



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Revelation

Chapter 6

His Grace Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- In this chapter and up to chapter twenty we find the practical execution of God's work with His people, the opposition of Satan to God's children, and the chastisement of the wicked for their repentance
- For this reason the Apostle mentions three successive series each consists of seven parts
 - 1- Seven seals
 - 2- Seven trumpets
 - 3- Seven bowls
- In this Chapter the Lamb opens six of the seven seals
- The 7th seal will not be broken until chapter 8 and is connected to the 7 trumpets



Introduction

The chapter may be divided into:

- The Suffering Church (under the care of the horsemen)
 - First Seal: The Conqueror 1-2
 - Second Seal: Conflict on Earth 3-4
 - Third Seal: Scarcity on Earth 5-6
 - Fourth Seal: Widespread Death on Earth 7-8
- Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs; The Church in Paradise (under the altar) 9-11
- Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom of the Church to Judge the wicked 12-17



First Seal: The Conqueror 6:1-2

- Seals are symbol of things hidden from mankind and express events to be fulfilled
- The first four seals are about events, which will take place here on earth, from the ascension of Christ until His second coming
- The other three seals are of heavenly scenes
- By *the Lamb* he means Christ, the Lamb mentioned in Revelation 5:1-14
- *the Lamb opened one of the seals*, That is Jesus Christ is the only One who has the right and can reveal what He wants to reveal to His creation

First Seal: The Conqueror 6:1-2



- *one of the seals* , mentioned in Revelation 5:1, that were set upon the book which John saw in the right hand of God the Father, given to Christ, Revelation 5:7
- *one of the four living creatures* , The particular one is not mentioned, though what is said in the subsequent verses leaves no doubt that it was the first in order as seen by John - the one like a lion, Revelation 4:7
- In the opening of the three following seals, it is expressly said that it was the second, the third, and the fourth of the living creatures that drew near, and hence the conclusion is certain that the one here referred to was the first



First Seal: The Conqueror 6:1-2

- *with a voice like thunder*, Voice very loud and echoing, exciting the attention of John
- Also *thunder* points to “***the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.***” (Revelation 5:5)
- *Come and see* - Attend to what is about to be exhibited
- It is very likely that all was exhibited before his eyes as in a scene, and he saw every act represented which was to take place, and all the persons and things



First Seal: The Conqueror 6:1-2

- The Groom opened the first seal, and the Apostle heard the first Living Creature who is like a lion, roaring as thunder saying, "*Come and see*" *The Lamb Himself came out as a horseman sitting on a white horse, "conquering"* by nature, for He bears no defeat at all
- *A white horse* - Represent the Gospel system, and pointing out its excellence and swiftness
- *white* being the symbol of victory
- *white* is also the symbol of peace and purity

First Seal: The Conqueror 6:1-2



- The two martyrs Ignatius and Polycarb, and Pope Dionysius agreed that the white horse is the group of prophets and preachers of the Good News, carrying the Person of the Lord, conquering over the forces of darkness through Him
- They compare the horse to their courage, their fearlessness of death (Zechariah 10:3), and their total obedience to their horseman
- In addition, several of the Church fathers, such as Bishop Irenaeus (m. 202 AD) in his book *Against Heresies* and Bishop Victorinus of Pettau in his *Commentary of the Apocalypse of John*, agreed and do identify this first horse and rider with Christ and with the victory of the Gospel which must be preached first before the judgments are given on the earth



First Seal: The Conqueror 6:1-2

- See Revelation 19:11-16 *" Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war... His name is called The Word of God ... and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."*
- The rider in this passage in chapter 19 is clearly Christ the victorious judge
- He is called by the same title in Revelation 3:14 in the letter to Laodicea: *".. These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God,.."*



First Seal: The Conqueror 6:1-2

- Then he began describing the rider of the white horse
- *Had a bow* - represent His influence
- So, as the bow is used in wars, our Lord uses His living word as a bow in the war against evil
- *“Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies; The peoples fall under You”* (Psalm 45:5)
- It is the preaching of the Gospel, darting conviction into the hearts of sinners
- In Habakkuk 3:8-9 we see God coming in judgment is riding on horses against His enemies and is armed with a Bow



First Seal: The Conqueror 6:1-2

- *A crown*, is the crown of triumph
- *a crown was given to him*, by God the Father; expressive of Christ's royal power and authority, of his honor and dignity, and of his victories and conquests
- *he went out conquering*, He defeated death by death and was risen from the dead
- He conquered through His disciples, “*Where their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world.*” (Psalm 19:3-4)



First Seal: The Conqueror 6:1-2

- But although he already has victory, he is still conquering *And to conquer, for...* He conquers by Himself in His Church and in His children
- For through Him we conquer Satan, and Christ conquers through us, *“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Corinthians 15:57)
- Any of our victories is related to Him, for it is fulfilled by Him and on His account



First Seal: The Conqueror 6:1-2

- *to conquer, the victory is His to the end, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Matthew 28:18)*
- *“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” (Daniel 2:44)*
- *“And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:33)*

Second Seal: Conflict on Earth 6:3-4



- The Lamb *opened the second seal*, To reveal another portion of the scroll
- John is again was commanded, and this time by the *second living creature*, which had the face of a calf or an ox, to *come and see*
- It is like an ox reminding us of the most important sacrifice that was offered in the Temple in the Old Testament as the believers will also offer their lives as an acceptable sacrifice to God
- After the scene of the first horse which was very peaceful, came the scene of the second horse very troubling and disturbing

Second Seal: Conflict on Earth 6:3-4



- As the white horse denoted prosperity, triumph, and happiness, so this would denote massacre, conflict, dispute, and bloodshed
- His color is red - signifies war; also signifies severe persecution, and the martyrdom of the saints
- *the one who sat on it* , It is the author of evil who *was given a great sword*, a great power
- *it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace*, The peace and tranquility which existed before, were now taken away, and were succeeded by confusion and bloodshed

Second Seal: Conflict on Earth 6:3-4



- The church will suffer persecutions and there will be wars between nations for several generations
- It is in accordance to what the Lord told us in Matthew 24 and represent the different persecution ages where many Christians were martyred
- *was given*, although Satan inspires evil deeds and people act upon it, but God is the One who allow anything to happen and give the permission

Second Seal: Conflict on Earth 6:3-4



- The sword directed against the saints of God is, by God's providence, converted into an instrument for the refining and conversion of His kingdom
- As in the death of Christ, Satan was foiled with his own weapon, and by death came life, so what is intended by the enemies of God to be the extermination of Christianity is the means of increasing and strengthening His Church



Third Seal: Scarcity on Earth 6:5-6

- *the third living creature* , That which had the face of a man
- The Black horse, black color denoting mourning and woe, darkness and ignorance; and also famines (Mark 13:8)
- Satan has failed in his war against the believers through persecution and martyrdom
- He changed his way and began spreading heresies
- This is why the *black horse* comes after the *red horse*



Third Seal: Scarcity on Earth 6:5-6

- And because heresies exist as an outcome of human wisdom and pride, the *black horse* here is represented by the living creature which has the face of a man
- *pair of scales* , an indication of the severe drought, to show that the scarcity would be such, that every person must be put under an allowance; the necessities of life should be at excessive prices
- It imply that men should eat their bread by weight, and drink their water by measure, or that there should be a great scarcity



Third Seal: Scarcity on Earth 6:5-6

- As Ezekiel prophesized saying, *“Moreover He said to me, “on of man, surely I will cut off the supply of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and shall drink water by measure and with dread,”* (Ezekiel 4:16)
- Bishop Victorianus thinks that this famine is a true fact happening in the time of the "Antichrist," for disciplinary reasons
- Despite the curse on the crops, the angel/rider is forbidden to touch the *oil and the wine*



Third Seal: Scarcity on Earth 6:5-6

- He cannot deprive the church from her joy and love, *the wine*; or the work of the Holy Spirit, *the oil*
- The oil and wine, both used in the rites of the Church (James 5:14-15; 1 Corinthians 11:25), may indicate that God's messengers of destruction are kept from harming the righteous
- Scripture often describes God's blessings upon the righteous in terms of oil and wine (Psalm 104:15)

Fourth Seal: Widespread Death on Earth 6:7-8



- The fourth living creature, who was "like a flying eagle," introduces this seal because the heresy is about denying Christ's divinity
- The fourth seal is the darkest and most terrible
- Forms of death, war and famine, were revealed in the earlier seals; now the great King of Terrors himself appears, and in his hand are gathered all forms of death
- The seal, therefore, gathers up into one all the awfulness of the past seals

Fourth Seal: Widespread Death on Earth 6:7-8



- It is the central seal, and it is the darkest
- The color *pale*, or livid, is that deadly greenish hue, which is the unmistakable token of the approach of death
- The word in Greek translates as 'green.'
- As Ibn-el-Assal says, that it is the angel of the impostor's state, or the angel of death
- His rider is death and hell

Fourth Seal: Widespread Death on Earth 6:7-8



- The green horse implies a very dangerous heresy and because of its seriousness it is called death
- Death is not only its name but the destiny of his followers
- *Hades* implies the place where the power of evil reside
- The meaning is that the destiny of whoever accept and believe this heresy is death
- He will use all kind of available ways and means to resist the children of God and, *to kill with sword, with hunger, with death*

Fourth Seal: Widespread Death on Earth 6:7-8



- *the beasts of the earth*, his followers
- He used the word *beasts* to imply their cruelty and brutality
- The Lord Himself says, “*For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.*” (Matthew 24:24)
- *a fourth of the earth*, God’s mercies would not allow the heresy of this deceiver to spread more than that

Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs 6:9-11



- After the Lord had revealed to His Church, through the first four seals what He allows her to suffer from: the Jews, the Gentiles, the heretics and the impostors, it was necessary for Him to reveal to her the state of the departed believers and the witnesses of the truth
- There is no living creatures nor any other being to introduce this seal, nor does there appear to be any new event predicted; but the whole is intended to comfort the followers of God under their persecutions, and to encourage them to bear up under their distresses

Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs 6:9-11



Who are they?

- *those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held*
- It is enough for them, to be counted as witnesses to the word of God
- They carried His sufferings and accepted to bear His cross
- Tertullian says that when John was in the Spirit, he saw clearly the souls of the martyrs, and he was sure that they got to know each other in Paradise

Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs 6:9-11



Where are they?

- *under the altar*
- Which means the martyrs are very close to God
- They are in Paradise, they did not go yet to the eternal glories, in its perfection and completeness
- They see the true Sacrifice through Paradise, as they enjoy the Crucified Christ and they offer Him sacrifices of thanks and praise
- The martyr Justin says, “I consider praise and thanksgiving offered by considerable persons as alone, the complete and acceptable sacrifices to God.”

Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs 6:9-11



- *they cried with a loud voice*, That is, their blood, like that of Abel Genesis 4:10, cried for revenge; for we are not to suppose that there was any thing like a revengeful spirit in those happy and holy souls who had shed their blood for the testimony of Jesus
- We sometimes say Blood cries for blood; that is, in the order of Divine justice, every murderer, and every murdering persecutor, shall be punished
- The imagery in verse 9 is taken from the Old Covenant sacrifices in which the blood of the slain victim was applied to the sides of the altar and streamed down the sides to form a pool of blood around the base (Leviticus 1:5,11, 3:8,13)

Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs 6:9-11



- Leviticus 17:11 tells us that the soul of the flesh is in the blood, and St. Paul uses an imagery similar to Revelation 6:10 when he writes: *"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering"...* (2 Timothy 4:6)
- The blood of the animals in the old sacrificial system was poured out of bowls/chalices onto the altar, ran in streams down the side and formed into a pool around the base of the altar so that their life-force was "beneath the altar."
- In this passage the death of these holy victims has been a most acceptable sacrifice to God

Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs 6:9-11



- *How long* —Greek, "Until when?"
- It is a standard phrase throughout the Bible for appealing to God's divine justice for the oppressed and persecuted (Psalm 6:3, 13:1-2, 35:17, 74:10, 79:5, 80:4, 89:46, 90:13, 94:3-4; Habakkuk 1:2, 2:6)
- After the Four Horsemen have been sent out on their mission, the martyrs ask how long God will withhold His judgment
- So the saints in God's presence in Paradise intercede on behalf of those who are still here on earth and cry day and night to God, who will assuredly, in His own time, avenge His and their cause

Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs 6:9-11



- They are like the widow who asked the judge to avenge her on her adversary, Luke 18:3
- After telling this story Jesus said in Luke 18:6-7
- *“Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. ⁷ And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?”*

Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs 6:9-11



- Each of them was given a *white robe*
- The white robes, the shiny apparel of the saints, Revelation 3:4-5, shall be theirs; each shall receive it
- They are robes of righteousness, Revelation 19:8; they are robes of honor, Revelation 4:4, for those who wear them are like God, seeing Him as He is, reflecting His image; they are acknowledged to be His, as they have acknowledged Him to be their God
- It is a token of their justification, and favorable acceptance with God; of their victory and triumph over death, their joy and glory
- Persecuted on earth, they are honored in heaven

Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs 6:9-11



- They are to *rest*
- This does not mean that they are to cease their cry for revenge
- They are to rest, as the souls of the faithful after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, in joy and felicity
- This rest is yet a waiting for a little while till fellow-servants and fellow-sufferers have achieved their work also
- He asked them to be patient for a while till judgment day
- St. Cyprian says; it is also appropriate for the militants on earth to be patient with the wicked, until judgment day

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- At the opening of the fifth seal we saw the souls of the victorious ones those who chose to die for Christ and carry His cross
- And with the sixth seal we see the destiny of those who chose to deny Christ and love the world which is seen here unstable and shaken by earthquakes
- The fifth seal reflects the image of a merciful Lord who comfort His beloved children
- The sixth seal reflects God's anger because of sin and heresies

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- The seals follow the lines laid down by our Lord in Matthew 24
- There He tells His disciples that wars (Revelation 6:6), famines and epidemics of diseases (Revelation 6:7), and persecutions (Revelation 6:9) are to be expected; these are necessary features in the history of the world
- But these features are described by our Master as preliminary to His Coming and the end of the world (Matthew 24:3), and that when these had shaped their work then the Coming of the Son of Man would take place (Matthew 24:29-31)

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- With this guide, it is impossible for us to deny that the opening of this sixth seal has reference to the Coming of the Son of Man, and finds its final and ultimate fulfillment in the day when He will come to gather His elect from the four winds
- His strong anger appears in the revolt of nature itself before His coming
- God's judgments and the outcome of His presence as judge over a sinful, unrepentant world are spoken of in Biblical prophecy as de-creation, the total collapse and the ripping apart of creation

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- This is explained by Tertullian, as he says, “It becomes as nothing, together with the earth which was created with it in the beginning, *‘Heaven and earth will pass away’* (Matthew 24:35), *‘for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away’* (Revelation 21:1). *‘And there was found no place for them’* (Revelation 20:11), as they come to an end.”
- As Ibn-el-Assal and many of the early Fathers, such as St. Augustine, say, that these events are accomplished in the period post Antichrist and during his misleading (three and half years), and immediately after him...and all that for discipline, so that the believers do not deviate



Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17

- These are true and actual events, of which the Holy Bible prophesied in more than one place
 - 1) Earthquakes: Psalm 18:7,15, 60:2; Isaiah 13:9-14, 24:19-20; Nahum 1:5
 - 2) Eclipse of the sun: Joel 2:10,31, 3:15; Amos 8:9; Micah 3:6
 - 3) The moon became like blood: Job 25:5; Isaiah 13:10, 24:23; Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 2:10,31

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- However, there is a symbolic meaning too to these events
- Bishop Victorianus, in association with St. Augustine and others, consider another interpretation which completes but does not replace the first one. It says that these events, will in fact be accomplished in the period before the advent of the Lord. But it will also be fulfilled in a symbolic way, in the time of the Antichrist before the Lord's coming.

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- Earthquakes imply that the faith of many will be shaken
- *The sun became black*, The sun is the source of light during the day, when it becomes black then the world will live in total darkness
- Darkness will cover the world because of wrong teaching and heresies
- These false teachings will become like *sackcloth of hair* which block the sun and its light, so people could not see the true teaching, meaning they will not know Christ

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- Bishop Victorianus says, “The sun darkens as sackcloth; that is to say the brightness of the teaching becomes obscure, because of the unbelievers”
- The Moon symbolizes the Church as we read in Song of Solomon 6:10 “*Fair as the moon*”
- Therefore, *the moon became like blood*, implies that many of church members will be martyred
- St. Augustine says, that the moon or the Church becomes as blood, because of the shedding of blood which occurs to her children, by the hand of the Antichrist and his followers.

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- It is interesting that a “parable of the fig-tree” follows in Matthew 24:32, immediately after the *“fall of the stars.”*
- But this image is taken from Isaiah 34:4, *“All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; All their host shall fall down As the leaf falls from the vine, And as fruit falling from a fig tree.”*
- Stars, in the Scriptures, are symbols of princes and rulers (Daniel 8:10; Revelation 8:10-11, 9:1); and the natural meaning of this symbol is, that there would be commotions which would unsettle princes, and bring them down from their thrones - like stars falling from the sky

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- Bishop Victorianus says, “The stars will fall down, i.e. some will depart from the Church because of the great tribulation.”
- St. Augustine says, “The falling of the stars to the earth is an indication of the great number of apostate, and the falling of the believers, who were as stars in the Church”

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- The sky vanishing like a Scroll rolled up:
- Isaiah 34:4, *“All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll”*
- Isaiah 51:6, *“For the heavens will vanish away like smoke”*
- Psalm 102:25-26, *“Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. ²⁶ They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed”*
- It implies that heaven was separated from earth and the way to heaven is no longer easy as before



Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17

- *every mountain*, a symbol of great kingdom and great nations
- Imply people in power and authorities and also everyone will be affected: Job 9:5-6, 14:18-19, 28:9-11; Isaiah 41:5, 15-16; Ezekiel 38:20; Nahum 1:4-8; Zephaniah 2:11
- *and island*, implies heathen temples
- All sorts of people shall be destroyed, or all the pagan religion shall be rooted out

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- The destruction will include all classes of men
- Who is able to stand?
- In the list of the great ones here we may notice the descending order—kings, great men, rich men generals,, strong men, bond and free men
- The terror strikes into every class
- Who have relied upon wealth, rank, or power, have prepared themselves against one form of trial, but find themselves unarmed in the day of spiritual testing

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- All hid themselves and they were astonished at the total overthrow of the heathen empire, and the revolution which had then taken place
- Again, as in verses 12-14, the account is sevenfold; thus denoting the universality and completeness of the extent of the judgment (Revelation 1:4, 5:1)

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- *“Fall on us and hide us ,* They preferred any kind of death to that which they apprehended from this most awful revolution
- They now saw that all these terrible judgments came from the Almighty; and that Christ, the author of Christianity, was now judging, condemning, and destroying them for their cruel persecutions of His followers
- It seems clear that the Father as well as the Son will be specially present and specially revealed in the judgment
- These are words of those who despair of escape

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- Of the cause of this despair there are two arguments:
- The presence of God and the Lamb provoked to wrath against the world
- And the awareness of their own weakness, feeling that they are not able to survive the day of the wrath of God Revelation 6:17 as it is said in Isaiah 14:27, *“For the LORD of hosts has purposed, And who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, And who will turn it back?”*
- *the great day of His wrath has come*, The decisive and manifest time in which he will execute judgment on the oppressors of His people

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- No might can prevail against the might of God
- Thus the sixth seal brings us to the verge of the Lord's coming
- The ungodly "tribes of the earth" tremble at the signs of His immediate approach
- God's wrath with the wicked is the assurance of His mercy and love for the righteous

Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17



- St. Augustine sees that these events are actually real, but they may represent what will happen to the state of the Antichrist, that is devastation before the coming of the Lord, to motivate people to repentance
- As an example: the earthquake indicates the shaking of the kingdom of Satan, the destruction of the state of the impostor and fear in the heart of his followers
- For the Lord says, *"I will shake heaven and earth I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms"* (Haggai 2:21-22)



Sixth Seal: The Coming of the Groom to Judge the Wicked 6:12-17

- Also the removing of every mountain and island is an indication of the falling of the giants and the great, and their loss of power, reputation and wealth
- They will escape, but where to go from the face of the Lamb?
- They will cry in front of His solemnity, and *"say to the mountains, "Cover us." And to the hills, "Fall on us!"* (Hosea 10:8)
- *"Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, And the rocks are thrown down by Him."* (Nahum 1:6)
- *who is able to stand?*, Chapter six ends with this question and we will hear the answer in Chapter seven



Discussion

- What is the significance of “*seven seals*”? What similarities did you observe in the first four seals? How are the fifth and sixth seals distinct?
- Who opens all of the seals? Who gives these horses and riders their authority? What biblical principle does this teach?
- What does each horse represent?
- How do you understand the phrase, “*conquering and to conquer?*”



Discussion

- What do you make of the phrase, “*Do not harm the oil and the wine*”?
- Why are the martyrs “*underneath*” the altar?
- Why does God allow His loved ones to be persecuted? Is all the pain in our lives God’s will? How would you respond if a skeptic asked you this question?
- What groups of people constitute the seven classes of society? Why does John include this list?