



REVELATION 6:9-17 STUDY GUIDE

THE SEVEN SEALS REVELATION 6-8

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THE FOUR HORSEMEN

1				6:1-2 1ST SEAL = WHITE HORSE = CONQUEST A rider holding a bow, wearing a crown and riding out as a conqueror bent on conquest.
2				6:3-4 2ND SEAL = RED HORSE = WAR A powerful rider on a fiery red horse, holding a sword and taking peace from the earth.
3				6:5-6 3RD SEAL = BLACK HORSE = FAMINE A rider on a black horse, holding a pair of scales and bringing famine (indicated by the grossly-inflated crop prices).
4				6:7-8 4TH SEAL = PALE HORSE = DEATH Death riding on a pale horse, with Hades following behind, having power over a quarter of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague and by wild beasts.
5				6:9-11 5TH SEAL = THE SOULS OF MARTYRS The souls of the martyrs calling out to God for justice, given white robes and told to wait a little longer.
6				6:12-17 6TH SEAL = CREATION UNCREATED A great earthquake strikes, the sun turns black, the moon turns red, the stars falls to earth, the heavens disappear, every mountain and island is removed. The day of the Lamb's wrath has come!
				7:1-17 PAUSE = THE REDEEMED ARE SEALED The redeemed, those whose robes are washed in the blood of the Lamb, are sealed against destruction.
7				8:1 7TH SEAL = SILENCE IN HEAVEN

We want to look at seals 5 and 6 under the theme of the persecuted church. Here's our roadmap:

- #1 – Outrage of the Persecution (Rev. 6:9)
- #2 – Outcry of the Persecuted (Rev. 6:10)
- #3 – Outcome of this Persecution (Rev. 6:11-17)

INTRO

So far—hope you agree with me!—it's been a very exciting, challenging, and encouraging book study!

As we finish up the second part of chapter 6's study guide, we have seen the great theme that Jesus Christ comes to encourage his battered, discouraged, and persecuted church.

And Revelation is full of:

- excitement,
- movement,
- action,
- symbolism,
- strong imagery,
- sounds,
- voices,
- songs,
- responses, and
- choruses.

This is a book that is multi-dimensional and full of color!

OVERVIEW

- **Vision #1 (Rev. 1-3):** We stayed on this earth and looked at what God was doing in the churches and on this earth.
- I (Darin) am taking the position that this is *not* a one-time “Great Tribulation” as most Christians today believe and have been taught.
 - Rather, these are events that were occurring in the days of the Roman Empire during the seven churches, throughout all time until now, and *are occurring now* even as we turn on the news.
 - And these will occur until Jesus returns and they climax in an ultimate judgment.
- **Vision #2 (Rev. 4-7):** We have followed John up to the throne room of God. We saw the Father sitting on throne. And we saw Jesus as the only one who can open the book of the scrolls that is sealed. The risen Savior is the only one that can handle the events of the world.
 - Now, in chapter 6, we see Jesus open seal after seal.
 - We saw last time the four horses and the horsemen and what they intended to convey.
 - In Revelation 6:1-8, we saw four truths about how God will bring tribulation upon the earth to punish rebels & purify the redeemed
 - 1. The Gospel will advance (6:1-2)
 - It is under God's control (6:1).
 - He's determined to conquer (6:2)

- 2. Wars will last until Jesus comes (6:3-4)
 - Destruction is inevitable (6:3)
 - Destruction is immense (6:4)
- 3. Famines will last until the end (6:5-6)
 - Famine is unstoppable (6:5).
 - Famine will be unbearable (6:6).
- 4. Death & Disease will be Rampant (6:7-8)
 - Death is controlled (6:7).
 - Death will be comprehensive (6:8).

SUMMARY OF THE SECOND VISION

- **BIG IDEA:** everything in this world is under the control of a sovereign God who works not according to whim -- but according to divine plan and purpose.
 - And he does so in the power and the strength of him who is the Lamb standing as it were slain in the throne room of heaven.
- **Application:** for everything that happens in this world: crazy politics, out-there weather, the ongoing persecution of Christians, and the remembrance of veterans who were killed for our freedom.
 - It is all about the:
 - Throne,
 - Book,
 - the Lamb, ... and,
 - the One who controls every detail for his final and supreme purpose and plan.
- **Bottomline:** Jesus is in control and governing all things.
 - He will make all things well for his people and His church, even if it be through persecution.
- Yet, the sword of persecution is bound to follow.

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#1 – Outrage of the Persecution (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 witness they had borne.”

- As we said with the first four seals: they are all **universal**. And this fifth seal is no different, TVBC family.
- Since our deep fall in Adam in Genesis 3 (Rom. 5:12-21) and the first announcement of the Gospel, the sword was there in paradise:

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15).

- As Adam and Eve were ushered out of paradise, the angel was put at the gate with the sword as well.
 - The battle of all ages had begun—and that battle continues to the very end.
- **Application:** Persecution is the common lot of the people of God of all generations!
 - **2 Timothy 3:16:** “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”
 - Don’t forget Cain and Abel! Cain came with a sword and killed his brother.

- **Matthew 10:34-38:**
 - *“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. 36 And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. 37 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”*
- You see, **persecution** is the common lot of the people of God, and it deserves outrage that this is so.
 - Millions upon millions of Christians throughout the ages have given their lives for naming the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and sharing the Gospel.
- Persecution = all throughout the Bible!
 - **Examples:**
 - Israel
 - Prophets
 - Godly believers in the Old and New Testament
 - Closing verses of Hebrews 11!
 - Churches in Revelation: The martyrs of Smyrna, Pergamum, and Philadelphia,
 - The martyrs under the Roman emperors,
 - The martyrs in the time of the Reformation,
 - The martyrs today.
 - **Don't forget:** In the last 100 years, more Christians have been killed than in the entire history of the world for naming the name of Jesus Christ.
 - And in our Western world, our government covers it up!
 - Our culture and the Islamic world get upset when someone draws a little cartoon about Muhammad,
 - We say we shouldn't do that and make all kinds of news.
 - But when Christians are killed in foreign lands, the media is silent.
 - Today, this is an outrage.
 - Reports are coming in from all kinds of radical Islamic and communist countries.
 - Christianity is against the law in more than two dozen countries in our world.
 - And in some, like North Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, sharing the Christian faith can be punishable by imprisonment, torture, and even death.
- And there are millions of Christians in prisons today.
 - Many more meet secretly for worship in their homes and are still oppressed by government forces and violent mobs.
- **Modern-Day Example:** A pastor-friend of mine in Turkey says that in the churches he's been privileged to establish, no more than 50% of the members dare to come even to secret underground churches.
 - He said, “Darin, pray that they will come, no matter if it means their lives.
 - They're so afraid because they don't know if the man sitting next to them in the pew is a police informant...and they'll be thrown into prison and beaten.”
- **Stats:** According to *World Mission Digest*, there are several millions of Christian martyrs in the 20th century.

- That's more than in the 19 centuries previously combined!
- And the problem is growing everywhere and it will be growing in our country as well.
- **5th Seal:** And this is what the symbolism you see in the fifth seal means!
 - Here we meet the **suffering souls** under the altar.
- **Leviticus:** Under the altar of burnt offerings, we're told in Leviticus 16:11-18 and 17:6 that when an animal was sacrificed on the altar burnt offering, the blood would be caught in a basin under the altar.
 - And that's the picture that John has in mind here.
 - He doesn't see the blood of animals under the altar in his vision.
 - But he sees the souls of men and women who've lost their lives for Christ's sake under the altar.
 - Not as their justification but as part of their sanctification.
 - He sees the lives of those who burned themselves out in the service of the Lord, who have not counted their lives dear for Christ's sake.
- **Application:** It is an outrage in this world that such people with such commitment to Jesus Christ have had to suffer in such a way.
 - Also, it calls us to examine ourselves, our lives, and our souls beneath the altar today.
 - Are we willing to put our lives on the line and to lay down our lives for Jesus Christ?
 - Christianity calls for total and entire commitment and consecration.
 - Nothing else will do and nothing less will satisfy.
 - To be a Christian means really to lay your life under the altar for Christ's sake.
 - Your life is to be a burnt offering.
 - You're to burn yourself out for the sake of Jesus Christ.
- Isn't that what Paul said in **Romans 12:1-2?**
 - *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."*
- **Questions for you:**
 - How much of your life is laid out under the altar?
 - How much sacrifice is there in your Christianity?
 - Do you deny yourself at all for the sake of Jesus Christ? How much pouring out of yourself is there for Christ?
- **Application:** In the Old Covenant, the Old Testament Israel often abused this, just as we do today.
 - It was common for worshipers to try to come.
 - God complains about that in the minor prophets, especially to come with the diseased and weak animals from the flock.
 - **Ex:** You've heard the story, no doubt, of a man who was given two calves, and he said, "I'll give one of these to the Lord."
 - And one of the calves grew sick and died.
 - He went back to his farmhouse and said to his wife, "The Lord's calf has died!"

- You see how easy that must have been under the Old Covenant to bring the stated sacrifices.
 - But then to bring the worst of your flock: weak and dying animals that you couldn't get anything at the market anyway.
 - So, folks often gave them to Lord as leftovers.
- That was sacrilege!
 - The Lord said:
 - “You were to bring Me the best of your flock.
 - You are to bring Me the first-fruits of your flock.”
- And the Lord set the pattern!
 - He gave the best he had, his own Son, for the worst he could find—sinners like you and me.
- But the question remains:
 - What are *you* giving to the Lord?
 - If he died on the cross, bearing the wrath of God for your sin, it is sacrilege for you and for me to hold anything back from him.
- And the scandal and outrage is this: that it is such people who are not living for themselves but living for Christ—whose lives are a fragrant offering, a sweet-smelling savor to God—who are the very people this world butchers, slaughters, hounds, and persecutes.

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#2 – Outcry of the Persecuted (6:10)

“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?’”

- Remember: we're in the realm of **symbolism**.
 - This is a vision, not a literal picture of heaven.
 - There's no altar in heaven any more than there's a throne as an article of furniture.
- So, it's important to remember these things so that we don't miss the proper interpretation here.
 - In heaven there's never:
 - unhappiness,
 - frustration,
 - impatience,
 - suffering, or...
 - thirst for revenge in heaven.
 - From 6:11, we see that the glorified saints are perfectly at rest, clothed in a white robe of sinlessness, happiness, and joyous acceptance.
- But if it's not a cry for revenge, then what is it?
 - It's a plea for the justice of God's holy name.
 - We need to understand Revelation 6:10 in the same way we understand the so-called “imprecatory psalms.”

- Or, the so-called cursing Psalms—the ones that wish curses on one's enemies and the Lord's enemies.
 - **Examples:** Psalms 5, 6, 11, 12, 35, 37, 40, 52, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 79, 83, 94, 137, 139, & 143
 - **Full disclosure:** Some of those cursing, imprecatory psalms are difficult to accept, aren't they? Sometimes the language is very strong.
 - But there's an outcry in those Psalms: That God would stand up and vindicate His name and His cause and put things right.
- **Application:** Likewise, this is the outcry with which we ought to plead with God for the persecuted brothers and sisters we have all around the globe today.
 - “Put things right, oh Sovereign God.”
 - And that's a biblical outcry.
- **Hebrews 12:4:** *“and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”*
 - The blood of Abel cried to God from the ground.
 - Now, we don't take that up literally, of course, because blood does not have vocal cords.
 - Blood is not able to cry out, nor are we to understand this in an evil kind of way.
 - Abel has NOT now become some kind of avenger who wants to take revenge on Cain.
 - Abel is one of the spirits made perfect at the right hand of God.
 - He's perfectly happy there.
 - There's no thirst for revenge there.
 - But what it means is this: that the blood of Abel is a crying shame.
 - There is injustice there.
 - It should never have happened from the human level.
 - And what happened to Abel will not go unnoticed.
 - It will be dealt with.
 - It will be put right in the great day.
- **Application:** Every wrong in this world will be righted one day! Praise God!
 - **Meaning of 6:10:** These glorified saints, therefore, aren't thirsty for revenge.
 - But they are yearning for God's name to be:
 - vindicated,
 - for his righteousness to be upheld, and...
 - for the wrong to be made right.

6:10 - “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?””

- **Application:** This kind of attitude ought to fill our souls as we think about our persecuted brothers and sisters.
 - We ought to have a holy anger—not of revenge—but a holy, godly jealousy for the vindication of God's holy name.

- And there ought to be a holy yearning in the heart of every Christian that God would make matters right:
 - in our souls,
 - in our families,
 - in our church,
 - in our schools,
 - in our nation, and,
 - in our world.
- We might cry out:
 - “How long, O Lord, must we go on in this world?
 - How long must we put up with injustices?
 - How long shall the wicked and the ungodly triumph?
 - How long will the baby-killing abortionist prosper?
 - How long will those who indulge in this home of sin of homosexuality prosper?
 - How long will our brothers and sisters be in prison around the globe?
 - How long before thou wilt intervene?”
- May we pray: “*Oh, come Lord Jesus, come quickly*” (Rev. 22:20).
- **Application:** Yet, honestly, when you listen to the outrage of 6:9 and the outcry of 6:10, human nature would say, “What’s the use of being a Christian at all? This is the kind of treatment that Christians get if they’re persecuted, and the wicked prosper and grow.”
 - That’s the old Asaph problem back in Psalm 73—being jealous of the wicked.
 - This is just a little season, though it may seem long to us.
 - “For with the Lord, a thousand years is one day” (2 Peter 3:8)

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#3 – Outcome of this Persecution (6:11-17)

“¹¹ 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.¹² 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,¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.¹⁴ The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.¹⁵ 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,¹⁶ 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,¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

- The sixth seal is the answer to the crying from beneath the altar of 6:10!

4 comforts from the outcry and outrage:

- **#1- Spotless robe (6:11) - Those who suffer persecution have a very bright future adorned in white robes and praising the triune God forever.**
 - They didn't deserve them.
 - They're sinners like everyone else.

- But their robes are made white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14).

The robes signify 3 things:

- **#1 - Their justification** - They're washed and made right in Christ's blood.
 - They're forever saved in Jesus AND forever acquitted by the Father.
 - Never in heaven will they sin again, be tempted to sin, or have to pay for sin.
 - It's completely done!
- **#2 - Their sanctification** - They are made white, they are purged, they are cleansed, and they are now sin-free forever in Jesus' land.
 - Perfectly holy before God as a perfect bride with a perfect bridegroom—forever cleansed.
 - Oh, if that doesn't warm your heart, my friend, to be sin-free with Jesus Christ, you are not a Christian!
- **#3 – Their victory** - White was a symbol in the ancient world of victory, just as the white of the first horse in the earlier in this chapter symbolized Christ's victory (Rev. 6:1-2).
 - **#2 – Short rest (6:11b – “rest a little longer”) –**

As if Jesus comes beside them and calmly says to them:

“My children, just leave everything up to me. You just rest for a short time. I will vindicate my righteousness. I will defend my people. I will show them divine protection. You cry out, 'How long?' I say, 'Rest.' I will make all things well. All things are in my hand. Trust me, my child.”

It's almost as if the souls under the altar are crying out:

“Lord, not more. Don't make more go through what we had to go through. Stop the suffering, Lord!”

The Lord says:

“No, my child. I know the exact number of my martyrs. My timetable is absolutely perfect. I'm never one second behind or one second ahead of my timetable in history, nor one single step out of step with my glorious purposes to glorify my Son and his church forever. Rest a while—a short while—and you will see it shall all be made well.”

- **Application:** That's true of every affliction in our lives.
 - That's true of every persecution that ever comes our way.
 - That's true of our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world.
- The Bible in Romans 8:28 when it says: “All things work together for good to them that love God.”
 - And so, it is true for the saints in glory can be absolutely satisfied in God!
- **Application:** Even as we on earth ask the question, "How long?" ... we see what's happening is Jesus is letting us as Christians here on earth see the saints there.
 - Again, almost like Jesus says: “Just a little while, my child, and I will bring you to be with me where I am.”
 - **Christian:** There will be ...
 - A little more persecution,
 - a little more disappointment,

- a little more weaning from this world,
 - a little more suffering,
 - a little more dying of yourself,
 - a little more...then...
 - we will rest forever in the Christ of everlasting glory!
- **#3 - Significant responsibility (no verse here – just some application thoughts!) –**
 - The fact that there is a rest doesn't mean that we should not do what we can to alleviate the suffering of Christians here below.
 - We have a call and we have steps to take to support our modern martyrs
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Ways to support those being persecuted here and around the world:

- **#1 - We must be informed.**
 - We must write to religious liberty advocacy groups, requesting updated information or get it on the internet on the issues of worldwide persecution.
- **#2 – We must empathize with them.**
 - We must fulfill 1 Corinthians 12:26: *"If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together."*
- **#3 - We must pray for them.**
 - **Acts 12:5** "So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church."
 - This is the most important thing we can do — to pray, country by country, in an informed way, for the persecuted.
 - And the persecuted in these countries ask us more than anything else to pray for them.
- **#4 – We are to speak of their faithfulness to the church.**
 - **2 Thessalonians 1:4** *"Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring."*
 - We can:
 - Speak of their plight to your friends and pray together for them.
 - Write letters to Christian media about their plight.
 - Speak of their injustice to the government.
 - Write your local congressmen and senators on behalf of persecuted Christians around the world.
 - Tell people that it's a double crime being committed against Christians all over the globe:
 - #1 - the crime of persecution by communists and Islamic governments and movements against Christians
 - #2 - and the crime of free nations like ours that avoid the problem out of greed for trade or out of political cowardice.
 - **#5 - We can go to them.**
 - Go to them with letters if we can't go to them in person.

- Go to them by contributing to mission groups who work among the persecuted peoples.
- **#4 - Significant responsibility (6:13-17).**
 - This shows us that there's a day coming when every wrong shall be righted and when this topsy-turvy world will be put right side up.
 - Example:
 - You know we've all heard about the sinking of the Titanic.
 - We've probably all seen man-made images of it going down.
 - And when that ship went down under the waves, we remember the prideful statement that said: "This ship will never sink!"
 - Well, all the furnishings and all the people, sadly, got churned about.
 - In the total chaos, the ship was completely turned over
 - And God is saying in the opening of the sixth seal:
 - As if God is saying: "This day is coming for the world, like the Titanic, as the world that is sinking in its sin and proudful rebellion against God."
 - **Application:** Christian—There's a day coming for this world—a glorious, solemn day—in which the whole creation is groaning and travailing (Rom. 8:21-22), waiting for this to happen.
 - A day when God will come in his omnipotent power and will touch this so all be righted.
 - So much:
 - Mountains and islands will be moved,
 - the sun will be turned to darkness,
 - the moon to blood,
 - and all the furniture of this world will be rearranged.
 - There's such a day coming!
 - The sixth seal says it will be a terrifying day for those not right with God.
 - That's why you see the symbolism is all about the:
 - dimming of the sun and the moon,
 - the falling of the stars,
 - the removal of mountains and islands,
 - the cry of the wicked for the hills to cover them,
 - the shaking of the earth,
 - the rolling up of the sky like a scroll.
 - It's all descriptive of this great 180-degree turn that is coming to this universe.
 - This powerful picture of the tremendous and terrifying upheaval that is coming on that day when God will judge the world—that man whom he has appointed (Acts 17:29-31).
 - Think about it:
 - Every power and every authority on earth and in hell will be totally confounded.

- No human language or figure of speech could more impressively depict for us the awful, total, hopeless, eternal ruin and despair as this language of Revelation 6:13-17!
- **“Wrath of the Lamb ... Great day of wrath” (6:16-17)**
 - Is there a more terrifying expression in all the Bible than this—“the wrath of the Lamb”?
 - So strong is the wrath that the following run and hide:
 - Rich men,
 - Hardened men,
 - Kings and rulers,
 - Captains,
 - Mighty men,
 - These are the ones who butchered the church and slaughtered Christians without a bit of conscience.
 - These men fear the face of the Lamb.
 - These men fear that face so much that they cry out to the mountains and to the hills and to the rocks: **“Fall on us and cover us from the wrath of the Lamb.”**
 - They are saying that there is nothing worse in all the world than to have to gaze into the face of the Lamb with a guilty conscience, an impenitent heart, and a hell-bound soul.
 - They'd rather have a nuclear holocaust of mountains, hills and islands being removed than to have to look into the face of Jesus Christ!
 - Crazy!
 - But what is it that makes his face so terrifying for the ungodly?
 - It's that they have rejected God's love and his many invitations.
 - Ex - There is nothing more painful in this world than to have a loved one hurt by you turn their face away in love against you.
 - And that's what the Day of Judgment is all about for the ungodly.
- **Application:** When we are discouraged about:
 - our nation,
 - politics,
 - sin,
 - and so many things in life
 - Ultimately, there's only one thing that matters for each of us: And that is to stand on the right side of Jesus on the great day, washed in His blood, clothed in His white robe of righteousness, and gazing upon His face without fear.
 - No more through a glass darkly, but now face-to-face in perfect, eternal, glorious and agape love.

Come, Lord Jesus, come!