

Table 4: Revelation's first four seals in cultural context (Rev 6.2-8)

a white horse! Its rider had a bow; a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer.	Mounted archers symbolize the Persians, the perennial Eastern threat to Rome. In other words, Rome does not control the world; its power is contested
another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another; and he was given a great sword.	Civil war and other internal power struggles show the empire's inherent instability
a black horse! Its rider held a pair of scales in his hand, and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's pay, and three quarts of barley for a day's pay, but do not damage the olive oil and the wine!"	The economy is an ongoing battle between Rome's need to feed people (barley) and the landed gentry's desire for long-term profit (olive oil and wine)
a pale green horse! Its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed with him; they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, famine, and pestilence, and by the wild animals of the earth.	Like empires before it, Rome brings death and suffering across the earth; "sword, famine and pestilence" is used many times by Jeremiah and Ezekiel to express the consequences of not listening to God.