

- **Setting:** Continues at the Heavenly Throne, initially, and then an interlude of explanation.
- **Timing:** Covers the seven-thousand-year biblical history—including the descendants of Adam and Eve.
- **Summary:** A quick world history from the time of Adam to the opening of the seventh seal, or time preceding the millennium, followed by a look ahead at the hope of the saints sealing to Eternal Life.
- **Symbols:** *Sword* as God’s word, command, or judgment
White clothing for priests and priestess, victory
Angels are heavenly servants and messengers
Crowns represent victory or conquerors
Sealing on forehead is an anointing with eternal promises
12 is divine order, and when it is squared it becomes perfected
1,000 is the largest number, a magnified number, or time period

D&C 77:6-7

Q. What are we to understand by the book which John saw, which was sealed on the back with seven seals?

A. We are to understand that it contains the revealed will, mysteries and the works of God; the hidden things of his economy concerning this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence.

Q. What are we to understand by the seven seals with which it was sealed?

A. We are to understand that the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years, and the second also of

Timeline of the Seven Thousand Years of Scriptural History

4,000 BC	3,000 BC	2,000 BC	1,000 BC	0	AD 1,000	AD 2,000							
Adam	Enoch	Noah	Jaredites	Abraham	Moses	David	Elijah	Isaiah	Christ	Mormon	Reformers	Restoration	PresHinkley-Nelson

The First Four Seals, Horses and Horsemen of Past History

The First Seal (Rev 6:1–2)

Rev 6:1 “I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, “Come!” (NIV) Once the heavenly singing stops, the Lamb (Jehovah/Jesus), starts opening the seven seals. The scroll cannot be opened until all seven seals are open.

The Lord revealed that the scroll represents 7,000 years (D&C 77:6-7). It leads us to assume that each seal represents another thousand years (also see D&C 88:108–109) or dispensation. However, other faith traditions and biblical scholars have other interpretations.

Thunder is heard as the Lamb opens the first seal—suggesting something momentous is happening. John’s guide encourages him to “Come,” as we read in Rev 4:1 (and John 1:39). But the Greek is actually a different word. This imperative may also read: “Go!” It is repeated four times, summoning “each horse and rider to execute their power on the earth” (Draper, Rhodes, *BYU NT Commentary: Revelation*, 248).

Rev 6:2 “I looked, and there was a white horse, and he who was sitting on it had a bow, and he was given a crown, and he went forth conquering” (NR) A horse in the Roman world was a war animal. The bow (and arrow) was a weapon of war. This person on the white horse represents a conqueror wearing a victor’s garland or crown.

The first of the four horses is white. In our world, white often means purity, but in John’s time, it also represented victory. In the Roman world, the winner of the Olympics received and wore a white garment. Victorious generals had their chariot, pulled by white horses (Draper, *BYU NTC*, 249). The toga of Roman citizenship was also white. In the Jewish world, when priests and Levites came to serve in the tabernacle and later temples, they ritually washed and then clothed in holy white linen clothes. Similarly, initiated Essenes, and the high priest on the Day of Atonement, also wore white linen to represent purity before the Lord (Ex 29:4-6; Lev 6:10; 16:23; 1 Chro 5:12; Josephus *BJ*, 2.138).

The first horsemen of the Apocalypse “was given” the victor’s crown. He received the crown in the passive tense (ibid.). The unseen power who delivered the crown was God. The crown was not a political crown, but rather a military or athletic victory. At the time, a victor’s crown was a wreath made from laurel, oak, or celery plants.

We can interpret the white horse and receipt of a crown as representing Enoch establishing the city and people of Zion (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 476). Enoch and his people conquered worldliness and selfishness: “they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness, and there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). We read in Moses 7:13, “so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled” (also see Moses 7:14-17).

The Second Seal (Rev 6:3–4)

Rev 6:3–4 “When he opened the second seal, I heard the second animal saying, ‘Come’ And another horse, fiery-red, came . . . to take peace from the earth . . . and he was given a large sword” (NR) The second seal represents a time of 3,000-2,000 BC, or the dispensation of Noah through the Tower of Babel and Jaredites (Moses 8:25-26). The fiery-red horse and rider using a sword signifies death through violence and bloodshed. Prior to Noah’s flood the people of the earth were filled with wickedness which I presume included fighting in all types.

The Third Seal (Rev 6:5–6)

Rev 6:5 “When the Lamb opened the third seal . . . there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand” (NIV) The third seal may represent the approximate time of 2,000–1,000 BC, from Abraham to King David, or possibly the dispensation of Melchizedek / Abraham (Gen 14:18-19; 17:1-14). The black horse symbolizes death by hunger or the plague. The balances suggest something is out of balance.

Rev 6:6 “And I heard a voice . . . ‘A quart of wheat for a day’s pay, and three quarts of barley for a day’s pay” (NR) The Famines often follow turbulent times of war, or political and weather changes. Famines cause the price of food to go up. The text describes a starvation diet. Daily rations were thought to be a quart of grain. Wheat was better and more costly, while barley was for the poor. Food was so expensive that a whole day’s wages (KJV: *penny*, WEB: *denarius*) was spent only on food to only keep one person alive. This period of terrible famines devastated the earth’s population. We read of Abraham’s brother starving to death, as well as the seven-year famine during Joseph’s reign in Egypt, that also plagued other portions of the world (Abr 2:17, 21; Gen 11:28; 41:42–57). The children of Israel’s forty years in the wilderness was a complete famine save for the manna and occasional water and birds (Exo 16; Num 20:10).

“do not harm the olive oil and wine” (NR) Mercy is given as the voice sets limits on the oil and wine—symbolic of many things. Many interpret it as annual food sources that have deep roots. The Dead Sea Scrolls include Jewish feasts of Oil and New Wine (Draper, *BYU NT*, 256-7). Both were used in temple ritual and stored in the temple. Could it mean do not harm those holy ones anointed with oil (Ex 29:29; Num 7:1; 1 Sam 16:13)? Wine becomes part of New Testament ritual representing the Lord’s blood at the Lord’s Supper, and later sacrament (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25).

The Fourth Seal (Rev 6:7–8)

Rev 6:7–8 “When he opened the fourth seal . . . I looked, and there was a pale horse, and the name of him who was sitting on it was Death, and Hell followed after him” (NR) The period from approximately 1,000–0 BC was symbolized by a pale green or cadaverous-colored horse, with a horseman representing death and hell. This is the time when the Lord’s covenant people went to war amongst themselves over and over. We read of famines that Elijah and other OT peoples fell victim to (1 King 17-18; also see 2 Sam 21:1; 2 King 25:3; Ezek 7:15).

It was also the time when conquering powers grew and traded hands every few generations. This is the time period of the captivity of both the northern ten tribes to Assyria, and of Judea to Babylon, Medes, and Persia. It also includes the Macedonian- Greek triumph of Alexander the Great and the conquest by the Roman Empire. In the “new world” it spans from Alma to 3 Nephi. China also became a powerful nation during this time and Egypt fell. The great nations of the earth all tormented each other and killed each other off.

“and they were given power over a quarter of the earth to kill with the sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth” (NR). The passive again suggest that God allowed death and hell to destroy His creation within certain limits. Death and hell did not have innate power, but were allowed to ravage the earth by God. A “part” (the fourth part) was given power to kill. This probably represent a limited area rather than exactly one-fourth. The “part” may represent the Mediterranean world whose history the Bible partially includes.

Future History—Fifth and Sixth Seal

The Fifth Seal (Rev 6:9–11)

Rev 6:9 “When the Lamb opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony they had upheld” The fifth seal represents the period from the Lord’s mortal life, John’s current existence to the future time of approximately 1000 AD. The seals that include the future do not include an apocalyptic horse and rider. Instead John describes seeing an altar. Symbolically, the Adamic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic altars typified the future symbolic altar of Gethsemane and Calvary where our Savior sacrificed Himself for us. John saw martyrs under the altar, possibly, the early Christian saints who sacrificed their lives to stand true to their beliefs. This period of martyrs may also include others—including Islamic religion wars as they come into power, and . The saints’ position—under the altar—may refer to them as sacrifices, or being protected by the sacrifice of the Lamb.

Rev 6:10–11 “And they cried with a loud voice saying, ‘How long, Holy and True Master, until you judge and avenge our blood?’ (NR) The persecuted and martyrs ask the Lord to avenge their blood with their heart-breaking pleas for justice. The word used here for “blood / *haima*” in Greek connotes “violent death and emphasizes the idea that the Saints

were hunted down and brutally killed” (ibid., 264). The prayers of the martyrs were not answered immediately, but as Jesus explained in the parable of the wheat and tares—the wicked and righteous are allowed to grow up together until the time of the harvest. The timing of God’s miracles and coming are evidence of the important and omniscience of His plan. **“each of them was given a white robe and they were told to rest”** (NR). Although their blood is not immediately avenged, the martyrs were given God’s greatest gift—exaltation. The prophet Jacob explained that after mortal death the white robes or righteousness are given to those worthy of eternal glory: “the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness” (2 Nephi 9:14; also see Isaiah 61:10; 2 Nephi 4:33; D&C 29:12; 109:76). The clothing that priesthood holders wore in the Israelite temples foreshadow these future “robes of righteousness” (Lev 16:23; 2 Chro 5:12; also, Alma 13:12–16). These saints are given the Lord’s “rest” which is “the fullness of his glory” (D&C 84:24; also see Moro 7:3; D&C 101:31-32). Alma also spoke of martyrs entering into the rest of the Lord (Alma 16:17; 60:13; etc.).

The Sixth Seal (Rev 6:12–17)

Rev 6:12–13 “When he opened the sixth seal . . . there was a great earthquake, and the sun turned black as sackcloth made of hair, and the entire moon was like blood. And the stars of the sky fell to earth . . .” (NR) John gives us more physical disasters from the sixth seal, which extends approximately from AD 1,000 to 2,000. This time was associated with natural disasters, including a great earthquake that affected mountains and islands (the first of three mentioned in John’s Book of Revelation). In Rev 16:18, earthquakes are used to represent God’s judgment. Human behavior affects not only the earth, but also the skies. In addition to the earth, the sun and moon abnormal behavior testify that the inhabitants of the earth are not aligned with God and His spiritual mourning. Similar prophecies are found in D&C 34:9. “before that great day shall come, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon be turned into blood; and the stars shall refuse their shining, and some shall fall, and great destructions await the wicked” (also see D&C 29:17; 88:87).

Rev 6:14 “The heavens opened as a scroll is opened when it is rolled together” (JST) The JST changes accurately reflect the Greek, which speaks of the heavens *apochórizó* / “to separate, part asunder” or “split apart.” When scrolls are unrolled, they disclose what is written inside. This may be another natural disaster, or perhaps it refers to the restoration when the heavens were opened when the fullness of God’s Gospel was restored through God, Jesus, and angels.

“and every mountain and island was moved out of its places” What does it mean that the mountains and islands were moved out of their places after this opening of the scroll? As this period of the sixth thousand year of the world’s history has already passed—it may include the 1815 volcanic eruption of Mt Tambora that caused the year without a summer, or the great yellow river flood in 1887 that killed two million people, or horrific earthquakes around the world. Volcanoes and tsunamis have changed the face of the land, but “every” may refer to all a figurative moving. Could it mean that knowledge of truth moved other stubborn previously permanent thoughts (like a mountain). Another possibility prophesied in D&C 133:21–24, “the islands shall become one land,” is often interpreted as our continents moving in the future. If Rev 6:14 is referring to this, then perhaps the length of the seal as a “thousand years” may be a general span of years on the Lord’s timetable, and not AD 1000 to 2000. We need not limit God’s understanding of geography and time to our limited comprehension.

Rev 6:15–16 “Then the kings of the earth . . . the rich, the mighty . . . both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called . . . ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!’” (NIV) Humans who have not repented were frightened to meet God. But their hiding places will not remove them from His judgments. Old and young, famous, bond, and free people of the earth will be ashamed or afraid and hide themselves from all the calamities and troubles. They will rather hide their sins than face their Creator.

Rev 6:17 “The great day of their anger is come; and who is able to stand?” (NR) This translation identifies God’s wrath in the plural—to both God the Father and His Son. From what we understand of God, his exercising of wrath or vengeance will be carried out for everyone’s good. Those who need to learn a lesson will still have an opportunity to learn it through humbling challenges. We believe God’s justice will be carried out with love for all Their creations in righteous.

Puritan theology felt the need to feel fear for God in order to avoid His wrath. Many Christians see the “great and terrible” day as a period to fear. But we believe that those who repent and strive to serve God will not need to fear. They will be able to stand in God’s presence as Rev 7:14 describes.

Revelation 7

The seventh chapter begins by continuing the discussion after the sixth seal—at the winding-up scenes of the earth’s history. Yet, right before the worst catastrophes, the Lord shows John the promised blessing that will be given to the righteous who come to Christ and valiantly keep their covenants. As a means of encouragement and explanation, the vision leaves its chronological order to show the fulfillment of God’s covenant with those who have been sealed. This detour is the first of John’s five interludes as diagrammed in our first class on Sept 8, 2020 (see Rev 10, 15, 17-18, 19).

In chapter seven, we read of the “sealed 144,000” purified saints who have been gathered at the throne of God (Rev 7:4, NIV). From this point on, the word “seal” takes on an additional meaning. Before it referred to the seals on the scroll; here it includes God’s seal on the righteous. John provides a vivid description of those saints who have prepared in righteousness to be sealed prior to the Second Coming of Christ. Paul and Joseph also referred to the sealing of the righteous: “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13; for more on the Holy Spirit of Promise’s conditional and permanent sealing see D&C 76:53; 88:3; 124:24; 132:7, 18-19, 26; and Ehat and Cook, *Words of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 26).

The First Interlude: Those Who Have Been Sealed

Rev 7:1 “I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth restraining the winds . . .” (NR) When the Bible refers to the four corners of the earth it usually means a geographic fullness, or the whole earth. Angels are messengers of God. When the Prophet Joseph asked the Lord to explain the role of these four angels, he learned that they each had special power:

- To save or destroy life
- To preside over the Lord’s worldwide missionary work
- To shut up the heavens
- To seal unto life or cast one into darkness

These four angels spread the gospel as well as destruction. Remember, “there are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong to or have belonged to it” (D&C 130:5).

“the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree” The angel stopping the wind may refer to stopping dangerous gusts up to hurricane levels, or possibly, a figurative use of holding back the “wind / *anemos* / empty doctrines” (*Strong’s Concordance*)

Rev 7:2 “I saw another angel ascending from the east holding the seal of the living God, and he shouted with a loud voice to the four angels who had been appointed to damage the earth and the sea, saying...” In D&C 77:9, we learn that this angel from the east (or “from the rising of the sun,” ESV) is an Elias. Elsewhere in scripture, the name Elias is used for different people (i.e. Elijah in Greek), and is also as a title for a forerunner (i.e. John the Baptist).

Here, Elias has God’s authority to direct other angels, seal God’s servants, and direct the later-day gathering of Israel and destruction. By combining this information within Rev 10 and D&C 77:14, we learn that John the Revelator is this Elias who will “restore all things” (D&C 77:9).

Rev 7:3 “Do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees” (NR) Before the destructions during the seventh seal, and the four angels will allow the winds to damage the earth, the angel from the East, Elias (John the Revelator), must make sure that the righteous are sealed and protected against harm. The timing is consistent with the surge in temple building over a few decades to allow this work to happen.

“until we seal the servants of our God on their foreheads” (NR) Anciently, putting a mark on the forehead had several implications. Some in the Greco-Roman world marked their foreheads with the god they worshiped for divine protection. Slave owners branded their slaves with a mark on their foreheads, forearm, or right palm. This came from the practice of slaves for life being marked by their owners in order to identify runaways. Later Christians were tattooed for their beliefs (Draper, Rhodes, *BYU NTC*, 287).

In the context of the sixth seal, the sealing is not a visible tattoo. In Rev 14:1 we learn that the saints had the “Father’s name written on their foreheads.” The Prophet Joseph expanded on this in a sermon: “Where it says and they shall seal the servants of God in their foreheads &c it means to seal the blessing on their heads meaning the everlasting covenant thereby making their calling & election sure” (“Discourse, 13 August 1843–A, as Reported by William Clayton,” *Joseph Smith Papers*).

D&C 77:8

Q. What are we to understand by the four angels spoken of in . . . [Rev 7:1]?

A. We are to understand that they are four angels sent forth from God, to whom is given power over the four parts of the earth, to save life and to destroy; these are they who have the everlasting gospel to commit to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; having power to shut up the heavens, to seal up unto life, or to cast down to the regions of darkness.

D&C 77:9

Q. What are we to understand by the angel ascending from the east [Rev 7:2]?

A. We are to understand that the angel ascending from the east is he to whom is given the seal of the living God over the twelve tribes of Israel; wherefore, he crieth unto the four angels having the everlasting gospel . . . this is Elias which was to come to gather together the tribes of Israel and restore all things.

D&C 77: 10

Q. What time are the things spoken of in [Rev 7]?

A. They are to be accomplished in the sixth thousand years, or the opening of the sixth seal.

144,000 Sealed

Rev 7:4 “Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel” (NIV) The number of souls who are sealed is symbolically significant. In scripture, twelve depicts God’s order or organization (i.e. twelve rotations of the moon around the sun every year, twelve tribes, apostles, and in the modern church, the twelfth-year young men begin service in the priesthood). Any number squared has even more significance. By adding one thousand it represents perfection (Draper, Rhodes, *BYU NT*, 292). Thus the 144,000 likely speaks of God’s complete or whole organization or righteous saints—male and female.

In D&C 77:11, we learn that those sealed are not the number saved, but representatives, like missionaries of the church of the First Born. In Nauvoo Joseph Smith taught a sermon on these verses:

It is not only necessary that you should be baptized for your dead, but you will have to go through all the ordinances for them, same as you have gone through to save yourselves; there will be 144,000 Saviors on Mount Zion, and with them an innumerable host, that no man can number. Oh! I beseech you to go forward, and make your calling and your election sure! (“History, 1838–1856, volume F-1 [1 May 1844–8 August 1844],” *josephsmithpapers.org*). Endowed saints who live their covenants are on the right path.

D&C 77:11

Q. What are we to understand by sealing the one hundred and forty-four thousand, out of all the tribes of Israel—twelve thousand out of every tribe?

A. We are to understand that those who are sealed are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn.

Rev 7:5–8 “From the tribe of . . .” The Lord’s organization lists His covenant people into the traditional twelve tribes of Israel. Often in the Old Testament, Ruben or Simeon are missing, with Joseph receiving a “double portion” for Ephraim and Manasseh (Deut 21:17; Joseph was the “first born” of the queen wife). But in this list, Dan is missing—possibly because of an idolatrous temple set up in his land (Judg 18:30; 1 King 12:29). Also, another tradition claimed the anti-Christ came from Dan (Draper, *BYU NT*, 291).

The Lord’s explanation in D&C 77:11, says they are ordained high priests from “every nation” to build the kingdom or spread the gospel. In the Restoration we also believe this may include endowed women. Pres. M. Russell Ballard, taught that “in the eternal perspective, both the procreative power and the priesthood power are shared by husband and wife” (“This Is My Work and Glory,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 19). Also see D&C 124:25–30; and 131:1–4.

Rev 7:9–10 “I looked, and there was a great crowd of every nation and tribe . . . standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb dressed in white robes and they had palm leaves in their hands” (NR) The innumerable group (far larger than the 144,000) of purified people praised God shouting, “Salvation belongs to our God and the Lamb” (RSV). Draper and Rhodes’ translation chose or “Victory belongs to our God” (NR), because the palms and white dress symbolized a double symbol of victory in the Greco-Roman world. (Alma 5:21–24 also alludes to this grand experience.)

Rev 7:11–12 “All the angels . . . elders . . . four animals . . . fell before the throne on their faces and worshipped God, saying ‘Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks. . .’ (NR) Those standing around the throne fall down in worship, and become a choir praising God. Their song includes seven attributes of God.

Rev 7:13–14 “One of the elders asked me, ‘These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?’ . . . he said, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb’” (NIV) The elder basically asks John, “Who will be able to stand the calamities of the last days?” Then the elder answers, “those who have been sealed.” Those in the white robes are defined as those who have applied the atoning sacrifice of the Son to their lives to be cleansed from the world and have endured through great tribulation to be accepted and thereby purified. The ancient OT priests are dressed in a similar fashion when serving in the tabernacle / temple as a type of those heavenly purified saints (also see D&C 138:13).

Rev 7:15-17 “They . . . serve him day and night in his temple . . . They shall hunger no more . . . For the Lamb . . . shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” These are those who have repented, accepted Jesus’ at-one-ment, and have been valiant in their testimonies and service to God. (Jesus taught the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well about these promises in John 4:10, 17; and again, in Capernaum in John 6:35; they are also described in D&C 76:70–79.) These saints serve God both in life and death. But, in heaven there is no hunger, excessive heat, no need for light, and God will comfort all sorrows (also see D&C 88:6–13; 97:21–16; John 4:10, 14).