

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Beginning of The End **Revelation 6**

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PowerPoint Presentation included: None

SermonAudio Blurb: We often think of the Cross and the death of Christ with atonement and forgiveness of sin. But how often do you consider that His death and resurrection is also the means to make Him worthy to bring for the judgments of God and usher in His Kingdom? In this chapter we will see exactly that.

I. Introduction.

- A. Brief overview of chapters 4-5.
- B. We enter into the bulk of this prophetic book which focuses upon what is known as the Tribulation.
 - 1. Matthew 24:6-21.
 - 2. Explicitly called this in Revelation 7:14.
 - 3. The tribulation period is made up of seven seals (6:1-17; 8:1), seven trumpets (8:7-9:21; 11:15), and seven bowls (16:1-19:2).
- C. Time frame:
 - 1. Your approach to the whole book determines how you will read chapters 6-19.
 - 2. I view this book from a futuristic perspective. Meaning this is something that is to come, not something that has taken place.
 - 3. I also take this in a realistic perspective. Meaning, unless the context demands otherwise, we take the text for what it says rather than make it all a spiritual meaning or hyper-symbolic.
 - 4. Basic sense of where this fits in to what we have seen so far:
 - a. Chapter 1 is John's preparation to receive this vision.
 - b. Chapter 2-3 are warnings to churches of that time who represented various situations in any church at any time.

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- c. Chapters 4-5 is entrance into the very throne room of God where we are then prepared to see the unfolding of divine justice and the fitness of only Jesus Christ to bring this to pass.
 - d. Rev 1:1 and 4:1 give us a futuristic sense.
 - (1) It was futuristic at least from John’s perspective.
 - (2) The question becomes for each of us to determine if these events fit into anything historical? And if so, how can we know which ones?
5. Key interpretive point—vs 17.
- a. It is not just a day of wrath—which would make it more generic and could be used to fit many different time periods.
 - b. It keeps the article “the” and in the Greek so it emphasizes identity.
 - (1) Whose day of wrath is it?
 - (a) Note that it is “their” day.
 - (b) This is God and the Lamb.
 - (2) Note how it keeps the Father and the Son distinct, yet it gives a sense of equality as well. It is their day of wrath.
 - c. Wrath terminology:
 - (1) “The great day” or “the day” or “The day of the Lord” (i.e. the Lord’s day).
 - (a) Old Testament: Isaiah 13:6, 9; 58:13; Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3 Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Zephaniah 1:7ff; Malachi 4:5.
 - i) Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty. (Joel 1:15)
 - ii) Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near, For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice, He has consecrated His guests. 8 "Then it will come about on the day of the LORD'S sacrifice That I will punish the princes, the king's sons And all who clothe themselves with foreign garments. 9

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"And I will punish on that day all who leap on the temple threshold, Who fill the house of their lord with violence and deceit. 10 "On that day," declares the LORD, "There will be the sound of a cry from the Fish Gate, A wail from the Second Quarter, And a loud crash from the hills. 11 "Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar, For all the people of Canaan will be silenced; All who weigh out silver will be cut off. 12 "It will come about at that time That I will search Jerusalem with lamps, And I will punish the men Who are stagnant in spirit, Who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good or evil!' 13 "Moreover, their wealth will become plunder And their houses desolate; Yes, they will build houses but not inhabit them, And plant vineyards but not drink their wine." 14 Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. 15 A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 A day of trumpet and battle cry Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers. 17 I will bring distress on men So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the LORD; And their blood will be poured out like dust And their flesh like dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the LORD'S wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth. (Zeph. 1:7-18)

- (b) New Testament: Matthew 7:22; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10.

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- (2) What is referred to here? The time of tribulation.
 - (a) Matthew 24:21-29.
 - (b) With Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 12:1.

Beale's commentary, thought by many to be the best shows how many choose to interpret this very large and important section. The title for this 8:1-8 he gave is, "THE FIRST FOUR SEALS: CHRIST USES EVIL HEAVENLY FORCES TO INFLICT TRIALS ON PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE CHURCH AGE FOR EITHER PURIFICATION OR PUNISHMENT .
(G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 370.)

Note the problems with this:

II. The text:

- A. What we are seeing from this point on is the future.
 1. The tribulation, which is the outpouring of the wrath of God upon those who reject him, covers chapters 6-18.
 2. I do not believe that we shall be rescued out of that time of tribulation; rather the Church shall go through it completely and come out the back side of it triumphant in Christ.
 3. Two other views see the Church as being rescued from the entire event or a part of the event.
- B. A example of how a person who sees chapters 6-18 as not future but merely symbolic. One major commentator, Dr. Beale argues that 6:1-8 is simply how Jesus uses hardships to punish evildoers and purify believers through the time of the Church.
 1. First, this section starts like so many of the sections in Revelation with *Καὶ εἶδον* (*kai eidon*, "and I saw") which is used to move the prophecy and the book along. It is only five times in the rest of the New Testament but starting in Revelation 5:1 John uses it 32 times all the way to chapter 21. It

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is worth noting that it is also used a lot in the prophecies of both Ezekiel and Daniel, both of which are alluded to time and time again in Revelation.

2. Second, to make this section merely mean that God uses fallen angels to accomplish His work throughout the time of the church is to simply ignore the clear and explicit statements of the passage itself.
 3. Third, it makes little sense to make this a general use of punishment and purification in the church age due to its tight connection to the worthiness of Christ to open the seals in chapter 5. God has freely used spiritual forces to accomplish His purposes since the garden of Eden.
 4. Fourth, there is nothing in vss 1-8 that shows a purifying work for the Church. It is wholly negative and wholly judgmental.
 5. Fifth, the context of Revelation 6 is that each is going out in sequence, one after another. They are not merely out there indefinitely. Their tasks are individual and specific with specific results.
- C. The first four seals belong together apparently.
1. Introduced by the four living creatures (6:1, 3, 5, 7).
 2. Each seal is preceded with a call to “Come.”
 3. Each seal contains the image of a horse and rider (6:2, 4, 5, 8).
 4. In each of the seals there is a progression of meaning given for each of the four seals: conquering, making war, famine, and death.
 5. Each of these seals is opened by the Lamb, Jesus Christ.
 6. Each seal is given its authority by Christ (“and to him was granted...”).
 - a. John sees the whole process of judgment under the control of God. The conqueror has only what Almighty God allows him to have. God is completely sovereign so His people do not need to be dismayed.
 - b. The afflictions are similar to Jeremiah 14:12; 24:10; 42:17. (Example: The Lord speaking of the evil king of Judah and his followers, “I will send the sword, the famine and the pestilence upon them until they are destroyed from the land which I gave to them and their forefathers.” (24:10))

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- c. Horses in the Old Testament often are symbols of war and conquest. And riders on the horses are connected with omens of the end.
- D. The white horse.
1. What is the identity of the rider of the white horse? It is not given, but there are many (at least 8) views.
 2. The one I think is best is that it is describing the anti-Christ.
 - a. Daniel 9:26-27.
 - b. This rider represents a conquering power that no one can resist (cf. Matthew 24:3-6).
 - c. This person has the semblance of Christ but he is not Christ (cf. Revelation 19:11-19).
 3. But do not get too tied up with this, keep the central point in mind, he was sent for the purpose of **domination** to bring nations and people under his rule.
 4. The other riders are not focused by most commentators indicating that we need to spend too much time here as well.
- E. The red horse.
1. Note that he removes any sense of peace. Mankind begins to devour itself. This is upon the “earth” and no indication that it is limited to some specific geographical location, like Jerusalem in 70 AD.
 2. Peace is already a vague concept; much worse in that time.
 3. We learn here that even now, in these times, God is withholding the fulness of our sinful natures or we would become utterly ruthless.
- F. The black horse.
1. The scales help us see that it is a time of great famine. The picture is the careful weighing of food due to the scarcity—rationing of food. The result is massive famine, but not for all.
 2. Notice the last part of vs 6 about oil and wine. These are luxury items.

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- a. “Do not damage the oil and the wine” means “do not tamper with,” reflecting the strict control over prices that ungodly rulers will have at this time.
 - b. The poor would have little money left over for oil, for fuel and health needs, and for wine to drink.
 - c. As the tribulation grows worse, the rich as well as the poor will suffer, but at this early stage the poor will suffer more than the rich.
- G. The grey/ashen horse.
1. Here we know the name of the rider—death.
 2. The Greek term for “ashen” (*chloros*) is the one from which we get our English word chlorine. It denotes a yellowish-green color as of a human corpse.
 3. Hades is pictured as coming behind death to gather its victims.
 - a. Note the massive amount of carnage that occurs.
 - b. 1/4th of the earth is swallowed up in death. That is 1.9 billion people or all of the USA almost 6 times.
 - c. There is the Old Testament allusion to Ezekiel 14:21, “For this is what the sovereign Lord says: How much worse will it be when I send my four terrible judgments – sword, famine, wild animals, and plague – to Jerusalem to kill both people and animals.”
- H. The fifth seal (9).
1. The imagery changes as well as the tone.
 2. The first four are hard, crisp and judgmental in tone.
 3. This one softens and the reason is that it is God’s initial judgment of vengeance for those martyred. A few observations:
 - a. First, that those who die in the Lord are in his presence.
 - b. Second, there is a desire by them for vengeance. But that vengeance is the Lord’s to make, not theirs.
 - (1) Romans 12:19, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”

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- (2) We learn from this that we can show tolerance and grace in the face of our enemies because God shall deal with them in His time.
 - c. Third, they are not discontent, but are called to continue to rest, to be refreshed.
 - d. Fourth, the fulness of the martyrs was not yet complete and so the vengeance of God in that respect was not yet time.
 - e. Fifth, God has ordained the exact number of those who shall die for His name sake.
- I. The sixth seal (12).
- 1. From a view in heaven we now switch back to the earth.
 - 2. Here we have strong language of a massive earthquake.
 - a. Isaiah 2:6-22.
 - b. Haggai 2:6-7 "For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. 7 'And I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations; and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.
 - (1) Note how this event is tied to the nations filling Israel with their wealth.
 - (2) This is one of many passages that point to a future time of worldwide blessing toward the nation of Israel.
 - 3. The imagery of the sun and moon are also found referenced in the Old Testament.
 - a. Isaiah 13:10-13.
 - b. Joel 2:30-32, ""And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire, and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, **before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes**. And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As

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the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.”

- (1) Note how well this fits with chapter 6 of Revelation with the judgments.
 - (2) But also see the word of hope and grace.
 - (3) **Those who call upon the name of YHWH will be saved.**
- c. But notice what the bulk of the people do (Revelation 6:15-17).
- (1) The great fear of mankind is truly not death but to stand before the God whom they have rejected.
 - (2) Death for the atheist simply means nothing, but watch them die. It is a fearsome thing.
 - (3) The great concern is that they might somehow escape God’s judgment through death, but it only brings them into that judgment.
- d. There is only one escape—to flee to God, not from Him.

III. Conclusion.

- A. As the title of the sermon states, this is the beginning of the end.
1. It is painful.
 2. It is sad.
 3. And it is frightening.
- B. But there is also the sobering reality of the character of God in the death of His Son, Jesus Christ.
1. Sin is not simply winked at or ignored.
 2. Sin truly brings the wrath of God upon each person.
 3. Grace does not simply make sin disappear.
 4. Sin must be dealt with for righteousness sake or God is a liar. It is resolved either through Jesus or through God’s wrath.
- C. Finally, we learn some things about our Lord in this chapter:
1. Jesus is the man of righteousness, not the man of sin, the Antichrist (2).

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2. Jesus is the Prince of Peace that not even these horsemen can remove (4)
3. Jesus is the bread of life, those who believe in Him will never hunger or thirst (6).
4. Jesus is the Life, the Living One, not death that destroys (8).
5. Jesus is holy and true (10).
6. Jesus will do that which is just and right.
7. Jesus will judge with full and pure wrath.

IV. Benediction/Doxology.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! ...To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!

Small Group Questions

- **Summer Break**