

Revelation: A Study of End-Time Events

Lesson Three: Chapters 4-5-6

Overview

We will see in Chapters 4-5-6 that John is given another vision (a continuation of the Revelation), which turns to a scene in the heavens, surrounding God's throne. There he sees 24 elders and four living creatures who lead the inhabitants of heaven in worship day and night. John sees a scroll with seven seals, but weeps because no one is found worthy to open the seals. That is, until He sees Christ as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and the Lamb on the throne, slain for the sins of the world.

We will see that the seals are actually judgments that will be brought on a Christ-rejecting world, beginning with what we have come to know as the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" in the first 4 seals. Then, the 5th seal is a scene in heaven of the souls of those who will be martyred for their faith during the Tribulation period. This is not a judgment on them, but speaks of the coming judgment on those who kill them.

The opening of the 6th seal begins with a great earthquake, but does not end there. The sun turns black, the moon turns red, and the stars fall to the earth. Every mountain and island will be removed from its place, and earth's inhabitants will cry out to the mountains to fall on them in order to hide them from the wrath of God. We will not see the opening of the 7th and final seal until Chapter 8.

Chapter 4: The Throne in Heaven

4:1

- 1) "After this"
The scene changes from earth to heaven.

- 2) "what must take place after this"
After what? After the Church Age covered in Revelation Chapters 2-3. The Church is never again mentioned on earth after Chapters 2 and 3. From this point on, Revelation speaks of the time of the end: the future Tribulation period, which will occur after the Rapture of the Church, and beyond.

4:2-5

- 1) “Elders” (*presbuteros*) is “a term of rank or office.”
- 2) What is the identity of twenty-four elders?
 - a) The elders are dressed in white, wearing crowns of gold. That is a description of church age believers from Revelation Chapters 2-3. Do they, therefore, represent the Church?
 - b) Or, could the 24 elders be the 12 Patriarchs and the 12 Apostles, representing the Old and New Testament saints? This position seems plausible, but consider the following:
 - Read Rev. 22:12 The Church is rewarded at the Rapture. Jesus’ reward is with him. The rewards are symbolized by crowns.
 - While the souls of the Old Testament saints are present with the Lord in heaven (Eph. 4:8-10), they will not be physically resurrected or rewarded until Christ returns to set up His kingdom on earth (Dan. 12:1-3,13). Therefore, they do not have crowns of reward.
 - All saints will reign with Christ (Rev. 5:10), but only those seated on thrones will have authority to judge.

Read Rev. 20:4

Note that those seated on thrones are a group distinct from those who will be beheaded during the Tribulation period.

- “throne” (*thronos*) is “a throne seat; hence divine power belonging to Christ; to judges, i.e. **tribunal** or bench; to **elders**.”
- Read 1 Corinthians 6:2 Who will judge the world?
- Read Daniel 7:7-13. This is the OT prophet, Daniel, speaking of the time of the final world empire and its leader.

- In the Old Testament, there were 24 orders of the priesthood. Each order was represented by a single priest. “When these priests met together, even though there were only 24, they represented the whole priesthood...”¹ New Testament believers are all considered to be members of the priesthood.

Read 1 Peter 2:9

The 24 elders may be described as tribunal of all church age believers, a jury before whom Christ as the Faithful Witness will present evidence demanding the coming judgment of the world: the Great Tribulation.

4:6-8

- 1) The “four living creatures” are cherubim (Ezekiel 10:20), angelic beings. They lead the companies of the redeemed in heaven in the worship of God.
- 2) They are “covered with eyes” (*ophthalmos*), speaks “metaphorically, of the faculty of knowing.” They reflect the character of God.

4:9-11

“Crowns” (*stephanos*) are the “rewards of the righteous,” not to take pride in but to lay before the throne of God!

Chapter 5: The Scroll and the Lamb

5:1-5

- 1) The picture of the sealed scroll is that of a portion of the scroll being rolled up and sealed, then another rolled over top of that one and sealed, until the 7th seal is placed on the scroll.
- 2) What scroll is this? The prophet Daniel was told to seal up a scroll that concerned “the time of the end.”

Read Daniel 12:4

This scroll is being opened and revealed to the Apostle John, “which God gave him (Jesus) to show his servants what must soon take place” (Rev. 1:1).

¹ Walvoord, John F., *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), p. 106.

- 3) “Revelation” (*apokalupsis*) means “a disclosure of that which was previously hidden or unknown.”

5:6-10

- 1) Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world. Only He is worthy to open the seven seals (sign of ownership) because He purchased men for God with His own blood.
- 2) “He had seven horns...seven eyes”
 - a) “Seven” is symbolic in Scripture of perfection or completion.
 - b) “Horn” (*keras*) is a symbol of strength. Therefore seven horns speak of ALL POWER: God is said to be OMNIPOTENT.
 - c) Here again, “eyes” (*ophthalmos*) speak “metaphorically, of the faculty of knowing.” Therefore, seven eyes is ALL KNOWING: God is said to be OMNISCIENT.
 - d) “...which are the seven Spirits (“sevenfold Spirit” refers to the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 11:2

5:11-12

“thousands upon thousands” (*urias*) literally, myriads of myriads; innumerable multitude, AND ten thousand times ten thousand (100,000,000). BEYOND NUMBERING!

5:13-14

Today, you are given the opportunity to participate in this future heavenly scene, by putting your faith in Christ as the only means of YOUR salvation.
OR... you could possibly live to endure the coming tribulation on earth: we do not know the day or hour.

Chapter 6: The Opening of the Seals/Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

The seven seals that are about to be opened are a view of the entire Tribulation period of seven literal years. We will not see the opening of the 7th and final seal until Chapter 8, and it will include all the remaining judgments of God and the

events leading up to the Second Coming of Christ: the second half of the Tribulation period, called the Great Tribulation. With the opening of the seals, it should be understood that the seals are sequential, following in order. However, some passages are an overall picture of some aspect of the Tribulation period. For example: Chapters 17 and 18 are an overview of the Judgment of Babylon. Others are heavenly scenes, running parallel with the seals of judgment.

Jesus Himself spoke of this time in Matthew 24:3-31. It is very important that you read this passage.

Also read Daniel 9:1-2. This passage refers to the time of the Babylonian captivity of the southern kingdom of Israel (Judah).

Please keep your place in Revelation, and turn to the book of Daniel (9:20-27)

Read Daniel 9:24 Seventy “sevens” are 70 weeks of years, or 490 years according to the Jewish calendar. Hebrew (*shabuwa*) means “seven, period of seven (days or years), heptad, week.” Since the Babylonian captivity was a literal 70 years, years are indicated here.

Read Daniel 9:25 Jerusalem was rebuilt after “seven ‘sevens’ (49 years), then when the additional sixty-two ‘sevens’ (434 yrs) is completed, “the Anointed One” comes (Jesus Christ). This is a total of 69 weeks of years (483 years).

Read Daniel 9:26 After the 62 weeks of years “the Anointed One will be cut off,” speaking of Jesus’ crucifixion.

God’s program for Israel stopped (temporarily) when they rejected Christ as Messiah. The Church Age is inserted at this point, lasting until the Rapture of the Church, when God’s program for Israel will be resumed, with what is Daniel’s 70th week (7 years of the Tribulation). This verse then speaks of “the ruler who will come” as he relates to “the end,” a reference to the Antichrist, the final world ruler.

Dan. 9:27 The Antichrist will confirm a covenant (peace treaty) with Israel for the final “seven” (years) before “the end,” but will break the treaty “in the middle of the ‘seven’ years. The term “Great Tribulation” refers to the final 3-1/2 years (42 months - Rev. 13:5) of the Antichrist’s reign of terror.

Note: Please refer to the Timeline of Daniel’s 70 week Prophecy at the end of this lesson.²

6:1-2

Riding the White Horse: the Antichrist

- 1) The rider on the “white horse” is a picture of the Antichrist, the final world ruler, as a counterfeit of Christ at his return. Read Rev.19:11:
- 2) He carries a “a bow” with no arrows. The Antichrist appears to come in peace, but is “bent on conquest.”

6:3-4

Riding the Red Horse: War

- 1) To “take peace from the earth” means “rage and havoc of war.”
- 2) To “slay” (*sphazo*) means to “slaughter, butcher.”

6:5-6

Riding the Black Horse: Famine

“One quart of wheat would be enough for only one person. Three quarts of the less nutritious barley would be barely enough for a small family. Famine had inflated prices to at least ten times their normal level.”³

6:7-8

Riding the Pale Horse: Death

- 1) The “pale horse” is “green, yellowish pale.”
- 2) For an in-depth study of the meaning of the word “Hades”, please refer to the chart on Hades at the end of Lesson One.
- 3) How much is “a fourth of the earth”? One-fourth of today’s population (6 billion) would be 1.5 billion people.

² Anderson, Sir Robert, *The Coming Prince: The Last Great Monarch of Christendom* (London, England: Hodder and Stoughton, 1881). This time line is used in J. Vernon McGee *Notes and Outlines: Daniel*, Thru the Bible Radio, Pasadena, CA.

³ Baker, K. (Ed.). *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) footnotes on Revelation 6:6, p. 1932.

6:9-11

- 1) This scene shifts from earth, back to heaven, showing the souls of those who will be martyred for their faith during the Tribulation period. The judgment referred to in this seal is upon those who killed these martyrs.
- 2) Why are these saints said to be “under the altar”? “In OT ritual the blood of the slaughtered animal was poured out at the base of the altar.”⁴

NOTE: These are not part of the Church, who have already been resurrected (given glorified physical bodies) and rewarded, but rather are martyrs of the Tribulation period following the Rapture, awaiting their future resurrection (Rev. 20:4).

- 3) “Completed” (*pleroo*) means “to consummate a number.” God knows the exact number of those to be martyred, and they had not yet reached that number.

6:12-14

- 1) The “blood” (*haima*) refers to “those things that resemble blood.”
- 2) To say that the “sky receded” (*apochorizo*) means “to separate, sever.” It appears that something will happen to separate the layers of the earth’s atmosphere.
- 3) “Every mountain and island was removed” (*kineo*). This means “to move from a place.” There will be more than one major earthquake!

6:15-17

- 1) No one will be exempt, either by money or power, from the wrath of God! (except by faith in Christ - Read John 3:36)
- 2) A natural disaster of catastrophic proportions occurs with the opening of the 6th seal, which precipitates the time of God’s Wrath. In v.17, we see the arrival of the time known as the Great Tribulation.

⁴ *The NIV Study Bible*, footnotes on Revelation 6:6, p. 1932.

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THE 70 WEEKS OF DANIEL 9

