

TTB - Revelation 1-6

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Dr. Nicole Massie Martin says, “Revelation is like a Quentin Tarantino movie: If you get caught up in the blood and gore you will have trouble, but if you look at the overall story you’ll understand it a lot more.”

What is Apocalyptic Literature?

- The book of Revelation gets its name from the first word in the Greek, Ἀποκάλυψις (*apokalypsis*), which means an “unveiling” or “revelation”
- Revelation is part of a long tradition of apocalyptic literature. This unique genre of writing shows what’s happening behind the veil of ordinary events, assuring the faithful that God is on the throne, that a day of reckoning awaits the wicked, and reward awaits the righteous.
- This was a common style of literature in the late First Temple period and especially throughout the Second Temple period.
 - Examples include **Daniel** and **1 Enoch**. Even Ezekiel has some of these elements.
- **[SLIDE]** Core features of the apocalyptic genre:
 - A **heavenly tour** led by an **angelic guide** who shows scenes and often explains their meaning (“Do you know what it means?”).
 - The seer experiences an **ascension/vision/dream**—an altered state (e.g., fasting)—and is taken through heavenly realms.
 - Frequent **throne-room worship** scenes with angels and liturgy.
 - Often presents history as a **war between good and evil** culminating in a final showdown.
 - Tends to unfold in **sequences of mounting calamities** (“first this, then that...”), echoing the **ten plagues** motif.
 - Other apocalypses (e.g., **Zephaniah**) also use organizing sequences like **trumpet blasts**, a pattern echoed in Revelation.
- The purpose of apocalyptic literature is to **encourage the faithful** amid suffering — Yes, things look unjust now, but God will intervene openly, judge evil, and set the world right.
- Apocalyptic literature uses **highly symbolic** imagery. For example:
 - beasts = empires/evil powers
 - sheep = God’s people
 - sword = judgment
- These symbols invite interpretation but they are **intentionally a bit cryptic**. That means we need to be careful when interpreting them.
- Even though it’s largely written in symbolic ways, an apocalypse **depicts literal outcomes**. It is not mere allegory to be spiritualized away.
- Apocalyptic literature (including Revelation and Daniel, are **not a crystal ball** or a neat **timeline chart** of the end-times. They are also not a straightforward **literal narrative**.

- When we read these texts we have to force ourselves to think outside the normal Western mindset that comes so easily to us.

Four Main Christian Approaches to the End Times

- **[SLIDE]** Before we get into the book of Revelation, it might also be helpful for us to briefly discuss the four main approaches we have in the Christian world to the study of the end times (eschatology). This is not a comprehensive list and does not include all of the possible permutations and elements of end times beliefs, but these are the main ones you should know.
- **[SLIDE] Futurism** — Reads Revelation 4–22 as **our** future.
 - This perspective does a great job of taking the prophecies of the Bible seriously and keeping our hope fixed on Messiah's return.
 - But it risks making the book of Revelation **irrelevant to John's original audience** in AD 95.
- **[SLIDE] Preterism** — Reads most events as **first-century** (often tied to the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and/or Domitian's persecution of the church, which we will talk about in a bit).
 - This position is helpful because Revelation says that things in the book "must **soon** take place". Preterism keeps the book **relevant to the apostolic generation**
 - However, it can reduce Revelation to a **historical curiosity** and it really struggles to fit **everything** into the first century.
- **[SLIDE] Historicism** — Says that Revelation **charts history** from the apostles to the Kingdom, giving both 95 CE context and room for **our future**
 - However, it becomes **rigid** (using charts/timelines to try to work out the actual plan and history) and tends to **ignore the apocalyptic genre** of the book.
- **[SLIDE] Idealism** — Treats Revelation's images as **recurring spiritual patterns** across history (e.g., "Antichrist" can take many forms).
 - The strength of this interpretation is its flexibility in applying the Biblical message to each generation
 - However, that also means that Revelation can be made to mean **almost anything**. The book loses its historical and future value.
- For the purposes of our study, I'll tell you now that I tend toward a Partial Preterist Futurist Historicist perspective. You don't have to agree with me, but I hope you'll stick with me for the journey.

Background

- **[SLIDE]** Most scholars date the writing of Revelation **toward the end of Emperor Domitian's reign** (AD 81–96), which is when the Irenaeus, a church father in the second century, said it was written.
- To understand the book of Revelation, it is important that you understand the events that were happening in the Roman empire at the end of the first century. These events form the social-historical and political backdrop for Revelation.
- **[SLIDE]** Domitian was the son of Vespasian and the younger brother of Titus, the emperors who, as generals, together fought the Jews in the revolt in 68-70 CE. After his father was called back to Rome to take the throne, Titus finished the war and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple.

- Domitian became emperor in 81 CE, just two years after his brother's ascension to the throne when Titus died under mysterious circumstances. He is said to have died of a fever, but ancient sources hint that Domitian was responsible for his death.
- After becoming Emperor, Domitian went down a very dark path.
 - He wanted to rule the Roman empire as a divine monarch, controlling every aspect of everyday life of his people.
 - This flair for micromanagement actually resulted in a very well-run empire from a political and economic perspective. Domitian was even able to spend most of his time outside of the city of Rome because he set up the structure of the government to run so smoothly.
 - Domitian was a dedicated follower of the Roman cultic religion. He justified his rule by making connections between his rule and the main god of the Roman pantheon, Jupiter. The ancient historians Suetonius and Cassius Dio both allege that Domitian officially gave himself the title of Dominus et Deus ("Lord and God").
- After the Jewish revolt was put down, Emperor Vespasian instituted the Fiscus Judaicus, the Jewish Tax.
 - The Jewish Tax was a yearly two-drachma poll tax imposed on every Jew across the empire. It was uniquely burdensome and symbolically insulting because the proceeds supported the Temple of Jupiter (signaling Rome's triumph over Israel's God).
 - Penalties for avoiding the tax ranged from imprisonment to execution and property seizure.
- This tax was continued in the time of Titus and in the time of Domitian.
- Domitian, needing revenue for his expanding government projects, ordered investigations and encouraged informers to report "secret Jews." The campaign uncovered not only Jews concealing identity to avoid the tax, but many Gentiles who were following Jewish practices (Sabbath-keeping, worship of Israel's God). To Roman eyes, non-Jews practicing Judaism was equivalent to "atheism," a rejection of the Roman pantheon.
 - Why were Gentiles following Jewish teachings? Some were God Fearers, Gentiles who had attached themselves to the God of Israel, keeping at least some of the commandments of the Torah and worshiping in synagogues around the Roman world.
 - In the eyes of Rome, there was some ambiguity in who counted as "Jewish." This meant that God-fearing Gentiles could be assessed the tax merely for living Jewishly; this pushed some to conceal their associations with Judaism or stop their practices altogether.
 - In addition to God Fearers, Gentile Christians in the first century also matched this description. The Christianity of the first century was distinctly Jewish in observance and practice, so Gentile Christians were in the same boat as non-believing Gentile God Fearers.
- Domitian extended liability for the Jewish Tax to anyone who "lived as Jews," and mobilized the public to denounce neighbors, which swept in Gentile believers as tax-evaders and impious atheists.
- This was problematic because Jews still had religious protections that were originally granted to them by Julius Caesar, and those could not be put aside.
 - In an effort to clarify who the tax applied to, Rome issued legal enactments distinguishing Jews from Gentile Christians: Judaism remained a legal religion (with tax), but the protections applied only to Jews; Christianity was declared illegal for both Jews and Gentiles, with death now attached to admitting the name of Christ.

- This led to an unfortunate schism between the broader Jewish community and the early believers.
- To preserve their legal status, synagogues in the Diaspora expelled believers and informed on them to Roman authorities. Before this, many Gentile believers were integrated in synagogue life and “looked Jewish enough,” which had masked them from scrutiny—until Domitian’s measures made that untenable.
- The Jewish Tax crisis combined with Domitian’s policies provide necessary background for Revelation’s setting of tribulation, trials before tribunals, and community pressure—framing the book’s calls to patient endurance.

Author: John the Apostle

- John the Apostle is the accepted author of Revelation.
- **[SLIDE]** In the late first century, John was overseeing assemblies in Asia Minor from Ephesus when he was arrested by Domitian for being a Christian. The vision in Revelation is addressed to seven assemblies in John’s Apostolate.
 - Again, John was Jewish, but his position as Christian leader made it easy for the Romans to justify his arrest.
 - Eusebius and Tertullian report that the Romans attempted to kill John in a few ways, but he survived **poison** and even being **boiled in oil**, after which the Romans decided to **exile him to the island of Patmos**.
- John identifies himself in the book as a “partner in the tribulation”. He is referring to the tribulation that was already present in his day.
- 18 September 96 CE, Domitian was assassinated in a palace conspiracy involving members of the Praetorian Guard and others who were unhappy with his rule. After Domitian’s death, the new Emperor Nerva released many of Domitian’s exiles, and John returned from Patmos to Ephesus.

Chapter 1 - The Setting

- 1:3 — not just blessed by reading the message, but also by doing what it says
 - We are not called just to hear what God says to do, but we are called to obey.
- 1:4 — John greets the readers with a greeting from God Almighty, and from Jesus, “the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”
 - He also greets them “from the seven spirits who are before His throne”. What are the seven spirits? is this a reference to the Holy Spirit, a sly connection to the Trinity in verse 4?
 - The “seven spirits before His throne” are identified later in the text as the highest angelic beings—the seven archangels or seraphim (“the seven flaming ones”). They stand before God and even “send greetings” alongside God and Jesus.
 - In the throne room (Revelation 4:5) they appear as “seven torches”—matching their identity as burning seraphim (“flaming angels”).
 - There is also a link between the seven angels and the seven churches. In Revelation, the heavenly realm mirrors the earthly assemblies. The seven churches of Asia have a heavenly representation among these seven angelic beings (hence the close connection between the churches’ angels, the seven stars, and the seraphim).

- In Revelation 5, the sealed scroll bears seven seal-impressions of the seven archangels. No angel is worthy to open them; only the Lamb can break those seals—underscoring His authority over the seven angels/seraphim (“He holds the seven stars”).
- 1:10 — When John says that he was “in the Spirit,” this implies a state of heightened spiritual awareness and focus—altered consciousness in a sort of prophetic trance—by means of close communion with the Holy Spirit of God.
 - The voice speaking to him sounded like the “voice of the shofar.” Thus alludes to the revelation at Mount Sinai, where “the voice of the shofar grew louder and louder” (Exodus 19:19).
 - It also alludes to the coming of the Messiah when “the Master Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
 - “on the Lord’s day” = Sabbath, Saturday
 - Christians in the late first century and early second century did not consider Sunday to be the Sabbath. Instead, they honored the first day (Sunday) as a weekly remembrance of the day Jesus rose from the dead.
- 1:11 — The Seven Assemblies: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea
 - The seven lampstands are the seven churches. See 1:20, “As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”
 - Picture them not as seven separate menorahs (which would be 49 lamps), but **seven lamps** that **correspond to the seven lamps of the menorah**.
 - The seven earthly assemblies (lampstands) **mirror the heavenly reality**—they correspond to a menorah, reflecting the **seven archangels** who 4:5 says “burn like torches before the throne,” with each assembly having an **angelic representative**.
 - The “one like a Son of Man” is “**in the midst of the lampstands**,” signifying His presence among the congregations and, by parallel, at the center of the seven archangels in heaven.
 - Because each assembly has a heavenly representative, congregations aren’t just a social club but have **spiritual standing** in the heavenly court—**lampstands of angelic light** around the throne.
- 1:13 — John sees “one like a son of man” standing **in the midst of the lampstands**. The phrase **deliberately alludes to Daniel 7** (the Son of Man figure).
 - In Daniel 7 the “one like a son of man” comes with the clouds to the Ancient of Days and receives dominion, glory, and a kingdom—language the teaching sees echoed in Revelation’s scenes and claims about Messiah’s everlasting rule.
 - The description also echoes **Daniel 10’s glorious angel** (linen robe, belt, burnished-bronze feet, roaring/“many waters” voice). The clothing here is **not** about priestly garb; the emphasis is Daniel’s allusion and the heavenly figure’s glory.

Sidebar: Angelic Representative

- I mentioned before that each of the seven assemblies has a heavenly counterpart—an angelic representative (“the angel of the church in...”) who personifies that community in the heavenly court.

- This is part of the broader picture in Revelation that earth mirrors heaven. As the menorah's seven torches burn before the throne (the seven archangels), so the seven lampstands (assemblies) on earth have angelic "heads/representatives"—their stars—under Jesus' authority.
- This is a standard understanding in Jewish angelology in the first century.
- **[SLIDE]** In addition, the chain of transmission in the Revelation is:
 - God → Jesus → the angel of Yeshua → John → the assemblies
 - The angel of Jesus speaks in the first person for the Master, which can be confusing if you don't understand this idea of angelic agency.

Finishing Chapter 1

- 1:17-18 — Why does Jesus "have the keys of death and of Hades"?
 - Because he defeated death!
 - Also, Hades here is Gehinnom, the place in Sheol, the Grave, where the wicked go for punishment.

Ephesus

- **[SLIDE]** The congregation in Ephesus is commended for:
 - **Their deeds, their toil, and their patient endurance**—especially under **Domitian-era pressure**; they've "borne up" for the Master's name.
 - **Their doctrinal vigilance** — they **tested "false apostles"** and did not tolerate evil.
 - **Their opposition to the Nicolaitans' works**
 - The Nicolaitans were a sect within the Yeshua-movement, not a pagan group.
 - Revelation 2:14 links them to the teaching of Balaam at Baal-Peor. In that story in the Torah, Balaam leads God's people to eat food sacrificed to idols and commit sexual immorality.
 - The Nicolaitans, then, were a group who permitted those practices—i.e., ignoring the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15) that forbade idol-food and sexual immorality for Gentile believers.
- **The rebuke Jesus has for the assembly in Ephesus is "you have abandoned the love you had at first."**
 - This is not a reference to cooling affections for Jesus. They've abandoned the **two great commandments—love of God and neighbor**—i.e., **deeds of Torah/chesed** that once marked them.
 - 1:5 — The call is to **repent** and **"do the works you did at first."**
- Jesus then issues this warning: "I will remove your lampstand"
 - This means that they will lose their **angelic lamp**—i.e., their **spiritual vitality will be cut off**, even though the congregation might still "exist." Hence the urgency to repent so the **lamp** is not "snuffed out."
- However, Jesus also offers a reward: To **eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God**—the delights of **eternal life** for those who **overcome**.

Smyrna

- 2:9 — “Poverty—yet you are rich.” Smyrna’s community is materially pressed but spiritually wealthy
- 2:9 — The sharp phrase “**synagogue of Satan**” should be understood **within a late-first-century context**: a **small number of synagogue leaders/informers** in Smyrna (and Philadelphia) **betrayed** believers to Roman authorities—thus acting as “accusers,” not that Jewish worship itself is satanic. The term targets **accusatory behavior** (informing/slander), not Jewish identity or synagogues per se.
 - Some scholars actually point out that this language might be related to the Nicolaitans issue.
 - They speculate that there are Gentiles in these cities who call themselves Jews but don’t follow the Torah. It’s possible, given the fact that Paul had left this region 30 years before, that the local messianic synagogues that had been launched by Paul had fallen into theological issues, and had started to misinterpret Paul’s message.
 - We know this happened later, but the troubling consistency of the Nicolaitan heresy in these cities points to a broader problem than just a few errant teachers.
 - While Paul had not taught his followers to eat food sacrificed to idols or to commit sexual immorality, it appears that those ideas had found a footing in the communities.
 - Jesus’ words through John aim to stop these teachers who think they are Jewish but who are not following the Torah.
- 2:10 — “**Ten days**” of tribulation = **testing**. The passage is framed as a **time-limited trial** (imprisonment/testing), calling for **courage and fidelity even unto death**, with the **crown of life** promised.
- Jesus’ call to Smyrna is **patient endurance** amid Domitian-era hostility (arrests, prison) with eyes on the **crown** and protection from the **second death**.

Pergamum

- 2:13 — Jesus describes Pergamum as “**where Satan’s throne is**”. The city had a monumental **Altar of Zeus** on the acropolis—an active sacrificial center with priests offering continual burnt offerings
 - temple = “throne,” hence the label.
- The community is **praised for holding fast** to Jesus’ name **under persecution**, even “in the days of **Antipas**... my faithful witness.” Antipas was apparently a martyr from Pergamum.
- Once again, the **Nicolaitans** are called out, people who teach Christians that it is okay to “eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality.”
 - Jesus does not mince words on these practices: He says he will come and wage war against them if they don’t repent.

Thyatira

- 2:19 — Thyatira is praised for **love, faith, service, and patient endurance**—and notably that their **later works exceed the first** (growth, not decline).
- However, they are being pulled into the same false teachings as Ephesus and Pergamum:
 - eating food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality
 - Apparently led by a woman prophetess who he calls Jezebel (not her real name)

- 2:26 — “The one who overcomes, and the one who keeps My deeds until the end”
 - Note the “keeps my deeds” — Jesus is very concerned about the deeds of his followers, not just their beliefs. That is a common thread in Revelation.
 - To those who hold on firmly until he comes, Jesus promises authority over the nations.
- 2:28 — **“I will give him the morning star.”** This is a **messianic reward/identity-sharing** promise tied to Jesus himself (“the bright morning star”)—a pledge of intimate participation in his reign.

Sardis

- 3:1 — The congregation in Sardis contains zombies (not literally): “You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.”
- Notice again, “I know your deeds” - their actual deeds don’t match up to what they say they believe.
- 3:3 — Jesus calls on them to repent, to return from their evil ways.
- 3:4 — He also says there is a remnant in Sardis, a few followers who are still righteous.

Philadelphia

- 3:9 — Again, the phrase **“synagogue of Satan”** should be understood **within a late-first-century context**: a **small number of synagogue leaders/informers** in Philadelphia **betrayed** believers to Roman authorities—thus acting as “accusers,” not that Jewish worship itself is satanic. The term targets **accusatory behavior** (informing/slander), not Jewish identity or synagogues per se.
- 3:11 — The Messiah is coming quickly! Hold on firmly and wait for the day of his return.

Laodicea

- 3:15 — notice again the focus on deeds.
 - This is a very well-known verse. Jesus does not like lukewarm followers. He’d rather someone be hot or cold, not lukewarm.
- 3:16 — The Laodiceans were rich, they had great wealth.
 - We talked about this when we studied Colossians, but let’s revisit it
 - **[SLIDE -MAP - tight]** About 100 miles East of Ephesus, the Lycus River meets the Maeander River in the Lycus valley. Three important cities occupied the valley: Laodicea, Colossae, and Hierapolis. The Romans controlled these cities as part of the Province of Asia. Hierapolis and Laodicea faced one another from opposite sides of the valley, with the Lycus River flowing between them. Colossae sat a few miles further upstream.
 - **[SLIDE - HOT SPRINGS]** Hierapolis was well known for its geothermal hot springs, which create these very interesting terraced structures made from the hard, limestone water that comes out of the springs.
 - When Jesus tells the Laodiceans, “I wish that you were cold or hot,” they know exactly what he means.
 - In addition to the hot springs, the Lycus Valley was a great place to raise sheep, and Colossae was known for special red wool called *colossinum*. This made the people there very wealthy.
- 3:19 — “Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.” This is a powerful reminder of what Jesus wants from us, not just belief, but obedience, zeal, and repentance.

- 3:20 — He follows that up with another well known passage: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”
 - Don’t disconnect verse 20 from verse 19. Jesus rebukes and disciplines us to lead us to repentance and zeal. He is knocking on our hearts asking us to open our hearts to his rebuke.

Chapter 4

- **[SLIDE]** After Jesus gives these messages to the congregations in Asia, the scene changes, and John sees the temple of God in the heavenlies.
- The whole scene in chapter 4 echoes the classic throne visions of **Isaiah 6** and **Ezekiel 1**.
- It also functions as the **heavenly backdrop** for what follows in chapters 5–6 (the scroll and the seals).
- Let’s look at some of the imagery that appears here:
 - **Open door / shofar-voice** → heavenly summons to see reality “behind the veil.”
 - **Throne** → God’s sovereign rule; the anchor for the entire vision that follows.
 - **Seven torches / seven spirits of God** → the **seven archangelic seraphim** burning before the throne.
 - **Four living creatures (chayot)** → throne guardians who lead worship in call-and-response with the burning ones.
 - **Twenty-four elders** → a worshiping council encircling the throne, enthroned and crowned, who prostrate and cast crowns when glory is given.
 - **Sea like glass** → the crystal expanse before the throne, part of the cosmic temple imagery.
 - **Rainbow** → one of the visual markers of divine presence and glory rather than a symbol that’s decoded on its own. It signals you’re in a heavenly throne room—the place where worship erupts before judgments unfold in chapters 5–6.

Chapter 5

- **[SLIDE]** The Scroll
 - In the **right hand** of the One on the throne is a **scroll** “written on both sides” and **sealed with seven seals**.
 - “Written on both sides” is read as temple/Torah imagery (like the tablets “engraved through”), signaling **divine authorship, completeness, and authority**.
 - No creature in heaven/earth/under the earth is **worthy** to open it; John **weeps**—until an elder announces the **Lion of Judah / Root of David** has **conquered**.
- The Lamb
 - John turns and sees not a lion but a **Lamb standing as though slain**
 - This is a paradox, but it comes to teach us an important lesson about Jesus.
 - His victory comes through his sacrificial death, not just his position as the Son of God
 - And he is now enthroned with full authority.
 - The **seven horns and seven eyes** represent the **seven spirits of God** sent out into all the earth.

- The Lamb **takes the scroll** from the right hand of the Enthroned One. This act is the **transfer of authority** to enact God’s plan.
- Worshipping the Lamb
 - The **four living creatures** and the **twenty-four elders** fall down with **harps** and **bowls of incense** (explicitly, the **prayers of the saints**).
 - They sing a **new song**: the Lamb is worthy **because** by His **blood** He **purchased** people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation, and **made them a kingdom and priests** who will **reign on the earth**.
 - This is important, as it is pointing to a **real future reign on earth**, not just in heaven.
 - Then the circle of praise **widens**: myriads of angels join, then **every creature** in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea—until the living creatures affirm “Amen” and the elders **prostrate** themselves again.
- What is the scroll?
 - It contains the **script of the final redemption/judgment**—God’s plan to set the world right.
 - The **Lamb’s worthiness** (His death, resurrection, exaltation) is what qualifies Him to **open** it.
- Something that you might miss is that as the Lamb **opens the seals**, events begin to unfold **even before the scroll itself is read**.
 - The seven seals are linked to heaven’s authority structure: the **highest angelic order** (the “seven spirits/archangels”), underscoring why **only the Lamb**—who “holds the seven stars” and stands at the center of the throne-room—can **break** those seals.
- Chapter 5 is the **authorization** moment; chapter 6 is the **execution** as the seals open.

Chapter 6

- As the **Lamb** opens the seals, **events begin to unfold even before the scroll is read**.
- Chapter 6 covers **seals 1–6**; the seventh comes later and leads into the trumpets.
- This is where we get into the timing that is the most popular part of the book of Revelation. Again, I encourage us all to hold onto these things with open hands. I’m going to give you my perspective, but it’s just that, my perspective.
- **[SLIDE] Seals 1–5** happen in and around the **first-century** world of John’s audience, with **seal 6** marking the onset of the **Day of the Lord** (the coming judgment of the world).
- **[SLIDE] Seal 1 — White horse (conquest)**
 - This is symbolic of **conquest and imperial expansion**, with **Rome** foremost in view (including Rome’s conquest of the land of Israel during the war of 68-70 CE).
 - This is part of a recurring, big-picture pattern of nations conquering nations.
- **[SLIDE] Seal 2 — Red horse (war)**
 - **War and bloodshed** follow conquest—the sword “takes peace from the earth.”
- **[SLIDE] Seal 3 — Black horse (famine/economic distress)**
 - **Scales** and ration-prices signal **scarcity** and **inflationary hardship** that often trail war.

- **[SLIDE] Seal 4 — Pale horse (death)**
 - **Death** by sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts—a composite of calamities that historically accompany the first three horsemen.
- **[SLIDE] Seal 5 — Souls under the altar (martyrs)**
 - The slain cry “**How long?**” and are given white robes, told to **rest a little while** until the full number of their fellow-servants is complete.
 - This group **spans from John’s day forward**—the number of martyrs **grows across the centuries**.
- **[SLIDE] Seal 6 — Cosmic upheaval (Day of the Lord begins)**
 - **Sun darkened, moon like blood, stars falling, sky rolled up, mountains/islands moved**—classic **Day-of-the-Lord** theophany signaling **open judgment**.
 - The great and small **attempt to hide**, asking who can stand.
- **Chapter 6 links history to judgment:**
 - the first four seals depict the **recurring pattern** of human empire (conquest → war → famine → death)
 - the fifth seal shows the **heavenly record** of faithful suffering
 - the sixth **breaks the pattern** with **cosmic disclosure**—the Day of the Lord arriving.
- 6:17 — It also sets up the next movement: the question “**Who is able to stand?**” opens to the sealing/protection theme that follows.