

A STUDY OF REVELATION

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Part XII

OPENING THE SEVEN SEALS

Revelation 6:1-17

Introduction: Caution! Revelation is not a simple narrative told in a graduated time sequence. The greatest difficulty is assigning a proper time to events of the book. Furthermore, the book is not a revelation of time and events as such. It is the revelation of Christ Jesus. Additionally, it is the nature of prophecy to set forth a person or an idea, to tell something about it, and then to plunge in thought to the ultimate end of it, skipping over important details of time and events. For instance, many Old Testament prophecies told of the second coming of Christ and the millennial reign, but completely ignored the earthly ministry of Jesus and the entire church age.

Coping with Revelation is not too difficult if you think about these things. Obviously, many of the events portrayed by various seals, trumpets, vials, etc., will occur simultaneously. Your goal should be to understand some of the details of various symbolisms and at the same time gain an over all picture of what is being presented. Keep from going to the extreme on either. This is a wonderful insight into the past, present, as well as the future.

Now, let's regain the entire picture from chapters four and five, the heavenly scene – some details of it; the triumph of the slain Lamb. Think now about a possible time element for these events. Are they shown as they transpired from the beginning of time or are they yet future?

I. THE FIRSTS FOUR SEALS OPENED – FOUR HORSEMEN, V. 1-8.

- A. The first seal.
 - 1. A white horse.
 - 2. A rider with a bow, but no arrows.
 - 3. A crown upon his head.
 - 4. He went forth conquering and to conquer.
- B. The second seal.
 - 1. A red horse.
 - 2. A rider with power to remove peace from the earth.
 - 3. He incited war.
 - 4. He possessed a great sword.
- C. The third seal.
 - 1. A black horse
 - 2. A rider with a pair of scales in his hand.
 - 3. The economics of food merchandizing is acclaimed.
 - 4. Oil and wine are ordered to be protected.
- D. The fourth seal.
 - 1. A pale horse
 - 2. A rider named death.
 - 3. Hell followed with him.
 - 4. He has power over 25% of the earth.

- a. To kill with sword.
 - b. To kill with starvation.
 - c. To kill with death.
 - d. To kill with the beasts of the earth.
- E. Some General Observations.
 - 1. Notice there are four horsemen, four things said about each, summoned by one of four living creatures.
 - a. Four is the number of creation.
 - b. It is the number of man as a part of creation.
 - c. Four living creatures represent land life on earth.
 - 2. The first horseman seems more difficult to identify than the others.
 - 3. The nature of things they represent.
 - a. None of this is new to the earth or to mankind under the laws of sin and of death.
 - b. These are powers available to mankind to continue to use until the "Day of the Lord."
 - c. There will be an apparent intensification of these powers employed in the last days.
 - d. These powers are specifically the powers of war, economics, and death represented by the last three horsemen.
 - e. Accordingly, the first represents the only available power for victory, the power of Jesus Christ through whom men may fight a good warfare and through the faith once delivered to the saints conquer sin and its effects in themselves and others. This rider represents for all practical purposes the church of the Lord Jesus. This is a totally logical explanation if viewed from the lifetime of John.
 - f. Many scholars identify the white horse rider as the anti-Christ. This is done by reckoning the time of the appearance of these horsemen as yet future. There are definite problems with that interpretation.

II. SEALS FIVE AND SIX, V. 9-17

- A. The fifth seal.
 - 1. Souls of men under the altar are shown.
 - 2. They were slain for the Word of God and their testimony.
 - 3. They cry out for the end of the present order on earth.
 - 4. They are given white robes and told to rest yet a little season.
 - 5. Their fellow servants and brethren are to join them.
- B. The sixth seal.
 - 1. It produced a great earthquake
 - 2. The sun became black.
 - 3. The moon became as blood.
 - 4. The stars of heaven fell to earth.
 - 5. Heaven departed as a scroll.
 - 6. Mountains and islands were removed from their place.
 - 7. Kings, great men, rich men, captains, mighty men, bond men, and freemen hid themselves in dens and rocks of the mountains.

8. They prayed to be killed and hidden from God, from Jesus.
 9. It is the Great Day of the wrath of the Lamb.
- C. General observations.
1. These are not introduced by the living creatures as they do not represent powers in the hands of men.
 2. Souls under the altar represent all the saved dead from Adam to John and/or on to just before the raptures and first resurrection.
 - a. They do not cry out of a heart of vengeance, but of desire to obtain their new bodies in the resurrected state.
 - b. Their desire and prayer should also be considered a force which hastens the world to conclusion as much as the other forces at work on earth.
 - c. Viewed from the lifetime of John, over fifty million have violently dies for Jesus to the present.
 - d. Those who lose their life to (in) faithful service are also considered as well as those who serve a short time and violently die.
 3. The sixth seal plunges in thought to the conclusion of the seventieth week, to the beginning of the millennial reign.
 - a. It seems to us many important events of tribulation, of rapture, of resurrection are over passed. These details will be presented in other parts of the revelation.
 - b. the language of verses 12 & 13 are used by Joel 2:28-32 and quoted by Peter as being at least partially fulfilled in Acts 2:16-21.
 - (1) A part of this prophecy was obviously fulfilled on Pentecost.
 - (2) A part of it has not been fulfilled.
 - (3) But Peter used it all with reference to the church age.
 - (4) It logically follows if the pouring out of the spirit was the ushering in of the church age with power, the moon becoming as blood, etc., will signify the end of the church age, the rapture and first resurrection.