

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation 6:9-17 | Session 12 | Opening of Seals Five and Six | Notes

1.2 THE FIRST VISION ON EARTH (6:1-7:8)

Seal #1 The False Messiah	Matthew 24: 4,5	Revelation 6:1,2
Seal #2 Wars	Matthew 24:6,7	Revelation 6:3,4
Seal #3 Famines	Matthew 24:7	Revelation 6:5,6
Seal #4 Pestilences	Matthew 24:7	Revelation 6:7,8
Seal #5 Martyrdoms	Matthew 24:8-28	Revelation 6:9-11
Seal #6 Signs in Heaven	Matthew 24:29,30	Revelation 6:12-17

1.2.1 THE OPENING OF THE SIX SEALS¹

1.2.2 **THE FIRST SEAL** | THE RIDER ON A **WHITE** HORSE (6:1-2) | **FALSE MESSIAH** | MATTHEW 24:4,5

1.2.3 **THE SECOND SEAL** | THE RIDER ON THE **RED** HORSE (6:3,4) | **WARS** | MATTHEW 24:6

1.2.4 **THE THIRD SEAL** | THE RIDER ON THE **BLACK** HORSE (6:5,6) | **FAMINES** | MATTHEW 24:7

1.2.5 **THE FOURTH SEAL** | THE RIDER ON THE **PALE** HORSE (6:7,8) | **PESTILENCES** | MATTHEW 24:7

¹ The seventh seal will be opened in the second vision in Heaven (8:1-6).

1.2.6 THE FIFTH SEAL | MARTYRS (6:9-11) | MATTHEW 24:8-28

As we read about the fifth seal being opened, there is something we should consider when reading the parallel passage of Matthew 24:8, where Jesus said to His disciples, *“All these are the beginning of sorrows.”* Do the *sorrows* Jesus spoke about go with the verses above it or those below?

It could be that Matthew 24:8 belongs to the things that follow in Matthew 24:9-28. In other words, should we read it as, *“the end is not yet; there is still more to come.”*

Matthew 24:6-7: *“For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet (Why not?), For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”* That’s why the end is not yet.

Can we propose that Matthew 24:8 begins a new paragraph?

If that is the case, *the following things are the beginning of sorrows, i.e., the Great Tribulation. Here are the sorrows of the Tribulation Jesus spoke about.*

1. *They shall deliver you up to be afflicted.*
2. *They shall kill you.*
3. *You shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake*
4. *Many shall be offended.*
5. *Many shall be betrayed.*
6. *Many shall hate each other.*
7. *False prophets shall arise and deceive many.*
8. *Iniquity shall abound.*
9. *Love shall wax cold.*

Suppose the fifth seal of Revelation 6:9 is the beginning of the seven years of the Great Tribulation. In that case, the first four seals are precursors during the interval between the Rapture and the confirmation of the covenant with the Antichrist. This fits better with the Matthew 24 passage.

Is the fifth seal a summary of the entire Tribulation?

Either way, I don't think it will destroy anyone's theology if one wants to assign the beginning of the Tribulation to seal number one, but we should consider the idea that it could begin with the fifth seal.

Another reason for the line of thinking that the Tribulation begins with the opening of the fifth seal above is that the fifth seal is separated from all the others. It stands alone.

Verse 9—

John sees **under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.**

The book of Revelation is not written in a linear, chronological fashion. We will see this as we move through the book. Although the seals, trumpets, and vial judgments are numbered sequentially, from 1-7, sometimes they are filled with gaps that will be filled in later.

The word **souls** should be read as **persons**. This is not unusual. A simple concordance search will reveal that Scripture often refers to the population as **souls**. Here, in verse 9, John **saw** people. In verse 10, John hears them speak. Speaking requires vocal cords, and tongues are necessary. But they are also dead; in Revelation 20:4, John sees them again and says **they lived again and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.**

These **souls** are given white robes in verse 11; how can souls wear robes? So, I think John sees a vision here to instruct him. He sees Jews (saints) who have been martyred, and they are at the foot of the altar of burnt offerings. Like sacrifices of devotion, they had been killed for their testimony. They are dead but will be raised.

Verse 10—

To be clear, these are Jewish saints, not Christian martyrs. **And they cried out with a loud voice, saying, How long O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood...** The body of Christ, the Church in the dispensation of grace, does not cry for vengeance on our enemies. We are told explicitly not to Romans 12:19, "Avenge not yourselves...." But these martyrs are in a different dispensation, and their cry to the Lord is appropriate; often, the Psalms cry out for vengeance. When our present-day dispensation of grace is over (at the Rapture), the cry will be fitting for those who utter it. Here is where it is good to rightly divide.

Verse 11—

As an indication that their request for their blood to be avenged will be granted, they are given **white robes**. The bestowment of new *raiment*, fine linen or white robes, etc., was a part of the rewards in the Old Testament (Genesis 41:42; 45:22; Esther 6:8,9; Daniel 5:16; Isaiah 3:7;

Zechariah 3:5, etc.). **They should rest yet for a little season.** This is not true for believers who have died in the dispensation of grace, for we are *absent from the body and present with the Lord* when we die (2 Corinthians 5:8). **Until their fellow-servants also...should be killed,** more will be killed throughout the Tribulation for refusing to take the Mark of the Beast (i.e., 666), Revelation 13:7,15; 17:6.

1.2.7 THE SIXTH SEAL | THE END OF THE TRIBULATION (6:12-17) | MATTHEW
24:29,30

As mentioned, the book of Revelation is not written in a linear fashion, where all of the details are given chronologically. In this sixth seal, John is carried to the time of the end. And that makes sense if we look at the fifth seal as the summary of the entire Tribulation and seal six as the end and the coming of the Messiah as Judge. Matthew 24:29,30 provides the parallel passage for this seal, and no one can read it with Revelation 6:12-17 without seeing that they speak of the same event.

Verses 12,13,14—

We should take these verses literally. At the end of the Tribulation, there will be a great convulsion of nature, causing a worldwide earthquake (Greek, *seismos*), the Sun being darkened, the moon turning red, and stars/meteors falling to earth. This exact event was prophesied by the prophet Haggai 2:6,7;

“For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, And I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: And will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.”

The prophets Joel and Isaiah also predicted this event in Joel 2:30-32 and Isaiah 13:6-13.

And the heaven departed as a scroll. This likely refers to the universe, not the Heavenly realm (the third heaven), where God’s Throne is located. Matthew 24:35 foretells this catastrophic event in which heaven seems to implode, *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”*

Verses 15, 16, 17—

On that Day, no one will be able to stand, no matter how rich or powerful. Some will hide in bunkers, caves, or other seemingly secure places, but to no avail. Isaiah 24:19-23 presents a picture of this event. The Lord refers to this in Luke 23:30 (quoting the words of Hosea 10:8), *“Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.”*

We will see similar phenomena mentioned under the fourth Trumpet blast and the seventh Vial (Revelation 16:20,21). The sixth seal is a preliminary announcement of what is to come, as Matthew 24:29 says, *“Immediately after the Tribulation of those days.”*

The Sixth Seal is a summary of the judgments distributed over the whole book of Revelation. These judgments are all under Divine control and do not happen by chance. Everything leads up to **the great day of his wrath**, and the chapter ends with **who shall be able to stand?**

That question will be answered in chapter 7 with the sealing of the 144,000 of all the tribes of Israel, who will pass unharmed through that Great Tribulation.