

Revelation 6 - Opening of the Seals

The Lamb opens the seals

Rev 6:1-17 NIV I watched as **the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals**. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!"

NOTICE it is the Lamb who is opening the seals

- In Revelation 6 the Lamb is opening the seals - He was praised as **creator** in Chapter 4 and as **redeemer** in Chapter 5. He is the rightful owner of all creation and of man who has been redeemed by His blood. He is now setting about to reclaim what is His.

Regarding the timing of the opening of the seals

There is much debate over when these seals are opened and of course it is based upon a person's view of Revelation.

- **The historicist** view is that the seals were broken beginning in AD 96 through about AD 496
- **The preterist** view is they were all fulfilled by AD 70
- **The futurist** believes the rider on the white horse (first seal) is the antichrist, so all the seals fall into a relatively short period of time at the end of the age

My thoughts on the opening of the seals (as of this date)

Many of the things that happen as a result of the opening of the seals (i.e. wars, famine, earthquakes etc) have been taking place throughout history. I would like to suggest that ***it is possible*** that the seals began to be opened shortly after Christ ascended and was seated at the right hand of the Father, and that these judgements (war, famine etc) though they have taken place throughout history, may simply increase in intensity over time until they reach a climax near the end of the age.

On the cross, He triumphed over principalities and powers

- Col 2:14-15 KJV Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; 15 And **having spoiled principalities and powers**, he made a shew of them openly, **triumphing over them in it**.

Yet we don't yet see everything under their feet

- Heb 2:6-9 NIV But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him? 7 You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor 8 and put everything under their feet." In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. ***Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them.*** 9 But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

The conquering of His enemies is presented as a function of time -- He is NOW seated at the right hand of God and will remain there UNTIL His enemies are under His feet.

- Act 2:34-35 NIV For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand 35 **until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.**"
- 1Co 15:22-26 NIV For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father **after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.** 25 For he must reign **until he has put all his enemies under his feet.** 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

The conquering of His enemies is presented as a quantifiable number -- If there is a LAST ENEMY to be destroyed (which is death), then obviously there are other enemies that are being destroyed along the way

- 1Co 15:22-27 NIV For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 **For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.** 27 For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ.

Who are the enemies He is subduing?

All of us were at one time His enemy

- Rom 5:8-10 NIV But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, **while we were God's enemies,** we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!
- Col 1:21-23 NIV **Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.** 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation-- 23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Those who love the world are His enemy

- Php 3:17-19 NIV Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, **many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.** 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. **Their mind is set on earthly things.**

- Jas 4:4 NIV You adulterous people, don't you know that **friendship with the world means enmity against God**? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

Those who resist the gospel

- Act 13:9-11 NIV Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, 10 "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? 11 Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

In the interim He is wanting everyone to come to repentance

- 2Pe 3:2-10 NIV I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. 3 Above all, you must understand that in the last days **scoffers** will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, "**Where is this 'coming' he promised?** Ever since our ancestors died, **everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.**" 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 **By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.** 8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead **he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.** 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.
- So to me the answer to the question of "***When were the seals opened?***" is linked to the question of "***When did he begin to put all enemies under His feet?***" and for the reasons stated above, my thought is the seals began to be opened soon after He was seated at the right hand of the Father...and it has been an ongoing process since that time...(to me it doesn't make sense that he would wait 2000 years or so to undertake this process.)

The Rider on the White Horse - The 1st Seal

2 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.**

Some teach the rider on the white horse is the antichrist...but let's look at the scriptures and try to determine who is this ***conqueror*** bent on ***conquest***

- **Jesus overpowers Satan** -- Luk 11:22 NIV But when someone stronger attacks and ***overpowers*** him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his

plunder.

- **God will prevail in judgement** -- Rom 3:4 NIV Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and **prevail** when you judge."
- **God's people overcome the evil one** -- 1Jn 2:13-14 NIV I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have **overcome** the evil one. 14 I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have **overcome** the evil one.
- **God's people overcome the spirit of antichrist** -- 1Jn 4:4 NIV You, dear children, are from God and have **overcome** them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.
- **God's people overcome the accuser of the brothers** -- Rev 12:11 NIV They **triumphed** over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.
- **Jesus has triumphed** -- Rev 5:5 NIV Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has **triumphed**. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."
- **The beast overpowers the two prophets (yet they are raised from the dead 3 days later - doesn't sound like much of a conqueror)** Rev 11:7 NIV Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and **overpower** and kill them.
- **The beast was given power to conquer God's people (yet his ultimate end is the lake of fire *see Rev 19:20 - doesn't sound like much of a conqueror)** Rev 13:7 NIV It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to **conquer** them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.
- **The saints are victorious over the beast** -- Rev 15:2 NIV And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been **victorious** over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God
- **The Lamb will triumph over the kings of the earth** -- Rev 17:14 NIV They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will **triumph** over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."
- **The overcomers are God's people** -- Rev 21:7 NIV Those who are **victorious** will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. (see also the messages to the 7 churches = "to him who **overcomes**" ... Rev 2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:26, 3:5, 3:12, 3:21)
- **This is the end of the beast -- and although the scriptures say twice that the beast overcomes the saints, it certainly does not paint the picture of a conqueror -- *Rev 19:20 ESV And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those**

who worshiped its image. **These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire** that burns with sulfur.

The spread of the gospel

A strong case can be made that the white horse represents Jesus and the spread of the gospel until the time of the end. This seal was opened in the Book of Acts & gathers momentum unto the end (Mt.24:14)

- Mat 24:14 ESV And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
- Psa 45:1-7 ESV To the choirmaster: according to Lilies. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah; a love song. My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the **king**; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe. 2 You are the most handsome of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever. 3 **Gird your sword on your thigh**, O mighty one, in your splendor and majesty! 4 **In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness**; let your right hand teach you awesome deeds! 5 **Your arrows are sharp** in the heart of the king's enemies; the peoples fall under you. 6 **Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness**; 7 you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;

Jesus has been conquering the hearts of men (his enemies) since His ascension into heaven - and even sent forth His Holy Spirit that the church could be equipped to continue in that function

- There were 3000 saved on the day of Pentecost
- Today an average of 174,000 come to Christ every day
- 3,500 new churches are opening every week worldwide
- In AD 100 there were 360 non-believers for every believer
- Today, there are only 9 non-believers for every believer
- The gospel is presented to roughly 260,274 people every day¹

Jesus is the conqueror

The word "white" is used 15 times in the Revelation and in each case it is in reference to the LORD or to his saints

- White is symbolic of purity (Rev.19:8 & 14)

Christ is the conqueror going forth to conquer the heart of man through the preaching of the gospel

- Isa 9:6-7 ESV For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 **Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end**, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with

¹ <http://www.thetravelingteam.org/articles/growth-of-the-church>

justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

- Col 1:13 NIV For he has **rescued us from the dominion of darkness** and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,
- Act 26:18 NIV to open their eyes and **turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God**, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

The Rider on the Red Horse - The 2nd Seal

3 When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" 4 Then another horse came out, **a fiery red one**. Its rider was given **power to take peace** from the earth and **to make people kill each other**. To him was given **a large sword**.

This seal represents war

- **Red** is the symbolic color of blood (2 Kings 3:22).
- God gives this rider **power to take peace from the earth**
 - Mat 24:6-7 NIV You will hear of **wars and rumors of wars**, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 7 **Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...**
- **To make people kill each other** -- The LORD has used the sword to bring judgement in the past as well
 - Jdg 7:22 NIV When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused the men throughout the camp to **turn on each other with their swords**. The army fled to Beth Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath.
 - 1Sa 14:20 NIV Then Saul and all his men assembled and went to the battle. They found the Philistines in total confusion, **striking each other with their swords**.
 - Jer 25:29-31 NIV See, I am beginning to bring disaster on the city that bears my Name, and will you indeed go unpunished? You will not go unpunished, for **I am calling down a sword on all who live on the earth**, declares the LORD Almighty.' 30 "Now prophesy all these words against them and say to them: "'The LORD will roar from on high; he will thunder from his holy dwelling and roar mightily against his land. He will shout like those who tread the grapes, shout against all who live on the earth. 31 The tumult will resound to the ends of the earth, for the LORD will bring charges against the nations; **he will bring judgment on all mankind and put the wicked to the sword,**" declares the LORD.
 - Mat 10:34 NIV "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. **I did not come to bring peace, but a sword**.

This seal gathers momentum until the final war of Armageddon (Rev 17:14; 19:11-21).

There have been many wars throughout the ages...[See Timeline of Famous Wars²]

- Rev 17:14 NIV They will wage war against the Lamb, but **the Lamb will triumph** over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."
- Rev 19:11-21 NIV I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 **Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.** "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of **the wrath of God Almighty.** 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small." 19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army. 20 But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. 21 **The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse,** and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

The Rider on the Black Horse - The 3rd Seal

5 When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was **a black horse!** Its rider was holding **a pair of scales in his hand.** 6 Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "Two pounds of wheat for a day's wages, and six pounds of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"

This seal speaks of food shortages [famine] and the effect on the economy.

- Basically it is stating that it will take 1 day's wages to pay for food for a day (wheat)
- For barley (cheaper/less nourishing) 1 day's wages could purchase for a small family of 3

The LORD used famine as an instrument of judgement

- 2Sa 21:1 NIV During the reign of David, there was a famine for three successive years; so David sought the face of the LORD. The LORD said, "It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death."

² <http://www.datesandevents.org/events-timelines/24-timeline-of-war.htm>

The LORD also cared for his people in the midst of famine

- Act 11:28-30 NIV One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.
- He sent Joseph to Egypt (Genesis 41)
- Elijah was sent to the widow
 - Luk 4:25-26 NIV I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for ***three and a half years*** and there was a severe famine throughout the land. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon.
- Psa 33:18-19 NIV But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, 19 to deliver them from death and ***keep them alive in famine.***
- Psa 37:18-19 NIV The blameless spend their days under the LORD's care, and their inheritance will endure forever. 19 In times of disaster they will not wither; ***in days of famine they will enjoy plenty.***

There were limits placed on this judgement as well (“**do not damage the oil and the wine**”).

- **Perhaps it is because the LORD will continue to bless his people in the midst of famine...**Psa 23:5 NIV You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with ***oil***; my ***cup*** overflows. (oil and wine)
- **Perhaps it is because the LORD wants us to continue to love our neighbor in the midst of troublesome times...**Luk 10:33-34 NIV But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, ***pouring on oil and wine.*** Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.

The Rider on the Pale Horse - The 4th Seal

7 When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" 8 (a) I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him.

It is the only horse whose rider is named

- **Death** (physical death of the body) and **Hades** was following close behind (**Hades** is where the souls of the lost go before they are finally cast into the lake of fire see Rev 20:14).
 - Rev 20:13-15 NIV The sea gave up the dead that were in it [*where their bodies are*], and death and ***Hades gave up the dead that were in them,*** [*where their souls are*] and each person was judged according to what they had done. 14 Then ***death and***

Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. [then body and soul are thrown into the lake of fire] The lake of fire is the second death. 15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Luke 16 gives some understanding of what it is like in Hades

- Hades is the place of the dead Luke 16:22-23 (before the resurrection of Jesus, the righteous were here also in Abraham's bosom)
- Hades is a place of conscious torment - **Not "Annihilation"** Luke 16:23-24
- Hades is a place of no escape - **Not "Universalism"** Luke 16:25-27

Vs 8 (b) 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.

- THEY (a collective they of all the preceding) were given power over 1/4th of the earth

How does the White Horse and the idea of it being the spreading of the gospel bring death?

- 2Co 2:14-16 NIV But thanks be to God, who always **leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession** [i.e. *white horse conquering*] and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15 For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16 **To the one we are an aroma that brings death**; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?
- 2Th 1:6-9 NIV God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 **He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.** 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might
- Joh 12:47-48 NIV "If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; **the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.**
- Joh 3:16-18 NIV For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but **whoever does not believe stands condemned already** because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.
- Joh 3:36 NIV Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but **whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.**

These types of judgements were used before (called “my four dreadful judgements”)

- Eze 14:21-23 NIV "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments--**sword** and **famine** and **wild beasts** and **plague**--to kill its men and their animals! 22 Yet there will be some survivors--sons and daughters who will be brought out of it. They will come to you, and when you see their conduct and their actions, you will be consoled regarding the disaster I have brought on Jerusalem--every disaster I have brought on it. 23 You will be consoled when you see their conduct and their actions, for **you will know that I have done nothing in it without cause**, declares the Sovereign LORD."

You might say, “The goodness of God leads to repentance”

- Rom 2:4-6 NIV Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that **God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance**? 5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 God "will repay each person according to what they have done."

True, but so does the threat of his judgment

- Jon 3:4-10 NIV Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "**Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.**" 5 The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. 6 When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. 7 This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. 8 But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. 9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." 10 **When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.**
- Rom 11:22 ESV **Note then the kindness and the severity** of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.
- 2Co 5:10-11 ESV For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 11 Therefore, **knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.** But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.

So while these seals are bringing forth the wrath of God - they are also intended to bring men to repentance

- Rev 2:20-21 ESV But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 **I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent** of her sexual immorality.

- Rev 9:20-21 ESV **The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works** of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, 21 **nor did they repent of** their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.
- Rev 16:9-11 ESV They were scorched by the fierce heat, and **they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.** 10 The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish 11 and **cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.**

The 5th Seal

9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw **under the altar** the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. 10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, **until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?**" 11 Then each of them was given a **white robe**, and they were told to **wait a little longer**, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.

With the 5th seal we don't see a specific judgement, rather we see the martyrdom of His people

- "those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained"

The altar - is a reference again to the Tabernacle of Moses in the wilderness and refers to the brazen altar where sacrifices were offered. Paul spoke of his martyrdom as being poured out like a drink offering (2Ti 4:6). This was wine that was poured out when there was a burnt offering. The martyrs are not the sacrifice...that is Jesus...but they are those whose lives have been poured out because of the testimony of Jesus...thus **they are under** and not atop the altar.

- Num 15:5 NIV With each lamb for the burnt offering or the sacrifice, prepare a quarter of a hin of wine **as a drink offering.**
- Num 28:7 NIV The accompanying drink offering is to be a quarter of a hin of fermented drink with each lamb. **Pour out the drink offering to the LORD at the sanctuary.**

God's judgement is right

- 2Th 1:4-10 NIV Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. 5 **All this is evidence that God's judgment is right.** and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. 6 **God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you** 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. **This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.** 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be

punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

Slain because of the Word of God and the testimony they had maintained

- This is also why John was on Patmos (Rev 1:9 NIV I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.)
- Rev 12:11 NIV They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by **the word of their testimony**; they **did not love their lives** so much as to shrink from death.

They were given a white robe

Here are some others that had a white robe

Those who came out of the great tribulation

- Rev 7:9-10 NIV After this I looked, and there before me was **a great multitude** that no one could count, from **every nation, tribe, people and language**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. **They were wearing white robes** and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."
- Rev 7:13-17 NIV Then one of the elders asked me, "**These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?**" 14 I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are **they who have come out of the great tribulation**; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. 16 'Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them,' nor any scorching heat. 17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water.' 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"

The ones who have not soiled their clothes - the one who is victorious

- Rev 3:4-5 NIV Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, **dressed in white**, for they are worthy. 5 **The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels.**

In order to cover the shameful nakedness

- Rev 3:18 NIV I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and **white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness**; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

The bride of the Lamb

- Rev 19:7-8 NIV Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and **his bride has made herself ready.** 8 Fine linen, ***bright [same word as white]*** and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.)

The armies of heaven

- Rev 19:13-14 NIV He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 The **armies of heaven** were following him, riding on white horses and **dressed in fine linen, white and clean.**

Wait until the full number of fellow servants are killed

Open Doors USA, which releases an annual report on persecuted Christians across the globe and provides a detailed global ranking of worst countries to live as a Christian, estimates that only 7,000 Christians were killed for their faith this year, [2016] according to Open Doors Director of Communications Emily Fuentes... .."However, this is an extremely conservative estimate, as we only track those we have confirmed details about name, location, etc," she told The Christian Post in an email on Friday. "There are likely many more."³

[Note other estimates are as high as 90,000, but many of those are killed as a result of civil war or other conflict and not necessarily because of their faith in Jesus...it is a difficult number to ascertain.]

Jesus gave them a warning so they would not fall away

- Joh 16:1-3 NIV "All this I have told you ***so that you will not fall away.*** 2 They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, **the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God.** 3 They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.

Jesus warns against letting your love grow cold

- Mat 24:9-13 NIV "Then you will be handed over to be **persecuted and put to death**, and you will be **hated by all nations because of me.** 10 **At that time many will turn away from the faith** and will **betray** and hate each other, 11 and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. 12 Because of the increase of wickedness, **the love of most will grow cold,** 13 but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Along with earthquakes, famines and pestilences, there will be martyrdom

- Luk 21:11-19 NIV There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. 12 "But before all this, they will **seize you and persecute you.** They will **hand you over** to synagogues and **put you in prison**, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. 13 And so **you will bear testimony to me.** 14 But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will

³ <http://www.christianpost.com/news/90000-christians-killed-in-2016-1-every-6-minutes-study-172464/>

defend yourselves. 15 For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. 16 You will be **betrayed** even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and **they will put some of you to death**. 17 **Everyone will hate you because of me**. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 Stand firm, and you will win life.

The 6th Seal

12 I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great **earthquake**. The **sun turned black** like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole **moon turned blood red**, 13 and the **stars in the sky fell to earth**, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. 14 The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. 15 Then **the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains**. 16 They called to the mountains and the 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 their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?**"

- **This is similar to what Jesus prophesied** -- Mat 24:29-30 NIV "Immediately after the distress of those days ***"the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."*** 30 "Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.
- Isa 13:6-13 NIV Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. 7 Because of this, all hands will go limp, every heart will melt with fear. 8 **Terror will seize them**, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame. 9 See, the day of the LORD is coming --**a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger**-- to make the land desolate and **destroy the sinners within it**. 10 The **stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light**. The rising **sun will be darkened** and the **moon will not give its light**. 11 **I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins**. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. 12 I will make people scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir. 13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and **the earth will shake from its place** at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, **in the day of his burning anger**.
- Isa 34:2-4 NIV The LORD is angry with all nations; his wrath is on all their armies. He will totally destroy them, he will give them over to slaughter. 3 Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will stink; the mountains will be soaked with their blood. 4 **All the stars in the sky will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall** like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.

In the last days God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh -- and while His wrath is being poured out, His offer of forgiveness stands...

- **Similar to what Joel prophesied - but he also mentions the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and salvation for those who call upon His name -- Act 2:17-21 NIV** "In the last days, God says, ***I will pour out my Spirit on all people.*** Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 ***The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood*** before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 ***And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'***
- **The darkening of the sun and moon in this chapter seems to indicate it takes place because of dust that rises from an advancing army -- the LORD still is calling people to repent "return to me with all your heart.** Joe 2:1-2 NIV Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand-- 2 **a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness.** Like dawn spreading across the mountains **a large and mighty army comes,** such as never was in ancient times nor ever will be in ages to come... ..Joel 2:10-13 NIV Before them **the earth shakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine.** 11 The LORD thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty is the army that obeys his command. The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it? 12 **"Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart,** with fasting and weeping and mourning." 13 Rend your heart and not your garments. **Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.**
- **Once again the emphasis is on harvest, even as the day of His wrath is coming -- Joel 3:13-15 NIV** Swing the sickle, for **the harvest is ripe.** Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow-- so great is their wickedness!" 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For **the day of the LORD is near** in the valley of decision. 15 **The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine.**

Sun darkened, moon turned to blood, stars falling

This could be literal (eclipse, atmospheric conditions, meteorites, or miraculous intervention of God) - there are other biblical events that show miraculous literal signs in the heavenly bodies

- Luk 23:43-45 NIV Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." 44 **It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45 for the sun stopped shining.** And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.
- 2Ki 20:9-11 NIV Isaiah answered, "This is the LORD's sign to you that the LORD will do what he has promised: Shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or shall it go back ten steps?" 10 "It is a simple matter for the shadow to go forward ten steps," said Hezekiah.

"Rather, have it go back ten steps." 11 Then the prophet Isaiah called on the LORD, and **the LORD made the shadow go back the ten steps** it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.

- Jos 10:12-14 NIV On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and you, moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." 13 **So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped**, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. 14 There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a human being. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel!

This could also be a figure of speech (as in Joel 2:10-13) where the judgement of God is described as an advancing army and the darkening sun and moon is caused by dust stirred up by them. Similar terminology is used in the OT when describing the destruction and downfall of nations.

At the destruction of Babylon -- Isa 13:9-11 ESV Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. 10 For **the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.** 11 I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.

At the destruction of Edom -- Isa 34:4 ESV All the **host of heaven shall rot away**, and the **skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall**, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.

At the destruction of Egypt -- Eze 32:7-8 ESV When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their **stars dark**; I will **cover the sun with a cloud**, and the **moon shall not give its light.** 8 All the **bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you**, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord GOD.

In the Olivet Discourse -- Mat 24:29 ESV "Immediately after the tribulation of those days **the sun will be darkened**, and the **moon will not give its light**, and the **stars will fall from heaven**, and the **powers of the heavens will be shaken.**

Whatever the future may bring (*things we don't know*), His love is unchanging (*things we know for sure*)

Rom 8:35-37 NIV Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall **trouble** or **hardship** or **persecution** or **famine** or **nakedness** or **danger** or **sword**? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.