



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

LESSON 5 – Judgment, Evangelists, and Martyrs

LESSON OBJECTIVE

The goal of this lesson is to understand the interpretation of chapters 6 and 7 of the Revelation, with particular emphasis on the meaning of the scroll God the Father gives to God the Son.

NOTES ON REVELATION 6

6:1 “And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.”

Jesus opens the first of the seven seals, and with that, unleashes the first judgment. One of the four cherubim that surrounds God’s throne says in a loud voice, like thunder, “Come and see.” This is God’s invitation to John to watch what follows from the breaking of the seal. Note that the angel’s voice is not just loud, but extremely loud. One observation we can make about heaven is that every time someone talks, it is loud. The loudness commands everyone’s attention and points to the fact that what is about to happen is important. Also, as we go through this study, I will try to demonstrate that the first six seals occur during the first half of the seven-year tribulation. The seventh seal occurs throughout the second half of the seven-year tribulation, the period sometimes referred to as the Great Tribulation because of the severity of the judgments then upon the earth.

6:2 “And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.”

This is the first of four horsemen that John will see. Although the meaning is different here, the horseman imagery was seen over 600 years earlier by the prophet Zechariah (see Zechariah 1:8 ff). There will also be a white horse in Revelation 19:11, but that is not the same one John sees here. Keep in mind that God is using apocalyptic literature here to cast global events onto a small canvas, allowing us to see what we consider to be very complicated variables, simplified as they are through God’s eyes and in God’s hands. The question, then, is the identification of the horseman. Some observations will help. First, the horse is white, indicating peace. And yet, the horseman is said to go forth conquering, indicating that he is a victorious warrior; that he receives a crown indicates his rise to power as a king. These symbols seem inconsistent at first. Add to it the fact that he has a bow, but nothing is mentioned of arrows. The answer seems to be that this is Anti-Christ, the “little horn” of Daniel 7. What we see here is that he rises to power through primarily non-military means. We know from Daniel 9:27 that he will make a peace treaty and break it, which is consistent with this verse. Also note that Paul taught that the Day of the Lord would not start until the Anti-Christ (or Son of Perdition) was revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:3); accordingly, we should expect John to be consistent with Paul and tell us that the 70th week begins Anti-Christ coming on the scene. We are going to see more of this character later in the book and at that time will address who he is in more detail. For further information about him, read Daniel 7, 9:24-27, Daniel 11 (a difficult chapter that speaks of an anti-Christ named Antiochus IV and the Anti-Christ in verses 21 through 24 that he prefigures; the two of them are cut from the same cloth). Note that the “little horn” in Daniel 8 is not

the same person. Also, I would note that Dr. Morris takes the horseman to be Jesus, identifying him with the horseman on a white horse in Revelation 19:11.

6:3 “And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.”

Jesus breaks open the second seal to the title deed to creation. The second of the four cherubim surrounding God’s throne tells John to “Come and see.” It is John’s duty to carefully observe what happens and then write it down.

6:4 “And there went out another horse *that was red*: and *power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth*, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.”

The second horseman rides a red horse, the color of blood. Whereas the previous horseman apparently conquers through alliances and diplomacy, this one removes peace from the earth and the result is war. We do not know how much time passes between the appearance of the first and second horseman (the breaking of the first two seals), but whatever peace may have existed with the advent of Anti-Christ now disappears. This horseman yields a “great sword.” Swords are used for killing, and a great sword for killing many people. This indicates the severity of the fighting that will take place. Note here that the horseman takes peace from the earth, not just from Israel or some other limited locale. Those that believe all the events of chapter 4 through 19 took place in the 1st century cannot take a verse like this one (and many after it) literally. Instead, they must read “earth” to mean something less than the entire world. This is called spiritualizing or allegorizing the text. The question that should be asked is this, “If God wanted to express to us that peace was taken from the whole earth, how else could he have done it than that which is stated?” We are far better to assume God is using normal communication to be understood literally. God is certainly free to use allegory, but that is rare in the Bible and there will be contextual clues to tell us God wants us to understand the text allegorically. Here, there are no such clues. Instead, the context speaks just the opposite.

6:5 “And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.”

Jesus now opens the third seal and the third of the four cherubim surrounding God’s throne tells John to “Come and see.” John sees a black horse. In this and the next verse, we see that this horse brings the natural consequence of what the second horseman brought, namely famine. War always has severe consequences, and famine is a typical consequence of warfare. The balances in his hand are for carefully measuring out food, which in this time is a scarce commodity.

6:6 “And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.”

The voice from the midst of the four cherubim may be God’s voice. The indication here is that a day’s wages are just enough to buy food for the day. The laborer can purchase the cheaper grain, barley, and obtain more, but not enough to satisfy. On the other hand, while most people will suffer in a time of great unemployment and famine, the world’s luxuries (oil and wine) are still available. This the indicative of the divide we already see around the world today between those who hold most of the world’s wealth and the rest of the world’s population, but in this future time it will be much worse than anything we presently see. Think about the consequences that will naturally flow from the war and famine.

Crime will skyrocket as people rob and kill to acquire the basic necessities of life. The world slowly plunges into chaos, the exact opposite of what Anti-Christ (the first horseman) promised in his rise to power. The world so wants peace that it will follow him, but he cannot deliver the goods.

6:7-8 “And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. **8** And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.”

Jesus opens the fourth seal and reveals the last of the horsemen, the pale horse, the color of death. It is no surprise given the first three horseman that we now see death. Indeed, this horseman is named “Death” because he personifies death. Hell (Greek *hades*, known in the OT as *sheol*) follows right behind him. Christians go to heaven (temporarily) when they die, but the unsaved go to Hell, Hades, or sheol, until their ultimate disposition into the Lake of Fire (we will get there in Revelation 20). This judgment at the hand of God is against unsaved persons, who immediately are dispatched to Hell. This judgment results in the death of one fourth of the earth; note, again, it is the whole earth in view. The current world population is 6.7 billion, which means that thus far 1,675,000,000 (over one and a half billion people) die. They die in the fighting, from the famine, the disease that follows, and from wild animals. This last statement (the wild animals) indicates that many people are homeless or have taken to the wilderness areas to seek refuge.

6:9 “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:”

Jesus now opens the fifth of the seven seals. John observes martyrs under the altar. They were killed because they testify of the word of God. We might call these the “tribulation martyrs”; from what follows, they seem to have been murdered during this time. This means at least two things. First, although all Christians were raptured away before the beginning of the tribulation, there are Christians on the earth during the tribulation. This means there is evangelism, which means there are evangelists. In later chapters, God will fill in the blanks, but for now it is sufficient to observe that God is still saving people at this time. Second, Christians are being killed if they are found out as Christians. This is a time of tremendous persecution (see Daniel 7:21-22). Note that John says he sees “souls.” Some have theorized that these tribulation martyrs have temporary bodies that John sees. We cannot be sure.

6:10 “And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”

The tribulation martyrs want to know when God will avenge their blood on those that dwell on the earth. The question tells us that the ones who murdered them are then living on the earth, hence the conclusion that these are indeed tribulation martyrs. (EXCURSIS: Note that the “souls” John sees both talk and remember. Your physical body is a tool that enables your spirit/soul to interact in this world. The real you, the emotions and intellect and memories, is your soul or spirit. We see a glimpse of that here. Now consider the implications. If the memories, intellect and emotion are tied to the spirit, not the body as is typically assumed, then how can mental disorders be treated by medicines that only affect the physical body. The word *psychology* comes from two Greek words found in our New Testament, *psuche* (meaning soul or life) and *logos* (meaning word or study). Literally, it means the study of the soul, but most practitioners assume there is no soul and concen-

trate their efforts on the physical body. Spiritual problems require spiritual solutions. If we treat the body when the problem is spiritual, then we are dealing with symptoms only (i.e., depression, a spiritual problem, can cause physical pain), and not the root cause. God is interested in our being better, not just feeling better. God offers real solutions because He knows the source of the problem.)

6:11 “And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

We have seen white robes before, in the letters to the seven churches in 2 and 3. The tribulation martyrs died for their testimony. Their righteous deeds are rewarded here. They are told that they will not have to wait long to be avenged, but that more will have to be martyred first. God knows exactly how many until it “should be fulfilled,” and then Jesus will return.

6:12 “And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;”

Jesus now opens the sixth seal, and with it comes an earthquake. This is the first of several in the book, and it is no tremor, but a “great” earthquake. We are not told what makes the sun go dark, but the earthquake could involve volcanic activities that send ash spewing in the air (see Dr. Morris for more thoughts on the scientific analysis). Not only is the sun darkened, but the moon is blood red. (Isaiah 13:10; Joel 2:10, 31; Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24). Whatever the cause, we are to take these images literally.

6:13 “And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.”

As Dr. Morris suggests, this verse most likely pictures an asteroid storm hitting the earth. There is certainly Biblical precedent (recall Sodom and Gomorrah) for this.

6:14 “And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.”

This verse probably alludes to Isaiah 34:4. The idea is that the stars disappear. They are most likely obliterated from view from smoke and vapors in the air as a result of the earthquake, also referred to in this verse (mountain and island moved out of their places).

6:15 “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;”

The idea here is that people of every social class, without exception, seek out the protection of caves to hide from the judgments God is pouring forth. Note the use of the phrase “kings of the earth,” a phrase that almost without exception refers to Gentile leaders in opposition to God (or to Israel).

6:16-17 “And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: **17** For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”

The inhabitants of the earth are not ignorant of the fact that it is God's judgment that is upon them. They recognize that the judgment comes from God the Father and God the Son. Note, however, that instead of simply repenting, they hide.

NOTES ON REVELATION 7

7:1 "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree."

Notice the transition "after these things." This does not mean that these events necessarily happen after the breaking of the first six seals, only that God showed them to John after showing him the breaking of the first six seals. This severity of the judgments that follow the breaking of the seventh seal will far surpass the first six. Chapter 7 acts as a parenthesis between the breaking of the sixth and seventh seals; this will occur again later as well. God does a parenthesis in the heavenly scene to show what is happening on earth at the same time. The angels are given the direction to restrain wind so that no wind blows. As Dr. Morris notes, there will be significant and devastating byproducts of the wind ceasing. The sun's energy and the earth's rotation drive the wind, which in turn make life possible on the earth through the hydrologic cycle as waters are transported inland from the ocean. (Morris, p. 126) Now, with the wind gone, there is also no rain. If I am correct that Chapter 7 occurs at the same time as the breaking of the first six seals, we can see how the stopping of the wind and all that would follow fits in with the judgments we have seen already (e.g., famine).

7:2 "And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,"

This seal is not related to the seven seals on the scroll. The seal of the living God is like God's signet ring (a ring used to sign or mark clay tablets with one's legal signature). It speaks of His authority. The angel is loud (remember, everyone always speaks loudly in this book). His words command everyone's attention. He addresses the four angels that are in charge of the wind.

7:3 "Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."

This verse is of tremendous significance. For one, it confirms that there are tribulation Christians. Second, consistent with God's pattern throughout the Bible of protecting His faithful when His hand of judgment falls, these Christians are sealed on their foreheads (see precedent for this sealing in Ezekiel 9). The sealing is like a brand. I take it that what John sees here does not indicate that the servants are actually branded, but that what John sees is symbolic of God indicating His ownership and protection of His servants from the judgment falling on the earth. But for this particular group of servants, there is more.

7:4 "And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.*"

There are 144,000 servants sealed. Many expositors take this figuratively, but without cause. The context overwhelmingly indicates the number is literal, in that the verses that follow tell us that 12,000 are sealed from each of the 12 tribes. The big question is as to the identification of the 144,000. All that we can conclude from this verse is that they are

Jewish, from twelve distinct tribes, and there are a whole lot of them. We get more information in Revelation 14:1-5. From there, we note that these are all men, they are Christians, they are virgins (which probably also means they are young), and they do the will of Jesus. Although we are not explicitly told what they do, I would suggest that they are evangelists. If all the Christians were raptured before the tribulation, and yet there are people saved in the tribulation (we have already noted the tribulation martyrs, for example), then who evangelized them? Obviously, anyone could pick up the Bible and read and be saved. But most of those who are saved in this time will probably be evangelized. Moreover, there is a national revival that must take place in Israel (e.g., Zechariah 12:10-14), and so it is appropriate that God would prepare Jewish evangelists to reach the Jewish community. Keep in mind that this is happening at the same time as the six seals, not simply after the six seals. One other observation should be made. The tribal identity for most Jewish people is lost, but God knows. Near the end of the book, we will discuss the Millennium, the thousand year reign of Jesus that follows the 7-year tribulation and precedes the creation of the new heaven and new earth. In that time, Jewish people will live in Israel and know their tribal identity. Finally, there will be two other very important evangelists that we will meet in Revelation 11.

7:5-8 “Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. **6** Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. **7** Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. **8** Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.”

The manner in which the 144,000 is broken down by tribe gives further indication that the number is to be taken literally.

7:9 “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;”

John sees a multitude standing before God the Father and God the Son. This crowd is drawn from all nations (i.e., Gentiles) and they are here in harmony before God the Father and God the Son. These are tribulation martyrs as we saw in Revelation 6:11. Their robes here seem to indicate their salvation in Christ. It is important that they are presented here, just after John told us about the 144,000. The gospel will be received by many, both Jew and Gentile, during the tribulation. And it may even be that some of these were saved through the ministry of the 144,000. The palm leaves are carried because they are in the presence of God; we have previously noted the Garden Theme that runs throughout the Bible, reminding us of God’s plan to dwell with His people, as He did in Eden.

7:10 “And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

Always everything is loud here. This draws John’s careful attention, and probably the attention of everyone in heaven. They praise God the Father and God the Son.

7:11 “And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,”

In addition to the saints, there are also angels, the 24 elders and the four cherubim. Everyone falls down flat on the ground in submission and worship of God.

7:12 "Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*"

Imagine the chorus of praise here. Count the praises (blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power, might); there are seven, God's perfect number of completion again. It could not be any other way.

7:13 "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?"

Remember that in this type of literature (apocalyptic), God is not trying to hide the ball. Often, there is someone standing by to explain. The elder asks John to identify the people in the white robes. Really, the question is designed to make sure that John does not let the matter pass by, but inquires diligently as to their identification so that he may tell us. The other relevant question is where are they from.

7:14 "And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

John does not know, but the elder can explain. These Christians died during the tribulation. That there are so many indicates that the persecution during the tribulation is unlike any persecution of Christians in history. John will soon give us more details on this worldwide persecution.

7:15 "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

Now they serve God all the time. Imagine that. They served God on earth in part, and now serve Him full time. Moreover, God dwells with them. That was God's plan all the way back in Genesis. It is coming to fruition now. We are not told much about this temple in heaven, except that this is where God is and His people are there with him. Consider that anywhere God is physically manifested is a temple. Everything is moving forward to a time when the whole earth is the temple and God and His people dwell in it forever!

7:16 "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat."

Life is good now, in contrast to the persecution they experienced on earth. We cannot lose sight of the fact that the first century churches of chapters 2 and 3, and many churches since then and even now, are undergoing persecution. This is a comfort verse, a promise that the persecution will cease. We have a future free from hunger, thirst, and the harshness of the elements.

7:17 "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Jesus himself feeds the Christians and gives the living waters to drink. Remember that Jesus always promised these things. (e.g. John 4:10, 6:35). I think the point is that they

are experiencing to the fullest the eternal life Jesus promised them. Sadness is a thing of the past as God wipes away their tears.

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record*, Tyndale House Publishers (1983)

RECOMMENDATION

It is highly recommended that each person taking this course read chapters 6 and 7 for this lesson and chapters 8 and 9 for next week in Henry M. Morris' commentary.