

Session 3. The Second, Third, and Fourth Seals: War, Famine, & Death

I. REVIEW: THE SEAL JUDGMENTS WILL TARGET THE HARLOT BABYLON

- A. The seven seals are released by Jesus the Lamb, not the Devil (Rev. 5:5; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1). The book of Revelation describes His leadership in preparing the nations to receive God's glory. Jesus initiates these judgments against the kingdom of darkness not against the saints.
- 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)***
- B. The seals are literal events that must not be explained away symbolically or historically. Our method of interpretation is the plain, literal, common sense approach. They are future. They have not yet occurred. They are numbered in the chronological order in which they occur.
- C. Revelation is an offensive book to the natural mind. Those who speak its truths will be rejected and persecuted by both believers and unbelievers. This is part of God's plan to remove all evil from the earth. We must not "domesticate" Revelation by making it acceptable—by explaining these future judgments as being symbolic or as having been fulfilled in history.
- D. The seal judgments target the nations that aligned with the harlot Babylon. This evil religion will be destroyed by the ten kings who serve the Antichrist at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. The nations made drunk with the Babylon religion will be judged by a king after their own heart.
- The ten horns which you saw are ten kings ... ¹⁶ The ten horns ... on the Beast will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. (Rev. 17:12, 16)***
- E. Each of the first four seals leads naturally to the next one. In the first seal, the Antichrist goes forth with political aggression. This will lead to world war in the second seal, resulting in economic crisis and famine in the third seal. Pestilence and disease follow in the fourth seal.
- F. The Antichrist is connected to each of the four horsemen judgments. The riders of the horses show four dimensions of the Antichrist's reign of terror. The change of color from white (peaceful aggression), to red (bloodshed), to black (famine), and to pale (death) reveals his plan.
- G. In the seals, God takes His restraining hand off of evil men to allow man do what is truly in his heart. The restraints on man's sin are lifted so that the truth of their lawlessness is seen. The Lord in effect says, "I will let you have what you want." The wild beast in sinful man's heart will come to full expression on the world stage. In this God judges the wicked by the wicked. Men celebrate and applaud the Antichrist at the beginning of his reign of terror, but will not at the end.
- H. The seal judgments are redemptive, or they bring good to the human race and the earth itself. God uses the least severe means to reach the greatest number of people at the deepest level of love without violating anyone's free will in training the future rulers of the earth. These events will set off the most dynamic prayer movement in history (Rev. 6:9-11; 8:3-5).

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

When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." ⁴ 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. **Fiery red**: speaks of worldwide bloodshed. The first seal occurs when the nations were at peace (1 Thes. 5:3). The second seal suddenly ends the brief time of world peace.

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)

- B. **Great sword**: speaks of violence both civil and military. The sword is great by killing great numbers with great severity and devastation using technology that has great strength. This sword that strikes the earth is the counterfeit of when Jesus strikes the earth with a sword (Rev. 19:15).

- C. Jeremiah prophesied of the end-time sword on the nations in the context of the second seal.

I will call for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth ... ³⁰ The LORD will roar ... against all the inhabitants of the earth ... ³¹ For the LORD has a controversy with the nations; He will plead His case with all flesh. He will give those who are wicked to the sword ... ³² Behold, disaster shall go forth from nation to nation ... ³³ At that day the slain of the LORD shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end. (Jer. 25:29-33)

- D. **Take peace from the earth**: people will kill one another first in civil unrest, then in oppression by the government (Rev. 13:15), then in international conflict leading to the greatest world war. The nations rejected God's Lamb, but in the age to come they will chose to follow the Beast.

Cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. (Rev. 13:15)

- E. Jesus will allow peace to be taken from the earth. This is contrary to what many believe about Him. Jesus will allow the sword to go forth in the second seal. In Matthew 10:34, Jesus spoke knowing that second seal would come on day to confront the hindrances to true world peace.

Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. (Mt. 10:34)

- F. Jesus the Lamb is the Prince of Peace who opens the second seal to remove peace from earth. This will cause confusion to believers who do not understand the Scripture concerning God's end-time purposes. Jesus will use the sword of evil men to bring their hidden evil to the surface and also to remove evil. This will ultimately result in true and lasting peace coming to the earth.

His name will be called ... Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isa. 9:6)

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men! (Lk. 2:14)

- G. In this hostile environment, all will choose how they will live before God. The Church will be tested, and unbelievers will re-evaluate their belief systems and come to Jesus by the millions. Those who love darkness will go into deeper connection with demons.

- H. The Antichrist shall honor the god of military power with gold and silver. His god will be war or military conquest. The god of fortresses is the combination of military and demonic power.
He shall honor a god of fortresses ... with gold and silver ... ³⁹ Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain. (Dan. 11:38-39)
1. He will honor the god of military strength (god of fortresses) by spending unprecedented amounts of money on developing his military.
 2. He shall advance the glory of a foreign god who is Satan by promoting leaders who have zeal for Satan. Satan will help him overcome the strongest fortresses (opposing armies).
- I. The Antichrist will overwhelm many nations (v. 40), overthrow them (v. 41), stretch out his hand against them (v. 42), and annihilate them (v. 42). He will attack Egypt (v. 42).
He shall enter the countries, overwhelm them ... ⁴¹ many countries shall be overthrown ... ⁴² He shall stretch out his hand against the countries ... Egypt shall not escape. (Dan. 11:40-42)
- J. The Antichrist will have an army of unprecedented strength in terms of people and finances.
They worshiped the Beast, saying, "... Who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13:4)
- K. **Granted**: God sovereignly grants the release of this sword and then oversees the entire process.
- L. **Come and see**: a voice called John to come near to God to see clearly (Rev. 6:1, 3, 5, 7). We receive the same twofold call to come near and see more clearly the events that are prophesied. The Church is to receive this command to go deep in our understanding that we may pray and make known its truths. It was a call to exert effort to understand the significance of these events.

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

When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine." (Rev. 6:5-6)

- A. **Black horse**: speaks of sorrow, sadness and mourning. Famine and economic crisis follow war.
- B. **Pair of scales in his hand**: speaks of economics. This passage prophesies the greatest economic crisis with the most severe famine in history. This is the hour in which the Church will multiply food like when Jesus fed the 5,000. Moses witnessed a supernatural food and water supply.
- C. **Quart of wheat for a denarius**: a denarius was equivalent to wages for one day of work. The message was that a day of work will earn enough money to buy food for one person for one day. A quart of wheat is the amount for one person to eat for one day (on a very minimal diet).

- D. **Three quarts of barley for a denarius**: wheat and barley were the common foods in John's day. Wheat is superior in taste and nutrition to barley. One could purchase three times the amount of barley (inferior grain) for the same price. Barley is cheaper, but less nutritious and tasty.
- E. The economic crisis will result in one's earning power being reduced to working all day to afford food for one day. This represents about ten times less buying power than in the world today.
- F. **Do not harm the oil and the wine**: the famine will not touch the ruling class. Luxuries will be enjoyed by a very few who will prosper in this famine. Only those in the Antichrist's hierarchy will be the wealthy elite.
1. The kings of the earth and the great merchants will continue to have abundance and luxury (Rev. 18). The Antichrist will buy their cooperation with luxuries.
 2. The vast majority of the people on earth will lack the necessities of life while a few greatly prosper. The social inequity between the rich and poor will result in civil strife in his kingdom. Most revolutions begin because of food shortages.
- G. **A voice in the midst of the four living creatures**: Jesus is in control of all. This voice declares the nature of the famine. Jesus is releasing this famine. He is working for the eternal good of the people and the earth itself. He sees this extreme measure as absolutely necessary. God's voice is speaking so we are clear that God is in control and God is carefully monitoring what is coming. God will be attentive. He will not be distant and uninvolved.
- H. The Antichrist will control many of the world economies (Rev. 6:5-6). The Antichrist will persecute all who resist his global economic policies especially those who refuse his mark.
No one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the Beast. (Rev. 13:17)
- I. This will set up the emergency mode that allows the mark of the Beast to be received much faster. He will "solve" the economic crisis by using the mark of the Beast.
- J. The famine may be imposed by governmental policies, as Stalin's famine in the 1930s that starved nearly 10 million people. However, it did not affect the ruling class.

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

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

- A. **Pale horse**: is literally pale green or ashen, which speaks of the color of death and decay (like a corpse). The faces of the peoples of the earth will show the terror they experience. One-fourth of the earth will be given over to Death. In other words, they will die unnatural deaths.

- B. ***A fourth of the earth***: the resistance to the mark will cause a series of events with a military backlash that will result in one-fourth of the earth being killed by war, famine, and disease.
- C. ***The name of him was Death***: the spirit of death is pictured as being in hot pursuit of the unsuspecting victims on the earth. Death is what happens to the physical body, which goes to the grave. Hades is the place where the departed spirit of an unbeliever goes after they die physically.
- D. ***Hades (Hell) followed with him***: the ranks or hordes from Hades will run behind Death. The demonic ranks of Hades will run hard behind the spirit of Death to imprison every unbeliever who dies. They will be eager to accost them. The spirit of Death will run fast on his horse, yet the hordes of Hades will keep pace. Hades will chase Death. No one ever escapes.
- E. *Hades* is a Greek term that is used only in the NT. It is the place of the dead that temporarily imprisons some disobedient angels (demons) and unredeemed human spirits.
- F. Hades includes the chamber of torment for the unredeemed. Tartarus is a chamber to imprison certain demons (2 Pet. 2:4).
1. The Greek name Tartarus is translated as ***hell*** by most translations or the ***bottomless pit*** or the ***abyss*** (Rev. 9:1-2, 11; 11:7; 17:8, 11; 20:1, 3).
 2. ***Hades*** is like the county jail in the spirit realm until the final sentencing occurs at the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15; Dan. 7:9-10). The lake of fire is like the federal prison (Hades: Mt. 11:23; 16:18; Lk. 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; 1 Cor. 15:55; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14).
- G. God speaks directly to Jewish leaders in Jerusalem during the Tribulation, telling them that their covenant with the Antichrist is a covenant with death and Sheol (translated Hades in the NT).
Your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand; when the overflowing scourge passes through, then you will be trampled down by it. (Isa. 28:18)
- H. In the fourth seal, the Antichrist's true nature is seen under the name Death with Hades. He will seek to kill all who oppose him, yet all who agree with him will be killed (Rev. 19:19-21).
- I. ***Power was given to them over a fourth of the earth***: the word "them" speaks of all four seal judgments combined together. The first three seal judgments weaken the nations. Then the fourth horseman will bring the deathblow to multitudes of fragile people in the nations.
And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth. (Rev. 6:8)

- J. These are the same four judgments God called, “My four severe judgments.” However, all four afflictions will occur simultaneously during the seal judgments against the nations which will be aligned with the harlot Babylon.

Thus says the Lord: “How much more it shall be when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem--the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence ... ?” (Ezek. 14:21)

I will send against you famine and wild beasts ... pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I, the LORD, have spoken. (Ezek. 5:17)

1. **Sword**: death by human violence will reach unprecedented levels.
2. **Famine**: will increase from the time of the third seal until Jesus returns.
3. **Death**: is literally “pestilence” or “disease.” It will increase beyond any time in history.
4. **Wild beasts**: when men die, wild beasts multiply rapidly and roam freely (Num. 21:6; Deut. 32:24; Josh. 24:12; 2 Kgs. 2:24; 17:25; Isa. 30:6; Jer. 5:6; Ezek. 14:21; 33:27). In New Orleans, alligators attacked people who were waiting for days on their roof tops and rats bit people hiding under bridges. Many diseases are spread by wild animals. Wild beasts will be demonized at an unprecedented rate because of so many demons on earth (Rev. 12:9).

V. THE MAGNITUDE OF THE DEATH TOLL OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

- A. It has been projected that by 2025 AD, 8 billion people will be alive. One-fourth of eight billion dying means two billion will die in the fourth seal judgment, leaving six billion people still alive.
- B. The sixth trumpet points to another one-third of this six billion dying. This means another two billion will die, leaving four billion alive. The death toll of these two judgments would equal four billion, or 50 percent of the original number of over eight billion living on earth before the Great Tribulation.
- C. The death toll of World War II (1939–45) was nearly 50 million people. The death toll of the two judgments (fourth seal and sixth trumpet) will be nearly 100 times the total of World War II. If four billion people die in the last three and a half years (1,260 days), then about three million will die on average each day. Thus, every month it will surpass the death toll of World War II. This will continue for forty-two months.

There will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world ... nor ever shall be. ²² Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved. (Mt. 24:21-22)