



YES, NO AND MAYBE

1. When I have a really strange dream, I like telling people about it.
2. If we had a quiz today, I could tell you what the first 6 seals are all about.
3. The four horsemen represent four literal kings and their kingdoms.
4. Jesus talks to dead martyrs.
5. God destroys the wicked because of His wrath.

THE FIRST 6 SEALS

➤ READ Revelation 6 (NLT)

As I watched, the Lamb broke the first of the seven seals on the scroll. Then I heard one of the four living beings say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" 2 I looked up and saw a white horse standing there. Its rider carried a bow, and a crown was placed on his head. He rode out to win many battles and gain the victory.

3 When the Lamb broke the second seal, I heard the second living being say, "Come!" 4 Then another horse appeared, a red one. Its rider was given a mighty sword and the authority to take peace from the earth. And there was war and slaughter everywhere.

5 When the Lamb broke the third seal, I heard the third living being say, "Come!" I looked up and saw a black horse, and its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice from among the four living beings say, "A loaf of wheat bread or three loaves of barley will cost a day's pay. And don't waste the olive oil and wine."

7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the fourth living being say, "Come!" 8 I looked up and saw a horse whose color was pale green. Its rider was named Death, and his companion was the Grave. These two were given authority over one-fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword and famine and disease and wild animals.

9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of all who had been martyred for the word of God and for being faithful in their testimony.

10 They shouted to the Lord and said, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you judge the people who belong to this world and avenge our blood for what they have done to us?" 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them. And they were told to rest a little longer until the full number of their brothers and sisters—their fellow servants of Jesus who were to be martyred—had joined them.

12 I watched as the Lamb broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became as dark as black cloth, and the moon became as red as blood. 13 Then the stars of the sky fell to the earth like green figs falling from a tree shaken by a strong wind. 14 The sky was rolled up like a scroll, and all of the mountains and islands were moved from their places.

15 Then everyone—the kings of the earth, the rulers, the generals, the wealthy, the powerful, and every slave and free person—all hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. 16 And they cried to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. 17 For the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to survive?"

» **Vs. 2: SEAL 1: A white horse with a rider carrying a bow and wearing a trophy crown** - White was the color of victory and triumphant warriors rode white horses. This one went forth not only conquering but bent on conquest.

The expression indicates purpose. Conquest was his whole aim. We should not miss the point that the crown was given to him. He doubtless thought that his own might produced his victory. But John is sure of the sovereignty of God. The conqueror has only what God allows him to have. The bow was not a typical Roman weapon, so it points beyond the Empire.

• **War** - Many theologians see this rider as representing war in general.

DIG DEEPER



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DIG DEEPER...CONTINUED

» **Vs. 4: SEAL 2: A red horse with a rider carrying a mighty sword** - The verb *was permitted* indicates that the action of the rider is tolerated, but not approved, by Christ the Lamb. The killing of one another reinforces the idea of civil upheaval. Indeed, strife and anarchy usually follow war among nations and states as the participants adjust internally to changes made as a result of the warfare. So the red horse and its rider symbolize the bloody civil strife that follows the conquests of war brought by the rider on the white horse.

» **Vs. 5,6: SEAL 3: A black horse with a rider carrying a pair of scales** - A black horse (cf. Zech. 6:2, 6), symbolizes famine. A pair of scales is unusual equipment for a horseman. It probably refers to the weighing of bread in a famine. This horse brings famine, the natural aftermath of war and civil strife.

- **A day's pay** - Wheat was preferred; barley was cheaper and less desired. Many ancient writers explain that the quart (Greek *chonix*) was the standard daily allowance for an adult. A day's wages (Greek *dénarius*) are a good rendering for the Roman coin that was the standard daily pay for a laborer. This means that under these famine conditions food prices were so inflated—about 1000 to 1500 percent—that someone must work all day to make enough to subsist. If that person had a family, he would barely be able to feed the family on the coarsest food available. The sense of the passage seems to be that, in times of scarcity, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

» **Vs. 8: SEAL 4: A pale green horse with a rider named Death with Hades following him** - The Greek *chlōros* (from which we get our word 'chlorine') means 'yellowish green.' We should probably understand it to mean the color of a corpse. While each of the preceding riders had an emblem (a bow, a sword, scales), Death needs no such sign.

- **Fractions** - Fractions occur quite often in the judgments of Revelation and are probably not to be taken literally but as a symbol of God's mercy. The meaning is that the judgments of the riders on the horses, which culminate in death brought by the pale green horse, are terrible but are not the end. The fraction communicates that no matter how much war, civil strife, famine, and death are experienced in this world, God's mercy preserves those who overcome.

« **Why do you think it's important to God to show that the Lamb is the one opening these seals?**

The breaking of the first four seals forms a group. If the number four in Revelation often represents the world, then it is right to see these as worldwide, history-wide scourges. The four horsemen have thundered down through history and all around the globe. They will continue to wield authority only as long as Christ, who holds the key, permits.

» **Vs. 9: SEAL 5: The souls of the martyrs under the altar** - At the ancient tabernacle of the Israelites, the blood of slaughtered animals was drained at the base of the altar, with the blood representing the life (soul) of the animal (Exod. 29:12; Lev. 4:7; 17:11). Though wicked humans may kill Christians, from God's point of view their deaths are a special heavenly sacrifice.

- **White robes** - White is to be seen as the color of victory. The martyrs appeared to have been defeated by their enemies. Actually they had been given the victory by God, who says, "Enjoy blessed rest for a little while longer."

« **What does God's response to the souls under the altar tell us about God's character?**

» **Vs. 12-14: SEAL 6: Great earthquake/sun darkened/moon turned red/star fell/sky rolled back like a scroll/mountains & islands moved** - In the first century most people appear to have thought of heaven as a solid vault. John uses this conception to express the completeness of the cosmic disaster.

« **What does the sixth seal tell you about God?**

» **Vs. 16: The wrath of the Lamb** - The wrath of the Lamb, an apparent oxymoron (Barr, 1998:87), most likely describes God's action "to right every wrong, to overturn every injustice, to call a halt to all oppression" (R. Smith, 2000:35).

« **How is the wrath of the Lamb different from the wrath of evil mankind?**

» **Vs. 17: And who is able to survive?** - In no place in this section is John trying to terrify the saints. He is using familiar apocalyptic imagery to reassure them, and to give them the certainty that their God is over all. God is bringing his purposes to pass, and he will do so though it means that this world order, and indeed this whole mighty universe, pass away.

« **What does this method of destruction tell you about the character of God?**

MY PRAYER...

1. How am I navigating the 4 horsemen in my lifetime?
2. How am I aligning myself with God's people?
3. What new aspect of God's character does He want me to know?



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