To stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:36)

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Bible Versions
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Other versions: See footnote 1.[1]

(Note: All underlining of Scripture quotations for emphasis has been added by the author.)

Consider the following Scriptures, all of which relate to Jesus' first-century coming (his *Parousia*) and the judgment of the nations that transpired at that time:

Luke 21:36:
"So keep watch at all times, and pray that you may have the strength to escape all that is about to happen and <u>to stand before the Son of Man</u>."

Isaiah 66:5-6:
5 *You who tremble at His word, hear the word of the LORD: "Your brothers who hate you and exclude you because of My name have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified that we may see your joy!'*
But <u>they will be put to shame</u>."
6 *Hear the uproar from the city; listen to the voice from the temple! It is the voice of the LORD, repaying His enemies what they deserve!*

Malachi 3:2 (MEV):
But who can endure the day of his coming, and <u>who can stand when he appears</u>?
For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.

Matthew 16:27-28 (MEV):
27 *"For the Son of Man shall come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will repay every man according to his works.*
28 *Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."*

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Hebrews 10:35-39:

[35] *So do not throw away your confidence; it holds a great reward.*

[36] *You need to persevere, so that … you will receive what He has promised.*

[37] *For,*

"In just a little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay.

[38] *But My righteous one will live by faith; and if he shrinks back, I will take no pleasure in him."*

[39] *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.*

1 John 2:28 (HCSB):

So now, little children, remain in Him, so that when He appears we may have boldness and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

1 John 4:17 (MEV):

In this way God's love is perfected in us, so that we may have boldness on the Day of Judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world.

Revelation 3:9: (my translation):

"Behold, I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan — who call themselves Jews though they are not, but are liars — behold, I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you."

Revelation 6:16-17 (HCSB):

[16] *And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb,* [17] *because the great day of Their wrath has come! And who is able to stand?"*

Luke 21:22:

"For these are the days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written."

The Final Judgment

As Matthew 16:27-28 makes very clear, the Day of Judgment was to transpire in the 1st century.

In Luke 21:22 Jesus declares that this judgment would represent the definitive fulfillment of all Old Testament Day-of-Vengeance and Day-of-the-Lord prophecies.

All the events of the Olivet Discourse were to transpire in that generation (Lk 21:32; Mt 24:34).

The Judgment was fulfilled in part in the events of the Jewish War and the fall of Jerusalem (Lk 21:20-24).

But at that same time, the nations and people of the Roman world were judged — those that had had the gospel proclaimed to them (Mt 24:14). This judgment of the nations is graphically depicted in Matthew 25:31-46.

The basis of judgment was how each person had treated Christ's persecuted and harassed followers — his "brothers" (Mt 25:40, 45; cf. 10:42).

Most had responded to the gospel and to his emissaries with hatred and persecution (Mt 24:9).

Note that ALL of the verses cited above, including those from the Old Testament, relate to this first-century judgment.

The two responses on Judgment Day

Wherever the gospel is proclaimed it demands a response.
Either people believe the good news about Jesus and his salvation, or they resist and rebel.
Just two responses.
So when Jesus returned and called people to account during those years (66-70 AD), there were again just two responses.
One group were bold and confident, having trusted in the Lord and longed for his appearing.
The others were "ashamed".
How did this work out in practice?

In the Jewish communities especially, the gospel divided families down the middle (Mt 10:34-37).[2]
Some believed Jesus to be the promised Messiah, but most did not.
That led to believers being socially ostracized and excluded from the synagogues, economically exploited, hauled before the courts, and even imprisoned (Heb 10:33-34; 13:2; Jas 2:6; 5:4). Something similar no doubt transpired in the more Gentile communities. Basic justice would be denied to believers (Lk 18:1-8).
Jewish believers could, already by the early 60s AD, see the signs of impending judgment upon their nation.
See Hebrews 10:25; James 5:1-9.

In the first-century Roman world you had two groups claiming to be the people of God — Jews and Christians.
Gentile unbelievers would no doubt have been aware of these rival claims as well.
So what happened in AD 70, with the dramatic fall of Jerusalem, one group was vindicated and the other group discredited. Christian believers were vindicated. Unbelieving Jews were put to shame.
In the province of Asia Jewish persecution must have been a headache for Christians. Jesus twice calls these persecutors the "synagogue of Satan" (Rev 2:9; 3:9). But before long they would be forced to acknowledge that Christian believers were the true people of God. Already, by late 66 with the outbreak of their War with Rome, Jews everywhere (both believing and unbelieving) would have been feeling the heat. Josephus reports that massacres of many thousands of Jews occurred in several cities (50,000 in Alexandria alone).

The application for us today is that we are judged immediately when we die. See Hebrews 9:27.
Believers are themselves judged and rewarded in accordance with what they have done for the Lord (2Cor 5:10).
Though we can of course be confident that Christ has dealt with our sins and we are even now justified in God's sight — acquitted and declared righteous and acceptable in him (2Cor 5:21; Php 3:9; Rom 4:5-8).

We shall now examine in more detail three of the passages cited above.

[2] The Jews comprised about 7% of the Empire's population (7% of 70 million = ca. 5 million total). In some areas they constituted a much higher proportion: 40% in Alexandria, and probably well over 10% in Syria and the province of Asia. Undoubtedly the Jews exerted considerable economic clout throughout the Empire as well.

Isaiah 66:5-6 undoubtedly has the first-century situation in view.
Two groups of people are mentioned:
Those who tremble at God's word (66:2, 5), and those who mindlessly cling to the temple ritual (66:3).
The entire context is the restoration of Jerusalem (from Isaiah 65:18 on).
As always, the faithful remnant are persecuted by wicked apostates within the nation.
But judgment comes from the Lord himself — from the very temple they trust in (66:6).
The wicked hate their brothers and exclude them (66:5). They challenge them with sarcasm:
"Let the Lord act on your behalf so we may witness your joy." But they will themselves be put to shame.
It may well be that John in his first epistle has this very passage from Isaiah in mind when he speaks of being bold or confident and not ashamed when Jesus appears (1Jn 2:28; 4:17).
Indeed, the entire background to John's letter is not some incipient form of Gnosticism, but rather the Jewish-Christian conflict. Themes shared with his gospel should make that obvious: light vs. darkness; love vs. hatred; children of God vs. children of the devil — see 1 John 2:9, 11; 3:10; 4:20.
This of course means that John's letter was written much earlier than is commonly supposed — in the 60s AD.
Note how Isaiah goes on to describe the sudden delivery of children who will populate Zion (66:7-8).
We should think here of the sudden birth of the Church on the day of Pentecost — in the very heart of Jerusalem itself! Three thousand converts in one day (Acts 2).
In the prophets, <u>Israel's salvation comes through judgment and transformation</u>.
Israel will be judged, and ultimately so too will her oppressors and enemies.
Israel (or Jerusalem) will be purged of evildoers, and a godly remnant will survive or return to inhabit the land.
This is precisely what we see in the latter chapters of Isaiah.
The Church, comprising believing Jews and Gentiles, represents Israel transformed (Gal 6:16).

Malachi 3:2. God here is promising to visit his people:
"And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight." (Malachi 3:1b, MEV)
He will come not in peace, but in judgment to refine the nation, punishing and destroying the wicked.
"Elijah" will appear prior to the Day of Judgment — fulfilled in John the Baptist (Mal 4:5; Mt 11:14; 17:10-13).
John indeed continued in his own preaching the judgment message of Malachi — see Matthew 3:7-12.
God's curse in Malachi 4:6 — the threat of total and irrevocable destruction — befell the nation in AD 70.

Revelation 6:16-17.
The "great day of Their wrath" obviously harks back to Malachi 4:5.
Recall how Jesus had warned the women of Jerusalem, using similar language borrowed from Hosea 10:8:

> **Luke 23:28-30** (ESV):
> 28 *But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.*
> 29 *For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'*
> 30 *Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.'"*

My point is this:
The six seals of Revelation 6 relate to the Jewish War and its culmination in the siege of Jerusalem.