

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 27TH-28TH, 2018 // REVELATION

### TWO VIEWS OF REVELATION 6

The "7 seals" represent a specific divine judgment that encompass the entire "tribulation" (the 7 year period of God's divine judgment on the earth).

- What is described is the state of affairs in the world between the 1st and 2nd coming of Christ and leading up to the 2nd coming of Christ and the great tribulation ("birth pangs").

### FOUR HORSEMEN (REVELATION 6:1-8)

In chapter 5, the "one seated on the throne" (God the Father) gave the seven-sealed scroll of God's judgment to the "Lamb" (Jesus).

- The scroll is a symbol of God's judgments on humanity leading up to the end of all things, and Jesus as the one who will carry this out.
- As the Lamb opens the first of the seven seals, one of the living creatures with a voice like thunder (probably the lion) summons a white horse.

But it was the rider, not the horse, that interested John.

- The rider held a bow, he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror (vs. 2).
- Most scholars understand this to symbolize military conquest.
- White represents "peace" & "purity" - which is what most military conquerors have promised as they began their campaigns for military dominance.

As the 2nd seal was opened, a red horse was summoned that was permitted to take peace from the earth, so "that people could slay one another" (vs. 3).

- This rider is "warfare", and he follows "conquest" (the 1st rider).
- The 2nd horse symbolizes the bloodshed and violence that has accompanied global conquest throughout history.

Where there has been conquest & war, it has always been accompanied by poverty, famine, and starvation.

- As the 3rd seal is broken, a black horse is summoned whose rider holds a pair of measuring scales.
- Two kinds of essential, main-staple foods were mentioned ("wheat and barley"), but their price is inflated by 1000 to 1500 percent!

In conquest, war, and political upheaval prices for basic goods and services become inflated so that it's almost impossible to survive.

- "Oil" and "wine" (commodities and luxuries) are also mentioned as unattainable items.
- When the 4th seal is opened, a pale ("chloros" = green) horse is summoned with a rider named "Death" and a companion named "Hades".

Wherever the riders of Conquest, Warfare, and Famine/Poverty go, Death is sure to follow.

- Death results from the rider Warfare ("those who are killed by the sword"), Famine/Poverty ("famine"), and also from natural disasters ("pestilence") and by wild beasts of the earth.
- The 4th rider was given authority over 1/4 of the earth - the amount of people throughout history who have died/will die from these judgments.

The breaking of the first four seals represents a group.

- If the number four in Revelation represents the world, then it's right to see these as world-wide, history-wide scourges.
- These "four horsemen" have thundered down through history and all around the world, and they will continue to wield authority only as long as Christ, who holds the key, permits.

### THE FIFTH SEAL (6:9-11)

What will it be like for followers of Christ during these judgments?

- The opening of the 5th seal gives the divine answer - they will continue to be slain because of the "word of God" and for the "witness they had borne" (vs. 9).
- John records seeing a heavenly altar in vs. 9, but it's what he saw under the altar that's important.

Under the altar John saw the souls (psyche = lives) of Christian martyrs.

- At the tabernacle of Israel, the blood of slaughtered animals was drained at the base of the altar, with the blood representing the life (soul) of the animal.
- What's being symbolized is the reality that from God's point of view, the deaths of martyrs are a heavenly sacrifice.

Throughout the centuries (and especially at the time of Revelation's writing), committed Christians have been harassed and killed.

- During Christ's earthly ministry, He taught that a true disciple must "take up his cross" in a willingness to die for Him (Matt. 10:38, 16:24).
- The ultimate testimony and witness of a real faith in Christ is found in a disciple's willingness to lay down their life.

These martyrs called out in a loud voice for vengeance and retribution.

- In other words, they are shown calling for God to rule that their martyrdom was wicked.
- Their question is, "How long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood...?"
- God is a God of justice, and He promises to bring final justice to His people.

Although God is a God of perfect justice, His timing is different than ours.

- All wrongs won't be made right until "the number of their servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had was completed" (vs. 11).
- In other words, God knows how many will give their lives for their faith before the end.
- For John's readers, there was a word of warning that times of martyrdom lie ahead.

But until the time of the final judgment, those who have been killed for their faith are given "white robes" of honor and told to wait a little longer.

- Those already martyred are to enjoy their state of rest and blessing until the day when God finally avenges their deaths in judgment.
- It's difficult to understand why God would prolong justice for His children, but we have to remember that God's timing is perfect.

### THE SIXTH SEAL (6:12-17)

When the 6th seal is opened, John sees a set of phenomena which in prophetic and apocalyptic language is the usual way in describing the end of the world.

- The prophets of the O.T. often wrote of this using the same kind of language John uses.
- "The sun turned to darkness" (Joel 2:31), "...I will shake the heavens" (Haggai 2:6), "the stars of the heavens...will not give light" (Isa. 13:10)

The earth will be affected through a great earthquake, the sun will turn "black like sackcloth", and the moon will turn to blood red (vs. 12) - (maybe volcanic ash?)

- When John writes that he saw the "stars of the sky falling to the earth", what's most likely being described are meteors falling to the earth.
- He then writes of seeing "the sky being rolled up" and mountains and islands being removed.

Certainly this a horrible and terrifying scene - but what does it mean and when does this happen in relation to other events prophesied?

- One interpretation is that is a symbolic description of "world-shaking events" (like a total nuclear war) that will happen leading up to Christ's return.
- The problem with this view is that humanity will credit this disaster to God's doing, not man's (vs. 17).

Most likely what's being described are divine acts of judgment on the earth that will bring us to the threshold of the actual end of the world.

- In other words, these specific cosmic catastrophes of judgment in the 6th seal are preliminary events that lead up to the breaking of the 7th seal - where a complex series of events and judgments take place.
- What will be the human response to this judgment?

John names groups of powerful people - political leaders (kings and princes), military leaders (generals), and economic leaders (the rich, the mighty) and the common man - "every slave and free" - representing all of humanity.

- The first global human response will be self-preservation ("hid in caves & mountains"), and the 2nd will be utter terror ("...hide us from the face of Him seated on the throne!")

Some interpreters think that the deeds and words related by people in these verses express repentance - they don't.

- Rather, they're expressions of outrage and blame coupled with self-preservation.
- Many will start to repent to "Mother Earth" and believe this is due to our disrespect to her, others will find true faith throughout these judgments.

### THE COUNTDOWN HAS BEGUN

- These judgments of God on the earth are realities that may difficult to accept, but God's wrath against evil is part of His nature (Psalm 7:11).
- Every judgment from God pronounced on humanity both now and in the future is completely and totally just.
- The amazing thing about our God is that He's given us a way out of His final and terrible judgment through Christ's sacrifice!