

Revelation 6: The Third, Fourth and Fifth Seals

Revelation 6:5–12 | Sunday, May 3 | Revelation Series

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OVERVIEW

Hal takes the group from the third seal to the opening of the sixth. He begins by reviewing the first two horsemen and their timing, then turns to the black horse: a pair of scales, which in the Bible's symbolic use means something precious and scarce, and a whole day's wage — a denarius — for a quart of wheat. Do not touch the oil and the wine, he says, because there is always an inner circle that keeps its luxuries while the masses go without. The fourth horse he renders not pale but sickly and ashen, and its rider's name is death, with Hades joined to him: authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with famine, with plague and by the wild beasts. He checks two Greek words in this passage and reports what he found. Then the fifth seal — the souls underneath the altar asking how long, and given a white robe — and the observation that even as their slaughter unbridles God's wrath, he still holds it back so that as many as will believe may believe.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Revelation 6:1–4 — The first two horsemen reviewed: the white horse, and the red horse that takes peace from the earth

Revelation 6:5–8 — The black horse and the ashen horse — scarcity, and death and Hades over a fourth of the earth

Revelation 6:9–11 — The souls underneath the altar: how long, O Lord, holy and true?

Revelation 6:12 — The sixth seal — a great seismos, the sun black as sackcloth, the moon like blood

Revelation 7 — The number too great to be numbered, who have come out of the Great Tribulation

Revelation 20 — Blessed and holy are those who will not suffer the second death

John — The third chapter — men and women must be born again

KEY TERMS

Scales — the two-tray balance used to weigh precious things; in the Bible's symbolic use, a sign that something is precious and scarce

Denarius — the wage of a day's work for the average person — here, the price of a single quart of wheat

Ashen — a sickly, pale colour; Hal says that is how the fourth horse should be translated

Tes ges — “the lands” — the word actually used of the fourth seal's territory, rather than oikoumene, the inhabited earth

Rhomphaia — the big, long curved sword named in the fourth seal, which Hal distinguishes from the makhaira of the second

The second death — what those who have believed in Jesus Christ will not suffer — “he who is born once shall die twice, but he who is born twice shall die but once”

The white robe — given to each of the souls under the altar; Hal calls it the imputed righteousness of Christ

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Answer from the message itself. Every answer is in the teaching.

1. In the review Hal gives, what do the first two seals bring and when does each fall?

2. What does the scale in the hand of the third rider tell you before a word is said about prices?

3. What do the prices in the third seal mean in ordinary terms?

4. What does “do not touch the oil and the wine” mean, in Hal’s reading?

5. How should the colour of the fourth horse be translated, and what are the rider’s names?

6. What two Greek words does Hal check in the fourth seal, and what did he expect?

7. By what four means do people die under the fourth seal?

8. What population figures does Hal recite, and what is his point?

9. Why does Hal expect plague to follow famine?

10. How does Hal explain death by wild beasts?

11. Who is under the altar at the fifth seal, what do they ask, and what are they given and told?

12. What historical pattern does Hal point to alongside the fifth seal, and what does he say God is still doing?
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DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. A day's wage for a quart of wheat. What would it change about your week if food took everything you earned?

2. Hal says there is always an inner circle that keeps the oil and the wine. Where do you see that pattern now, and what does it do to people who are outside it?

3. The rider's name is death, and Hades is joined to him. Hal says death should hold no fear for a believer. Is that true of you, and what would it take for it to be?

4. "He who is born once shall die twice, but he who is born twice shall die but once." What does that saying settle, and what does it leave open?

5. The souls under the altar are told to wait until a number is completed. How do you sit with an answer that is real but not yet?

6. Hal says the people you talk to now will remember what you said when they see these things happen. Who is that person for you, and what is worth saying to them?

MEMORY VERSE

"When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar, the souls of those who had been slain because of the Word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained."

— Revelation 6:9, as Hal reads it in this message