

Revelation 6: The visions of the seven seals, the ultimate human woes. KV 17

With the opening of the seals, the events of the tribulation are now described in stages.

1. Four horsemen of the apocalypse, the first four seals. 1-8

The seals herald in the first phase of the tribulation to be followed by the seven trumpets (chapters 8-9) and finally the seven bowls (chapter 16). Though horrifying, the catastrophes of the seals are actually the mildest and represent only the ultimate evils of humanity. The trumpets will involve the ultimate forces of nature and evil, while the bowls, the forces of divine wrath. Each horse represents events occurring on earth, such that John is requested always to “come” and look. The horsemen are not individuals as they do not appear again in the narrative but are personification of the evil state of events on earth. It begins with the white horse **(1-2)**. This is deceptively harmless but it is the forces of evil with the crown, seeking world conquest. The bow has no arrow, indicating that the world will be deceived without a battle. It is the early part of the 7-year tribulation, with the antichrist building a world empire that seems to be prospering. With the second, a red horse, global war will emerge **(3-4)**. Things must have gone out of control and a sword is given to the evil forces signifying that the killing has begun. The black horse with the scale is the consequential economic breakdown with roaring inflation **(5-6)**. A denarius is a full day’s wage. Yet it is enough only for a quart of wheat, a day’s supply of basic food. Barley, the staple for the poor can go on for three days. As expected, the rich is momentarily unaffected. This is the implication of leaving the wine and oil or “elaion” in Greek which is olive oil, undamaged. The fourth horse is death **(7-8)**. In Greek, the colour is “cloros” or pale green representing fear. The dire effects of war and the economy culminate with famine and diseases, resulting in death to a quarter of mankind, which is unheard of before. Also, the ruins of civilization must be immense with the jungles creeping in and the destruction by the wild beasts in v8.

2. The widespread martyrdom of God’s people. 9-11

In the fifth seal, there is the arrival of the martyrs for God’s word to heaven **(9-10)**. They appear below probably the altar of incense, which has an earthy equivalent in Moses’ Tabernacle. This is right before God’s throne for the incense of worship (8:3). The martyrs must be from the tribulation up to the fourth seal, for their executioners are still alive on earth (10). Furthermore in **v11**, the supply of the white robes suggests that they have just arrived, with their numbers yet to be completed. In the midst of the tribulation, all men will be required to worship the Antichrist (2Thess. 2:4) and these martyrs are those who resisted.

3. The sixth seal, the ultimate human holocaust. 12-17

The nature of this seal is much debated. Actually it fits well with a nuclear holocaust **(12-14)**. The varied fumes cause the unusual appearances of the heavenly bodies, as confirmed by Hiroshima’s eyewitnesses. Massive tremors make the stars appear falling, as well as everything else moving. In Greek, the sky is said to split or “apochorizo” as a rolling scroll, which is the stem of the mushroom-like nuclear blast. People are in caves, which are the nuclear shelters **(15-17)**. They know that it’s God’s judgment and the fear of facing Him grips them more than death. Yet, it is not the end but only the first phase of the tribulation.

Lesson to Ponder: Wealth might help us to escape some woes, as in the third seal but eventually nothing will protect us from the wrath of God. It is best to rest in His grace.

第六章：七印章的異象和人類最終的結局

鑰節：17 節

隨著七印章的撕開，大災難的不同階段也就一一呈現。

1. 四匹馬和首四個印章—1-8 節

七個印章標誌著大災難的第一階段開始，接下來是七個號筒（8-9 章），最後是七個碗（16 章）。雖然嚇人，但七個印章的災難已算是最輕微的了，它們只是代表人類終極邪惡的一面。七個號筒涉及大自然以及邪惡的終極力量，而七個碗則代表神憤怒的力量。每匹馬各代表在地上發生的事，而每次約翰都被喊“來”觀看。騎馬的並非任何人，因為他們並沒有在描述中再出現，他們只是代表著在地上要發生的邪惡之事。首先出場的是匹白馬（**1-2 節**）。表面看來無甚威脅，但這邪惡的力量卻是拿著冠冕的，它誓要征服世界。那張弓並不帶箭，表示世界會被誤導以為不會有戰爭。這是七年大災難的初期，敵基督在建立全球勢力，發展情況頗為順遂昌盛。第二匹是紅馬，將會發生世界大戰（**3-4 節**）。事情大概已經無法控制，因為這邪惡力量接過了大刀，意味著殺戮已經開始。騎黑馬的拿著天秤，隨之而來的是經濟崩潰和嚴重的通貨膨脹（**5-6 節**）。一得拿利是一天的工資，但卻不夠買一公升小麥即一天的基本食糧。大麥是窮人的主食，一天的工資可換三公升。正如所料，富人暫時是不會受到影響的，這也就是不可糟蹋酒和油的意思。油在希臘文是“elaion”，即橄欖油。第四匹馬是死亡（**7-8 節**）。灰色在希臘原文是“cloros”，是灰青色，代表恐懼。可怕的戰爭、經濟問題，加上饑餓和疾病，結果是有四份之一的人類死亡，這是前所未有的事。文明大規模地瓦解，森林又重新長回來了，野獸也會殺人（8 節）。

2. 神的子民大量殉道—9-11 節

當第五個印章被撕開時，殉道者呼求神伸冤的聲音抵達天上（**9-10 節**）。他們在祭壇下面出現，這壇跟摩西會幕中的祭壇是同一式樣的。祭壇是在神的寶座前，用來擺放敬拜的香（8:3）。那些殉道者一定是在前四個印章期間被殺的，因為殺他們的人還活在世上（10 節）。**11 節**說他們被賜白袍，他們應是剛到達天上，而且人數還未滿額。在大災難中，所有人都會被逼迫敬拜敵基督（帖撒羅尼迦後書 2:4），這些殉道者就是那些拒絕依從的人。

3. 第六個印章，人類最終極的浩劫—12-17 節

這印章到底是怎樣的一回事有許多不同的見解，老實說它極像一場核爆的浩劫（**12-14 節**），核爆的煙塵令天體的表面變得極不尋常，廣島原爆的目擊者所描述的就是這樣。強烈的地震令星星好像從天上掉下來，所有東西都在搖晃。在希臘原文天空是像捲軸的書卷那樣從中斷裂或“apochorizo”的，核爆的磨菇狀雲柱不就是這麼樣捲起來嗎。人們躲進山洞，那些顯然是核子塵的掩蔽所（**15-17 節**）。他們知道那是神的審判，相對於死他們更害怕面對神。只是這還不是終結，這只是大災難的起頭。

思想心得：財富或者可以幫助我們暫時逃過某些災困，就像第三個印章當時的情況那樣。不過到最後還是沒有東西可以保護我們逃得過神的忿怒，所以最好是安息在祂的恩典裏。