

Revelation: Lesson #101 – Opening the Seven Seals

Notes for Parents to Study With Their Children

For Sunday, May 31st

Read Revelation 6:1 – 8:5 (a simplified explanation of the text will be supplied at the end of these notes.)

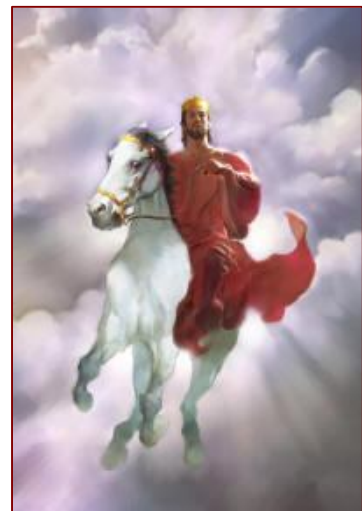
Memory Verse: Rev. 6:1 “Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.”

The Seven Seals Reveal God’s Plan

- We learned in our last lesson that Jesus was seen by John as the Lamb of God worthy to open the book with the seven seals. In this lesson Jesus will break open each seal and as He does John will see a part of God’s plan.
- Remember God’s people were being troubled because they followed Jesus. The nation they lived in, the Roman Empire, was often guilty of fighting against Christians. Jesus’ faithful followers would not give in to their sinful ways. They would not worship their idols or get drunk or live immorally. Because of this the world persecuted them:
 - Some Christians were just being insulted and made fun of. Sometimes lies were told about them.
 - Some had their jobs taken away from them; they couldn’t make any money to feed their families and pay their bills.
 - Other Christians were put in prisons. It became a law that no one could be a Christian.
 - Some Christians were put to death just because they said, “I am a Christian.” And they were killed in cruel ways: fed to wild animals, burned, crucified.
- So what would happen to God’s people? Would the church survive? Was Jesus really ruling from heaven? How could He help His people?
- As Jesus opened the seven seals and showed what was in the book, He began to reveal that God had a plan to defeat their enemy.

The First Seal is Opened

- A rider went out on a white horse. He wore a crown and went out to win His battles. Many believe that this is meant to show us a picture of Jesus. He would go out to help win the battle and conquer those who would oppose His kingdom.
- In the Old Testament book of Habakkuk chapter 3 God is pictured as riding a horse with a bow in hand ready to shoot His arrows at His enemies.
- In Revelation 19:11-16 we see a similar picture of Jesus: “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He



had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

- Jesus does this first through winning people to His kingdom through the gospel. But He also reigns in heaven fighting for us. The next three seals show us some things He will do.

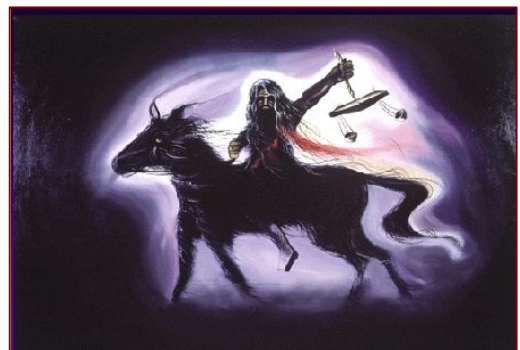
The Second Seal is Opened

- Another rider went out, this time on a red horse – red like blood. This rider could bring war and conflict to the earth with a sword. People would settle problems with weapons, killing each other. Problems of war and day to day violence would spread.
- God tells us to respect other people’s lives, treat them fairly, try to be at peace with them and forgive them if they’ve wronged us. But when people don’t want to obey God, this is a natural result. Many become violent and disrespectful of others.
- The rider of the red horse would bring conditions to the earth where many people would no longer live in peace with each other.



The Third Seal is Opened

- A third rider goes out on a black horse which showed that “dark times” were coming. This rider holds a pair of scales in his hands that weigh out food. Back in those times merchants used these type of scales to show how much wheat and other goods you were buying.
- As the rider was leaving, one of the four creatures called out these mysterious words, “A measure of wheat for a denarius, and three measures of barley for a denarius, and don’t hurt the oil and wine.”
- A denarius was money and it usually was equal to what most people made for a day’s work. A measure of wheat was just enough food for one person to eat in a day. Now what if your dad or mom worked and could only make enough money in a day for one person in your family to get to eat? What if that was all the money your family had and there was no money left to buy anything else? They could buy three measures of barley for that much money, but barley didn’t taste as good and was a poor man’s food.



- The expression “don’t hurt the oil and wine” showed that these were precious and expensive items and everyone needed to do their best to keep them as long as they could.
- All of this lets us know that the Lord could send times when their money was not worthy much. A famine could hit and the crops wouldn’t grow very well. Food that had been plentiful would be expensive to buy. Some people would lose their jobs. Families might not be able to stay in their homes.

The Fourth Seal is Opened

- This fourth rider comes out on a pale, sickly looking horse. The rider might scare us because his name was Death.
- Death could happen a lot of different ways: Some people would die due to violence (people killing each other), famine would cause some to starve, plagues and diseases would come and take lives, and in that day and time wild animals like lions could attack them.



- A nation like the Roman empire was the mightiest nation that had ever been on earth. But they could not stand against these heavenly forces of God. Jesus could send the gospel to change the hearts of many, but on those who rebelled against Him, He could send war, violence, famine, money problems, plagues, disease and wild beasts. In Ezekiel 14:21 God said He could send “four terrible punishments”: “I will send wars, famines, wild animals, and plagues. They will destroy people and animals.” All of these things would gradually weaken and destroy the Roman empire.

The Fifth Seal is Opened

- The fifth seal showed that those who had died serving Jesus Christ were with God. John could see these souls under the altar. They were Christians who had kept on testifying about God’s Word and had been killed because of it.
- They were waiting for the day when the Lord would fight for them: “How much longer” they asked, “will you wait before you judge those on the earth who killed us?”
- But the Lord told them they must wait until even more had died for Jesus.



The Sixth Seal is Opened

- Even though the Lord would wait for a while, the time would come when He would fight against His enemies.

- Symbols of destruction are used like when volcanoes erupt and earthquakes shake the ground. The ground shakes. The sky turns black with ashes. The moon takes on a blood red look. The stars of the heavens would fall.
- The Old Testament uses these same symbols to describe how God would destroy nations in ancient times (Isa. 13:10,13; 50:3; Ezk. 26:15,18).
- All the important people would try to hide from God's judgment. They would run to the mountains and caves and want the rocks to cover them up. The day when the Lamb of God started to fight for His people would be an awesome day.

Between the Sixth and Seventh Seal

- It is explained that while the Lord would start sending His troubles on the earth to judge His enemies, time would be given for people to hear the gospel and be saved. God is said to be placing a "seal" on all His servants. We have already talked about how a seal often had its owner's mark on it – a special sign or an initial that would identify who it belonged to.
- The angel shows John how large numbers from every tribe of Israel had been sealed. In the book of Acts the gospel was first preached to the Jews. Many Jews became servants of Jesus Christ during that time.
- Then John sees "a large crowd of people, so many no one could count them, from all the nations, all the families, all the peoples, and all the languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb dressed in white robes and having palms in their hands." These are people from all nations of the earth that had been saved by obeying Jesus. The last half of the book of Acts tells how the Gospel went to all nations of the earth.
- All this crowd of people John saw was made up of both Jews and Gentiles that had been washed in the blood of the Lamb. (Remember that song we sing, "Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?")
- As Jesus ruled on the throne, He gave time for many to obey Him before He began to pour out His wrath. Many of those who had obeyed Him had gone through great troubles before they died. Now they could rest with the Lord and reign with Him as He started to show His great power.



The Seventh Seal is Opened

- When the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, opened the seventh seal, everything in heaven became very quiet; as if everyone was waiting and wondering about what was going to happen.



- Then suddenly seven angels appear and each one is given a trumpet. Our next lesson will talk about what happens as the seven trumpets are sounded.
- Also another angel appears with a container

of incense to be burned on the altar of incense. We are told that this had to do with the prayers that God's people offer to Him. It may mean that Christians had



been praying for the day when God would come to help His people. This would remind Christians of that time and our time that God hears our prayers and will help us.

Simplified Explanation of the Text

The First Seal

6:1 And I saw when the Lamb opened the first of the seals. And I heard a sound like the noise of thunder which was one of the four creatures saying, "Come."

2 I looked and could see a white horse and its rider had a bow. And a crown was given to Him so that he could go out to win victories in battle and conquer others.

The Second Seal

3 And as soon as He opened the second seal, I heard the second creature say, "Come."

4 There went out another horse, this time a red one. And its rider was given the authority to take peace from the earth, that its people would kill one another, and he was given a great sword.

The Third Seal

5 Now when the third seal was opened, I heard the third creature say, "Come." I looked and saw a black horse and its rider had a pair of scales in his hand.

6 And I heard a voice coming from the creatures saying, "A measure of wheat for a denarius, and three measures of barley for a denarius, and don't hurt the oil and wine."

The Fourth Seal

7 And when the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the fourth creature say, "Come."

8 And I looked and saw a pale yellowish-green horse, and its rider's name was Death, and Hades (the realm of death) followed him. He was given power over one-fourth of the earth to kill whether with the sword, with hunger, with death or with beasts.

The Fifth Seal

9 And when He had opened the fifth seal, I could see under the altar the souls of those who had kept on testifying about God's Word and had been put to death because of it.

10 And they cried out with a loud voice saying, "Our Lord, who is holy and true, how much longer will you wait before you judge those on the earth who killed us and avenge our blood?"

11 Every one of these was given a white robe. They were told that they should rest for a little while until it had been fulfilled that others who were their brethren and fellow servants of Christ with them were killed like that had been.

The Sixth Seal

12 And when the sixth seal was opened, I saw that there was an earthquake and it looked like a coarse cloth made of hair had been pulled over the sun making the sky black. And the moon looked like blood.

13 Then the stars of heaven started to fall to the earth like when the wind blows hard and shakes figs off a fig tree before they are even ripe.

14 And the heavens started to separate like when a scroll is rolled together. And every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

15 Then the kings of the earth and all the important people and all those who are rich and the army captains and all the powerful people, slaves as well as people who were free all hid themselves in the caves and mountain rocks.

16 And they said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall over us and hide us from the face of the One who is sitting on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb because the great day of His wrath has come and who will be able to stand."

[Chapter 7 takes place before we get to the Seventh Seal]

Before Earth is Troubled, Many Saints Had to Be Sealed

7:1 Now after these things happened, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth. And they held the earth's four winds so that the wind would not blow on the earth, the sea or on any tree.

2-3 Now these four angels had been given the work of hurting the earth and the sea.

And I saw another angel going up from the east who had the seal of the living God, and he cried with a loud voice to those four angels saying, "Don't hurt the earth, the sea or the trees until we have put a seal on the forehead of all the servants of God."

4 And I heard the number of how many of them had been sealed – 144,000 out of all the tribes of Israel.

5 Out of the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed. Out of the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 were sealed. Out of the tribe of Gad, 12,000 were sealed.

6 Out of the tribe of Asher 12,000 were sealed. Out of the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000 were sealed. Out of the tribe of Manasseh, 12,000 were sealed.

7 Out of the tribe of Simeon 12,000 were sealed. Out of the tribe of Levi, 12,000 were sealed. Out of the tribe of Issachar 12,000 were sealed.

8 Out of the tribe of Zebulun 12,000 were sealed. Out of the tribe of Joseph 12,000 were sealed. Out of the tribe of Benjamin 12,000 were sealed.

9 And after this I looked and saw a large crowd of people, so many no one could count them, from all the nations, all the families, all the peoples, and all the languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb dressed in white robes and having palms in their hands.

10 These cried out with loud voices, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb."

11 And all the angel also stood around the throne, as did the 24 elders and the 4 creatures, and they bowed their faces before the throne and worshipped God.

12 And they said, "Amen (it is true). Praise and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might to our God for ever and ever. Amen."

Who Are These That Were Clothed in White?

13 One of the 24 elders asked me, "Who are these who are clothed in white robes? Where did they come from?"

14-17 And I said to him, "Sir, you know."

And he told me, "These are the ones who have come out of great pressures and afflictions, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Because of that, they are always before the throne of God and serve Him night and day in His temple. And the One sitting on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. They will never be hungry or thirsty again. And the Sun will never again burn them, nor will any scorching heat. For the Lamb who is in the middle of the throne will feed them and lead them to fountains of living water, and God shall wipe away all the tears from their eyes.”

The Seventh Seal

8:1 And when the seventh seal was opened there was silence in heaven for about half and hour.

2 Then I saw seven angels that stood before God and they were given seven trumpets.

3 And another angel with a golden container for incense came and stood at heaven’s altar of incense. He had been given a large amount of incense to offer the prayers of the saints on the golden altar which was in front of the throne.

4 The smoke of the burning incense, the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel’s hand.

5 And the angel took the golden container and filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it down to the earth, and there were voice and thunders and lightnings and earthquakes.