



Truth For These Times



46. THE SEVEN SEALS

The early Christian church was a pure church with a simple faith and a compulsion to tell the whole world about Jesus Christ. This was the church Christ organised. Its teachings and ideals were not meant to change as the years passed by. But unfortunately they did change, to such a degree, that if the founders of the first church were to return, they would say, "What has happened to the faith once delivered to the saints?" God was not taken by surprise. As He looked into the future, He saw how the Christian church would become corrupt and persecute those who remained faithful to the teachings of Scripture. The falling away is graphically described in the prophecy of the seven seals.

1. WHITE HORSE - PURE CHURCH

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. He who sat on it had a BOW; and a CROWN was given to him, and HE WENT OUT CONQUERING and to conquer.



White Horse symbolizes pure church from Christ to approx. A.D.100.

Previously John had been given a view of the throne of God in heaven where he saw a mysterious book of seven sealed scrolls. Only Jesus was able to unfold the seals and explain the mystery.

The rider on the white horse describes the pure enthusiastic nature of the early Christian church. The bow symbolises aggressive warfare and the white horse and crown are symbols of triumph. The early Christian church was indeed a conquering church in the spiritual sense. They carried the gospel to the then known world. It is estimated that by A.D.100, 5 million converts had been won to Christ. The first seal extends from A.D. 31 to A.D. 100.

2. RED HORSE – PERSECUTING and APOSTATE CHURCH

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.



Red Horse symbolizes the church under persecution during the period A.D.100 to about A.D.323.

The original purity of the church was not to last. The red horse pictures the corruption of the church after the first Apostles had died. The colour red in the Bible symbolises sin, corruption and bloodshed. The reason for the church's downfall was due to the converts from paganism who brought many of their false teachings with them and blended the errors with Christian teachings. Some of these errors were: belief in purgatory,

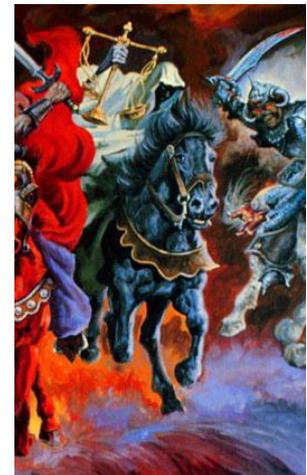
prayers for the dead, the use of images in worship, infant baptism, holy water, and others. This corrupted the pure stream until the whole church was tainted.

Also we notice that the rider of the horse was given a sword. At this stage the church had the sword of civil power, using political power to achieve spiritual ends. This resulted in the persecution of all who would not submit to the dictates and corruption. This is the time when Christians were thrown to the lions, crucified, and burnt as human torches. The second seal extends from A.D. 100 to A.D. 323 when Constantine, the Roman Emperor was said to have been converted. Christianity became popular, but this brought other dangers.

3. BLACK HORSE – STATE CHURCH ESTABLISHED

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.”

The rider on the black horse symbolizes increasing corruption which progresses rapidly from the time of Constantine to the beginning of Papal supremacy, in A.D. 538. This was the time when the true gospel of Christ was almost completely extinguished by worldliness and superstitions. Black is the opposite of white and this was the actual spiritual condition of the church at this stage. This was the period of the dark ages that the apostle Paul had predicted.



Black Horse symbolizes apostasy coming into the church from A.D.323 to A.D.538.

2 Thessalonians 2:3,4 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, 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.

With the growth of the church, certain leaders became worldly men of wealth and influence. Some of the bishops lived in palaces and employed their own soldiers. Might was right, and the bishop with the biggest army naturally rose to the top. When Constantine became a Christian, he promised his soldiers one hundred gold pieces and a new white robe if they would be baptised. He had no trouble getting converts, but their hearts were not converted and paganism with its customs invaded the church, concealing the compromise by giving them Christian names. The apostate church lost sight of the original gospel and world evangelisation was forgotten. The “bread of life” was sold by such perversions as purgatory, the mass, the indulgence and the confessional. God’s gift of salvation was offered in exchange for money. The balances in this verse are a symbol of judgment, showing the churches attempt to judge, by ruling man’s conscience and deciding his destiny. The wheat and barley referred to was selling at famine prices, indicating the spiritual famine of the church. The oil and wine show how rich bounties of heaven were still available. The light of true religion would never be completely extinguished. There was a remnant of faithful witnesses who resisted the great apostasy.

4. PALE HORSE – DARK AGES

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.



Pale Horse symbolizes the Dark Age period of the apostate church from approx. A.D.538 to the Reformation.

Here we see the apostasy in full bloom, when the state church of the middle ages became an instrument of ruthless tyranny and persecution. The word “hades” here means the grave, showing the power of the church to destroy life. The original church founded by Christ promised LIFE, but now, the church in the dark ages had become a pitiless engine of destruction and death. The era of the pale horse was the era of the “Inquisition”, and the world still shudders at its memory. During the Dark Age period, which lasted until reformation times, it is estimated that in excess of 100 million martyrs shed their blood for the pure faith of Christ. They lost their lives because they would not bow to the dictates of the state church. In some places it was a crime to read the Bible. Many were burnt at the stake and millions were tortured. There was no religious liberty – no freedom of worship according to the dictates of conscience.

5. SOULS UNDER THE ALTER

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.



The cry for judgment and reform during the Reformation era.

The opening of the fifth seal reveals the victims of the fourth horseman. Just as the blood of righteous Abel was said to have cried to God from the ground, so under the fifth seal the blood of the martyrs send forth a pathetic appeal for deliverance. The dawn of the Reformation was the answer to that prayer. Freedom of worship came in many lands and persecutions largely came to an end. The millions of martyrs who had died as common criminals at the hand of the state were now vindicated before the world and recognised as loyal heroes of the cross, “Then a white robe was given to each of them”. The Biblical symbol of the white robe is the righteousness of Christ. The characters of those under the fifth seal were vindicated before God, and as a result of the Reformation they were also vindicated before men.

6. THE SIXTH SEAL – SIGNS AND SECOND COMING

Revelation 6:12,13 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. 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.

Great convulsions in nature mark the opening of the sixth seal. The great earthquake is none other than the Lisbon earthquake that shook Portugal on November 1, 1755. Up to that time, it was the most devastating and extensive earthquake recorded. Within six minutes sixty thousand people perished. Four million square miles of the earth's surface was affected. The tremendous magnitude of the earthquake led many to regard it as a sign that the end of all things was at hand.

On May 19, 1780 the sun became “black as sackcloth” over a large portion of North America. The darkness commenced about mid-morning and continued until midnight. When the moon rose that night it had the appearance of blood. Many reliable records have been made of the event, but none have been able to account for the uncanny darkness. It was not due to an eclipse because the heavenly bodies were not in the correct position. Furthermore the duration of eclipses is very short, whereas this darkness lasted all day. The event is recorded in “*Webster's Dictionary*” 1869 Edition where it says, “The true cause of this remarkable phenomenon is not known.” It further states that at mid-day “persons could not see to read common print in the open air for several hours together. Birds sang their evening songs, disappeared, and became silent; fowls went to roost; cattle sought the barnyard; and candles were lighted in the houses.....”

A remarkable meteoric shower on November 13, 1833 was the fulfillment of the third natural phenomenon mentioned in these verses. This unforgettable display of “falling stars” was by far the most spectacular event of its kind ever recorded. Eyewitnesses estimated that the stars fell like a continuous fiery hailstorm at the rate of 200,000 an hour for five or six hours. They fell in the manner described, “As a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.” An interesting record of the event is in “*History of Astronomy in the Nineteenth Century*,” page 328, Agnes M. Clerke.



Stars falling from heaven in 1833.

Today we live between verses 13 and 14 and the next great event to take place is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The prophecies show clearly that His coming is soon.

Revelation 6:14-17 Then the SKY RECEDED AS A SCROLL when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 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, 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! For THE GREAT DAY OF HIS WRATH HAS COME, and who is able to stand?”

All the signs mentioned in this chapter have come to pass. The next great event is the coming of the King of Kings. Some feel that because these events occurred so long ago they have no significance for us today. But God knows no haste and no delay. At the appointed time He will bring it to pass.

It took more than 1800 years to unroll the six seals. We cannot tell when the seventh seal will be opened, but as we examine the signs of Christ's coming in Matthew 24 we must conclude that it will be soon.

7. SEVENTH SEAL – SILENCE IN HEAVEN

Revelation 8:1 When He OPENED THE SEVENTH SEAL, THERE WAS SILENCE IN HEAVEN for about half an hour.

The opening of the seventh seal brings down the curtain upon human history. The time of "silence" takes place at the second coming of Christ when all the angels accompany Christ when He comes to receive His own. The short prophetic time (half an hour) is about 7 days in literal time when using the Biblical prophetic principle of 1 day = 1 year. Heaven is silent because no one is there.



All of heaven comes to claim the righteous from the earth.

Matthew 25:31 When the SON OF MAN COMES in His glory, and ALL THE HOLY ANGELS WITH HIM, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 For THE LORD HIMSELF WILL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be CAUGHT UP TOGETHER with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. AND THUS WE SHALL ALWAYS BE WITH THE LORD.

One day soon our eyes shall behold the coming of the King, and if faithful, we will be in the blessed homeward – going throng. Jesus wants to save us from the dangers to come. He wants us to be ready for His appearing. He has given us this revelation so that we might know what the future holds and thus prepare our hearts. Dear friend, are you ready for Jesus to come?

Review Sheet – The Seven Seals

ASSIGNMENT: Read the Bible study carefully before answering the following questions.

1. Explain the meaning of the symbol of the “white horse”. Revelations 6:1,2

Answer: _____

2. What does the “red horse” symbolize? Revelation 6:3,4

Answer: _____

3. Which church represents the “black horse”? Revelation 6:5,6

Answer: _____

4. Did the Bible say the church would depart from the pure faith? 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4

That day will not come, _____

5. List some of the corruptions of the church during the dark ages that began at this time.

Answer: _____

6. Describe the meaning of the “pale horse”. Revelation 6:7,8

Answer: _____

7. Who are the souls slain under the altar? Revelation 6:9-11

Answer: _____

8. Where do we live in the prophecy of the seven seals? Revelation 6:12,13

Answer: _____

9. When does the heaven recede as a scroll? Revelation 6:14-17

Answer: _____

10. Does the “dark day” and the “falling of the stars” have any significance for us today? Give a reason for your answer.

Answer: _____

11. Why is there silence in heaven for half an hour? Revelation 8:1

Answer: _____

12. What great event – the opening of the seventh seal – brings the end to human history?

Matthew 25:31; 1 Thess. 4:16,17

When _____

Do you desire to see Jesus come? YES _____ NO _____