

“Angels, Seals, Scrolls and Bowls”

Revelation 6-16

Detailed outline from the Sermon on August 24, 2008

Six seals of judgment are opened by the Lamb (6:1-17)

- One important note: In describing God, some people start off with wrath and misrepresent God. However, others ignore wrath and also misrepresent God. When studying Revelation, remember:
 - *God is love.*
 - Have humility in assigning meaning to the symbols.
 - Seven woes are unleashed on the wicked and oppressors of the righteous.
 - These are the famous “horsemen of the apocalypse” – scary stuff.
 - John watches as these seals are opened and judgment is unleashed on the earth.
1. The white horse of Conquest (6:1-2)
 - Those looking for time and place explanations say that conquerors adept at the bow and arrow on horseback (e.g. Parthians) would conquer. A more spiritualistic and futuristic read might say that soldiers and wars will plague the last and coming days.
 2. The red horse of Confusion (6:3-4)
 - Represents internal discord, civil wars, internal unrest – which brings more difficulty. To whom? Israel? The church? The whole earth?
 3. The black horse of Balances (6:5-6)
 - Some would say that the black horse tells a story of famine and desperation as necessities (like wheat and barley) become expensive, and useless luxuries become cheap. Every grain will be so dear that the balances (measurement) will be very important.
 4. The pale horse of Death
 - The color of ashes and corpses, this horse brings death and Hades, apparently riding together. They kill with sword, famine, pestilence, sickness and wild beast.
 5. The altar of Reward
 - Martyr’s souls cry out from an altar for God to make things right. They’re given robes and asked to wait a little longer.

6. The unraveling of the earth (6:12-17)
 - Earthquakes, the sun goes black, the moon goes red, stars fall to earth, fruit falls from trees, the sky rolls, mountains and islands are stirring.
 - What is this about? God will deal with the earth.

Sealed and Saved (Chapter 7)

Before the 7th seal, an interlude. Four angels are given power to quiet the chaos, while the redeemed and rescued receive another kind of seal...the seal of approval from God.

- There is an interlude in the woes (which leads some to have a mid tribulation view of the rapture).
1. The 144,000 from the twelve tribes (7:1-8)
 - 12,000 from all 12 tribes of Israel. (Literal or representative?)
 2. The great multitude in white robes (7:9-17)
 - Too many to count, from every nation and tribe, people and language, wearing white robes and waving palm branches, declaring:
“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the lamb.”
 - The angels sing an “Amen” chorus.
 - John gets curious. Who are these people?
“They’ve come out of the great tribulation, and the blood of Christ has washed them clean.”
 - These are the Christians alive and delivered from the great tribulation.

The seventh seal (8-11)

This is the most cataclysmic seal. Silence follows its opening for a half hour...tension is building. The seven angels with seven trumpets appear.

1. The golden censer (8:1-5)
 - Another angel with a censer appears. Incense rises with the prayers of the saints; then is filled with fire and flung at the earth. Thunder, lightning and earthquakes follow.
2. Six of seven trumpets (8:6-9:21)
 - They sound their trumpets and hail, fire, blood, meteors, wormwood (people still did not repent), eclipses, smoke from the abyss (volcano?), dark skies, and plague arise.
3. The angel with the little scroll (10:1-11)
 - John is asked to eat the scroll that tastes sweet, but goes sour in his stomach. It might taste good to pronounce doom, but the implications are sobering/sickening.

4. Two great witnesses
 - Elijah and Moses figures who will be given authority to preach for 1,260 days (3.5 years).
5. The beast from the abyss (11:7-10)
 - Will kill the 2 witnesses and evil people will gloat over their bodies.
6. The breath of life (11:11-14)
 - After 3 ½ days, God breathes back into them and takes them to heaven while the world watches. Then comes the great cataclysm.

The seventh trumpet blows (11:15-13:18)

1. There's a transfer of dominion
 - "The Kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever." (11:15)
 - The elders on the 24 thrones break out in song. God's temple in heaven opens up and the Ark of the Covenant is there. Lightning, thunder and earthquakes ensue.
2. A woman gives birth (12:1-2, 5-6)
 - New image: a woman clothed with sun gives birth to a male child.
3. The red dragon
 - Various incarnations of Satan
 - 7 heads, 7 crowns, 10 horns, chases her...bumping the very stars of the sky with his tail. The child is transported to heaven, and the woman goes into hiding.
 - We call this the "Antichrist."
4. The angels join in battle (12:7-13:1)
 - They cast down the dragon, which is named in 12:9, "Satan who leads the whole world astray". Satan and his angels are hurled to earth, and his minions chase the woman and her offspring (who are followers of Jesus).
5. The beast from the sea (13:1-10)
 - A successor to the antichrist, acting on its behalf.
6. The second beast from the earth (13:11-18)
 - Another incarnation of evil, with a healed head wound. He forces people to receive a mark on their forehead or hand with the name of the beast, rather, the number of his name (which is 666).

The lamb and the new song (14:1-20)

Shift to Mount Zion – the 144,000 are singing and praising God.

1. A new song before the throne (14:1-5)
2. The angel of the gospel (14:6-7)
 - Flies over the earth and proclaims, “Fear God and give Him glory. The hour of judgment has come. Worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the seas, the spring of water.”
3. The angel of prophecy (14:8)
 - “Fallen is Babylon!”
4. The angel of warning (14:9-12)
 - “If anyone worships the beast, you’re on the wrong team!”
5. The voice from heaven (14:13)
 - “Blessed in heaven are those who die in the Lord from now on.”
6. The dreadful harvest (14:14-20)
 - Angelic figures slay the wicked

God’s wrath on the earth (Chapters 15-16)

1. Song of victory
2. Seven bowls full of wrath (15:5-16:21)
 - Sores
 - The sea turns to blood
 - Rivers and streams turn to blood
 - The sun has new power to scorch
 - Wrath poured out at the throne of Satan
 - Great river Euphrates dries up
 - A voice calls out, “It is done!” More chaos and cataclysm.

A few more thoughts

However we read this (literal, figurative or both):

1. God is sovereign and good.
2. Satan is evil and treacherous: he’s given freedom and influence for a time.
3. People are too prone to be deceived. We have choices to make.
4. God and the angels will win the ultimate heavenly battles.
5. We need to get on the right team.
 - Honor God.
 - Follow Jesus.
 - Tremble about things that deserve healthy reverence.

- Rest in the truth of God’s goodness and ultimate victory and reward for those who (by faith) are washed in the blood of Christ.

We’re not done yet. Next week: the big victory and the ceremonies of triumph.

- *What do I do with all this?*
 - *How much do I weight this book?*
 - *Should I spend time in intensive study in Revelation?*
 - *Should I expose Revelation to my children? New Christians? Non-Christians?*
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- 2 Corinthians 12: Paul’s had similar experiences. References them, but doesn’t rest much of his teachings or ministry on them. Like tongues, in Corinthians 14:

“I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you, but I’d rather speak 5 intelligible words to instruct others than 10,000 words in a tongue.”

- This is not a book that I suggest for young or new Christians in the early stages of growth. Start with the gospels, and then teach other texts that are more instructive than revelation. Then people can read Revelation with a more seasoned understanding.
- I believe that all scripture is inspired by God. But I’m also a “red letter Christian.” I use the teachings of Jesus in the four gospels as a filter for understanding the rest of the Bible (before and after) with more clarity.
- If you have a curiosity and calling to study Revelation in depth, this is good. But don’t fall prey to the temptation to become arrogant about your interpretation or predictions.