

Peace, War, and Famine
Revelation 6:1-6
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INTRODUCTION

1. Three years ago we looked at a passage that I would like us to consider again today and next time.
2. I am referring to that passage found in Revelation chapter 6.
3. It has been on my heart for some time now to share with you again the events of this chapter as we watch our world change before our eyes.
4. We are living in dark days, but nothing compares to what is yet coming.
5. It is my view that the church is not ready to suffer for her faith in Jesus Christ.
6. If my interpretation of end time prophecy is correct, we will suffer in ways unimaginable by the Antichrist himself.
7. In Revelation 6, you have the opening of the first 6 seals.
8. As each seal is opened we will see that what is written on the scroll is not read, but acted out.
9. Read Revelation 6:1-17.
10. Now up to this point, John has seen a lot of things.
11. He has seen a door open in heaven, a throne set in heaven, the One who sat on the throne, a rainbow around the throne,

twenty-four throne, twenty-four elders on thrones, lightnings, thunderings, and voices, seven lamps of fire, a sea of glass, four living creatures, worship, a seven sealed scroll, a Lamb (5:6-7), worship and singing (5:8-14).

12. Now he sees the first six seals opened by the Lamb.
13. This covers all of chapter 6.
14. The seventh seal is not opened until chapter 8.
15. Chapter 7 deals with the sealing of the 144,000 believing Jews from the twelve tribes of Israel and the Tribulation saints who are now before the throne.
16. Before we begin our look at chapter 6 is important to ask at this point is this the day of the Lord?
17. When you read verse 17 it says, “For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”
18. Is this referring to the first 5 seals or what?
19. From a face value reading many believe it is referring to the five seals that have been previously opened by the Lamb.
20. But when you examine the verb “has come” or “is come” (AV) you see something entirely different.
21. If you want to follow-up on the information I am about to share you can get the book *The Prewrath Rapture of the Church* by Marvin Rosenthal (pp.163-170) and you can consider this information on your own. Much of what I am about to share though is not dealing particularly with a view as opposed to the information he has included in the book concerning the aorist tense verb.

22. I believe the understanding of this period hinges on the verb “has come” found in 6:17.
23. This verb is in the aorist tense in Greek.
24. And the questions that now arise refer to this aorist tense. Is this referring to the past (the 5 seals just mentioned) or the future (the 7th seal)?
25. The pretribulational view says this verse “must be interpreted as referring to an event which has already occurred and which includes the five seals that preceded it. Thus, when it says, ‘his wrath is come’ (Rev.6:17), it is covering a period of substantially more than three and one-half years and includes all the events of the seventieth week to that point in time” (Marvin Rosenthal, *The Prewrath Rapture of the Church*, pp.164-165).
26. In other words, this whole period is viewed as the period called the Day of the Lord which is a period in which God pours out His wrath on earth on unbelievers.
27. According to many Greek scholars the aorist tense can mean something entirely different than what many have imposed it to mean in 6:17.
28. John Sproule, former head of the Greek department at Grace Seminary and present dean of Capital Seminary, wrote, ‘If the verb is taken as a constative, then it speaks of past action and includes the preceding seals. If, however, it is a dramatic aorist, the tense of the verb is indecisive.’
29. In other words, it can refer either to a past action or an event still future.
30. Paul Feinberg of Trinity Evangelical Seminary, while

interacting with Robert Gundry on the Rapture issue, wrote, ‘The verb wrath in Revelation 6:17 can be an ingressive aorist expressing a condition ‘just entered’ or a dramatic aorist which functions like a future tense—that the wrath is about to begin.’

31. D.A. Carson, in his *Grammatical Fallacies*, makes this observation:

‘More than a decade ago, Frank Stagg wrote an article about ‘The Abused Aorist.’ The problem as he saw it was that competent scholars were deducing from the presence of an aorist verb that the action in question was ‘once for all’ or ‘completed.’ The problem arises in part because the aorist is often described as the punctiliar tense. Careful grammarians, of course, understand and explain that this does not mean the aorist could be used only for point actions. The aorist, after all, is well-named: it is a-orist (that is, without a place, undefined). It simply refers to the action itself without specifying whether the action is unique, repeated, ingressive, instantaneous, past, or accomplished.’

32. All these men are clearly indicating that an aorist tense can be used to express either a past action or an event that is about to occur.

33. In this regard, the comment by Gary Cohen, a Greek scholar and a staunch pretribulation rapturist, on a parallel passage in the book of Revelation is important. He wrote,

‘The announcement...’ for the marriage of the Lamb is come’ (Rev.19:7), is made after the Great Harlot is said to have been judged, and shows that the marriage is now imminent. The fact that the verb translated ‘is come’ is in the aorist cannot be allowed to push the marriage itself back into the past. The expression *elthen ho gamos...*, ‘the marriage...is

come' (v.7) is parallel to elthen he hora, 'the hour is come' (Mark 14:41). This latter saying is made by Christ speaking at Gethsemane of His impending *future* crucifixion. Thus the aorist tense of the verb erchomai, lit. 'has come,' is sometimes used in the third person to tell of an over hanging event about to occur. Its significance is precisely this here in Revelation 19:7 and it conveys the thought that the time of the marriage has now at last arrived.'

34. In Mark 14:41 the phrase "the hour has come [aorist tense]" spoken by the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane is referring to His impending crucifixion.
35. In Revelation 19:7 the equivalent phrase "the marriage of the Lamb has come [aorist]" refers to the impending wedding of the Lamb—It is about to happen; it has not yet occurred.
36. In Revelation 6:17 again the equivalent phrase "For the great day of His wrath has come [aorist]" can be demonstrated to have but one meaning: God's "Day of the Lord" wrath is impending. It is about to happen; it has not yet occurred.
37. There is no legitimate way that the phrase "The great day of His wrath has come" in the context of Revelation 6:17 can be made retroactive to include the first six seals.
38. This aorist tense verb then, according to the context of Revelation 6, then is referring to what is about to take place in chapter 8 with the opening of the 7th seal.
39. Scripture supports this understanding when you look at Joel 2:30-31 which speaks of the comic disturbance that occurs before the Day of the Lord.

Joel 2:30-31 says, "I will display wonders in the sky and on

the earth, blood, fire and columns of smoke. 31 ***The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood before*** the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.”

40. This is precisely what occurs with the opening of the 6th seal.
41. Notice what else the prophet Joel says in 3:14-15:
“Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. 15 ***The sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness.***”
42. Even the prophet Isaiah said in Isa.13:9-10 - “Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. 10 ***For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises and the moon will not shed its light.***”
43. If you were to put Rev.6:15-16 side-by-side to Isa.2:19-21 you would have an exact parallel.

Isa.2:19-21 says, “***Men will go into caves of the rocks And into holes of the ground before the terror of the LORD*** And the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble. 20 In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, 21 ***In order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs before the terror of the LORD*** and the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble.

44. That is exactly what is taking place in Revelation 6:12-17.
45. In both passages, men are said to flee to the dens and rocks

of mountains.

46. Marvin Rosenthal says, “It is clear that men flee from God’s wrath *after* the sixth seal is opened. If God’s wrath begins with the first seal, as pretribulationism normally asserts, why do men not flee from God’s wrath until after the sixth seal is opened—a considerable period of time after the wrath begins? The solution sometimes suggested is that God’s wrath started years earlier but that men did not recognize it as God’s wrath until after the sixth seal is opened. Such a strained, unsubstantiated view is not to be taken seriously by those who love and honor God’s Word. Even a cursory look at the Day of the Lord texts indicates that when God’s Day of the Lord wrath begins, the world will know it. There will be no question about it. His wrath will be awesome in its intensity. This planet will be shaken to its very foundations” (The Prewrath Rapture of the Church, p.169).
47. Before we begin to look at the six seals, let me have you look at a few other significant passages.
48. Notice in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 the chronology concerning end time events.
49. You have the rapture occurring in chapter 4:13-17 and then in chapter 5 the Day of the Lord (5:1-11).
50. Look at Matthew 24.
51. As we go through the six seals in Revelation 6, you will notice a perfect parallel in Matthew 24.
52. In Matthew 24 you find the 1st seal in vv.4-5, the 2nd seal in v.6, seals 3 and 4 in vv.7-8, seal 5 in vv.9-28 and seal 6 in vv.29-31.

53. What am I saying?
54. The rapture occurs at the end of the 6th seal prior to the Day of the Lord which begins in Revelation 8 with the opening of the 7th seal.
55. Notice Revelation 7:9-17 following the sealing of the 144,000 “of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” This is the church raptured who came out of “the great tribulation.”
56. All of this hinges on the context of the aorist tense found in 6:17 and the passages pertaining to the Day of the Lord as well as the “sign of Your coming, and the end of the age” found in Matthew 24; Mark 13; and Luke 21.
57. Now as we look at the opening of the first six seals in chapter 6, let me say a few things regarding this scroll.
58. It is first mentioned in chapter 5 as being “in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne” (v.1).
59. It was “written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals” (v.1)
60. In verse 7 Jesus takes the scroll “out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne” and now in chapter six He begins to break each seal.
61. The word “scroll” or “Book” is the Greek word biblion, which generically refers to “a small book, a scroll, or a written document.”
62. This is not a book as in the modern sense but a scroll – Chapter 6:14 uses this word when saying that the “sky receded as a scroll [biblion] when it is rolled up” (NKJV).

63. A scroll was “a roll of papyrus, leather, or parchment on which an ancient document- particularly a text of the Bible- was written (Ezra 6:2). Rolled up on a stick, a scroll was usually about 11 meters (35 feet) long-the size required, for instance, for the Book of Luke or the Book of Acts. Longer books of the Bible required two or more scrolls” (Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., Harrison, R. K., & Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary*. Rev. ed. of: *Nelson's illustrated Bible dictionary*.; Includes index. Nashville: T. Nelson).
64. “Scrolls were commonly used before the invention of the codex, or modern-style book, consisting of square pages bound together” (John MacArthur, *Revelation*, p.163).
65. Alan Johnson, who interpreted the book of Revelation in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* says, “Papyrus codices (which were like books as we know them) did not originate until the second century A.D., or perhaps the late first century (Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* 2d ed. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1964], p. 6). In ancient times, papyrus rolls were used for public and private documents. Usually the writing was on one side only--the inside part, arranged in successive vertical columns. Occasionally a scroll was written on both sides; in that case it was called an "opisthograph." Such double-sided writing was for private, nonsalable use in contrast to the usual scrolls written on only one side, which were sold (Edward Maunde Thompson, *An Introduction to Greek and Latin Paleography* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1912], pp. 49-50). In the context of chapter 5, an opisthograph would signify a scroll full of words” (p.467).
66. Luke 4:17 says, “And He was handed the book [biblion] of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened [anaputusso - to unroll] the book [biblion], He found the place where it was written” (NKJV).

67. Ezek.2:9-10 says, “Then I looked, and behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it. When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back, and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe.”
68. Robert VanKampen and Charles Cooper in their commentary on Revelation says, “The exact form of the scroll is debated. However, taken at face value several points are obvious. First, the basic book form during John’s time was the scroll. The fact that all seven seals were visible argues for a scroll. The fact that the contents of the scroll could not be known until it was opened argues for a rolled up scroll. There is no historical evidence of a sealed scroll within a sealed scroll” (Revelationcommentary.org).
69. Robert Mounce says “Admittedly the scroll is arranged in an unusual way, because as each seal is broken a portion of its content is enacted. We would not expect, however, that all the details of the vision conform to normal expectations” (Revelation, p.143).
70. Alan Johnson says, “Scrolls, or folded sheets, were sealed with wax blobs impressed with a signet ring to protect the contents or guarantee the integrity of the writing. Only the owner could open the seals and disclose the contents. Original documents were usually sealed; copies were not. Sealed documents were kept hidden while unsealed copies were made public (Rev 22:10) (TDNT, 7:941ff.)” (Revelation, The Expositors Bible Commentary, p.467).
71. As to the type of scroll some say it was a “deed or contract or a will.
72. John MacArthur says, “While Roman wills were sealed up with seven seals, this scroll is not a will but a deed or contract” (Revelation, p.163).

73. Robert L. Thomas says, “This kind of contract was known all over the Middle East in ancient times and was used by the Romans from the time of Nero on. The full contract would be written on the inner pages and sealed with seven seals. Then the content of the contract would be described briefly on the outside. All kinds of transactions were consummated this way, including marriage-contracts, rental and lease agreements, release of slaves, contract-bills, and bonds. Support also comes from Hebrew practices. The Hebrew document most closely resembling this scroll was a title-deed that was folded and signed, requiring at least three witnesses. A portion of text would be written, folded over and sealed, with a different witness signing at each fold. A larger number of witnesses meant that more importance was assigned to the document” (Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary, p.378).
74. Godet considers this scroll to be "the book of the new covenant." Others label it "the book of judgment." Walter Scott considered it "the revelation of God's purpose and counsel concerning the world." It perhaps should bear no title because it is, as Dr. Harry Ironside has suggested, the title deed to this world.
75. You will remember that when the children of Israel were going into captivity, Jeremiah was instructed to have his servant go and buy some property and to get the title deed to it, because God promised that Israel was going to be returned to the land (see Jer. 32:6-15).
76. Who holds the title deed to this earth down here? It is none other than the Lord Jesus; He alone has it. In Daniel 7:13-14 we read: “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. 14 "And to Him was given dominion,

Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.”

77. This suggests, I believe, that what is being handed over to the Lord Jesus is the title deed to this world in which you and I live. He created it, He redeemed it, and it belongs to Him” (Thru the Bible).
78. John MacArthur further adds: “Unlike other such deeds, however, it does not record the descriptive detail of what Christ will inherit, but rather how He will regain His rightful inheritance. He will do so by means of the divine judgments about to be poured out on the earth (6:1ff.). While the scroll is a scroll of doom and judgment, it is also a scroll of redemption. It tells how Christ will redeem the world from the usurper, Satan, and those men and demons who have collaborated with him” (Revelation, p.164).
79. Now as we look at chapter six, we see Jesus, referred to in verse one as “the Lamb” break each of the seals.
80. Chapter six records only the breaking of the first six seals, the seventh seal is not broken until chapter eight.
81. As Jesus “breaks the 7 seals that secure the scroll, each seal unleashes a new demonstration of God's judgment on the earth...These seal judgments include all the judgments to the end. The seventh seal contains the 7 trumpets; the seventh trumpet contains the 7 bowls” (John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible).
82. Notice verse 1 of chapter 6 as we look at *the first seal*.

I. The First Seal - False Peace (vv.1-2)

A. Its Opening (v.1a)

John sees “the Lamb” open “one of the seals” and then he hears a “voice.”

B. Its Summons (v.1b)

1. It is made by “one of the four living creatures”
2. He says “with a voice of thunder, “Come.”

As I studied these first two verses I was struck with a problem in verse 1: The NKJV and KJV says the voice of one of the four living creatures says “Come and see” after the first seal is opened. Is he talking to John or someone else?

Many commentators say that he is addressing John but further study revealed that he is speaking to the rider on the white horse.

The two words “and see” do not occur in the Revised Version, the NASB, the ESV, the NIV or NJB.

Lehman Strauss, says they should be “omitted, according to the Revised Version. The voice is not speaking to John, but rather to the rider on the white horse” (Revelation, p.155).

Marvin Vincent also says the two words “and see” should be omitted.

Leon Morris says one of the four living creatures,

“In a voice like thunder...spoke just one word,
Come” (Revelation, p.101).

C. Its Contents (v.2)

John looks with amazement. He says, “I looked, and behold.”

1. “A white horse”
2. The rider on the horse
 - a) He “had a bow” (but no arrows)
 - b) “A crown was given to him”

This is not a diademas, “royal crown” but a stephanos, “a crown won as a prize”

- c) He “went out conquering and to conquer”

He conquers with “peace.” As we will see later, it is a “false peace.”

“Some, seeing a parallel with 19:11, identify the one who sat on the white horse as Christ. But since Christ opens the sealed scroll, He cannot be the rider” (John MacArthur, Revelation, p.178).

As we already noted the rider in 6:2 is wearing a stephanos not a diademas which Christ is wearing in 19:11. Further, “unlike this rider, who carries a bow, Christ carries a sword (19:15)” (Ibid., p.178).

Who then is the rider on the white horse?

One commentator says that it cannot be the Antichrist “since the other three riders represent not individual persons but impersonal forces (war, famine; and death)” (Ibid., p.178). He says it is “best to view the first one as a force as well. That force is best defined as a worldwide peace, shattered during the second seal by the second rider (6:4). However Antichrist, as will be seen, will play a leading role in promoting this worldwide obsession with seeking peace” (Ibid., p.178).

Matthew 24:4-5 says, “And Jesus answered and said to them: ‘Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.”

Robert VanKampen says that the first seal “represents those whom Christ *permits* to go forth into the world as false Christs. Because the rider is male (he), in the singular form (meaning one), and because ‘a crown was given to him’ (the word ‘crown’ is normally symbolic of rulership, in this instance a position that is specifically given to this particular rider only, going far beyond being just another false Christ), I personally believe this rider to be ‘the’ false Christ of all false Christs, Antichrist!” (The Rapture Question Answered, p.140).

1 Thessalonians 5:3 says that before the day of the Lord commences they will be saying “‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction

comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.”

Daniel 9:27 says that the Antichrist will “confirm a covenant [treaty] with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering and on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.”

In 2 Thess.2:1-12 Paul sheds more light on this period by revealing what will happen in that day.

John MacArthur says this so called man of peace is “no real king and has no real monarch’s crown (diadema), but has won a crown from the world for his triumphant achievements leading to world peace. He will not conquer by military force, but by cunning and deceit (cf. 2 Thess.2:9-11). His conquest will be a ‘cold war’ victory, a peace won by agreement, not conflict (Dan.9:24-27). Even as the final doom of the world approaches, Antichrist will promise a golden age of peace and prosperity. In gratitude, the world will honor him and elevate him to the position of supreme leadership. But both the accolades and the peace will be short-lived” (Revelation, p.180).

II. The Second Seal - War (vv.3-4)

A. Its Opening (v.3a)

“When He [the Lamb] broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, ‘Come.’”

B. Its Summons (v.3b)

He says to the second horse “Come.”

C. Its Contents (v.4)

John now sees “another” horse.

1. “A red horse”

The NKJV says it was a “fiery red”

2. The rider on the red horse is “granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him” (v.4).

Matthew 24:6 says, “You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.

John MacArthur writes, “Men will slay one another on an unprecedented scale. Violent slaughter will become commonplace. While Scripture does not give the details, the advances in modern weaponry suggest a terrible, unimaginable holocaust” (Revelation, p.180).

“As bad as these first two seals may be, they are not a part of the end of the age—the Day of the Lord. The wrath of God is still to come” (Robert Van Kampen, *The Rapture Question Answered*,

p.141).

III. The Third Seal - Famine (vv.5-6)

A. Its Opening (v.5a)

The Lamb opens the third seal and John hears the voice of the third living creature.

B. Its Summons (v.5b)

He calls for the third horse and its rider by saying “Come.”

C. Its Contents (vv.5b-6)

1. “A black horse” (v.5b)
2. “A pair of scales in his hand” (v.5b)

A voice coming from the *midst* of the four living creature says, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine.”

- a) The “pair of scales” the rider carried in his hand “pictures the rationing that will result from the famine” (MacArthur).
- b) A “quart of wheat” “is barely enough to sustain one person for one day, while a denarius represents one day’s wages for an average worker” (MacArthur).

Robert Van Kampen writes, “The picture that is painted by John is a picture of food shortages that will accompany famine conditions in the world

when the third seal is broken. In John's day, a denarius represented a full day's wage, giving us some indication of how highly inflated food prices will be during this time.

Returning to the Olivet Discourse, we see that the next event described by Christ, following the wars and rumors of wars, 'will be famines' (Mat.24:7b). Once again this perfectly parallels His revelation to John, one account giving the reader an overview of what will occur, the other filling in the details.

Christ then continued to explain to His disciples that 'all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs' (Mat.24:8). In other words, the arrival of the false Christ or Christs (the first seal), the wars and rumors of wars (the second seal), and the famines (the third seal) are nothing compared to what follows next because 'then they will deliver you to tribulation [persecution]...[for] when you see the Abomination of Desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place...then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall' (Mat.24:9,15,21)" (The Rapture Question Answered, p.142).

CONCLUSION

1. False peace, war and famine – this is what is acted out in the first three seals opened by the Lamb.
2. This is only "the beginning of birth pangs" according to Matthew 24:8.

3. It will get worse.
4. People today think things will get better. Every year they vote for new people in office in hope of things getting better but as will be seen things have to get worse before it can get better.
5. The only way you can experience the *best* to come is to be a born-again follower of Jesus Christ who will be raptured before the Day of the Lord begins.
6. That is the only way you can be prepared for what is yet to come.
7. Next week we will look at seals four, five, and six and see what else will occur before Jesus returns for His church.
8. Let's pray.