

THE REVELATION

The Seals Are Broken: One through Four

Revelation 6:1-8

Until now we have been studying Jesus' letters to the seven churches of Asia and contemplating John's vision of the heavenly throne: the One who sits upon it and the Lamb. As we enter chapter six the Revelation takes a dramatic turn. The Lamb upon the throne has been identified as the only One qualified to break the seals and open the scroll, and He does so as we begin reading chapter six. We have considered that the scroll is the story of humanity. It is parallel to Ezekiel 2:9-10 where Ezekiel is given a scroll written on on both sides and it contains a message of lament and mourning and woe. The story of humanity, apart from God, is a story of lament and mourning and woe, and this scroll in Revelation tells the story of the final chapters of the human race. The dramatic turn we take now is the turn into Biblical prophecy regarding the last days and the end of time as we know it.

I. The First Seal is Opened

The first horseman is a symbol of a conqueror through war. The first seal is indicative of general unrest and war spreading throughout the earth as the human race is robbed of peace.

II. The Second Seal is Opened

As war spreads, political upheaval and instability begins to reign. Organized conquest turns into anarchy as people just begin slaying one another for all sorts of reasons—or no reasons at all.

III. The Third Seal is Opened

The balance scales in this rider's hand is not a symbol of justice in this case, but rather a literal symbol of the market scales as the price of food has risen dramatically in the face of widespread famine, inflation, and failed economies. In the basic equivalent of the day, it will take a whole day's wages just to feed one person—not a family, but a single individual. Available food will be priceless, and famine and starvation will reign throughout the earth.

IV. The Fourth Seal is Opened

This is the result of the natural sequence of events of war, anarchy, political and economic collapse, with famine and starvation: malnourishment and loss of civil services and utilities result in more killing and mayhem as selfishness and the strong continue to abuse the weak for personal gain. Plagues spread with famine and wild beasts roam the earth now in search of food wherever it can be found. Over a fourth of the earth succumbs to the judgment of the fourth horse and rider.

These are events we are beginning to see even now. How long this period will last, and how long until a fourth of the earth dies from the consequence, are questions we cannot answer with certainty. As Jesus said in Matthew, these are only the beginning of birth pangs—this is only the introduction to the last days and is largely a result of the outcome of human sin and people's inhumanity to one another, Let us watch and pray with open eyes and hearts.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

NIV Revelation 6:1 I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!"

2 I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

3 When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!"

4 Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.

5 When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand.

6 Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"

7 When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!"

8 I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

Mat 24:3-8 3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

4 Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you.

5 For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ, ' and will deceive many.

6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

8 All these are the beginning of birth pains.

2 Timothy 3:1 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.

2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,

3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good,

4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--

5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

NOTES

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

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