



Revelation 6

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy,
and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it,
because the time is near. 1:3

The awesome vision of God's heavenly throne, the exaltation of the Lamb, and the triumphant anthems of saints and angels have set the stage for the opening of the seals. **The Lamb who was slain has begun His reign!** But to hard pressed believers, struggling to survive in the face of bitter persecution, the evidence of God's coming kingdom must have been difficult to discern.

*"Riders of ruin go forth, four of them, the despairing cry of slain martyrs is heard, and a convulsed and tottering universe seems to cut off forever all human hope for a better day. Things are as they have been; war and dearth and death are rampant as heretofore; indeed, **things are to be worse than they have been.**"* Franzmann, p. 60

The message of the seven seals, and indeed of the trumpets and bowls which will follow from them, is that Christ reigns even in the apparent chaos and confusion of this world. The preliminary judgments depicted here are **THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES** which herald the great day when Christ will return in glory to judge the living and the dead. In the meantime, *disaster and suffering do not take place at random or by chance but serve both the redemptive and judicial purposes of the Lord*. The horsemen ride forth only upon the thunderous command of the cherubim. **THE LORD REIGNS!** Even those who persecute His church and oppress His people help to accomplish His purpose and usher in the Day of Judgment. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.143-144

Read Revelation 6:1-17

The Matthew 24 connection: Read Matthew 24:3-14

Before considering the details of this vision it is helpful to view it in broad outline. There is a great similarity between this vision and the Savior's words about the signs of the end in Matthew 24. **Not only does this vision speak of the same signs of the second coming but even in close to the same order.** While there is disagreement also among orthodox commentators about the meaning of the rider on the white horse, there can be no dispute whatever about the second through the sixth seal. The red horse obviously is war; the black horse, famine; the pale horse, various kinds of pestilence and calamity; the souls under the altar speak of persecution; and in the sixth seal we find a description of the end of the world.

This list of calamities ending with the Last Judgment clearly indicates that we have here a symbolic representation of one aspect of the entire New Testament era. The events described here in symbols are signs and foreshadowing's of the end of the world ending with the last judgement itself. The signs and the order in which they are mentioned generally agree also in Mark and Luke (cp Mark 13:6-13 and Luke 21:8-17). (NOTE THE FOLLOWING CHART) Becker, *Revelation: The Distant Triumph Song*, p.103

Matthew 24	Revelation 6
False Christs v. 5 Wars And Rumor Of Wars v. 6 Famines v. 7 Pestilences v. 7 (Cp Lk 21:11) Earthquakes v. 7 Persecution v. 9 Apostasy v. 10 False Prophets v. 11 Love Growing Cold v. 12 “Then Shall The End Come” v. 14 The Worldwide Spread Of The Gospel	The White Horse (?) v. 1-2 The Red Horse (War) v. 3-4 The Black Horse (Famine) v. 5-6 The Pale Horse (Death) v. 7-8 Earthquake v. 12 The Souls Under The Altar v. 9-11 The End v. 12-17 The White Horse (?) v. 1-2

This comparison should demonstrate beyond question that what we have in this chapter of Revelation is a symbolic representation of the truths the Savior taught in regard to the signs of the last times. The signs of the times are recurring patterns of events intended to remind those with the insight to see the signs that the Day of Judgment is coming. Becker, *Revelation: The Distant Triumph Song* p.104

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

The opening of the first four seals present one of Revelation's most familiar images, the famous **FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE**. In the ancient Near East, donkeys and camels were used for transportation in contrast to horses which were connected with warfare and conquest. Hence the four horsemen bring a message of war and the calamities which accompany the waging of war.

The image of horse and rider as a symbol of the powers that patrol the earth to carry out God's purposes is drawn from the Old Testament book of Zechariah; see [Zechariah 1:8-10; 6:1-5,7](#)

White, *Revelation*, p.146

† Using the **Zechariah** image of horsemen patrolling the earth, Revelation has the **horsemen represent the judgment of God upon a rebellious and sinful world which continues to persecute the people of God.**

† The agents of God's judgement in Revelation, conquest, warfare, famine, and death, closely parallel **Ezekiel 14:12-23** where sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts are the dreadful judgments poured out upon apostate Jerusalem. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.147

† **Both the world and the church must endure** the visitation of the horsemen. These judgments come upon the sinful majority as punishment while for the faithful remnant they are the chastening of God intended to strengthen and purify believers. **Christians are not exempt from these horsemen.** **If you are affected, then remain faithful and patiently endure.**



† The horsemen are **four** in number thus emphasizing their impact upon all the earth. They do not correspond to specific events but represent **ongoing, endlessly repeated patterns of events** which will recur throughout the New Testament era - **not a particular** conquest, war, famine, or pestilence but each of these grim realities in general in all of their specific occurrences as they are repeated over and over again until the Lord returns. Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.148

Revelation 6:1-2 The First Seal

The Lamb

The crucified and risen Lamb proceeds to unseal the first of the seven seals which close and conceal the scroll. By this symbolic action Christ reveals and sets in motion the events contained in the scroll.

“Come!”

The crucial point is that the horsemen ride out **only at the command of God**. They are His messengers. The four living beings who surround God’s throne serve as the agents through whom His Will is carried out. The reference to **thunder** serves to identify the angel’s voice with the divine throne from which had come “flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder.” (Revelation 4:5) **The ominous rumble of the thunder warns of the coming judgment storm.**



The White Horse

There is a [wide range of ideas](#) – even among conservative Lutheran commentators – who this Rider is. Here are some of the interpretations:

† **CHRIST** “the whole symbolism of the book of Revelation points to the conclusion that the rider on the white horse is Jesus” The earliest church fathers believed this. The idea is that even in the midst of the tribulations, Christ is victorious.

- In Rev 19, Christ is victorious on a White Horse; and white is the color of purity.
- *The Rider and Fighter is the personal, Eternal Word, the Logos. Here He appears as a Fighter.*

Stoeckhardt, Lectures on Revelation, p.15

† **THE GOSPEL** “The worldwide proclamation of the gospel stands out as a bright ray of hope in a list otherwise composed wholly of calamities and catastrophes. Becker, *Revelation: The Distant Triumph Song* This sign of the end that is listed in the Gospels is not accounted for in the other 3 horses of Rev. 6.

† **ANTICHRIST** The first rider sits astride a white horse wearing the pure white robes of holiness and righteousness. The image is strongly reminiscent of John’s portrayal of Christ as the victorious champion on a white horse who is “Faithful and True.” (Revelation 19:11). *But the Christ, the Son of God and Captain of the hosts of Heaven has no place in this sinister company.* This horseman is not Christ but an antichrist! Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.148



- He is carefully disguised to conceal his true satanic identity. Satan is the Imitator, the Counterfeit, who masquerades as the Lord whom he seeks to replace. Our enemy is the master of disguise and deception (2 Corinthians 11:14). This hellish horseman rides out not to “*judge and make war with justice*” (19:11) as did our Lord, but “*as a conqueror bent on conquest.*” The repetition in the phrase serves both to emphasize conquest as the rider’s sole and only purpose and to state the certainty that he will achieve that which he sets out to do. He not only intends to conquer but he will.
- The white rider is in every way a **parody** and a **perversion** of the victorious Christ. He personifies the lust for glory and power that leads to conquest.
- The false Christ wears the victor’s crown by God’s consent -- note the passive verb -- “*he was given a crown.*” He is, to use Luther’s phrase, “*Gottes Teufel*” (“God’s Devil”) used by the Lord to carry out His own purposes. This enemy of the Lord will meet with widespread success, moving from triumph to triumph. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.151-152
- This Rider is similar to Revelation 19, but **an imposter** who looks like Christ, and proudly goes out into the world, but ultimately brings evil and conquest with his bow Dr. Martin Franzmann

† **FALSE TEACHERS** --- “Because of the rather remarkable parallelism between Rev 6 and Matt 24, the position of the white horse at the head of the procession here seems significant. Becker

- This rider would represent all false “Christ’s” and false teachers who appear Christ-like
- The Antichrist would certainly be one aspect of this
- This would follow the order of Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21

† **HUMAN TYRANNY** The picture represented by this rider on the white horse symbolizes and represents every form of tyranny which is won and acquired by power and force, usually warfare or forms of it, and which then by dictatorial rule exploits, enslaves, dominates, and terrorizes. Revelation, Brighton, p. 165

- Since all the other seals in this chapter represent calamities that overtake the world and aggravate the church, the rider on the White horse must also be one of the churches enemies that threatens the church. Brighton, p. 165
- “Bow” is a weapon of war, indicating the intention to conquer using military might -- white indicates that they think they are doing the right thing
- The White horse is equal to the other horses, not superior.
- Human tyranny brings with it bloodshed (red horse), famine (black horse), and death (pale horse).

Possible Interpretations

Christ
Gospel
Antichrist
False teachers
Human tyranny

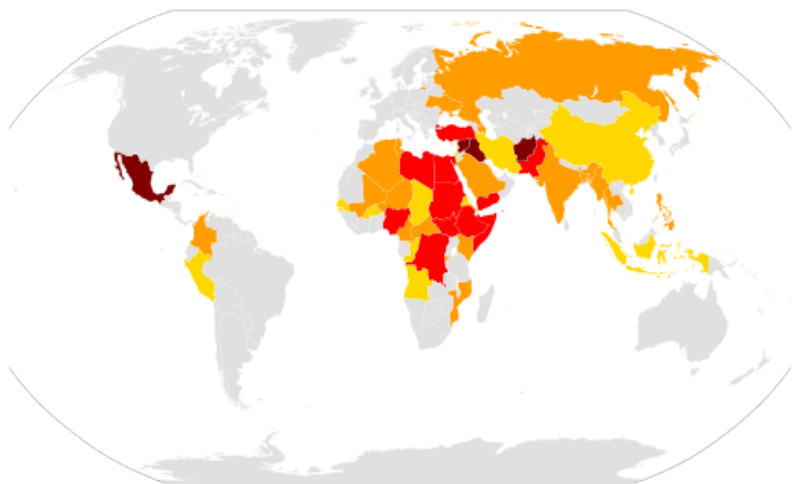
Read Revelation 6:3-4 The Second Seal

The first four seals comprise a unit. The second horseman rides out to ravage mankind. His color is the bright red of blood and fire, symbolic of the calamitous mission upon which he is sent forth. This is the grim reality of warfare, unlawful killing, murder, violence, and all other kinds of mayhem, malice and turmoil.

- † Again, the text stresses the fact that the horseman is a messenger of God's judgment, carrying out the sentence of His righteous wrath upon rebellious mankind. His power and his sword are "given" to him by God. His power is *"to take peace from the earth and to make men slay one another."*
- † In the *Little Apocalypse*, Jesus had warned of *"wars and rumors of war"* throughout the latter days (Matthew 24:6). He had foretold that *"nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom,"* (Matthew 24:7) and so it has been.



- † "Throughout the time period covered by the prophetic message of Revelation, from the victory of the Lord Christ up to His second coming, **peace and tranquility will be the exception**. The general rule will be wars and rumors of war, violence, murders, insurrections, and the like (Mark 13:7-9). Revelation, Brighton, p. 166
- † The horseman is empowered to deprive the world of peace and to endlessly incite men to violent conflict with one another. To carry out this judgment, he is given "a large sword". It is described as "large" not because of it's unusual size but because of **"the constant and terrific slaughter it symbolizes."** Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.152-153
- † In May, 2017, Wikipedia listed **69 ongoing armed conflicts** currently in the world. The map is from the website, showing the areas in the world where the conflict is occurring.

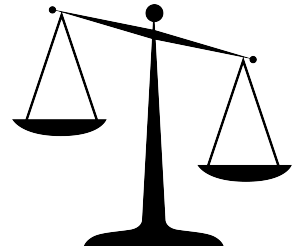


(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ongoing_armed_conflicts)

Read Revelation 6:5-6 The Third Seal

The color of this horse is “ill-omened black”, the color of death, calamity, and mourning. The black rider represents **famine and starvation**, for he bears in his hand the measuring scale used in the sale of food.

- † The scale is literally described in Greek as a “balance” or “yoke.” It consisted of a bar with pans suspended from both ends. Weights would be placed in the pan on one end and the commodity being measured on the other. The amount of that commodity would then be adjusted until it balanced with the weight on the other end of the scale. Dr. L. L. White, [Revelation](#), p.154



- † The voice announces and explains the impact of the third horseman’s visitation.

**“A quart of wheat for a day’s wages,
and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages,
and do not damage the oil and the wine.”**

Exorbitant prices for food signal scarcity and hunger. A full day’s wage would barely suffice to purchase enough grain for the family to survive, even resorting to the use of less expensive and less nutritious barley. These prices are estimated to be about 16 times the average cost of these items in the Roman Empire during the First Century. Dr. L. L. White, [Revelation](#), p.154

- † Most commentators see the reference to sparing “**the oil and the wine**” as an allusion to the economic disparity which is exaggerated in times of famine. Luxury products remain available, but only the rich can afford to buy them. While most people struggle to provide the bare necessities of life, the wealthy revel in their excess. The plight of the starving poor is thoughtlessly dismissed – “**Let them eat cake!**” That disparity only adds to the tension of the explosive situation and increases the potential for violence and disorder.

- † “The overall picture presented is a condition of both scarcity and plenty, that is, an economic imbalance in the supply of food and the daily necessities of life...The horseman on the black horse, then, suggests that throughout the entire period from the Lord’s ascension until the End, there will always be present, at various times and places, hunger and famine.” [Revelation](#), Brighton, p. 168

- † According to World Hunger Day 2017 website, 795 million people don’t have enough to eat, 98 percent of the world’s undernourished people live in developing countries, and hunger kills more than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. The most threatened countries currently are Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya.



Read Revelation 6:7-8 The Fourth Seal

The Pale Horse The color of this horse in the Greek text is “*chlorus*” (English **Chlorophyll**, which is essential in *photosynthesis*, allowing plants to absorb energy from light and stay green). Its the ghastly greenish complexion of a decaying corpse. This is the color of *Death* itself. It was the word that doctors used to describe sick people. Similar to how we might say, “**you look green around the gills**”.

† The grim reaper, *death* personified, rides out upon this hideous horse - “**Its rider was named Death.**” Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.157

† *Death* is accompanied by his inseparable comrade **the grave**. The Greek term “**hades**,” literally means “**the place that is not seen.**” It is the equivalent of the Old Testament Hebrew word “**Sheol.**” These words are often used in Scripture to refer to **Hell**, the place of the damned. In this instance, as consistently in Revelation it is used in a neutral sense to simply describe **the place of the dead, the grave**. As *Death*’s attendant, the grave follows closely along behind, its gaping jaws opened wide, prepared to swallow up and consume *Death*’s victims. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.157 **Hades** is visualized as a “**voracious beast ready to devour the men who have been killed by war, famine, pestilence, disease, and wild animals.**”

† The fourth horseman both intensifies and summarizes the consequences wrought by his three predecessors. **Conquest, warfare, and famine all result in death**, hence *Death* itself is the last and decisive horseman.

† The **vast extent of their devastation** is expressed by the phrase - “**They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.**”

† The Lamb who has broken the seal remains in complete control, as He implements God’s plan for the future. Millions will die, but *Death* is not permitted to completely annihilate mankind. The scope of his activity is limited by God. Only “**A FOURTH OF THE EARTH**” is allowed to perish. The fraction is quantitative not literal. It signifies that a major portion but not all of mankind is effected.

† The four ravages through which *Death* accomplishes His task -- ① sword, ② famine, ③ plague, and ④ the wild beasts of the earth are drawn from **Ezekiel 14:12-21. They summarize**



Human deaths by animal each year

1. Mosquitoes 725,000 deaths
 2. Snakes 50,000 deaths another website: +100,000
 3. Dogs 25,000 deaths
 4. Tsetse fly 10,000 deaths
 5. Crocodiles 1,000 deaths
 6. Hippopotamus 500 deaths
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-36320744>

Other animals that cause significant human deaths each year:

Ascaris roundworms 4,500 deaths
Assassin bugs 12,000 deaths
Freshwater snails 20,000 deaths
< 100 Sharks, Lions, Wolves
< 1000 Elephants, Tapeworms

A quick look around at misc. websites

Top 10 Epidemics in History (Millions of people affected and/or killed)

Polio
Typhus
AIDS
Malaria
Cholera
Smallpox
Yellow Fever
The Black Death (Plague)
Influenza
Tuberculosis

<http://www.healthcarebusinesstech.com/the-10-deadliest-epidemics-in-history/>

violent and catastrophic death in every form. The grim history of mankind throughout the New Testament era provides ample evidence of the accuracy of John's vision. Again and again the horsemen have gone forth leaving death, devastation, and destruction in their wake. Every one of their fatal visitations should serve to **remind us of God's righteous judgment upon sin and prepare us for the day when He will come again to judge the living and the dead.** White, Revelation, p.159

Read Revelation 6:9-11 The Fifth Seal

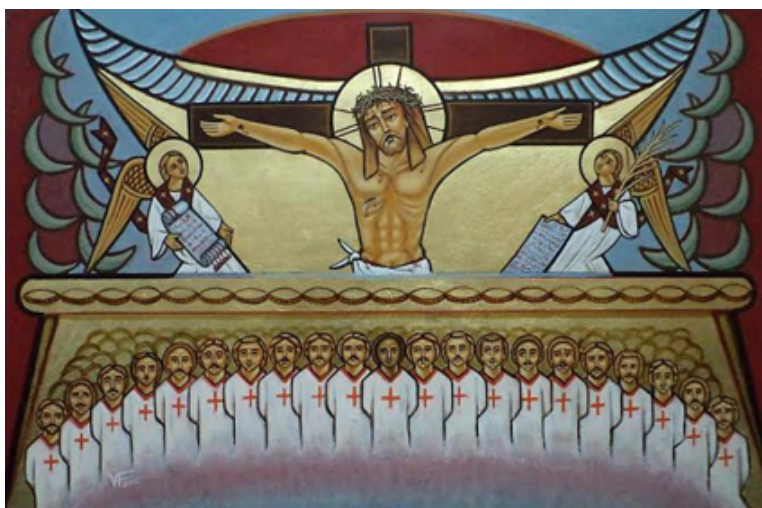
The fearful scenes of horsemen sent out to ravage the earth now give way to a vision of the souls of the martyrs crying out for vindication. The fifth seal addresses the issue of persecution and places the ongoing suffering of God's people in its proper perspective. **"With the fifth seal the Church comes into sight, in its persecuted suffering state."**

† The "**soul**" (Greek - "psyche") is the immaterial part of man, the self or ego, our sense of individual identity and personality. Physical death is the separation of the body and the soul. The body dies and decays, returning to the dust from which man was created in the beginning, there to await the resurrection of all flesh on the Last Day. The soul survives death. Unlike the body, the soul does not cease to exist. **At the moment of physical death the soul of the believer is with Christ in heaven while the souls of the damned are condemned immediately to the torments of hell.** Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.161

† The "souls" here depicted are in what has been called the "**Intermediate State**," that is, the time between individual death and the Final Day of Judgment. While recognizing that this is a vision, the details of which are not designed to convey literal reality, it is also true that the framework of the vision, like that of our Lord's parables, does not deceive. *It is therefore significant to note, that these souls in the Intermediate State are fully aware of their presence before God in heaven and equally cognizant of the fact that the Judgment has not yet come and that evil continues to run rampant upon the earth.*

† **Martyrs** These are the believers of every age who have given their lives for the faith and sealed their witness with the martyr's blood. They have stood for the truth of the Word of God and have fearlessly and faithfully testified (Greek - "martyr") to that truth despite the opposition of all the world. ... These brave souls willingly followed in the footsteps of the Lamb that was slain, giving up their lives without protest or resistance, led like lambs to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7). The sacrificial nature of their martyrdom is emphasized by the use of the verb "slain" which was used earlier in reference to Lamb upon the throne (Revelation 5:6) and specifically describes the **slaughter** of a sacrificial animal.

† John sees the souls of the martyrs "**under the altar.**" This is a safe place in the presence of God. Their presence



“**under the altar**” signifies the intimacy and the immediacy of their heavenly relationship to God. The golden altar of incense stood in the holy place of the temple, directly in front of the holy of holies. **So also the martyrs in heaven stand before the throne in the presence of the God for whom their lives were given.** Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.162-163

6:10 The Martyr’s Heavenly Prayer

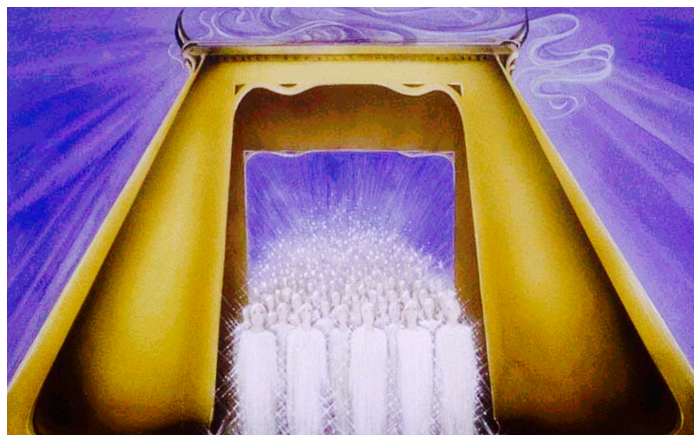
The urgency of the martyrs’ prayer is indicated by the words “**they called out with a loud voice.**” The verb “**to call out**” is a strong word which means to cry out in anguish during the hour of most urgent need. Their plea is not softly stated. They cry out “**in a loud voice**” in a manner consistent with the urgency of their petition.

† The prayer takes the form of a question “**How long?**”. *This perplexing question has been on the lips of the righteous almost since the beginning of the human race.*

† The martyrs pray for divine intervention in the face of rampant evil. They plead for the vindication of God and the demonstration of His justice before all the world. They pray for the coming of the judgment and the end of sinful mankind’s defiant rebellion against the Creator.

† This is not a matter of personal vengeance or vindictiveness. The souls beneath the altar are not merely asking for the punishment of those who murdered them. Instead they cry out for judgment upon all of “**the inhabitants of the earth,**” a phrase which is consistently used in Revelation to describe sinful mankind in its opposition to God and His will. ... **When the martyrs pray that their blood may be avenged, they are asking God to vindicate His cause, the cause for which they died.** Some would object that such a prayer is improper, given our Lord’s repeated commands to forgive those who sin against us. This objection fails to recognize both the nature of the prayer and the circumstances in which it is offered. An unwillingness to recognize the necessity of punishment for sin also reflects a confusion of law and gospel. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.165-166

† “At first glance the prayer of these martyrs may seem to be in conflict with the spirit of Jesus who calls upon us to forgive those who sin against us and to pray for those who persecute us. In this respect, this prayer of the martyrs is reminiscent of the **imprecatory psalms**, [IMPRECATORY: *invoking judgment, calamity, or curses upon one's enemies and the enemies of God. See Psalm 69:22-30 as example*] in which the psalmist prays for vengeance on his enemies. Neither the prayer of these martyrs nor the imprecatory psalms, however, are unworthy prayers. The difficulty which many people and even many theologians see in them stems from a failure to understand the biblical distinction between law and gospel. The law, which is an expression of God’s holy, immutable will, calls for the punishment of evildoers. This prayer of the sainted martyrs as well as the imprecatory psalms are to remind God’s enemies that their sins will surely be punished if they continue in their impenitence. It is the will of the just God that those who sin against Him and His people should be punished, and the prayer of these martyrs is in accord with this holy will of God. The prayer can therefore be made with a loud voice. It is a prayer of which they need not be ashamed and which they can pray with confidence.” Revelation, Becker, p. 112



6:11 White Robe & Patience

The bestowal of the white robes upon the martyrs is a vindication of their faithfulness to God and a reaffirmation of His faithfulness to them. That reaffirmation also includes the promise of certain judgment upon those who have oppressed and murdered God's witnesses.

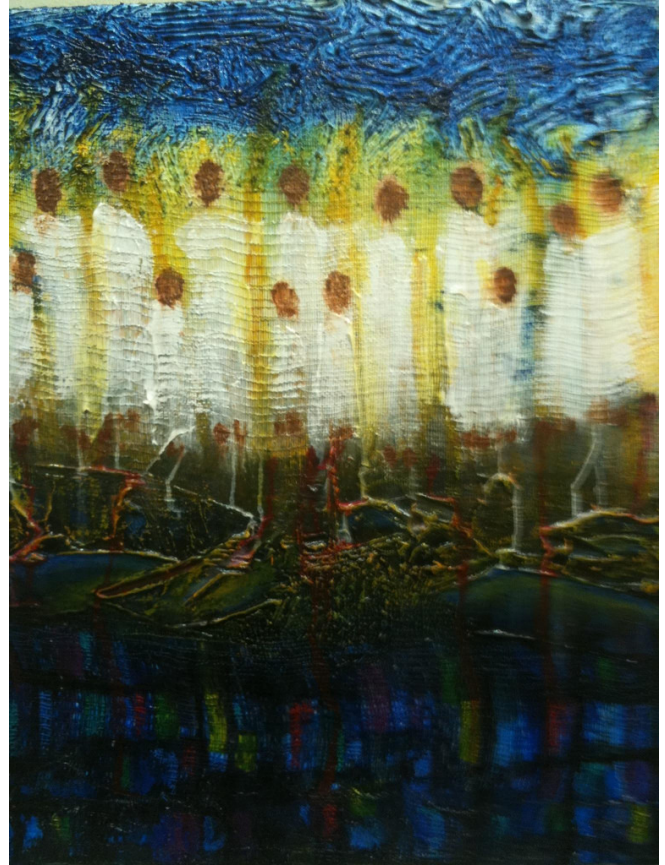
- † The **white robes** in which Revelation consistently depicts the saints in heaven symbolize the **righteousness of Christ** which is God's gracious gift to every believer. The robes are "white" to symbolize the fact that those who have been cleansed in the blood of the Lamb stand before God in purity and holiness.

Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.167

- † **Patience** The comfort of the original is somewhat muddled in the English translation. The Greek literally reads "**rest yet a little time.**" The verb means "**to be at peace**" without worry or concern. In this context the phrase might better be translated "**enjoy your peaceful rest a little while longer.**"

- † "The "**short time**" during which the martyrs are to wait patiently for God's avenging justice is evidently the whole New Testament period." Revelation, Becker, p. 113 *The Creator God's perspective on time is different than ours.*

- † The mission of all the witnesses, those who live for Christ and those who die for Him, must be completed before the coming of the final judgment. The number set in God's predetermined plan had not yet been reached (cf. Matthew 23:32). Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.169-170



The vision of the fifth seal presents the Church, the people of God in heaven and on earth, in the midst of a sinful world rushing headlong toward destruction. As the marauding horsemen of God's judgment ride relentlessly back and forth, leaving chaos and confusion in their wake, the people of God are called to offer a faithful witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to patiently endure - even unto death - the persecution that will be the world's inevitable response to that witness. We long for the day of the Lord's glorious return and the vindication which that day will bring. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.169-170

- † According to the website <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/> the top 10 (of 50) countries persecuting Christians are North Korea, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and Eritrea.
- † See handout: "**Persecution and Martyrdom for Christ**" about the early church prior to 250AD

Read Revelation 6:12-17 The Sixth Seal

The martyrs beneath the altar had prayed for the coming of the judgement and now, as if in response to their prayer, the opening of the sixth seal depicts **the end of the world** and the cosmic disturbances which will accompany our Lord's return. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.170-171

Plethora of Old Testament Imagery

The imagery of the sixth seal employs a great many of the Old Testament's most popular judgment images.

The judgement of the world is depicted with stock in trade OT imagery for the dissolution of the cosmos. This portrayal is based on **A MOSAIC OF OT PASSAGES** that are brought together because of the cosmic metaphors of judgment they have in common, including: **the shaking of the earth or the mountains;** **the darkening or shaking of the moon, stars, sun and/or heaven;** and **the pouring out of blood.**" White, p.170



Earthquakes

Revelation mentions earthquakes seven times (Revelation 6:12; 8:5; 11:13 (twice); 11:19; 16:18 (twice)). Elsewhere in Scripture earthquakes often accompany and attest God's mighty acts. **The shaking of the earth serves to represent the tenuous and transitory nature of the physical world.** But this is no ordinary earthquake! It is a shaking of cosmic proportions, effecting not merely one nation or region, but all of the universe!

† **Every earthquake throughout history is but a foreshadow of this great earthquake which moves every mountain and island from its place.** Not only the earth but **THE WHOLE UNIVERSE** undergoes radical change." Revelation, Becker, p. 114

† **As of 4:30pm on Tuesday, Oct 31, 2017, there have been 56 earthquakes of 2.5 magnitude or greater on Tuesday alone!** <https://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquake>

Heaven and earth creak and crack like an old house ready to fall apart and collapse and act in every way as though they know that the world is soon to come to an end and that The Day is close at hand.

Martin Luther, St.L.VII:148off

The earth quake is accompanied by four occurrences in the heavens, that which Luke the Evangelist had described as "fearful and great signs from heaven" (Luke 21:11).

1. "The **sun turned black** like sackcloth made of goat hair." The darkening of the sun is a common feature of apocalyptic imagery. Here the eclipse like blackness which will overtake the basic light source is compared to a rough black cloth typically woven from the thick black hair of a goat. This was the cloth of mourning and despair (Isaiah 50:3) as if the sun itself is grieving the death of the universe. Remember the Solar Eclipse of 8/21/17 and how much attention it received? It was a sign of the End!
2. "The whole **moon turned blood red.**" The pale light of the moon is transformed into the ghastly red of blood, another terrifying indication of doom and destruction.
3. "And the **stars in the sky fell to the earth** as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind." That which is depicted here is not merely the appearance of unprecedented

numbers of meteors and comets but the total collapse of the universe (cf. 2 Peter 3:10 - “**the heavens will disappear with a roar.**”) This is the disintegration of the vast reaches of the entire universe. The imagery of stars falling like figs from a tree is drawn from Isaiah 34:4.

4. “The **sky receded** like a scroll rolling up.” The vast expanse of the heavens will appear to split and roll back in opposite directions, shriveling and curling up like paper burned in a fire. This graphic imagery is drawn, once again from Isaiah 34 and the prophet’s description of the collapse of the physical universe.



Great Fear for Unbelievers

Sinful humanity’s response to the cosmic cataclysm is consternation and dread. The comprehensive nature of the event is emphasized by the **sevenfold categorization of fallen mankind**. The message is clear. The panic of this decisive moment will include every unbeliever on the face of the earth.

- † Men, great and small, who have presumed upon His longsuffering (Romans 2:4) are only driven to mad desperation by the sight of the sure, dependable universe now being shaken into huge uncertainty; they attempt to hide themselves from Him whose eye searches everywhere, in dark caves and under the shelter of the enduring hills; they cry for extinction under the collapsing rocks rather than face the wrath of the enthroned Judge whose patience they have despised, the wrath of the Lamb whose redeeming sacrifice they have refused (5:7-9). On that great day of wrath the strutting kings and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong will strut no more. Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.176-177
- † That which sinful mankind fears at this awful moment is not merely death, but judgment. It is death for which they pray as they cry to the mountains and to the rocks: “**Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!**” Like our first parents Adam and Eve in the aftermath of their disobedience, mankind does not dare to stand before the Creator.
- † When the cosmic, earthquake-like shaking hits the earth as the mountains begin to move and disappear, the peoples of the earth will be struck with a terror and a hopelessness that staggers the imagination and surpasses any horror yet experienced by humanity.” Brighton, p. 173

Who can stand?

“The great day” is a characteristic Old Testament designation for the end of time and the judgement of the human race. Judgement is depicted as both a great day of vindication and deliverance for the people of God, and a day of fearful retribution and wrath for the unbelieving world. The New Testament makes use of the same language to speak of the coming day of judgement. White, Revelation, p.180

- † All of mankind will recognize its accountability before God on that day and will tremble when confronted by His righteous anger - “**WHO CAN STAND?**”
- † **Our Lord Himself provides the only possible answer to these awful questions: “Be always on the watch, and pray, that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.” (Luke 24:36)**
- † **Note who is “standing” in Rev 7:9**
- † **Note Rev 8:1 for the “seventh seal” which is the vision of the Seven Trumpets**

PERSECUTION AND MARTYRDOM FOR CHRIST

The First 300 Years of Christianity¹

Christian persecutions were not one long all-inclusive, empire-wide horror story but a selective torture that was localized and an on-and-off proposition 147		The persecution against us at various places flared up again more fiercely, and mob violence in the cities led countless martyrs to their glory . . .150		It is commonly assumed that early Christians were martyred mostly at Rome, but this is far from the case. Within the Roman Empire, fewer Christians were persecuted in Rome and Italy than in the North African providences – Egypt in particular – as well as Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, and Gaul 185				
<div><div>SACRIFICE TO ROMAN GODS</div><div>The early persecution came from the Roman Empire, and required Christians to “Sacrifice to Roman Gods”. These sacrifices were demonstrated in various ways, including, verbal affirmation of a roman god, a verbal oath, a verbal denial of Christ, a pinch of incense into a votive lamp burning in front of the emperor’s bust, or touching a Roman sacrifice.</div><div>(Note: On the surface, some these may have appeared to be minimal things that could have saved the martyrs, but they recognized them as acts of pagan worship, and the line their consciences dare not cross; and they chose to remain faithful to Christ, even unto death!)</div><div>Those who renounced Christ were called <i>Lapsi</i>; and the <u>Novatian</u> controversy began.</div></div>		<div>PERSECUTION AND MARTYRDOM</div> <table><tr><td>Burned alive Dragging Plundering Chained Imprisoned in filth Isolated in darkness Long imprisonments Death by Sword Stretching feet in stocks to the fifth hole Strangled Tore to pieces savagely Large stick skewered through his vital organs Slavery Crucified Nailed head down to a cross, and kept alive until they died of hunger Bodies torn to shreds with claw-like potsherds Pummeled by hands/feet Gauntlet of whips Beaten with rods Hit with straps Stoning Beatings Ruthlessly whipped The rack Pressed with red hot brass plates against the most tender parts of his body Raped Denied burial Bodies burned to ash and thrown into river Burns Scars</td><td>Suspended by one hand from a colonnade and hauled up with excruciating pain Lashed to pillars, facing pillar, with their feet off the ground and their body weight pulling the ropes tighter and tighter Mangled bodies writhing in pain left laying in arena for spectators to see Mauling by beasts Thrown to the dogs The Iron Chair, which roasted bodies Substitutes for gladiators Hung on a stake Food for wild beasts : lions, leopards, bears of all kinds, wild boars Forced nudity in the stadium Signs hung around their necks Beheading (Roman citizens) Forced to watch others die Put into a net and thrown to a bull goaded by hot irons into a snorting rage Boiling tar poured slowly, drop by drop, over various parts of her body from head to toe Stabbed in face and eyes with pointed reeds Tied her feet and dragged her across the city over rough pavement Hoisted up naked and lashed w/ whips Mixed salt and vinegar and poured it over wounds Roasted bodies by fire as if meat for eating – not all at once, lest he find it too quick a death, but little by little Burned in quicklime</td><td>Beaten not only on their sides, as with murderers, but also on their bellies, legs, cheeks. Executioners bound many others and threw them into the sea Women were tied by one foot and swung high in the air, head downward by machines, their bodies totally naked without a stitch of clothes Fastened to trees: they bent down their strongest branches by machines, fastened one of the martyrs legs to each tree, and then let the branches fly back to their natural position, instantly tearing apart the limbs of their victims. Attacked, plundered, looted, stole and burned homes Knocked out all her teeth Cutting throats of boys Tearing out vital organs of newborn babies Killed with axe Hung upside down over a slow fire to suffocate by smoke Noses, ears, hands were mutilated; other parts of the body were butchered Sharp reed driven under fingernails Molten led poured down their bodies Broke all his limbs Right eyes gouged out Left legs maimed Threw him down head first from the upper floor</td></tr></table>				Burned alive Dragging Plundering Chained Imprisoned in filth Isolated in darkness Long imprisonments Death by Sword Stretching feet in stocks to the fifth hole Strangled Tore to pieces savagely Large stick skewered through his vital organs Slavery Crucified Nailed head down to a cross, and kept alive until they died of hunger Bodies torn to shreds with claw-like potsherds Pummeled by hands/feet Gauntlet of whips Beaten with rods Hit with straps Stoning Beatings Ruthlessly whipped The rack Pressed with red hot brass plates against the most tender parts of his body Raped Denied burial Bodies burned to ash and thrown into river Burns Scars	Suspended by one hand from a colonnade and hauled up with excruciating pain Lashed to pillars, facing pillar, with their feet off the ground and their body weight pulling the ropes tighter and tighter Mangled bodies writhing in pain left laying in arena for spectators to see Mauling by beasts Thrown to the dogs The Iron Chair, which roasted bodies Substitutes for gladiators Hung on a stake Food for wild beasts : lions, leopards, bears of all kinds, wild boars Forced nudity in the stadium Signs hung around their necks Beheading (Roman citizens) Forced to watch others die Put into a net and thrown to a bull goaded by hot irons into a snorting rage Boiling tar poured slowly, drop by drop, over various parts of her body from head to toe Stabbed in face and eyes with pointed reeds Tied her feet and dragged her across the city over rough pavement Hoisted up naked and lashed w/ whips Mixed salt and vinegar and poured it over wounds Roasted bodies by fire as if meat for eating – not all at once, lest he find it too quick a death, but little by little Burned in quicklime	Beaten not only on their sides, as with murderers, but also on their bellies, legs, cheeks. 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<div>Other atrocities that angry jailers, full of Devil, inflict on prisoners 155</div> <div>Tortured in ways too terrible to describe and finally given to the flames or drowned in the sea 266</div> <div>The executioners were not to have the least regard for us but were to treat us as if we no longer existed, another torture added to the rest 268</div> <div>Executioners grew so tired they had to work in shifts 267</div>		<div>“his body was a witness to his torment: it was all one wound, mangled and shorn of human shape” (Sanctus in Gaul 177AD)</div> <div>“It is impossible to report the vast number of people who first had their right eye sliced out with a sword and cauterized with fire and the left foot rendered useless by branding irons applied to joints. 271</div> <div>Words are inadequate to describe the number or the nobility of God’s martyrs, as witnessed by the people in every city and region 262</div> <div>This went on not for a few days but for some whole years. Sometimes ten or more, at times more than twenty were put to death, or thirty, or almost sixty; at other times a hundred men, women, and little children were condemned to a variety of punishments and killed in a single day. 267</div> <div>Prisons prepared for murderers and grave robbers were now filled with bishops, presbyters and deacons, readers and exorcists, so that there was no longer any room for criminals 262</div> <div><i>Others endured shameful, pitiful, unmentionable suffering in their private parts and intestines, which the noble, law abiding judges eagerly invented, trying to outdo one another in devising new tortures, as if contending for a prize 270</i></div>						

¹ This is a brief survey of Eusebius, *The Church History*, Translated and commentary by Paul L. Maier. Eusebius was Bishop of Caesarea in 313AD and played a prominent role at the Council of Nicaea in 325AD. Eusebius, a learned man and famous author, enjoyed the favor of the Emperor Constantine. He is considered the "Father of Church History". He is the principle primary source for early Christianity, researching and quoting many long lost documents. (Page numbers refer to Maier’s translation.)

THRONE^{13x}

God the Father

Holy Spirit as 7 Blazing Lamps
and 7 Spirits Of God

Glory as Precious Stones

Grace as Emerald Rainbow

Power as Thunder & Lightning

Peace as a Sea of Glass

Church Triumphant as 24 Elders

Righteousness as

White Robes and Gold Crowns

All Creation as 4 Living Creatures

Worship as "Holy! Holy! Holy!"

God the Creator is Praised

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CHRIST

AND THE SCROLL

Sealed with 7 seals

No creature worthy

ONLY CHRIST IS WORTHY

Lion of Judah

Root of David

TRIUMPHED !

Lamb! Slain! Standing!

Center of Heaven

Seven Spirits of God

CORONATION

New Song of Redemption

All Creation sings

24 Elders & 4 Living Creatures

Myriads of Angels

Power Wealth Wisdom

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