

The Seals in Revelation 6

| VERSES | LIVING CREATURE | SEAL COLOR | RIDER | WHAT IS REVEALED | NOTES |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Seals 1-4 | | | | | |
| 6.1-2 | First (lion) | white | Carrying a bow, wearing a crown, conquering | The empire's claim to have conquered the world is shown to be challenged by an army of mounted archers | Mounted archers could imply Parthians to the East, or others from outside the empire |
| 6.3-4 | Second (bull) | red | Carrying a "great sword" (<i>machaira</i> ; 13.10, 14); cf. <i>romphaia</i> , v. 8) | The imperial "peace" cannot hold; internal war within the empire has ensued | "As long as Caesar is the guardian of the state, neither civil dissension nor violence shall banish peace" (Horace, <i>Odes</i> 4.15). |
| 6.5-6 | Third (human face) | black | Carrying scales | Imperial economy is unsustainable; food shortages cause strife and rivalry among wealthy landowners (<i>latifundia</i>) | A <i>choenix</i> of wheat "normally" cost 1/16 denarius, and barley about half that. The annual cereal crops compete with the perennial vineyards/orchards amid famine. |
| 6.7-8 | Fourth (eagle) | Yellow-green (<i>chloros</i>) | Death, with Hades following | The "true" ruler of the empire is Death. | "sword, famine, pestilence": a standard biblical formula for a collapsing social order; e.g., Jer 15.2-3; 34.17; Ezek 14.21 |
| Seals 5-6 | | | | | |
| VERSES | COLOR | WHO SPEAKS | WHAT IS REVEALED | NOTES | |

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| 6.9-11 | White | Those who had been killed for the Word of God and their witness | The yearning for vengeance prevents having “ears to hear” the Good News of God’s victory | Title for God, <i>despotes</i> , was used for Roman emperor Domitian (late first century CE) NRSV is misleading in “number” of those to be killed. |
| 6.12-17 | Black/red | Kings, “big men,” military leaders, rich/powerful, slave/free | The system upon which they rely is doomed; their claims to authority are satirized | Isa 34.4 and Hosea 10.8 are in the background. |