

The Book of Revelation



Remember the BIG PICTURE!

Remember, our logical, Western thinking wants to see Revelation as a linear timeline of the demise of Rome. Instead, it is a gradual view of a broad mosaic. While there may be something of a progression, it is not a strict chronology that can be supported by historical events. To try to make Revelation fit history is futile, for many commentators who attempt it hopelessly contradict each other.

“Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse”

OT Backgrounds

- Zechariah 1:8-15
- Zechariah 6:1-8
- Minor differences including the use of chariots in Zechariah 6.
- Four symbolizes God's sovereign control over the entire earth (e.g., four corners, four winds, etc.). We even conventionally use this with four points on a compass, four world oceans, etc.

Cultural Backgrounds

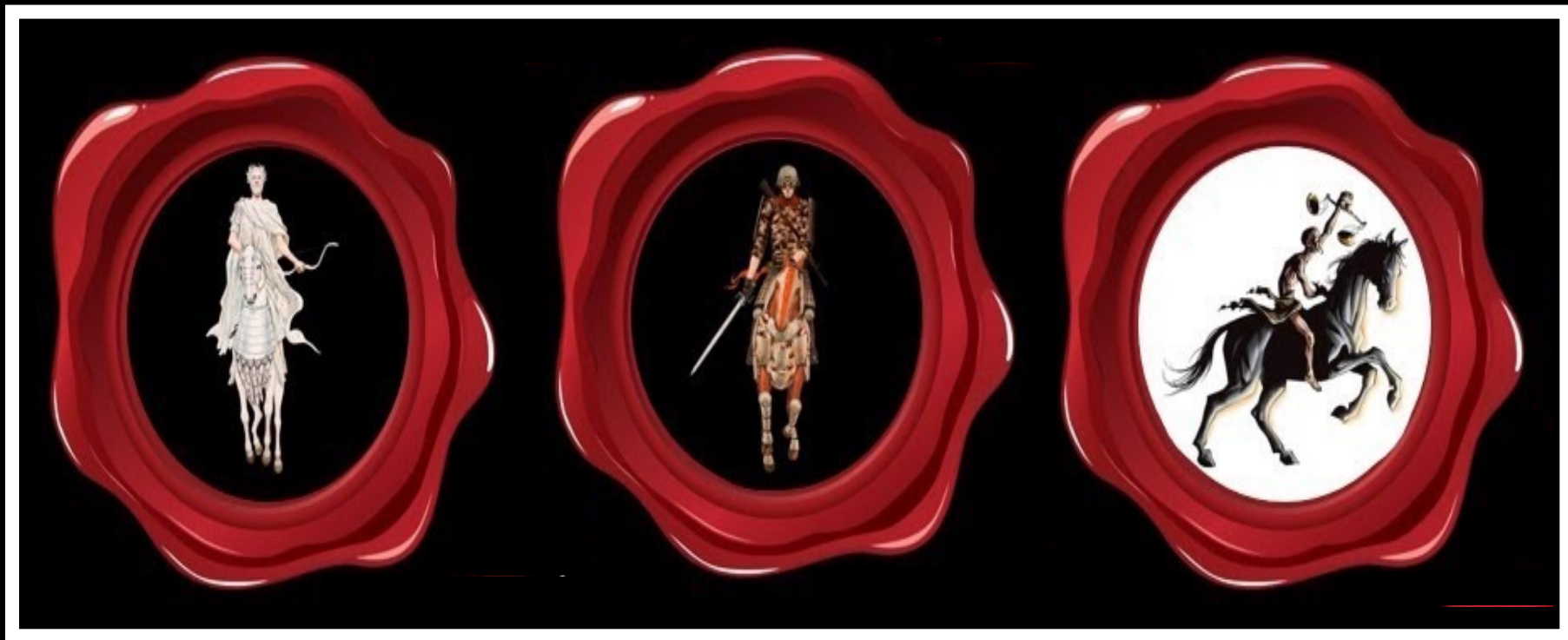


Vase from Athens 520 BC with four barbarian riders, one on white horse

“Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse”

“Many are the modern references to ‘the four horsemen’ of this passage, but few understand that they rightfully declare the sovereignty of God. He permits the horsemen to ride. He controls them. He limits them. And he stops them when they have served their purpose. Modern media do not tell the world this truth. They announce the tragedies of war, famine, and disease. They report the injustices of mankind, but the media do not report that the Lamb of God is King of all the earth. The world looks for wisdom in its statesmen, healing in the discovery of its scientists, and victory in the strategy of its generals. But the believer knows differently. He has knowledge of the true powers that rule the world. Though the book of Revelation is a message of fear for the wicked, it also brings comfort and great consolation to the righteous.”

(Robert Harkrider, Revelation, Truth Commentaries, 1997, 87)



The First Three Seals (6:1-6)



The First Seal (6:1-2)



- *The White Horse of the Conqueror*
- There is an invitation to “come” (KJV adds “and see”) – Is this an invitation to John (KJV) or an invitation to the horsemen?
- Who is the rider? A Parthian? Jesus? (cf. 19:11) Some foolishly link this to “The Antichrist” – white is not used a single time in the book for evil in all of its 16x! Jesus is the CONQUEROR!
- White = moral/holiness overtones; white horse could be an allusion to the imperial steed of victorious generals/emperors; possibly even Incitatus, Caligula’s famous steed?
- The bow was a well-known symbol of Apollo, Greek/Roman god of inspiration and prophecy; the Satanic imitates the divine. God uses the bow to destroy His enemies (Psalm 7:12).
- God’s message of salvation marches out through the earth in the gospel and condemns and overcomes the actions of those devoted to sin and the destruction of God’s people. Through allying with the Lamb, we become more than conquerors (Romans 8:37).



The Second Seal (6:3-4)



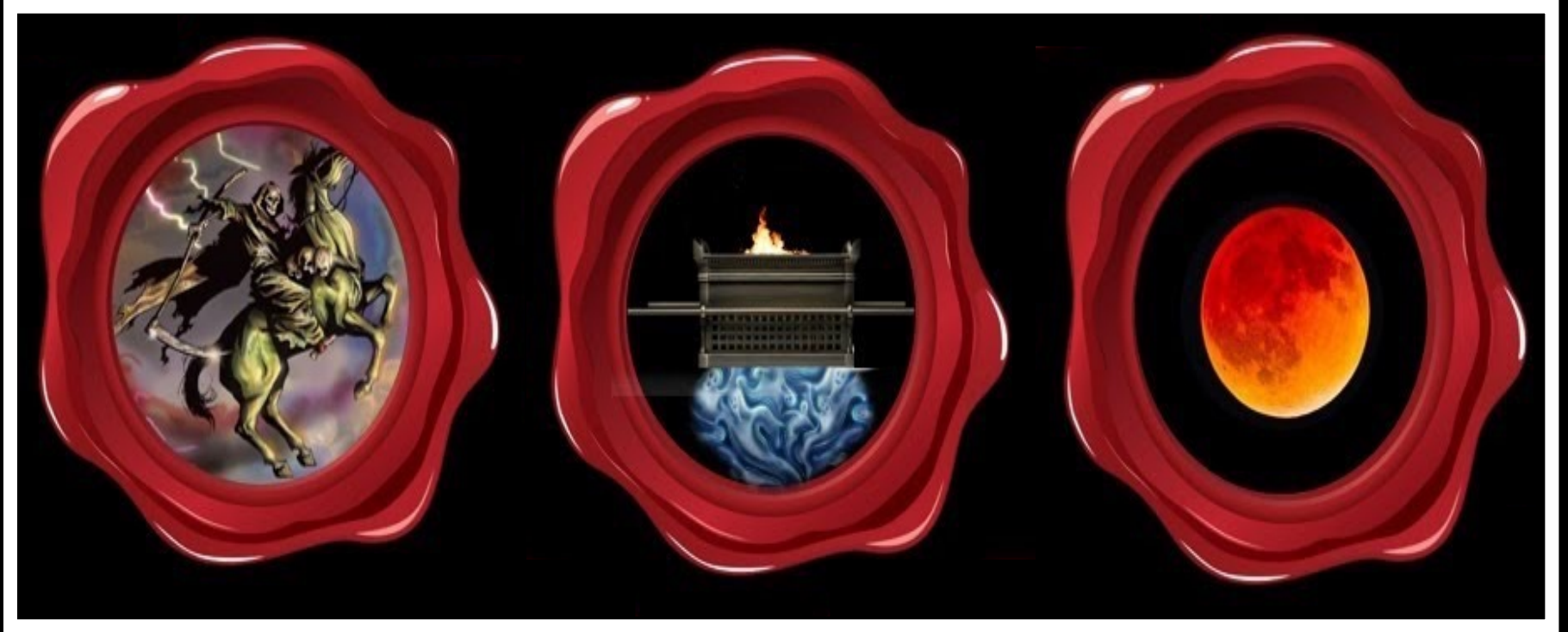
- *The Red Horse of Bloodshed*
- “It was granted” for him to take peace from the earth
 - The Romans enjoyed Pax Romana – peace devoid of God is an illusion and the illusion is to be removed; i.e., Rome loses its power
 - The nature of the Roman Empire (iron and clay) led to many battles and invasions on its vast frontiers as well as civil wars
 - Foreign attack is often a judgment from God in the Scriptures (cf. Deuteronomy 28:22; Isaiah 1:20; 1 Kings 11:14, 23; Amos 6:14)
- Horses 2-4 are calamities characteristic of war; Christ is at war against the Roman Empire (more importantly, against the one using Rome as a tool)



The Third Seal (6:5-6)



- *The Black Horse of Famine*
- Scale – symbol of trade and commerce
- Shortage of wheat and barley, but not oil and wine (cf. Ezekiel 4:10-16; 2 Kings 6:24ff; 2 Kings 7:1); severe, but not too severe
- Prices in v. 6 are 8-16x normal
- No need to look for a historical fulfillment; this is “signified”
- God’s people suffered hardship for not submitting to the Romans; the Romans will suffer hardship for not submitting to the gospel.
- This is just the beginning... (cf. Mark 13:8)



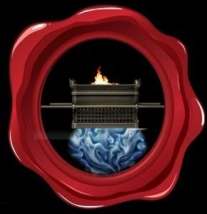
Seals Four, Five, & Six (6:7-17)



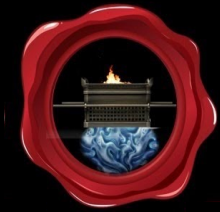
The Fourth Seal (6:7-8)



- *The Pale Horse of Death and Hades*
- Ridden by “Death” with “Hades” traveling behind
- Again, power is “given” – the Lamb is in control and is executing what is written in the scroll, not merely reading it
- This horse seems combinatory – sword, famine, and wild animals are common Old Testament methods of judgment
 - Wild Animals – Jezebel in 2 Kings 9:36f; Baasha in 2 Kings 16:3-4; Jeroboam in 2 Kings 14:11; Israel in 2 Kings 17:25f; 2:24; Jeremiah 5:6
 - Famine, pestilence, and sword – Leviticus 26:18-28; 1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 8:1; Jeremiah 4:23-26; Ezekiel 14:12-23
 - Though Gentiles were not under the Law, this language is accommodated to demonstrate that there are no people without law from God
- Only ¼ of the population is affected (cf. Ezek. 5:1f, 16f) – God nearly always doles out lesser judgments to try and get people to “wake up” (cf. Amos 4:6-11); the impact will increase moving forward



The Fifth Seal (6:9-11)



- *The Martyr's Cry for Vengeance*
- This seal explains the purpose of the previous seals – those receiving judgment have acted violently against God's people and He is exacting vengeance
- Also likely is that this is meant to anticipate increased persecution in the years moving forward and the questions it would raise
- Note that they are not rebuked for desiring God to exact vengeance; instead, they are given white robes and told that Rome's domination has not yet reached its peak (cf. Psalms 6:3; 13:1f; 35:17; 74:10; 79:10; 94:3; Zechariah 1:12)
- The promised destruction of Rome once they have served their purpose is a fulfillment of Daniel 11:36, 45.



The Sixth Seal (6:12-17)



- “Who is able to stand?” (cf. Nahum 1:6)
- Not the “Final Judgment” but rather a this-world judgment of God against the enemies of His people. This is drawn out; when Jesus returns it will be in the twinkling of an eye and as a thief (1 Corinthians 15:52; 2 Peter 3:10).
- Classic apocalyptic imagery of upheaval and change in world-order (cf. Isaiah 13:10, 13; 34:1-4; Micah 1:3-4; Joel 2:30-32//Acts 2). Hal Lindsey in *The Late Great Planet Earth* incorrectly used this section to claim nuclear holocaust would be the end of the world circa 1988. He, and other dispensationalists, overlook the fact that this language was already seen to be fulfilled and proven to be figurative in the OT.
- In this great day of divine wrath (6:17), the powerful and cruel and arrogant will be seeking for a place to hide (Isaiah 2:19-21; cf. Psalm 2:2ff). Crying for the mountains to fall on oneself occurred 3x in biblical history prior to this (Hosea 10:8; Isaiah 2:19; Luke 23:30).
- Evil men and women attempt to exploit God’s patience for more evil rather than use it to seek redemption. How sad!

The Message of Chapter 6

“Okay, what did we see in this chapter? We saw the unveiling of the future [of John’s recipients, EP] undergirded by the primary truth of the book of Revelation—Jesus is the Overcomer, the Conqueror. We saw Him come forth, pure and victorious. We saw him come FIRST to assure the saints. We saw the four sore judgments of God being sent into the world; we saw persecution announced as ahead for the saints; and we saw their cry for vindication being answered in the description of judgment aimed at their oppressors.

Thus we saw a glad picture and a sad picture. We saw a picture having consolation, but speaking also of trouble. We saw, since the Lamb did the opening, that everything was under his control. But the chapter did end with a horrific picture of judgment, and thus leads easily into the contents of chapter 7.”

(Jim McGuiggan, The Book of Revelation, Let the Bible Speak Study Series, 1976, 105)

The Overall Message



In the end;
GOD WINS