

The Seals of Revelation

A short Bible study from The Son Of Man Daniel 7

In Revelation 5 a scroll sealed with seven seals is held in the right hand of Him who sits on the throne, and only the Lamb is worthy to open it. As each seal is broken, John sees events on earth. Read Revelation 5–8 before you begin.

They sang a new song, saying, “You are worthy to take the book and to open its seals, for you were killed, and bought us for God with your blood out of every tribe, language, people, and nation,

Revelation 5:9 (WEB)

1. The first four seals: the four horsemen

A white horse whose rider goes out to conquer (6:1–2); a red horse, and peace is taken from the earth (6:3–4); a black horse, with food scarce and costly (6:5–6); a pale horse, Death, with sword, famine and plague (6:7–8). Jesus described the same things as the beginning:

You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you aren’t troubled, for all this must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be famines, plagues, and earthquakes in various places. But all these things are the beginning of birth pains.

Matthew 24:6–8 (WEB)

2. The fifth seal: the martyrs

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been killed for the Word of God, and for the testimony of the Lamb which they had. They cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, Master, the holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” A long white robe was given to each of them. They were told that they should rest yet for a while, until their fellow servants and their brothers, who would also be killed even as they were, should complete their course.

Revelation 6:9–11 (WEB)

God's people are suffering for His word during the seals. They are told to wait "until their fellow servants and their brothers ... should complete their course".

3. The sixth seal: the signs in the heavens

I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became as blood. The stars of the sky fell to the earth, like a fig tree dropping its unripe figs when it is shaken by a great wind. The sky was removed like a scroll when it is rolled up. Every mountain and island was moved out of its place. The kings of the earth, the princes, the commanding officers, the rich, the strong, and every slave and free person, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. They told 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, for the great day of his wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Revelation 6:12–17 (WEB)

These are the very signs Jesus said would follow the tribulation (Matthew 24:29) and which Joel said come “*before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes*” (Joel 2:31, WEB) (Joel 2:31). The world itself recognises that the day of wrath has arrived.

4. Between the sixth and seventh seals: the gathering

Before the seventh seal is opened, God's servants are sealed (7:1–8), and John sees a great multitude in heaven:

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could count, out of every nation and of all tribes, peoples, and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.

Revelation 7:9 (WEB)

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 7:14 (KJV)

They have **come out of great tribulation**. This matches Jesus' order in Matthew 24:29–31: tribulation, then the heavenly signs, then the trumpet and the gathering of His chosen ones. We believe this is where the rapture belongs: after the sixth seal and before the seventh.

5. The seventh seal: the trumpets of wrath

When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

Revelation 8:1–2 (WEB)

Only now do the seven trumpets sound (Revelation 8–11), followed by the seven bowls, “*for in them God's wrath is finished*” (Revelation 15:1, WEB) (Revelation 15:1). God's people are not appointed to wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9), and they are gathered before it falls, but not before the Antichrist is revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Questions for reflection

1. Compare Revelation 6:1–8 with Matthew 24:4–8. What do you notice?
2. What does the fifth seal (6:9–11) teach about suffering for Christ?
3. Where does the great multitude of Revelation 7:9–17 come from, according to verse 14?
4. Why does it matter whether the Church expects to be gathered before or after the Antichrist is revealed?

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