

Introduction: these are "in the Spirit" visions given to John giving, not snapshots of heaven, but visible symbols

- The original readers are those who are suffering greatly in a world upheaved by the consequences of sin
- The primary purpose is to comfort, encourage, and give hope to Christian believers in a world which doesn't seem to display the reality of God's sovereign purpose and control
- We previously saw the vision of the throne room, and how the Lamb alone was worthy to open the 7-sealed scroll
- Beginning here, through ch.8, is the opening of those seals and its results

I. THE FIRST FOUR SEALS – the Four Horsemen

- In each case it is **the Lamb** who opens the seals and unleashes the horseman – **4 living creatures** "come and see"

A. First Seal – the White Horse (6:1-2)

1 Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals;

and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see."

2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse.

He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

B. Second Seal – the Red Horse (6:3-4)

3 When He opened the second seal,

I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see."

4 Another horse, fiery red, went out.

And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth,

and that *people* should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

C. Third Seal – the Black Horse (6:5-6)

5 When He opened the third seal,

I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see."

So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying,

"A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius;

and do not harm the oil and the wine."

D. Fourth Seal – the Pale Horse (6:7-8)

7 When He opened the fourth seal,

I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see."

8 So I looked, and behold, a pale [green] horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death,

and Hades followed with him.

And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth,

to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

- *In these four horsemen are represented the world's political/military power, self-destructive cultures, economic despair, and death by war, hunger, famine, plagues, and wild beasts*
- *These are a consequence of the opening of God's scroll by the Lamb (not some separate demonic power independent of God)*

II. THE FIFTH SEAL – the Martyrs (6:9-11)

9 When He opened the fifth seal,

I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain [viewed as sacrifices]

for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying,

"How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer,

until both *the number* of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they *were*, was completed.

- o **The apparent result of the opening of this seal is the persecution and death of servants of God**

- o **This too is a result of God's will and the seal breaking of the Lamb**

III. THE SIXTH SEAL

A. Cosmic Collapse (6:12-14)

12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold,

there was a great **earthquake**; and the **sun** became black as sackcloth of hair, and the **moon** became like blood.

13 And the **stars** of heaven fell to the earth (as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind).

14 Then the **sky** receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every **mountain and island** was moved out of its place.

B. The Men of the Earth Respond (6:15-17)

15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man,

hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,

16 and **said** to the mountains and rocks,

"Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!

*17 "For the **great day** of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"*

- ***This indicates the end, the final scene of judgment and utter cosmic ruin***

IV. INTERLUDE BETWEEN THE SEALS (7:1)

1 After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

A. The Command to Seal God's Servants (7:2-3)

2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having **the seal** of the living God.

And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,

3 saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees

till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

B. The Sealed of the Tribes of Israel (7:4-8)

4 And **I heard** the number of those who were sealed.

One hundred *and* forty-four thousand of all **the tribes of the children of Israel** were sealed: 5 of the tribe of

Judah...Reuben...Gad...Asher...Naphtali...Manasseh...Simeon...Levi...Issachar...Zebulun...Joseph...Benjamin
twelve thousand were sealed;

C. The Sealed of the Great Multitude (7:9-10)

9 After these things **I looked**, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of **all** nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues,

standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with **white robes**, with **palm branches** in their hands,

10 and **crying out** with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

D. The Worship Surrounding the Throne (7:11-12)

11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

12 saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom,

Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *Be* to our God forever and ever. Amen."

E. The Elder's Question (7:13-14)

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me,

"Who are these arrayed in white robes, and **where** did they come from?"

14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know."

F. The Elder's Declaration

1. Their Past (7:14)

So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the **great tribulation**, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

2. Their Present (7:15)

15 "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His **temple**.

3. Their Future (7:15-17) [two images]

And He who sits on the throne **will dwell** among them. [tabernacle-ing among them - more later in the book]

16 "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;

17 "for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them [pastoral imagery – the Shepherding Lamb] and lead them to living fountains of waters.

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

The Portrait of Christ

- This is the One before Whom all will either fear or worship
- He is **God's Gracious Gift** to the World – gracious, because NONE are worthy, only the Lamb
 - The gift, if rejected, will bring about the despair of 6:15-17
 - The gift, if received, will bring about the blessings of 7:15-17