

THE SEALS AND THE SAINTS

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First, let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

INTRODUCTION:

The Tribulation begins after the church-age believers are taken to heaven in the Rapture. During these seven years of tribulation, God pours out His wrath upon the earth for its great wickedness. These Tribulation judgments begin in Revelation 6 when the Lord Jesus Christ breaks open six of the seven seals on the scroll which He had received in Revelation 5. This scroll is the title deed to the earth and all its inhabitants, which rightfully belongs to Christ. Although the judgments associated with the first six seals are weighty, the judgments that follow the breaking of the seventh seal are much greater and will increase in intensity until the end of the Tribulation. All of the judgments associated with the first six seals occur in the first half of the seven-year Tribulation.

During the first half of the Tribulation, Antichrist will pursue his goal of world power, which he will attempt by ruthless means. He will kill many believers (6:9-11), who will be saved after the Rapture of the church believers. 144,000 Israelites also will be saved after the Rapture, but they will be sealed by God in the middle of the Tribulation (7:4-8), so Antichrist cannot kill them. However, an innumerable multitude of Gentile believers will be martyred during the last half of the Tribulation (7:9-17). Those who receive Christ after the Rapture will suffer and many will die at the hands of Antichrist during the Tribulation.

AIM OF THE LESSON:

To help sinners receive Jesus as Savior now before the Rapture so they will not suffer in the Tribulation.

OUTLINE OF THE LESSON (use the Study Notes to add to this lesson plan as the Spirit leads you):

I. The Seals (6:1-17)

A. Deceit: Seal One (6:1-2)

When the first seal is opened, Antichrist goes forth on a white horse to conquer the world. The white horse is symbolic of the peaceful means that Antichrist uses to bring the world under his control. A victor's crown (a garland, not a diadem) is on his head to indicate his success in this regard and a bow is in his hand to encourage the nations to make peace with him. He is so deceitful that not only will the Gentiles be deceived and follow after him, but even the Jews will put their trust in him. The Jews, who rejected Jesus as their true Messiah, will make a covenant with him for seven years (Dan 9:27; John 5:43). A week of years is seven years.

B. Devastation: Seal Two (6:3-4)

When the second seal is opened, a rider goes forth on a red horse to cause men to kill one another. The red horse is symbolic of the great amount of blood that will be shed during this war that is initiated by Antichrist in his quest for world dominion. When his peace initiatives do not bring all nations under his control, he will turn to a brutal war that will destroy the power of the nations that attempt to resist him.

C. Dearth: Seal Three (6:5-6)

When the third seal is opened, a rider goes forth on a black horse with a pair of scales in his hands. The black horse is symbolic of a shortage of food for the people caused by this war. Food will be so scarce that it will be carefully weighed in small amounts for large amounts of money. Inflation and famine follow devastating wars. Fields that usually produce the crops are disrupted by war machines and workers that usually harvest the crops are fighting in the armies or are being killed in the battles.

D. Death: Seal Four (6:7-8)

When the fourth seal is opened, a rider goes forth on a pale (yellow-green) horse to lead Death and Hell through the earth. Hades is translated Hell, but it usually refers to the grave. Saved and unsaved will die in this war (cf. 6:9). This horse is symbolic of the death of one fourth of the world's population that are killed by the sword, hunger, pestilence and the beasts of the earth. If the population is seven billion at that time, 1,750,000,000 will die. This is

TEACHER'S LESSON PLAN

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equal to all the people that live in the Western Hemisphere and all of Europe including all of Russia and Turkey. This is the first gruesome result of Antichrist's conquest of the nations for global power.

E. Disciples: Seal Five (6:9-11)

When the fifth seal is opened, John sees the souls of Christ's disciples that are killed during the first half of the Tribulation (3½ years). They are under the golden altar in heaven, which symbolizes the place of prayers to God. They ask God how long it would be before their blood would be avenged. They are promised that they will be answered in due time. This promise is the judgment of the fifth seal. In the meantime they are told to be patient until other believers are killed in the Tribulation. White robes are given to them to indicate that their salvation is secure. These people will become believers after the church believers are taken to Heaven.

F. Doomsday: Seal Six (6: 12-17)

When the sixth seal is opened, great signs appear in the heavens and on the earth and the wicked realize that the wrath of the Lamb has come upon them. They flee to the caves and call for the mountains to fall on them to hide them from His face and from the great day of His wrath (16-17). Since they speak of this event as the great day of His wrath, it is understood that this refers to the last 3½ years of the Tribulation, which begins when the seventh seal is opened (8:1). That means this event is at the middle of the Tribulation. The opening of the six seals relates to Antichrist's war and its bloodshed and death during the first half of the Tribulation, when God allows Antichrist to cause the destruction of a fourth of the people on earth. The opening of the last seal relates to Christ's wrath when He destroys Antichrist's kingdom during the last half of the Tribulation. This is known as the great Tribulation due to the greater judgments under the trumpets and the bowls (Dan 12:1).

APPLICATION: Do not be fooled by men who promise to give peace and prosperity to the world or to any country. No man in politics or religion can give peace or prosperity to anyone other than Jesus Christ. Not even Antichrist will be able to do it when he has control of the whole earth. Only Christ can give peace and prosperity. Trust Him now and you will have peace in your heart. Trust Him now and you will be taken to Heaven in the Rapture before the Tribulation begins. If you do not accept Christ now, there is little hope that you will do it when it will cost your life. If you do not accept God's grace, plan to receive His wrath.

II. The Saints (7:1-17)

A. Defended Ones (7:1-8)

Near the middle of the Tribulation, 144,000 Israelites, who are faithful servants of God, will receive the seal of God in their foreheads (7:3). This sealing takes place before the first trumpet judgment at the beginning of the great Tribulation (compare Rev 7:1-3 with 8:1-7). These Israelites are willing to lay down their lives as martyrs for Christ, if needed (cf 12:11). They will preach the kingdom of God throughout the world during of the Tribulation (Mt 24:14). These servants are chosen so that 12,000 come from each of twelve tribes in Israel. They meet with Christ on Mt Zion at the end of the Tribulation (14:1-5).

B. Distressed Ones (7:9-17)

During the Tribulation there will be multitudes that will be saved from all nations. No doubt, these will be saved through the witness of the 144,000 Israelites. Most of these that are saved will be martyred during the great Tribulation (7:14). John sees these souls, who had been hounded and distressed on earth, rejoicing and praising God in heaven. They had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; now John sees them serving God day and night with the promise that they will never again suffer persecution but have endless delight in His presence (7:14-17).

APPLICATION: Not many will live through the Tribulation. Even those who trust Christ during this time will be martyred. Knowing this terrible time is coming, God has graciously warned us so that we can receive Jesus as our Savior now and escape this day of His wrath. Have you made that decision? God wants you to do it, but you must make that decision for yourself.

SEEK THE LORD NOW AND BE SAVED FROM HIS WRATH