

## The Seven Seals, Pt. 2: Content (Revelation 6:1-17)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (8/9/2015)

### Introduction

1. People want to know *when* the end of the world will be and what *signs* will accompany it.
  - a. However, Jesus spoke of *trends*, not signs.
  - b. He was more interested in *why*, not when.
  - c. He was more concerned to *prepare* His own to endure the hardships of the trends, not to titillate them with speculations of end time prophecies.
2. In Matthew 24:3–14, Jesus taught that the gospel age will be characterized by (1) an abundance of false Christs, (2) an increase of conflicts and disasters, and (3) great difficulties for faithful saints, but these are *not* signs of the end (v. 6; Luke 17:20, 21).
  - a. False Christs that are very appealing (v. 5); don't be fooled.
  - b. Great earthquakes, famines, pestilences (plagues), and terrors (fearful things) and great signs from heaven (Luke 21:1; Matt. 24:7, 8); don't be afraid.
  - c. They will lay their hands on you and persecute you, bringing you brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. (Luke 21:12; Matt. 24:9-14); don't be discouraged.
3. These trends are "birth pangs," the limited judgments on the wicked, who are insatiable in the greed of their selfish pursuit of happiness and peace.
4. This tendency of the wicked is a natural instinct in all flesh; thus, Jesus needed to correct this tendency in the disciples (vv. 9, 13, 14; Mark 10: 35-45; Luke 22:24-30; Acts 1:6-8).
5. The church must humbly suffer as did Jesus in order to be the fragrance of Christ (2 Cor. 2:14-17), serving as His ambassadors in the world (2 Cor. 5:16-21).
6. Therefore, based on the vision of Zechariah (6:1-8), the first four seals represent the limited judgments of the Lamb on those who oppose His rule and oppress His church.
7. The fifth seal gives the reason for these judgments.
8. The sixth seal reveals the last judgment.

### I. The Judgments of Christ

1. The first seal reveals a white horse whose rider has a bow and is given a victory crown (*stephanos*).
  - a. At the command of a living creature, he rides out conquering and to conquer.
  - b. This rider symbolizes the insatiable lust for power to control and dominate.
  - c. The judgment is that insatiable greed will never fully satisfy and always leads to misery and destruction.
2. The second seal releases a red horse whose rider is given the power to take peace from the earth.

- a. This rider symbolizes conflict, whether verbal or violent, that results from the first rider's conquests.
  - b. There is no peace on any level for those who will not find their satisfaction in submission to Jesus (Isa. 57:21; 59:8; Jer. 12:12; Ezek. 7:25; Rom. 3:17).
3. The third seal releases a black horse whose rider has scales representing the shortage that comes from the effects of the first rider.
- a. Scales symbolize commerce; the voice confirms a roughly 800 percent inflation on wheat and barley.
  - b. This judgment is also limited (wine and oil) and will affect those not directly killed in the warfare.
4. The fourth seal releases an ashen horse whose rider represents death, the ultimate consequence, the Lord's weapon against all who defy His authority.
- a. This rider has the power to "kill with sword, famine, pestilence (death by epidemic), and wild beasts."
  - b. This rider represents all the toxic byproducts of war, affecting all who survive the initial bloodshed.
  - c. With all this (Matt. 24:3-24), the end is not yet.

## II. The Patience of the Saints

1. The fifth seal represents the response of slain and glorified saints to their suffering.
- a. They are under "the altar," the place of sacrifice, symbolizing prayers of the saints (Rev. 8:3; 16:6, 7).
  - b. The seal answers the seeming delay of divine justice and the lament, "How long?" (Psa. 74:10; 94:3).
  - c. Note that these souls in heaven are not blissfully resigned to their current state. They are anxiously awaiting God's glory in the satisfaction of His justice.
2. These saints are described as those who have been *slain* (results from attack from the red horse) and *killed* (results from attack from the pale horse).
- a. The *slain* (metaphorically) represent all believers who have suffered for their faith.
  - b. In committing themselves to the Word and to the testimony of Jesus, they are identified with the suffering of the Lamb (Mark 8:35; Matt. 10:38, 39; Rom. 12:1, 2; Phil. 2:17).
3. The prayer of these slain saints is not for revenge but for the manifestation of God's justice (Rom. 3:25, 26).
- a. Their appeal is prefaced on the description of God as "holy and true" and must be answered (19:2).
  - b. Thus, the judgments of the horsemen function as the partial response to their plea.
  - c. Full and final justice must wait until all who are yet to suffer join them (2 Pet. 3:9).

### **III. The Sixth Seal: Wrath of the Lamb**

1. The sixth seal is the “Day of the Lord,” the final judgment on “earth-dwellers.”
  - a. That day comes suddenly with a great earthquake that shakes the whole cosmology as detailed in the OT (Isa. 13:6-13; Joel 2:30, 31).
  - b. With the opening of this seal, we are at the end of history.
2. This seal cannot be an extended “tribulation” period after a “rapture” since there remain saints not yet martyred.
  - a. Also, the earthquake and cosmic signs are repeated in 16:20; 20:11; Joel 2:28-32), which symbolically indicate the last judgment by removing every means of escape.
  - b. The OT is filled with references to this hour (Isa. 24:1-6; 34:3, 4; Ezek. 32:6-8; Joel 3:15, 16; Hab. 3:6-11).
3. The judgment released in this seal involves all classes of society: kings, great ones, generals, the rich and powerful, slaves and freemen—everyone.
  - a. These same groups are mentioned in 19:18, 19 as those who gave allegiance to the beast.
  - b. Suddenly, there is nowhere for them to hide from the wrath of the Lamb as He avenges the blood of all His martyred host.

#### **Use**

1. In light of these verses, how should we view Satan and his horde with respect to Christ’s awful sovereignty?
2. We are called to suffer; so how does negative reaction to suffering reflect godliness?
3. How does our culture of instant gratification contribute to patience and endurance required of God’s children?