

Revelation as Trilogy
The Fellowship of the King
Chapter 6: Chaos Unleashed

Introduction: Every good hero story needs action that causes the reader/listener to experience a growing sense of dis-ease. This is where we find ourselves in this chapter. The action will grow by the unveiling of the “sevens.” We will have seven seals, then seven trumpets, and then ultimately seven bowls. Each of these series of sevens brings forth a variety of judgments upon the earth. Each series increases the fear of what the future holds. In this first series we have the famous four horsemen. These are not new to the Jewish readers and can be found in Zechariah 1:8-11 and 6:1-8. These horses and their riders are in place to patrol the earth for God. But now these horsemen are being commanded by God to move from patrolling to bringing misery on the earth in payment for the sins of humanity. Notice carefully that God does not send these horses and riders, but instead allows them to dish out the well-earned punishments. One other note is that we are returning from heaven to earth, to the world in which the readers live.

The Story: The chapter begins with the opening of the first four seals, each one of which calls forth a horse and rider. These horses and riders represent an ever-increasing level of disaster, destruction and death. The white horse and rider, while sometimes being associated with Jesus, is more than likely representative of a generic conquering king, pretending to be a savior, yet in reality is an oppressor. The second horse and rider are red. This pair represents the red blood of slaughter that occurs when nations come to blows. This would have been a familiar sight to any in the Roman Empire. The third horse and rider are black. They represent the pall of death that begins to descend like night over a land. We see this in the description of the ever-increasing cost of food (a quart of wheat for day’s pay and three quarts of barley for a day’s pay). The final horse and rider are pale green. This is the color of corpses, which makes sense because this pair are given the ability to “kill with the sword, famine and pestilence, and by the wild animals...” Again, the identity of any of these pairs of horse and riders is not important. What matters is that they represent the increasing level of disaster that flows from conquest and war.

What we encounter with the opening of the fifth seal are the consequences, both negative and positive of this increasing level of violence, destruction and death. The negative consequence is that many of the followers of the Lamb/Jesus lose their lives. We see this in the souls that are under the altar in the throne room of God in heaven. Even though they are in the presence of God they are crying out wondering how long this process of death and destruction will last. “Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of earth?” As a reward for their faithfulness they are given white robes.

The sixth seal increases the intensity of the disaster for humanity by unleashing chaos on the world, as represented by the sun becoming black, the moon like blood, stars falling from the sky, the sky rolling up and mountains being moved. It is as if God has withdrawn from the world allowing creation to revert to its primordial chaos. This brings about such terror that all people, rich and poor, kings and slaves, all are petrified at this sudden change of events, crying out, “Who can stand.”

Reflection: this chapter should resonate with any person who has witnessed the march from peace to war. This process unleashes chaos, death and destruction. It is as if God has taken a break from being in charge and allowed humanity to destroy itself. In the process the non-combatants are those who pay the greatest price. Or in the case of the original readers of this text, it reminds them of the deaths of their brothers and sisters in Christ at the hands of the Empire.

Questions:

1. Where have you watched this process of moving from peace to war?
2. What emotions has this process raised in you?
3. What are the consequences of the world for this process?