

Series: **The End of Time**

Today's Title: **"7 Seals"**

October 15, 2023 – Revelation 4:1-8:1

Objective: To help people understand what the future Tribulation judgements will be like.

Church Plant focus / video / financial support

Opening prayer

Turn in your Bible to Revelation 4

Show timeline.

We're now entering a part of our study of **'The End of Time'** which will reveal what will happen during the Tribulation here on earth – and also what happens in heaven.

Read Revelation 4:1-5

The **throne** of God in heaven. 4:1-5

"throne" is used 15x in **chapters 4 & 5**.

John's vision is of the throne room of God in heaven.

"jasper" and "carnelian" – red stones – jasper can be red, yellow, or brown – and carnelian comes in a variety of colors – all with a red quality.

vs. 4, 10 – the 24 elders around the throne have "crowns" – Greek: *stephanos* – laurel leaf crowns / wreaths – given to the winner in the Olympic games.

Compare that with the crown Jesus is wearing at His 2nd coming - **19:12** – “on His head are many diadems” – Greek: *diadema* - royal crown.

vs. 5-6

“...flashes of lightning...thunder”

In the Bible – these accompany the presence of God.

“...seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God”

Likely a reference to the Holy Spirit – 7 simply symbolizing the perfection and completeness of God.

The continual worship of God in heaven. 4:6-11

Read 4:6-11

“a sea of glass, like crystal”

This is not water. It is the floor / ground - as clear as crystal.

“...four living creatures” – likely angelic beings (cherubim, seraphim)

See **Ezekiel 1:10, 10:14** and **Isaiah 6**.

Ezekiel 1:10

“As for the likeness of their faces, each had a human face. The four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle.”

Isaiah 6:2-3

Above Him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!”

vs. 8, 11 – God is worshiped for:

1. His holiness – **vs. 8** “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.”
2. His eternal nature – **vs. 8b** “...who was and is and is to come!”
3. His creative power – **vs. 11** “...for you created all things...”

The worship of Jesus in heaven. *5:1-14*

Read 5:1-14

What are the “seals”?

In ancient times, a document was sealed (like our licking an envelope), by dripping hot wax onto the scroll when it was rolled up – and the wax would seal the scroll which would keep the scroll from unrolling – and the seal could only be opened by someone who had authority to open the scroll.

John is brought to tears because (vs. 3-4) “no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it...”

vs. 5 – the angel consoles John – telling him that there is One who is able to open the scroll.

“...the Lion of the tribe of Judah”

This is a Messianic title for Jesus with roots back to **Genesis 49.**

Genesis 49:9-10 – Jacob – about to die – prophesying and blessing his sons.

“Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?”

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”

“...the Root of David” – traces Jesus’ human ancestry back to King David.

But John doesn’t see a lion – he sees a Lamb.

In Revelation – this is the title / description used of Jesus. (28x in Revelation)

Jesus was the fulfillment of the Passover Lamb.

When he saw Jesus, John the Baptizer said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

vs. 6 – On the Lamb were 7 horns - the horns signify authority – Jesus’ power over the death and Hades.

“seven eyes” - the #7 – signifies perfection / completeness.

God sees all things / knows all things perfectly.

See: **Zechariah 4:10**

“These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth.”

vs. 7 - The “mighty angel” (vs. 2) takes the scroll from God – he will bring it to Jesus / the “Lamb” – and as he does this, “the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb...”

They sang a new song – which speaks to the worthiness of the Lamb / Jesus – to open the seals on the scroll.

The song speaks of the salvation in the blood of Jesus – how He has redeemed people “from every tribe and language and people and nation...”

In the Bible, the smoke from incense in the Temple is often symbolic of the prayers of the saints – the people of God – Christians.

Psalm 141:2

“Let my prayer be counted as incense before You, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!”

vs. 11 – This worship service in heaven is massive!

“...numbering myriads of myriads and thousands and thousands...”

In Greek, the largest single number used was 10,000 – which is the word *urias* or translated “myriad”.

John is not trying to give us an exact count here.

He is saying there are too many to count!

So... in **chapters 4 & 5** John’s vision starts with this amazing scene in heaven – which reveals the glory and power of God – and of Jesus – the Lamb of God.

The Father and the Son are worshiped – and the stage is set for what is about to happen.

The 7 seals opened by Jesus. 6:1-17, 8:1

Chapter 6 begins a section – which actually runs through **chapter 18** – which details the horrific judgments God pours out on the earth.

These events sovereignly orchestrated from God are horrific – *but they are just and righteous.*

If you struggle believing they are just and righteous, it reveals 1 of 2 areas where you lack understanding.

1. It reveals you don't understand the evil and utter depravity of our sin.
2. It reveals you don't understand the immensity and purity of God's holiness.

Or... maybe you don't understand either of these – in their fullness.

Our problem: We always minimize our sin – and exaggerate our own goodness.

At the same time, we tend to minimize God's holiness, because we can't fathom what true and absolute holiness is actually like.

When you put these 2 things together – we end up with a warped and perverted self-image – and God-image.

A true understanding of history – of the past, present, and future...

A true understanding of ourselves and the world...

Must be rooted in these 2 truths.

- The depth and extent of human sin.

- The heights and glory of God's holiness and righteousness.

As we look at these judgements – never lose sight of these 2 anchors of truth which will give perspective as we walk through the Tribulation judgments over the coming weeks.

Here in **chapter 6**, we are introduced to what are commonly called '*The 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse*'. There are 4 horses and their riders – each symbolic of real events that happen on earth.

Seal #1 – read vs. 1-2

The white horse – its rider has a bow – but no arrows.

A bow w/out arrows is symbolic of peace.

This is the Anti-Christ.

“Man of Lawlessness” – “son of destruction” (2 Thess. 2:3)

“...he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.” (2 Thess. 2:4)

“The Abomination that causes desolation” (Daniel 9:27, 11:1; Matthew 24:15)

“The Beast” (Revelation 13)

He will rise on the world stage – speaking about a great peace – involving Israel and likely the Arab states.

Everyone will love him – praise him – idolize him!
But he doesn't want peace.

Only 3 ½ years after this peace deal is signed – he will violate the deal.

vs. 2b – “and he came out conquering, and to conquer.”

This is his true motive.

Seal #2 – read vs. 3-4

Red symbolized death, terror, and bloodshed.

Peace is replaced by war – violence – death.

Seal #3 – read vs. 5-6

Black horse – representing famine and financial collapse.

“A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius...”

A quart of wheat was needed to make a loaf of bread.

A denarius was a day’s wage.

A day’s wage will only buy a loaf of bread!!!!

“Oil and wine” – represent the wealthy.

The wealthy will not be impacted these hardships.

Seal #4 – read vs. 7-8

Horse #4 – a pale horse – Greek: *chloros* – English: chlorophyl – which is a greenish color – this is pale green.

These (“Death, and Hades”) are given authority and power to kill over ¼ of the earth!

According to today's population of the earth – over ¼ would be over 2 billion people!

Seal #5

We've seen the 4 horsemen of the Apocalypse – and the 5th seal shifts to the death and martyrdom of believers during the Tribulation.

Read vs. 9-11

There will be people who are saved during the Tribulation.

It will be difficult – very difficult – due to the intense persecution of Christians – especially when they don't take the mark of the Beast.

But some will turn to Christ during this time.

The horrific events – over 2 billion people dying – will wake some people up!!

Some of those who come to Christ were certainly people who were in church before the Rapture – hearing the Gospel – hearing about the end times – but never believing in Jesus – never putting their faith in Christ as their Savior.

They heard *"it's only by grace"* – but they kept telling themselves, *"I'm a good person – I'm good enough!"*

And then the rapture happens – the peace treaty with Israel happens – then falls apart.

Death and destruction start to escalate – and they will realize the truth of what’s going on – and they will turn to Christ.

And many of them will be martyred – and many will also die in the terrible events we’ve covered in the first 4 seal judgments.

But those John describes here were (vs. 9) “...those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.”

Seal #6 – read vs. 12-14

This judgment brings natural catastrophes on a scale the world has never known.

Earthquakes, volcanoes, meteors and asteroids, tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, etc.

Terror sets in after the 6th seal.

Read vs. 15-17

vs. 16 - People want to die – instead of facing God. Certainly not all – but some people are going to realize the supernatural power behind these events – and they will recognize that God is behind these things.

This reveals a few of the reasons we have these prophecies in our Bible.

It is to shake people – deep in their soul – of what will happen if they don't turn to Christ.

It's also to shake up Christians – out of a spiritual passivity – to spiritual alertness – so we will be active in the mission – *to reach people for Christ and to help them grow in the faith.*

The 144,000 Jewish servants sealed by God. 7:1-8

Chapter 7 doesn't seem to be in chronological order with **chapter 6 & 8.**

Many believe it is a parenthetical chapter – where John has a vision of some other things happening.

It's probably included here as an answer to the question that concluded **chapter 6**: “Who can stand?”

Read 7:1-3

Chapter 7 - John has another vision (“After this...”).

There are 5 angels – 4 of them have the job of holding back any judgment from taking place.

The 5th angel, “with a loud voice”, command the other 4 angels to prevent the judgment...

vs. 3 – “...until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”

What is this seal / mark?

Look at **Revelation 14:1** – background prophecy in **Ezekiel 9:3-4**

“Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with Him 144,000 who had His name and His Father's name written on their foreheads.”

The seal on the 144,000 was the name of the Father and the Son.

This seal protected them from these judgments.

Revelation 9:1-4

“And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.

2 He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.

3 Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth.

4 They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.”

Read vs. 4-8

“144,000” - These are not the Jehovah Witnesses – JW’s claim to be the 144,000 mentioned here.

This group (vs. 1-8) are Jewish believers – 12,000 from each of the tribes of Israel.

In the O.T. - Jacob was the grandson of Abraham and the son of Isaac, and Jacob had 12 sons.

His 12 sons later became the 12 tribes of Israel.

If you compared the list of the 12 tribes in these verses – with the many other lists we have in the Bible – you would notice that there are some differences in the list.

This is not a textual error or some confusion by the inspired writers.

Sometimes the tribes are listed by birth order (Gen. 29, 35) ...

Sometime by the order of Jacob’s blessing (Gen. 49) ...

Sometime how they were encamped in the wilderness years (Numbers 2) ...

Sometime by the order of the census (Numbers 26) ...

Sometime by the blessing and cursing (Deuteronomy 27) ...
Or according to Moses' blessing (Deuteronomy 33) ...
Or by the princes (Numbers 1) ...
Or by the order of inheritance (Joshua 13-22) ...
Or by the wives and concubines (1 Chronicles 2-8) ...
Or the order of the city gates (Ezekiel 48).

(Source: <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/66-28/survivors-of-the-wrath-of-god>)

The important point for us – is to know that God will work in a significant way – during the Tribulation – in the nation of Israel.

Zechariah 12:10

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on Me, on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps over a firstborn.”

Now...let's look at the 2nd group in John's vision – Gentile believers.

The tribulation Gentile saints in heaven. 7:9-17

Read 7:9-17

These are Gentiles who put their faith in Jesus during the Tribulation period, some may have been martyred – but most probably died due to the deadly events of the 6 seals.

This is a beautiful picture of unity – even though there is great diversity. (vs. 9-11)

Redeemed people from all around the world – the angels and four living creatures – all of them – together – worshipping God.

True and lasting unity is not found when we emphasize and focus on our differences.

It's when we focus on the same thing.

When we worship and value the same person: Jesus.

It is in Jesus and His truth that we find unity – love – kindness – dignity for all.

Seal #7 – Read 8:1-2

Seal #7 contains all the other judgments yet to come.

The 7 trumpet - and then the 7 bowl judgments.

Silence – due to the severity of these judgments – sober / somber moment – a pause.

We'll cover those judgement over the coming weeks.

Apply it...

Who can stand?

6:17 - “...for the great day of Their (Triune God) wrath has come, and who can stand?”

Only those who have faith in Jesus as their Savior can stand.

Close in prayer