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## **The Seals and the Multitudes**

### **Series: Between a Rock and a Hard Place**

**May 16, 2021**

### **Revelation 6-7**

#### I. **Structure of Revelation**

- A. **Revelation 1:19** (NASB95) — 19 “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.”
1. **Have seen**
    - a. Vision of Christ in Chapter 1
  2. **Are**
    - a. Current state of 7 churches
  3. **After these things**
    - a. **Revelation 4:1** (NASB95) — 1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place **after these things.**”
    - b. Chapters 4-22
- B. **Theme**
1. **Jesus Christ is coming**
    - a. Tribes of earth will mourn over Him
    - b. Eschatological triumph of Christ over the anti-Christian forces of evil in the world and in the heavenly realms
  2. **Purpose – encourage the churches under great pressure**
    - a. Series: Between Rock and a Hard Place
- C. How is this purpose accomplished?
1. **Four visions**
    - a. **“In the Spirit”**
  2. **Revelation 1:9–10**
    - a. First vision
      - (1) The glorified Christ
      - (2) The messages to the seven churches
  3. **Revelation 4:1–2**
    - a. Second vision
      - (1) The heavenly vision
      - (2) The tribulation
  4. **Revelation 17:1–3**
    - a. Third vision
      - (1) The mystery of Babylon
      - (2) Judgment of Babylon

- (3) Final triumph and consummation
- 5. Revelation 21:9–10
  - a. Fourth vision
    - (1) The New Jerusalem
- D. Structure of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vision
  - 1. Chapter 4 – Almighty God on His throne
  - 2. Chapter 5 – Lion and Lamb
  - 3. 6.1-8.5 – Seven Seals
    - a. Rider – white horse; conqueror
    - b. Rider – red horse; takes peace from earth
    - c. Rider – black horse; wheat and barley for denarius (famine)
    - d. Rider – ashen horse; death with Hades close behind
    - e. Martyrs; “how long”; white robes; told to wait until other martyrs
    - f. Earthquake – sun darkened, moon turned to blood; great people afraid
      - (1) 144,000 sealed
      - (2) Great multitude in white robes
    - g. Silence; angels given trumpets; prayers of saints; thunder, lightning, earthquake; no real content

## II. The First Six Seals

- A. Revelation 6:1–11 (NASB95) —
  - 1. 1 Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, “Come.”
  - 2. 2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.
  - 3. 3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come.”
  - 4. 4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.
  - 5. 5 When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, “Come.” I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.
  - 6. 6 And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine.”
  - 7. 7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come.”
  - 8. 8 I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.
  - 9. 9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;

10. 10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”
11. 11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

B. **General pattern**

1. **Increasing difficulty**
  - a. Human society
  - b. Nature
2. **Brief period of extreme tribulation**
  - a. Especially seen in trumpets and bowls
  - b. Seem to be included in the 7<sup>th</sup> seal
    - (1) 7<sup>th</sup> seal has no content
    - (2) Book would be open
    - (3) Trumpets and bowls are the contents of the book
3. **The end**

C. Cf Olivet Discourse – Matthew 24; Mark 13

1. Mark 13.5-6 – false messiahs
2. Mark 13.7-8a – war
3. Mark 13.8b – famine, natural disaster
4. Mark 13.9-13 – persecution, martyrdom
5. Mark 13.14-20 – desecration, persecution, tribulation (shortened)
6. Mark 13.21-23 – false messiahs
7. Mark 13.24-25 – cosmic catastrophes
8. Mark 13.26-27 – second coming
  - a. Gathering of the elect

D. **The Four Horsemen**

1. No debate about riders 2-4
  - a. 2 = war
  - b. 3 = scarcity leading to famine
  - c. 4 = death
2. Great deal of debate about rider 1
  - a. Militarism in general (cf war in particular in seal #2)
  - b. False Messiah
3. Problems with both views
  - a. Something different cf other horsemen
    - (1) No woes!
  - b. White color
    - (1) Cf vision of Christ
  - c. **Revelation 19:11–16** (NASB95) —
    - (1) 11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, **a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True**, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

- (2) 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.
- (3) 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.
- (4) 14 And **the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.**
- (5) 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.
- (6) 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

- d. White horse
- e. Diadems on head
- f. Every other place in Revelation, white always refers to Christ or to His servants
  - (1) 1.14 – Vision of Christ; head and hair white like white wool
  - (2) 2.17 – Overcomers given white stone
  - (3) 3.4-5 – Those in Sardis who haven't soiled their garments walk with Christ in white; Overcomers given white garments
  - (4) 3.18 – Those in Laodicea who would buy gold refined by fire, receive white garments
  - (5) 4.4 – Elders wear white garments
  - (6) 6.11 – Martyrs (bond-servants) given white robes
  - (7) 7.9ff – Great multitude of redeemed clothed in white; they'd been washed white in the blood of the Lamb
  - (8) 14.14 – One like son of man, coming to reap, sitting on white cloud
  - (9) 19.14 – Armies in heaven, wear white, ride white horses
  - (10) 20.11 – throne on which Christ sits for final judgment is the Great White Throne

4. **1<sup>st</sup> Horseman – has to do with Christ**

- a. But not time for Him to return!
  - (1) Has to do with the proclamation of the gospel of Christ
  - (2) **Matthew 28:20** (NASB95) — 20 "...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, **I am with you always**, even to the end of the age."
  - (3) Jesus promises His presence as we evangelize
- b. Color = white
- c. No woes
- d. Cf Olivet Discourse
  - (1) Does talk about false Messiahs

- (2) Also talks about something else not included in the traditional view of the seals
    - (3) **Mark 13:10** (NASB95) — 10 “The gospel must first be preached to all the nations.”
    - (4) **Matthew 24:14** (NASB95) — 14 “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.”
  - 5. **1<sup>st</sup> Horseman has bow – symbol of divine victories**
    - a. **Habakkuk 3:9** (NASB95) — 9 Your bow was made bare, The rods of chastisement were sworn. Selah. You cleaved the earth with rivers.
      - (1) **Habakkuk 3:13** (NASB95) — 13 You went forth for the salvation of Your people, For the salvation of Your anointed. You struck the head of the house of the evil To lay him open from thigh to neck. Selah.
    - b. **Isaiah 41:2** (NASB95) — 2 “Who has aroused one from the east Whom He calls in righteousness to His feet? He delivers up nations before him And subdues kings. He makes them like dust with his sword, As the wind-driven chaff with his bow.”
    - c. **Isaiah 49:2–3** (NASB95) — 2 “He has made My mouth like a sharp sword, In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me; And He has also made Me a select arrow, He has hidden Me in His quiver. 3 He said to Me, “You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory.”
    - d. **Zechariah 9:13** (NASB95) — 13 For I will bend Judah as My bow, I will fill the bow with Ephraim. And I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece; And I will make you like a warrior’s sword.
  - 6. **Crown**
    - a. Crown of victory in contest, rather than royalty
    - b. Gospel goes forth to conquer; will win its victories
- E. **Significance**
  - 1. We don’t realize that dimension of the gospel
  - 2. When we evangelize, we set out to conquer
    - a. Break down enemy strongholds
    - b. Gain spiritual victories where Satan used to control lives
  - 3. Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe
  - 4. Doesn’t conquer without difficulty
    - a. Context will be terrible
    - b. Persecution will be rampant
    - c. Believers will actually die for their faith
    - d. Both Olivet and Revelation agree on that
  - 5. But the gospel will have its victories
- F. The next time you evangelize, imagine who goes with you
  - 1. Christ

2. Riding on a white horse
3. Victor's crown on His head
4. Bow cocked and ready to destroy an enemy stronghold
5. Go out and conquer in the name of Christ!

G. **Revelation 6:12–17** (NASB95) —

1. 12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood;
2. 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.
3. 14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.
4. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains;
5. 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;
6. 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and **who is able to stand?**”

III. **Who is Able to Stand?**

A. **Revelation 7:1–3** (NASB95) —

1. 1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.
2. 2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,
3. 3 saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed **the bond-servants of our God** on their foreheads.”
4. Why are the bond-servants of God able to stand?
  - a. Sealed on their foreheads

B. **Two groups** mentioned in this chapter

1. **Revelation 7:4–8** (NASB95) —
  - a. 4 And I heard the number of those who were **sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand** sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:
  - b. 5 From the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand,
  - c. 6 from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand,
  - d. 7 from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand,
  - e. 8 from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of

Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.

2. **144,000**
    - a. Sealed
    - b. From every tribe of the sons of Israel
  3. **Revelation 7:9–17** (NASB95) —
    - a. 9 After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;
    - b. 10 and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”
    - c. 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,
    - d. 12 saying, “Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”
    - e. 13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?”
    - f. 14 I said to him, “My lord, you know.”
    - g. And he said to me, “**These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation**, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
    - h. 15 “For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them.
    - i. 16 “They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat;
    - j. 17 for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”
  4. **Great multitude**
    - a. Can’t be counted
    - b. Every nation, tribe, people, tongue
- C. **Same or Different?**
1. Different groups, right?
    - a. Is there anybody who thinks they are the same group?
    - b. I do!
- D. Why do I think they are the same?
1. Problems with the list of tribes
    - a. Actual tribes of Israel
      - (1) Reuben

- (2) Simeon
  - (3) Levi
  - (4) Judah
  - (5) Zebulun
  - (6) Issachar
  - (7) Dan
  - (8) Gad
  - (9) Asher
  - (10) Naphtali
  - (11) Joseph
  - (12) Benjamin
- b. Tribes mentioned when the land is paramount (Ezekiel 48, restoration)
- (1) Reuben
  - (2) Simeon
  - (3) ~~Levi~~
  - (4) Judah
  - (5) Zebulun
  - (6) Issachar
  - (7) Dan
  - (8) Gad
  - (9) Asher
  - (10) Naphtali
  - (11) ~~Joseph~~
    - (a) Ephraim
    - (b) Manasseh
  - (12) Benjamin
- c. List in Revelation 7
- (1) Reuben
  - (2) Simeon
  - (3) Levi
  - (4) Judah – mentioned first
  - (5) Zebulun
  - (6) Issachar
  - (7) ~~Dan~~
  - (8) Gad
  - (9) Asher
  - (10) Naphtali
  - (11) Joseph
    - (a) ~~Ephraim~~
    - (b) Manasseh
  - (12) Benjamin
- d. Perhaps use of “Israel” is symbolic, not literal
2. Number is clearly symbolic
- a. Only Jehovah’s Witnesses, Worldwide Church of God, Seventh



- Day Adventists believe in a literal 144,000
- b. Number stands for something
    - (1) One suggestion – 12X12X10X10 – **the fullness of all God's people**; people of God in tribes of 12 multiplied by multiples of the number of perfection or fullness (10)
  3. Chapter answers the question, “Who is able to stand?”
    - a. Stand against the wrath of God?
    - b. Answer – 7.1-3 – those who are sealed
      - (1) Called bond-servants of God (not Israel, per se)
    - c. Who are the bond-servants who are sealed?
      - (1) **144,000**
        - (a) **Sealed on earth**
      - (2) **Great multitude**
        - (a) **In heaven**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb (result of having been sealed)
        - (b) Identified as having come out of the great tribulation (possibly by martyrdom?)
  4. Coup de gras for seeing these two groups as the same – structure of the chapter compared to what we have already seen in this vision
    - a. Remember Chapter 5
      - (1) “Who is worthy to open the book and break its seals?”
      - (2) John weeps because no one is able
      - (3) Elder: “Stop weeping; ... the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah... has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals”
      - (4) John hears “the Lion from the tribe of Judah”
      - (5) John looks
      - (6) “I saw... a Lamb standing, as if slain”
      - (7) John hears “Lion”; he looks and sees “Lamb”
    - b. Chapter 7
      - (1) An angel cries out to other angels, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God...”
      - (2) John hears 144,000 – from the tribes of Israel
      - (3) Then John looks
      - (4) “I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the throne and before the Lamb...”
    - c. Just like Chapter 5
      - (1) John hears one thing; looks and sees another thing; they are the same thing
      - (2) He hears 144,000 of sons of Israel; he looks and sees a great multitude from every people, tongue, tribe and nation
  5. **Two visions of the church**
    - a. One sealed on the earth, on the threshold of the tribulation

- b. The other having passed through the tribulation, victorious, robes washed in the blood of the Lamb
  - c. The church militant
  - d. The church victorious
- E. Church, then, is spiritual Israel; integral connection between Israel and the church
1. Problem if you think the church is raptured out before the tribulation
    - a. I'm still looking for a definitive passage in NT
    - b. That theology is made in America (Britain)
    - c. Purpose: This Revelation was meant to encourage churches under great pressure, persecution, martyrdom (Between a Rock and a Hard Place)
  2. **Luke 21:16–18** (NASB95) — 16 “But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, 17 and you will be hated by all because of My name. 18 “Yet not a hair of your head will perish.”
  3. **Two dimensions of the tribulation**
    - a. **Wrath of God**
      - (1) Believers are sealed, protected from wrath
    - b. **Persecution** of the Beast against the bond-servants of God
      - (1) Believers will feel the effects of the anger of the Beast
- F. **The Church and Israel**
1. Spiritual Israel?
    - a. **Galatians 6:16** (NASB95) — 16 And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.
    - b. **Galatians 3:29** (NASB95) — 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.
    - c. **Romans 4:11** (NASB95) — 11 and he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,
    - d. **Romans 2:28–29** (NASB95) — 28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. 29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.
    - e. **Philippians 3:3** (NASB95) — 3 for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh...
    - f. **Ephesians 2:11–22** (NASB95) —
      - (1) 11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands— 12 remember that **you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel,**

**and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.**

- (2) 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
- (3) 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.
- (4) 17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.
- (5) 19 So then **you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.**

- g. John in Revelation is able to make the same kind of distinction
  - (1) **Revelation 2:9** (NASB95) — 9 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.
  - (2) **Revelation 3:9** (NASB95) — 9 'Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.'
- h. John hears the bond-servants of God described in a way that identifies them as Israel
  - (1) But he sees the bond-servants as people from every nation

## G. **Implications**

- 1. Possible that you would go through the tribulation
  - a. If not through the great tribulation, some tribulation
  - b. Must know that not a hair of your head will perish; you will be saved from the wrath of God
    - (1) Because you've been sealed!
  - c. That's the main purpose of this book – encourage churches under great pressure
    - (1) Christ is coming again
    - (2) Terrible times will lead up to His coming

- (3) He will come to complete your salvation
  - (4) He will come to judge wickedness and evil
2. You may say, "I want to know that I won't go through the tribulation"
- a. I say, "I want to know that if and when I do go through the tribulation, I will eventually stand before the throne worshipping the Lamb"
  - b. "I want to know that my robe is washed white in the blood of the Lamb"
  - c. "I want to know that the One who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over me"
  - d. "I want to know that I will hunger no more, thirst no more; that the sun will beat down on me no more, no more heat"
  - e. "I want to know that the Lamb will be my shepherd who will guide me to the springs of the water of life"
  - f. "I want to know that God will wipe away every tear from my eyes"
3. In the final analysis, it doesn't matter what your eschatology is
- a. I would hope that you would want to know the same things whether you go through the tribulation or not