

## “The Seven Seals (Chap. 6:1-17)”

### VIEWS OF “THE MILLENNIUM”

1. The “millennium” is a thousand year period described in 20:1-6. The meaning of this period is hotly debated in the church, particularly among evangelicals and fundamentalists. There are three main views regarding the millennium:
2. **PREMILLENNIALISM** - At some point in the future, persecution and temptation of Christians will intensify into a Great Tribulation in which the events described in Revelation 6-19 occur. After which, Christ up will gather the faithful martyrs and survivors of the Tribulation and he will reign with them for one thousand years of peace and righteousness. After the millennium, the dead will be raised and judged, the earth will come to an end, and the eternal kingdom will be initiated. This is called pre-millennialism because the Tribulation occurs before the return of Christ and the thousand year period.
3. **POSTMILLENNIALISM** - The church will grow and spread until eventually the whole world will be Christianized. A long period of peace and prosperity, the millennium, will then precede the Coming of Christ, which will usher in the resurrection, last judgement, and the eternal kingdom.
4. **AMILLENNIALISM** - There will be no special section of history called the millennium. The “resurrection” has already occurred in the believer’s new birth and rising to life after being dead to sin. The millennium is symbolic of the present reign of souls of deceased believers in heaven. The present order will be followed by Christ’s return, the resurrection, the final judgement, and Christ’s reign over the new earth.

### NOTES ON 6:1-17

1. The seven seals are the first of three sets of seven events (the “trumpets” occur in chaps. 8-9 and the “bowls” occur in chap. 16). The seals hide the precise contents of the scroll which the “Lamb” (Jesus crucified, risen and glorified) is alone worthy to open.
2. The first four seals (6:1-8) begin with the 4 living creatures (cf. description in 4:6-8) each saying “Come!” and a horse and rider coming forth. Each “rider” is given some kind of authority to carry out the judgement of God, and the first three hold an instrument in hand. Compare with Zechariah 1:8-17; 6:1-8. In the OT, horses were rarely used for peaceful purposes, but in war.
  - a. The white horse - White signifies conquest through the use of power. Some interpreters say this horse either augers the coming of Christ or the antichrist.
  - b. The fiery red horse - Symbolizes bloodshed and warfare.
  - c. The black horse - signifies famine and shortage of food. The amounts given are barely enough to feed an individual or a small family. This is a limited drought, because the deeper roots of the olive tree and vine are not affected.
  - d. The grey/pale horse - signifies the ashen appearance of death.

3. The fifth seal - the comfort of the martyrs. Under the altar is the place where the blood of sacrifices is poured out in the Jewish Temple. It is a place of honor in the presence of God. Not only was Christ's blood shed for the gospel, but also those who were killed in the persecutions of Christians. V.11 foreshadows the persecutions of Christians yet to come in the events described in Revelation.
4. The fifth seal brings a great earthquake, a darkening of the sun, the moon turning blood red, and the stars dropping to earth. In Jesus' description of the last days, these events seem to immediately precede His Second Coming (cf. Matthew 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; and Luke 21:25-28). Many Old Testament prophets predict earthquakes and darkness are signs of the day of the Lord (cf. Isaiah 2:10-22; Joel 2:10, 30-32).
5. A parenthesis (7:1-17) separates the sixth seal from the seven, containing visions of the 144,000 and the innumerable multitude.

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Are the events in chap. 6 pleasant or unpleasant sounding to you? How do you think you should feel?
2. What do the judgements of the four horsemen have in common?
3. Revelation 6:10-11 gave insight for Christians in John's day who were undergoing persecution from the government, the synagogue, and other sources. Why is this also an important insight for modern Christians?
4. How do people - both the mighty and lowly - react to these judgments (6:15-17). How is this a warning and encouragement to you?

### **FOR FURTHER STUDY**

1. What do you think about these events? Are they descriptive of past events (occurring in John's day)? Are they meant to be taken literally as descriptions of future events before Christ's return? Are they only meant to be taken figuratively as symbolic descriptions of future events?
2. How does Revelation 6:12-17 fulfill Isaiah 2:6-22?
3. Keep track of your study of Revelation by putting together a running outline of the sections of the book and noting what happens in each section.