

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 2 THE EARTHLY DRAMA

STUDY TWO

Let the Judgments Begin

Revelation 6:1–8

When it comes to judgment, the only way to live safe and secure is to be in Christ.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WAITING for a letter from someone you love dearly can feel agonizing. Day after day, you look for the mail carrier. As the truck drives away, you sprint to the mailbox hoping it finally holds the words you've waited to read. You grab the bundle of envelopes and quickly flip through them—another bill, another flyer, another magazine. No letter. You think, *Maybe tomorrow . . .*

Until one day, you pull from the mailbox an envelope with your name penned in familiar handwriting. You immediately rip it open and read the letter—once, and then again, and yet again. Joy quenches your thirsty heart as your loved one's words rise from the page.

For millennia, the people of God had waited to hear from Him—to know how He would permanently cleanse His creation from all evil. Until one day in the first century AD, seven churches in Asia Minor each received an unexpected letter from John. As they heard his words, they realized it was the message they had waited so long to hear: Jesus will soon return to defeat Satan, sin, and death. And He will establish His eternal kingdom on the earth.

This *Searching the Scriptures* study will witness Jesus deliver the message of God's plan of redemption. Though the first step of this plan is judgment, followers of Christ need not fear. Instead, they can rejoice even as they wait.



Let the Judgments Begin

Revelation 6:1–8



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before you search the Scriptures right now, offer to God your own prayer of expectation. Express your eagerness for Christ's return and your eagerness to know Him better as you wait.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

“Who is worthy to break the seals on this scroll and open it?” (*Revelation 5:2*). When John heard this question in God's heavenly throne room, he wept. *If no one can open the scroll of God's plan of redemption, he likely thought, then we will never be freed from evil.*

Yet, through the tears, John saw the One who *was* worthy to open the seals—the slaughtered Lamb. Because Jesus paid sin's ultimate price and died for all humanity, only He can execute God's justice that creation has awaited for so long. In *Revelation 6:1–8*, He broke the first seals of the scroll and set into motion the final stages of God's plan of redemption.



Observation: The First Four Seals

Every time Pastor Chuck Swindoll studies a passage of Scripture, he follows the same four steps. His method allows him to come to a clear understanding of a passage's message, meaning, and application. Following these four steps always is important—especially for more difficult books like Revelation.¹

As Jesus released each seal of the scroll, John simply recorded what he saw and heard in these sometimes-obscure apocalyptic visions as best as he could using the language he had. As you read *Revelation 6:1–8*, join John in this task of observation. Include as much detail as you can in your answers. This is the first step of the method. You may wonder, *What does this mean?* but we will consider that question in the next phase.

According to *6:1–2*, what did John hear when the Lamb opened the *first* seal? What did he see? What happened as a result of this seal's opening?

Let the Judgments Begin

Revelation 6:1–8

According to *Revelation 6:3–4*, what did John hear when the Lamb opened the *second* seal? What did he see? What happened as a result of this seal’s opening?

According to *6:5–6*, what did John hear when the Lamb opened the *third* seal? What did he see? What happened as a result of this seal’s opening?

According to *6:7–8*, what did John hear when the Lamb opened the *fourth* seal? What did he see? What happened as a result of this seal’s opening?

God is neither inaccessible nor hard to reach. The final judgment will come, but by His grace it has not yet begun. There’s still time for those who do not yet believe. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Revelation 6:1–8 may be one of the most widely recognized passages in Revelation because it depicts what we know as the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse”—riders who gallop out to bring God’s justice to the four corners of the earth. In the interpretation phase of the study, we will consider the meaning of each of these images.

Let the Judgments Begin

Revelation 6:1–8

In the space below, use your observations to show how John’s detailed descriptions of each horse and its rider represent a certain kind of judgment from God. What is the significance of each judgment? For some help, consult your Bible-study tools, like Pastor Chuck’s commentary, *Insights on Revelation*.² For a free resource, use *Constable’s Notes* online at netbible.org.

The White Horse—*Revelation 6:1–2*

The Red Horse—*Revelation 6:3–4*

The Black Horse—*Revelation 6:5–6*

The Pale Green Horse—*Revelation 6:7–8*

There is no hope for deliverance apart from faith in the Savior. Many hang on to a false religion that gives a sense of false peace because they think they can work their way toward some means of pleasing God and gaining His approbation. They try to somehow get there on their own by their works. They miss the beauty of God’s grace. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Let the Judgments Begin

Revelation 6:1–8



Correlation: Horses and Hope

John's vision of the four horses and their riders parallels a vision from the Old Testament prophet Zechariah. By correlating these two passages, we will be able to better understand each of their messages. According to [Zechariah 1:8](#), what did the prophet observe in his vision? In what ways was his vision similar to John's? In what ways was it different?

After seeing this vision, Zechariah asked an angel a question that John didn't: "My lord, what do these horses mean?" ([Zechariah 1:9](#)). The angel replied, "I will show you." In your own words, summarize the explanation of the vision recorded in [1:10–11](#).

As these horsemen patrolled the earth, they discovered that the pagan nations had enjoyed peace for several decades while God's chosen people of Israel endured exile and turmoil. Even the angels couldn't understand this reality. What message of hope did God offer in response in [1:14–17](#)?

How does this message from Zechariah help us better understand the meaning of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse? How can we see hope amid the chaos?

Let the Judgments Begin

Revelation 6:1–8

In the opening verses of Zechariah, God said, “Return to me, and I will return to you” (*Zechariah 1:3*). In these words lies the essential message of these passages describing God’s judgment. *Anyone* can avoid God’s judgment. The path is repentance and faith.



Application: Coming to Terms with Judgment

As we take the first steps in this journey of God’s redemption of creation, we must come to terms with what seems like a very grim reality: judgment. Pastor Chuck offers two suggestions as we seek to apply *Revelation 6:1–8*:

1. Praise God for delivering you from the coming judgment.
2. Urge others to come to faith in Christ.

God not only delivers you from His coming wrath, but He also delivers you from the power of sin in the present. *What a gift!* In what ways can you respond to this gift and express your gratitude to Him this week? Write down some practical ideas in the space below.

Write down the names of two or three non-believers in your life. As you do, consider what their future would look like if they continue to live without Christ. How do you sense Him leading you to declare and demonstrate the good news of Jesus Christ to them?

For John’s original readers, they knew well the forces of conquest, war, famine, and death. Perhaps you do too. In what ways can followers of the worthy, slaughtered Lamb find hope when they hear the distant trot of these horsemen today?

Let the Judgments Begin

Revelation 6:1–8

God's judgment is coming. Though it will cause many to tremble in their bones, this truth plays an essential part in the good news of the kingdom of God. Without judgment, God cannot eradicate evil from His precious creation. So when the slaughtered Lamb returns, we will rejoice because He will bring the final word of hope we've awaited for so, so long.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for sending Your Son Jesus Christ to die for my sins. Thank You for showing me that He will come as the righteous judge. Thank You for reassuring me that I will be spared His most fearsome judgment. Fill me with hope as I anticipate His return and equip me to point others to You so that they, too, can enjoy eternity with You. In Jesus' just name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Brad Smith, writer and content strategist, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2003, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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Study 2 • Page 7

