

## “REVELATION: DOES IT DESCRIBE OUR DAYS?” SERIES

### #10: “Chapters Five through Seven”

#### INTRO:

Chapter 5 goes under the heading: “The Scroll and the Lamb.” John sees that God has a scroll in His right hand. The scroll is sealed with seven seals that no one but Jesus, the Lamb of God, can open.

First, note the scroll. You know what a scroll is, don't you?

#### ***THE SCROLL REPRESENTS GOD'S MASTER PLAN FOR THE UNIVERSE DURING THE CHURCH AGE.***

It's closed and sealed because the plan, at the time of John's vision, hadn't been revealed or executed. As John takes in what he saw, he realizes that there is no one worthy to break the seals and open the scroll, which means God's will can't be revealed and executed, so he begins to cry.

But alas, one of the twenty-four elders stepped up and said to John, ***“Weep no more; behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, he has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and the seven seals.”***

Remember, the twenty-four elders represent the saved who have died and gone to be with the Lord. They have benefitted first-hand from what the Lion of Judah has done, for that Lion became a lamb to be sacrificed for the sins of the world, only to conquer death and rise from the grave. This made Him worthy to break the seals and open the scroll that would make Him King of kings and His kingdom, the church, the focal point of history.

I like Hendriksen's comment:

*“No sooner has the Lamb taken the scroll, and thus accepted the office of king of the universe, than there is a great burst of triumph and exuberant joy in three doxologies. Those nearest The Throne lead off, namely, the cherubim and the twenty-four elders. They fall down before the Lamb, rendering divine worship. Each of the elders has a harp, an instrument of joyful music, and golden bowls filled with incense, symbolizing prayer and thanksgiving in its most comprehensive sense. They sing a new song. It is **new** because never before had such a great and glorious deliverance been accomplished and never before had the Lamb received this great honor”* (p. 111).

This chapter closes with myriads of angels joining the cherubim and the twenty-four elders in praising God and the Lamb and then the entire universe joining them.

Now, let's move into chapter six...

First,

#### ***JESUS OPENS THE SEALS.***

Here is where we're introduced to the famous *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* that you've no doubt heard about.

When the first seal is opened, a rider on a white horse is revealed. He has a bow and he's given a crown. Verse 2 says, ***"he came out conquering and to conquer."***

This rider symbolizes Christ Himself, who is the sinless one who has conquered sin and death.

When the second seal is opened, a rider on a red horse appeared. He's ***"permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another."*** He's given a short-sword, a sword of sacrifice. What's with that?

This rider symbolizes the persecution of Christians and other suffering during the church age.

When the third seal is opened, a rider on a black horse appears. He has a pair of scales in his hand. And one of the four living creatures says, ***"A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine."***

So, what do we have here? Hendriksen says, *"To eat bread by weight refers to a condition of economic hardship"* (p. 122). *"Oil and wine, representing all the comforts of life, exist plentifully! But they are utterly beyond the reach of the man who is making hardly enough to provide coarse food for his family. Now we have the entire picture: we see the rich enjoying their food in abundance, and all the comforts of life besides. And the poor have hardly enough to hold body and soul together"* (p. 123).

Who are the poor? Believers. The church.

So, the second and third riders have to do with the persecution of God's people that takes place throughout the church age.

When the fourth seal is opened, John sees a pale horse whose rider is Death, and he is followed by Hades. They symbolize death in general – death that affects both believers and unbelievers. Death takes them down, and Hades, the intermediate place of the disembodied dead, gathers them up.

They are "allowed" to kill ***"a fourth of the earth with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth."***

The ***"sword"*** here is a different Greek word than the ***"sword"*** of the rider of the red horse. It's a "long" sword – a sword of war. War in those days brought famine; famine brought on pestilence; pestilence led to ravaging wild animals. These things were very real to John's readers, and in various forms continue to be real to the earth, and none of them distinguish Christian from non-Christian. All suffer from these four woes.

Let's review the meaning of these four horsemen:

- The rider on the white horse is the lord Jesus Christ as He is described in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John;
- The rider on the red horse symbolizes the slaughter of believers;
- The rider on the black horse represents the economic hardship of the church – poverty due to injustice and the “cancel culture”; and
- The rider on the pale horse symbolizes war, death, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts, woes of humanity that affect the church.

Then, when the fifth seal is opened, John ***“saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.”*** These are the many believers who have died and will continue to die because they will not deny Christ. They want to know how long God will allow such treatment of His people before He avenges their blood.

They are told to be patient, because many more would die, and given white robes, which are symbols of their righteousness and eternal reward.

When the sixth seal was opened, there was a great earthquake. The sun was blackened, and the full moon became blood red. Stars fell from the sky as the sky itself vanished. Every mountain and island was removed from its place. Both believers and wicked non-believers, scared to death, hide themselves in caves, trying to hide from God, because they know that the end has come.

William Hendriksen comments:

*“The terror of that great day refers, of course, only to the wicked. But whereas believers are going to be few in number when the second coming arrives (as Jesus said in Luke 18:8, ‘I tell you, he [God] will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?’) we can say that the world in general is seized with alarm. In this connection, it is interesting to observe that this final outpouring of the divine wrath upon mankind is described under the **sixth** seal – six, rather: six hundred sixty-six, being the number of **man** (according to Revelation 13:18), is here represented as affecting **six** objects of creation; and is distributed among **six** classes of men”* (p. 129).

*“What we have here is a symbolic picture of the terror of the judgment-day. The symbol, taken as a whole, teaches just one lesson, namely, that the final and complete effusion of God’s wrath upon a world that has persecuted the church will be terrible indeed!”* (p. 130).

Hendriksen continues:

*Thus, under the symbolism of these six classes, John sees the entire godless world seized with sudden fear. He see them terror-stricken and fleeing. Fleeing to escape what? The crumbling mountains and falling rocks? No, there is something far more terrible from which they seek safety in caves and rocks, even in death itself! If only death will come to them now: -- John hears voices, shrieks of agony uttered by a*

*thousand, yea, thousands of voices: kings and slaves, princes and servants, they are caught in the same, self-inflicted agony of despair. O, that cold sweat, these throbbing hearts, that dreadful wail: ‘Mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of the One sitting on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb! For it came, the day, the great one, of their wrath, and who is able to stand?’ The door of grace is closed forever, once that day has arrived” (p.131).*

These who had rejected Jesus as Lord and Savior don’t want to face God the Father and the Jesus the Son. They know that eternal life is impossible for them now.

Let’s move into chapter seven...

Here in this chapter, we’re going to see the great and glorious crescendo of Christ’s return and Judgment Day.

The first thing John sees are...

### **...FOUR ANGELS AT THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH.**

There was a time when this was one of the verses used to make the case for a flat earth. In fact, it’s still used by a group called “The Flat Earth Society.” However, this is simply a figurative way of speaking, and isn’t to be taken literally.

Why *four* angels? There are four because they represent the four winds of woe that are about to sweep over the earth and destroy it, from the east, west, north, and south. These four angels are holding them back, waiting for God to give the signal to turn them loose.

The second thing John sees is...

### **...ANOTHER ANGEL, DESCENDING FROM THE RISING SUN.**

This angel has “***the seal of the living God.***” What could that be? Verse three tells us, when the angel says, “***Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.***” This is what John sees. Is this what is going to happen prior to the judgment of unbelievers and the destruction of the earth? Again, I say, “Your guess is as good as mine.”

Seals had a threefold significance:

1. It protects against tampering; if a seal is broken, it is the sign of tampering. In this case, God is saying, “Don’t mess with those who are mine.”
2. It marks ownership. In this case, it shows that we belong to God.
3. It certifies the real thing. In this case, it marks us as truly God’s child.

The third thing John does not see but *hears* and it is...

### **...THE SEALING OF THE 144,000 OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL.**

The first thought to come to mind is that these 144,000 represent the saved from the Jews, but William Hendriksen sees it differently:

*“The number is 144,000. This, of course, is symbolical. First, the number three, indicating the Trinity, is multiplied by four, indicating the entire creation, for the sealed ones shall come from the east and the west, the north and the south. Three times four makes twelve. This number therefore indicates: the Trinity (3) operating in the universe (4). When the Father through the Son in the Spirit performs his saving work on earth – the divine (3) operating in the universe (4) – we see in the old dispensation the twelve (3x4) patriarchs and in the new the twelve apostles. In order to arrive at the conception of the **church** of the old and of the new dispensation, we shall have to multiply this twelve by twelve. This gives us 144.*

*“Entirely in harmony with this representation, we read in Revelation 21 that the holy city Jerusalem has twelve gates and twelve foundations. On those twelve gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the twelve foundations, the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, Revelation 21:9-14. We also read that the wall is 144 cubits in height, Revelation 21:17.*

*“It is very clear, therefore, that the sealed multitude of Revelation 7 symbolizes the **entire Church Militant** of old and new dispensation. In order to emphasize the fact that not a small portion of the church is meant but the **entire Church Militant**, this number 144 is multiplied by 1,000. 1,000 is 10 x 10 x 10, which indicates a perfect cube, reduplicated completeness. Read Revelation 21:16. The 144,000 sealed individuals out of the twelve tribes of literal Israel symbolize spiritual Israel, the church of God on earth” (pp. 133-134).*

The next thing John sees is...

### **A GREAT MULTITUDE STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD.**

They are people from every tribe and nation and language, both Jews and Gentiles. These are the saved. No one knows how many; only God knows.

They are wearing white robes, an indication of righteousness – the righteousness that comes only through faith in Christ.

Then, one of the elders spoke to John, asking who the white-robed people are and where they're from. John answers, **“Sir, you know.”** And the elder said, **“These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”**

Now, what is this **“great tribulation”**? This section, chapters 4 through 7, is about the church in tribulation. This term, **“great tribulation,”** symbolizes all the times of tribulation faced by the church throughout its history. *“The point is: the saints come out of their trials”* (Hendriksen, p. 137).

This “**tribulation**” takes many forms, from being ostracized to being killed. We are empowered to endure whatever treatment the world can dish out. We count it a privilege to suffer for our faith in Christ. Even when we suffer death, we know that we will be in the presence of the Lord. We’ll be before the Throne of God, rejoicing in our victory over sin and death.

Finally, note...

**...WHAT THOSE WHO COME OUT OF TRIBULATION RECEIVE.**

These words are worth reading again:

**“...he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.**

**“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.**

**“For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”**

Among this great multitude are:

- John the baptizer, who was beheaded;
- The apostles, save John, who were executed;
- The Christians killed in the wake of Saul’s hatred;
- Stephen, who was stoned to death;
- The Christians who were fed to hungry lions in the arena on order from Nero;
- Believers who were burned at the stake;
- Believers among the six million Jews exterminated by Hitler’s order; and
- Christians who have been and are being killed by Muslims around the world.

**IN CLOSING:**

There’s an opinion (and it’s just an opinion) that I’ve heard all my adult life, and it’s this: In the end, everybody’s going to go to heaven; God is too loving a God to send anybody to hell.

I’m here to tell you this morning that that’s a lie from none other but the devil himself. Hebrews 9:27 makes it clear: **“...it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment...”** Jesus himself said, concerning faithful, obedient believers and the unbelieving, **“And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life”** (Matthew 25:46). He also said, **“...the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few”** (Matthew 7:13-14).

Have you found it? Are you on a path to heaven?