

# Revelation — Chapters 6 to 8:1

## *The Seven Seals*

*An Outline of "The Revelation" — Walter Scott From The Faith and The Flock, 1910–1911*

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The Apocalyptic judgments under the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Vials are heaven-sent chastisements upon Christendom. But why are these lands to be swept by the hurricane of Divine judgment?

Apostasy has long settled down on the east. The Bible has been supplanted by the Koran, and Christ by Muhammed. Now in the west, the scene of gospel light and triumph, the dark clouds of apostate unbelief and contempt of God are settling down. Soon the west will be a vast moral ruin, and given over to Satanic rule and occupation. The flood gates of hell shall be opened (Rev. 9; 18:2), and the earth turned into a veritable pandemonium. Need we be surprised, therefore, at the increasing severity of the threefold series of judgments—comparatively light under the Seals but widespread; heavier under the Trumpets, yet not embracing such a wide sphere of operation as the earlier ones; then the Vials in which the concentrated wrath of God is poured out without mixture?

Connect the Lamb with the Seals; Angels with the Trumpets; and God directly with the Vials.

A reference to the Chart, issued with the February number, shews this section distributed into three parts: first, six Seals occupy chapter 6; second, the Seventh Seal announcing the Trumpets is noted in chapter 8:1; third, an interesting parenthetical episode of great importance forms the subject matter of chapter 7.

Further, the seven Seals are divided into two groups—four and three. Each of the four is characterized by a living creature and a horse. The living creature is the unseen power, and the horse, the instrument in effecting the providential purposes of God respecting His then government of the earth. The three remaining Seals have not this character so distinctly impressed upon them.

### ***First Seal, vv. 1, 2***

Under this Seal we witness the first great political event consequent on the removal of the Old and New Testament saints to heaven. For those therefore, who believe in the verbal or word inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, it is not without interest to note that the words “I

saw” occur twice, and that the cardinal one and not the ordinal first are characteristics of this Seal. We may also remark that the words “and see,” in vv. 1, 3, 5 and 7 should on the best of authority be omitted. These verses do not present a call to John as the retention of the words would indicate, but a call from the living creatures to the human agents to come and accomplish the providential task assigned them.

All power is of God. Every kind and character of power has its source in God. In its administration, however, the creature is responsible. The living creatures who represent the governmental and judicial action of the throne summon the human instruments and guide and move them to the divinely appointed judgment. What is the first recorded judgment ?

A conqueror, either of royal birth or of royal position, enters the prophetic scene and carries all before him in a career of triumph and victory. The white war horse on which he sits denotes victorious power. The rider is not named. Speculation as to the name of this brilliant warrior of universal fame, and from what quarter of the earth he arises, is useless and mischievous. We must respect the silence of scripture on those points. Both Psalm 45 and Rev. 19. as to time and circumstances must negate the thought entertained by many that Christ is the unnamed royal conqueror of the first Seal.

Others strongly hold the opinion that the Antichrist, who first comes upon the scene as a King, is the distinguished rider on the white horse. There is a measure of probability in this supposition, but that is all. Certainty there is not, for on the point scripture has not spoken. “A crown was given unto him” signifies that he was invested with royal dignity. “He went forth conquering and to conquer” intimates a career of unchecked and brilliant victories. The crown was given before the victorious monarch entered upon his conquests. His power, his name, and a certain prestige will no doubt greatly contribute to his wonderful success.

Immediately, or soon after the translation of the redeemed to the Father’s House, the spectacle will be witnessed of a crowned head of fame and name leading his invincible and victorious armies, making conquests of kingdoms and countries, and bearing down all opposition, more by stratagem and diplomacy than by actual warfare. Certain characteristic signs point to the providential rise of just such a personage. Unless we except the national restoration of Judah to Palestine, the first prophetic and political event of importance is the rise of the white-horsed rider and his marvelous career.

### ***Second Seal, vv. 3, 4***

“And there went out another horse that was red.” The personal witness of the Seer, “I saw,” or “I beheld” is omitted in the introduction of the second seal, but is found in all the

others. Then the words, “another horse” show that this Seal both as to time and circumstances is not independent as the others are in its character.

There is a certain connection between the two first Seals. The white and red horses stand related to each other.

The red horse denotes bloodshed. There was given to the rider on the white horse “a crown.” There was given to the rider on the red horse “a great sword.” This latter has a twofold commission entrusted to him, which he no doubt fulfils to the letter: (1) to take peace from the earth; (2) to create a time of mutual slaughter. The state of things contemplated under this Seal is not that of civilized war-nation against nation, but to the providential advent on the scene of a man of fierce and ungovernable passion—one who in every part of the prophetic earth breaks in upon the general peace and sets the peoples and inhabitants of cities, towns, and villages against each other. It will be a time of civil war. Blood! blood!!! blood!!! everywhere. Probably the time when the forces of socialism and of order come into deadly grips—for such a conflict is as sure as the sun shines in the heavens. “Kill one another” is the simple yet awful account of this scene of almost universal and mutual slaughter. May God graciously preserve our children and loved ones from ever having a part in these scenes of apostasy and bloodshed.

We Christians—all Christians—shall be caught away previous to the opening of the Seals—they are opened by the Lamb and in our presence in heaven.

### ***Third Seal, vv. 5, 6***

The various horses represent separately an aggressive power in action. The white horse signifies conquest, the red horse bloodshed, the black horse in the third seal mourning, and the pale horse in the fourth seal death.

Under the second Seal, agricultural pursuits must have largely ceased, and commercial life become paralyzed on account of the masses being engaged in deadly strife and mutual slaughter. The inevitable consequence is pointed out in the third Seal. The rider “had a pair of balances in his hand.” Bread is sold by weight and at famine prices. The necessities of life are scarcely obtainable. A famine ensues. Thousands—probably millions—will endure hunger and starvation. A general scene of lamentation and mourning in these Christian lands is intimated in the color of the horse—the aggressive power providentially and judicially employed of God for this purpose, namely, famine, starvation, and death. “And see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.” The command to spare the luxuries of the rich while dealing in judgment with the absolute necessities of life is significant. Socialism is

spreading rapidly. Class hatred is fomented, and the doctrine of public plunder of the wealthy and forcible distribution of their money and property is the open and avowed purpose of an atheistic and godless socialism. Hence the masses, the working classes who are so eagerly imbibing the “Gospel of equality”—a doctrine illogical and mischievous—are the first to suffer in the recoil sure to follow. The rich, with all others, come in for judgment under the sixth Seal.

#### ***Fourth Seal, vv. 7, 8***

Here for the first time the name of the horseman is given—Death.

The name of his attendant is also told us—Hell or Hades. Death demands the bodies of men. Hades the souls of men. These two are the respective custodians of the body and soul till the resurrection, when at the command of Christ they yield up their prisoners and are themselves destroyed, as their work is forever over (Rev. 20:13, 14).

The lake of fire takes the place of Hades. The former is eternal, the latter is temporary. It will be noticed that the fourfold judgment—sword, hunger, death, and beasts, is limited to one part of the prophetic earth—probably the worst (verse 8). These “four sore judgments” (Ezek. 24:21) are contemporaneous, not successive. The “beasts” must be understood as literal wild animals, who will flock in upon the starving inhabitants to kill and devour. What a mercy that God has limited the operation of these judgments to a fourth part of the earth—whether in Europe or Asia we cannot say.

#### ***Fifth Seal, vv. 9-11***

Each of the four Seals already briefly considered is characterized by a living creature giving the word of command to a special aggressive power. But in the three Seals to follow there is no mention of either living creatures or horses. In the four, the course of providential judgment is traced. God is not seen in them. But in the three, God’s activities—His heart in the fifth and His hand in the sixth and seventh Seals—are witnessed.

The imperial persecutions under pagan Rome, as those subsequently under the papacy, have not exhausted the wrath of the human heart against the faithful followers of the Lamb. Persecution again bursts forth. The church is in heaven during the martyrdom of saints under the fifth Seal, whose souls under the altar cry aloud for vengeance.

Probably they are Jewish sufferers. Their cry is right and in keeping with the character of the then dispensation—one of judgment. The cry of the Christian martyr is one of grace (Acts 7:60), in keeping with the present age of grace and of God’s long suffering. We

should ever breathe the spirit of the dispensation in which our lot is cast. The sacrificial word slain, not killed (verse 9), helps to the understanding that these are Jewish witnesses. Gentiles as well as Jews are contemplated in verse 11, hence the word killed, not slain, as in the earlier reference. God hears the cry, and bestows on each a white robe expressive of His approval and pleasure. But their appeal for vengeance is not immediately answered. They are to wait “a little season” till their number is augmented by a company of fellow martyrs. These latter suffer under the Beast. Both companies are subsequently seen in the separate state, “I saw the souls of them” (Rev. 20:4), also as raised, “and they lived.” What led to the fierce and Satanic outburst against these martyrs is stated—“Slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.” It is ever so, faithfulness to God and to revealed truth rouses the slumbering enmity of the human heart. Man hates God, God loves men.

### ***Sixth Seal, vv. 12-17***

The scene herein described is one of awful sublimity and of equal horror. The powers of nature are summoned to set forth a catastrophe which for magnitude and character is unequalled in the world’s history. The general idea is that of the total subversion of all governing authority—supreme and dependent. Everything deemed secure and stable on earth breaks up. Crowns are shattered, governments overturned, and every phase and character of even social order goes in the universal wreck. This is what the socialism of the day leads to—this, its goal. The effect upon all from the highest to the lowest is next shewn. It is an hour of mortal dread. There is a universal cry of terror, not to God, but to mountains and rocks to screen them from the Sitter on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. Vainly they hide themselves in cave and rock, vainly they appeal for shelter, and in their awful terror they imagine that the wrath of the Lamb has overtaken them. But that wrath is yet future, and even more awful days and times are yet to come. We gather that out of the vast political, civil and ecclesiastical system thus utterly smashed up, the Roman Empire, strong and powerful, will emerge.

It would be difficult to suppose the existence of the Empire during the state of things described under the sixth Seal.

### ***Seventh Seal, Chap. 8:1***

The opening of the seventh Seal completes the revelation of God's counsels respecting the earth. The secrets of God are disclosed and lie open to view. The immediate effect of opening this Seal is not judgment, but "silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." Trouble on earth yet silence in heaven. The throne in heaven is the source of the judgments

on earth. Silence there, means that there is a brief pause, a brief cessation of further chastisement. The seventh Seal introduces the Trumpet series of judgments, and it may be that during the brief pause in heaven the sealing of Israel (Chap. vii.) has its place.

### ***Two Parenthetic Visions, Chap. 7***

“I saw” introduces the first vision which concerns Israel (vv. 1-8). “I beheld” connects itself with the second vision, which relates to the Gentiles (vv. 9-17). Both are visions of grace. The contents of this chapter are introduced between the sixth and seventh Seals, and yet form no part of the Seals. It is a chapter without dates. The chapter anticipates the millennium. The hundred and forty-four thousand of all Israel are sealed and preserved, and must not be confounded with the hundred and forty-four thousand of Judah on Mount Sion (Chap. 14:1-3). This later company emerges out of the great tribulation, not so the former company.

Then the Seer calls attention to the blessedness of a countless multitude of Gentiles who have come out of the great tribulation.

Probably they are the same Gentiles received into millennial life at the return of the Lord in glory (Matt. 25:34). Here, however, their blessedness is more fully developed. But the chapter in its two parts and two classes of mankind presents scenes of blessedness on earth in the coming day, and not in heaven as is supposed by some. Verse 15 refers to a moral standing and position before the throne.