

Things to Come

#10 The Seals: Part 1

(Rev. 6:1-8)

I. Introduction

The scene now shifts from a heavenly focus on praise for God the father and Jesus Christ to an earthly focus on the coming judgment.

A. A Word About the Sovereignty of God:

Make no mistake; these awful judgments are coming from the hand of God. Throughout the scripture, God indicates over and over again that He is in charge. His ways are not our ways (Isa. 55:8).

He brought the trouble upon Job (Job 42:11). He is the source of the disaster outlined by Daniel (Dan. 9:14). He hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 7:3). When Rehoboam made it harder on the people of God, it was clear that the turn of events was from the hand of God (I Kings 12:15). The Lord sent Babylon to destroy Judah (II Kings 24:2-4). He made the disciples get into the boat on the Sea of Galilee knowing that it would be a very difficult night for them. (Matt.14:22). And so on. Tough "stuff" does occasionally come directly from the hand of our Lord.

B. The seals parallel the signs (of the approaching end times) outlined by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse. (See Matt. 24:1-35, Mark 13:1-37 and Luke 21:5-33)

1. "The beginning of birth pangs": False messiahs, wars, famine, earthquakes, death etc. –THE SEALS FIT INTO THIS PERIOD OF TIME
2. "The great tribulation": ("Jacob's Trouble"-Jeremiah 30:7) Generally recognized as the last three years of the tribulation period
3. The period "immediately after the distress of those days" (Matthew 24:29-30): Just prior to Christ's second coming.

C. As the Lamb breaks each seal, what is written there begins to be acted out. John hears one of the four living creatures shout "Come" and the first of four horsemen appear (The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse).

D. Seals 1-4 are distinct from seals 5-7. Seals 1-4 involve riders on horseback. (Zechariah has a similar vision-see Zech. 1:8 and 6:1-8. His horsemen and chariots are also instruments of divine judgment. However, his colors are associated with points on a compass.) Note that horses in the Bible are associated with things like victory, majesty and conquest. (See Job 39:19-25 and Jer. 6:23)

- E. These first four horsemen represent powers that are given them over the earth. These are general judgments that will fall on mankind-likely during the first three years of the tribulation. This is a time of unprecedented "woe."

II. The First Seal (6:1-2)

- A. A white horse-Indicating a time of false peace
- B. The rider
 1. Some believe that the rider is Christ. They see a parallel to the rider in Rev. 19. But the only real similarity is that they are both mounted on a white horse. The setting is quite different (Ch. 6: conquest/victory. Ch. 19: retribution). Note also that the Lamb (Christ) is breaking the seal. It is unlikely that He would also be the rider on the first horse.
 2. Others believe that the rider is the Antichrist or at least a force or power associated with his evil. (My view)
 3. He carries a bow but no arrows, insinuating that at this time his victories will be bloodless. He will conquer using cunning and deceit.

III. The Second Seal (6:3-4)

- A. The red horse-Indicating war
- B. The rider is the antichrist. After the period of false peace, the true nature of the antichrist will be revealed. He will resort to war. (Daniel 8:24)
- C. He carries a "great sword" (A short sword used by the Romans in battle. It was also a kind of weapon that a sneaky assassin might use.)

IV. The Third Seal (6:5-6)

- A. The black horse-Indicating famine.

See Lam. 5:10 and Matt. 24:7. Famine is used in the Bible as a means of judgment. See also Lev. 26:26, II Kings 8:1, Isa. 3:1
- B. The rider carries a pair of scales as a picture of rationing out supplies. These are starvation wages.
- C. Notice the voice that declares the devastation: Christ in the midst of the 4 living creatures. This is a direct judgment from Him.

V. The Fourth Seal (6:7-8)

- A. The ashen or pale colored horse-Indicating death.

"Chloros": a pale yellow green. We get the word "chlorophyll" from this term. It conveys a decomposing corpse.

- B. The rider is named "Death." "Hades" was following him. Hades is likely representing the grave or the gravedigger. These two are paired together in Rev. 1:18 and 20:13-14.
- C. They were given authority to kill one fourth of the population on earth. At today's world population, that would be approximately 1.5 billion deaths.
- D. Death will come from:
 - 1. The sword (war)-this is a different sword. It is a larger, broader and more barbaric weapon.
 - 2. Famine.
 - 3. Pestilence –a broad term that could include natural disasters, the effects of modern chemical or biological weapons etc.
 - 4. Wild Beasts-one commentator suggest that these are rats that would thrive in an environment of millions of rotting corpses.

VI. So What?

Let's remember that Aslan is not tame!

"It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10:31)