

# ***The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse***



## ***The Seven Seals Of Revelation***

***# 5 in a series***

## Introduction:

Today, many parenting experts encourage approaches to child-raising that allow young people to personally experience the “rewards and consequences” of their choices. If a child makes a good choice they will subsequently experience the appealing rewards and (hopefully) make more of these healthy decisions. Alternatively, if a child makes a poor choice there will be the resulting unpleasant consequences. Allowing a child to experience the results of their choices leads them to grow into mature and fully-functioning adults.

God has used this same principle for thousands of years to encourage His people to choose the way of salvation rather than the sinful ways of this world. Right back at the time when the Israelites were miraculously rescued from the bondage of Egypt, God delivered His covenant to the people by telling them there would be “blessings” (rewards) for faithfulness and “curses” (consequences) for rebellion (see Deuteronomy 11:26-28, also Deuteronomy ch. 28). These blessings for loyalty and curses for disobedience were God’s method of bringing the Israelites into a right relationship with Him – a relationship that would lead to their salvation.

We see this principle in this session’s study in Revelation. We see that today our Heavenly Father continues to allow us to experience the spiritual rewards and consequences of our choices. God then uses these rewards and consequences to encourage us to choose His ways - the way that leads to eternal life.

### Overview for Session #5 (Revelation chapter 6 & 8:1)

1. **The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Seals 1 - 4)**
2. **The Fifth Seal: Overcoming Persecution**
3. **The Sixth and Seventh Seals: The Return of Christ & God’s Eternal Kingdom**

## 1. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

In Revelation chapter 5, we saw the scroll with seven seals that no-one was worthy to open except Jesus. We will now turn our attention to the first four seals as they’re opened in heaven. Popular culture refers to this section as “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse”. The imagery in Rev. 6:1-8 comes from the Old Testament but is slightly changed to deliver a new message (see *Zechariah 1:7-17 and 6:1-8*). In *Revelation 6:8*, power is given to the four horsemen to kill a fourth of the earth with the sword. In *Ezekiel 14:21*, we read of “four dreadful judgments” against Jerusalem. The purpose of this was to bring these people back into a right relationship with God. These “four dreadful judgments” were a consequence of disobeying God and His laws. It shouldn’t surprise us that in New Testament times God’s people still wander away from His truth and the inevitable consequences of being distant from God encourages us to return to Him.

Have you ever drifted from God? Just like God did with the Israelites, He will lovingly call you back to Him. God doesn't desire to hurt us, but He does allow us to experience the results of our poor spiritual choices in order for us to realise His ways are best.

### ***The First Horseman: The White Horse***

*Revelation 6:1-2 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". And I looked and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on it had a bow: and a crown was given to Him, and He went out conquering and to conquer.*



Jesus Christ is the kingly rider on this pure white horse sending the gospel to the world through His enthusiastic and dedicated followers. With military like precision, the good news of salvation went rapidly to all of the then known world in just a few decades after the resurrection of Jesus. **A white horse with the Rider dressed in white and wearing a golden crown is symbolic of an overcomer. The bow carried by the rider represents battle against the forces of evil** and is also an image of God (when compared with *Habakkuk 3:8-9*). Here God is pictured as riding on a horse and carrying a bow as he proceeds into battle assured of conquest.

***Question 1: What is the symbolism of the white horse?***

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***Question 2: What is the meaning of a bow and a crown?***

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### ***The Second Horseman: The Red Horse***

*Revelation 6:3-4 When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." 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.*

*Question 3: What is the purpose of this horse being the colour red?*

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*Question 4: What is the meaning of taking away peace from the earth?*

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*Second Seal  
Red Horse*

This is not an encouraging picture for believers. **The rider on a red horse is symbolic of blood** (see 2 Kings 3:22,23) where the colour red is likened to blood. **The rider taking peace from the earth tells us that the Gospel is being rejected.** The Gospel brings peace to the believer (*Revelation 1:4*). When the Gospel is rejected, the pleasure of peace of mind is lost. *Isaiah 57:20,21* assures us that there is no peace for the wicked. The rider carrying a sword speaks of division and persecution. Jesus warned that the rejection of the Gospel can bring division between believers and unbeliever *Matthew 10:21*. The first horse brought the good news of salvation and now the second horse brings persecution. Jesus encouraged the persecuted when He said, *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* *Matthew 5:10*

It is not unusual for believers in Christ to be persecuted, even in our time. When a person first chooses to become a follower of Jesus, relatives and associates often bring pressures on them to change their minds. Some even use physical force and continue to harass and persecute the new believer, hoping to push them into submission. Unfortunately, it often works but there are those who refuse to reject their deep convictions and determine to remain true to Jesus no matter what may happen to them.



*Third Seal  
Black Horse*

### ***The Third Horseman: The Black Horse***

*Revelation 6:5-6* 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. 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.**"

***Question 5: What is the significance of the excessive cost of the bread and barley?***

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***Question 6: What is the meaning of the wine and oil?***

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The image of this third horse is even more discouraging than before. Riding on a black horse means that God's presence is absent altogether. *Matthew 4:16* speaks of the people sitting in darkness when the nation of Israel was devoid of spiritual light. Also note that the rider is carrying a pair of scales indicating a spiritual famine. In *Ezekiel 4:16*, the weighing of bread indicated its scarcity at a time when Israel was devoid of spirituality. **So the high cost of wheat and barley in Revelation 6:6 indicates a lack of spirituality. The wine is symbolic of the gracious salvation in Jesus Christ and the oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit.** Even in times of spiritual darkness, there are faithful believers although the number may be few. To not harm the wine or oil is showing that God is still working on the hearts of faithful believers even in times of spiritual famine.

### ***The Fourth Horseman: The Pale Horse***

*Revelation 6:7-8* When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." So I looked and behold, **a pale 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.

***Question 7: What is the meaning of the rider being called Death?***

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The spiritual decline now goes to its extreme. The pale horse symbolizes death. **This is the horse of spiritual death** – in fact the rider's name is Death and is given power over a fourth of the earth. This marks a time when people are spiritually dead. In a time of spiritual enlightenment, while there may even be a revival of spirituality there are some who are spiritually dead. This can be true even today. If this is your personal experience, remember that Jesus wants to revive you and offer a special relationship with Him. All He needs is your choice to accept Him as your Saviour.

*Fourth Seal*

*Pale Horse*



## An Historical Application

The imagery of the four horsemen mirrors the Christian Church's experience until the end of the Dark Ages.

Period	The Christian Experience	Horse
31-100AD	Significant passion and growth	Conquering
100-313AD	Persecuted by the Roman Empire	Persecution
313-538AD	Church compromised with the Roman Empire	Spiritual famine
538 +	Dark Ages	Spiritual death

## A Personal Application

The personal application found in the imagery of the four horsemen is timeless. It speaks to every person throughout history. As we reflect on the four horsemen, we see a warning of what will happen to those who reject God's grace found in Jesus Christ. If we ignore and resist the Gospel message, it will result in our own personal spiritual famine, disease and ultimately death.

The urgent message of the four horsemen is: Don't ignore the pleadings of God any longer.

*"Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts... (Hebrews 3:15)*

*Question 8: Can you see the importance of not delaying a decision to accept Jesus Christ?*

*The Fifth Seal*

*Souls under the Altar*



## 2. The Fifth Seal: Overcoming Persecution

*Revelation 6:9-11* When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 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?" 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.

In analysing these verses, we need to note that the altar described here is an allusion to the altar of sacrifice in the earthly sanctuary. In Revelation chapter 6 we see those under the altar crying out to God – "How long?" - before they receive justice for the persecution they've experienced as a result of their faithfulness to Jesus. They have died at the hands of 'those who dwell on the earth'. These are their persecutors who have rejected the Gospel of Jesus and in turn have persecuted God's people.

They are to be given white robes for their sacrifice which is a sign of victory over their persecutors. They remained faithful to God even at the cost of their lives. Yet their lives have not been wasted. They are an inspiration to all who follow Jesus and provide courage to anyone who risks death because of their faith in Christ. They may have lost their lives but they are assured of the reward of everlasting life. All is made right in the end.

*Question 9: Who are those who dwell on the earth?*

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*Question 10: What is the meaning of being given a white robe?*

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*Christ's Second Coming*



### 3. The Sixth & Seventh Seals: The Return of Christ

The sixth and seventh seals are a summary of events that bring an end to our planet as we currently know it. The return of Christ sets in motion a 'series of events' that ultimately brings to an end the battle between good and evil, and leads to eternal life for all believers. These details we will study in future lessons. The subjects are as follows:

#### *Revelation's sequence of "The End of Time"*

*The Return of Christ*  
The Resurrection of the Righteous  
The Destruction of the Wicked  
The Millennium of Judgment  
The Final Destruction of Satan  
The Re-Creation of Earth  
The New Jerusalem  
Eternal Life with God

#### *The Sixth Seal*

*Revelation 6:12-14 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became as black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 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. Then the sky receded like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every island and mountain was moved out of its place.*

All these signs are cataclysmic for the Earth and the universe and they are associated with what is known in the Old Testament as "The Day of the Lord". Jesus gave these same signs for His return in *Matthew chapter 24*. Note the fear of Christ's return in *Revelation 6:14-17* by those who have rejected the Gospel. In desperation they cry out – *'For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'*

The answer to this question regarding those who are able to stand is presented in chapter 7 of Revelation - which we will study in our next lesson. Those who can stand at the end of time when Jesus returns are the faithful who have been sealed by God.

#### *The Seventh Seal*

*Revelation 8:1 When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.*

The seventh seal is symbolic of the events that follow the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The silence is equated with the universe's reverence for God's final judgment. Half an hour means a short period of time compared with all of eternity.

What we learn from this study is that God will do all He can to develop a relationship with all people. Also, that we are involved in a spiritual battle between the goodness of God and the evil of Satan. It is a daily, continuous battle for our allegiance. For some it is facing persecution. All of us are tempted by the devil to submit to the sinfulness of the world. The promise of Revelation is that all this will one day come to an end and if faithful, we will enter into God's glorious kingdom for eternity.

*Question 11: Are you personally preparing for eternity?* \_\_\_\_\_

