COMMENTARIES ...

- is preparation for the wrath described in Revelation 6–19. It seems strange to us that worship and judgment should go together, but this is because we do not fully understand either the holiness of God or the sinfulness of man. Nor do we grasp the total picture of what God wants to accomplish and how the forces of evil have opposed Him. God is long-suffering, but eventually He must judge sin and vindicate His servants. [Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible exposition commentary (Vol. 2, p. 586). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.]
- As you study these fourteen action-filled chapters, keep in mind that John wrote to encourage God's people in every age of history. He was not only writing prophecy that would be fulfilled in the end times; but he was also writing great theology and dramatically revealing the character of God and the principles of His kingdom. These chapters describe the cosmic conflict between God and Satan, the New Jerusalem and Babylon; and no matter what "key" a student may use to unlock Revelation, he cannot help but see the exalted King of kings as He vindicates His people and gives victory to His overcomers. [Ibid.]
- Since the church never knows when Christ will return, each generation must live in expectancy of His coming. Therefore the Book of Revelation must be able to communicate truth to each generation, not just to the people who will be alive when these events occur. Verses like Revelation 13:9; 16:15; and 22:7,

- 18–20 all indicate the timelessness of John's message. This also explains why the apostle used so much symbolism, for symbols never lose their meaning. In every era of its history, the church has had to contend with Babylon (compare Revelation 18:4 with Jeremiah 50–51) and Antichrist (see 1 John 2:18ff). Revelation 6–19 is merely the climax of this conflict. [Ibid.]
- (6:1-2) The first seal: Many interpreters regard the conquering horseman as Christ and link the passage with the vision of the returning Lord in 19:11–12. The only element in common in the two pictures, however, is the white horse, a symbol of victory ... in view of the evident similarity of the four horsemen, it seems more natural to interpret all four as symbolizing judgments. This rider appears to signify an overwhelmingly powerful military force. [Beasley-Murray, G. R. (1994). Revelation. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), New Bible commentary: 21st century edition (4th ed., p. 1435). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.]
- on the fiery red horse also denotes a warring power. If it is to be asked how he differs from the first, the language suggests that the first rider represents an army invading other countries; the second a general confusion of strife, including hostilities between countries, and perhaps even civil war (... to make men slay each other). Note the double reference to war in Mark 13:7–8 and

- parallels. [Ibid.]
- **(6:5–6) The third seal:** The rider on a black horse denotes famine. The balance in his hand suggests scarcity of food, the prices quoted are prohibitive. [Ibid.]
- **(6:7-8) The fourth seal:** The fourth rider is named Death, but it is likely that it represents a special kind of death, namely pestilence ... That Hades was following close behind is a reminder that death does not end life's story; judgment awaits sinners (cf. Hebrews 9:27–28). [Ibid.]
- (6:9-11) The fifth seal: The souls of the martyrs were under the altar because they had been, as it were, 'sacrificed' (cf. Philippians 2:17; 2 Timothy 4:6). In the light of 12:17 the testimony the martyrs had maintained is the testimony of Jesus (see also 1:2 and 19:10). The white robe given to them is likely to be a representation of their justification through Christ in face of their condemnation by the world, and so a sign and pledge of the glory which is to be theirs in the 'first resurrection' (20:4-6). This vision of the martyrs is viewed as an integral part of the judgments of the Lord, for the prayer for justice (10) is answered, and the end thereby hastened. [Ibid.]
- (6:12-17) The sixth seal: The description of the cosmic signs at the end of the age is drawn from a number of OT passages that speak of the day of the Lord (for a great earthquake as a sign of the end, cf. Ezekiel 38:19-20; for the sun turning black like sackcloth and the moon blood red see Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7–8; Joel 2:10; 3:15; for the falling stars and the rolling up of the sky like a scroll see Isaiah 34:4; for the hiding in the rocks see Isaiah 2:10; and for prayer to the mountains see Hosea 10:8). These 'signs' are indications not that the end is drawing near but that it has arrived. They originally were pictorial expressions of the terror of the universe before the majesty of the Creator as he steps forth in judgment and deliverance (see especially Habakkuk 3:6-11), and so served to magnify the awesomeness of the Lord in his theophany. [Ibid.]
- (Hebrews 9:27–28 NIV) Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

