sword**; and him that is in the open field will I give to the **beasts** to be devoured; and they that are in the strongholds and in the caves shall die of the **pestilence**.'" (Eze. 33:27) [emphasis added]

Amos predicted this character of the day of Jehovah: "Woe unto you that desire the day of Jehovah! Wherefore would ye have the day of Jehovah? It is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned

his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of Jehovah be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?” (Amos 5:18-20). There is intentional irony in God’s reversal of roles as men become the source of food for beasts (Gen. 9:2-3 cf. Eze. 29:5; 39:17-20; Rev. 19:17-18[±]). When man is disobedient to God, He reverses the original divine order where man was given dominion over the beasts (Gen. 1:26-28; 9:2-3) and gives man into the hand of beasts (Lev. 26:22; Deu. 32:24). The beasts will be emboldened both because of the emaciated and sickly condition of men and the scarceness of their own food supply. “Once food becomes scarce, wild animals which generally leave man alone will begin to attack man for food.”⁶⁷

Revelation 6:9

Opening the Fifth and Sixth Seals

[58](#)

fifth seal

With the opening of the fifth seal, we break from the judgments associated with the four horsemen. “There are no voices of command from heaven under this seal, and no messengers dispatched from the throne; for the reason that bloody persecutions of God’s servants come from beneath—not from above.”⁵⁹ We now leave the “beginning sorrows” spoken of by Jesus behind and enter the time of tribulation characterized by martyrdom:

All these *are* the beginning of sorrows. **Then** they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. (Mat. 24:8-10) [emphasis added]

The beginning of sorrows have passed and the Great Tribulation is now upon the world, a time of unprecedented martyrdom and anti-[Semitism](#) (Mat. 24:15-22; Rev. 12:6, 13-15[±]). “The futurist interpretation takes these as the first martyrs of the tribulation of Daniel’s 70th Week. The fifth seal corresponds to Mat. 24:8-28, martyrdoms.”⁶⁰

under the altar

[Θυσιαστηριου](#) [thysiastēriou], used “of the altar of burnt offering in the inner forecourt of the temple at Jerusalem . . . the heavenly altar of Revelation also seems to be thought of as an altar of incense: Rev. 6:9[±]; Rev 8:3[±], 5[±]; Rev 9:13[±]; Rev 14:18[±]; Rev 16:7[±].”⁶¹ When Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the priesthood, after the blood of the bull was put on the horns of the altar of sacrifice (or burnt offering), the remaining blood was poured “beside the base of the altar” (Ex. 29:12; Lev. 8:15). This pattern was also followed for the sin offering (Lev. 4:7). The blood of the martyred saints is considered as an “offering” before God as it accumulates at the base of the altar during this time of intense persecution of all who name the name of Christ (Mat. 24:9). “Like sacrifices, they had been slain for their testimony. Not sacrifices of atonement, but of *devotion*.”⁶²

The picture of souls immediately in God’s presence after death is in harmony with 2Cor. 5:8, and the fact that the martyrs are beneath the altar is consistent with the symbolism of Lev. 4:7, for the priest poured the blood of the sacrifice at the bottom of the altar, and the blood represented the life of the sacrifice (Lev. 17:11-14). So these martyrs will sacrifice their lives for God, and Heaven acknowledges this.⁶³

Some see this altar to be the altar of incense rather than the altar of sacrifice.⁶⁴ Yet the location of the martyrs *under the altar* has more in common with the altar of sacrifice and there is no compelling reason to connect this altar with the altar of incense upon which the prayers of the saints are offered.

the souls

[ψυχῶν](#) [psychas], these have yet to attain a resurrection body which they will receive prior to the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:4[±]). The word can also denote *physical life*. “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life ([ψυχῶν](#) [psychēn]) even unto death” (Rev. 12:11[±]).⁶⁵ Given the location of the martyrs *under the altar*, *souls* may be intended to convey *life*. In the same way that the “life ([ψυχή](#) [n^ep^eš]) of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev. 17:11) and the blood was poured beneath the altar (Ex. 29:12), the *souls* of the martyrs reside under the heavenly altar. Though their physical life was terminated, they themselves are still very much alive:

Their slaying, then, is not the end of them. It is not the total interruption of their being in all respects. It makes them invisible to men in the flesh, in the natural state; but it does not hinder their living on as souls, or their being visible to heavenly eyes, or to the eyes of John in his supernatural and prophetic exaltation. The holy Apocalypticist tells us that he “saw” them, although they “had been

slain;” and heard them speaking with loud voices, though their material tongues had been burnt to ashes, and their corporeal organs of speech had been stiffened in death. It is altogether a wrong interpretation of the Scriptures which represents the dead in a state of non-existence, unconsciousness, or oblivion.⁶⁶

who had been slain for the word of God

It is difficult to establish exactly when these saints were martyred. Some argue that they were martyred *prior* to the opening of the fifth seal, during the preceding four seals.

A. T. Robertson, who has been acclaimed as America’s premier Greek authority of the 20th century, indicates that the verb form translated “were slain” in Revelation 6:9⁺ represents action that was completed before the action of the main verb “saw” . . . The fact that John did not see believers being slain, but instead saw the disembodied souls of saints who had been slain before he saw them, forces the conclusion that when Christ breaks the fifth seal, it will not cause the martyrdom of those saints . . . The martyred saints of the fifth seal will be living and dying during the first four seals.⁶⁷

But it is difficult to avoid the emphasis a plain reading of the verse puts upon the timing of the fifth seal and the revelation of the martyrs. It seems clear that with the opening of the fifth seal God intends us to realize that we have gone past the beginning of sorrows into the actual Tribulation period. See [Trouble Ahead](#). By now, a heightened religious persecution attends the events upon the earth for these saints did not perish due to beasts, famine, pestilence, or war—but were *slain for the word of God*. Their testimony was seen as a dangerous and undesirable witness against the false religious system riding the beast (Rev. 17:6⁺). At this point in the sequence of events, the [Antichrist](#) has not yet become the center of all worship:

[Some assume] that the fifth seal saints are martyred because they would not bow to the Antichrist. But, again, there is nothing in the context of the fifth seal to indicate this. To be sure, they are martyred for their faith. But it does not say that it was specifically for refusing to bow down to the Antichrist. The self-proclamation of deity by the Antichrist takes place at the time of the Abomination of Desolation (Mat. 24:15; 2Th. 2:4) which, . . . happens at the midpoint of the seven years. In Revelation, that midpoint begins with chapter eleven, when the Temple is taken over by Gentiles for 42 months (the second three and one-half years). Then Antichrist proceeds to remove all opposition by killing the two witnesses (Rev. 11⁺) and persecuting the Jews (Rev. 12⁺). He then proclaims himself to be God and sets up his image (Rev. 13⁺). Only those saints in and subsequent to chapter thirteen are being killed for refusing to accept the Antichrist.⁶⁸

The revelation of the fifth seal makes clear that in the future time of tribulation it will be most difficult to declare one’s faith in the Lord Jesus. It may very well be that the majority of those who trust Christ as Saviour in that day will be put to death. This is confirmed in Revelation 7⁺ where another picture of the martyred dead of the tribulation is given, and in Revelation 13⁺ where death is inflicted on all who will not worship the beast. Martyrdom in those days will be as common as it is uncommon today.⁶⁹

the testimony which they held

Like the first martyr of the Church (Stephen, Acts 7:59) and Antipas of the church at Pergamos (Rev. 2:13⁺) they will *hold* a consistent testimony up to and *beyond* the point of death (Rev. 12:11⁺). They are faithful sheep whose blood is spilled for God’s sake. “Yet for Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Ps 44:22 cf. Rom. 8:36). Their death is as much a part of their testimony as their life. Those who “die in the Lord” have works which follow them (Rev. 14:13⁺).

Revelation 6:10

How long, O Lord

Lord is [δεσπότης](#) [despotēs] which emphasizes His ownership of the saints, as a master has slaves,⁷⁰ or a ruler over a household (Tit. 2:9).⁷¹ Let us always keep in mind that He can do *whatever* He desires with His sheep. In this case, He allows their slaughter as a testimony to their faith and the evil unfolding below which will finally be judged.

judge and avenge

When God finally tramples the winepress of His wrath it is described as “the day of vengeance,” for “the year of My redeemed has come” (Isa. 63:3-4). This then, is the *judgment* associated with the fifth seal—that petition of God by the martyred saints seals the fate of those who put them to death. One of the duties of the *Goel*, the nearest of kin, was to avenge the blood of the family member who had been murdered (Num. 35:19-21; Deu. 19:6; Jos. 20:3). See commentary on [Revelation 5:9](#).

dwell on the earth

Their persecutors appear to be currently living on the earth which argues for understanding these as recent martyrs from the times

described by the seals. This phrase denotes the [earth dwellers](#) and has significance far beyond merely designating people who happen to be living upon the earth. In this book, it takes on a soteriological and eschatological sense as a [technical phrase](#) describing those in the end times who refuse salvation, persecute the saints, and continue to blaspheme God in the midst of judgment (Rev. 3:10⁺; Rev 6:10⁺; Rev 11:10⁺; Rev 12:12⁺; Rev 13:8⁺, 12⁺, 14⁺; Rev 14:6⁺; Rev 17:8⁺).⁷² These are the ones being tested by this time of trial from God (Rev. 3:10⁺) and rejoice when God's two witnesses are killed (Rev. 11:10⁺). It is they who are subject to the wrath of both God and the devil (Rev. 12:12⁺) and who will be deceived into worshiping the beast (Rev. 13:12⁺, 14⁺). Even though an angel preaches the everlasting gospel to each one (Rev. 14:6⁺), they continue in their rejection of God to the end. Therefore, their names are not written in the [Book of Life](#) (Rev. 17:8⁺). See [Book of Life](#).

Revelation 6:11

white robe

These are the white robes promised to the overcomers, for their nakedness is clothed (Rev. 12:11⁺ cf. Rev. 3:5⁺, 18⁺). This is the righteousness of God which is obtained, not by works, but by *faith* (Rom. 3:5, 21-26; 10:3; 2Cor. 5:21; Php. 3:9; Jas. 1:20). See commentary on [Revelation 3:5](#).

a little while longer

Some see the announcement of the angel that "there should be delay no longer" as the terminus of this period (Rev. 10:6⁺). But the context of the angel's proclamation here concerns the completion of "the mystery of God . . . as He declared to His servants the prophets" (Rev. 10:7⁺). Perhaps the two time periods coincide in that martyrdom continues until the time of the final victory (Rev. 19⁺).

until . . . fellow servants and their brethren . . . would be killed

Their *fellow servants and their brethren* denotes a single category. "Figure of speech Hendiadys of Nouns. 'Fellow servants and brethren' denote by this figure not two separate classes of persons, but one class, their fellow servants who were their brethren."⁷³ Here again a most difficult reality presents itself. God Who has the power to step in and end this holocaust at any moment instead *chooses* to allow it to play out in all its gruesome detail. Although we will never fully apprehend His divine patience, we know that it is explained, in part, by His great mercy toward those who have not yet turned, the glorious testimony being accrued by the martyred saints, and the filling up of the cup of injustice of the perpetrators. If He were to move immediately in vengeance at the time of their request, then some would be eternally lost that are yet to become their *brethren*.

This section of Scripture is the first intimation that the reign of Antichrist is to witness the greatest revival that the world has ever seen. More millions will be saved under the preaching of God's witnesses in these seven years than in many times that period in this present age.⁷⁴

Their request has much in common with the prayers of the saints in the bowls in Revelation 5:8⁺ and is recorded by the Psalmist, "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs - O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth! Rise up, O Judge of the earth; render punishment to the proud. Lord, how long will the wicked, How long will the wicked triumph?" (Ps. 94:1-3). The "golden age" to be ushered in by the preaching of the gospel as all the world turns to Christ is an unscriptural myth. A golden age will come, but not by worldwide response to the gospel:

Surely this ought to be sufficient to convince all Christians today that the gospel is not intended to cover the world, or to bring in universal peace and blessing. This dispensation of grace (rejected) is to be followed by a dispensation of judgment. Not until after that shall Jerusalem be the centre of God's presence and government.⁷⁵

The Gospel, as now preached, is not, and in the present order of things never will be, triumphant. This is demonstrated in the seven Epistles, and is the common teaching of the Scriptures on the subject. A leading feature in its entire history is, that it is mostly rejected. It is universally preached "as a witness to all nations," but nations, as such, with all their patronage, have never received it, and have ever been the slayers of its witnesses.⁷⁶

killed as they were

They are probably being slain initially at the hand of the harlot who is "drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Rev. 17:6⁺).⁷⁷ She rides the beast who probably does the actual execution at her behest. Once she is destroyed (Rev. 17:16-17⁺), then the beast himself will carry out their martyrdom. Many will be beheaded (Rev. 20:4⁺).

Revelation 6:12

sixth seal

“It would be difficult to paint any scene more moving or more terrible than that described at the opening of the sixth seal.⁷⁸ Up to now, the effects of the first five seals, although unprecedented in their global impact, could still be explained away as an intensification of what history already records: conflict, war, death, famine, disease, and martyrdom. With the opening of the sixth seal, all such explanations vanish for the signs which attend this seal are unmistakable in their uniqueness and scope.

The magnitude of the earthquake and cosmic disturbances that will occur when Christ breaks the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-14⁺) forces the conclusion that this will be an awesome expression of the wrath of God, not the work of unregenerate mankind.⁷⁹

When the *sixth seal* is opened, there are unmistakable global signs of astronomical proportions, but the Lamb has yet to ride forth on His horse (Rev. 19:11⁺)—He is still in heaven loosing seals. How can His riding forth to destroy the armies of the earth be *tonight* if none of these unmistakable signs have transpired? Yet Scripture teaches His coming is *imminent*. The answer to this dilemma, as we’ve seen, is in recognizing that signs precede His final arrival in judgment, but not His coming as a bridegroom for His bride—a separate coming which precedes these events. See *Rapture*. By the time of the sixth seal, the *Day of the Lord* must be already underway. Having already come without warning, *like a thief in the night*, it is now made unmistakable to the *earth dwellers* in the cosmic signs which attend this seal:

Paul declared that the broad Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night—suddenly, unexpectedly, when the victims are unprepared [1Th. 5:2]. A thief depends upon the element of surprise for success. He does not give his intended victims a forewarning of his coming. Paul’s point—the unsaved will be given no forewarning of the coming of the broad Day of the Lord—rules out any of the seals of Revelation as being forewarnings of the beginning of the broad Day. For example, it rules out the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-14⁺) which will cause great cosmic disturbances and a major earthquake causing the people of the world to flee to the mountains in terror (Rev. 6:15-17⁺). . . . if the disturbances of the sixth seal were a precursor to the Day of the Lord, the unsaved thereby would be given a graphic forewarning of its coming and will not be caught by surprise when it comes. Thus, the Day of the Lord would not come unexpectedly like a thief in the night.⁸⁰

a great earthquake

The uniquely intense earthquakes which attend the judgments of the Tribulation period provide tangible evidence of God’s hand in the events which transpire (Rev. 6:12⁺; 8:5⁺; 11:13[±]; 16:18⁺ cf. Mat. 27:54). During the Tribulation, even though men understand the source of the earthquakes, most fail to repent (Rev. 6:16⁺). A rare exception is the case of the great earthquake in Jerusalem, where those who avoid death “gave glory to the God of heaven” (Rev. 11:13⁺). Jesus said great earthquakes would be one of the signs of “the beginning of sorrows” (Mat. 24:7-8). The *OT* prophets also predicted a time where God would intensely shake the earth.⁸¹ Haggai revealed that global earthquakes and the overthrow of the Gentile kingdoms would precede the return of God’s glory to His (millennial) *Temple*.⁸²

For thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, thesea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,’ says the Lord of hosts. . . . I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms. I will overthrow the chariots And those who ride in them; the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. ‘In that day,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel,’ says the Lord, ‘and will make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you,’ says the Lord of hosts. (Hag. 2:6-7, 22-23)

Joel saw earthquakes associated with the mighty judgments of God poured out in the Day of the Lord, judgments which were intended to cause people to turn to God.

The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong *is the One* who executes His word. For the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; who can endure it? “Now, therefore,” says the LORD, “Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.” (Joel 2:10-12)

The *earthquake* affects more than just the face of the earth. *Σεισμος* [Seismos] means “shaking; of a storm on the sea, with waves caused by high winds [Mat. 8:24].⁸³ In the *Septuagint*, it is used in Joel 2:10 to describe the heavens trembling.⁸⁴ This catastrophic event extends beyond the geography of the earth to effect the cosmic realm.

the sun became black as sackcloth of hair

Jesus said that cosmic signs would be associated with the time of the end (Mat. 24:29; Mark 13:24-25; Luke 21:11). From other considerations, we understand that the signs associated with this sixth seal are not the only cosmic signs of this time period.⁸⁵

The Isaiah 13:9-10 and Joel 3:14-15 passages [concerning cosmic disturbances] clearly take place *within* the Day of the Lord, . . . Joel 2:30-31 describes cosmic disturbances *before* the Day of the Lord. In the prophetic scheme of things, there are several cosmic disturbances.⁸⁶

There are reasons for concluding that the cosmic disturbances related to the beginning of the Joel 3 Day of the Lord and the Second Coming of Christ immediately after the Great Tribulation are not the same as those of the sixth seal. First, the cosmic disturbances of Joel 3 will occur when the armies of the nations have gathered for war in Israel. Those armies will not begin to gather for war until the sixth bowl has been poured out (Rev. 16:12-16⁺), long after the sixth seal—one seal, seven trumpets, and five bowls after the cosmic disturbances of the sixth seal. . . . other cosmic disturbances will occur after those of the sixth seal. A third of the sun, moon, and stars will be darkened by the fourth trumpet (Rev. 8:12⁺); the sun will be darkened by smoke from the abyss at the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:1-2⁺); the sun will scorch people on the earth with fire and fierce heat when the fourth bowl is poured out (Rev. 16:8-9⁺). . . . when the cosmic disturbances of the sixth seal take place, kings, military men, and all other classes of people will run to the caves and rocks of the mountains to hide. . . . By contrast, when the cosmic disturbances immediately before the Joel 3 Day of the Lord occur after the sixth bowl, the kings and military men will not run and hide. Rather, they will remain assembled together in battle array to boldly attempt war against God, His Messiah, and the holy angels (Ps. 2:1-3; Joel 3:9-16; Zec. 12:2-9; 14:1-6, 12-14).⁸⁷

The *sun* and *moon* were created for “signs” (Gen. 1:14).⁸⁸ They now provide indication that the events associated with this seal cannot be explained by natural phenomena—but result from the One Who controls the universe! The darkening of the sun may be from the perspective of viewers on the earth—due to material ejected into the upper atmosphere by the earthquake or the impact of asteroids in the next verse. Although the sun is darkened, the moon continues to reflect light (as if the path light follows between the sun and moon is only minimally affected). In the fifth trumpet judgment, it is smoke which darkens the sun (Rev. 9:2⁺). Eventually, like the earth, the sun and moon are judged to show those who dwell on the earth Who the true source of light is—the Lord Himself. If the trend in our own day is any indication, worship of the heavenly bodies will still be prevalent at that time and so God interferes with that which man has idolized (Zep. 1:5).⁸⁹ As always, the message is to turn from *dead* idols to serve the *living* God:

The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but the Lord will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. Your sun shall no longer go down, nor shall your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. (Isa. 60:19-20)

the moon became like blood

σελήνη λι [hē selēnē holē], the *entire moon* in all its fullness. John uses simile to describe the effects upon the moon. The entire moon takes on a reddish appearance, as when atmospheric dust darkens or moisture refracts its light. The red appearance conveys the idea of judgment.

Revelation 6:13

stars of heaven fell to the earth

Stars is αστέρες [asteres] from which we get the word *asteroid*. The word is also used of the supernatural manifestation which led the magi to the babe (Mat. 2:2), Christ who is the “morning star” (Rev. 2:27⁺; 22:16⁺), angels (Rev. 1:16⁺; Rev 2:1⁺; Rev 3:1⁺; Rev 9:1⁺), and astronomical objects (Mat. 24:29; Mark 13:25; 1Cor. 15:41; Rev. 6:3⁺; Rev. 8:10⁺). Here and in Revelation 8:10⁺ *stars* are said to fall to the earth. It seems best to understand these as asteroids or meteors for even the smallest sun would consume the entire planet should it ever fall to earth.⁹⁰

The stars proper are certainly still found in their places after the fulfilment of this vision. (See Rev. 8:12⁺.) And remembering that the Scriptures often speak in the common language of men, without reference to the distinctions of science, and that even science itself still popularly speaks of “falling stars,” when it means simply meteoric phenomena, it appears but reasonable that we should understand the apostle to be speaking of something of the same sort.⁹¹

The most likely identification of these particular falling stars is that of a great swarm of asteroids that pummel the earth. Such an event has never occurred in historic times, but scientists have long speculated about the probability of either past or future earth catastrophes caused by encountering a swarm of asteroids.⁹²

“The sixth seal presents a disturbance of nature so vast that we naturally seek to explain it as hyperbole,”⁹³ but this is not merely hyperbolic language.⁹⁴ (See Interpreting Symbols.) These are the very signs that Jesus predicted would attend the period preceding His return:

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from

heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear** in heaven, 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. (Mat. 24:29-30 cf. Mark 13:24-25; Luke 23:44-45; Rev. 1:7[±]) [emphasis added]

Isaiah had been shown this fearsome time:

Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine. I will punish the world for *its* evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, a man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore **I will shake the heavens**, and the earth will move out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger. (Isa. 13:9-13) [emphasis added]

In these judgments, God is shattering the puny pillars of support which men trust in when they turn away from Him.

See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the **removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain**. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (Heb. 12:25-28) [emphasis added]

The increasingly severe judgments which fall during this period are specifically designed to remove hope in all else but God so that all creatures recognize their *utter dependence* upon the Creator. Hope placed anywhere else is idolatry. God now begins a systematic destruction of the natural order (sun, moon, stars, earth) which men have often deferred to in place of the Creator.⁹⁵ In its failure to recognize the Creator, environmentalism eventually fails in its effort to preserve the creation.

Revelation 6:14

the sky receded

receded is [πρυχωρισθη](#) [apechōristhē]. The term is used to describe the *parting* of Paul and Silas from Barnabas and Mark (Acts 15:39). The sky *receded* causing it to be "split apart" (NASB). At the appearance of the Judge at the Great White Throne Judgment, "the earth and heaven fled away and there was found no place for them" (Rev. 20:11[±]). The psalmist predicted a time when the heavens would "grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them" (Ps. 102:25).

Come near, you nations, to hear; and heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world and all things that come forth from it. For the indignation of the LORD *is* against all nations, and *His* fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to the slaughter. Also their slain shall be thrown out; their stench shall rise from their corpses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and **the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll**; all their host shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, and as *fruit* falling from a fig tree. (Isa. 34:1-4) [emphasis added]

Passages such as this tempt the interpreter to jettison the literal approach and "go symbolic."⁹⁶ Yet events which are so far removed from our daily experience as to be completely foreign need not be incredible when initiated by the hand of the Almighty. It is as if we were to try to explain the design of a nuclear plant to the ant! The construction of the starry realm is far beyond our grasp and the description which meets us here is at best an approximation which only hints at the full dimensions of what transpires. Clearly, it is an enormous and terrifying sight which could not even begin to be explained by modern physics. "This is the human perception of the magnitude of the disturbance, but is not the ultimate passage of the heavens, which does not come until Rev. 20:11[±]; . . . The impression of all these heavenly phenomena is that the universe is coming apart."⁹⁷ In response to these events, men recognize the *wrath of the Lamb* (Rev. 6:16[±]). Mills offers an unusual suggestion concerning the purpose for the splitting of the sky:

In order to ensure that there is no misunderstanding on the source of these disasters, God will open the heavens for an instant, and the people on earth will be given a glimpse of God and the Lamb on their thrones (Rev. 6:16[±]). Revelation 6:14[±] pictures an extended scroll suddenly being split; the two ends recoil, spring-like, around the end rod to which the scroll is attached. Suddenly, earth can peer into Heaven as Stephen did in Acts 7:56. Man sees Him who sits on the throne and the Lamb. Men will know they are experiencing the wrath of God, and this knowledge will be even more fearsome to them than the great natural catastrophes they will have endured.⁹⁸

every mountain and island was moved out of its place

The seismic disturbances will be of such magnitude that the entire geography of the earth is permanently altered.⁹⁹ The extensive

mapping of the earth, both by GPS and sonar, will eventually be for naught as in a moment every geophysical mapping database is rendered obsolete.¹⁰⁰ As great as this earthquake is, it is but a precursor to an even greater one associated with theseventh bowl at which “every island fled away and the mountains were not found” (Rev. 16:19⁺). It would appear that the islands sink from sight and the mountains are leveled by God’s final outpouring of wrath.

Revelation 6:15

kings of the earth

These are the kings which fail to “kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little” (Ps. 2:12). They are the “kings of earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously” with Babylon, who were ruled by her, but will mourn her fall (Rev. 17:2⁺, 18⁺; 18:3⁺, 9⁺). They are the kings who “gather . . . to the battle of that greatday of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:14⁺; 19:19⁺). Here, they are “gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and will be shut up in the prison” (Isa. 24:20).

the great men . . . the mighty men

[μεγιστονας](#) [megistanes], *the great ones* and [αχυρο](#) [ischyroi], *strong ones*. These are men who do not occupy official positions of rulership or military command, but who nevertheless influence and control the affairs of men from behind the scenes: from board rooms, golf courses, and luxury yachts. They are the “captains of industry.” As the globalization of our world continues, power will reside more and more in the hands of these leaders of multinational corporations.

commanders

[χιλιαρχοι](#) [chiliarchoi] from [χιλιάς](#) [chilias] *one thousand*. The leaders over a thousand troops. Roughly equivalent to a major or colonel.¹⁰¹

every slave and every free man

Several verses indicate that even at the supposed “height” of humanism’s achievements at the time of the end, slavery will not yet have been abolished worldwide (Rev. 13:16⁺; 19:18⁺). The emphasis is upon the comprehensive nature of the judgments. The magnitude of the disturbances coming upon the earth is such that *every man* is affected.

hide themselves in caves

Here is the classic record of man’s response to his own sin—a vain attempt to hide from the omnipresent, omniscient, almighty God (Gen. 3:8; Rev. 6:16⁺). In the irony of God, those who persecuted God’s servants, who were “destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy,” who “wandered in deserts and mountains, *in dens and caves of the earth*” (Heb. 11:38) now experience firsthand a similar affliction from the very hand of God.

Revelation 6:16

fall on us

So intense is their fear of God’s judgments that they temporarily seek even death—anything to flee from His manifest presence (Hos. 10:8; Luke 23:30; Rev. 9:6⁺).

hide us from the face of Him

Attempting to hide from God illustrates how sin and fear warp the intellect, for it is impossible to hide from the Omnipresent One (Job 34:22). How different the motivation of the godly from the ungodly. Those with faith in Christ *desire* His presence and *seek* His face. (Ps. 17:15; Pr. 8:7; Isa. 45:19; Isa. 58:2; 65:1; Jer. 29:13; Amos 5:4). Those who reject God *fear* His presence and *flee* His face. This dichotomy is seen today in the reaction of people to the preaching of the gospel:

For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? (2Cor. 2:15-16)

At the scene of God’s final judgment of the ungodly, there will be nowhere available to hide from His face, for heaven and earth will have fled away (Rev. 20:11⁺). All things are naked in His sight!¹⁰²

who sits on the throne

See commentary on [Revelation 4:2](#).

the wrath of the Lamb

Here we encounter a phrase of seeming contradiction. The *Lamb* who was silently led to the slaughter (Isa. 53:7) now metes out *wrath*. It is the *Lamb* which opens each of the seals bringing forth these judgments which are indicative of the *wrath* of God. See commentary on [Revelation 5:5](#). The wrath of God began earlier, when the Lamb arose from His seat to open the first seal. Now it is recognized for what it is. "It should be noted that the passage does not say that the wrath of God begins only with the sixth seal, but that only with the sixth seal do unbelievers recognize that it is the wrath of God."¹⁰³ Those on the earth are ignorant of the Scriptures. Yet even they recognize that the time of God's *wrath* has now come upon the earth (Rev. 11:18⁺; 14:9-10⁺, 19⁺; 15:1⁺, 7⁺; 16:1⁺, 19⁺). See commentary on [Revelation 5:6](#).

Revelation 6:17

the great day of His wrath

The *great day* is [The Day of the Lord](#), a unique time yet future when God will radically intervene in history to demonstrate in an irrefutable way Who He is.

The primary Old Testament passages from which the images in the sixth seal are drawn prove that the great day must be the Day of the Lord (Isa. 2:10-11, 19-21; 13:9-13; 34:4, 8; Eze. 32:7-8; Hos. 10:8; Joel 2:11, 30; Zep. 1:14; Mal. 4:5).¹⁰⁴

First, the expression the Day of the Lord refers to God's special intervention into world events to judge His enemies, accomplish His purpose for history, and thereby demonstrate who He is—the sovereign God of the universe (Isa. 2:10-22; Eze. 13:5, 9, 14, 21, 23; Eze. 30:3, 8, 19, 25-26). Second, several Days of the Lord already have occurred in which God demonstrated His sovereign rule by raising up nations to execute His judgement on other nations. For example, He raised up Babylon to judge Egypt and its allies during the 500s B.C. (Jer. 46:2, 10; Eze. 30:3-6). However, the Bible also foretells a future Day of the Lord.¹⁰⁵

At the outset of the day of the Lord, human trials will be prolonged and comparable to a woman's labor before giving birth to a child (Isa. 13:8; 26:17-19; 66:7-9; Jer. 30:6-8; Mic. 4:9, 10; cf. Mat. 24:8; 1Th. 5:3). This phase of growing human agony will be climaxed by the Messiah's personal return to earth to terminate the period of turmoil through direct judgment.¹⁰⁶

The great day which has been on the horizon for thousands of years has finally arrived. Men will experience unparalleled fear and conditions that have never before prevailed upon the earth:

Wail, for the day of the LORD *is* at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will be limp, every man's heart will melt, and they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of *them*; they will be in pain as a woman in childbirth; they will be amazed at one another; their faces *will be like* flames. Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. (Isa. 13:6-9)

The proud technologies of man, and infrastructure upon which it depends, will quickly collapse in the midst of this time of divine retribution. Death will be so common that burial will be uncommon as the flesh of men is treated as so much garbage:

The **great day** of the LORD *is* near; *It is* near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day *is* a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers. "I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse." (Zep. 1:14-17) [emphasis added]

"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch." (Mal. 4:1-2)

Not only will God pour forth his wrath upon the Gentile nations, but the Jewish nation will also undergo a time of unparalleled trouble designed to purge out the unbelieving rebels and turn the remainder back to God. In the midst of this intense judgment, God has promised that a believing remnant will survive (see [Jacob's Trouble and the Great Tribulation](#)):

Now these *are* the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah. "For thus says the LORD: 'We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man *with* his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! **For that day is great**, so that none *is* like it; and it *is* the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.'" (Jer. 30:4-7) [emphasis added]

Jesus also spoke of this fearful time:

And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. (Luke 21:25-26)

This is that *great day* for which the angels who did not keep their proper domain are reserved for judgment—they will be *used in judgment* against men (Rev. 9⁺). See [The Day of the Lord, Jacob's Trouble and the Great Tribulation](#). The *wrath* is said to be of the *Lamb* (Rev. 6:16⁺). This is extremely significant because those who are covered by the blood of the Lamb prior to this day (1Pe. 1:17-19) are exempted from experiencing His wrath—they are His bride (Luke 21:36; Rom. 5:9; 1Th. 5:9; Rev. 3:10⁺). See commentary on [Revelation 3:10](#). See [Rapture](#).

has come

[ἤθηεν](#) [ēlthen], aorist tense which normally denotes past time. The day *has already come* in the opening of the sixth seal. God's wrath is being poured out *prior* to the seventh seal (which initiates the seven trumpet judgments). This contradicts the pre-wrath [rapture](#) view which holds that the seals represent "**Man's wrath** through Antichrist" [emphasis added]¹⁰⁷. While it is true that the aorist tense *can* be used to describe a future event (*proleptic*),¹⁰⁸ it is more often used of actions which have already transpired.¹⁰⁹ Advocates of the pre-wrath rapture view argue that the pronouncement associated with the sixth seal is *anticipatory* of the wrath of God, and not in *reaction* to it.¹¹⁰ Since the aorist can represent events either in the past or future, the form of the verb itself (aorist) cannot settle the matter. Instead, the *context* must indicate which meaning is in view. The use of this same word within the larger context of the book of Revelation argues for understanding *has come* as denoting a past or present event which has just arrived. Mention of this specific aorist form rendered *has come* ([ἤθηεν](#) [ēlthen]) in the book of Revelation, include the following:

1. "Then *He came* and took the scroll" (Rev. 5:7⁺).
2. "For the great day of His wrath *has come*" (Rev. 6:17⁺).
3. "Another angel, having a golden censer, *came* and stood at the altar." (Rev. 8:3⁺).
4. "The nations were angry, and Your wrath *has come*" (Rev. 11:18⁺).
5. "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment *has come*" (Rev. 14:7⁺).
6. "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time *has come* for You to reap" (Rev. 14:15⁺).
7. "Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls *came*" (Rev. 17:1⁺).
8. "Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet *come*" (Rev. 17:10⁺). (It is important in this instance to observe that [ἤθηεν](#) [ēlthen] merely denotes *come*. The future aspect of the statement, *not yet*, comes from another word ([οὐ πῶ](#) [oupō].)
9. "That great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment *has come*" (Rev. 18:10⁺).
10. "Rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb *has come*" (Rev. 19:7⁺).
11. "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues *came* to me" (Rev. 21:9⁺).

In each of these cases, the verb describes something in the past, in the present, or in the *immediate future*—having "just now" come. "The aorist may be used for stating a present reality with the certitude of a past event. This idiom is a device for emphasis. It is commonly used of a state which has just been realized, or a result which has just been accomplished, or is on the point of being accomplished. (John 13:31; Mat. 3:17; 1Cor. 4:18)."¹¹¹ In none of its appearances in Revelation is it rendered by the translators as a true future tense (e.g., *shall come*, *will come*, *is coming*). The pre-wrath rapture view requires its use here to be anticipatory over a period—spanning the events of the next chapter where the 144,000 are sealed and a multitude of martyrs are revealed—reaching until the seventh seal is loosed (Rev. 8:1⁺). Within the larger context of the book of Revelation this verb form does not denote what pre-wrath rapture proponents require. The most that can be said is that in some cases it describes an event which is "just now" happening, on the boundary between the present and the future (e.g., the impending destruction of Babylon in Rev. 18:10⁺, the arrival of the marriage of the Lamb in Rev. 19:7⁺).

The only time an aorist indicative speaks of something future or something about to happen, however, is if it is a dramatic aorist (H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* [New York: Macmillan, 1927], p. 198), a futuristic aorist (BDF, par. 333 [2]), or a proleptic aorist (Nigel Turner, *Syntax*, vol. 3 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963], p. 74). Some contextual feature must be present to indicate clearly these exceptional usages. No such feature exists in the context of the sixth seal, so these special uses are not options here. . . . The verb in Rev. 6:17⁺ must be a constantative aorist looking back in time to the point in the past when the great day of wrath arrived.¹¹²

When we examine the immediate context of this passage—the seismic and astronomical disturbances—we find that Isaiah elsewhere attributes these phenomena as being *part of* the [Day of the Lord](#):

Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the **day of the LORD**

of hosts *Shall come* upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up—And it shall be brought low—upon all the cedars of Lebanon *that are* high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan; upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills *that are* lifted up; upon every high tower, and upon every fortified wall; upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all the beautiful sloops. The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted **in that day**, but the idols He shall utterly abolish. **They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily. In that day** a man will cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they made, *each* for himself to worship, to the moles and bats, **To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crags of the rugged rocks, from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily.** (Isa. 2:10-21) [emphasis added]

Isaiah tells us that *in that day*, not before the day, men will hide in holes of the rocks and caves.¹¹³ They are hiding *from the terror of the LORD when He arises to shake the earth mightily*. Their hiding is not *anticipatory*, but *reactionary*. In other words, the events of the sixth seal are part of the Day of the Lord.

The reaction of the unbelieving world to the terrors unleashed by the sixth seal will not be one of repentance (cf. Rev. 9:21+; 16:11+), but of mindless panic. They will finally acknowledge what believers have been saying all along, that **the disasters they have experienced are God's judgment.** [emphasis added]¹¹⁴

In what way could the events of the sixth seal be said to be **"Man's wrath"** [emphasis added]¹¹⁵ as pre-wrath rapture advocates hold? These events occur "when **He** opened the sixth seal" [emphasis added] (Rev. 6:12+). Who is *He*? The *Lamb* of Revelation 6:1+! It is *Jesus Christ* who directly initiates these judgments. And how could astronomical and seismic manifestations such as these reflect the wrath of puny *men*? For *what man could cause* asteroids to fall to the earth and the sky to recede as a scroll (Rev. 6:13-14+)?

Isaiah 2:10-22 foretold the future time when people, including the proud and lofty, will flee in terror to hide in the holes of the rocks and caves of the earth "for the fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Isa. 2:11). . . . note that Isaiah indicated he was writing about the Day of the Lord, from which we can conclude that the Day of the Lord . . . will include the sixth seal, and that seal will involve Day of the Lord wrath.¹¹⁶

See [When Does the Day of the Lord Dawn?](#)

who is able to stand

[τίς δύναται σταθῆναι](#) [tis dynatai stathēnai]. *Able* is present tense. The phrase could be rendered: *who is presently able to stand*. Their exclamation does not concern a *potential* future situation, as if the wrath were to begin *after* the seventh seal. They are *presently* experiencing the wrath and recognize it by the events which have just transpired which have driven them to hide in caves and in the rocks. *When the sky splits and rolls up like a scroll, mountains and islands move out of their place, and asteroids fall to earth, there is little doubt concerning the power involved—it is the judgment of God!* These events are not a precursor to God's wrath, they are the *result* of His wrath. As Joel said, "For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; Who can endure it?" (Joel 2:11b). It will be a time of unprecedented bloodshed and death, However, in the midst of these things, there *are some* who are able to stand because they are afforded special protection from God. The 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel, Jewish believers in Messiah Jesus, are protected so that their gospel mission (Rev. 7:9+) can be accomplished during this time of unprecedented upheaval (Rev. 7:3-8+). As for the [earth dwellers](#), they will remain in denial:

But then, amazingly, even this would pass. After these few terrifying days, the stars stopped falling and the terrible shakings ceased. The survivors emerged from their shelters and began again to rationalize their resistance to God. After all, these calamities could be explained scientifically, so perhaps they had been too quick to attribute them to God's wrath. They quickly set about rebuilding their damaged structures and became more resolute in their opposition to the gospel of Christ.¹¹⁷

The book of Revelation discredits those who hold that God is so loving and kind that He will never judge people who have not received His Son. Though the modern mind is reluctant to accept the fact that God will judge the wicked, the Bible clearly teaches that He will. The Scriptures reveal a God of love as clearly as they reveal a God of wrath who will deal with those who spurn the grace proffered in the Lord Jesus Christ. The passage before us is a solemn word that there is inevitable judgment ahead for those who will not receive Christ by faith.¹¹⁸

Dear reader, is *your* citizenship in heaven? Or do you remain an earth dweller yet?

Friends and brethren, what a mercy that day is not yet upon us! There is a Rock to which we still may fly and pray, with hope of security in its wide-open clefts. It is the Rock of Ages. There are mountains to which we may yet betake ourselves, and be forever safe from all the dread convulsions which await the world. They are the mountains of salvation in Christ Jesus. I believe I am

addressing some who have betaken themselves to them. Brethren, “hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised.” (Heb. 10:23.) But others are still lingering in the plains of Sodom, who need to take this warning to heart as they never yet have done. O ye travellers of the judgment, seek ye the Lord while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near! And may God in His mercy hide us all from the condemnation that awaits an unbelieving world!¹¹⁹

Amen!

Notes

¹Robert L. Thomas, [Revelation 1-7](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992), Rev. 6:1.

²Ibid.

³Alva J. McClain, [The Greatness Of The Kingdom](#) (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1959), 56.

⁴Keith H. Essex, “[The Rapture and the Book of Revelation.](#)” in Richard L. Mayhue, ed., [The Master’s Seminary Journal](#), vol. 13 no. 1 (Sun Valley, CA: The Master’s Seminary, Spring 2002), 230.

⁵John MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), Rev. 6:1.

⁶Albrecht Durer (1471 - 1528). Image courtesy of the [Connecticut College Wetmore Print Collection](#).

⁷“Both passages involve similar descriptions to the approaching end.”—Renald E. Showers, [The Pre-Wrath Rapture View](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001), 11. “The beginning of birth pangs and the first four seals are the same and . . . take place during the first half of the 70th week.”—Renald E. Showers, [Maranatha, Our Lord Come](#) (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1995), 16. “A comparison of Christ’s description of the beginning of birth pangs in Matthew 24:5-7 with the first four seals of Revelation 6:1-8⁺ indicates that the beginning of birth pangs and the first four seals are the same thing.”—Ibid., 25.

⁸Ibid., 63.

⁹J. A. Seiss, [The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), 125.

¹⁰As another example of [Anti-supernatural Bias](#), consider Mounce’s observation: “As usual, John modifies his sources [Zechariah] with great freedom. Apparently for Mounce, it is *John* who is determining the content of his vision!”—Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), Rev. 6:2.

¹¹Thomas, [Revelation 1-7](#), Rev. 6:2.

¹²Fausset sees this rider as “Evidently Christ, whether in person, or by His angel, preparatory to His coming again, as appears from Rev. 19:11⁺, 12⁺.”—A. R. Fausset, “[The Revelation of St. John the Divine.](#)” in Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, [A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments](#) (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, 1877), Rev. 6:2.

¹³Alan F. Johnson, [Revelation: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), Rev. 6:2.

¹⁴“How the Lamb who opens the seal can be the effect of the opening, and at the same time be the rider on a white horse, we cannot understand.”—E. W. Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1984, 1935), Rev. 6:2.

¹⁵All four riders are representative personifications of forces. With this rider, there is also a correlation to an individual which the “spirit of antichrist” brings forth (1Jn. 4:3). “This rider, like the other three, is not an individual, but a personification of a growing movement or force that will be at work during this future period.”—Thomas, [Revelation 1-7](#), Rev. 6:2.

¹⁶“Rabbi Akiba proclaimed Bar Kokhba as Messiah in A.D. 132; the whole Jewish community of Crete followed a messiah named Moses in the fifth century; Abu Issa of Isfahan raised an army of 10,000 men; and European Jewry crowned Shabbetai Zvi messiah in the seventeenth century, although he later converted to Islam!”—Randall Price, [Jerusalem In Prophecy](#) (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1998), 192.

¹⁷Showers, [Maranatha, Our Lord Come](#), 105-108.

¹⁸Jerome Smith, [The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), Rev. 6:2.

- ¹⁹Marvin Rosenthal, [*The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 142.
- ²⁰Bullinger, [*Commentary On Revelation*](#), Rev. 6:17.
- ²¹Arthur Walkington Pink, [*The Antichrist*](#) (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1999, 1923), s.v. "The Career of the Antichrist."
- ²²J. Dwight Pentecost, "[Daniel.](#)" in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., [*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983), Dan. 8:23.
- ²³MacArthur, [*Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*](#), Rev. 6:2.
- ²⁴Showers, [*Maranatha, Our Lord Come*](#), 108-109.
- ²⁵"The Greek language has two words meaning 'crown,' One is the word *diadem*, which is a king's crown. It is the crown of a sovereign and of a person who is royal by his nature and by his position—a king. This is the kind of crown that Jesus wears."—Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, [*The Footsteps of Messiah*](#), rev ed (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003), 160. "That the figure is not Messiah is indicated by the fact that the crown here is a *stephanos* crown, the crown of an overcomer or victor. It is not the diadem crown, the crown of sovereignty and royalty, the type of crown Messiah will wear in chapter 19."—*Ibid.*, 206. "This rider wears the conqueror's crown (*stephanos*); Christ will have a different kind of crown—the crown of kings (*diadema*)."—Showers, [*Maranatha, Our Lord Come*](#), 105. "This rider wears a *stephanos*, a crown won as a prize; in Rev. 19:12+ Christ wears many *diadēmas*, royal crowns."—MacArthur, [*Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*](#), Rev. 6:2.
- ²⁶Walter Scott, [*Exposition of The Revelation*](#) (London, England: Pickering & Inglis, n.d.), 155.
- ²⁷Pink, [*The Antichrist*](#), s.v. "The Genius and Character of the Antichrist."
- ²⁸Showers, [*Maranatha, Our Lord Come*](#), 62.
- ²⁹Monty S. Mills, [*Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John*](#) (Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries, 1987), Rev. 6:3.
- ³⁰Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, [*Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 340.
- ³¹Frederick William Danker and Walter Bauer, [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 796.
- ³²MacArthur, [*Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*](#), Rev. 6:4.
- ³³Danker, [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#), 499.
- ³⁴Donald Grey Barnhouse, [*Revelation*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 127.
- ³⁵Danker, [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#), 752.
- ³⁶*Ibid.*, 179.
- ³⁷Fausset, [*The Revelation of St. John the Divine*](#), Rev. 6:6.
- ³⁸Colin J. Hemer, [*The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 175.
- ³⁹Thomas, [*Revelation 1-7*](#), 272.
- ⁴⁰*Ibid.*, Rev. 6:6.
- ⁴¹Pink, [*The Antichrist*](#), s.v. "Antichrist in the Apocalypse."
- ⁴²Smith, [*The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*](#), Rev. 6:6.
- ⁴³Barnhouse, [*Revelation*](#), 128.
- ⁴⁴"For while there is a famine of food, there will be an abundance of medicine, for the *oil and wine* are not hurt. These items were

used for medicinal purposes.”—Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of Messiah*, 219.

⁴⁵Gordon Franz, “Was ‘Babylon’ Destroyed when Jerusalem Fell in A.D. 70?.” in Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, eds., *The End Times Controversy* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2003), 226-227.

⁴⁶Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 155.

⁴⁷Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, Rev. 6:6.

⁴⁸Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 882.

⁴⁹M. R. Vincent, *Vincent’s Word Studies* (Escondido, CA: Ephesians Four Group, 2002), Rev. 6:8.

⁵⁰Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, Rev. 6:8.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²See the world population clock: [<http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/popclockw>].

⁵³Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 737.

⁵⁴“Metonymy of the Effect, the effect (death) put for the cause producing it (pestilence).”—Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, Rev. 6:8.

⁵⁵MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, Rev. 6:8.

⁵⁶“The context of Ezekiel 5:17 (Eze. 5:12-16) indicates that the famine, beasts, pestilence, and sword of that passage are expressions of God’s wrath.”—Showers, *Maranatha, Our Lord Come*, 115.

⁵⁷Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of Messiah*, 219.

⁵⁸Albrecht Durer (1471 - 1528). Image courtesy of the [Connecticut College Wetmore Print Collection](#).

⁵⁹Seiss, *The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, 140.

⁶⁰Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, Rev. 6:11.

⁶¹Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 366.

⁶²Bullinger, *Commentary On Revelation*, Rev. 6:9.

⁶³Mills, *Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John* Rev. 6:9.

⁶⁴“The description given in Revelation seems to fit the altar of incense better than the great altar of sacrifice which stood near the door of the tabernacle. The altar in Revelation is connected with the prayers of the martyrs (Rev. 6:9[±]), its fire is used to light the incense of the golden censer (Rev. 8:3[±], 5[±]), and its location is ‘before God,’ which would accord much more closely with the place of the altar of incense that stood on the border between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, the inner shrine of the tabernacle.”—Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1957), 171.

⁶⁵“This Greek word occurs 105 times in the New Testament, and its uses and occurrences may be classified as follows: (1) Metonymy of the Cause, ‘soul’ put for ‘life,’ which is the effect of it. The natural life of the body, Mat. 2:20; 6:25, 25; 10:39, 39; 16:25, 25; 20:28. Mark 3:4; 8:35; 10:45. Luke 6:9; 9:56; 12:22, 23; 14:26; 17:33a; John 10:11, 15, 17; 12:25a, 25b; 13:37, 38; 15:13; Acts 15:26; 20:10, 24; 27:10, 22; Rom. 11:3; 16:4; Php. 2:30; 1Jn. 3:16, 16; Rev. 8:9[±]; 12:11[±]. Rendered ‘soul,’ Mat. 16:26, 26; Mark 8:36, 37; Luke 12:20; 1Th. 2:8. (2) The immaterial, invisible part of man: Mat. 10:28; Acts 2:27, 31; 1Th. 5:23; Heb. 4:12. (3) The disembodied man (2Cor. 5:3, 4; 12:2): Rev. 6:9[±]; 20:4[±]. (4) The seat of personality: Luke 9:24, 24; Heb. 6:19; 10:39. (5) Metonymy of Cause. The seat of perception, feeling, desire: Mat. 11:29; Luke 1:46; 2:35; Acts 14:2 (mind), 22; 15:24. (6) Metonymy of Cause. The seat of will and purpose: Mat. 22:37; Mark 12:30, 33; Luke 10:27; Acts 4:32; Eph. 6:6; Php. 1:27; Col. 3:23; Heb. 12:3. (7) The seat of appetite: Rev. 18:14[±]. (8) Metonymy of Cause, soul put for person. Synecdoche of the Part, an integral part of man (individually) is put for the whole person. Used of persons or individuals: Acts 2:41, 43; 3:23; 7:14; 27:37; Rom. 2:9; 13:1; Jas. 5:20; 1Pe. 3:20; 2Pe. 2:14; Rev. 18:13[±]. (9) Synecdoche of the Part. The expression ‘my soul,’ ‘his soul,’ etc., becomes by Synecdoche the idiom for me, myself, himself, etc. Used to emphasize the personal pronoun (a) in the first person: Mat. 12:18; 26:38; Mark 14:34; Luke 12:19, 19; John 10:24 (us); 12:27; 2Cor. 1:23; Heb. 10:38 (soul); (b) in the second person: 2Cor. 12:15; Heb. 13:17; Jas. 1:21;

- 1Pe. 1:9; 22; 2:25; (c) in the third person: 1Pe. 4:19; 2Pe. 2:8. (10) Synecdoche of the Part. 'Soul' (Gr. psyche) is also used of animals. An animate creature, human or other: 1Cor. 15:45; Rev. 16:3⁺. (11) The 'inward man,' seat of the new life: Luke 21:19; 1Pe. 2:11; 3Jn. 2. Compare the classification of the corresponding Old Testament term nephesh at Gen. 2:7 (note).—Smith, [The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge](#), Mat. 2:20.
- ⁶⁶Seiss, [The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation](#), 142.
- ⁶⁷Showers, [Maranatha, Our Lord Come](#), 110, 119.
- ⁶⁸Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, [A Review of the Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church](#) (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, n.d.), 43.
- ⁶⁹John F. Walvoord, [The Revelation of Jesus Christ](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1966), Rev. 6:9.
- ⁷⁰Danker, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) 176.
- ⁷¹Friberg, [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#), 107.
- ⁷²“Them that dwell on the earth’ is a semi-technical designation for mankind in its hostility to God.”—Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 159.
- ⁷³Smith, [The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge](#), Rev. 6:11.
- ⁷⁴Barnhouse, [Revelation](#), 132.
- ⁷⁵Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), Rev. 6:11.
- ⁷⁶Seiss, [The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation](#), 126.
- ⁷⁷“As to who is persecuting these believers, this will be answered by Revelation 17⁺: namely, Ecclesiastical Babylon.”—Fruchtenbaum, [The Footsteps of Messiah](#), 220.
- ⁷⁸Walvoord, [The Revelation of Jesus Christ](#), Rev. 6:12.
- ⁷⁹Showers, [Maranatha, Our Lord Come](#), 119.
- ⁸⁰*ibid.*, 60.
- ⁸¹McLean believes this earthquake to be correlated with the timing of the Abomination of Desolation: “If the time sequence of A (the Abomination of Desolation at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week of Daniel and the tribulation of the synoptics), equals B (at this time the people flee to the mountains and women are warned about impending dangers); and the time frame of B equals C (the people cry out for the mountains to fall on them); and the reference C equals D (the sixth seal of Revelation when the wrath of God and the Lamb initiate the great day of their wrath, and people cry for the mountains to fall on them), then A (the Abomination of Desolation at the midpoint of Daniel’s Seventieth Week), equals or occurs at the [same] time as D (the time of the sixth seal of the Apocalypse).”—John A. McLean, “[Structure of the Book of Revelation.](#)” in Mal Couch, ed., [Dictionary of Premillennial Theology](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996), 375-376.
- ⁸²In this passage Zerubbabel typifies the Messiah.
- ⁸³Danker, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) 746.
- ⁸⁴MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 6:12.
- ⁸⁵Fruchtenbaum recognizes “five cosmic disturbances: one before the seven years, three during, and one after.”—Fruchtenbaum, [A Review of the Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church](#), 25.
- ⁸⁶*ibid.*
- ⁸⁷Showers, [Maranatha, Our Lord Come](#), 66-69.
- ⁸⁸Passages describing astronomical signs: Isa. 5:30; 13:10; 24:23; 30:26; 50:3; Jer. 4:23-28; Eze. 32:7; Joel 2:10; 2:31; 3:15; Amos 8:9; Mat. 24:29; Mark 13:24; Luke 21:25; 23:45; Acts 2:20; Rev. 6:12⁺; 8:12⁺; 9:2⁺.
- ⁸⁹Concerning the worship of heavenly bodies: Gen. 11:4; Deu. 4:19; 17:3; 2K. 17:16; 23:5, 11; 2Chr. 33:3; Job 31:26-28; Isa. 47:13;

Jer. 8:2; 10:2; 19:13; Acts 7:42; Rom. 1:25; Rev. 8:12⁺.

⁹⁰Some believe these *stars* could refer to fallen angels. “The sixth seal marks the end of the first half of the tribulation, so these stars could be the expulsion of Satan’s host from Heaven (Rev. 12:7-12⁺ with 12:3-4⁺).”—Mills, [Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John](#), Rev. 6:13.

⁹¹Seiss, [The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation](#), 154.

⁹²Henry Morris, [The Revelation Record](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1983), Rev. 6:13.

⁹³Mills, [Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John](#) Rev. 6:13.

⁹⁴As we forewarned the reader in our discussion concerning [The Genre of the book of Revelation](#), many interpreters part ways here from the Golden Rule of Interpretation in favor of subjective “apocalypticism.” “The details of this dramatic description of a universe in turmoil are drawn from the common stock of current apocalypticism. They are not to be taken with complete literalness. Those who first read John’s description would not have bothered to debate whether or not the details were to be taken literally. They were part of a well-established tradition that went back through contemporary apocalyptic literature to the early prophetic portrayals of the day of the Lord.”—Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 161. We might ask who decides what “complete literalness” means? Which parts are literal and which parts are not? Are the men literal? But not the stars? “The suggestion of combining symbolic and literal (Mounce) is fraught with hermeneutical difficulty.”—Thomas, [Revelation 1-7](#), Rev. 6:12. Also: how *would* God convey these events if they *were* literal? The [Anti-supernatural Bias](#) of these interpreters makes it nearly impossible for God to tell us of catastrophic events because they always get recast as “apocalyptic” and therefore not literal.

⁹⁵Concerning worship of heavenly bodies: Gen. 11:4; Deu. 4:19; 17:3; 2K. 17:16; 23:5, 11; 2Chr. 33:3; Job 31:26-28; Isa. 47:13; Jer. 8:2; 10:2; 19:13; Acts 7:42; Rom 1:25.

⁹⁶However: “The difficulties of the symbolic interpretation are insuperable, while no difficulties whatever attend the literal interpretation.”—Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), 274.

⁹⁷Thomas, [Revelation 1-7](#), Rev. 6:14.

⁹⁸Mills, [Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John](#) Rev. 6:14.

⁹⁹That is, until the regeneration of the Millennial Kingdom (Mat. 19:28) and later, the eternal state (Rev. 21:1⁺).

¹⁰⁰Even today, charts of Alaskan waters made prior to the 1964 earthquake carry a disclaimer indicating that actual depths may vary by dozens of feet from that shown on the chart.

¹⁰¹Danker, [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) 881.

¹⁰²Concerning the omniscience of God: 2S. 7:19; Job 24:1; 28:24; 31:4; Ps. 69:5; 139:2-4; 147:5; Isa. 40:28; 41:21-26; 42:9; 43:9; 44:7; 45:21; 46:10; 48:3-5; Jer. 12:3; Dan. 2:10, 27; Mat. 6:8; Luke 7:39; 12:6; Acts 15:28; Rom. 11:33; Rev. 2:23⁺.

¹⁰³Fruchtenbaum, [The Footsteps of Messiah](#), 221.

¹⁰⁴MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 6:17.

¹⁰⁵Renald E. Showers, “[The Day of the Lord.](#)” in Elwood McQuaid, ed., [Israel My Glory](#) (Westville, NJ: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, March/April 2003), 18-19.

¹⁰⁶Thomas, [Revelation 1-7](#), Rev. 6:17.

¹⁰⁷Rosenthal, [The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church](#), 147.

¹⁰⁸We will use the term “prophetic” for “proleptic” since most readers are more familiar with that term.

¹⁰⁹“The aorist tense describes an *undefined* action that normally occurs in the past.”—William D. Mounce, [Greek for the Rest of Us](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 157, 160.

¹¹⁰Rosenthal, [The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church](#), 164-167.

¹¹¹Tommie P. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, [A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament](#) (Toronto, Ontario: The Macmillan

Company, 1955), 198.

¹¹²Thomas, [Revelation 1-7](#), 460.

¹¹³Rosenthal misrepresents Isaiah: "The prophet Isaiah said men would flee to the caves of the mountains immediately before the Day of the Lord."—Rosenthal, [The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church](#), 175. This makes little sense. Why would they flee *before* that day when it is the events which *attend* the day which they recognize as being God's wrath which *cause* their flight?

¹¹⁴MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), Rev. 6:17.

¹¹⁵Rosenthal, [The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church](#), 147.

¹¹⁶Showers, [Maranatha. Our Lord Come](#), 120.

¹¹⁷Morris, [The Revelation Record](#), Rev. 6:17.

¹¹⁸Walvoord, [The Revelation of Jesus Christ](#), Rev. 6:17.

¹¹⁹Seiss, [The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation](#), 159.

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ADDENDUM COMMENTS BRUCE HURT

Revelation 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.

- **a white horse:** Rev 19:11,14 Zec 1:8 6:3-8
- **and he who sat** Ps 45:3-5 76:7
- **and a crown:** Rev 14:14 19:12 Zec 6:11-13 Mt 28:18
- **and he went out conquering** (nikao): Rev 11:7 = nikao, Rev 11:15,18 15:2 17:14 Ps 98:1 110:2 Isa 25:8 Ro 15:18,19 1Co 15:25,55-57 2Co 10:3-5

NOT THE CHRIST BUT THE ANTI-CHRIST

I looked, and behold, a white horse Note that many consider this to be the Christ. E.g., here is the Treasury of Scripture note "This seems to be a representation of the person and dignity of Christ, and the mild and beneficent triumphs of his Gospel over all the powers of paganism." Remember that context is king in interpretation and to avoid astutely observing the context often (usually) leads to an erroneous interpretation. Here, the context is the Lamb breaking the first seal (Rev 6:1). Think about this -- is He going to break the seal and then quickly hop on a horse? I don't think so. Yes, it is a **white horse** as in His second coming in Rev 19:11. Who is the liar and deceiver who seeks to mimic the actions of Christ? Of course, that is the ruse of the Antichrist and I think this rider is in fact the Antichrist and that this marks the beginning of Daniel's 70th Week, the last 7 years of this present evil age.

Even **Dr Henry Morris** who has a good, generally literal interpretation of the Revelation ([The Revelation Record](#)), writes in his study notes ([Defender's Study Bible](#)) that "Many futurist commentators interpret the rider on the white horse to be the Antichrist (**ED**: YOURS TRULY IS AMONG THIS GROUP), who they say is seeking to imitate Christ as he appears as the conquering Rider on the white horse in Revelation 19:11. This interpretation seems inappropriate. The coming Antichrist is not a "false Christ," pretending to be Christ (**ED**: IS THAT REALLY TRUE? REMEMBER THE PREFIX "ANTI-" CAN MEAN OPPOSED TO BUT IT ALSO CONVEYS THE SENSE OF INSTEAD OF. IN SUM THE ANTICHRIST IS AN ADVERSARY AND A COUNTERFEITER OF CHRIST), but the ultimate Antichrist, openly opposing Christ and seeking to destroy all Christian believers and everything for which Christ stands (**ED**: THAT IS NOT TRUE AT HIS INITIAL ARRIVAL ON THE WORLD SCENE FOR HE BROKERS WHAT MEN HAVE BEEN SEEKING FOR DECADES, A MIDDLE EAST PEACE ACCORD. Da 9:27). The Antichrist, or Beast, will receive his power and authority from

Satan (Revelation 11:7; 13:7) (**ED**: YES THAT IS TRUE, BUT ULTIMATELY HE RECEIVES HIS POWER BECAUSE GOD SOVEREIGN WILLS/ALLOWS/GIVES IT! THIS IS RELATED TO GOD'S SO-CALLED PERMISSIVE WILL. [What is God's permissive will?](#)) The proper interpretation is to view Christ as the rider; remember that each judgment of the seven seals is sent forth by Christ, not Satan. Furthermore, it is eminently fitting that the conquering Christ should be seen as riding forth both at the beginning of His cleansing judgments on the earth, and then again at their climactic completion (Revelation 6:2; 19:11) (**ED**: THIS LOGIC DOES NOT REALLY MAKE SENSE). Throughout the events of Revelation 6 through 19, as the successive seal judgments are sent forth, He is gradually "conquering" and is destined finally "to conquer" completely. (**ED**: YES, BUT WE SHOULD EMPHASIZE THAT HE INITIALLY CONQUERS WITHOUT AN ARROW IN HIS BOW! THIS IS PART OF HIS INCREDIBLE POWER OF DECEPTION).

Charles Ryrie - Evidently a reference to Antichrist. See 1 John 2:18. His method of conquest at first does not seem to include open warfare, since peace is not removed from the earth until the second seal is opened (v. 3). This corresponds to the description of delusion in 1Th 5:3. ([Ryrie Study Bible](#))

Danny Akin - John sees a white horse whose rider has a bow and is wearing a crown (Gk stephanos). He goes out "as a victor to conquer." Exactly who this rider is has generated much discussion and disagreement. Opinions include (1) Jesus Christ (see Rev 19:11–16), (2) the advance of the gospel, (3) Apollo (representing false religion), (4) the antichrist, (5) the spirit of conquest, (6) government persecuting Christians, and (7) Satan's servants in general. The rider cannot be Jesus, even though this view goes back at least to the time of the church father Irenaeus (late second century). The riders of Rev 6:1–2 and 19:11–21 have little in common other than being on a white horse. Further, The Lamb opens the seals, and no angel would command Christ to do anything! The better view is that this is the spirit of deception and conquest that will be embodied in the counterfeit Christ, the antichrist (2Th 2:3–4), the beast of Rev 13:1–10. This deceptive, conquering rider keeps company with **war, famine, and death—the next three riders**. This rider fulfills the warning of Jesus in Matthew 24:4–5 where He tells us to be on guard against deception and false christs.

Paige Patterson - Instead, the conqueror of the first seal should be identified with the long-awaited Antichrist, the ruler who would come and destroy the city and the sanctuary mentioned in Dan 9:26. This interpretation has the advantage of explaining the results of the opening of the first seal as seen in the conflagration that breaks out with the opening of the second seal, the famine that results in the opening of the third seal, and the widespread desolation and death as a consequence of all that is revealed in the fourth seal. (New American Commentary - Revelation)

Lehman Strauss - This rider on the white horse sheds no blood. His is a bloodless conquest. He corresponds to the false Christ of Matthew 24:5. His method is that of deception. We shall see as we pursue our study that Matthew 24 is a commentary on Revelation 6. This rider comes with a bow but without an arrow, indicating that he offers a promise of peace. I believe that at this very moment the world would welcome a superman who could unite the United Nations. Jesus said, "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:43). The world that has rejected God's Christ is ready to receive the devil's Christ. After the Church has been translated, this political leader and military strategist will put in his appearance and deceive the entire world. Appearing as a great ruler of men, he will be but a servant of God to carry out the divine purpose in the earth. He will be the last man to attempt to bring peace, but his efforts will only prove that there can be no peace without the presence of the Prince of Peace.

Mark Hitchcock - . Revelation 6:2 describes the rider on the white horse as having a bow and wearing a crown. He wears a victor's crown and has a bow—but no arrows! This indicates he will win a bloodless victory at the beginning of his career. The bow represents the threat of war, but apparently this war will never materialize because the Antichrist is able to gain victory through diplomacy and peaceful negotiations, or possibly through threats of destruction. (101 Answers to Questions about the Book of Revelation)

It is interesting that **Charles Swindoll** does not specifically call the rider the Antichrist - The rider on the white horse (Rev 6:1–2) most likely represents bloodless conquest—false peace and security. Notice that he carried a bow without arrows. The type of crown on his head is the stephanos [4735]—not a crown of regal authority but a victor's crown.[70] The Tribulation period will begin with a deceptive peace accompanied by a counterfeit spirituality and false religion. Paul describes this same general condition in 1 Thessalonians 5:3: "While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape." The coming of false religion is seen also in Christ's own description of the end times in Matthew 24:4–5.

POSB - The strongest arguments seem to point toward the white rider being the antichrist. How is the antichrist going to conquer the world? Scripture tells us that it is going to be through deception. Because of the sins and evil of people, because people have chosen to go the way of sin and evil, the antichrist is going to be able to deceive them.

Warren Wiersbe: We would expect the Antichrist to resemble the Christ, because the Antichrist is Satan's great imitation! Even the

Jews (who ought to know the Scriptures) will be deceived by him (John 5:43; 2 Thess. 2:1–12). This great deceiver will come as a peaceful leader, holding a bow but no arrows! (Our Lord's weapon is a sword; Rev. 19:15.) The Antichrist will solve the world's problems and be received as the Great Liberator.

John Walvoord - A more plausible explanation is that the rider of the white horse is none other than the "prince that shall come" of Daniel 9:26, who is to head up the revived Roman Empire and ultimately become the world ruler. Ainslie believes the rider of the white horse will appear at the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel and that the rider himself "is the Roman prince of an empire that must rise again to fulfill the great prophecies of the book of Daniel."¹⁰ He is Satan's masterpiece and the counterfeit of all that Christ is or claims to be. He is therefore cast in the role of a conqueror, which seems to be the significance of the white horse....While the dispute as to the identity of the rider cannot be finally settled, especially in the brief compass of this discussion, the conclusion identifying him as the world ruler of the tribulation, the same individual described as the beast out of the sea in Revelation 13, is preferred.

Hampton Keathley - This rider is the Antichrist, the false Christ who comes as a peacemaker. Later he will show his true colors and will then be called the beast. This is undoubtedly the prince who is to come and who will make a peace treaty with Israel according to Daniel 9:26–27. This fits with the picture Paul gives us in 1 Thessalonians 5:3. The world will be trusting in the peace and safety brought about by the tactics of the white horse rider, but it will be oblivious this very peace has inaugurated the Day of the Lord which will quickly usher in destruction.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3. for you know very well that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape (NIV).

(1) White is a symbol of peace and he comes as a peacemaker. According to Daniel 9:26–27, one of his first feats will be to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute by a peace treaty with Israel. This evidently begins Daniel's 70th week, the unprecedented time of Jacob's distress (Jer. 30:7).

(2) His weapon is a bow, yet no arrows are mentioned. The bow is a symbol of distant victory and since no arrows are mentioned it seems to indicate that he gains his victory by bloodless tactics.

(3) That all this is true is indicated further by the fact that peace isn't taken from the earth until the second seal.

(4) He has a hidden agenda. His purpose is not world peace, but rather world domination. He goes out conquering and to conquer. He is the false Christ.

So, Revelation 6:2 says "he went out conquering and to conquer," but the picture given here of a bow (perhaps a symbol of distant victory), but with no arrows mentioned, suggests that he conquers by cold war tactics through a one world order mentality that has been growing for years and continues to do so. Today the world is ripe for the rise of such a man with his world government as an answer to international problems. Prominent world leaders and movements have posed the idea that what we need is a world order with a charismatic leader who can mold the world into harmony and peace.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum - This figure who enters the Tribulation conquering, and to conquer is the Antichrist. (Footsteps of Messiah)

Alan Johnson - . The evidence, however, seems to favor slightly....identifying the white horse with the Antichrist and his forces, which seek to conquer the followers of Christ. John sensed that these persecutions were already present in his day and that they would culminate in a final, more severe form (1 Jn 2:18; Rev 13:7). (Explorer's Bible Commentary)

F. C. Jennings puts the matter concisely, "The whole context and character of these seals absolutely forbid one thinking of this rider as the Lord Jesus, as so many affirm. His reign will not bring war and strife in its train".

I was surprised by **John MacArthur's** statement "Others identify the rider as Antichrist. But since the other three riders represent not individual persons but impersonal forces (war, famine, and death), it is best to view the first one as a force as well."

It is surprising that **Robert Mounce** in his comment on Rev 6:2 does not even mention the possibility of the Antichrist! ([The Book of Revelation](#) - one of my least favorite commentaries although unfortunately it is widely quoted)

I was also surprised to read **William Newell's** interpretation - This first seal then indicates the Lord and the hosts of heaven turned against the earth: a most solemn thought! It is a public change from the day of grace.

Grant Osborne does not favor the Antichrist - Some scholars (Alford, Hendriksen, Hodges, Bachmann) have argued that the rider on the white horse is Christ, since he is described at his parousia as coming on a white horse (19:11) to destroy his enemies (19:15–16). The imagery of "conquering" then describes the triumph of the gospel (Matt. 24:14), presented as a separate view by some (Sweet 1979: 139 takes it of the conquest of the world by the gospel). Several (Considine 1944: 419–20; Bachmann 1986: 240–47; Bachmann 1998: 260–65; Herzer 1999: 231–38) argue that the first rider is marked off from the other three as a positive ("white" as the color of righteousness) figure "going forth" with a crown (sovereignty) and a bow (the gospel) to conquer (with all the "conqueror" imagery in the book)....Still others (e.g., Rissi 1964: 414–17; Johnson; Thomas; Wong 1996: 221–25; Beale; MacLeod

1999a: 210) believe the rider is a satanic figure, possibly the Antichrist.....It is better to see this image as more general, with the riders relating to the human lust for war and its consequences (so Swete, Morris, Roloff, Beasley-Murray, Metzger, Talbert, Giesen, Mounce, Aune). In these four interconnected seals, God's judgment is to allow human depravity to run its course.⁸ (Revelation - BECNT)

and a crown was given to him - This is an example of the divine passive for it describes the permission that God gives this wicked person. See discussion of [God's permissive will](#). See related topic [The Providence of God](#).

QUESTION - [Who are the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse? Watch the video.](#)

ANSWER - The Four Horsemen correspond with the first four [seals](#) opened by the Lamb as He opens the scroll of judgment in heaven (see Revelation 5). When [the Lamb](#) opens the first seal, one of the living creatures before the heavenly throne says to John, in a voice like thunder, "Come!" (Revelation 6:1). John then records what he sees: "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" (Revelation 6:2).

The first Horseman likely refers to [the Antichrist](#). He is the false imitator of the true Christ, who is also associated with a white horse (Revelation 19:11–16). At the beginning of the tribulation, the Antichrist will be given authority ("a crown"), and he will wage war ("a bow"), conquering all who oppose him. This description agrees with Daniel's vision of the "[little horn](#)" that rises to power and is bent on conquest: "This horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them" (Daniel 7:21; cf. Revelation 13:7). (For full discussion see [GotQuestions.org](#))

Related Resources:

- [What is the Antichrist? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who is the antichrist? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who is the beast of Revelation? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who is the man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12](#)
- [What is the little horn in the book of Daniel? | GotQuestions.org](#)