

CHAPTER 6

Chapter 6 of Revelation describes the first six of the seven seals. (a useful mnemonic)

In addition to the basic structure of the scroll which was discussed in Chap 5, we should remember that the Bible which we enjoy today is divided into chapters and verses: These markers were later additions by editors which were not present in the original text.

As we have previously noted, this is the revelation of (and about) Jesus Christ, not St. John, as is often erroneously stated, and here is none other than the Lamb (John's preferred descriptor for Jesus) who is opening these seals himself.

The first four seals are accompanied by the expression, '*come and see*,' uttered by each of the four living creatures, respectively. There are three important points to keep in mind about these seals:

First, the seals are a chronological division of the events which are to take place. This in no way excludes that there will not, or could not, be some overlapping of events, but merely allows that these seals will be opened in a chronological order: Therefore, the Second Seal follows the First, the Fifth follows the Fourth, and so on; and by extension the events in the 1st Seal precede, at least to a large extent, those events revealed in the 2nd Seal.

Second, the seals, while containing much information, are primarily a broad and general description of the events which are to take place. Many of the subsequent chapters in Revelation will, in fact, provide additional information and insights into the happenings revealed within these seven seals.

Third, and this is a vital principle, the Seventh Seal (7th Seal) is not a description of general calamity or tribulation on the earth, but rather describes the direct intervention of God, and Jesus (the Lamb) in the form of their judgment on the evil present in the earth and specifically on the Beast-empire as revealed both in the Seven Trumpet Judgments AND the Seven Bowl Judgments.

The 7th Seal = The Seven Trumpet Judgements = The Seven Bowl (Vial) Judgements.

Revelation: Chapter 6 (The King James Version)

1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

There are two widely-held interpretations of the white horse and its rider:

One group attribute this description to Jesus Christ himself: Notice the horse is white, that he wears a crown, and is a conquerer. In this interpretive model, we find a 'pre-apocalypse' portrait of Christ. Also, notice there are no casualties mentioned; and he has a bow, but no arrows.

The alternative, opposing, and more widely-held view, is that this is an anti-Christ 'imposter' image, for we know that Christ is later depicted as returning on a white horse, where his choice of a weapon is a sword, "the word of God." Therefore, the picture here presented is essentially a depiction of a warlike character.

If not Christ, then who? Some commentators have, additionally, proposed that this rider is representative of the Prophet of Islam, and that the first five seals foretell in a broad historical perspective the rise of Islam, its violent subjugation of the lands under its control, and its notable persecution and martyrdom of vast numbers of Jesus' servants.

Other scholars have helpfully suggested the rather obvious parallels between these seals and the clear and sequentially harmonious warnings given by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew Chap 24: Therefore, I submit that this rider strongly appears to be an anti-christ figure, and is most likely the Beast-ruler, himself, as described in Revelation Chap 13.

Let's compare these passages side by side:

Matthew Chap 24: (NRSV)	Revelation Chapter 6:	Synthesis:
<i>4 Jesus answered them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah!' and they will lead many astray.</i>	The White Horse and its rider: The 1 st Seal: An anti-christ figure emerges (Rev 6:2)	Many false Christ will arise, but among them the 'Beast-ruler' (the anti-christ) who will be directed and controlled by Satan himself.
<i>6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom,</i>	The Red Horse and its rider: The 2 nd Seal: Wars and conflicts (Rev 6:4)	The Beast-ruler will engage in many wars of conquest; violence and lawlessness will increase.
<i>...and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: 8 all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.</i>	The Black Horse and its rider: The 3 rd Seal: Famine (Rev 6:6)	Famine will engulf much of the earth, largely as a result of these conflicts.

7...and pestilences;	The pale horse and its rider: The 4 th Seal: Death (Rev 6:8); Four primary causes: War, famine, deadly diseases (implied), and wild animals.	In Revelation, the addition of disease (pestilence) with, oddly enough, <i>'the wild animals of the earth'</i> will contribute to the deaths of many.
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As a further source of much conjecture, the first four seals are given without any specific time reference, thus a very pressing question quickly becomes: Are these events occurring within a relatively narrow time frame (Daniel's seventieth week of years, for instance) or, are they representative of a long view of history, or both? Many scholars have pointed out that biblical themes are often repetitive, and that one can find patterns of prophetic fulfillment repeated throughout scripture and therefore with many historical connections and allusions, as well. Along this line, the first four seals present a scenario of war and the consequences thereof, a subject found far too often in humankind's history.

In the 5th Seal we encounter persecution. While this may reflect on the recurrent theme of martyrdom faced by many believers in Jesus at various times in the Christian church's history – ancient Roman, Islamic, Ecclesiastical, Communist, to name just a few – it undoubtedly represents a final and intensified persecution occurring during the time of Daniel's 70th week, specifically, the timeframe after the abomination of desolation (A of D).

The first indication of events having no clear previous historical pattern (meaning that they are entirely new phenomena) occur in in the 6th Seal, where we find cosmic disturbances so arresting that they have no readily-acknowledged pattern in recently-recorded human history: Importantly, the world's reaction to these events confirms that mankind itself sees these signs as precursors to the wrath of God, so extraordinary that they will view these catastrophes as harbingers of the end of the world as we know it.

The Second Seal: Conflict on Earth

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

This is a general description of widespread bloodshed through the symbolism of the red horse. The picture presented here is of war and general lawlessness, and of a warrior-king who will be responsible for much of the violence on the earth. This is almost certainly a description of the Beast-ruler (some refer to him as the anti-Christ) and of his Beast-empire. This personage could have many forerunners found throughout the pages of both modern and ancient history: Nero and Hitler are frequently mentioned, but are by no means the only examples.

The Third Seal: Scarcity on Earth

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

Here is another broad picture of the state of want and famine on the earth, undoubtedly fueled by ongoing wars, conflicts, and lawlessness. Much as been written about the oil and wine reference: This may imply that basic foods like wheat and barley will be in short supply, but that luxury items will still be available, for those who can afford them.

The Fourth Seal: Widespread Death on Earth

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.¹

With the advance of time, the level of want and deprivation on earth explodes. The calamities outlined here describe a logical progression of events: War(s) leading to famine, pestilences, and disease caused from exposure to the elements and a lack of proper nutrition.

The phrase, *and power was given to them over a fourth of the earth* in verse 8 may imply something more geographical (or localized) in nature, thus, suggesting a certain part or section of the global population. {From Strong's Definitions Legend: γῆ γῆ, ghay; contracted from a primary word; soil; by extension a region, or the solid part or the whole of the terrene globe (including the occupants in each application):—country, earth(-ly), ground, land, world.}

Importantly, some translations do not directly imply that one fourth of the earth's population will necessarily be killed, but more specifically, that one fourth of the earth's inhabitants would be directly affected by these dreadful events.

Since 'death and hell' have power *given to them* over a fourth of the earth, a very practical query then becomes, who gives them this power?

A further prescient question immediately comes to mind: Do they (death and hell - implying the powers of evil itself) have power over the entire earth, from which one-fourth (1/4th) will be killed? Or, do they have power over one-fourth (1/4th) of the population of the earth from which many or most will be killed?

To gain some additional perspective let's examine a very literal reading from the Greek text:

6:7 καὶ ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν τετάρτην ἤκουσα φωνὴν τοῦ τετάρτου ζώου λέγοντος ἔρχου

6:8 καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἰδοὺ ἵππος γλωρός καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ ὄνομα αὐτῷ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ἄδης ἠκολούθει μετ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς ἐξουσία ἐπὶ τὸ τέταρτον τῆς γῆς ἀποκτεῖναι ἐν ῥομφαίᾳ καὶ ἐν λιμῷ καὶ ἐν θανάτῳ καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν θηρίων τῆς γῆς

¹ For a discussion of “the wild beasts of the earth” please see the discussion in the appendix.

And when it [he, Jesus] opens the seal of the fourth, I hear sounds of the fourth living animal [creature] saying: 'come and observe.' And I perceived and there was a green horse and the one sitting upon him was named death and the unseen [world, 'Hades'] is following with him and to them was given authority to kill on the fourth part of the land in [through] saber-blade [sword] and in [through] famine and in [through] death and by the beasts of the land. (Rev 6:7-8)

As the Greek text clearly seems to suggest that one-fourth (1/4th) of the world is directly impacted by these events, is it reasonable therefore to conclude that three-fourths (3/4^{ths}) of the earth isn't directly involved?

As we read through the entire text of Revelation it will become apparent that while these events will impact the entire globe, the focus of much of this coming conflict is Jerusalem-centric and concerns itself most directly with the nation of Israel and those nations in the surrounding, largely Islamic world, namely in the Middle East, central Asia, and North Africa.

The Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

The 5th Seal introduces a theme which will be repeated several times in the coming chapters: Many of those who believe in Jesus will be martyred during this period. This seal, therefore, argues directly against the often repeated proposition of a 'pre-tribulation rapture,' which we will deal with in more depth in the coming chapters. Here is also the first reference to the avenging of the blood of the martyrs, made even more interesting as this request comes from the martyrs themselves. This theme will be found again in Revelation Chap 19, specifically in reference to the destruction of Babylon.

Sixth Seal: Cosmic Disturbances

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Versus 12-17 are some of the most extraordinary and vivid descriptions in the whole Bible. This passage portrays disturbances occurring both on the earth and in the heavens: not only powerful earthquakes - consider the movements of tectonic plates strong enough to drop continents and reposition mountain ranges - but may suggest our ability and reliance upon basic measures of time, such as the sun and moon, will be radically upset. This passage could be interpreted to suggest that numerous asteroids will be striking the earth, and additionally, that large planetary bodies will come close enough to the earth to change the earth's rotational axis or speed of rotation resulting in a so-called 'polar shift.'

A polar shift (the earth literally being rotated on its side) does not merely suggest that the earth's magnetic field will alter itself, but that the entire planet will turn on its axis: Specifically, meaning that the earth's equator as it currently exists would be altered from its approximately 23° to a potentially significantly different axis, and thereby unleashing enormous climatic changes: tsunamis, earthquakes, lighting storms and the resultant fires they would produce. A polar shift is one phenomenon whereby the sky (the atmosphere) could, in fact, actually roll up on itself, and would, as well, result in the moving of islands and mountains out of their current topographical positions: Could this astronomically-induced event, with profound geological consequences be a causal agent for the phenomena which we see in described verse 14? ¹¹ Whatever the inciting event(s), the earth's geography, geology, and topography will be radically altered as this seal unfolds.

Verses 15-17 provide an extraordinary and unambiguous clue about what is to come, for in verse 17 it says, '*for the great day of his wrath has come.*' Again, this description of the wrath of the Lamb will be repeated in the coming chapters and paints an entirely different portrait of Jesus, who is not returning now as a suffering servant, but as a righteous and indignant judge prepared to pour out his wrath on those who have murdered his servants, hated his Jewish brothers, and destroyed his creation.

To summarize, the first six seals are a description of the state of the earth before the Christian church is removed. This event will most likely occur around the end of the 6th Seal as we will discuss in great detail in the coming chapters.

The first four seals are a general view of the Beast-ruler (the anti-christ), the wars that will be occurring under his direction, and the resulting calamities that follow them: hunger and starvation, disease and death. These conflicts appear to be caused, at least in large part, from the Beast-empire's aggression.

The 5th Seal is a separate seal that reveals and poignantly depicts the widespread persecution of the Christian church and the martyrdom of many people, especially those believers in Jesus.

These first five seals could represent a relatively narrow time window (exclusively centered on Daniel's seventieth week of years, for example), or could represent a more expansive view of the man's history and the persecution of the Church: In either scenario, though, the attacks on Christian believers are greatly intensified in the time leading up to Jesus's second

coming, strongly suggesting that this persecution will continue until the end of the 6th Seal.

The opening of the 6th Seal introduces a new and dramatic theme: massive planetary and earthly disruptions that will occur at this time. These disturbances will include enormous and devastating earthquakes; asteroids striking or, at a minimum, influencing the earth and her rotational stability; and descriptions suggestive of a polar shift leading to the displacements of islands and mountains: Thus, geological, astronomical, and weather-related changes to the earth which are so violent and extreme that even the earth's inhabitants will view them as a sign of divine anger.

The 7th Seal is God's (and his Christ's) judgment on a wicked and unrepentant earth, and specifically on the Beast-empire (the anti-christ kingdom): His church will not be present during this period.

I submit that the 7th Seal will encompass both the Seven Trumpet Judgments and the Seven Bowl Judgments: As we probe deeper into this revelation we will discover that these judgments are, in fact, the same series of judgments – not, as is often interpreted, two separate and chronologically distinct series of judgments, but rather, a series of judgements which are viewed from two somewhat different perspectives: the Trumpet Judgments, as revealed, being witnessed from heaven while the Seven Bowl (sometimes referred to as Vial) Judgments are fundamentally the same series of judgements (admittedly with some differing details) while being viewed from an earthly perspective. We will discuss this concept in much more detail in the coming chapters.

Let's now compare the signs of the 6th Seal as described in the three vignettes that St. John has recorded in the Book of Revelation:

The 6th Seal: A comparison of the 'signs' as found in chapters 6, 11 and 16.

Revelation 6:12-17 (Before the 7 th Seal)	Revelation 11:19 (After the 7 th Trumpet)	Revelation 16:18-21 (After the 7 th Bowl)
Great earthquake	Earthquake	Great earthquake: 'worst ever'
		Jerusalem divided into 3 parts
		Cities of the nations fell
	Babylon is fallen: (Revelation 14:8; Is: 21:9)	Babylon destroyed: God's wrath (Rev Chaps 17, 18)
Sun became black (Is. 13:10; Joel 3:15; Matt 24:29)		
Moon like blood (Is. 13:10; Joel 3:15; Matt 24:29)		
Stars of heaven fell to earth (Joel 3:15; Matt 24:29)		
Sky receded as a scroll (Is. 34:4)		
Mountains moved		And the mountains not found
Islands moved		Then, every island fled away
	Lightnings	Lightnings
	Noises	Noises
	Thunderings	Thunderings
	Great hail	Great hail (talent: 50-100 lbs):
'Hide us.' Men recognize God's wrath		Men blasphemed God

Here, when we view, side by side, these three passages from chapters 6, 11, and 16, respectively, the parallelism between the texts becomes clear. I submit, therefore, that these events must all be occurring within the 6th Seal, and thus preceding the 7th Seal judgments where both the trumpet and bowl judgments occur. These three descriptions of the 6th Seal are all complementary, and present, especially when taken together, a startling picture of what is taking place on the earth.

With some trepidation, I would like to weave these three descriptions together into a contemporary narrative. I am in no way trying to supplant the Holy Scriptures, and therefore, encourage everyone to read these inspired verses independently and make up their own mind.

The 6th Seal: A contemporary narrative of one possible scenario of coming events:

[At the time of the opening of the 6th Seal there will be a great earthquake - so great in fact, that there will have never previously been such a powerful earthquake in all of the history of mankind on the earth: It will be so devastating that the city of Jerusalem will actually be divided into three distinct parts, and moreover, the cities of those surrounding nations will be leveled.

During this time, God will also execute his final vengeance upon Babylon (the great false religion) and she will be destroyed by her enemies (Iran and others) through a massive nuclear attack and cease to exist as a nation.

Due to the earthquakes, volcanic activity, and the vast amounts of debris thrown into the air from the complete destruction of Babylon (Saudi Arabia), the air will be fouled, and the sun and moon will become obscured and darkened.

Premonitory signs will also be observable in the heavens as asteroids and other planetary objects will impact or influence the earth itself – likely inducing changes in its magnetic field, its speed of rotation, and radically altering the topography of the planet: These cosmic influences will cause cataclysmic changes to the earth's biosphere resulting in the phenomenon whereby the sky (the atmosphere) appears to roll up on itself, in addition to the movement and even disappearance of mountains and whole mountain ranges, and, as well, the movement of islands, including the submerging of coastal areas through tsunamis and the dramatic shifting of the earth's tectonic plates.

The atmospheric changes brought about by these events will also unleash unimaginably violent weather-related phenomena, including both electrical- and thunder-storms, as well as inundating rainfall, and will even generate massive hailstones, some weighing as much as 100 pounds: These hailstones will be so destructive that many men will curse God while others will hide themselves in caves and mountains, finally realizing that the day of God's wrath has arrived.]

Interestingly, Isaiah 13:13 states *that the earth shall remove out of her place*: This may suggest that the current celestial position of the earth in relationship to our sun will be significantly altered. Isaiah 24:20, moreover, reports that *the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard*: What an astonishing description, further implying that some (as yet unknown) astronomical agent will be significantly influencing the earth's rotational stability.

During the 6th Seal, in addition to the destruction of Babylon, two events of prime importance will take place: First, the gospel, simply meaning the good news of Jesus Christ, will be preached to the entire world; and second, his church (those who believe in Jesus) will be removed (raptured or reaped), thus allowing for the opening of the 7th Seal when God's wrath will be poured out upon the Beast-empire.

It should be noted that the events taking place within the 6th Seal describe (with the notable exception of the destruction of Babylon) calamities largely occurring from within the realm of the natural world: Thus, phenomena that are being effected through natural or physical laws, dramatic though they may seem. What is even more noteworthy is that the removal (the reaping or rapture) of the Christian church, as we have previously discussed, occurs toward the end of this period. It is important, as well, to emphasize that God's specific judgements upon the Beast-empire (those found in the 7th Seal) have not yet even begun.

The progression into the 7th Seal and its judgements (both Trumpet and Bowl) are initially a

continuation of those themes found within the 6th Seal, meaning naturally-occurring disasters such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, asteroids, and massive changes to the earth's topography, all serving as God's final warning upon a rebellious and unrepentant world. While they may seem unfamiliar to us today, a study of earth's long history actually reveals repeated examples of similarly devastating phenomena which have affected and dramatically altered life on this planet periodically from time to time. The intensity and rapidity of these last seven plagues, though, is both startling and sobering in its impact on the earth and her inhabitants.

Far from suggesting that these “signs” are to be exclusively interpreted “literally,” I would certainly concede and even encourage the reader to additionally consider their more general, symbolical, or even metaphorical interpretations. In order to gain a more complete and fully-encompassing perspective, let's look at some of these events in this light, and how they might unfold:

Earthquakes: There will be “great shakings” in the earth and among its people:

“This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.’” (Haggai 2:6 NIV)

Candidates for this coming shaking might potentially include:

- Wars, including horrific nuclear exchanges with resulting mass casualties
- Waves of human migration and the movement of vast numbers of people due to conflicts and other factors, destabilizing nations and even whole continents
- Climatic changes and plagues of locusts leading to crop failures and widespread famines
- Disease outbreaks due to wars, poor nutrition and lack of medical care
- The introduction of biological agents (for instance, the corona virus: a pestilence), which have been demonstrated to have the ability to bring the world to its knees in a matter of a few short weeks
- Total economic collapse, as the debt-fiat system finally dissolves under the weight of its own insolvency
- A complete breakdown in societal order due to any number of the factors listed above

Any, or all of these taken together have the potential to be described as the greatest shaking to effect the world in the history of humankind. As we have already seen many of these calamities described for us in the first four seals, they should come as a surprise to no one.

The coming messiah is described as the *Sun of righteousness* by the prophet Malachi in the Old Testament, and to this end the “sun” will be become black, as Jesus, the Son of God withdraws his light from the world. Jesus describes himself in John's Gospel as *the light of the world* (John 8:12) and thus, as humankind increasingly separates itself from Him, He will, in turn, withdraw the light of his presence from the world and its affairs: Things are going to get very dark, indeed.

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. (Malachi 4:2)

The moon, as a natural reflector, will in these last days predictably darkly mirror the events

happening on earth. The blood red color may thus be a metaphorical allusion to the conflict, carnage and wanton loss of life occurring on the earth at this time. This may, more specifically, represent the horrors of the 5th Seal persecutions, resulting in the deaths of many Christians and Jews.

The stars will fall to earth: In addition to any cosmic phenomena – asteroids, comets, or rogue planets, for instance - we are clearly informed in Revelation that this description has spiritual foundations as well, for Satan himself, and fallen angels will be cast down to the earth to work their mischief among those who worship the beast and his image. The earth, and its inhabitants will, in short order, fully experience the folly of desiring the lords of darkness over the one who first called light into existence and is himself the *light of the world*.

The sky receded as as a scroll: This curious expression has intrigued countless readers over the centuries. Perhaps this is a broad metaphor for the completion of this era of the earth's history, as a seven-sealed scroll is effectively the symbol that Revelation employs as God's last testament to the earth and her inhabitants. Other interpretations might suggest that the sky is actually being prepared for the imminent return of Jesus in the clouds, and the rapture of His bride, the church; Could it even imply the removal of earth's protective atmospheric shield in preparation for the 7th Seal plagues, soon to be raining down upon the Beast and those who worship him?

Let's look at two examples illustrating the errors of being too literal vs. too metaphorical:

First, we have already mentioned how the millennial reign of Christ is viewed by many reformed theologians, often being interpreted as a metaphor for the improvement to humankind and its condition due to the influence of Christianity in the world: in other words, the world will increasingly become a much better, “more Christian” place, so good in fact, that it will be just as if Jesus had come back and set up his kingdom, all without the necessity of Jesus actually coming back. As we look at the state of the world today, this unnecessarily rosy view of things is becoming increasingly fanciful and unlikely, to say the very least.

On the other hand, Babylon is described as a *destroying mountain* in Jeremiah Chap 51, and we will discover in the coming chapters that the writers of the Bible often use mountains to represent earthly kingdoms. Thus, the Babylon here referenced is not an active volcano, located on the Ring of Fire, spewing out clouds of ash and pyroclastic flows, but a metaphorical portrait of a place: a geopolitical entity, existing in time and space that creates mayhem in the world. These vivid allusions should always be examined in the context in which they are used.

And here in these texts we see *every mountain and island moved out of its place* (Rev 6:14): What striking language St. John uses! A potential scenario that could play out on the world's stage might suggest that major world powers (perhaps the United States, Russia, or China) would be moved out of their positions of prominence, or even disappear completely, ie. *not found*. It's not difficult to imagine some of the potential causes for such a startling proposition: massive nuclear exchanges; total economic collapse; biological agents, decimating populations. Bear in mind, these events were already predicted in the first four

seals. If you are of the opinion that the Jerusalem-centric view should always to be considered first, then this may be foretelling the destruction of Saudi Arabia or the forced incorporation Egypt into the Beast-empire (as implied in Daniel's prophecies).

The isles: Traditionally, this expression has been understood by a majority of commentators in various biblical texts to represent places that are, in a very basic sense, “across the water:” in other words, distant lands and continents. To the writers of the Bible who lived in and around Israel and the Levant this may have referred to Crete, Malta, or the coasts of Italy and Spain, and because the earth's surface is roughly seventy percent (70%) water, in a very real sense, much of our world that is not contiguous, are, in fact, “the isles.” This text may therefore be underscoring that the events shaking the world will not be limited to the lands of the Middle East, but have far reaching consequences for every corner of the globe: This concept will be repeated in Revelation Chap 10.

So literal vs. figurative? That is, as they say, the question.

As we've already looked at various texts (and have not even begun to scratch the surface), I would simply summarize this topic by returning to the topic of earthquakes: To this end:

- If you live in an area where there are known geological faults, you should expect and prepare for significant seismic activity;
- If you are a human being alive on planet earth at the time of these events, you may experience dramatic upheavals to all your preconceptions about the world and its affairs;
- And in every case, *pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.* (Luke 21:15)

In other words, the answer is, YES.

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A question of both practical and theological importance could be posed: Why is the Christian church allowed to experience both the great persecutions of the 5th Seal, and, as well, the 6th Seal cosmic disturbances, which will be so devastating to the planet? This question is as old, or older, than the Book of Job itself: A clue to the question of persecution is perhaps found in one of the letters to the seven churches found in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, where, Jesus Christ, himself, when addressing specifically the church of Thyratira, (which most theologians believe to represent the Medieval Church, and thus the Roman Catholic Church) gives a sobering warning: Rev 2:22 *Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.* This admonition certainly implies an element of judgement for certain especially egregious sins of the church, or at the very least, of its leaders.

As to the question of the 6th Seal calamities that will befall the earth, I am convinced that this represents a 'last opportunity,' as a final witness of the true believers in Jesus, imploring the rest of the world to '*seek the Lord while He may be found,*' (Isaiah 55:6), and as a warning of the sad fate that will be awaiting them otherwise.