

Session 8 The Forerunner Message in Revelation 6-7

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. John saw Jesus take the scroll from the Father (5:1-7). The scroll speaks of the “title deed” of the earth and God’s action plan to cleanse and restore it. By taking the scroll, He accepts responsibility to cleanse, restore, and rule the earth. For Jesus to open the scroll and loose the seals involves Him releasing judgments (Rev. 6-19) that will result in removing the wicked kings of the earth (19:21).
- ⁵One of the elders said, “...[Jesus] has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals”...⁷Then He [Jesus]...took the scroll out of the right hand of Him [the Father]...⁸Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders...⁹sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals [release judgment]...” (Rev. 5:5-9)***
- B. **Outline of Revelation 6** (the first chronological section)
- 6:1-8** The Lamb breaks the first four seals
6:9-11 The Lamb breaks the fifth seal
6:12-17 The Lamb breaks the sixth seal
- C. **Outline of Revelation 7** (the first parenthetical section)
- 7:1-8** The sealing of the 144,000
7:9-12 A great multitude standing before the throne
7:13-17 The great multitude identified
- D. God’s judgments are not released *on* the saints but *in context to* their prayers (5:8; 8:3; 22:17)
- ⁹For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through...Jesus. (1 Thes. 5:9)***
- E. Many people fear reading the book of Revelation because they have a wrong perspective about it. They do not see the main storyline being about a victorious Church (12:11; 15:2) relating to Jesus as a mature Bride (19:7), partnering with Him (8:3; 22:17) in destroying the Antichrist’s oppressive empire.
1. As Moses released God’s judgments on Pharaoh by prayer (Ex. 7-12), so the Church under Jesus’ leadership will pray (8:3) to release the Tribulation judgments on the Antichrist.
 2. One focus of the book of Revelation is God’s judgment against the Antichrist’s empire. A secondary theme is the Antichrist’s persecution of the saints. Out of 403 verses, 12 verses (3%) speak of persecution (Rev. 6:9-11; 11:7; 12:17; 13:7, 15; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4).
 3. I refer to Revelation as the ***end-time book of Acts***. It is a ***canonized prayer manual*** that informs us of the ways in which Jesus will manifest His power. Imagine hundreds of millions of believers with a unified prayer focus because they know the sequence in which the trumpet judgments will unfold. For example, the saints will know that, after the third trumpet, will come the fourth trumpet, and so on!

4. Jesus' judgments will remove everything that hinders love. He will overthrow all the evil systems that perpetuate injustice and oppression. He is the loving liberator of the nations from the Antichrist's oppression and injustice.

II. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

- A. **5 chronological sections:** There are 5 chronological sections in the book that communicate the main storyline, highlighting the key judgment events in the chronological order in which they will occur.
- B. **5 angelic explanations:** Each chronological section is followed by an angelic explanation which is often referred to by commentators as a parenthetical section.
- C. The 5 angelic explanations each function as a parenthesis that puts the continuous storyline on "pause" to answer two "pastoral" questions.
 1. "Why are these judgments so severe?" Or, how can a God of love be so violent?
 2. "What will happen to the Church?" It describes how God will help the saints to stand in the midst of great deception and persecution and/or how the Antichrist will attack them.
- D. The 5 chronological sections (seals, trumpets, bowls) tell us what happens to the *Antichrist empire*.
- E. The 5 angelic explanations (parenthetical sections) tell us what happens to *God's people*.

III. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION: 4 MAIN PARTS

Part 1—Rev. 1 *John's CALLING to prophesy about the end times*. John gave 24 truths about Jesus' majesty that form the way he prophesied about the end times. These are meant to equip us.

Part 2—Rev. 2-3 *Jesus gave 7 LETTERS to 7 churches*. The instructions Jesus gave to these 7 churches in that day about overcoming sin give us insight into what we must overcome today. Jesus selected churches to identify the main issues that would challenge the end-time Church.

Part 3—Rev. 4-5 *Jesus takes the SCROLL* containing the earth's title deed and Jesus' plan to cleanse it.

Part 4—Rev. 6-22 *Jesus' BATTLE PLAN* reveals His main story line of love in the book of Revelation. The Antichrist is at "war" against Jesus and His people (Rev. 11:7; 12:7, 17; 13:4, 7; 17:14; 19:11, 19). His battle plan or the main story line is laid out in **5 chronological sections** describing the 21 judgment events that unfold in sequential order. Each chronological section is followed by an **angelic explanation** functioning as a parenthesis, putting the storyline "on pause" to tell John why the judgment events are necessary. They answer questions arising from the chronological sections: Why is God's wrath so severe? What will happen to us?

Rev. 6 **Chronological Section #1:** The **SEAL JUDGMENTS** against the kingdom of darkness
Rev. 7 **Angelic Explanation #1:** We receive PROTECTION from judgments and falling away.

Rev. 8-9 **Chronological Section #2:** The **TRUMPET JUDGMENTS** against the Antichrist's empire
Rev. 10-11 **Angelic Explanation #2:** We receive DIRECTION by a great increase of prophetic ministry.

- Rev. 11:15-19 **Chronological Section #3: SECOND COMING ROYAL PROCESSION and RAPTURE**
At the seventh and last trumpet (1 Cor. 15:52; Rev. 10:7; cp. 1 Thes. 4:16): Jesus will replace all evil governmental leaders on earth. It will be a hostile takeover that includes a war.
- Rev. 12-14 **Angelic Explanation #3:** The Antichrist's violent CONFRONTATION against the saints and everything that God calls good requires that all his governments be replaced.
- Rev. 15-16 **Chronological Section #4:** The **BOWL JUDGMENTS** destroy evil infrastructures in society.
Rev. 17-18 **Angelic Explanation #4:** The SEDUCTION by Babylon's evil religion will permeate and infiltrate all the structures of society, requiring that Babylon be totally destroyed.
- ⁸I [Father] will give You [Jesus] the nations for Your inheritance...⁹You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel. (Ps. 2:8-9)**
- Rev. 19-20 **Chronological Section #5:** Jesus' **TRIUMPHAL ENTRY** to Jerusalem (Rev. 19:11-21:8)
Rev. 21-22 **Angelic Explanation #5:** The RESTORATION of all things (Acts 3:21; Rev. 21:9-22:5)
At Jesus' coming, He will restore all that God originally intended in the Garden of Eden.

IV. THE SEVEN SEALS

- A. Jesus opens each of the seals which are *literal* (not merely symbolic), *future* (future fulfillment), *progressive* (increasing in intensity), and *numbered* (released in a sequential order). It seems that the seals will be released over a few *years*, the trumpets over *months*, and the bowls over *days*.
- B. The negative activities that are released in context to the seals continue to occur even as the trumpet and bowl judgments are released.
- C. The 7 seals are each released by Jesus (5:5; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1). John was commanded 4 times to "come and see" (6:1, 3, 5, 7), to draw closer to God and grasp the implications of His judgments.
- ¹Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals...one of the four living creatures saying...
"Come and see"...³When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying,
"Come and see"...⁵When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say,
"Come and see"...⁷When He opened the fourth seal, I heard...the fourth living creature saying,
"Come and see." (Rev. 6:1-7)**
1. The exhortation repeated the most in the book of Revelation is "to hear what the Spirit is saying"—it is found 8 times (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9). The second most emphasized exhortation is to "come" or "come and see"—it is found 7 times (4:1; 6:1, 3, 5, 7; 17:1; 21:9).
 2. Those who walk righteously (Isa. 33:15) will see the King's beauty in His end-time storyline (Isa. 33:17). The Church is to look for the beauty displayed in His end-time leadership. Many will not see God's beauty, but only what seems like "random chaos" when interpreting the escalating pressures that Jesus referred to as the "distress of the nations" (Lk. 21:25).
**¹⁵He who walks righteously...¹⁷Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; they will see the land that is very far off [Jesus' rule is worldwide]. ¹⁸Your heart will meditate on terror:
"Where is the scribe [and]...he who counts the towers?" ¹⁹You will not see a fierce people... (Isa. 33:15-19)**
 3. **Your heart will meditate on terror:** The redeemed are to meditate on terror by thinking on the implications of His past judgments and His future judgments against the Antichrist's empire.

4. **Where is the scribe?** The Assyrian officials occupying Judah in Isaiah’s day included bookkeepers, auditors, and tax officials who kept meticulous records. They were gone! The result of God’s judgment was that the enemies of His kingdom were removed from the land.

5. **Not see a fierce people:** The Lord promised that all Israel’s enemies will be removed forever.

D. God’s judgments against the wicked in the first five seals are the result of God taking His restraining hand off evil men—allowing them to sin against each other in unrestrained ways. The Lord allows wicked nations who refuse His leadership to live under the darkness that inevitably results from them insisting on ruling the nations according their sinful ways. There is a time when Lord “gives people over” to their own dark and depraved ways (Rom. 1:24-28; 2 Thes. 2:11).

²⁴...**God also gave them up to uncleanness...to dishonor their bodies among themselves...**

²⁶**God gave them up to vile passions...Their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.** ²⁷**Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.** ²⁸...**God gave them over to a debased mind... (Rom 1:24-28)**

¹¹**For this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie... (2 Thes. 2:11)**

E. The Antichrist will allow the 10 kings under him to destroy the worldwide Harlot system (17:16).

¹**Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot...²**with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk...⁶**I saw the woman [harlot], drunk with the blood of the saints...¹⁶**The ten horns [10-nation confederation]...on the beast [the Antichrist] ...will hate the harlot...and burn her with fire. (Rev. 17:1-2, 6, 16)********

F. The nations have been enjoying a counterfeit worldwide peace (1 Thes. 5:3) which will end with the opening of the first seal, the fall of Babylon, and the abomination of desolation.

³**For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (1 Thes. 5:3)**

V. FIRST SEAL: THE ANTICHRIST’S POLITICAL AGGRESSION (REV. 6:1-2)

A. In the first seal, Jesus allows the Antichrist to be raised up to release God’s judgments on the Harlot Babylon worldwide system or networks which have been murdering the saints (17:6).

¹**I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals...²**behold, a white horse. He [the Antichrist] who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. (Rev. 6:1-2)****

B. **White:** The color white symbolizes righteousness because his reign initially appears righteous. He is the counterfeit to Jesus who rides a white horse with truth (19:11).

C. **Arrowless bow:** The Antichrist’s rule initially is gained by an **arrowless bow** implying his bloodless victories using deceptive diplomacy. A bow speaks of war that can strike at a distance.

1. This is commonly understood as a **threat of war**—to persuade nations to submit to him.

2. Hitler bullied nations into submission often by deceiving them with false promises, along with threatening to destroy them by a military invasion. Examples of this include the time when Hitler annexed Austria (March 1938). Next, he annexed Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland (October 1938) and later occupied Czechoslovakia after threatening to invade (March 1939).
- D. ***A crown was given to him:*** The Antichrist will receive authority from Jesus, Satan, and sinful men. Jesus will give the Antichrist a specific sphere in which to operate for 3½ years.
- ²...***The dragon [Satan] gave him [the Antichrist] his power, his throne, and great authority...***
⁷***Authority was given him [the Antichrist] over every tribe, tongue, and nation. (Rev. 13:2, 7)***
1. Daniel prophesied of the saints being given into the hand of the Antichrist for 3½ years
²¹“...***the same horn [Antichrist] was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them,*** ²²***until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints...***
²⁵...***the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time [3½ years].***
(Dan. 7:21-25)
 2. All authority belongs to Jesus (Mt. 28:18)
¹⁸***All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (Mt. 28:18)***
¹***There is no authority except from God...the authorities that exist are appointed by God...***
⁴***He is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.***
(Rom. 13:1-4)
- E. I believe the first seal is opened at the beginning of the Great Tribulation or at the final 3½ years of this age. Some see the first seal as being opened at the beginning of the final 7 years of this age to launch with worldwide counterfeit peace and safety (1 Thes. 5:3). If the first seal opens at the beginning of the final 7 years, then it would be the only seal that begins before the final 3½ years and is not a judgment on the kingdom of darkness.
- F. Some see the first seal as symbolic of *Jesus* conquering sin on the cross, or of the victory of the *gospel* through history. Others see it as fulfilled by the military activity of the Roman empire or by the Parthian invasions of the Roman Empire.
1. These views require excessive spiritualizing while *ignoring the details* of the text (the arrowless bow, single crown, and lack of victory of the gospel in history) and the special recognizable relationship of the first 4 seals with clear points of similarity between them.
 2. Each has similar characteristics such as a horse with a distinct color with a rider released by a prophetic decree given by one of the living creatures.
 3. It would be out of place to see one horseman as Jesus with the other three as negative events. Jesus cannot be reduced to the same level as the other 3 horsemen that follow.
 4. Jesus is gloriously pictured in Revelation in splendor in three strategic places (1:12-18; 14:14-16; 19:11-16). He is not simply a rider on a white horse with a crown and bow. There are significant differences between the white horse riders in 6:2 and in 19:11-16.

VI. SECOND SEAL: WORLDWIDE BLOODSHED AND THE FINAL WORLD WAR (REV. 6:3-4)

- A. The second seal speaks of a world war (6:4) which results in a fourth of the population dying (6:8).
³*When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.”*
⁴*Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. (Rev. 6:3-4)*
- B. **Great sword:** This sword speaks of extreme forms of bloodshed coming from war and violence.
- C. The Antichrist’s orchestrated conflict starts initially with an arrowless bow (6:2). Later he uses a great sword of violence resulting in a world war (6:4).

VII. THIRD SEAL: FAMINE AND ECONOMIC CRISIS (REV. 6:5-6)

- A. The black horse speaks of the famine and economic crisis that will follow the world war in 6:4.
⁵*He opened the third seal...a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.*
⁶*I heard a voice..., “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius.” (Rev. 6:5-6)*
- B. **A denarius:** A denarius was equivalent to the wages for one day of work. A quart of wheat is the amount that one man might eat in one day on a minimal diet. The economic crisis will cause one’s earning power to be reduced to working all day to afford food for one person for one day. This represents well over 10 times less buying power than what we see in the world today.
- C. **Wheat and barley:** Barley, an inferior grain, will be three times cheaper than the price of wheat.

VIII. FOURTH SEAL: DEATH TO ONE-FOURTH OF THE EARTH’S PEOPLE (REV. 6:7-8)

- A. As a result of the fourth seal, one-fourth of the earth will die (6:8). The word for pale is literally pale green or ashen (the pale grey color of ash)—this color is symbolic of death
⁷*When He opened the fourth seal...⁸behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death [disease], and by the beasts of the earth. (Rev. 6:7-8)*
- B. **Death and Hades:** Death speaks of what happens to the body going to the grave. Hades is the prison where the departed spirit of an unbeliever goes before going to the lake of fire after the Millennium.
- C. These are the same four judgments called “God’s four severe judgments” in Ezekiel 5:17 and 14:21.
²¹*...“How much more it shall be when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem—the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence—to cut off man...from it? (Ezek. 14:21)*

- D. ***A fourth of the earth:*** By AD 2025 the world population will be about 8 billion people. For 1/4 of 8 billion people to die—totaling about 2 billion deaths—it would leave about 6 billion who remain. In the sixth trumpet (6:15), 1/3 of these 6 billion will die—totaling another 2 billion deaths—leaving about 4 billion who remain. Thus, the total of deaths will be about 4 billion people.

⁶*...the curse has devoured the earth...the inhabitants...re burned, and few men are left.*
(Isa. 24:7)

IX. FIFTH SEAL: PRAYER RELEASING JUDGMENT (REV. 6:9-11)

- A. The fifth seal is supernatural power on the prayer movement that releases greater judgment on Antichrist's empire. This is the turning point in Revelation. This seal is misunderstood in seeing martyrdom as the judgment. The seals bring judgment on the kingdom of darkness, not the saints.

⁹*When He [Jesus] opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God...¹⁰They cried..., "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You...avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"¹¹...It was said to them that they should rest...until ...the number of their...brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed. (Rev. 6:9-11)*

- B. In AD 197, the church father Tertullian said, "*The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.*"

- C. ***How long:*** This is the prayer most recorded in Scripture (Zech. 1:12; cf. Ps. 6:3; 13:2; 74:10; 79:5; 80:4; 89:46; 90:13; 94:3; Dan. 8:13; 12:6-13). This prayer is not a cry for personal revenge but for judgment on the Antichrist's cruelty, vindication of God's reputation, and deliverance of His people.

⁷*Shall God not avenge His elect who cry out day and night...⁸I tell you that He will avenge them speedily...When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith [agreement] on the earth?*
(Lk. 18:7-8)

X. THE SIXTH SEAL: COSMIC DISTURBANCES (REV. 6:12-17)

- A. John sees the beginning of God's answer to the prayer of the martyrs (6:12-17).

¹²*He opened the sixth seal...there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth ...and the moon became like blood. ¹³The stars [asters]...fell to the earth...¹⁴The sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. ¹⁵The kings of the earth, the great men...hid themselves in the caves...¹⁶and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and the wrath of the Lamb!*
¹⁷*For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"* (Rev. 6:12-17)

- B. ***Stars:*** The Greek word for stars is *aster* from which we get the word *asteroid*. An *aster* refers to any shining mass in the sky, including stars, meteors, asteroids, any flaming debris, etc.

1. Physical elements in the solar system include planets, comets (and large comet tails), asteroid belts, meteor showers. Some ***meteorites*** are pieces of rock or iron that often come from the surfaces of other planets. A ***meteor shower*** is a collection of meteors seen when the earth passes through a trail of debris left by a comet. ***Asteroids*** are made of rock or metal (and are larger than meteorites). ***Comets*** are made up of ice or rocky particles that can range in size from a few hundred yards to 100 miles. Some ***comet tails*** can be millions of miles long.

2. **Elon Musk**, the CEO of SpaceX developed *Starlink* which is a satellite constellation project that seeks to establish a space-based Internet communication system. Phase one of the *Starlink* constellation project has launched over 1,500 satellites at an altitude of about 400 miles. SpaceX has plans to deploy 40,000 satellites before 2030. Concerns have been raised about the eventual danger of space junk resulting from thousands of satellites being in orbit. The plan is to launch 2,000 satellites a year.

XI. FIRST PARENTHETICAL SECTION: WHO CAN STAND? (REV. 7:1-17)

- A. The question of “who is able to stand” through the day of the Lord’s wrath (6:17) is answered in this first parenthetical section in two visions: in the sealing of the Israelites (7:1-8) and in bringing a multitude of Gentiles from every nation to salvation (7:9-17).

²I saw another angel...having the seal of the living God. He cried...³ saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of God...” ⁴One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed... (Rev. 7:2-4)

- B. A great multitude from all nations will come to Jesus during the Tribulation (7:9-17; cf. Mt. 24:14).

⁹...behold, a great multitude...of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne...¹³Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these...and where did they come from?”...¹⁴So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation...” (Rev. 7:9-14)