

What on Earth is Going On?

Session 3 - The Seven Seals of Revelation

Warm-up question: Think of a time when your faith was being tested. What was the test and how did the outcome benefit your character?

Life is a Series of Tests

I think of myself as a perpetual student in this life. You can never come to the end of truth and knowledge, as there is always something new to discover. We often find that in seeking the truth, we have to be open to change our world view as God adds to our finite picture and unfolds new lessons to us. I have found that life is not about how happy we and our families can be, (as happiness depends on what happens to you.) Rather, it is about preparing for eternity and having a heavenly perspective as you make your journey through this life. It is easy to get bogged down in the mundane details of life, but our heavenly Father is seeking to mold us into what we shall be in eternity. Keeping a heavenly perspective can be hard, especially when challenges loom ahead of you and threaten to consume your joy and energy. When you feel like this, remember that you are still under the watchful eye of a loving heavenly Father who is allowing all of these challenges in your life to mold you and craft you into a more faithful, consistent, and stronger “you.” He is crafting your soul, your mind, your resilience, and finally your ability to make excellent choices. When life is too easy, we do not grow. Think about that, it is easy to skate along in complacency when there is never a challenge or obstacle to your faith. It is always when times are hard that we are driven to call upon greater resources. I have heard someone say that Christians are like elastic bands—they have to be stretched in order to be effective! The church of Jesus Christ grows strong and is much more effective in what she is called to do and be when she experiences tests and trials of her faith. The testing of your faith produces character, and character is the stuff of eternity. You have heard people say; “You can’t take it with you.” That is true about many things, but what God produces in our character will last forever. Every bit of kindness, compassion, faith and all that is worked into your character through the Holy Spirit will live on

in eternity as part of who you are! So that is something you CAN take with you. Our adversary, the devil, is seeking to hoodwink us into believing that our lives are random situations that happen in a haphazard way with no cosmic meaning, but God is sovereign over every situation and trial we go through. Nothing escapes His watchful eye, and He is using these events and circumstances to our ultimate benefit, as the scriptures tell us;...we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28). Becoming a Christian is just the first step in a journey that God oversees. He is leading you even when you cannot see where the path is going.

²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son (Romans 8:29).

In Romans Chapter 16, Paul writes a number of specific things to specific people commending them on aspects of their character. For instance, he writes: “Greet Apelles, tested and approved in Christ.” There is depth in the meaning of the words Paul chooses to use here. The Greek word that is translated ‘approved’ is the word dokimos. It was used in the common Greek language for something that had been through the fire of testing, and the testing had established it to be seen as something genuine, accepted and approved. The word was also used by James, chapter 1, verse 3, where he says: “² Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the **testing** of your faith develops **perseverance**.” The word “testing” again, is the same Greek word “*Dokimos*”. It is interesting to note that this word is found on the bottom of many ancient pieces of pottery unearthed by archeologists in the Near East. This mark meant that the piece had gone through the furnace without cracking; it had been approved. God allows us to go through trials and testing in order that having gone through the fire, we might become a vessel of honor. In every trial, God’s initial purpose is to produce perseverance. This word comes from a combination of two words that put together, literally mean “to abide under.” This word

“*dokimos*” is like God’s “Good Faith keeping Seal of Approval”, and it is applied only to those who persevere, or abide under the tests He sends. Enduring, and responding in the way Christ would respond to those tests is what brings about the maturity and character that is God’s ultimate purpose for our lives (verse 4).

It is with these thoughts in mind, in the context of suffering, testing and ultimate rewards, that I want us to consider these passages concerning the opening of the seven seals in the book of Revelation:

¹ Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” ³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” ⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders (Revelation 5:1-6).

In chapters four and five of the Book of Revelation the scene is the throne room of God and all eyes are focused on a scroll with seven seals. The seals need to be broken to open the scroll. John the apostle weeps (5:4), because there was not found anyone worthy to open the scroll or even to look inside it (5:4).

What do you think the scroll represents?

We are not told what the scroll represents. Some believe it represents the judgments of God, others believe it is a title deed to planet earth. Scripture is very clear that the Earth belongs to the Lord (Psalm 89:11) but it also says that an usurper has gained control:

¹⁹ We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

Why would Christ be called a lion yet also be seen as a lamb? (Revelation 5:5-6) Why is He proclaimed worthy to open the scroll? (Revelation 5:9-10).

Christ, through His death on the cross as an in-

nocent substitute, has won a complete pardon for all that receive the gift of eternal life. He has purchased with His blood men and women from every tribe, language, people and nation out of Satan’s slave market of sin. He is seen represented as a lamb, an innocent sacrifice. The picture of Christ as a lamb would have been a powerful symbol of sacrifice to the people of John’s day. Every year they would sacrifice a lamb at Passover, which would remind them of how the blood of the lamb upon their door caused them to be safe from death when they were in Egypt (Exodus 12:3; 12-13; 22-23). Like a lion, Christ is also seen as triumphant. He has overcome the enemy with His victorious death on the cross. He is seen as both the Lion and the Lamb, who by virtue of His sinless life and sacrificial death, is the only one found worthy to open the scroll.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Revelation 6).

¹ I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, “Come!” ² I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest. ³ When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” ⁴ Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword. ⁵ When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, “A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!” ⁷ When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” ⁸ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth. ⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” ¹¹ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed. ¹² I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great

earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red,¹³ and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind.¹⁴ The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!¹⁷ For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” (Revelation 6:1-17)

We start with the horsemen being unleashed with the opening of the seals. With each of the first four seals being opened we see a horseman going forth, and each horseman brings with him an effect upon the earth. Even though we see the living creatures giving the orders, “Come!” I don’t believe that these effects are initiated from heaven. It is as if the creatures are calling forth the horsemen when the seals are open, as divine allowance being given for mankind to reap what has been sown. I say that because at the opening of the fifth seal we see persecution and a number of servants of Christ being martyred for their faith (Revelation 6:9-11). I do not believe the seals to be the wrath of God, for God is not the author of persecution of His people. The word of God never says that the first six seals are the wrath of God being poured out. The seventh seal however seems different in intensity and content than the first six. Many things start happening all at once, and we have not seen this level of fury, with all of the elements of nature reeling. In my opinion, it is only at the opening of the scroll at the seventh seal that the judgment of God begins to fall. The first six seals are consequences of man’s bad stewardship of the planet and satanic involvement through his man, Antichrist, and his minions, that have their agenda of putting Antichrist at the head of a world government. To clarify, let’s look at the possible meanings behind each seal and the effect it has on the earth:

The First Seal is Broken

When the first seal is broken we are told of a rider on a white horse carrying a bow, but no mention of arrows. He is given a crown and he rides out as a conqueror bent on conquest. This sounds very similar to what we have already said about the Antichrist. The Antichrist mimics Christ, who at His coming will be

seated on a white horse (Revelation 19:11). The symbolism of the rider being a conqueror, but having no arrows reminds us that he will be a peacemaker. The most intense struggle which exists in the Middle East and affects world politics is the conflict between the Jews and Palestinians and at the crux of that struggle is the issue of ownership of Jerusalem. The Antichrist will make a peace treaty, which the prophet Daniel says will start a period of seven years where we will see this man setting up an “abomination of desolation,” an image of himself in the middle of the seven year period in the newly built temple in Jerusalem (Daniel 9:27; 2Thessalonians 2:4). As we work through the seals, you will notice that the effects of the seven seals of the Book of Revelation are also the same as what Jesus said would happen in his talk with the twelve disciples on the Mount of Olives, known as the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24). This talk which was given to the 12 disciples, I see as an outline of events, whereas the Book of Revelation fills in more of the details. It might be helpful for you to have one finger in Matthew 24 and the other in Revelation chapter 6. When the disciples asked Jesus, “what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” the first thing Jesus answered was:

⁴ “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many (Matthew 24:4-5).

How has the world seen this phenomenon already? What names can you recall of people claiming to be God or Christ?

Leading up and into the 70th week of Daniel, the world will see a number of people claiming that they are the Christ, the anointed one. The final manifestation of this will be that Antichrist himself will come with lies and deceit and will claim that he is the Christ, the one that the world has been waiting for to bring peace and salvation! He will overcome nations and come to a throne over the ten nation confederacy (see the first sessions notes) by deceit, and proud boasts of what he will accomplish. Jesus said to the Jewish people, “I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him (John 5:43). If this passage does refer to Antichrist, it is entirely possible that the nation of Israel will buy into Antichrist’s lies that he will be the guarantor of a peace covenant and they can have their Temple rebuilt on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. He

will be believed in and received as their savior until he proclaims himself as God and sets himself up as God in the Temple itself in the middle point of the seven year period (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Daniel 9:27).

The Second Seal is Broken

The breaking of the second seal brings a second horse, “a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay one another” (Revelation 6:4). This obviously is talking about war. Flip back to the book of Matthew and read Jesus’ teaching of the disciples on the Mount of Olives:

⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom (Matthew 24:6-7).

It is possible that this is a war that we read about in the first session, when we talked about Antichrist gaining power in a 10 nation confederacy and we see three nations or leaders were brought into subjugation by him (Daniel 7:24). It is very likely that it is more than one war that takes place, for we read of nations fighting nations and kingdoms fighting kingdoms. It may also be the time when we read of a nation to the far north of Israel (Ezekiel 38:15, and 39:2, most commentators believe this nation to be Russia) allied with Persia (Iran) and other nations that make an attack on Israel (read Ezekiel, chapters 38-39, this passage has not yet been fulfilled). This attack happens after a re-gathering of Jewish people from all nations back to the land of Israel (Ezekiel 38:7-9), an event that is happening in our day. There is no other day in history prior to the homecoming of the Jews and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 when this could be fulfilled so perfectly. God gathering his people back to their land is another sign of the last days, and something that has to happen before this great battle will take place. The state of Israel is made up of people from all nations, and Jews have returned to their homeland from all corners of the earth. We can see in this way, how the scene is being set in our day for events that the scriptures tell us are yet to come.

The Third Seal

⁵ When the Lamb opened the third seal; I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” I looked, and there before

me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, “A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!” (Revelations 6:5-6).

The result of the wars in the beginning of the 7 year period, the 70th Week of Daniel, is that now famine begins to take hold on the earth. This could be the result of nuclear weapons being used with fallout spreading over fields destroying crops. It could also be the consequences of global warming and pollution of the upper atmosphere, or it could be that corrupt governments are using resources for war instead of feeding their people. Whatever the cause, we are told that a day’s wages will only manage to buy enough food for the day for a small family. The pair of scales represents food being weighed and rationed. Barley was usually fed to animals and was low in nutrients hence the better price. Matthew also records Jesus telling of the next event in the calendar adding in the fact that there will be earthquakes as well at this time:

⁷ There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains (Matthew 24:7-8).

Notice that Jesus said in verse 6 (Matthew 24), when talking about wars, “Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.” He is letting us know that we are only in the beginning stages of what will happen. In verse 8, He calls these preceding years the beginning birth pains, likening this seven year period to the birth of a baby. When a woman’s time has come to give birth, the birth pains start slow at first and are further apart. The pain is not as intense. As the time progresses and the baby starts to come down the birth canal, the painful contractions come closer together and are much more severe. In the same way, the beginning stages of the seven year period are not so destructive to the planet as the later ones, and each mishap is further apart. The further into the seven year period we will get, we will see stronger birth pangs. It is as if the world is in the throws of hard labor. The destructive events are more painful and closer together.

The Fourth Seal

⁷ When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” ⁸ I looked, and

there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth (Revelation 6:7-8).

When the fourth seal is opened we see that pestilence or plague is accompanied by persecution. The passage states that some were killed by sword (Verse 8). The color of the pale horse is significant, as the Greek word used here is the same root word from which we get the word chlorophyll; it describes the pale, ashen-green, pallor characteristic as that of a decomposing corpse. Its rider is named Death and we are told that permission is given for a fourth of the population of earth to be killed by sword, famine and plague, and by wild beasts. To be killed by sword sounds like persecution with people being hunted down and killed. Famine and plague also adds to the death of a quarter of the population. How can we explain wild beasts? How many wild beasts are left on planet earth even at the present time? The Greek word used is *thērión*, and although it is mostly used for animals, it could also be indicative of people who have let their inner beast nature dominate their lives to such a degree, that they are likened to wild beasts. When people who are dominated by selfish greed find themselves backed in a corner, they will act in a predatory way, out of a beast-like need for preservation. Consider the two scriptures below that speak of men behaving like beasts:

⁴ I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts—men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords (Psalm 57:4).

¹² But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish (2 Peter 2:12).

Jesus also talked about what happens on earth at this time of the fourth seal.

⁹ “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be **hated by all nations** because of me. ¹⁰ At that time **many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other**, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but he who stands firm to the end will be saved (*sōtēria* translated saved here can also

mean delivered). ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:9-14).

This persecution of the saint’s results in a powerful outpouring of the Spirit bringing about a great harvest of people being saved as the gospel is being preached in power. Men betraying each other sound like individuals that are depraved and giving full vent to the beast side of their nature, persecuting anyone that will not go along with Antichrist’s mark and his rule and reign. Let’s see what Jesus said will happen next:

¹⁵ “**So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,**’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸ Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. ¹⁹ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ **For then there will be great distress**, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. ²² If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the **elect** those days will be shortened. ²³ At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles **to deceive even the elect—if that were possible**. ²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time. ²⁶ “So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the desert,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷ For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:15-27).

In the above passage, Jesus gives an event that will happen that is accompanied with two warnings of what will follow.

What event does Jesus tell us to look out for? What warnings follow the event? Who are the people that should heed the warnings?

We are told in verse 24 that it is the “elect” that should be careful not to be deceived. Who are the elect? The elect of God are those who have been set apart for holy use, the saints. We thought that we chose Christ, but in reality He also chose you! This is one of the great mysteries of the faith. If you are a Christian, it is because you were chosen and given grace and favor

by God even before you were born! You have been set apart from this world by God Himself:

¹¹ In him we were also **chosen**, having been **predestined** according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will (Ephesians 1:11).

⁴ **For he chose us in him** before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ **he predestined us** to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will (Ephesians 1:4-5).

I believe this warning (Matthew 24:15-27) to be spoken to Jewish believers in Jerusalem and Israel, and also to Gentile (non-Jews) believers all over the world that see this on the television news. Those that are in the city of Jerusalem are to get out of the city quickly. The warning concerns what happens after “the abomination of Desolation,” spoken of by the prophet Daniel.

What is meant by the phrase, “the Abomination of Desolation?”

Let’s look at Daniel’s prophecy concerning this statement:

²⁷ He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ **In the middle of the ‘seven’** he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple **he will set up an abomination that causes desolation**, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him (Daniel 9:27).

The abomination of desolation is a term that is mentioned three times in the Old Testament and twice in the New Testament. Jewish people will point to an historical event that occurred in 168 B.C. when Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a Syrian, a descendant of one of the four generals that inherited Alexander the Great’s Grecian Empire, set up an image to Zeus in the Temple and also slaughtered a pig, an unclean animal to the Jewish people on the altar. He claimed he was a god and sought for the Israelite people to worship him. The Jewish people rose up against him under Judas Maccabeus and defeated him and cleansed the temple. Occasionally in scripture we get a type or a picture of something that will happen also at a later date. Jesus speaking about 198 years later, said that the Abomination of Desolation was yet to happen, and Matthew and Mark wrote down his words (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14). Notice

at what time Daniel says that this event will happen—at the middle of the seven week period, the 70th Week of Daniel 9:27.

Remember that Paul also spoke of this event which we looked at in the last session (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4). The conclusion which we arrived at was that we should not expect the rapture of the saints to happen until 3 three events had happened:

- 1) The apostasy, falling away or rebellion, depending on your translation (Verse 3).
- 2) The man of lawlessness (The Antichrist) is revealed (Verse 3).
- 3) He will set himself up in God’s Temple, proclaiming himself to be God (Verse 4).

Jesus refers to this event, with Antichrist setting himself up in God’s Temple as “the Abomination of Desolation”. Jesus warns that at that point, (Matthew 24:21) there will be great distress (New International Version). The King James Version calls this phrase, “Great Tribulation.” The Greek word is thlipsis, it means to crush, press, compress, squeeze. Tribulation, trouble, affliction. thlipsis conveys the picture of something being crushed, pressed, or squeezed as from a great weight. It is used to denote grievous physical affliction, or mental or spiritual distress. Luke, in his gospel, also states that men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world” (Luke 21:26). This Greek word, thlipsis, is used in a prophetic sense five times in the New Testament. I am indebted to the work of Marvin Rosenthal in his excellent book, *The Prewrath Rapture of the Church*, for the following thoughts:

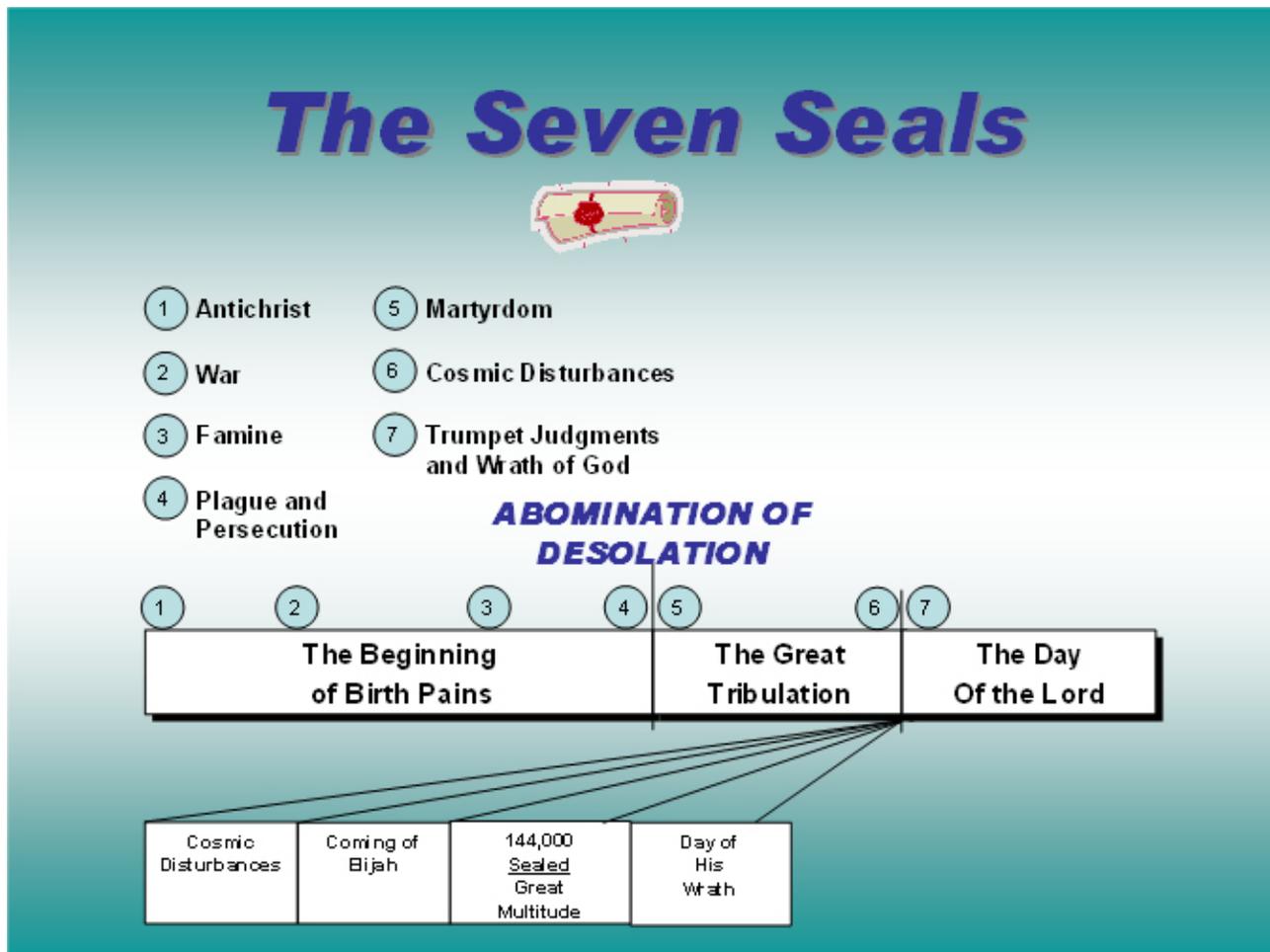
In His Olivet Discourse teaching, the Lord said, ²¹ “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). Two points are germane to this statement. First, the time of the tribulation of which the Lord speaks is directly related to the desecration of the temple (the abomination of desolation) and the warning to flee Jerusalem (Matt 24:15-20). The desecration of the temple, it is widely agreed, occurs in the middle of Daniel’s seventieth week (Daniel 9:27; Rev 12:6,14), specifically, three and one half years into it. Second, the word tribulation in this text (Matthew 24:21) has the adjective “great” before it. Eight verses later He once again uses the word tribulation. He taught, ²⁹ “Immediately after the tribulation (distress NIV) of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give its

light, and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken” (Matthew 24:29).¹

sky, the sun being darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars falling from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken (Mark 13:24-25).

What are the clear events that Jesus speaks about happening chronologically? (Matthew 24:15-31).

Now let’s go back to Revelation to see if the



Mark, in his gospel, also uses thlipsis in the same sense, he talks about “days of distress” (thlipsis) right after the abomination of desolation (Mark 13:14-19) and then goes on the say that “in those days, following that distress,” (thlipsis):

²⁴ “But in those days, following that distress, “ ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵ the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ ²⁶ “At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens (Mark 13:14-27).

rest of the seals line up with what Jesus taught:

The Fifth Seal

⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” ¹¹ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed (Revelation 6:9-11).

The sequence of events according to Jesus is that a great distress (tribulation or persecution) breaks out against the saints. Right after that will be cosmic signs in the

Doesn’t it sound similar to Jesus’ teaching in the Olivet Discourse, where a time of persecution, death and people being killed by the sword will come

¹ Marvin Rosenthal, The PreWrath Rapture of the Church, Page 104, Published by Nelson.

to pass just before the mid point of the seventieth week and will intensify after the Abomination of Desolation? The fifth seal ties in with the Great Tribulation or distress, where saints of God have been slain because of their stand for the Word of God and the testimony they have maintained. Notice during the fifth seal the saints are crying out for vengeance against Antichrist and his forces—this past five seals have not been the wrath of God going on—it has been the wrath of Satan against God’s elect!

In Revelation 12 we are given insight of Satan being cast down to the earth by Michael and his angels (12:6) and a war erupting against the elect of God, the saints: “Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.....Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:12, 17). This is the war that we talked about in the first session, when we looked at Daniel’s prophecy concerning the Antichrist, that he would be “waging war against the saints and defeating them (Daniel 7:21). This is not the wrath of God; this is the wrath of Satan against God’s people. The day of the Lord, the wrath of God, hasn’t started yet. That doesn’t happen until the seventh seal is opened.

The Sixth Seal

¹² I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, ¹³ and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. ¹⁴ The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place (Revelation 6:12-14).

Cosmic signs begin to happen at the sixth seal just as Jesus said in Matthew and Mark’s gospel. I always wondered how the stars in the sky could fall to the earth but then I came across Isaiah’s prophecy, which I believe ties in with what is happening at this point. Isaiah, under the inspiration of the Spirit, said:

¹⁹ The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken. ²⁰ The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls—never to rise again. ²¹ In that day the LORD will punish the powers

in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below. ²² They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days. ²³ The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously (Isaiah 24:19-23).

If one was standing in the evening at any point on earth, looking to the horizon, the earth tottering on its axis would appear as if the stars were falling from the sky. What a terrible sight that would be! Jesus said that after the distress (thlipsis) of those days and the cosmic signs, He would send forth his angels and gather His elect:

²⁹ “Immediately after the distress of those days “ ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ ³⁰ “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (Matthew 24:29-31).

Isn’t that exactly what we see in the Book of Revelation? We are clearly told that after the cosmic signs of Revelation 6:12-14, chapter seven begins with the words, “After this” (the this being the cosmic signs) the rapture takes place. We are specifically told of 144,000 Jewish people that are sealed. I presume this to mean that they have responded to the call of God and are included in the Church. I do not know if this is a symbolic number (12,000 x 12,000 equals 144,000), it is of note that the New Jerusalem that descends from above is: 12,000 stadia in length and 12,000 wide with walls that are 144 cubits thick (Revelation 21:16-17). It is possible that God is reminding us that He has not forgotten the Jewish people that inherited the promises and the Word of God, and that He will fulfill all that He has spoken to them. Personally, I believe that He will bring a remnant of Jewish people through the fire of Antichrist’s persecution to be included in his body, the Bride of Christ.

We are then told, again in accordance with what Jesus is instructing his disciples on the Mount of Olives, that the angels would gather the elect (every one that is born again of God) and they are all seen in heaven

before the throne:

⁹ After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb”. ¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying: “Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!” (Revelation 7:9-12)

We are told that this great multitude was from every nation, tribe, people and language. Is this not the rapture and doesn't it tie in exactly to what Jesus said in the Olivet discourse? Nowhere does it say that these 144,000 were evangelists sent over the world to evangelize—I can't conceive of Antichrist letting 144,000 travel across borders to reach this great multitude. None of these men will have a mark of the Beast upon them to enable them to travel.

Let's just explore the thought that the rapture did occur before the seven year period started. We would then have to come to the conclusion that those who were becoming Christians during the seven year period were allowed to come in to the body of believers (the Church) even though we have already established the fact that there is no second chance after the door of salvation is shut at the catching up of God's people (Luke 13:23-28). If there were two sets of believers, one raptured before the seven year period and those saved during it, why don't we then see the pre-tribulation believers welcoming those arriving into heaven having gone through the Great Tribulation? (New International Version uses the word Distress) We read of the angels and the four living creatures standing around the throne, with God

Himself with them, why does scripture not mention those that had been raptured in the Pre-tribulation rapture if there was such a thing?

Instead we see those that have gone through the Great Tribulation (Distress, NIV) getting the opportunity to serve God day and night in His temple, and that God will spread his tent over them (a picture of marriage, Ruth 3:9), and wipe away their tears (Revelation 7:13-17).

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴ I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore, “they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. ¹⁶ Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:13-17).

I believe with all my heart that we will all appear at one time before the throne. There are not two raptures, one before the seven year period and one at the sixth seal. Those of us that are here at that time will go through a time of trial of our faith and come out as gold with robes made white. We will be spotless and without blame before our God and He Himself will wipe away our tears. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

Prayer: Father, I thank you that you have chosen me and called me your child. Whatever trials I may go through, please give me your enabling power and grace that I may glorify you with every decision I make. Please mold and shape my character to be all that you want me to be. Amen.

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