

John the Revelator

This is a traditional call-and-response song. It was first recorded in 1930 by Blind Willie Johnson. Performed as blues, gospel, and bluegrass; often performed a *capella*. Covered by Ralph Stanley, Son House, Gov't Mule, Curtis Stigers ("Sons of Anarchy" TV show), John Mellencamp, and in the Blues Brothers movie. John of Patmos (Greece) wrote The Book of Revelation. The title comes from the Greek word *apokalypsis*, meaning "unveiling" or "revelation." The Seven Seals refers to symbolic seals that secure the scroll. The opening of each Seal brings cataclysm and judgment.

There are two versions of the verses. The first is full of apocalyptic language. The second is the more familiar one, below. The song is done slowly, often in monotone (chanted) with just one chord (A-minor), a drum, and/or hand clapping throughout the song.

Start with the chorus, *acapella*, with clapping:

Tell me who's that writin'? - John the Revelator
Tell me who's that writin'? - John the Revelator
Tell me who's that writin'? - John the Revelator
Wrote the Book of the Seven Seals.

Repeat the chorus, with instrument(s), and continue with verse/chorus/break, etc.:

Am
Tell me who's that writin'? - John the Revelator
Tell me who's that writin'? - John the Revelator
Tell me who's that writin'? - John the Revelator
E Am
Wrote the Book of the Seven Seals.

Am
You know God walked down in the cool of the day
Called Adam by his name
But he refused to answer

E Am
'Cause he was naked and ashamed

CHORUS - then BREAK

Am
Well, Christ had twelve apostles
And three he led away
He said, "Watch with me one hour,
E Am
While I go yonder and pray."

CHORUS - then BREAK

Am
Christ came on Easter morning
Mary and Martha went down to see
He said, "Go tell my disciples

E Am
To meet me in Galilee."

CHORUS (twice)