

3. Seven Seals - 6:1–8:5

a) Six seals - 6:1-17

1. The first four horses - people raised in Judaism would immediately think of Zechariah 1.7-16, and Ezekiel 6.1ff. There the horses had to do with controlling that the earth was at peace (that is, that Israel was safe after it had been subjected to Babylon). Now the horsemen bring judgement. A strange reversal of the images. See also Luk 21.9-12.
2. The first horse and its rider - seems to be Christ, who takes the initiative in bringing judgment. Cf. Rev 19:11-16.
3. The sequence of the judgments (horsemen 2-4, seal 5 and seal 6) parallels Jesus' prophecy about what would happen before the fall of Jerusalem (Luke 20). They also parallel the covenantal wrath that is predicted in Leviticus 26.14-33.
4. The fifth seal - a vision of those killed in the persecution. They are under the altar - in the heavenly temple. Meaning: God keeps their soul safe. They are not dead but they live. Their prayer is for God to avenge them. This is a prayer against their persecutors. Remember who those persecutors were?



5. Those souls under the altar are now given white gowns. This shows that we must not read the book of revelation as if this is a prediction of sequential future events.
6. The sixth seal: the ecological disasters are very similar to those predicted by Jesus in Luke 20 and Mathew 24. I think these do not need to be seen as literal events; in Judaism this was language used in times of great crises. Symbolical language. When Jerusalem fell in AD70, Josephus described that fall with similar words: The sun stopped shining, the moon became blood.
7. A quarter of the earth is subject to these disasters (Rev 6.8). Compare with Rev 8.7, where a third of the earth is made to suffer. Things seem to be getting worse.
8. This event is the wrath of the Lamb. Christ is not always the "sweet Jesus". As his brothers and sisters are persecuted, he comes to their aid. He will avenge them.
9. In Rev 6 we see the anger of God revealed: He comes to avenge his people. The persecutors are being punished. And here is the most shameful issue: the original people of God had become the persecutors and they are the one's being punished. With the punishment that had been predicted by Leviticus and Jesus. Leviticus and Jesus predicted punishment against the people of God, and that is being described by John in Rev. 6.
10. The final question is 6.17, 'who can stand'? The answer follows in Rev 7.

