

## **Session 5 The Seals of Judgment and God's Protection (Rev. 6-7)**

### **I. INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVEN SEALS**

- A. Jesus took the scroll that was sealed with seven seals from the hand of the Father (Rev. 5:7). It represents the ***title deed*** of the earth and the ***action plan*** required to cleanse the earth. One by one, Jesus opens each seal, which releases judgment against those who align with Babylon.
- B. The seven seals are ***literal*** (not merely symbolic), ***future*** (their greatest fulfillment is future), ***progressive*** (increasing in intensity), and ***numbered*** (released in a sequential order).
- C. Each seal leads to the unfolding of the next seal in a natural way. For example, the Antichrist of the first seal (Rev. 6:2) leads us to a world war in the second seal, which in turn causes famine and economic crisis in the next seal, then pestilence and disease, etc.
- D. The timing in which Jesus opens the seals is an interpretive key to Revelation. I believe Jesus has not yet opened the scroll. It was not opened at the time of Jesus' ascension (30 AD) but would be sometime after Rev. 2-3 (90 AD; Rev. 4:1), and only after the bowls of prayer are full (Rev. 5:8).  
*<sup>1</sup>After these things... "I will show you things which must take place after this." (Rev. 4:1)*  
*<sup>8</sup>When He [Jesus] had taken the scroll...the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (Rev. 5:8)*
- E. God's judgments will be released against the great harlot Babylon and the Antichrist by a mature, worldwide prayer movement in the way that Moses released the plagues of Egypt. God's judgments against the wicked in the first four seals are a result of God taking His restraining hand off of evil men, thus allowing them to sin in an unrestrained way against one another. The Antichrist here acts against the harlot, yet the devastation reaches back to his worldwide empire.
- F. The seven seals are released by Jesus, the Lamb of God (Rev. 5:5; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1). Jesus releases the seal judgments against the harlot and the Antichrist's empire. The purpose of all seven seals is to release judgment on the kingdom of darkness to hinder the Antichrist's empire from spreading evil and from persecuting the saints, while causing unbelievers to cry out for salvation.  
*<sup>1</sup>I saw when the Lamb [Jesus] opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." (Rev. 6:1)*
- G. We receive the same twofold call that John received to come and see. John was to ***come***, or draw closer to God to position his heart to understand God's heart, and then to ***see***, or to pay attention.

- H. God's judgment is not on the saints. His judgments remove all that hinders love.  
**Principle of judgment:** Using the least severe means to reach the greatest number at the deepest level of love without violating anyone's free will.

<sup>9</sup>***God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through...Jesus. (1 Thes. 5:9)***

## II. FIRST SEAL: ANTICHRIST'S POLITICAL AGGRESSION

<sup>2</sup>***I looked, and behold, a white horse. He [Antichrist] who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. (Rev. 6:2)***

- A. In the first seal, God judges the harlot, who will murder the saints (Rev. 17:6, 16) by raising the Antichrist up against her. The color **white** symbolizes righteousness because his reign initially appears righteous. He is the counterfeit to Jesus who rides a white horse with truth (Rev. 19:11).

<sup>6</sup>***I saw the woman [harlot], drunk with the blood of the saints...<sup>16</sup>...the ten horns [Antichrist's 10-nation confederation]...will hate the harlot...and burn her with fire. (Rev. 17:6, 16)***

- B. There is a special, recognizable relationship between the first four seals, with points of similarity between them. Each has similar characteristics, such as a horse with a distinct color and a rider released by the prophetic decree of one of the living creatures.

- C. The Antichrist's rule initially is gained by an **arrowless bow**. It points to his initial bloodless victories, or peaceful conquest using deceptive diplomacy. This rider is pictured as ready to go to war with a bow in hand on a horse. A bow speaks of war that can strike at a distance. Since there are no arrows, it is commonly understood as a **threat of war** without war breaking out.

- D. The nations have been enjoying a counterfeit worldwide peace (1 Thes. 5:3), which will end with the opening of the first seal, the fall of Babylon, and the abomination of desolation.

<sup>3</sup>***For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (1 Thes. 5:3)***

- E. The Antichrist wears a **crown** as a symbol of his political prominence (Rev. 13:1-2, 7).

- F. Power is **given to him**, which speaks of the permission he receives from God and aid he receives from Satan and sinful men. He is released by God as a judgment on the wicked (Rom. 13:1-7). All authority belongs to Jesus (Mt. 28:18), who will give the Antichrist a specific sphere to operate in for a limited time of 3½ years. "Is given" is used 22 times in Revelation.

<sup>7</sup>***And authority was given him [Antichrist] over every tribe, tongue, and nation. (Rev. 13:7)***

- G. Some see the first seal as symbolic of **Jesus** conquering sin on the cross, or of the victory of the **gospel** through history. Others see this seal as fulfilled by the ancient military activity of the Roman emperor conquering other nations, or of the Parthian invasions of the Roman Empire. These three views require excessive spiritualizing while ignoring the details of the text (arrowless bow, single crown, lack of victory of the gospel throughout history) and the special relationship of the first four seals with many points of identity between them. It would be out of place to see one horse as Jesus with the other three as negative events. Jesus cannot be reduced to the same level as the other three horsemen that follow. Jesus is gloriously pictured in Revelation in splendor in three strategic places (Rev. 1:12-18; 14:14-16; 19:11-16). He is not simply a rider on a white horse with a crown and bow. There are significant differences between the white horse riders in Revelation 6:2 and Revelation 19:11-16.

### III. SECOND SEAL: WORLDWIDE BLOODSHED AND THE FINAL WORLD WAR (REV. 6:3-4)

<sup>3</sup>*When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see."*

<sup>4</sup>*Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. (Rev. 6:3-4)*

- A. The great sword speaks of extreme forms of bloodshed coming from war and violence. The Antichrist starts by using an arrowless bow (v. 2), then uses a great sword which strikes up-close.

- B. The Antichrist continues to be the vehicle of God's judgment on the great harlot by "taking peace" from the nations that were made drunk by the harlot (Rev. 17:1-17).

<sup>1</sup>*Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot...<sup>2</sup>with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk...<sup>16</sup>the ten horns...on the beast [Antichrist]...will hate the harlot...and burn her with fire. (Rev. 17:1-2, 16)*

### IV. THIRD SEAL: FAMINE AND ECONOMIC CRISIS (REV. 6:5-6)

<sup>5</sup>*He opened the third seal...a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. <sup>6</sup>...I heard a voice... "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius..." (Rev. 6:5-6)*

- A. The black horse speaks of famine and economic crisis that will follow the world war in verse 4. The greatest economic crisis with the most severe famine is yet to come against the nations that embrace the harlot and the Antichrist. The saints will multiply food, like when Jesus fed the 5,000, and like when food and water were provided supernaturally in the days of Moses.

- B. A denarius was equivalent to wages for one day of work. A quart of wheat is the amount that one man would eat for one day (a very minimal diet). The economic crisis will cause one's earning power to be reduced to working all day to afford food for one person for one day. This represents about ten times less buying power than in the world today. Wheat is superior in taste and nutrition to barley. Barley, an inferior grain, will be three times cheaper than the price of wheat.

V. FOURTH SEAL: DEATH TO ONE-FOURTH OF THE EARTH'S PEOPLE (REV. 6:7-8)

<sup>8</sup> *...a pale horse...the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed...power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts. (Rev. 6:8)*

- A. The pale horse (literally, pale green, ashen) is the color of death and/or the decay of a corpse. Death is what happens to the physical body, which goes to the grave. Hades is the prison where the departed spirit of an unbeliever goes before going to the lake of fire after the Millennium.
- B. The word translated *death* means “pestilence” or “disease.” Fatal diseases will increase beyond any time in history. Wild beasts will roam in the open to devour people. These are the same four judgments called “God’s four severe judgments” (Ezek. 5:17; 14:21). It is estimated that eight billion people will be alive in 2025. One-fourth of this is two billion, which is fifty times the death toll of World War II.

VI. FIFTH SEAL: PRAYER RELEASING JUDGMENT (REV. 6:9-11)

<sup>9</sup> *When He [Jesus] opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar [altar of incense] the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God...<sup>10</sup> They cried...“How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”<sup>11</sup> Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their...brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed. (Rev. 6:9-11)*

- A. The fifth seal is supernatural power on the prayer movement that releases greater judgment on Antichrist’s empire. This is the turning point in Revelation. This seal is misunderstood in seeing martyrdom as the judgment. The seals bring judgment on the kingdom of darkness not the saints.
- B. The judgment of each seal increases in intensity as they unfold. In other words, the fifth seal is more severe than the four that precede it. The blood of the saints fuels the prayer movement. The shedding of righteous blood stirs Jesus’ heart of vengeance (Rev. 19:2).

<sup>2</sup> *“Righteous are His judgments...He...avenged on her the blood of His servants.” (Rev. 19:2)*

- C. The prayer ministry in heaven at this time gives insight into the prayer ministry on earth. The Spirit, who inspires intercession in heaven, will inspire the same on earth with profound unity.
- D. This is not a cry for personal revenge, but that God removes reprobates in the Antichrist’s empire from their place of influence. We love mercy; thus, we want the cruelty of the Antichrist to stop.
- E. The prayer, “*How long?*” is one of the most recorded prayers in Scripture (Zech. 1:12; Ps. 6:3; 13:2; 74:10; 79:5; 80:4; 89:46; 90:13; 94:3; Dan. 8:13; 12:6-13). Here is prayer for justice on the Antichrist’s cruelty, vindication of God’s reputation, and deliverance of His people.

<sup>7</sup> *“Shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? <sup>8</sup> I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith [agreement with His will] on the earth?” (Lk. 18:7-8)*

- F. Revelation 6:12-17 begins the specific answer to this prayer of the martyrs in the release of the trumpet and bowl judgments on the Antichrist (Rev. 8-9; 16).
- G. The cry is for Jesus to avenge their blood on those who dwell on the earth. To generalize this passage as referring to all the martyrs throughout history is to ignore the detail that their persecutors are still alive on earth at the time that this prayer is being offered in heaven.
- H. ***O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood...?*** Holy and true are two aspects of Jesus emphasized in the context of His end-time judgments (Rev. 3:7). The saints lean into sovereignty with confidence in Jesus' goodness. God's judgments are holy in that they do not violate love, and they are true in judging the guilty with accurate information. God's judgment is not too severe or too lenient—it is accurate, without any misplaced judgment.

## VII. THE SIXTH SEAL: COSMIC DISTURBANCES (REV. 6:12-17)

*<sup>12</sup>He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a **great earthquake**; and the sun became black as sackcloth...and the moon became like blood. <sup>13</sup>...the stars of heaven fell to the earth...<sup>14</sup>Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. <sup>15</sup>...the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves...of the mountains, <sup>16</sup>and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup>For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Rev. 6:12-17)*

- A. The breaking of the sixth seal causes cosmic disturbances to judge the Antichrist's empire. This seal begins a new order of supernatural judgment released by the trumpet and bowl series. The martyrs cried, "Avenge us." The unbelievers will cry, "Hide us."
- B. There will be a **great earthquake** or a worldwide geophysical upheaval (Hag. 2:6; Heb. 12:26-28). Earthquakes are prophesied seven times in Revelation (Rev. 6:12; 8:5; 11:13 [2x], 19; 16:18 [2x]). Every mountain will be moved rather than destroyed. No one could hide in the mountains if they were all destroyed. The mountains continue to exist in the seventh bowl (Rev. 16:20).
- C. What causes the **sun to become darkened**? It will be by supernatural signs sent by God, as well as possibly including the natural effects of ash and debris that come from volcanic eruptions, or from smoke as it did from the World Trade Center, which blocked the sunlight for days.

*<sup>11</sup>"There will be...**fearful sights and great signs** from heaven." (Lk. 21:11)*

*<sup>25</sup>"There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars...with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; <sup>26</sup>men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." (Lk. 21:25-26)*

- D. The **stars of heaven fell** speak of asteroids and meteor showers hitting the earth. The Greek word for stars used here is *aster*, from which we get the word asteroid. An aster refers to any shining mass in the sky, including stars, meteors, asteroids, or any flaming debris, etc. The diameter of the earth is nearly 8,000 miles. Our sun is a small star that is over 800,000 miles in diameter, or 100 times larger than the earth. If one star hit the earth, it would be completely destroyed, and thus the kings would not flee to the mountains. This is not speaking of stars hitting the earth but meteorites or other objects hitting it. Stars are still in the sky in the fourth trumpet (Rev. 8:12).
- E. **The sky will recede**, or draw back as a scroll, opening a “window” into heaven so that worldwide leaders may witness God’s wrath. World leaders are pictured as running for their lives in panic without regard for their dignity as they run to the mountains to hide from God. This is not the second coming yet, because in the seventh bowl they rise up to fight against Jesus (Rev. 19:17-21). We are not told how they conclude this is God’s wrath, but forerunners will proclaim it since the opening of the first seal. The great question of the hour is “Who is able to stand?”  
<sup>17</sup>***“For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Rev. 6:17)***

### VIII. FIRST PARENTHETICAL SECTION: WHO CAN STAND? (REV. 7:1-17)

- A. The parenthetical sections mostly describe Satan’s attack against the Church and then God’s intervention to help with power, protection, direction, or reward. They are the interpretative sections of Revelation that answer two main questions. First, ***“Why are these judgments so severe?”*** In other words, how can a God of love be so violent? Second, ***“What will happen to the Church?”*** In other words, will we be safe in God’s favor, and will we be anointed to stand against deception and persecution? The five parenthetical sections answer these two questions.
- B. This parenthetical section answers the question, “Who can stand?” Affirming the security of God’s people, God answered this cry by revealing that 144,000 Jewish believers will stand in victory (7:1-8) and Gentile martyrs (7:9-17) shall stand strong without wavering in persecution.
- C. John sees a divine sealing on His people that gives them physical and spiritual protection.  
***<sup>1</sup>I saw four angels...holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. <sup>2</sup>...I saw another angel...having the seal of the living God...he cried...<sup>3</sup>saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” <sup>4</sup>I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed. (Rev. 7:1-4)***
- D. These saints are raised up as a model for victory. They receive a protective seal before God strikes the earth, sea, and trees (Rev. 7:3). The books of Exodus recounts that when Israel was living in Egypt, in Goshen, they received a protective mark on their doors as a seal that saved their firstborn from death. Others will be sealed by God for protection (Rev. 9:4; Ezek. 9:6). The Goshen principle is seen in Ex. 8:22-23; 9:4, 6, 26; Zeph. 2:3; Ps. 91.  
***<sup>4</sup>They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (Rev. 9:4)***

***<sup>4</sup>The Lord said, "Go through...Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations..."<sup>5</sup>To the others He said..."Go...through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare..."<sup>6</sup>slay old and young men, maidens and little children...but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary." (Ezek. 9:4-6)***

- E. Gentile believers (Rev. 7:9-17) will also stand strong without wavering even in persecution. Many saints will be physically protected (Rev. 9:4; Zeph. 2:3; Mic. 7:14-19; Isa. 11:15-16).

***<sup>9</sup>Behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne...clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,<sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God..."<sup>13</sup>Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"<sup>14</sup>... So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.***

***<sup>15</sup>Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.***

***<sup>16</sup>They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;<sup>17</sup> for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Rev. 7:9-17)***