



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Vision 2 , Part 3 (6:1-11) - The First Four Seals

4 NATIONS IN DANIEL 2 AND 7

- Neo-Babylonian Empire — carried Judah into captivity
 - Persia — rebuilt the temple and reconstituted the Israelite homeland
 - Greece — brought a universal language, culture, philosophy, thought (e.g. Septuagint)
 - Rome — built the Pax Romana (the peace of Rome); stability allowed for the spread of the gospel
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NATIONS WITH EVIL INTENT

- Zechariah 1:14-15, “they helped – but with evil intent”
 - Babylon: Is. 47:5-9: “You showed them no mercy” (verse 6)
 - The Persians nearly allowed the Jews to be wiped out by Haman (the book of Esther)
 - Greeks: Antiochus Epiphanies profaned the temple (see Daniel 8:23-27)
 - Rome: Nero and Domitian persecuted the church
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THE SEALS AND THE TRUMPETS ARE GOD'S
JUDGMENT OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

A FEW PASSAGES TO REMEMBER

- 1:1, “things which must **shortly** take place.”
 - 1:19: “Write the things which you **have seen** (his first vision of the glorified Jesus), and the things **which are** (the letters to the seven churches), and the things which will take place **after this** (after this current period in time).”
 - 4:1, “Come up here, and I will show you *things which must take place* **after this.**”
 - Series of visions takes place toward the end of Domitian’s reign (96 AD)
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SEAL # 1: THE AGE OF THE ANTONINES

SEAL # 1 - WHAT JOHN SEES

- “white” - purity and/or victory; in war it must refer to victory
 - “crown” - Gr. *stephanos* – a laurel wreath worn by a conquering hero
 - “bow” - not a weapon of Rome; the use of which was perfected by the Cretans
 - “went out conquering and to conquer” - uninhibited victory
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THE AGE OF THE ANTONINES - 96-180 AD

- 96-98: Nerva (a Cretan)
 - 98-117: Trajan (the greatest conqueror since Julius Caesar)
 - 117-138: Hadrian (the greatest emperor since Caesar Augustus)
 - 138-161: Antoninus Pius (the zenith of the Antonines)
 - 161-180: Marcus Aurelius (the philosopher king)
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SUMMARY OF SEAL # 1

- White horse - victory in war
 - The crown (Gr. *stephanos*) - worn by victorious Roman emperors when returning to Rome
 - Bow - a new line of non-Latin emperors beginning with a Cretan, Nerva
 - External victory, internal peace, and great prosperity
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SEAL #2: CIVIL WAR

SEAL #2 - WHAT JOHN SEES

- “red” - blood, a bloody war, carnage, excessive bloodshed
 - “take peace from the earth” - once existed a state of peace
 - “kill one another” - a period of civil war
 - “great sword” - standing army
 - “the earth” - the portion of the earth governed by Rome
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A CENTURY OF CHAOS - 183-284 AD

- 193 - Commodus, son of Marcus Aurelius, assassinated
 - 193 - “The Year of Five Emperors”
 - 193-235 - The Severan Dynasty
 - 235-284 - The Crisis of the Third Century
 - Maximinus Thrax - 235-238
 - From 235-270, thirty seven men were proclaimed emperor of Rome
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SUMMARY OF SEAL #2

- Red horse - bloody war
 - Take peace from the earth - no peace where once there had been peace
 - Kill one another - civil war
 - Great sword - standing armies; legions and Praetorian Guard often vying for power
 - The earth - the portion governed by Rome
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SEAL #3 - ECONOMIC DEPRESSION AND FAMINE

SEAL #3 - WHAT JOHN SEES

- “black” - calamity as the result of strife
 - “balances” - weighing bread in order to ration (see Leviticus 26:26)
 - The weighing of bread symbolizes scarcity of bread (see Ezekiel 4:16)
 - The only rider not wielding an implement of war
 - “denarius” - a day’s wages
 - Indicative of inflation – the denarius' purchasing power was drastically less (see 2 Kings 6:24-25)
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ECONOMIC DOWNTURN - MID 3RD CENTURY

- Indigenous farmers could not compete with foreign imports
 - High taxes led to poor profits and declining resources for upkeep
 - Precious metals depleted, governments issue coins of lesser value
 - Decline in value led to increase in coin production which led to...inflation
 - Economic depression set in; famine and starvation result
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SUMMARY OF SEAL #3

- Black horse represents a calamity
 - The balances represent a significant economic downturn caused by inflation
 - And when an economic downturn leads to famine and starvation, plagues are not far behind.
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SEAL #4 - PLAGUE

SEAL #4 - WHAT JOHN SEES

- “pale” - death; color of the body at the time of death
 - “sword” - war
 - “hunger” - famine
 - “death” - plague
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FAMINE, PLAGUE, AND WAR - 250-265 AD

- 5000 people died each day in Rome
 - Gibbon estimates that almost $\frac{1}{2}$ the population of the Empire died in this 15 year period
 - Ongoing civil war - from 235-270, 37 men were proclaimed emperor
 - External enemies advanced
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SUMMARY OF SEAL #4

- The pale horse represents the famine, plague, and war that struck the Empire during 250-265
 - Internal strife was ongoing; external enemies were multiplying
 - By the beginning of Diocletian's reign in 284, the population had been reduced by 1/3 from the time of Marcus Aurelius
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“Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us.’”

“He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: ‘Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.’ ‘I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me, “You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession...””

“You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.’ Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.”

—Psalm 2
