

## Revelation, Part 9

**Rev 6:1** Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, “Come!” <sup>2</sup> And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

<sup>3</sup> When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” <sup>4</sup> And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

<sup>5</sup> When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. <sup>6</sup> And I heard what seemed to be 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 wine!”

<sup>7</sup> When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” <sup>8</sup> And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

<sup>9</sup> 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 witness they had borne. <sup>10</sup> They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” <sup>11</sup> Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

<sup>12</sup> When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, <sup>13</sup> and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. <sup>14</sup> The sky vanished

like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. <sup>15</sup> Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, <sup>16</sup> calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, <sup>17</sup> for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

Chapter 6 introduces God’s judgment on earth and its inhabitants. Some of the judgments are “natural” in the sense they are natural events — earthquakes, volcanos, etc. But we must keep in mind that God is in control of those events, thus we must accept that anything that happens during the Tribulation, God is either a direct cause or allows it under the principle of His permissive will and using mankind to execute His will. Therefore, the argument that the “wrathful” part of the Tribulation does not begin until after the midpoint is totally without merit.

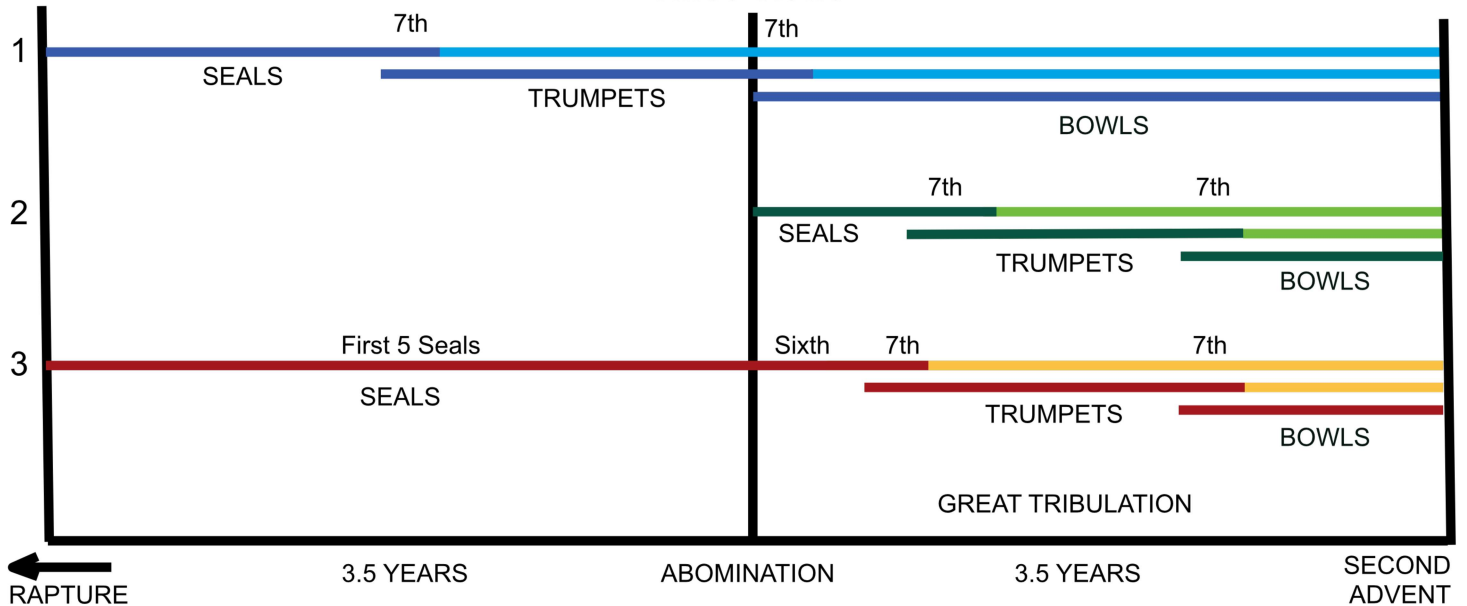
The rest of chapters 6-19 of the book can be summarized thusly: There are three series of judgments — Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls, and they come in chronological order. Seals first, then *during* the seventh Seal, we have the Trumpet judgments, then *during* the seventh Trumpet, we have the Bowl judgments. They should be view as increasing in intensity at a compound rate. At the end of the tribulation you will have the Bowl judgments poured out on top of the seventh Trumpet judgment, which is itself on top of the seventh Seal judgment. That is a lot of judgments taking place at one time!

Some of these take place during the first half of the tribulation, which are mostly divine “natural” judgments, followed by intense war during the second half. The Seal judgments are revealed here in chapter 6. The Trumpet judgments are revealed in chapters 8 and 9. The Bowl judgments are revealed in chapter 16.

The other chapters, 7, 11-15, and 17-19 are to be seen as parenthetical in the sense they give additional information about what is going on. These parenthetical chapters are not necessarily in chronological order. They either cover the entire period or spotlight an event within a period, or they survey the first or the last half of the period. The story can be followed by focusing on the three sets of judgments and what is between is supplemental information put there for clarification.

# REVELATION JUDGMENTS TIMELINE

## Three Views



The various views of the timing of these three groups of judgments, Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls, can be distilled down to mainly three, as illustrated above. Almost all agree that the next series of judgments begins and is contained within the last or seventh judgment of the preceding series. Furthermore, all three series continue to the end of the Tribulation with the judgments compounding upon each other—disaster upon disaster of unimaginable magnitude. The seventh Trumpet contains all the Bowls and the seventh Seal all of the Trumpets.

The placement of each series on my chart above is for illustrative purposes only and is not an attempt to identify their exact timing within the Seventieth Week except as noted in the following: Number 1 takes the position that the Seals and Trumpets fall within the first half of the Tribulation with the seventh Trumpet coming at or right after the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Number 2 takes the position that all three series fall within the second half or the Great Tribulation. Number 3 has the first five Seals in the first half of the Tribulation with the sixth and seventh Seals falling in the very beginning of the Great Tribulation.

Many expositors, including myself, lean to number 1, but Dwight Pentecost in his book *Things to Come* makes a good argument for number 3 using Matthew 24. Regardless, it seems obvious that the first seal, the rider on the white horse, is at the beginning of the tribulation. It also seems logical that the second and third seals, war and scarcity on earth, which would be associated with war, could also be in the first half of the

tribulation. We have wars and rumors of war now on a relatively small scale and scarcity is coming out of that.

Here is the chronology so far: First half of the “week” Israel will experience chastisements although they will dwell in relative safety under the covenant with the antichrist (Daniel 9:27). In the middle of the week a great persecution will break out when the Abomination of Desolation goes up in the Temple and Levitical sacrifices cease. Believing Israel will then have to flee to the East. We will see more detail on these events later in our study.

With that frame of reference, let’s begin our study of the judgments.

**Rev 6:1** 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.” 2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

A white horse and rider is revealed to John. Some interpret this rider to be Jesus Christ mainly because of Revelation 19:11, where we see Christ returning at the Second Advent on a white horse. But just because there is a white horse in both passages does not necessarily mean we have the same rider. It was traditional for victorious persons, such as emperors and generals, to ride white horses in parades of triumph after success in war. So the white horse more likely symbolizes victory for the rider rather than identifies the rider.

This is our first look at the antichrist, the “ruler who will come” of Daniel 9:26. We will see more detail on him later. He carries a bow and wears a crown but notice no arrows for the bow? The bow is obviously an implement of war and has long range when considered in its historical context. We might think of the bow as equivalent of a modern rifle in our time, but more accurately, it was often used more as short range artillery in John’s time. It is thus thought that the bow implies far reaching power.

The fact that he has no arrows can suggest several things: Either his power is merely threatening and he really does not have the power he implies he has, or maybe he simply does not have to deploy the power in a violent way. Regardless, he goes “out conquering and to conquer”. He accumulates power over others that might otherwise require military might

demonstrated against them. He conquers without killing. He wears a crown, and this crown is a *stefanos* not a *diadem*. A *stefanos* is crown of the victor not a ruler. He is a great peacemaker and according to Daniel 9 he makes a treaty with Israel that apparently guarantees her continued existence, and permission for Israel to build the third temple and begin animal sacrifices again. We know there is a third temple and animal sacrifices because they are seen in Matthew 24:15 and Daniel 9:27. This “peace treaty” with Israel is considered to be the official beginning of the Tribulation.

Putting all this together, this rider carries a bow, rides a white horse and wears a victor’s crown. He is presumed to be the antichrist, “the prince who will come”. He assumes power and “conquers” others in a bloodless victory and establishes some level of peace, especially for Israel.

## **Second Seal: Conflict on Earth**

**Rev 6:3** When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.” 4 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.

The peace didn’t last very long, but most expositors agree this probably does not involve Israel, at least for a while. In every dispensation there are wars and rumors of wars just as Christ warned in Matthew 24.

**Mat 24:6** And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

The words of Christ closely parallel the vision of Daniel 9 and the seven Seal judgments in Revelation. Though antichrist evidently attempts to exercise control over the world, he has varying degrees of success. These “wars and rumors of wars” are only the beginning, and things will get worse, as Christ warned.

The first Seal revealed the antichrist and, with the second Seal, we see a dramatic change from peace to warfare. This rider has a sword and makes war. This figure does not so much represent a person as it does a trend — war and killing. Some expositors note that only the horse is mentioned as changing and not the rider.

### **Third Seal: Scarcity on Earth**

**Rev 6:5** 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. 6 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.”

Scarcity comes with warfare. We experienced food rationing during World War II here in the relative safety of America. Americans did without all manner of things, mainly because the war effort demanded so much of what America could produce, and many of those who would be doing the farming and producing were in the military. With economies so dependent upon each other today, it will be worse. We are seeing some of that right now because of supply chain disruptions, some of which are related to the war in Ukraine.

A denarius was roughly a day’s wages when this was written. Then it could buy roughly 10 times what is stated in this passage. Here it can buy only enough wheat or barley to feed one person for one meal. That means a working man or woman would earn enough to just feed themselves one meal and not their family or pay for other needs such as rent, fuel, etc. Hyper-inflation! The economy will tank, and many will suffer as a result. Famine almost always follows war.

Oil and wine, though considered luxuries, seems to be available for those who can afford it. That suggests a level of relative luxury for the governing elite. It was noted by some expositors that olive trees and grape vines, unlike other crops, can thrive with very little human tending.

### **Fourth Seal: Widespread Death on Earth**

**Rev 6:7** When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see.” 8 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.

Now we have a dramatic picture of divine judgment upon the world. The horse is an unearthly color. “Pale” should be translated literally “pale green,” a sickly color. The rider is pictured as death and, in his aftermath, Hades follows. Hades (Hell or Sheol) is the abode of the lost dead. We will look at Hades in more detail later in our study.

The rider has the power of death over 1/4 of the world’s population. It is projected that we will have a population of 8,000,000,000 people come November 2022. One-fourth of that would be two billion people dead. If the first four seals are during the first half of the tribulation then it will not be a very pleasant time. The rider is symbolic, and these deaths will come from a number of sources including famine, warfare, and demon activity.

### **Divine Restraint Is Removed**

What we have in the first four seals is what some expositors see as a group of four connected events. They do not necessarily represent individuals, although the first does in some respect speak of the coming and revealing of antichrist. They do express the work of divine judgment, which comes from God upon man in two ways: passive and active.

The passive judgment is that God allows the sin natures of mankind to impact the world, and He uses that for His own divine purpose. We also call this God’s permissive will.

Active intervention by God is through His providential powers. God proactively providentially acts in the lives of individuals and even nations to exert His will upon them.

What we see in the first four seals is mostly the passive intervention by God and the removal of divine restraint of sin. God allows mankind to experience the full impact of his negative decisions — to reap what he has sown.

**2 Thes 2:1** Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only **He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.** 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but shad pleasure in unrighteousness.

Our focus is on verse 7 and the removal of restraint. Note the sequence: First He who restrains is taken out of the way, and *then* the lawless one will be revealed. We have already developed this in our pre-trib Rapture support. The “restrainer” is the Holy Spirit in the capacity of indwelling all born again believers during the Church Age. As a result of the removal of the Church in the Rapture plus God returning to dealing with Israel in the last seven years of the Age of Israel (Daniel’s Seventieth Week), we have a return to the conditions found in that age. That means no universal indwelling of the Holy Spirit and His influence on individual believers. That does not imply that the Holy Spirit ceases to work in the hearts of men; we will later see evidence that He does continue ministering during this return to the Age of Israel. What this does imply is the restraining work of the Holy Spirit is lifted and man’s sin nature is unrestrained. The only restraint remaining then seems to be the divine institution of government (fear of the law), but government is often even now corrupt and will become much more so during the Tribulation. It will take only a short while before it becomes evident to the unsaved that with the mysterious disappearance of the “judgmental-church-goers” there is little or no restraint on their sin



natures, and they can do what they want. We see a perfect example of this in the “defund the police” movement. In jurisdictions who have adopted this along with a liberal policing style, we are seeing a dramatic increase in crime. The other riders flow out of this lifting of divine restraint as God allows the antichrist the freedom to make his case and fail.

The first four seals can be classified as man-made disasters. There is an attempt at peace, which soon disintegrates into warfare. Through war and the effects associated with war 1/4 of the world’s population will die — two billion people!

Under the Law, God promised Israel peace based on their obedience to the Law. When Israel was in obedience to the Law, God often used them as instruments of His judgment on others, but when Israel was not in compliance with the terms of the covenant, God used evil nations to discipline Israel. We are not under the Law, but we do function under that same basic principle. God does prosper nations that call upon Him, that follow Him, that have their core values and a culture that is based on divine principles. Deviation from that is an invitation for God to turn His back on those who have turned their backs on Him. Divine discipline is the result, just like He inflicted on idolatrous Israel. Would we not expect Him to treat the U.S. the same?

## **Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs**

**Rev 6:9** 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. 10 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?” 11 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.

We have a shift of scene from what is happening on Earth to Heaven. This scene takes place during the first half of the tribulation but could be capturing the idea of the martyred dead in both halves. John looks “under the alter” and sees the “souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held”. That Greek word translated “slain” means killed by violence. These are martyrs that come out of the

tribulation. These in verse 9 are in Heaven and are given white robes, which implies they are saved. This is further supported by the reason given for their death, “slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held”. Implied in that statement is the fact that believers during the tribulation will find it very difficult to express their faith. To do so is to invite death as a martyr for Christ. The fact that they cry out for God to judge and avenge their blood also implies their tormentors and murderers are still alive and are still dwelling on earth.

The answer to their cry for judgment is in verse 11. The martyrs are told they must wait a while for the judgment of their tormentors, “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.” This implies their number is not yet complete, and there will be other martyrs to come out of the Tribulation to join their number under the alter.

**2 Tim 3:12** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

In the English the term “under the alter” suggests they were physically gathered under an alter in Heaven, but I think this should be viewed more figuratively and in the context of the Law. Remember, this period is a return to the Age of Israel and all associated with it. Under the concept of the Levitical offerings the blood of the offerings were sprinkled on the alter and on its sides. This was a foreshadowing of the shedding of the blood of Christ. I believe this is picturing OT saints using the figurative language “under the alter” as the pre-cross type for the Cross. In an Age of Israel context, this is a picture of believers who have come “under” the saving influence pictured by the blood sprinkled on the alter when Israel was under the Law. They are not physically cowering under the alter in Heaven but are saved and in Heaven because of their faith in the blood of Christ symbolized by the alter and the blood sacrifice.

A question arises concerning these tribulational martyrs, regarding their bodies. They are seen wearing white robes. This implies the robes are hanging on something that has physical form. The problem is these people have not yet received their resurrection bodies. That will not happen until the end of the Tribulation as pictured in Revelation 20.

**Rev 20:4** And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Tribulation martyred believers do not get a formal resurrection until the end of the Tribulation when all Old Testament saints get resurrected. Then if they do not have their resurrection bodies yet in Revelation 6, what form do they have? Some argue they are spirit beings, but spirit beings don't wear robes. Scholars are divided on whether or not those in Heaven before they are resurrected have some form of temporary body or not. I believe 2 Cor. 5:1-4 possibly refers to such an interim body.

**2 Cor 5:1** For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, 3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

To be fair, most expositors, however, see this as referring to the final resurrection body, but a few do not. One points out that the resurrection body is said to be earthly in that it is "corruption putting on incorruption," suggesting a change of its nature. Whereas the fleshly body in verse 1 is said to be a "tent" that is temporary and exchanged for a "building" that is made in heaven. In verse 2 Paul is longing to be clothed in this "dwelling from heaven," and in verse 3 he says this is so he will "not be found naked". This suggests that this dwelling made in heaven may not be the resurrection body at all but is another body of a temporary nature that awaits the resurrection body. Note that at the time Paul wrote this the Church had not yet been resurrected (Rapture), and those who died before the Rapture are seen as being resurrected at that time. They must have had some sort of "temporary body" until they were resurrected. At the time depicted here by John, the Old Testament saints have not yet received their resurrection bodies.

The human soul requires some form of housing. In the absence of an earthly body and the resurrection body not yet granted, an interim resurrection body is in order, so the soul will not, as Paul says, “be found naked”. In 2 Peter 1:14 we see Peter talking about laying aside his earthly dwelling, implying that it is put aside for future use when it will be changed into an incorruptible body.

There are a number of expositors that believe we will receive a temporary resurrection body until our actual resurrection takes place. At that point our corruptible human bodies, in some cases long rotted in the earth or even destroyed by fire or explosion as in war, are resurrected and changed into incorruptible bodies for our eternal existence. Remember Jesus did not abandon His earthly tent to decay in the grave and take on a whole new resurrection body, rather His earthly body was transformed into His resurrection body.

Though this is far from conclusive, the evidence suggests these saints “under the alter” are in some form of temporary resurrection body, awaiting their resurrection at the end of the Tribulation.

## **Sixth Seal: Cosmic Disturbances**

**Rev 6:12** I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 13 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. 14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and 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 His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

It is difficult to paint a more horrific scene than this one. Some have a tendency to interpret this as symbolic, while others urge us to see these as literal events. One point we should be sure of is this is a picture of God acting providentially. This isn't man being the instrument of God's judgment. This is God's wrath directly and emphatically intervening in

human affairs. These judgments originate with God as divine punishment upon a blasphemous world. The judgments seen here are common in prophecies pertaining to the end of the age. Christ Himself predicted earthquakes in Matthew 24:7. Earthquakes and the sun being blocked out and the moon red are also predicted in Joel

**Joel 2:30** “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

The sky opens up and rolls back like a scroll. That must be a very intimidating sight and clearly of a divine nature. There are mighty earthquakes around the globe that affects all locations. Though not mentioned here, this probably creates volcanos, the ash and dust from the earthquakes and volcanos are in the atmosphere and cause the sun to dim as seen through sackcloth. Sackcloth has a coarse weave that light partially penetrates. At night the moon has a blood red color.

The stars fall from the sky. The word for “stars” refers to a celestial body. This can be literal stars or probably meteors that impact the earth and even contribute to the junk in the atmosphere. All of this causes those on Earth to panic.

**Rev 6:5** And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and 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 His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

It becomes obvious that this is divine judgment. These people are frightened, but note their reaction; they don't repent and seek God; they hide in caves and ask for death to spare them of this suffering. But what about the suffering of eternity? This is biblical proof that when some see the truth in its most vivid form and even recognize its source, they still will not turn to God.

It should be noted that the “day” of wrath is not a literal day. A biblical “day” can be a time period shorter than a literal day or even much longer, which is the case here.

Chapter 6 closes, having advanced the narrative to a high point in the progress of the book, but we still have the seventh seal, not to mention the Trumpets and Bowl judgments. The chapter closes with the comment by those hiding from God’s wrath, “who shall be able to stand?” Indeed, who shall be able to stand against God? The obvious answer is only those who don’t run away from God but run *to* Him and avail themselves of His grace, even though they suffer a martyr’s death. That is exactly what we will see in the next chapter.