## Some important notes to begin with:

***1) The meaning of “Apocalypse”:*** (a) The Greek / Latin word = “a revelation, an uncovering”; (b) The ‘official’ title of the last book of the Bible in the Latin Vulgate translation (and probably in “Catholic” Bibles) [e.g., “the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” are the riders revealed by the Lamb as He opens the first four seals in Revelation (“Apocalypse”) Chapter 6]; (c) by derivation and in popular culture, any account of widespread catastrophe indicative of the end of the world [e.g., “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” and “Apocalypse Now” – movies; so-called “zombie apocalypse”, etc.).

***2) The Most Important Person in Chapter 6:*** The Lamb, who opens the seals

***3) The Second Most Important Persons in Chapter 6:*** The martyrs under the altar of incense (5th seal), and the unbelievers cowering in terror (6th seal)

***4) The Least Important Persons in Chapter 6:*** The four riders released by the Lamb

**Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 provides the key to understanding all six of these Seals, but Seals #5 and #6 in particular** (and the intersection of Revelation, Preaching and Evangelism!):

**16**”This [outpouring of the Holy Spirit] is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

**17**“‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.
**18**Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.
**19**I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.
**20**The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood
     before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.
**21**And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Seals # 5-6****Verses 9-17****The pattern** | **The Lamb opens the seal** | **The scene** | **The people** | **Their cry** | **Their relief** |
| **Seal # 5****verses 9-11** | The Lamb opens the seal | Under the altar (of incense)? | Witnesses unto death | “How long, o Lord”? | A white robe; the promise that others will join them |
| **Seal # 6****verses 12-17** | The Lamb opens the seal | Cataclysmic disasters (v.12-13)Joel 2:28-32 | All classes of people | “Where can we hide from the wrath of the Lamb?”Hosea 10:8 | None (but see Acts 2:19-21) |

In “the great and terrible day of the Lord” (Joel), although they won’t escape the disasters befalling the entire world, believers still may find refuge under the altar of God, much as birds find shelter under the wings of their mother (Psalm 61:4) or as we might find shelter in our Mighty Fortress (Psalm 46; see also the hymn “A Mighty Fortress”), because as Peter quoted “And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Acts 2: 21) How can we be confident that this is so? We’ve covered all of this in Revelation 1-5!

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 A mighty fortress is our God, A trusty shield and weapon;He helps us free from ev’ry need That hath us now o’ertaken.The old evil foeNow means deadly woe; Deep guile and great might Are his dread arms in fight;On earth is not his equal. | 3 Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us,We tremble not, we fear no ill; They shall not overpow’r us.This world’s prince may stillScowl fierce as he will, He can harm us none. He’s judged; the deed is done;One little word can fell him. | 4 The Word they still shall let remain Nor any thanks have for it;He’s by our side upon the plain With His good gifts and Spirit.And take they our life,Goods, fame, child, and wife, Though these all be gone, Our vict’ry has been won;The Kingdom ours remaineth. |

In the meantime, those who are not believers, no matter what their class or station in life, will find that there is no place for them to hide in “the great and terrible day of the Lord.” No mountain will give them refuge, no cave will give them shelter.

But when these unbelievers are in this state of terror, believers have the opportunity to say to them, “come and take refuge with us under the altar of the Lord.” This is evangelism.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Seals # 1-4****verses 1-8****The pattern** | **The Lamb opens the seal; one of the 4 living creatures summons the rider** | **The horse’s color** | **The symbol the rider has been given\*** | **The power the rider has been given\*** | **The name of the rider** |
|  |  | Note – although the horses’ colors seem to be theirs by nature, the riders do not seem to have their symbols or power by right or by claim; they have been given their symbols and power by someone else – presumably, the One who opens the seals (see Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43) |
| **Seal # 2** **verses 3-4** | The Lamb opens the seal; one of the 4 living creatures summons the rider | **Red** (πυρρός)- the color of fire | **A large sword** | **Power to remove peace and make people kill each other**  | **“Destruction”?****“War”? (civil or otherwise)** |
| **Seal # 3****verses 5-6** | **Black** (μέλας) – the color of  | **A pair of scales** | **He can manipulate economies** | **“Famine”?****“Oppression”?****“Manipulation”?** |
| **Seal # 4****verses 7-8** | **Greenish** (χλωρός) – the color of new plants or pus | **Hades is his sidekick** | **Power to kill by sword, famine, plague and wild beasts** | **Death (v. 8) – the only one named in the text** |
| **Seal # 1****verses 1-2** | **White** (λευκός) – like the warhorses of the Caesars | A bow and a crown | He is bent on conquest | “Conquest”?“Victory”?“Pestilence”?“Tyranny”? |
| The following scheme provides an alternative interpretation, with Horseman #1 identified as Christ.1 |
| **Seals 2-4 as above** |
| **Seal # 1****Verses 1-2** | The Lamb opens the seal; one of the 4 living creatures summons the rider | **White** see Revelation 19:11-12 => | (Rev. 19:11-12 -Many crowns; His robed is dipped in blood) | (Rev. 19:11-12 -With justice he judges) | (Rev. 19:11-12 His name is Faithful and True; he also has a secret name) |

1 Supporters of this idea include Irenaeus (2nd century A.D.), Lenski, and Sweet; Mounce suggests Horseman #1 might be an angel; Franzmann suggests he is an “Antichrist” – “both imitator and opponent of the Christ.”