

Revelation Bible Study

Remember, Revelation is a book of comfort to the Christian!!

Before beginning the study of chapters 6:1-8:5 open the study labeled 6:1-20:10. That will help explain how everything from 6:1-20:10 is somehow the same action but from different angles.

Chapters 6:1-8:5

Camera angle One

Remember – What happens in these verses has been going on since the beginning of time and will go on until the Judgment.

The Seven Seals:

Seal One

6:1-2:

(Notes to help understanding)

The opening of this seal inaugurates the next set of visions, which are that of the seven trumpets. The opening of the seal is greeted with a half-hour silence, by which point all who are caught up in it cannot help but be ready for that which is to come. (LL)

6:1, 3, 5, 7... living creatures. These winged creatures act on behalf of God and the victorious Lamb as mediators to John.

6:1 the Lamb opened. The Lamb is Jesus. Only He is worthy of opening the seals. He sees to it that the destinies, which are in His hands, are fulfilled. This fulfilling is sure and therefore is communicated to Christendom. Christians are to know what is about to take place, and therefore to be well prepared for it.

At this point view the picture labeled 6:1-8:5. It pictures the four horsemen and the damage they inflict (6:1-8).

6:2 a white horse! *Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.*

White is the color of God's majesty and wisdom, holiness and righteousness, and those who act on God's behalf can wear white. White is the color of victory, for Christians who are victorious over sin and death can wear white. Thus the rider of the white horse claims that his conquering ability and his victories are by the authority and majesty of God. HOWEVER, the words "bow," "conqueror" and "conquest" describe warlike actions. Jesus came to "serve and give His life as a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28). THEREFORE, this is not Christ but His enemy. The rider of the white horse symbolizes and represents every form of tyranny which is won and acquired by power and force, usually warfare or forms of it, and which then by a dictatorial rule exploits, enslaves, dominates and terrorizes. (CC)

The crown is another misperception. A garland or wreath was awarded to the winner in athletic contests. It was an earthly reward. Christ gives us a crown of eternal life.

Seal Two

6:3-4:

(Notes to help understanding)

6:4 red horse...take peace...men slay...sword. Where there is war there is bloodshed. Clearly the rider of the red horse symbolizes warfare, but in addition he represents any sort of unlawful killing and murder.

Seal Three

6:5-6:

(Notes to help understanding)

6:5 black horse...scales. Where you have war and bloodshed famine will result. Whatever the details may be, the overall picture is a condition of both scarcity and plenty, that is, an economic imbalance in the supply of food and the daily necessities of life.

6:6 quart of wheat/barley...not damage oil and wine. This continues the famine issue of v. 5.

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.

Sets limits on the destruction by the rider of the black horse. The roots of the olive and vine go deeper and would not be immediately affected by a limited drought.

Seal Four

6:7-8:

(Notes to help understanding)

6:8 pale horse...Death and Hades. Describes the ashen appearance of the dead; it symbolizes death and punishment for unbelievers.

6:8 over a fourth...sword, famine and plague. The "fourth" is not to be taken literally. It is extensive and will intensify.

6:8 word, famine and plague...wild beasts. These are tragedies that afflict a sinful world. The "wild beasts" are violent deaths inflicted by enemies of Christians.

Summary of verses 6:2-8

These verses describe an ongoing of wars and that which results from them. From the moment sin entered this world there has been strife. Wars and rumors of wars are going to be with us until the end. We will be affected by the continued conflict. BUT, there will be limits to the destruction. WE WILL not only survive but we will also triumph and receive the crown of life (2:10).

(Meditation/Discussion)

1. What lessons did you learn from this section? How will they impact your life?
2. What comfort can you take from this section?
3. What is a favorite verse in this section?

Seal Five

6:9-11:

(Notes to help understanding)

6:9 souls under the altar. Jesus, the Lamb, has already been sacrificed and is Himself a constant reminder of the sacrificial altar, that is, his cross. There thus would be no need for a sacrificial altar in heaven. But there would still be a need for an incense altar, because the prayers of saints in heaven and on earth are continually rising to God as incense.

Christians are people who are persecuted by the devil and the world and who are willing to die for the faith; they may be called upon to die a martyr's death, or they may die from other causes (e.g. illness or old age).

6:9 testimony. Testimony comes from the English word "martyr." A witness was someone who had observed something and then in public or in a court of law gave a testimony of what he/she had seen and heard. If called upon to do so, the witness would have to back his testimony with his good name and reputation, and even at times with his property and wealth. In the NT testimony is used of Christians because they were to be witnesses of Jesus Christ and what he had done to save the human race. As they gave their witness, their testimony about Jesus Christ, they were to confirm the truth of it by the way they lived, by the way they loved each other, by the way they sacrificed and suffered for the name of Christ and even at times by the way they died. At John's time the word "martyr (dom)" referred to the whole life of the Christian.

6:10 how long...judge...avenge. It is proper for Christians to pray for justice in God's own time and manner, for God still desires every sinner to repent and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4), (Ez 18:23) and that is the reason for the delay of God's vengeance (2 Pet. 3:8-9).

The angels in heaven pray for us, as does Christ Himself (Romans 8:34). So do the saints on earth and perhaps in heaven (Revelation 6:9-10). It does not follow, though, that we should invoke and adore the angels and saints (Rev. 22:8-9).

6:11 white robe. These saints were clothed with Christ in baptism. The white robes they wear are also a vindication of their trust in and faithfulness to God, and of God's faithfulness to them – faithfulness that includes God's judgment of those who had slain His people. (CC)

Summary of verses 6:9-11

This seal is a picture of all Christians who have died and are now in the presence of Jesus. (The souls of believers go to heaven the instant they pass out of this life.) These saints are not crying out for themselves but out of concern for those Christians still living on earth.

While they long for justice, they will wait for God's plans to be carried out in His time. They are, however, rewarded for their faithfulness to the end with the white robe of righteousness.

(Meditation/Discussion)

1. What lessons did you learn from this section? How will they impact your life?
2. What comfort can you take from this section?
3. What is a favorite verse in this section?

Sixth Seal

6:12-17:

(Notes to help understanding)

6:12-14 Earthquake / Sun Black / Moon Blood / Stars / Scroll. These depict the passing away of the present world on the Day of Judgment.

6:15-17 Kings / Generals / Rich / Mighty / Slave / Free. These describe the punishment of those who are enemies of God and of his church at the end of time.

Summary of verses 6:12-17

The suddenness of this earthquake-like shaking is graphically portrayed by the heavens being split open and rolled up like an old style window shade suddenly flying up when touched ever so slightly.

The question "Who can stand?" is a rhetorical question that expects the answer "No one!" (cf. Ps. 130:3). (TLSB) With our humanity we cannot survive, but because of our faith in Christ we will live eternally with Christ in heaven.

(Meditation/Discussion)

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Interlude

After the horrifying scenes introduced by the first six seals, scenes that could have melted John's heart like wax in awe and terror, chapter 7 is like an interlude before seal seven. It is meant to have John catch his breath and be comforted before continuing.

7:1-8:

(Notes to help understanding)

The vision in 7:1-8 continues the previous one of 6:12-17, though the focus now shifts from cosmic upheaval and judgment to the salvation of God's elect. (TLSB)

7:1 four angels...four corners...four winds. The four winds symbolize the tribulations and sufferings which take place all over the earth under the permissive will of God; they express his anger and judgment over against the sinful human race.

The wrathful winds of "the last things" are restrained so that the work of sealing God's people may be accomplished.

7:3 do not harm...seal on foreheads. The Spirit of God in his gracious activity through God's Word and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, seals God's people so that they know they belong to God and that he will protect them in their faith in the midst of all the tribulations they endure.

7:4 144,000. The number is symbolic of perfection, similar to the perfectly square dimensions of the new heavenly Jerusalem, whose four walls each measures 144 cubits (Rev 21:17). The new Jerusalem has twelve foundations and twelve gates with twelve angels, one at each gate, and the twelve gates are inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, while the twelve foundations are inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles (21:12-14).

The 144,000 thus present a picture of the church militant throughout the entire period of the prophecy of Revelation and at any given moment in this time period.

7:4-8 tribes of Israel. Not a reference to members of actual Jewish tribes, but symbolic of all the faithful believers on earth.

Summary of 7:1-8

There are at least 3 comforting insights in these verses: Angels holding back the wrath of God concerning believers; we are sealed in the true faith of God through our baptism; and we are a part of the Holy Christian Church. The 144,000 includes all Christians not

an exact and limited number as some denominations teach. As we believe in Jesus as our Savior, we don't have to be worried if there is room for us in exact group numbering 144,000.

(Meditation/Discussion)

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2. What comfort can you take from this section?
3. What is a favorite verse in this section?

7:9-17:

(Notes to help understanding)

In 7:1-8 we found the church militant. They stand poised to be launched out into a world of turmoil and suffering. But, they are confident of God's sealing protection.

In 7:9-17 we find the church triumphant, at rest and peace and awaiting the final act of God's judgment and the resurrection at the End. They will never again experience tribulation and persecution on earth.

7:9 every nation, tribe, people and language. The crowd of people before the throne of God is countless and they are from everywhere.

7:10 white robes. This is the third time that John sees heavenly figures dressed in white robes. They are those who remained faithful to their Lord. Their faith made them pure.

7:10 holding palm branches. These were symbols of victory. They were displayed when victorious kings were welcomed, most famously when Jesus entered Jerusalem. (TLSB)

7:10 salvation belongs to our God. The "Hosanna!" cried on Palm Sunday means "Now save us." In this vision, salvation is acclaimed as an accomplished fact. (TLSB)

7:11 elders...four living creatures. Elders represent all believers who are now in heaven. The four living creatures are exalted angels. Together they sing God's praises. We hear this in the Preface in the communion liturgy when the pastor says "with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven." We join them in singing the Sanctus. We are also connected with them when we receive the body and blood of Christ because Jesus is present when this happens and He is also present with them in heaven.

7:15-17 The perfect bliss of the heavenly host is described in a series of 10 statements. The first three lines of the poem describe the blessedness of believers in the presence of God. The next four lines depict the freedom of God's people from the effects of sin. The last three lines give the source of their bliss: the Lord will shepherd them to the water of life (cf. Jn 4:14). (CSB)

7:15 temple. All 16 references to the temple in Revelation use the word not as an actual building but the place where God's presence dwells.

7:15 spread his tent. The imagery would evoke memories of the tabernacle in the desert (Lev 26:11–13). (CSB)

Summary of 7:9-17

This is a picture of the saints who have triumphed and are singing God's praise. Verses 15-17 describe conditions of security and comfort. Many of the items in 16-17 are described in negative terms because they are easier for us to understand in that manner.

(Meditation/Discussion)

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3. What is a favorite verse in this section?

8:1-5:

(Notes to help understanding)

8:1 silence in heaven. This silence might seem anti-climatic. However, Jews at this time expected just such a silence in the heavens before God ushered in the new creation. This glorious revelation of the new heavens and earth must wait, however, as John transitions to another scene about the end times: the seven trumpets (8:6). (TLSB)

8:1 half an hour. The silence lasts "for about half an hour," that is, for "a relatively short period." Nevertheless, the silence "would form an impressive break in such a rapidly moving drama." (CC)

8:3 with prayers. At Revelation 6:9-10, the sainted martyrs are depicted as praying for vindication. Here however, John identifies the intercessors as God's people both in heaven and on earth. (TLSB)

8:5 hurled it on the earth. When the angel empties his censer and thus casts fire upon the earth, it is an action of judgment against an evil world. (CC)

Summary of 8:1-5

The opening of this seal inaugurates the next set of visions, that of the seven trumpets. The opening of the seal is greeted with a half-hour silence, by which point all who are caught up in it cannot help but be ready for that which is to come. (LL) Being ready can be a great comfort to Christians as they see the events of God's wrath being unfolded in all aspects of the world.

(Meditation/Discussion)

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