



A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE END TIMES

Week 33: The Seal Judgements, Part 1

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Review:

- We've had two weeks off, so a short reset is probably needed.
- Generally, we are working our way in chronological sequence through the prophetic Scriptures. A few rabbit trails here and there have supplemented this general approach.
- We've completed a fairly thorough study of the antichrist, including his rise to political power, his career highlights, and the various conflicts he is part of.
- One of the important rabbit trails, we pursued in all that, led to some interesting insights about Jesus' Second Coming and how that will play out according to the Bible.
- With the last lesson in this series, I indicated that we would start to study the Seal Judgements. They are the first of 21 judgments outlined in the book of Revelation.

NOTE: To help us properly understand the nature and purpose of the Seal Judgments, we need to take a bit of a running start.

Turn to Revelation 5

NOTE: We are still continuing in a chronological pattern moving through the events of Bible prophecy along a systematic timeline. In doing so, we now find ourselves needing to wade through *Revelation* for the next few weeks.

- I. **BACKGROUND:** No book of the Bible reveals the glory of God and Christ in any more splendor and detail than *Revelation*. Yet, and perhaps, 'because' that is the case, no book of scripture has been more misrepresented, misinterpreted, and maligned than this book. Satan does not want us to understand this content. This is because *Revelation* enables us to:
 - A. Comprehend the future. (And to the faithful believer, it increases our hope and joy).
 - B. This book helps us to comprehend Christ as the only all-powerful judge and ruler. Any lesser or tamer view of Christ serves Satan's purposes better.
 - C. When our view of Christ is diminished, our view of ourselves is expanded. The opposite is also true. This is the principle behind the statement John the Baptist gave in *John 3:30* when he said "He must increase, but I must decrease...."
 - D. That is why the key to Revelation is found in *Revelation 1:1*: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ..." is what this book is about. It is the revealing of Jesus Christ.
 - E. It is the uncovering of truth about Christ previously not known. He is magnified, glorified, and justified in *Revelation* in ways no other book reveals.
 - F. Which explains why *Revelation 1:3* says "Blessed is the one who reads it, hears it, and takes it to heart..." (**3 step process: read, receive, and respond**).

G. This is all the more reason to approach Revelation literally. If the assumption is this cannot be done, then this blessing makes no sense and scripture is reduced to a 'placebo effect.'

H. Events leading up to *Chapter 5*:

1. As we have learned, in **Chapters 2 & 3**, John is instructed to write letters to seven churches. These are seven real churches that existed in those cities that they are stated to exist in.
2. However, they are also representative churches, because each is unique and each represents churches in all phases of church history. In all the history of the church there have always been these kinds of churches. In the greater view of church history, the attitude and performance of the church has followed the layout of these seven churches.
3. Each church receives a special ministry from the Lord. Each one had particular issues to which God had provided a unique message. So, this is His ministry, His message, to the church age.
4. This is also why each of the 7 messages ends with: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (Note the plural: the message to each is a message for all).
5. THIS IS IMPORTANT - The church is mentioned 19 times in chapters 1-3. Then, the term is absent till chapter 19 when the marriage of the Lamb is discussed.
6. Meantime, in the intervening chapters, John admonishes with the warning, "If anyone has an ear, let him hear." Period! (*i.e. Revelation 13:9*). There is no mention of ...to the churches, a consistent and common phrase in the first three chapters. (implications? Reason? Rapture?)
7. NOTE: There is the mention of "saints" in the context of (**Revelation 13:7 & 10**). These, however, are concerning those who get saved during the seven years after the church has been taken into heaven.
8. (This premise of the church being absent on earth in **Revelation Chapters 4-18** is further supported by the Jewish customs and traditions surrounding marriage and how the groom comes for the bride and takes her away to be with him.)
9. And so, representing the Rapture, John is told in **Revelation 4:1** to "Come up here..." He is transported in a vision to heaven where his description of the throne environment is very similar to **Ezekiel 1**.
10. All that said, this brings us to **Revelation 5**, which is important to us so we can understand the dynamics of The Tribulation properly. Here is a loose 4-point outline to help us understand this chapter:
 - a. The Scroll
 - b. The Search
 - c. The Savior
 - d. The Song

I. The Scroll (vs. 1)

1. In ancient times they didn't have books where pages were cut and bound together.
2. Prior to the invention of the book, there were scrolls. They were a single long parchment (papyrus / vellum) usually rolled up from both ends which met in the middle.
3. This scroll has some unique characteristics:
 - a. It was written inside and on the back. Like inside a book and also on the cover and spine.
 - b. It was sealed with seven seals. Wax and sometimes clay were used to seal them.
 - c. After the scroll was written on, it was rolled up. The edge of the scroll was sealed repeatedly until it was finally closed.
 - d. You could not access the contents unless you broke a seal and then another, and so on until the full writing was exposed. This prevented people from looking at the document without the proper authorization.
4. In ancient Eastern cultures, and up through the time of the Romans, important documents were treated in exactly this manner, specifically:
 - a. Wills and testaments.
 - b. Contracts (usually deeds or titles) – most common use of this approach
 - c. A portion of text would be written and then sealed with a different witness signing at each sealing until the whole document was complete. A larger number of witnesses meant that a higher importance was assigned to the document.
 - d. In this case, 7 seals are used, representing 'perfection or completeness.' It was common in Roman times to seal deeds with 7 seals.
 - e. In light of the context of Revelation, and in light of historical context, we can safely assume this scroll is some kind of a contract or a deed, probably about ownership or rights. The details are on the inside and will remain unknown to all except the authorized party.
5. An example of this sort of transaction and document is seen in ***Cf. Jeremiah 32:7-15.***
 - a. Around 586 BC when Babylon was conquering Judah, invasion had already begun.
 - b. God instructed Jeremiah to purchase land from his relative (land that was worthless in light of the invasion and pending captivity) to demonstrate God's faithfulness
 - c. Terms and protocol of this deed are outlined, similar to what we see in ***Revelation 5***
6. I feel this scroll likely represents God's will and deed to give the earth to Jesus Christ.

- a. Affirms His promise. **Cf. Psalm 2:7-9.**
 - b. Here is the promise from the Father to the Son, and here's the title and deed the Father holds in His hand. The time has come for the Son to rightfully take back the earth and reign.
 - c. QUESTION: How can you describe the heritage or the right of an eternal God? The earth is already His, so that is not the way to think about this.
 - d. So rather, this scroll reveals how He will take back what is His. Not why it is His, but how He will redeem His rightful possession. Certainly, this scroll affirms man's sinful condition and his need for a redeemer.
 - e. That being said, the point is missed if the scroll is seen as containing descriptions of the earth, the universe, and descriptions of God Himself as the rightful heir.
 - f. It is better to understand it in light of His qualifications as a Redeemer, and having descriptions of His judgments and His vengeance. Also, the purging power of God's wrath is detailed within.
 - g. Remember, our Lord is a JUST God. Nobody will stand before Him and disagree with Him. Prior to the final bowl judgments, God's justice is praised (**Cf. Revelation 15:3-4**), also **Revelation 19:1-4**.
- J. The Search (vss. 2-5) – The operative question here is: “Who is worthy to open the scroll?”
- 1. In other words, “Who is worthy to have the rights detailed in this scroll, to reign, and to rule?”
 - a. The desire to rule the world is longstanding. Certainly, Satan started it all. From a human perspective, there was Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Napoleon, Hitler, Lenin, Stalin,...and more recently the World Economic Forum.
 - b. Some day there will be the Antichrist, the most powerful individual who will ever represent Satan in the world. He will subdue all opposition and set out to conquer the world and take it, so to speak, away from the hands of God.
 - c. None of them succeeded or will succeed. None of them are worthy.
 - d. Turning to the other side, we can even talk about righteous men that we might assume would be capable of ruling the world, but none of them are qualified either, and **Revelation 5:3 affirms this!**
 - 2. However, **verse 3** says he not only has to be worthy, he has to be able.
 - a. It is saying, "Who has the ability? Who can overthrow Satan? Who can destroy sin? Who can remedy the curse on the world and the curse on the human body and mind? Who can do it? Who is able?"
 - b. Then John weeps because nobody could be found. (**vs. 4**) (Here, the Greek word 'oudeis' means "no one" or "no thing." So not even an angel could open the book.)

- c. Perhaps we can understand why John cried. The record was full and complete. The whole human race was sinful.
 - d. In effect, it's easy to imagine Satan saying to God, "The people of earth are mine! The facts are recorded. Look at the record which shows what these sinners have done. They have broken your law and they deserve to die.
 - e. One of the elders (**vs. 5**) confronts John about his weeping. Who would know better than one of the 24 elders what it meant to be redeemed? (representing human race)
- K. The Savior (vss. 6-7) - Jesus is the only one worthy to receive the scroll and to open it.
1. Some observations about the Lion (**vs. 5**)
 - a. (**vs. 5**) – “...the Lion of the tribe of Judah” – recalls Jacob’s blessing on his son Judah, giving leadership over his brothers (**Cf. Genesis 49:8-10**).
 - Jacob prophetically gives the scepter of kingship to Judah and makes it the tribe of kings and from which the King of kings will come.
 - It is interesting to note that God never intended Saul to establish a dynasty; he came from the tribe of Benjamin.
 - b. “...the Root of David,” - God established the eternal dynasty through David, who was from the tribe of Judah.
 - In the Old Testament, the coming Messiah is called both the “shoot” and “branch” that will spring from Jesse’s root to restore David’s dynasty. (**Cf. Isaiah 11:1**)
 - c. “...has triumphed” - literally the Greek word means to ‘overcome.’ Jesus faced the most extreme adversity, paid the highest price for our sin that anyone could pay, and he overcame the odds.
 2. Some observations about the Lamb (**vs. 6**)
 - a. Is this really how the exalted Son of God looks – like a baby sheep with multiple horns and eyes? Of course not.
 - John is using symbolic language to describe the same individual he earlier depicted as having white hair, eyes like blazing fire, feet like fine bronze, and a mouth giving way to a two-edged sword (**Revelation 1:14-16**)....the same image which made John fall down as though dead!
 - This is the same “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (**John 1:29**).
 - Isaiah depicts Him as “a lamb led to the slaughter” (**Isaiah 53:7**), and “bearing the iniquities of all mankind”
 - b. John’s view of Jesus as a slain lamb is to convey the key truth that Jesus’ suffering and death are both a great sacrifice and a great victory.

NOTE: It is significant that the glorified Jesus Christ bears the marks of His crucifixion. John’s description of Him as “a slaughtered lamb” (**v. 6**) is consistent with:

- Zechariah’s prophecy of the glorious appearance of the Messiah, who has been “pierced” (**Zechariah 14:10**).
- It’s also consistent with Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, in which He invites followers like Thomas to both examine and touch His wounds. (**John 20:27**).

NOTE: Why does Jesus retain scars when we are assured perfect bodies in the future? Two reasons seem clear.

- First, Jesus’ scars are an everlasting testimony of His sacrifice for us.
 - Second, we are cautioned that many false Messiahs will arise, and Jesus’ scars are a sign of His authenticity. When Jesus returns, His crucifixion scars will identify Him as the true Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world (**Revelation 13:8**).
- c. **The seven horns.** In scripture, horns symbolize great power. David writes (**Cf. Psalms 18:2**), after the Lord rescues him from his enemies, *“The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my mountain where I seek refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation”*
- No doubt the seven horns on the Lamb in John’s vision show the full power of Jesus.
- d. **The seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth.** The phrase “seven spirits” ties back to **Revelation 1:4** and may be translated “the seven-fold Spirit.”
- likely a reference to the completeness of the Holy Spirit in Christ.
 - The emphasis here seems to be on Christ’s place in the Godhead and His authority as the One who has all the fullness of the Spirit (**Cf. Isaiah 11:1-2**).
- L. **The Song** – this is sincere worship that is honest, it has integrity, and sincerity (it is pure)
1. When Jesus says, "I'll take that scroll, I'll redeem the earth and claim what is mine," (**vs. 7**), then all heaven begins the halleluiahs again first seen in chapter 4.
 - Not a familiar hymn this time (**Cf. Revelation 15 where they sing the Song of Moses**), but a ‘new song.’
 - The four living creatures and the 24 elders respond immediately, prostrating themselves before the Lamb in clear acknowledgement of His deity.
 2. Jesus is worthy to receive something: (7 things are listed in the full embodiment of true worship: **Cf. vs. 12-13**):
 - a. **Power.** The Greek word here is ‘dynamis,’ from which we get “dynamite.” He not only holds all authority, but He has the power to vindicate His holiness and punish evil.

- b. **Riches.** During His earthly ministry, Jesus shows no interest in building personal wealth. However, we will cast the crowns He has given us at His feet, for He deserves all that can be given Him.
- c. **Wisdom.** Jesus was often accused of being mad, or even demon-possessed. Jesus endures the slander and disrespect of those who are wise in their own eyes. He is “the only wise God,” (*Cf. Romans 16:27*).
- d. **Strength.** Jesus not only saves His own but keeps us by His infinite power (*Cf. 1 Peter 1:5*).
- e. **Honor.** He is seated at the Father’s right hand, in the highest place of honor.
- f. **Glory.** His humble life and many sorrows are replaced by the glory of heaven’s throne room.
- g. **Blessing.** He is to receive all blessings from the grateful recipients of His grace.

...brings us to **Chapter 6:1-2**

II. THE BIG PICTURE (WE START TO UNDERSTAND THE SEAL JUDGEMENTS).

General (NOTE: My personal view of the Seal Judgments is not a conventional one. The conventional view is the Seal Judgements take place within the 7 years of the Tribulation. I believe, as Bill Salus and some others do, that the Seal Judgements take place, mostly, within that timeframe BETWEEN the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation. (more on that later)

- A. Unprecedented time:
 - 1. Our planet has endured multiple cruel times of war, famine, disease, destruction, dictatorship, chaos, etc.: BUT NEVER LIKE THIS!
 - 2. God’s purpose is to shake humanity loose from its false sense of security, to cause man to repent, and to turn to Him for salvation

- B. This begins the first of three sets of chronological judgments outlined in the book of Revelation.
 - 1. Seven seals (*Revelation 6:1-8:1*)
 - 3. Seven trumpets (*Revelation 8:2-11:19*)
 - 4. Seven bowls (*Revelation 15:5-16:21*)
 - 5. NOTE: Some scholars see overlap of three sets of judgments (running concurrently). The text more strongly suggests an orderly sequence, with trumpets coming from 7th seal, etc. (i.e. like fireworks display)
 - 6. We will generally follow the order that Revelation lays out.

- C. First seal introduces us to first of “the four horsemen of the apocalypse”
 - 1. These horsemen are dramatic presentations (symbols) of literal facts and events.

2. It is not God's intention to convey individual personalities, but 'forces' or 'conditions' in the world (i.e. peace [perhaps "deception"], war, famine, pestilence) - - ex. 4th horseman has riders called 'death,' and 'hades,' and death, for example, is not a person any more than 'famine' is (we studied this)

NOTE: These four horsemen really underscore man's inhumanity to man. Sinful man makes deliberate choices which adversely affect his situation. We see this in our own time like never before, but never this bad! World history has shown this typical sequence many times already.

3. Timing

- a. (Conventional): This is the start of the 7-year Tribulation. It is the signing of the 7-yr peace treaty between Israel and the Antichrist (**Cf. Daniel 9:27** – "...he will confirm a covenant with many for one week...")

NOTE: The Jews will accept him as a political leader, not as their Messiah.

- b. Keep in mind, the Jews are shrewd when it comes to matters of national security and they will not sign a treaty with a 'nobody.' The antichrist will have already proven himself on the world's stage and gained credibility
- c. This suggests that the antichrist will have been a pivotal figure for some time.
 - The opening of 1st seal is the heavenly action that coincides with this treaty (two views: one heavenly and one earthly) – THIS IS THE START OF THE TRIBULATION
 - Starts the ticking clock (7 years, 84 months, 2520 days: based on Jewish 30-day month) which culminates in the physical return of Jesus Christ.
- d. (Unconventional – MY VIEW): This is not the start of the seven-year Tribulation. While God is beginning to turn His attention to dealing with Israel once again, these 7 Seal Judgements shed light on that timeframe between the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation (HOW DO WE KNOW THAT GOD IS TURNING HIS ATTENTION TO ISRAEL ONCE MORE?)
 - **Cf. Daniel 9:24** – "Seventy sevens are decreed (cut out of the timeline and set aside for a special purpose) for your people and your holy city..."
 - God's design for the 'Church Age' will be complete. The church will be raptured and out of the picture, and God begins to turn His attention to Israel once more. This is prophesied.
 - **NOTE:** In accordance with **Revelation** being more or less chronological, the temple details (part of the covenant terms) are not mentioned until **Revelation Ch. 11**, quite a bit later than the events of the Seal Judgments being recorded.

4. Events of the first Seal Judgment.

- a. Begins political phase of the antichrist.

- The antichrist and his kingdom are obviously what is symbolized by the rider on the white horse
- He is ushering in peace (according to the world's definition of it) however, it is a false peace. No guessing; scripture affirms this:
 - **(Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:3)** - *"When people say, "There is peace and security," destruction will strike them as suddenly as labor pains come to a pregnant woman, and they will not be able to escape."*
- **Important! - This false peace is the direct result of spiritual deception, chiefly seen by the presence of false Messiahs and deceptive leaders,** (This coincides with the precise account stated by Jesus – **Cf. Matthew 24:4**)
 - **NOTE:** The narrative of **Matthew 24:4+** precisely follows the chronology of the 7 seals, 7 trumpets, etc. (same in **Mark 13:5+ and Luke 21:8+**)
 - These are pre-Tribulation narratives, which moving into the details of The Tribulation itself, is to be understood as being MOST relevant for the events of those 7 years.
 - This false sense of peace masks the 'conquering' intentions of the Antichrist. **(vs.3)**
 - He has a bow, representing power and aggression, but no arrows. (he will conquer by diplomacy and political ability rather than by open warfare, initially!). Again, we studied the antichrist in depth; we saw this very process.
 - The world WILL see him as superman, who 'promises' great things and appears to have the ability to deliver, all the solutions to the world's problems, and the world will believe him.
 - He will be victorious is seen by the fact that he "...was given a crown." (One does not have a crown if one does not rule).
 - ***The first Seal Judgement describes the initial ascent of the antichrist on the world stage.***
- b. The world will willingly follow the Antichrist's leadership. (WHY?) RECOGNIZE! The world desires one-world government.
 - Key global leaders are ALREADY calling for one man to lead the world.
 - All this plays into socialist ideals (Even though socialism has never worked, many will never be content till they have gained it).
 - Interdependence among nations today is increasing at rapid pace.
 - The UN is ineffective and secular, but most world leaders blindly feel it is the only solution to world peace. We want to 'fit in' and 'be a part of something' and so many small new nations have same voting power as the USA.
 - Think: As a result 2/3 of UN voting power resides with 10% of world's population that own 5% of the global land mass.

- Mounting hysteria over nuclear warfare has persuaded many to believe that a one-world leadership is the only way to prevent global annihilation.
- Today, many of the wealthiest foundations and people in the US (NOTE: The World Economic Forum is a great example!) are doing everything possible to brainwash the population with the idea that the only solution is to give up personal rights, personal independence, and personal goals, and to subscribe to the idea that the government can take care of you. **MANY ALREADY BELIEVE THIS AND WANT THIS!**
- Conclusion: “Conformity” will be priority over “individuality” (people and nations)
 - **Happening NOW!** EX. (Law of the Sea Treaty / LOST) - We will be required to pay one-half of all royalties from off-shore oil drilling and mineral proceeds to the U.N. or its appointed Council.
 - Furthermore, we as a “rich” nation must give away all our proprietary technology about off-shore drilling. The international body will also decide where we can drill.
 - Plays into socialist ideals we see sweeping the world even now (Including US)
 - The stage is already being set...
- c. World conditions: (In the general chaos and confusion following the Rapture, the world will be seeking solutions and be ripe for deception). This is a post-rapture dynamic.

NOTE: This is an important reminder: God promised that Christians are not destined to wrath (the Tribulation) but to obtaining salvation (deliverance) through Jesus Christ (**1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9**). **This describes a future soteriology, since salvation from sin is a present assurance.**

- d. A time of great upheaval and chaos:
 - Some nations will be severely affected (i.e. USA), while others not so much (i.e. Europe, Russia, and Middle East) It is interesting to speculate on ramifications of The Rapture.
 - New political rules will likely be instituted so governments and social order can be supported and maintained
 - For many unsaved people, it will be their “appointed time” to die (**Cf. Hebrews 9:27**) when the rapture takes place, as their lives will hinge on the role of a believer at that time (planes, trains, autos, medical professionals, etc.)
 - Christians have become a part of every legitimate profession and every level of leadership; their sudden absence will likely initiate martial law and fundamental change in societies everywhere.
- e. Interpretation of rapture event by those that remain.
 - Many thoughtful individuals will be impressed by the event and will seek out answers in the Word of God.

- There will likely a huge spike in numbers of people being saved. Churches will likely be packed, and serviced by those churchgoers who suddenly realize their faith was not a saving faith.
- Those who are susceptible to spiritual deception (MANY OF THESE!) will be glad those backwards, fundamentalist Christians are gone (Theories????)
- These individuals will immediately seek their own humanistic / secular / godless agenda. This serves the intentions and purposes of the antichrist well.
- As we've already studied, I believe fallen angels will enter the sphere of human experience at this time and promote this deception thoroughly.