

A SERIES ON REVELATION: is this the end?

Week 12 – the end begins?

Transition: In Revelation chapters 4 & 5, John is given a vivid picture of heaven. Whereas in chapter 4, John's attention went from God on His throne, to the 24 elders on their thrones, and then to the four living creatures who continually flew around the throne proclaiming God's glory, in chapter 5 John's gaze is fixated on the Lamb. The Lamb is Jesus of course. Likewise, in chapter 5, the predominant theme is that the Lamb alone is worthy to break open the seals of the heavenly scroll. Because He is worthy, all of heaven, and indeed, all of creation join together in worshipping Him.

Context: Chapter 6 opens a new chapter in Revelation. The Lamb begins opening the seals of the scroll that no one but Him was worthy to open. In essence, the opening of the first of the seven seals on the scroll marks the beginning of the end. It signifies that humanity's final march toward the culmination of history and the advent of the eternal kingdom has begun.

Opening Questions:

- Share a story of a Christian martyr whose story had a significant impact on you. What about them or their martyrdom affected you? In what way(s) did it change you/your life?
- To you, what is the hardest part in sharing the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection (the gospel) with others?

Scripture/Storying: Revelation 6 & 7

Discipleship Questions:

- Compare Revelation 6:1-8 with Matthew 24:3-8. What is similar? What is different? What is your understanding of how the sending out of the four horses fits into the end-times scheme/framework?
- In Revelation 6:9-11, John sees and hears souls crying out to God. Who are these people? What are they crying out? Why are they crying out? What are they asking the Lord to do? What is His response? What does this teach us about God that we can apply to our own lives?
- Compare Revelation 6:12-17 with Matthew 24:29-31. What is similar? What is different? What do we learn about God from these passages? What is your personal response to it?
- What is the relationship between the souls in 6:9-11 and the ones in 7:9-14? What does the elder say about the latter group in verses 7:15-17? Compare v17 with Psalm 23. The elder also quotes from Isaiah 25:8. Read Isaiah 25. In consideration of these other passages as well as what is said in 7:9-14, what is God telling you about Himself? Why is this picture of God fitting considering the context of what is going on in the world?
- Share a story of a time when God "wiped away every tear" from your eyes. Since this is figurative language, how did He actually do it? What influence has it had on how you live? How does this future reality influence your life today?
- What does it mean that God seals the foreheads of the 144,000 mentioned in 7:1-8? Read 2 Corinthians 1:18-22, Ephesians 1:13-14, and Ephesians 4:30. What does it mean that you (as someone who has trusted in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus) have been sealed by God? What effect ought the reality of being sealed have on your daily life?
- To you, what does it take to be faithful to Jesus, especially when suffering persecution to the point of death?
- What has God revealed to you about Himself today? ...what has He revealed to you about you?