



Study

6

Alpha & Omega

Bible Studies in the Book of Revelation

Study # 6: Revelation chapter 6

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ABOUT “Alpha & Omega”

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

~ Revelation 1:8

Alpha & Omega is the second series of Bible Studies especially written so that you can do them alone at home, or with others in a group. They don't depend on a leader or someone affirming the right answer. The title of this series comes from the introduction of John's letter to God's people, preparing them for the persecution and difficulty the Church of Christ was about to face. But it gives them (and us) two views of this: the seen reality of what God's people experience, and the unseen reality of God's glorious and gracious rule in Christ over all these events. They suffered, and we will suffer, but Christ rules even over the suffering ... and he is returning soon with saving victory for his Church!

INTRODUCING REVELATION 6

Revelation 6 is famous for popular but mythical and misleading portrayals of the “*Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*,” from the first eight verses of the chapter. Although four horses and their riders feature prominently in the first half of the chapter, they are not what the passage is about. Verse 1 tells the reader who the chapter is about and what that person was about to do to encourage the believers in the seven churches of Asia in the tribulation they were entering. Like every vision in Revelation, the message of this passage is the message of the whole book: “Christ reigns!” He reigns, faithfully caring for his people, for the whole dispensation from the first to the second coming of Christ.

Because this is a chapter that has proved truly fertile ground for much wild and misleading speculation, as well as working through the passage verse by verse, a supplement, *the Four Horsemen of Revelation 6*, can be looked at along with the first part of this study. It explores the ways in which symbolism, such as that of the four horses and their riders, can be understood as symbols. Applying the simple approach of reading the text before imposing questions or particular interpretive structures on the text should help frame discussion of this passage around its main points, as will looking at those main points before getting lost in detail at expense of the main idea. What was said in the first study still applies – most of the symbols in Revelation are easy to understand by applying the basic principles of symbolism.

What is important to take note of in this chapter is the transition that is taking place: the book opened with a vision of Christ who rules (Chapter 1); then it moved to consider Christ ruling in the midst of the churches (2 & 3); it then took us to Christ ruling from the throne in heaven beside his Father (4 & 5); and it now moves to Christ ruling in the outpouring of judgement upon the earth – a partial outpouring of wrath that foreshadows Christ's final judgement. The “Lamb who was slain” is on the throne!

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GETTING STARTED

Please remember that this is God's Word. God used John to write God's words in God's way for us. So

1. Pray, asking God to give you his Spirit so that you will honour him, understand his word, and learn how to live better for Jesus.
 2. Read the passage listed above for this study. What is it mainly about?
 3. Now discuss/think about/answer the questions that follow.
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THE FOUR HORSEMEN

Please read Revelation 6:1-8

1. What are the common images and ideas in these eight verses?
2. Who sends the horsemen out?
3. Looking at this passage before looking further afield, what does it say the horses and horsemen do?

Please read Zechariah 1:8-11 & 6:1-8

4. These passages clearly relate to Revelation 6:1-8:
 - a. What is similar and what is different?
 - b. What *function* is the same in all three passages? (see v8) What *functions* are different?
 - c. What indicates whether these horses & chariots "patrol" simultaneously or not?
5. John is writing to prepare the believers in the seven churches of Asia for the coming tribulation. As they read of each of the horses and riders, what will they expect to happen soon (1:1-3) and how will these verses help them cope with that?
 - a. The white horse and its rider v2
 - b. The red horse and its rider v3 & 4
 - c. The black horse and its rider v5 & 6
 - d. The pale or green horse and its rider v7 & 8

Please read Jeremiah 15:2,3

6. What is the relationship between the categories of judgement evident here and in Revelation 6?

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THE LAST THREE SEALS

Prayers of the Martyrs: Please read Revelation 6:9-11

7. v9: Why are the souls of martyrs pictured as being under the alter when we know they are with Christ?

8. Why had they been martyred?

9. v10: Should vengeance really be our prayer? (cf Luke 9:54,55; Psalm 79:10; Rev 16:5-7; 1 Peter 3:12)

10. v11: (For their white robes, cf Rev 3:4.) Why is God waiting before the final judgement? (cf Hebrews 11:40)

Shaking of the Heavens: Please read Revelation 6:12-14

11. v12: What is God's answer to the prayers of the martyrs? (Isaiah 34:4; Mark 13:24-28; Joel 2:31)

Terrified! Please read Revelation 6:15-17

12. v15: Who hides?

13. Why do they hide? (Psalm 76:7; Psalm 2; 2 Thessalonians 1:9)

14. Whose wrath is falling on them?

15. Who can stand? (Malachi 3:2; Joel 2:11; Nahum 1:6)

16. In the light of this passage: What can you thank God for? What can you pray for others? What can you trust God for?

17. In the light of this passage, what changes do you need to make: In your faith? In your worship? In your attitude? In your life?