

The Sixth Seal (D. Mar)
A series on Divine Judgment (part 8)

When Jesus breaks the sixth seal, the apostle John sees catastrophic events occurring on earth:

I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Rev 6:12-17)

In reading this passage, there are two significant observations that can be made.

1. Of all the seals, trumpets and bowls that result in something happening on earth, this is the only one where there is no mention of an angel carrying out God's judgment.
2. The catastrophic events of the sixth seal appear to be very similar, if not identical, to the events caused by the seventh bowl (Rev 16:17-21). This particular observation has been noticed by many other scholars.

The Sixth Seal Lacks an Angelic Mediator

Whenever God does something to earth, He either does it Himself (Gen 1:1-31), or uses an angelic mediator (Gen 19:12-13) or human agent (Ex 4:1-9, 17). However, none of these actions are noted when Jesus Christ breaks the sixth seal; the apostle John just records what he sees as the result.

This exception is more apparent when examining the seals, trumpets and bowls of Revelation.

	Angel does something to earth
Seal 1 (Rev 6:1-2)	Angel on white horse
Seal 2 (Rev 6:3-4)	Angel on red horse
Seal 3 (Rev 6:5-6)	Angel on black horse
Seal 4 (Rev 6:7-8)	Angel on ashen horse
Seal 5 (Rev 6:9-11)	Not Applicable: a heavenly event occurs
Seal 6 (Rev 6:12-17)	Exception: No angel is mentioned!
Seal 7 (Rev 8:1-5)	Angel threw something
Trumpet 1 (Rev 8:7)	Angel threw something (Rev 7:2-3)
Trumpet 2 (Rev 8:8-9)	Angel threw something (Rev 7:2-3)
Trumpet 3 (Rev 8:10-11)	Angel threw something (Rev 7:2-3)

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	Angel does something to earth
Trumpet 4 (Rev 8:12-13)	Angel threw something (Rev 7:2-3)
Trumpet 5 (Rev 9:1-12)	Angel takes a key and opens the abyss
Trumpet 6 (Rev 9:13-21)	Four earth bound angels are released
Trumpet 7 (Rev 11:15-19)	Angel(s) begin reaping the earth (Rev 14:14-20)
Bowl 1 (Rev 16:1-2)	Angel pours a bowl
Bowl 2 (Rev 16:1, 3)	Angel pours a bowl
Bowl 3 (Rev 16:1, 4-7)	Angel pours a bowl
Bowl 4 (Rev 16:1, 8-9)	Angel pours a bowl
Bowl 5 (Rev 16:1, 10-11)	Angel pours a bowl
Bowl 6 (Rev 16:1, 12)	Angel pours a bowl
Bowl 7 (Rev 16:1, 17-21)	Angel pours a bowl

The Events of the Sixth Seal are Identical to the Seventh Bowl

Of the sixth seal and seventh bowl, the apostle John reports a “great earthquake” where “every island and mountain” moved such that they could not be found in their original location. The apostle’s report of the seventh bowl’s earthquake as being the greatest that the earth has experienced since the existence of man indicates that this catastrophic event was a one time event.

Seal 6 (Rev 6:12-17)	Bowl 7 (Rev 16:17-21)
I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake ; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places . Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”	Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done.” And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth , so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found . And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

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In consideration of these two observations, the sixth seal lacks an angelic mediator and the events of the sixth seal are identical to the seventh bowl, it suggests that the breaking of the sixth seal encompasses all of the events from the seventh seal to the seventh bowl.

When Jesus Christ breaks the sixth seal, the apostle John records the resulting consequence.

In the course of recording the events of the seventh seal, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls, the apostle is observing the successive angelic mediated events that culminate in the catastrophic event of the seventh bowl which appears contemporaneously as the sixth seal.

On a chart, this appears as follows:

Seal 6		
Seal 7	Trumpets 1-7	Bowls 1-7

With this understanding, there are two significant implications:

1. The book of Revelation can be read naturally as a continuous historical narrative including each interlude in its place; God's unfolding plan of judgment can be understood in a continuous sequential manner. There is no need to take apart and rearrange the sequence to make sense of the apostle John's recording.
2. One might object to the perceived redundancy of the effects of sixth seal and the seventh bowl; however, there is good reason for this. God's work of judgment is completely done after His Son breaks the sixth seal and its consequence fully realized (Rev 15:1; 16:17). Just as He completes Creation in six days (Gen 2:2), God completes His work of judgment in six seals and recovers what was lost from the Fall, which was the image of God (Dan 9:24). The writer of Hebrews refers to what follows after, when glorified Believers will enter into His Sabbath rest which is the eternal Sabbath.

Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said,

"As I swore in My wrath,
They shall not enter My rest,"

although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; and again in this passage, "They shall not enter My rest." Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before,

"Today if you hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts."

For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. **So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.** For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. (Heb 4:1-11)