

## Have No Fear, The End is Near

A Practical Discussion on the  
Book of Revelation

10.21.09

## Opening the Scroll

Revelation 6:1 Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!"<sup>2</sup> And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.<sup>3</sup> When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!"<sup>4</sup> And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.<sup>5</sup> When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand.<sup>6</sup> And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!"<sup>7</sup> When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!"<sup>8</sup> And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

<sup>9</sup>When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.<sup>10</sup> They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"<sup>11</sup> Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.<sup>12</sup> When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood,<sup>13</sup> and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.<sup>14</sup> The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.<sup>15</sup> Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,<sup>16</sup> calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,<sup>17</sup> for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

## Opening the Scroll

- This is the scroll Jesus alone was worthy to open. The seals are being broken by Jesus.
- This is also the first of seven cycles of judgment in revelation.
- All the cycles deal with the execution of God's plan leading up to the Second Coming.
- The cycles have parallel structures.
- They are probably meant to be understood symbolically. Chapter 6 and following is where there is a lot of disagreement...

## Keep in Mind

- This text mattered for the early church.
- This text also matters for us today.
- Any interpretation must be useful for the church throughout all ages.

## The First Seal

- The first horsemen "of the apocalypse"
- Many believe Jesus is the first rider. He will appear later in chapter 19 on a white horse, which leads to the confusion. But in this case, it doesn't fit the context.
- White often refers to purity in Revelation, but in Roman times it also represented victory, or conquest.
- This rider symbolizes conquest.
- Roman rule promised peace, but reality was different...

### The Second Seal

- The second rider likely represents slaughter, or traditionally – war.
- The red horse depicts bloodshed.

### The Third Seal

- Famine
- Barley was cheaper than wheat and was considered food for the poor.
- The fact that olive oil and wine are spared represents that the famine will only affect some.

### The Fourth Seal

- Death and terror
- The riders escalate in their intensity.
- These four judgments together echo some OT imagery.
  - See Ezekiel 14:21; Zechariah 1:8; 6:1-3
- Notice the limit: a fourth of the earth is affected.

### The Fifth Seal

- Martyrs cry out for justice.
- In different periods of history, Christians have in fact been killed for their faith. This seal seems to foreshadow that reality.
- Notice, judgment does not come immediately, but in God's time.
  - “rest a little longer”

### The Sixth Seal

- The return of Christ in view here.
- The foundations of the universe shake at His arrival.
- Seven types of people mentioned – points to complete judgment for all people.
- They flee in terror, like Adam and Eve did, to avoid exposure and punishment.
- Notice the “wrath of the Lamb”.
  - Believers need not fear this, because the Lamb extinguished wrath meant for His people.

### Summary of Chapter 6

- Message to the original audience:
  - Put your confidence in God and His plan, not in the promises of peace and prosperity made by Roman rule.
- Message to the historical church:
  - Each new regime throughout history would make promises that only God can ultimately make. Trust in Him alone.
- Message for us today:
  - Our hope is in the Lamb and His return, not in earthly promises to overcome wars, hunger, or death.