

Segment IV**The Seven Seals Examined****With God, Timing Is Everything**

No doubt you have heard it said, “With God, timing is everything.” This statement is particularly poignant in this study on the seven seals. If the Book of Life were prematurely opened, God would not be able to “prove” beyond doubt that He does not use His divine powers of omniscience and omnipotence to manipulate His children and the outcome of history. So, God sealed the Book of Life with seven seals to *prove* at an appointed time that He does not manipulate the choices of His children. His children are truly free to make up their own minds; therefore, we are completely accountable for our actions. We can choose to submit to God’s government or we can choose to rebel. With these thoughts in mind, consider how timing affects the following events:

1. The Book of Life was written *before* life was created.
2. Jesus was found worthy to receive the Book of Life in 1798.
3. The first seal was broken in 1798 and the breaking of the seventh seal will occur at the end of the thousand years.
4. The contents of the Book of Life will be revealed *at the end* of the thousand years.

There is a close relationship between the contents of the Book of Life and the breaking of the seven seals. The Book of Life contains a prerecorded history of life, and the breaking of each seal does two things. First, a new revelation about Jesus occurs as each seal is broken. Second, as each seal is broken, God’s children move closer (both chronologically and intellectually) to the resolution of the sin problem. So, what new truths about Jesus have been discovered since 1798? Before I respond to this question, please review the first four seals.

Seal #1 – White Horse

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts [the one that had the face of a lion] saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.” (Revelation 6:1, 2, KJV, insertion mine)

Seal #2 – Red Horse

“And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast [the one that had the face of an ox] say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.” (Revelation 6:3, 4, KJV, insertion mine)

Seal #3 – Black Horse

“And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast [the one having the face of a man] say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.” (Revelation 6:5, 6, KJV, insertion mine)

Seal #4 – Pale or Dappled Horse

“And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast [the one that had the face of an eagle] say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the Earth.” (Revelation 6:7, 8, KJV, insertion mine)

These eight verses speak volumes with very few words. (If only I could write the same way. Smile.) The first four seals describe four tasks assigned to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is represented as four living creatures, and the four living creatures are represented as four horsemen. These representations of the same thing enable us to understand the diverse work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

As Jesus breaks each of the first four seals, He gives a command to the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit invites John to “come and see” His actions. Many people have heard of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, but their understanding has been distorted by preachers and artists who have painted scary and grotesque pictures of the four horsemen. Few people have any idea why four horsemen are part of this vision, even though the solution to this mystery is quite simple.

Royal Horses and Royal Horsemen

In ancient times, there were no telephones, faxes, satellites, high speed internet connections, televisions, or radios. In those days, kings

dispatched “couriers” on fast horses throughout their kingdoms to deliver laws, edicts, bulletins, political directives and other information that was pertinent to the administration of the kingdom. The person in charge of the couriers lived in or near the king’s residence so the king could dispatch royal couriers at a moment’s notice. The king’s commands could have no delay. Royal couriers rode special horses that had been bred and trained for stamina because the king’s provinces could be hundreds of miles away from the throne.

For example, during the time of Queen Esther, King Artaxerxes naively issued a decree which allowed the Persians – at an appointed time – to kill all of the Jews and take their possessions. (Esther 3:9-11) But, the queen learned of the plot and she cleverly exposed wicked Haman. Haman had masterminded the plan because he hated the Jews, especially her uncle, Mordecai. When King Artaxerxes discovered that he had been duped into granting a decree to kill all of his wife’s people, he had Haman hung on the gallows which Haman had prepared for Mordecai. The king asked Mordecai to write an emergency edict which was sent to all the Jews throughout his kingdom, notifying them that they were to take up arms and defend themselves. **“Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes, sealed the dispatches with the king’s signet ring, and sent them by mounted couriers, *who rode fast horses especially bred for the king.* The king’s edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate any armed force of any nationality or province that might attack them and their women and children; and to plunder the property of their enemies The couriers, riding the royal horses, raced out, spurred on by the king’s command”** (Esther 8:10-14, italics mine) The parallel should be obvious. As horsemen were dispatched from the throne room of King Artaxerxes, four horsemen are dispatched from God’s throne as Jesus breaks the first four seals. God used the imagery of horses and riders because this was how couriers were used in John’s day. In short, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse represent the Holy Spirit who is sent on four missions.

According to Rule Three of apocalyptic prophecy, the use of parallel language within the Bible is highly important. Parallel language helps to clarify the intended meaning of language found in Revelation. As you read the following passage, notice the number and color of the horses. The horses in Zechariah 6 resemble the horses in Revelation 6. The prophet Zechariah wrote, **“I looked up again – and there before me were four chariots coming out from between two mountains –**

mountains of bronze! The first chariot had red horses, the second black, the third white, and the fourth dappled – all of them powerful. I asked the angel who was speaking to me, ‘What are these, my lord?’ The angel answered me, ‘These are the four spirits of Heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world. The one with the black horses is going toward the north country, the one with the white horses toward the west, and the one with the dappled horses toward the south.’ When the powerful horses went out, they were straining to go throughout the Earth. And he said, ‘Go throughout the Earth!’ So they went throughout the Earth. Then he called to me, ‘Look, those going toward the north country have given my spirit rest in the land of the north.’ ” (Zechariah 6:1-8)

Around 510 B.C., God gave the prophet Zechariah this vision showing how His will is accomplished on Earth. Zechariah saw God send out the four spirits, who stood before His throne, into Earth. The four spirits are the four living creatures. They were represented to Zechariah as four horses going toward the north, south, east and west, and in this vision, their task was to restore peace on Earth. Zechariah particularly noted the horse that went toward “the north country” because this was the direction from which God’s wrath came against Israel. (See Chapter 4; Isaiah 41; Leviticus 26:24, 25; Jeremiah 1:14; 15:3,12; 51:48; Ezekiel 1:4; Zechariah 1:19-21.) At other times, God sends a spirit of peace throughout Earth and the Holy Spirit is the means through which the will of God is accomplished. For example, God raised up Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem because of its degeneracy, and after Israel had served seventy years in captivity, the Holy Spirit moved Cyrus to set Israel free at just the right time. **“In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing.”** (2 Chronicles 36:22, italics mine)

Even though Zechariah 6 does not mention riders on the horses, the point remains that the four living creatures who stand before the throne of God were represented to Zechariah as horses with the same four colors found in Revelation 6. Understand that the Holy Spirit is not actually four living creatures or four horses. God creates these caricatures of the Holy Spirit so that human beings can understand something about divine processes and powers that exist outside the realm of human understanding and ability.

Four Horns and Four Craftsmen

Perhaps one more sample of parallel language will make the connection between the four living creatures and the Holy Spirit more clear. Notice these verses from a vision recorded in Zechariah 1: **“Then I looked up – and there before me were four horns! I asked the angel who was speaking to me, ‘What are these?’ He answered me, ‘These are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.’ Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen. I asked, ‘What are these [four craftsmen] coming to do?’ He answered, ‘These are the [four] horns that scattered Judah so that no one could raise his head, but the [four] craftsmen have come to terrify them [the enemies of Jerusalem] and throw down these horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter its people.’ ”** (Zechariah 1:18-21, insertions mine) This vision reveals an awesome truth. The four horns that brought down Jerusalem was not King Nebuchadnezzar. The four horns (or four powers) that brought down Jerusalem were the four living creatures. The Holy Spirit aroused King Nebuchadnezzar to accomplish God’s will and the Holy Spirit delivered Jerusalem into the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar! (Daniel 5:18, 19) God told Jeremiah, **“ ‘I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin.’ ”** (Jeremiah 25:9)

It is interesting that God calls Nebuchadnezzar “my servant” in Jeremiah 25:9 even though the king did not recognize the God of Israel as the Most High God until many years later. The Holy Spirit punished God’s people by arousing Nebuchadnezzar, and the angel told Zechariah that four craftsmen would rebuild the city. In other words, God told the Holy Spirit to raise a destroyer for Jerusalem, and He did. Then, God told the Holy Spirit to set His people free, and He did. Cyrus issued the decree right on time! (2 Chronicles 36:22) Then, God told the Holy Spirit to raise a builder so that Jerusalem might be rebuilt, and He did. **“So he said to me, ‘This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel [the rebuilder]: ‘Not by might nor by [human] power, but by my Spirit,’ [You will overcome the obstacles and rebuild the temple.] says the Lord Almighty. ‘What are you, O mighty mountain [of obstacles]? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground [and enable his success].’ ”** (Zechariah 4:6, 7, insertions mine)

Putting It Together

When we compare parallel language from the books of Esther and Zechariah with Revelation 6, the mystery of the four living creatures is easily resolved. The four living creatures represent the Holy Spirit. He is the omnipresent “Enabler” through whom the will of God is accomplished on Earth. Now we know *when* the Book of Life was written, *why* the Book of Life was written, who the four living creatures are, why the Holy Spirit is represented as four couriers on horseback, and when Jesus was found worthy to receive the Book of Life; now we can now examine the seven seals to learn how Jesus will resolve the sin problem and exonerate the government of God!

Seal #1 – White Horse – 1798 – The Salvation of Jesus Proclaimed

“I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.” (Revelation 6:1, 2) The English translation of these verses can mislead the reader. The Greek text indicates the horseman rode out of Heaven’s temple carrying a *toxon*,¹ that is, a winner’s ribbon, an ornamental bow made of fabric. The rider also carries a *stephanos*, a crown of laurel, or a crown of victory like an athlete would wear (the rider is not carrying a *diadema* which denotes authority or dominion). The Greek syntax also indicates the work of this horseman takes time and effort. Literally, the Greek says, “the rider went out overcoming that he might overcome.” What is the

¹ One highly respected authority, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament* by Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich says the Greek word, *toxon*, means a weapon, a bow for arrows. On the other hand, another respected authority, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* says that the Greek word #5115 means a bow made of fabric. Both meanings of *toxon* will fit into this scene of a rider bent on conquest. Apparently, the Holy Spirit rode out of Heaven’s temple to engage in a spiritual war – in a conquest to exalt Jesus as the Savior of the world. In this sense, a bow for arrows (although arrows are not mentioned in this passage) could be figuratively appropriate. On the other hand, Strong’s definition for *toxon* seems to fit better if we understand the bow is a “winner’s ribbon” offered to those who overcome the world through faith in Christ. I prefer the ribbon over a bow for arrows because the crown in this passage is a *stephanos* (Greek: a crown of victory) – not a *diadema* (Greek: a crown of authority).

Holy Spirit attempting to overcome? Would you believe the two greatest enemies of truth are arrogance and ignorance? According to Revelation 4:7, the first living creature had the face of a lion. As you will see, this face describes “the relentless conquest” of the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to the world. (See Numbers 23:24 for the characteristics of a lion.) The success of the Holy Spirit will be revealed at the Second Coming when a large number of saints “go marching in!”

Seven Campaigns

I like to think of the breaking of the seven seals as seven campaigns, with each campaign having a set of unique disclosures, processes, objectives and results. To win public office, politicians conduct political campaigns. A political campaign is *a process* which the candidate undertakes to win recognition and favor for himself. Politicians travel around the nation to be seen and heard. They make promises and ask voters to put their faith in them. In a similar way, the seven seals are seven unique campaigns that Jesus conducts to resolve the sin problem and exonerate God’s government. Jesus undertakes seven campaigns that dovetail into one grand climax. During these seven campaigns, Jesus is seeking recognition. He wants to be seen and heard. He wants to win the affection of the people of Earth because He alone can save us from the penalty and consequences of sin! Long ago, Jesus traveled to Earth to make a number of promises to the human race and He asks us to trust that He will fulfill His promises. Of course, there are several differences between putting faith in a politician and putting faith in Jesus. When we put faith in a politician, we believe that he will do good things *for* us. When we put our faith in Jesus, we believe that He will not only do good things for us, but He will also do good things *through* us.

After Jesus was found worthy to receive the Book of Life in 1798, He immediately broke the first seal. Because this world is in darkness about God, He initiated a campaign to overcome the arrogance and ignorance of this world. The first campaign is an offer of salvation and everyone who submits to the terms and conditions of His offer will be gathered up at the Second Coming. Jesus’ victory at the Second Coming will be bittersweet. Many people for whom Jesus died will not receive Him. Even though Jesus is not willing that anyone should perish (2 Peter 3:9), human beings have the power of choice.

Because of man’s arrogance and ignorance, Jesus is the most hated God on Earth today. The world hates Jesus because Jesus offends our carnal nature more than any other God. He has made claims that are just too

hard for non-Christians to swallow. Many so-called Christians would also reject the teachings of Jesus (if they knew them) because His demands are hard to accept. Even though Jesus is widely hated, He loves us and offers to save us from the penalty of sin. He understands our darkness, diversity, arrogance, ignorance, prejudice and paradigms, and in spite of these things, He loved each one of us enough to die for us. **“For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”** (Romans 5:10) The point is that Jesus will conduct seven campaigns to win as many souls as possible. These campaigns will carefully separate the sheep from the goats in every religious body, and in the end, Jesus will exonerate the government and reveal the love of God. Just as Jesus removed our guilt through His death, He will remove Lucifer’s reproach on the Father’s character by proving that Lucifer is a liar!

Root Problem

The seven seals are carefully laid campaigns that address certain problems and issues. Before we examine the first seal, a short review about man’s condition and position before God is necessary; otherwise, the first three seals may not mean as much to you as they should.

Adam and Eve were created in God’s image, but after they sinned, they lost the nature of God. (This is why we have to be born again – to receive God’s nature.) Instead of having a propensity for righteousness (like our Creator), they suddenly had a propensity for rebellion against God’s ways (like the devil). The curse of sin was conveyed to Cain, the first child of Adam and Eve. It is ironic that Lucifer was the first of God’s creation and Cain was the first of Adam’s creation. Jesus said of Lucifer, **“He was a murderer from the beginning.”** (John 8:44) What comparison can be drawn between these two murderers? Why does sin produce murderers? Murder is the only thing among mortals that resolves the question of authority. Sinners cannot tolerate anyone, including God, who constantly thwarts the demands of a self-seeking heart. Therefore, murder is sin’s solution to the question of sovereign authority.

When people justify murder in the name of God, their actions prove that Lucifer is their God. Jesus said to the Jews, **“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. . . .”** (John 8:44) Distorted views of God are formed in ignorance and defended by arrogance. History reveals that

more wars have been fought in the name of God than for any other reason. The root problem with religion is man's "egocentric view of God." Every religious system is both arrogant and ignorant, and these components can ruin an otherwise decent person. When pressed to its core belief, the egocentric view of God says, "My understanding of God and His will is better than your understanding of God and His will. My church has the truth about God and yours does not. My God is the greatest God and He is more powerful than your God. If you insult my God or my beliefs, I will defend my God by inflicting harm on you so that my God will not be diminished by an unbeliever. I know God best. My God is the only true God, and therefore, I will defend the name of God from infidels and blasphemers." These comments reflect pure ignorance and arrogance. The last resort of false religion is force. Any person would have to agree that a God who depends on human protection is very weak.

The population of the world has become very dense in some areas and because human beings have cherished ideas about God, religious tensions are erupting with increasing violence. It is very difficult for religiously diverse people to discuss their religious differences without denigrating each other. Egocentric religion causes people to look on others with contempt and hatred. Religion is a powerful force in the world and most people would rather die for their religion than change it. In fact, I have seen statistics indicating that less than five percent of the world's population changes religious systems. If this is true, it indicates that religion is the second most powerful force on Earth. Of course, the most powerful force on Earth is death.

We Cannot Hear Each Other

Can a Jew tell a Catholic the truth about God? Can a Moslem tell a Jew the truth about God? Can a Hindu tell a Baptist the truth about God? Can a Mormon tell a Jehovah's Witness about God? Of course not! Contrary to what evangelicals say, Jesus is not frustrated or distressed by man's religious diversity because He takes full responsibility for it. When He separated the people of Earth at the Tower of Babel, Jesus knew what He was doing and He foreknew the outcome of His actions. (Genesis 11:8; Acts 17:26, 27)

This section on the first seal includes these issues because the first seal is a campaign to rescue the sheep of God, and *we know from Scripture that there are sincere and honest people in every religious system on Earth.* (John 10:16; Romans 2:13-16; 3:29, 30) We also know there are wicked people in every religious system on Earth. The Bible indicates

the ratio is one-third sheep and two-thirds goats. (Zechariah 13:8, 9) Human beings cannot accurately read the motives of the heart; therefore, they cannot tell sheep from goats. (God alone knows our hearts. 1 Kings 8:39) Jesus began a campaign in 1798 that will ultimately allow the final generation to determine whether they are sheep or goats. This is interesting because Jesus does not judge who is a sheep and who is a goat during the Great Tribulation. Instead, a series of tests will determine the answer!

A person might ask, “Since God already knows the contents of our hearts, why does He insist on putting us through the test that is coming upon the whole world?” (Revelation 3:10) The answer is simple. How could Jesus condemn anyone to death on the basis of foreknowledge? Can you imagine Jesus saying to a wicked person at the Great White Throne judgment scene in Revelation 20, “Well, I could not save you because I knew what your choice would be if I tested you during the Great Tribulation?” Of course not. Jesus said, **“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”** (Revelation 22:12) Notice that Jesus does not reward people for what they believe. We will be rewarded for what we do because our faith is revealed by our actions. (James 2:26) Paul wrote, **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”** (2 Corinthians 5:10) Notice that Paul said we will receive our reward for things “done” instead of things “believed.” The point is that the inhabitants of Earth will be tested during the Great Tribulation, with the terms and conditions of salvation, because God’s generous offer is ours to accept or reject.

According to Revelation, the separation of sheep and goats will occur during the Great Tribulation. At the appointed time, Jesus will select and empower 144,000 people who will come from every religious group on Earth. These people will be selected and chosen on the basis of their hearts – not their religion. Their love for God and man will be the basis of their selection. These people are identified as coming from the twelve tribes of Israel in Revelation 7:4 because they will have *hearts like Abraham*. You may recall that Jacob was renamed “Israel” after he became humble and showed true remorse for his sins. (Genesis 32:28) This is why the redeemed are called the children of Abraham! (Genesis 15:5) You may also recall that Jesus defined our genealogy according to our actions. In other words, if we act like the devil, then our father is the devil. On the other hand, if we humbly put our faith in

Christ as Abraham did, “to go – to be – to do” as Jesus directs, then we are the sons of Abraham! (John 8:38-44; Galatians 3:28, 29) The point is that there are “sons of Abraham” in every religious system on Earth, although they are not formally called Jews. (Romans 2:13-29)

Jesus will personally appear to the 144,000 in a glorious vision, and He will give them a prepared script, a book of words, to speak during the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 10:1-7) The 144,000 will not speak their own words. They will speak like Ezekiel, who was given a prepared script, a book containing words that he was to speak to Israel. (Ezekiel 2 & 3) As a result of their encounter with Jesus, some of the 144,000 will suddenly become “Hindu believers in Christ” and they will speak to their fellow Hindus about the terms and conditions of salvation through Jesus. Similarly, “Moslem believers in Christ” will speak to their Moslem brothers about the terms and conditions of salvation through Jesus, just as “Jewish believers in Christ” will speak to their Jewish brothers about the terms and conditions of salvation through Jesus. The irony is that “Protestant believers in Christ” will speak to their Protestant brothers about the terms and conditions of salvation through Jesus, and most of them (two-thirds) will refuse the testimony of Jesus at the same rate as Moslems, Hindus and Jews! Because one religion cannot speak to another, Jesus will avoid man’s egocentric view of God by having “brothers” speak to brothers. I call this end time solution to presenting the gospel a “theo-centric view of God” because it is God-centered. In essence, it robs denominations of their arrogance and highlights their ignorance. No religious system will be able to claim or receive credit for presenting the gospel of Jesus to the world!

Given the enormous prejudice against Jesus found in the world’s religions, you may wonder, “How will the 144,000 be able to speak to their brothers about Jesus?” The answer is simple. A sudden outbreak of God’s horrific judgments (the first four trumpets) will kill hundreds of millions of people, and the crisis that follows will humble the whole world to a point where every ear will thoughtfully consider the powerful declarations and miracle working powers of the 144,000. By empowering “enlightened” brothers to speak to their brothers in darkness, God will have 144,000 servants who understand the culture, religion and language of each nation. By ignoring the pompous claims and bamboozle of religious systems, Jesus will be able to speak to each religious group within its own mind set. The 144,000 will deliver the testimony of Jesus and they will declare that Jesus Christ is coming soon to gather up His sheep. They will explain that Jesus is profoundly concerned about our response to His authority. Our response to truth reveals whether we are submissive to God or rebellious against God. Theo-centric sheep will

say, “Lord, whatever you want me to do, I will gladly do.” Egocentric goats will say, “This is not the voice of God. There is safety in numbers. I will obey my leader.”

Humanity’s egocentric ways will be completely revealed during the Great Tribulation. When God’s judgments begin, the religions of the world will be forced to swallow some pride (arrogance). Their silence on these coming judgments will prove they know nothing about God’s Word or His plans. To cover up their ignorance, they will participate in a crisis government that will form to appease God. (If religious leaders understood the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, they would not participate in the crisis government that will form as a result of God’s coming judgments!) In an attempt to justify God’s actions, self-righteous people from each religious system will declare that wicked people are responsible for God’s wrath, and with hundreds of millions of people lying dead in the streets, what will the wicked people be able to say?

Self-righteous, churchgoing people will insist that laws with severe penalties must be implemented to reduce sinful behaviors, and befuddled politicians will quickly oblige. In light of the overwhelming destruction all around, what else can they do? The religious leaders of the world will conclude that God must be worshiped and revered, and in this context, they will seek laws demanding respect for God and the worship of God. When the 144,000 and their followers refuse to obey the laws implemented to appease God, they will be associated with “the wicked people” who have angered God. Both groups will be persecuted with harsh civil penalties for refusing to worship God according to the laws demanded by the religious leaders.

The message of the 144,000 will be hard to obey because the testimony of Jesus will stand in direct opposition to the laws which have been established. Catholics, Protestants, Hindus, Moslems, Jews, and pagans alike will struggle with the testimony of the 144,000, because the demands of Jesus will be powerfully clear, but contrary to what is traditionally believed and taught. Even more, the demands of Jesus will be contrary to the laws of the land. In this juxtaposition of conflicting laws, a large number of people will prove to be sheep. The net result is that Moslems will not become Protestants, and Protestants will not become Hindus, etc. Many people will become “believers” in Christ through the testimony of the 144,000, just like many early Jews became Jewish “believers” in Christ through the testimony of His disciples. God has carefully designed the separation of sheep and goats so that the playing field during the Great Tribulation will be level for everyone. Every person on Earth will experience *the same level* of difficulty of

living by faith in Christ. Winning the heart of the Hindu will be no easier than winning the heart of the Protestant.

Trusteeship of the Gospel Changes

When Jesus delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery, He had a glorious purpose for them. Israel was to be a light unto the Gentiles, but Israel repeatedly failed. So, Jesus took the trusteeship of the gospel from the Jews (Matthew 23:38) and gave it to the Christians. (Matthew 28:19, 20) Unfortunately, Christians have also failed. So, Jesus took the trusteeship of the gospel from the Catholic Church and gave it to the Protestant Church in 1798. But, Protestants have failed, too. The final trusteeship of the gospel will be given to the 144,000. Like Gideon's tiny band of three hundred, the 144,000 will succeed in their mission because they will be sealed. (The sealing mentioned in Revelation 7 is the removal of the sinful nature. For a discussion on the importance and meaning of the sealing, please see Chapter 6 in my book, *Jesus, The Alpha and The Omega*.)

After the 144,000 are sealed, the Holy Spirit will work through them in a most dramatic way for 1,260 days. (Revelation 11:3)

Remember that God has sheep and goats in every religious system, and He has been able to bring good things out of religious systems that fell into apostasy. For example, the Jews gave us the Old Testament. The Catholics gave us the New Testament and Protestants discovered the five essential teachings of Jesus. The 144,000 will use the Old Testament, the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus to lead God's Sheep through the Great Tribulation, helping them pass the test of faith and receive the seal of God!

For reasons that are forthcoming, the first three seals have been broken and, as a result, we now have information about Jesus, our King and High Priest, that is as fresh as manna from Heaven! This information comes to us in the form of five essential Bible doctrines. *Protestants began globally preaching the first of these five doctrines after the fall of the papacy in 1798.* I am not saying these five essential doctrines suddenly became true in 1798. Truth is always true, but truth is not always known or widely understood. For example, salvation through faith in Jesus has always been true, but not always known or widely understood.

Even though these five doctrines have been true for ages, they could not be widely known or understood until Jesus began campaigning to overcome man's arrogance and ignorance. Unfortunately, the Catholic

Church does not endorse the five essential doctrines, and in fact, most Protestant churches today do not endorse all five doctrines either. Just because Hindus, Moslems, Jews, Catholics and Protestants do not understand or accept them, does not prevent these five teachings of Jesus from being true. During the Great Tribulation, these five essential Bible truths will be presented to the world. The five essential Bible doctrines (or the five S's) are:

1. Salvation through faith in Christ
2. The State of man in death
3. The Second Coming
4. God's seventh day Sabbath
5. God's use of parallel Sanctuaries or temples

Seventy-Three Percent of the World is Not Christian

When Jesus broke the first seal, the Holy Spirit came to Earth and gave power to the message that salvation comes through faith in Jesus. How can this message be a *new* revelation in 1798 if salvation through faith in Jesus has been proclaimed ever since He returned to Heaven? The answer may surprise you. At the present time, the American Bible Society says approximately 73% of the world does not recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Other Christian organizations estimate the number is closer to 66%. Nevertheless, the actual statistic speaks volumes. Christians have been telling the world that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, for almost 2,000 years, and at the present time, less than one-third of the world claims to be Christian. How is it that more than two-thirds of the people alive on Earth right now have not had a chance to thoughtfully consider the gospel of Christ, or if they have heard it, why did they reject it? The answer to this question is simple. The power of religion keeps people from considering ideas that are religiously different. Moslems cannot tell Baptists about God and Mormons cannot tell Episcopalians about God, etc.

You may say, "But, the idea that salvation comes through faith in Christ was not a new revelation in 1798." A review of church history¹ reveals otherwise. When a person surveys the history of the Christian Church,

¹ The doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ began unfolding the day Adam and Eve sinned. Abel was the first casualty of faith in Christ. (Hebrews 11:4) Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Moses put their faith in Christ. (Hebrews 11:6-26) Christ led Israel out of Egypt and provided food and

(Continued on Next Page)

the doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ was missing for more than a thousand years. In its place, the Catholic Church substituted a doctrine that taught salvation comes through the *Church of Christ*. This subtle but deadly deflection from the truth began soon after Jesus returned to Heaven. For centuries, the truth about salvation was buried in the traditions and teachings of the Church, and it was not until military power broke the authority of the Catholic Church in 1798 that *the truth* about salvation, through faith in Christ, could be *widely* proclaimed to the world!

“And on This Rock I Will Build My Church”

Between A.D. 538 and 1798, the clergy of the Catholic Church lorded “divine authority” over the nations of Europe by imposing two false doctrines on the people. (A brief discussion on the meaning of Matthew 16:13-19, one of the texts used by Catholics to defend claims of papal authority, is located at the end of the discussion on this third seal.)

1. First, the pope claimed to be the appointed successor of Peter and so he held the highest and most honorable position on Earth. The Church claimed that God spoke only through the pope because he was the vicar of Christ on Earth. (Later on, this claim became the foundation of papal infallibility.) The Church also claimed that Jesus had given Peter and his successors “the keys of the kingdom.” Eventually, Pope Gregory VII (1028-1085) defined “the keys of the kingdom” to mean that everyone on Earth, including kings and

water for His people in the wilderness. (1 Corinthians 10:4) From the beginning of sin until the end of salvation’s offer (Revelation 22:11), everyone who willfully surrenders to the authority of Jesus receives the gift of His righteousness, and through His righteousness, salvation is possible. (Genesis 3:21; Romans 1:17, 3:21, 22; 6:23; Revelation 19:8) During the Jewish era (1437 B.C.-A.D. 33) and Catholic era (A.D. 538 - 1798), this sublime truth was alive, but it was underground. After the Jews and Catholics were taken out of the way, and the Protestants received the trusteeship of the gospel, the message of salvation through faith in Jesus came out of hiding. It subsequently claimed six percent of the world’s population. (Today, 400 million Protestants make up six percent of the world’s population. Of course, the actual number of born again Protestants is substantially less than 400 million.) In this respect, *church history reflects the corporate actions of the Christian Church whose headquarters were in Rome*. It was not the church invisible, or the underground believers who faithfully obeyed the Word of God through the ages.

queens, were subservient to the authority of the pope. In other words, the pope and his priests had authority over eternal life.

2. The second false doctrine was the necessity of sacraments. The church taught that if a person refused to receive the sacraments or was excommunicated so that he could not receive the sacraments, that person would go to Hell and burn forever. Therefore, ignorant laymen submitted to the outlandish demands of Catholic clergy to avoid being sent to Hell. In effect, the clergy held the laity hostage and any ransom demanded by the clergy was produced. This situation was the straw that broke the camel's back. When Tetzel offered forgiveness of sins for money, Martin Luther could not tolerate the tactics of the Church any longer and he protested by nailing his complaints to the church door (the ninety-five theses).

History confirms the Church aggressively defended these two doctrines because together, they secured enormous power and leverage for the Church over kings and nations. The actions of the Church of Rome should not be surprising. Whether in matters pertaining to church or state, those who have possession of power will do whatever it takes to hold on to power. This is the selfish egocentric nature of man. The history of the Jews and the history of Christianity share an interesting parallel. God gave both populations the trusteeship of the gospel. Both endured for more than a thousand years. Both religions began with good-hearted people, and both ended in apostasy and in opposition to God's truth. This is not a statement about Jews and Catholics. This is a statement about human nature. I have often said that if God had chosen Ishmael instead of Isaac, the names of the people would have changed, but the results would have been identical.

Salvation through Faith in Christ Rediscovered

When Martin Luther (1483-1546) nailed his ninety-five theses to the church door in 1517, the Roman Catholic Church was stirred, but not alarmed. How could a priest in Germany threaten the mighty Church of Rome? However, Luther's protest against Rome can be compared to Samson's destruction of the Philistine temple. (Judges 16:30) When Samson gained enough strength to push the main pillars of the Philistine temple out of their places, the temple collapsed. Similarly, when Protestantism gained enough strength, it pushed the two main pillars of Catholicism (papal authority and the necessity of sacraments) out of their places and the Catholic Church fell. On the basis of Bible discovery, Protestants denied the claims of the pope and this explains, in part, the historical conflict between Protestants and Catholics today.

The Apostle Paul of the Protestant Reformation

Protestant historians have conferred the title, “Father of the Protestant Reformation” on John Wycliff (1330-1384) because Wycliff was the first reformer within the Catholic Church to significantly challenge Rome’s departure from Bible truth. If Wycliff is the father of Protestantism, then Martin Luther should be called “the Apostle Paul” of the Reformation. I say this because Paul and Luther were highly educated and they stand out in history for having accomplished the *same* thing. Both men created an exodus from two corrupt religious systems, Judaism and Catholicism, respectively, using the authority of Scripture.

Luther entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt in 1505 and he took the vow of obedience, poverty and chastity in the following year. By 1512, Luther had earned a doctoral degree. In 1515, at the age of 32, he was made vicar over eleven Augustinian monasteries. Luther was serious about serving the Lord and His church. As Luther matured in his understanding of the Bible, he became concerned about a number of doctrines which the Church endorsed. Eventually, a wedge of discernment divided the devotions of Luther. Even though he loved the Lord and the Church, Luther had carefully documented ninety-four issues within the Church that needed reform. When the priest, Tetzel, came to town in 1517 boastfully offering to sell forgiveness of sins for a price, Luther was outraged. Tetzel was raising money to pay for the construction of St. Peter’s Basilica by selling salvation for a price. This was too much. Luther added this behavior to his long list and with a soul full of disgust, he nailed his ninety-five complaints to the church door in Wittenberg on October 31.

As a young priest, Luther did not question the idea that Church authority was greater and higher than the teachings of the Bible. However, after comparing the teachings of the Church with the Bible, Luther realized the Bible must be continually asserted and exalted above the authority of the Church. Otherwise, the carnal nature of man would eventually manipulate or corrupt the teachings of Christ. Luther also became convinced that mankind is justified before God through Christ without the necessity of works and a shocking experience confirmed his belief. Sometime between 1512 and 1515, Pope Leo X offered an indulgence (the forgiveness of sins) to people who would climb Pilate’s staircase on their knees. Because Luther sincerely wanted freedom from the guilt of sin, he decided to climb the staircase even though he was already struggling with the relationship between faith and works. While climbing the staircase, he heard a thunderous voice say, “The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:17) It was an epiphany! Suddenly, everything

he had been studying in the Bible connected. In a flash he realized that salvation came through faith in Christ alone – without sacraments or works of penance – and he stood to his feet and departed the building in shame and haste.

In April 1521, Luther was summoned before Church officials at Worms to defend his radical teachings and behavior. He was accused of forty-one errors and given sixty days to recant. Of course, the Church could not accept Luther's call for reform because his reformation would weaken the "God given" authority of the Church. When Luther saw that church officials had not examined his books and they would never accept the plainest teachings of Scripture, he spoke to the assembly saying, "Here I stand. I can do no other . . . my conscience is captive to the Word of God." Luther was condemned to death, but he escaped with his life.

Even though Luther's call for reformation did not reform the Church, he did catch the ear of the laity. Laymen were weary of the fear and the burdens which the Church imposed on them. Luther knew the laymen were in spiritual darkness because they did not have access to the Bible. So, Luther translated the New Testament into the vernacular language of the German people in 1522. This was the dawning of a new day. The Church had forbidden possession of the Bible and people caught with Bibles were severely punished, tortured, or killed.

Luther's activities in Germany added to the swell across Europe for reformation within the Church. Two hundred eighty-one years after posting his ninety-five theses to the church door at Wittenberg, the authority of the Catholic Church was toppled because it would not reform. In February 1798, Napoleon's forces captured the area currently known as Vatican City, the pope was dethroned, and was taken prisoner by Generals Waller and Berthier. The elimination of papal power enabled Protestants to speak freely about salvation through faith in Christ. At last, they could teach and preach without intimidation or threat from the Catholic Church. Protestants began to share the good news that salvation was not dependent on church or priest! Salvation came through faith in Jesus alone. There is nothing more powerful than a truth whose time has come. When we remember that the Church of Rome fell because "judgment was pronounced in favor of the saints of the Most High" (Daniel 7:22), and that Jesus was found worthy to receive the Book of Life in 1798, we find an interesting effect on Earth. Jesus broke the first seal on the Book of Life and the power of Jesus' gospel broke out of the tomb of darkness where it had been sealed for 1,260 years!

The United States Provided Sanctuary

To ensure the growth of Protestantism and the fulfillment of His purposes after 1798, God had prepared a new nation to provide sanctuary for Protestantism. The Pilgrims came to America for several reasons, one of which was religious freedom. Many Lutherans also came to America and they established their first church on Manhattan Island in 1648. Twenty-two years before the papacy fell, the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. No one in Philadelphia could have anticipated the development and the accomplishments for Christ that the United States of America would fulfill. The book of Revelation predicted this phenomenon and it will be discussed when we examine Revelation 12:16. The Holy Spirit raised the United States by giving it a marvelous Constitution and an amazing Bill of Rights ensuring religious freedom for everyone. Protestant immigrants were drawn to this nation by the millions. Because the population of the United States was predominantly Protestant in those early days, Catholics who settled here were often scorned and mistreated. In fact, Catholics were not elected to public office for many years. (The first Catholic president in the U.S. was John F. Kennedy, 1960-1963.)

Since 1798, the United States has produced more Christian missionaries, gospel workers, and literature proclaiming “salvation through faith in Jesus Christ” than any other nation in Earth’s history. Of course, the Holy Spirit is still pushing “the good news” of salvation through faith in Jesus, even though Protestantism has mutated into a deep and horrible apostasy. Protestantism has lost its love for and fidelity to the Word of God. It became weak and confused after World War II because it did not press deeper into the Bible for truth. Protestants became materialistic following in the apostasy of Rome. It displaced the teachings of Jesus with the teachings of fallen man. Unfortunately, America has forgotten its Creator and Benefactor. This nation has focused on the gifts rather than The Giver. Most citizens are consumed with the acquisition of wealth and the pursuit of happiness and pleasure; sexual immorality is rampant. Perplexities and social problems are on every horizon. The spirit of America has dimmed because the Spirit of God has been grieved. In spite of our nation’s corporate apostasy, the gospel of Jesus is still alive. Although weak, the cry of the reformation still rings out: **“Salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone.”** There is “a crown of victory and a winner’s ribbon” for everyone who submits to the authority of Jesus and overcomes this world through faith in Him. (2 Timothy 4:8) Soon, during the campaign of the fourth and fifth seals, this cry will again swell and fill the whole Earth!

Summary

The breaking of the first seal in 1798 resulted in the emancipation and empowerment of the Protestant movement. After the fall of the papacy, Protestants were able to proclaim salvation through faith in Jesus without intimidation or persecution from the Church of Rome. The first seal was a great start, but six more campaigns would be necessary! The revelation of Jesus will get brighter and clearer as these campaigns unfold and dovetail together.

Additional Note on Papal Doctrine

The Catholic Church teaches that the pope is the infallible successor of Peter and that it has the keys of the kingdom of God. Let us briefly examine the following passage and see if Christ's church was built on successors of Peter: **"When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in Heaven.' 'I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven.'" (Matthew 16:13-19)**

Jesus queried the disciples about His identity in order to teach the disciples two impressive lessons. When Peter responded, "You are the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the living God," Jesus blessed Peter saying, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah." Notice that Jesus used Peter's formal name because He was about to use Simon's surname to make a profound point. While Peter's words were still reverberating in their ears, Jesus contrasted Peter's humanity with His divinity. Jesus said, "I tell you that you are petros." (The Greek word petros is transliterated "Peter," but it means rock or pebble.) Then, Jesus said, "and on this Petra [Greek: petra, a huge rock] I will build my church." The contrast in language indicates that Jesus pointed to Himself when He spoke these words. Jesus was the vine and they were the branches. (John 15:5) The Son of God who stood before them in dusty sandals was the eternal and awesome "Petra" of the Old Testament. (Genesis 49:24; Deuteronomy 32:4,15; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 18:31; 1 Corinthians 10:4) The disciples

must have shuddered with this reality. Can you imagine hearing about “The Rock of Ages” from the Scriptures all of your life only to discover one day, that “Petra” Himself, garbed in the robe of humanity, is standing in your presence? The faith of the disciples was greatly increased. The Church of Christ would succeed because it was founded on “The Rock” and sustained by His eternal power. The distinction between the pebble (petros) and The Rock of Ages (petra) was unmistakable. Furthermore, there is no evidence in the Bible that the disciples regarded Peter as the head or founder of the Christian Church. In fact, Paul reprimanded Peter for foolish behavior in Galatians 2:11.

Then Jesus taught His disciples a second lesson. He promised them the keys of the kingdom. Jesus said, “Whatever you ‘loose’ or ‘bind’ on Earth will be loosed or bound in Heaven.” The terms, “to bind” or “to loose” means having the authority “to approve or disapprove.” (Isaiah 22:20-23, Revelation 3:7) The “keys of the kingdom” is a phrase that means “having responsible authority.” If you give the keys of your car to a person, he receives the benefit of using your car, but also receives a serious responsibility to operate your car. The parallel is simple. Jesus promised the disciples they would have authority to make the day to day decisions necessary to advance the work of His church, and He assured them that He would honor their decisions in Heaven. Of course, Jesus would only honor their decisions if they followed the leading of the Holy Spirit and built the body of Christ according to the teachings of “The Rock.” (Matthew 28:19, 20) It is important to notice that Jesus did not give His disciples authority to determine the eternal destiny of anyone. That responsibility is not transferrable. Jesus is our Judge. He redeemed us with His own blood and His sacrifice for us gives Him the right to pass judgment on us. (John 5:22, 23; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 5:9; Acts 17:31)

Seal #2 – Red Horse – 1800 – The Teachings of Jesus Rediscovered

“When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, ‘Come!’ Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the Earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.” (Revelation 6:3, 4) For reasons that follow, it appears that Jesus broke the second seal around the year 1800. At that time, Jesus gave the Holy Spirit the sword of Truth and sent Him to Earth on a campaign to enlighten the world with two essential doctrines that will be presented later in this section. This endeavor would take a lot of strength.

Perhaps this is why the face of the second living creature looks like an ox. (Revelation 4:7) As the truth about Jesus becomes more clear and powerful, humanity's resistance to it will become more determined and rebellious. Eventually, a time will come when wicked people will kill those who love Jesus and obey His commandments. Jesus warned His disciples about the response of the carnal heart to His teachings by saying, **"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the Earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."** (Matthew 10:34)

According to Rule Three, we should use parallel language from other Bible texts to clarify passages that are cryptic if parallel language exists. Since the second seal is somewhat cryptic, consider the following words of Jesus, **"All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. . . ."** (John 16:1-4) Why did Jesus warn that religious people would persecute and kill His disciples? Jesus made these comments because He wanted His disciples to understand the nature of religion. When religious people are confronted with truth, they react in one of two ways. They either rejoice and submit or they become angry and hostile. This is why God's truth is like a double edged sword. During the Great Tribulation, the saints will be persecuted and put to death because of their loyalty to the Word of God. (Revelation 6:9-11; 13:5-7) Therefore, the campaign of the second seal has something to do with the death of many saints *after* 1798. Speaking of the final days, John wrote, **"I saw that the woman [the great whore] was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished."** (Revelation 17:6) Why were they killed? **"When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained."** (Revelation 6:9) What issue puts the Word of God in conflict with the Antichrist? **". . . And [the dragon] caused all who refused to worship the image to be killed."** (Revelation 13:15)

These texts indicate that a time will come when worship will be a serious matter. The Antichrist and his wicked followers will kill those who obey God's law, and the wicked will think they are doing God's will by killing the saints! Keep this thought in mind as we continue to examine the second seal.

Our Position and Condition before God

The assurance of salvation is the best news a person can hear *after* he understands his position and condition before God. Our true position and condition before God is revealed only through the teachings of Jesus. Jesus said, “. . . **I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**” Our position before God is that of a sinner. (Romans 3:23) Our condition before God is one of natural hostility. (Romans 8:7, 8) The verdict of God’s Word is clear. We are under the curse of sin and we cannot save ourselves from it. The good news is that through the atonement of Jesus, we can escape from the penalty of sin. Furthermore, we can be born again and through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, we can be victorious over our hostility toward God!

Thoughtfully consider the following sentence because it may be a hard one to accept. When salvation through faith in Jesus is separated from the teachings of Jesus, the assurance of salvation becomes “an opiate,” “a sweet nothing,” “a theological fantasy,” which may be wonderful to believe, but practically worthless for overcoming the temptations and trials of the human experience. On the other hand, when the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus is aligned with the other four essential doctrines taught by Jesus, the assurance of salvation will transform it. When we surrender our will to God’s will, we submit to the armor of God. Paul wrote, **“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”** (Ephesians 6:12, 13) John wrote, **“For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.”** (1 John 5:4)

Additionally, when the doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ is separated from the other four essential teachings of Jesus, discipleship suffers and Christianity disintegrates. Many Christians have been led into idolatry without realizing it. Consider the process: When the assurance of salvation is separated from, or exalted above, the importance of being a submissive disciple to the teachings of Christ, human nature will diminish the serious consequences of sin. Soon afterwards, Christians begin doing things which offend God. Sexual immorality and idolatry are twin sisters. When Christians separate the salvation of Jesus from the teachings of Jesus, He becomes a religious

icon instead of the Lord and Master of our lives. Jesus said that we cannot *receive* salvation without *giving* ourselves over to His dominion as an obedient disciple. **“If anyone would come after me [for salvation], he must deny himself and take up his cross [of responsibilities which I will assign] and follow me [my teachings]. For whoever wants to save his life [for eternity] will lose it [that is, will lose control of his life], but whoever loses [gives up control of] his life for me and for the gospel will save it [for all eternity].”** (Mark 8:34, 35, insertions mine) Notice how the apostle Paul summarized the relationship between faith and works, **“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.”** (Hebrews 5:7-9)

When salvation through faith in Christ costs nothing, it produces nothing. The problem is that salvation and discipleship are inseparable. Here is a true paradox: *Salvation is totally free through faith in Christ, but discipleship will cost everything you possess.* Jesus told the rich young ruler, **“ . . . Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven. Then come, follow me.”** At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, **“How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”** (Mark 10:21-23)

Jesus did pay the penalty for our sins by dying on the cross and whosoever is willing to submit to the teachings of Jesus (*this* is the true meaning of putting faith in Jesus) shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16) Surrendering to the teachings of Jesus produces “justification.” When we become willing to go, to be and to do all that Jesus requires, we receive the assurance of salvation. Jesus covers our sinful life with His perfect righteousness and we stand before God “justified” – just as though we never sinned. Jesus lived on Earth as one of us to show us how God wants His children to live. Every true disciple of Jesus obediently submits to the discipline and His teachings. (John 15:10; 1 John 2:3; Hebrews 12:5-14) Discipleship is also called “sanctification” which means becoming like Jesus. Judas was not a true disciple of Jesus. Oh yes, he was excited about being a founding member of Christ’s new kingdom. He faithfully followed Jesus around and was numbered among the twelve, but he did not submit to the sanctification which the Master offered and required. Eventually, his love for money and disgust

with Jesus led him to betray his Master.

Just before He departed for Heaven, Jesus told His disciples, **“Therefore go and *make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to *obey* everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** (Matthew 28:19, 20, italics mine) The relationship between obedience and faith is summarized by Jesus. The gospel commission centers on making obedient followers of Jesus. The apostles understood the balance between faith and works. James wrote, **“In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”** (James 2:17) Understandably, Martin Luther did not like the book of James (or the book of Revelation). The pendulum of salvation through works needed a serious push toward salvation through faith, and James sounded too “works oriented” for “faith oriented” Luther. So, Luther wanted to leave the books of James and Revelation out of his German translation of the New Testament, but close friends prevailed and Luther included them both. Nevertheless, when you read the book of James, there is a very clear balance between faith and works. James does not teach that works are a prerequisite for salvation. James says, godly works produce evidence there is faith in Christ! (James 2:14-24)

Salvation through Christ, Not the Church

Remember that the Church of Rome eventually led Christians to believe that salvation came through faith in the *Church of Christ* rather than faith in Christ. This transition was not premeditated. Rather, it just happened because of the nature of fallen humanity. The Jews did the same thing during their period of trusteeship and Protestants have done the same thing since 1798. Over time, religious institutions *always* drift away from the teachings of Jesus.

Because God created us, every person is accountable to God for his or her actions, just as a child is accountable to his parents. Regardless of what clergy may say or laymen may believe, God sends the Holy Spirit to every person to lead them toward a more complete understanding of truth. (John 16:13) Here is something hard to swallow: No church speaks for the Holy Spirit and no church has “a corner” on the teachings of Jesus. Are churches free to study God’s Word? Are they free to embrace the teachings of Jesus? Actually, no! Churches are depositories of ideas which denominational pioneers held about God. After the church becomes established, a new generation grows up and attends the church of their childhood without seriously questioning the original ideas

or beliefs. Tradition explains why Judaism, and Catholicism, could not embrace the teachings of Jesus. Tradition also explains why Protestantism cannot embrace the teachings of Jesus. Religion is more sticky than molasses.

I have spent a considerable amount of time emphasizing the importance of salvation through faith in Christ, because the biblical definition of faith is not widely understood or practiced. Faith in Jesus centers around a steadfast commitment to obey the teachings of Jesus at all costs. The matter of discipleship is important in our study on the second seal, because the second seal concerns the advancement of discipleship and regrettably, Christian resistance to it. Jesus said, **“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”** (John 14:15) John put discipleship in perfect balance when he wrote, **“We know that we have come to know Him if we obey his commands. The man who says, ‘I know Him,’ but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys His word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in Him: Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.”** (1 John 2:3-6)

The Large Sword of the Second Seal

The apostle Paul said that Scripture is sharper than “a double-edged sword,” for good reason. (Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17) When the teachings of Jesus are presented with power and authority, when sinful behavior is openly rebuked and sin is called by its right name, when evil motives and deeds are exposed by the light of truth shining from God’s Word, it makes rebellious people furious because the Bible offends them. Do not forget that John the Baptist, the greatest of the prophets (Matthew 11:11), lost his life for telling King Herod that he had sinned by taking his brother’s wife. (Mark 6:18) The parallel is that each of us have a bit of King Herod in our hearts. If we had the authority and power, would we kill those who openly rebuke us and expose our sins? Look at the judicial system in many countries today. Consider the ends to which evil doers will go to avoid the embarrassment and humiliation that comes from having their deeds exposed to the light of truth. Revelation predicts that many, if not all of the 144,000, will be killed during the Great Tribulation because of the testimony they deliver. (Revelation 16:4-7) In this sense, the sword of truth cuts both ways. The Bible rebukes sinners and the wicked punish the people who proclaim Bible truth.

An enormous amount of inertia, resistance and hatred in this world is

focused on the teachings of Jesus. Eastern Mystics, Hindus, Moslems, Catholics, Jews, Pagans, Atheists and Protestants are no different when it comes to the authority of Jesus! This should not be surprising. The carnal heart of humanity does not want to surrender its rebellion and submit to His authority. This is especially true when no one else around us is obeying Jesus in the same way the Holy Spirit is leading us. It was distressing for Jesus to confront the rebellion of the Jews, and it is just as hard for His followers to confront the rebellion that surrounds them. Paul wrote, **“The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”** (Romans 8:7, 8) Jesus said, **“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”** (John 3:19-21)

The Year 1800

The year 1800 appears to resolve the question of timing. The first seal was broken in 1798. Remember, the first rule of apocalyptic prophecy requires that the second seal must be broken after the first seal. When the Holy Spirit “rode out” of Heaven’s temple, He immediately began a campaign to translate and distribute the Bible (the sword of truth) throughout the world. The Holy Spirit motivated Protestants to form numerous Bible Societies in Europe and the United States. During the early 1800’s, Protestants gave sacrificially and generously toward the translation and distribution of the Bible because they knew their victory over the Church of Rome came through the exaltation of Bible truth, specifically, the assurance of salvation through faith in Jesus. Because the Bible became increasingly accessible, laymen began to study the “Good Book,” and as they investigated the Bible, they began to understand for themselves Rome’s deep apostasy.

Prior to the fall of the papacy in 1798, few people owned a Bible in Europe. This was either due to the expense, or in some countries, the Church forbade the possession of a Bible through laws enforced by the state. Today, this context seems so foreign. Even the Church of Rome now publishes Bibles, albeit in the archaic Douay version. What produced this marvelous transition from a few Bibles to the sudden appearance of many Bibles following 1800? I can find no better reason than the opening of the second seal. From 1800 to 1844, the Bible (or portions of it) was translated into approximately 112 translations. By

1944, the number of translations exceeded one thousand. Today, the number of translations exceeds 1,500. As people began to read the Bible, various ideas about the teachings of Jesus occurred. Because nineteenth century Protestants were a diverse group of people from the many nations of Europe and the United States, Protestantism fractured into several distinctive denominations after 1798 under the leadership of various godly people.

The Holy Spirit was sent on a campaign to translate and distribute Bibles in the second seal, because there is **no other authoritative source on the teachings of Jesus**. For 200 years, the Bible has been progressing throughout the world, one book at a time. The Bible tells us what sin is and it presents our true condition and position before God. Soon, a time is coming when Bible truth will cause men to slay one another! Without going into a lot of detail at this point, it will happen in the following manner: The opening of the fourth seal will initiate the Great Tribulation. God will send a series of destructive judgments, and during the first thirty to sixty days of the Great Tribulation, more than a billion people will perish! The nations and religions of the world will respond to God's horrific judgments by immediately establishing a crisis government with a broad range of powers. The purpose of this crisis government will be to appease God so that His judgments will cease. This crisis government (called Babylon in Revelation) will have no choice but to mandate the worship of God, by outlawing immoral behavior and imposing other laws that have religious significance. The 144,000 will appear in every nation including Moslem, Hindu and atheist nations like India, China and Russia, and they will begin preaching from the book of Revelation. In this context, the purpose for translating and distributing the Bible during the past 200 years will suddenly mature. Because the Bible is in every nation, it will become *the object* of a global controversy. The Holy Spirit will work mighty miracles through the 144,000 to confirm their testimony, but unfortunately, many of the teachings of Jesus are contrary to the established religions of the world. Thus, the testimony of Jesus will inflame the passions of evil people as it did when Jesus taught on Earth, and if evil doers killed the Master for His testimony, then they will certainly kill His servants.

The horrific judgments of Jesus are designed to open the eyes and ears of all religions. By shattering the religious paradigms and prejudices of people everywhere, the 144,000 will be able to present the authority and demands of Jesus so that people in every religious system will be able to thoughtfully consider what the Bible says. Because of prejudice, this has not been possible. Billions of people will begin to look into the Bible to

verify the claims of the 144,000. People will want to know what Jesus is doing and why He sent the judgments. The whole world will examine and intensely study the books of Daniel and Revelation. The result will be an enormous controversy. People who are sincere and honest will embrace the teachings of Jesus and submit to the laws of our Creator. People who are rebellious and wicked will reject the teachings of Jesus and rebel against Him. *The Bible will separate the sheep from the goats in every religion and cause men to kill one another!* During the fifth trumpet, the devil will physically appear masquerading as Almighty God. He will move quickly to deceive the wicked and set up his kingdom. His forces will kill millions of saints who obey the Word of God. This bloodshed is described in the fifth seal. The Bible says, **“When he [the Lamb] opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.”** (Revelation 6:9, insertion and italics mine) Did you notice why the saints were slain?

Two More Essential Doctrines in Protestant America

Even though the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus was rediscovered by Luther around 1515, Protestantism was not set free to proclaim it until 1798. After the Church of Rome fell, Protestantism became a significant Christian force in the world. When the meaning of salvation through faith in Jesus is separated from the larger body of Jesus’ teachings, the assurance of salvation becomes a “theological fantasy,” which may be wonderful to believe, but practically worthless for dealing with the temptations and trials of the human experience. To keep the first essential doctrine on track, Jesus broke the second seal around 1800, and the Holy Spirit was sent to establish Bible Societies in Europe and the United States. The translation, printing and distribution of the Bible was necessary so that all of the teachings of Jesus could be rediscovered. Because the Bible is a treasure trove of 66 books, it takes considerable time and effort to become familiar with its gems of truth. Because the Holy Spirit has been commissioned to guide us into all truth (John 16:13), He gives the Word of God a special attraction. The Bible draws to itself everyone who wants to know God.

When Protestant settlers first came to America from Europe, they brought the first of five essential doctrines – salvation through faith in Jesus. During the nineteenth century, two more of the five essential teachings of Jesus took root in America. These two doctrines were “soul sleep” and “the obligation of the Ten Commandments.” Although mainstream Protestantism in Europe and the United States did not embrace these two doctrines, many people incorporated these doctrines

in their beliefs, and the teachings of Jesus became a little brighter. The rejection of soul sleep and the obligatory nature of the Ten Commandments by mainstream Protestants brings up a point which I have mentioned before: Truth is always true, regardless of who believes it or rejects it, and the fulfillment of prophecy reveals who had the truth!

Dr. Edward White (1819-1898), a Congregationalist minister in Britain, can be credited with uncovering the doctrine of soul sleep. His discovery began with his rejection of John Calvin's (1509-1564) view of predestination. Calvin taught that only a predetermined number of people could be saved and the rest were doomed to suffer in eternal hell. Dr. White argued that God alone is immortal (1 Timothy 6:15, 16), and therefore, the soul of man cannot be immortal. Since the soul is subject to death, the souls of sinners cannot be tormented forever. A few Protestants accepted White's views, and the doctrine of "soul sleep" was added to the "fringe" of Protestantism's theological fabric.

Note: The basic idea behind soul sleep is that when a person dies, he is not judged nor does he go to his eternal reward. Instead, when a person dies, his soul "sleeps," that is, there is no awareness or intelligence. The dead await the judgment bar of Christ. (Hebrews 9:27) The dead will rise in one of two resurrections. When Jesus appears at the Second Coming, the righteous dead will be resurrected to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17) and the wicked who are living at that time will be slain by the Lord. (Revelation 19:19-21) At the end of the thousand years of Revelation 20, the wicked dead of all ages will be resurrected to meet their Maker in a great white throne judgment scene. (Revelation 20:12) After the wicked are sentenced for their cruelty to man and rebellion against God, they will be punished with fire and eventually annihilated because the soul is mortal. (Ezekiel 18:4) Protestantism, in general, has rejected this doctrine even though this doctrine is one of the five essential doctrines needed to understand the book of Revelation. Most Protestants today believe, as Catholics do, that at death, people either go to Heaven (or paradise) for eternity or they burn in Hell for eternity.

Another essential doctrine took root in the United States during the nineteenth century. The doctrine of the perpetuity of the Ten Commandments also came from England. This doctrine teaches that God requires man to obey His Ten Commandments, including the observance of the seventh day Sabbath (the fourth commandment). To many Protestants, the observance of the fourth commandment, unlike the other nine commandments, seems contradictory to the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus. In 1664, Stephen Mumford, a member

of the Bell Lane Seventh Day Baptist Church in London, came to Rhode Island. Because he could not find any Seventh Day Baptists, he worshiped with Sunday keeping Baptists for awhile. Eventually, five Baptist families adopted Mumford's view that the Ten Commandments were obligatory and the Seventh Day Baptist Church in the United States began in 1671. By 1802, there were twenty churches with two thousand members in the United States. Increasing numbers of immigrants were arriving in America each month. Because Bibles were available and affordable and the Baptist name was a respected Protestant denomination, interest in the seventh day Sabbath continued to grow. However, Sunday keeping Baptists were strongly opposed (and remain opposed) to the idea that Jesus requires mankind to observe His fourth commandment.

In the Forward of this book and again in Chapter 9, I highlighted the point that the teachings of Jesus center around five essential Bible doctrines because an understanding of these doctrines is a prerequisite for reaching the intended meaning of Revelation. Currently, most Protestants do not appreciate the importance of these five doctrines. Nevertheless, we will discover that Revelation's story mandates an understanding of soul sleep, as well as the perpetuity of the Ten Commandments. Circumstances during the Great Tribulation will force the importance of the five essential doctrines out of obscurity, and the teachings of Jesus, which are plainly stated in the Bible, will make a lot of people very angry.

Summary

The second seal appears to have been broken around 1800. The large sword carried to Earth by the Holy Spirit represents the Bible, which contains the teachings of Jesus. The sudden formation of Bible Societies in Europe and the United States around the year 1800 indicates the Holy Spirit was sent on a campaign to translate and distribute the Bible throughout the world. The translation and distribution of the Bible will produce deadly consequences during the Great Tribulation. We will discover this in our study on the fifth seal.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Bible was flushed out of obscurity. Since that time, it has been translated into 1,500 languages and hundreds of millions of copies have been distributed all over the world. The Bible has been *the* best seller of all books every year since 1800. The doctrines of "salvation through faith in Jesus," "soul sleep" and man's obligation to observe the Ten Commandments, including the

seventh day Sabbath of the fourth commandment, will play crucial roles during the Great Tribulation.

Seal #3 – Black Horse – 1844 – The Judgment Bar of Jesus

“When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, ‘A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!’ ” (Revelation 6:5, 6)

I believe the third seal was broken around 1844. At just the right time, the Holy Spirit, in the form of the third living creature, was sent from the throne room on a campaign to inform the world that Jesus had begun to judge the dead. The face of the third living creature is like that of a man. (Revelation 4:7) This face indicates that the Holy Spirit has an assignment requiring divine wisdom. **“To you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding. Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right.”** (Proverbs 8:4-6)

The scales in the hand of the rider indicate **“. . . the court was seated and the books were opened.”** (Daniel 7:10) The breaking of the third seal marks the beginning of the judgment bar of Christ! **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”** (2 Corinthians 5:10) The third seal merges soul sleep, the worthiness of Jesus, and the pre-advent judgment into a comprehensive prophetic fulfillment. Of course, if a person does not understand the doctrine of soul sleep, God’s use of parallel temples, or the four rules of interpretation, the breaking of the third seal in 1844 will make very little sense.

The doctrine of parallel temples teaches that long ago, God set a date, near the end of the world, for our High Priest to begin cleansing the temple in Heaven. The temple in Heaven needs cleansing because the record of our sins has defiled it. We have discussed the prophetic precision of 1798 and 1844 at length in this book. We have closely examined the date Jesus was found worthy to receive the Book of Life in Segment III of this chapter, and we have examined the breaking of the first two seals. The orderly progression of the historical matrix is unmistakable.

The cleansing of Heaven's temple is accomplished by transferring the guilt of each person to its final destiny. After investigating the record of each dead person, Jesus decides if that person is wicked or righteous. The guilt of sin remains on the head of the wicked person, or in the case of a righteous person, the guilt is transferred onto the head of the scapegoat. Keep in mind, the Lord's goat (representing Jesus) provided atonement for *the penalty* of sin (Leviticus 16:21), whereas the scapegoat (representing Lucifer) provided atonement for sin's presence. (Leviticus 16:22) Lucifer is the father of sin and, as such, he bears full responsibility for it. (John 8:44) The doctrine of soul sleep teaches that the dead are neither judged, nor do they go to Heaven or Hell at the time of death. We also know that the righteous dead will meet Jesus in the air at the Second Coming (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17) and the wicked dead will be resurrected at the end of the thousand years. (Revelation 20:5, 6) The unanswered question concerns timing. When are the dead judged? The answer to this question is resolved by the alignment of two essential teachings of Jesus (soul sleep and parallel temples) and the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. Daniel 8:14 tells us the judgment bar of Christ began in 1844, and the breaking of the third seal in Revelation 6:5, 6 aligns with this date.

The Holy Spirit departed the throne room around 1844 on a campaign to inform the world that the judgment of the dead had begun. The scales in the hand of the rider on the horse indicate the judgment of mankind has arrived. **“For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”** (Ecclesiastes 12:14) Do not confuse the judgment of mankind with the full cup principle. In a sense, God constantly manages Earth. He passed judgment on the antediluvians in Noah's day. He passed judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. He passed judgment on Egypt and Pharaoh then drowned the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. Jesus passed judgment on Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day. He also passed judgment on Israel just before His death. (Matthew 23) Jesus manages the kingdoms of Earth with the full cup principle, but He began passing eternal judgment on individuals in 1844.

Remember the mysterious words written on the wall at Belshazzar's feast? Daniel told the Babylonian king, “. . . **You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.**” (Daniel 5:27) God weighs the actions of nations as well as individuals. Jesus weighs our actions against our knowledge. **“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and does not do it, sins. . . . If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of**

judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.” (James 4:17; Hebrews 10:26, 27)

The scales in the hand of the Holy Spirit indicate judgment has begun. We know from the doctrine of parallel temples and information in Daniel, that this judgment is not a judgment on nations, but on people. (See Daniel 7:9, 10; 8:14; Hebrews 8 and 9) Perhaps in this judgement process, Jesus began with Abel, the first man to die. For the past 160 years, Jesus has been reviewing and passing judgment on each person who has died. Of course, Jesus does not need 160 years to judge the records of the dead, but the angels and the 24 elders need this time. The ongoing judgment scene in Heaven is for their benefit. In effect, the angels have been getting a “college education” on the dimensions of God’s government. They are observing and learning about God’s constitution, branches of government, grace, wisdom, mercy, and most of all, how God’s love is the perfect balance between mercy and justice. Their lectures include realtime applications of God’s justice and mercy. Every life record presented to Jesus is a unique story. They are watching the close scrutiny which Jesus applies to every record. They have never seen anything like this, and the Father predetermined long ago that all of Heaven would benefit from observing this courtroom-classroom drama. This is why the Bible states, “thrones were arranged and the Ancient of Days took His seat . . . and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. . . .” As billions of heavenly beings silently observe, Jesus decides who shall be saved and who must be destroyed. Because the angels understand the incalculable value of eternal life, they watch with the greatest interest. They also watch closely for another reason. People who are granted eternal life will become their rulers. The redeemed from Earth will be elevated above the angels! (Revelation 1:6) Therefore, the angels are very curious to see who will rule over them. This is why they have to attend this convocation. Once they understand the full dimensions of God’s government and salvation, they know they have nothing to fear from the exaltation of victorious sinners from Earth. Each judicial case reveals a unique expression of God’s justice and mercy.

Will Work for Food

The commission given to the Holy Spirit at the breaking of the third seal consists of a campaign to educate the world that Jesus began to cleanse Heaven’s temple in 1844. As the Holy Spirit prepared to leave the throne room, Jesus spoke these words, **“A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!”** Wages! These words are a promise of

wages. Wages, in the form of “good” food, is promised to those who will enter God’s service to promote this special message, and I can testify that after 17 years of endeavor, the Lord’s promise has proven faithful and true.

Rule Three of apocalyptic prophecy encourages us to look for parallel passages in the Bible to determine the intended meaning of apocalyptic prophecy, and there is a very good parallel in the Old Testament concerning the use of wheat, barley, oil and wine as wages! King Solomon offered Hiram, king of Tyre, an enormous quantity of food if his servants would gather up materials for the construction of the Lord’s temple in Jerusalem. **“I will give your servants, the woodsmen who cut the timber, twenty thousand cors of ground *wheat* [125,000 bushels], twenty thousand cors of *barley* [125,000 bushels], twenty thousand baths of *wine* [115,000 gallons] and twenty thousand baths of olive *oil* [115,000 gallons].”** (2 Chronicles 2:10, italics and insertions mine) Solomon offered Hiram food because food was of greater value than silver or gold. The building of the Lord’s temple in Jerusalem would be an enormous undertaking for which Solomon did not have the building materials, but he did have food. He was willing to pay Hiram’s workmen with something more desirable than gold if they would do his bidding. At various times in human history, food has been the currency of choice between nations.

The parallel is that since 1844, Jesus has been offering wages to those who are willing to build up the knowledge of His heavenly temple. The Bible is a very comprehensive book and God’s ways are vast. Teaching the Word of God, if done well, is not a simple or easy task. Again, I can testify from personal experience, that this is the most difficult assignment I have ever had. An offer of wages goes with the breaking of the third seal because Jesus wants the world to know that He is judging the dead and the judgment of the living is coming soon. Jesus wants the news spread far and wide and He is willing to pay wages “in food” to anyone willing to carry the news!

William Miller (1782-1849)

An interesting sequence of events occurred in the United States just before the third seal was broken. The story began on a Sunday morning in 1816, when the Holy Spirit changed the heart of William Miller. Captain Miller was a 34 year old army officer who had settled in Low Hampton, New York, after retiring from military service. At the time, Miller was a self-proclaimed deist. (Deists believe in a Supreme Being, but they deny the inspiration of the Bible and hold to a view of God that

is contrary to the Bible.) However, Miller had two uncles that were Baptist preachers, and even though he was not a church member, he dutifully attended services at the Hampton Baptist Church with his believing wife whenever his uncle, Elisha, was preaching.

Because Miller did not attend church when his uncle was absent, certain members of the church thought Captain Miller might be persuaded to attend church more regularly if he were asked to participate. So, they asked him to read a selected sermon from *Proudfit's Practical Sermons* the next time his itinerant uncle was absent. To their surprise, Miller agreed. A few weeks later, Miller was called on to read the sermon one Sunday morning. About halfway through the sermon on Isaiah 53, Miller was overcome with a personal realization of what he was saying. Isaiah's predictions about the sufferings of Christ for our sins caused Miller to stop and begin weeping. He buried his face in his hands and humbly sat down. Many in the audience wept, too. The moving of the Spirit was overpowering that wonderful morning and, from that day forward, William Miller was a changed man. He became a born again believer in Christ and joined the Baptist Church. After his conversion that morning, Miller began to intensely study the Bible. Two years later, in 1818, Miller concluded from the book of Daniel that Jesus would return to Earth "around 1843." For several years, Miller kept this matter to himself for he thought he was alone in this view.¹

Fifteen years after becoming a born again Christian, Miller began to feel a burden to publicly share his discoveries in the Bible. An invitation from his nephew to speak to a small church group initiated Miller's "lay ministry" in August 1831. Because Miller's views on the Second Coming were unusual, word spread. Miller gained the respect of those who heard him even though he was not highly educated. Miller was a very

¹ Miller did not know in 1818 that several other Bible students in the United States and Europe had reached similar conclusions. For example, five years earlier, William Cunningham (1776-1849) of Lainshaw, Ayrshire (Scotland) concluded the world would end around 1843. William C. Davis (1760-1831), a Presbyterian minister in South Carolina came to an 1843 conclusion in 1818. In 1820, Archibald Mason (1753-1831), of Wishawton, Scotland, concluded the world would end "around 1844." It is not coincidental that more than twenty-five writers in Europe and the United States, having no collaboration with William Miller, came to the conclusion that the 2,300 days mentioned in Daniel 8:14 would terminate around 1844. (See *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, by LeRoy Edwin Froom, Volume III, pages 744,745, published 1946 by The Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington D.C.)

bright person, a keen thinker, well organized in his thoughts, thorough in his research and most of all, humble. In 1833, he was licensed by a small group of Baptist ministers so that he could preach in surrounding Baptist churches. By 1844, Miller estimated that he had personally delivered 4,500 lectures on Bible prophecy to 500,000 people; a remarkable feat when you consider that he was about 50 years old when he began preaching, the physical demands of travel in those days, and that he spoke to audiences without the support of a public address system. William Miller has few peers in early American history. He was the “Billy Graham” of his day. Of course, as his popularity grew, so did resistance. At the height of his ministry, historians calculate the Millerites (as his followers were called) numbered between fifty and one hundred thousand people. When Jesus did not appear in 1843 or 1844 as predicted, Miller’s credibility was ruined and he went to his grave five years later bearing the shame and stigma of a “false prophet.”

Shortly after the 1844 disappointment, Miller responded to his critics saying, “I have never courted the smiles of the proud, nor quailed when the world frowned. I shall not now purchase their favor; nor shall I go beyond duty to tempt their hate. I shall never seek my life at their hands; nor shrink I hope, from losing it, if God in his good providence so orders.” (*The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, by LeRoy Edwin Froom, Volume IV, page 683) William Miller died in 1849, broken in health and finances. He had “bet the farm” on the Second Coming of Jesus and spent everything he owned sharing the good news of Christ’s return. He died trusting in Jesus as his Savior, but he was unable to understand where he had gone wrong.

Miller Becomes Interdenominational

In the early nineteenth century, New England Baptist churches were loosely organized and rather independent of each other. There were no telephones or televisions. This isolation explains how ministers in some areas could accept Miller’s views without causing a problem for the Baptist denomination in general. Because Miller was a layman and his early efforts were confined to a small geographical area, opposition to Miller’s ministry was not significant in the beginning. In addition to this, Protestants in New England were quite open to new ideas from the Bible. There was deep respect and interest in the Bible in those days. (Remember, the Declaration of Independence was only 55 years old when Miller began to preach.)

Miller’s obscure lay ministry was transformed into a public phenomenon by an event that occurred on November 13, 1833. That particular night,

New England experienced the most remarkable meteoric shower that had ever been witnessed. Tens of thousands of falling stars were seen in New England and portions of Europe.¹ It looked as though the whole sky was falling! New Englanders panicked and many thought the world was coming to an end. This spectacular event catapulted interest in Miller's message to a much larger stage and Miller's 17 years of study had prepared him to explain his understanding of the sixth seal to wondering people. When it became evident that Miller was unusually qualified and informed on prophetic matters, a group of about 40 ministers (half of whom were Baptists) recognized Miller's unique ministry in 1835 by granting him a license to speak in their affiliated churches. The falling of the stars overcame denominational barriers so that non-Baptists could hear what a self-taught Baptist preacher had to say.

Miller's Logic

Because Miller believed that Daniel 8:14 pointed to the Second Coming in 1843, Miller naturally interpreted the falling of the stars to be a prophetic sign that Jesus would appear in about ten years. He had no doubt that the falling stars were a fulfillment of Revelation 6:13. Consider his logic: The sixth seal defines a sequence of events that climax with the appearing of Jesus in the clouds of Heaven. These events include a great earthquake, the darkening of the sun, the falling of the stars and the appearing of Jesus – in this order. (Revelation 6:12-14) Appealing to recent history, Miller reminded his listeners of the Lisbon, Portugal earthquake on November 1, 1755 where 60,000 people perished. This, he claimed, fulfilled the great earthquake in Revelation 6:12. Some people remembered "the dark day" of May 19, 1780. By noon on that day, the sun became so dark in New England that a person could not see a white sheet of paper in front of his face. Later that day, the moon became the color of blood. The animals even came in from the field around noon because the darkness was so great. (There is historical evidence that suggests the darkness was caused by a massive volcano

¹ No one knew it at the time, but the dazzling meteoric shower that night was predictable. Earth annually passes through a debris field in space created by the orbiting comet, Tempel-Tuttle around mid-November. As a result, we regularly see meteoric showers of "falling stars" appearing to come from the constellation of Leo about mid-November. Hence, these "falling stars" are called Leonids. We now know that Earth passes through the densest part of the comet's debris field every thirty-three years. Sometimes, the thirty-third year produces a spectacular display of shooting stars as it did in 1833. The debris field of Tempel-Tuttle and the thirty-three year cycles of "shooting stars" was discovered thirty years later in 1863 by Yale College professor, Hubert Newton.

eruption in Mexico.) So, the great earthquake (1755), the dark day (1790), and the falling of the stars (1833) during the past 78 years proved to Miller that the sixth seal had been broken. According to Miller, the coming of Jesus had to be the next event because Revelation 6:14 (the next verse that follows the falling of the stars) describes the appearing of Jesus in clouds of glory. When Miller demonstrated how the 2,300 evenings and mornings of Daniel 8:14 terminated in 1843, what could people say? Many sincere Protestants embraced Miller's message. Several influential pastors joined Miller and a Millerite movement formed. As Miller's teachings grew in popularity, mainstream Protestant churches circled the wagons by expelling people from their churches for "denying the faith once delivered to the saints."

When the Spring of 1843 passed and Jesus did not appear, the Millerites poured over their calculations and found a simple mistake. They had overlooked one year between 457 B.C. and 1843. Because calendar years are not counted on a mathematical scale, the transition from B.C. dating to A.D. dating requires adding an extra year because there is no zero year. So, the 1843 date was corrected to 1844 and 1844 became the terminus of the 2,300 years of Daniel 8:14. This discovery renewed the hopes of the Millerites and, more importantly, gave it one more year to spread the doctrine of an imminent Second Coming. However, the Spring and Fall of 1844 came and went without a Second Coming. Jesus did not appear and the Millerite movement imploded in bitter disappointment. The Millerite fiasco caused many Protestant churches, particularly Baptists, to disdain the study and meaning of prophecy.

Fifth Essential Doctrine Rediscovered

After the Millerite movement collapsed, most of the Millerites renounced their faith or sheepishly returned to their churches. A few Millerites, however, did not give up. They returned to their Bibles to try to figure out what went wrong and soon discovered the problem. Miller had interpreted the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 to mean Earth would be purified of wicked people at the Second Coming. After carefully comparing the books of Hebrews, Leviticus and Daniel, they concluded that Miller's view on the 2,300 years was correct, but the sanctuary to be cleansed was the *true temple which is in Heaven*. (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 8 and 9) In other words, Jesus began cleansing Heaven's temple in 1844.

From my point of view today, Miller's ministry and disappointment served two purposes. First, Miller brought attention to Daniel 8:14 as no one else had. Second, the essential doctrine of God's use of parallel temples was rediscovered as a result of Miller's disappointment. The Holy Spirit accomplished an astounding success. After the Millerite

implosion passed, there were people on Earth who understood that the judgment bar of Christ in Heaven's temple had begun! Naturally, mainstream Protestantism was rather pleased that the Millerite movement had disappeared, but out of the ashes of Miller's disappointment, a new church group formed that would become known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This church group organized about twenty years after the disappointment (1863) – the same year Hubert Newton figured out the thirty-three year cycle of the shooting stars.

The story of William Miller and the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist church are germane to the breaking of the third seal. The Holy Spirit raised a humble Baptist preacher to draw attention to the commencement of the judgment bar of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10; Daniel 8:14) just like He used a Catholic monk to draw attention to justification through faith. (Romans 1:17) As a denomination, Baptists rejected Miller's prophetic views before his ministry imploded in 1844. Because traditional Baptists could not accept the doctrines of God's use of parallel temples, God's seventh day Sabbath, and soul sleep, the Holy Spirit raised a new church to proclaim these essential Bible truths.

The wonderful thing about religious liberty in the United States is that people are free to study the Bible and believe whatever they wish to believe! This freedom enabled Miller to proclaim a truth whose time had come. Miller discovered the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 ended in the Spring of 1844 and my studies affirm the validity of his claim. I am also convinced that the Holy Spirit raised the Seventh-day Adventist Church to compile Luther's rediscovery of salvation through faith in Jesus, the Congregationalist view of soul sleep, the Seventh Day Baptist view on the observance of God's seventh day Sabbath, Miller's views on the Second Coming, and the subsequent rediscovery of God's use of parallel temples. Adventists merged these five doctrines into a harmonious system of understanding, but Seventh-day Adventists, like all churches, have not been willing to follow advancing light. This is a true paradox. Churches can form around a truth whose time has come, but they seem incapable of moving beyond that point when additional truth unfolds later. In this sense, Seventh-day Adventists have followed in the footsteps of Protestant churches which have not been able to move forward with advancing light. People will understand the darkness which currently holds Catholics and Protestants prisoners (their traditional prophetic views) when the next seal is broken!

Summary

Four key points need to be emphasized as we conclude this section on the

breaking of the third seal. First, a person cannot reach the intended meaning of apocalyptic prophecy without some understanding of the five essential Bible doctrines. This is because the doctrine of soul sleep addresses the two resurrections and the destruction of the wicked at the end of the thousand years. (Revelation 20) Second, the doctrine of parallel temples explains the need to cleanse Heaven's temple. (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 8 and 9; Daniel 8:14) Third, the doctrine of the Ten Commandments, including the observance of God's seventh day Sabbath, explains the coming persecution of the saints, because a great controversy will occur over worshiping God after His judgments begin to fall. (Revelation 8 and 13) Last, the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus, rather than through "the church," explains why Jesus is going to tear down the religious systems of the world during the Great Tribulation so that religious paradigms will not obstruct His offer of salvation! (Revelation 17)

History reveals that the advancement of truth comes at a high price, and a majority of people are unwilling to pay the price. It is much more comfortable to remain within the social and religious comforts of fellowship than to follow the Spirit into the desert of rejection where often, you are alone with God. The Bible represents people as sheep for good reason. They prefer to flock together. They also tend to follow their leaders (political and religious) without thinking or thoroughly studying matters for themselves. Consider the total sum of religious thought that Hindus, Moslems, Catholics, Jews, Protestants, atheists and pagans believe today. All of these different ideas about God came from spiritual leaders who are as blind as the lay people they guide. (Matthew 23:16)

Humanity's diversity in religious beliefs proves that people are capable of believing anything and everything. Our diversity also proves that our belief systems have nothing to do with eternal truth. Even though Catholics and Protestants insist their views come directly from Scripture, a cursory review of Scripture can demonstrate otherwise. Truth is not determined by a majority vote or acceptance. Thoughtfully consider these words: "Truth is not what I believe. Truth is not even what I know. Truth is fact. I may not believe it. I may not know it. That does not change it. It is there nevertheless, waiting to be discovered and believed. Truth does not depend on the unsettled and changing opinions of men. It was truth before it was believed. It remains truth whether it is believed or not. Reason does not originate or create it. It merely discovers it. Consequently, reason is not a source. Truth goes back beyond reason. Others would have us believe that the church is the source of authority, particularly in matters of theology. They are wrong.

The church is the product of truth. It does not originate it. It came into being by accepting divine revelation. It is not the source of that revelation. Truth goes beyond the church, it is antecedent to it.”
(*When a Man Dies*, Carlyle B. Haynes (1882-1958); p.5)

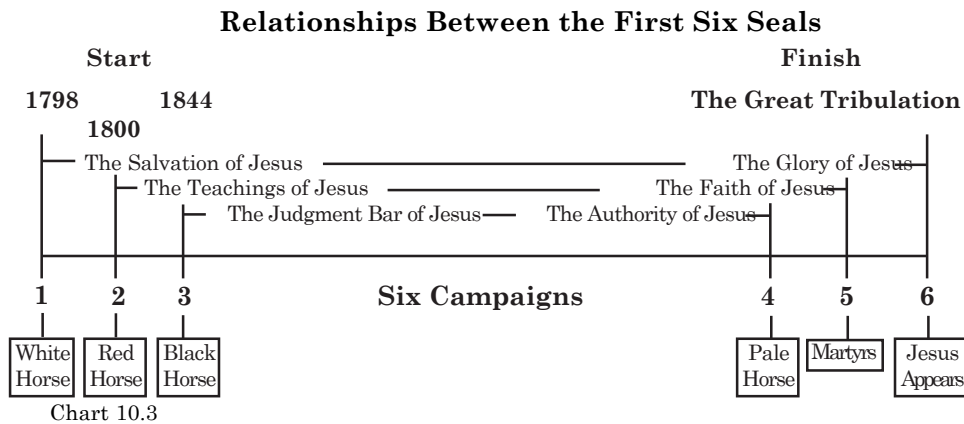
The breaking of the third seal occurred about 1844 and with it, the five essential teachings of Jesus have been rediscovered. These five doctrines have been understood for more than 160 years. Recall, for a moment, how the first three seals fit together. The doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus is the first essential doctrine. It came first and caused Protestants to separate theologically from Catholicism. After the Catholic Church’s power over Europe was broken in 1798, the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus was spread all over the world by Protestant missionaries. The breaking of the second seal brought on a campaign to translate and distribute the Bible, because Jesus requires discipleship from every soul who receives His salvation. (John 15:14; Hebrews 5:9) The widespread distribution of the Bible afforded ordinary people the privilege of discovering the teachings of Jesus, and various Protestants accepted and practiced three essential truths during the first part of the nineteenth century – salvation through faith in Jesus, soul sleep, and observing the Ten Commandments. The breaking of the third seal brought on a campaign to inform the world that Jesus had begun to cleanse Heaven’s temple, and the doctrine of the Second Coming became better understood. William Miller and later, Seventh-day Adventists, became players in this development. The end result is that today, right now in fact, a great stage for an upcoming drama has been set. The five essential teachings of Jesus are known and the book of Daniel has been unsealed. Now that we have the four rules of apocalyptic interpretation and the five essential teachings of Jesus, *we have the tools necessary to unlock the intended meaning of Daniel and Revelation*. This is highly important because the fourth seal will be broken next!

Before I close this section on the third seal, I must point out an interesting parallel. The first thing Jesus did after He began His public ministry on Earth was to cleanse the temple in Jerusalem. **“To those who sold doves He said, ‘Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!’ . . . Then the Jews demanded of him, ‘What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’ The Jews replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?’ ”** (John 2:16-19) It is interesting to discover that Jesus cleansed the earthly temple after forty-six

years of construction, and it took forty-six years from the time that Jesus began breaking the seals in 1798 to begin cleansing Heaven's temple in 1844.

Three Campaigns Underway

Now that we have examined the first three seals, consider for a moment how the first three seals relate to the next three seals. Look at Chart 10.3 and notice that when the first seal was broken, the Holy Spirit started a campaign in 1798 that will climax at the breaking of the sixth seal (the Second Coming). When the second seal was broken, the Holy Spirit started a campaign around 1800 that will climax after the breaking of the fifth seal (the martyrdom of many saints because of the Word of God). When the third seal was broken, the Holy Spirit started a process in 1844 (the judgment of the dead) that will climax after the fourth seal is broken (the judgment of the living). Notice how the first three seals start campaigns that relate to the next three seals during the Great Tribulation!



Seal #4 - Pale Horse – Coming Next – The Authority of Jesus Revealed

“When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the Earth.” (Revelation 6:7, 8)

According to Rule One of apocalyptic prophecy, the breaking of the fourth seal has to occur after the breaking of the third seal in 1844. For reasons that will be presented in our study on the 144,000, the breaking

of the fourth seal has been “on hold” since 1994. This means the commencement of the Great Tribulation could begin any day. When Jesus breaks the fourth seal, the Holy Spirit will depart Heaven’s temple on a campaign of death and destruction. The face of the fourth living creature is that of an eagle. (Revelation 4:7) This face represents swift and deadly destruction. Notice how parallel language was used in Jeremiah’s day: **“This is what the Lord says: ‘Look! An eagle is swooping down [for destruction], spreading its wings over Moab.’”** (Jeremiah 48:40, insertion mine)

The mission of the Holy Spirit is personified with the name of “Death” in this text. The grave (Greek: *hades*) follows “close behind” because a fourth of Earth’s population will die. There will be death on a global scale not experienced since the flood. The final generation is about to see a display of the sovereign authority of Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit implements His command. The breaking of the fourth seal marks the sudden and irreversible start of the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 8:2-5; Matthew 24:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:3; Revelation 7:1-3)

The Holy Spirit – Agent of Wrath?

It may seem contradictory at first that the Holy Spirit should be an agent of death and destruction since He is called “The Comforter” in the KJV or the “The Counselor” in the NIV. The problem with this definition is that it provides a limited view of the attributes of God. The Holy Spirit is mentioned in the first and last chapters of the Bible as a separate and distinct member of the Godhead. (Genesis 1:2; Revelation 22:17) The Holy Spirit is God. (Matthew 28:19, 20) He has the same powers and prerogatives as the Father and Son. (John 16) He is called various names in the Bible such as “The Spirit of Truth” (John 14:17), “The Spirit of Grace” (Hebrews 10:29), “The Spirit of the Lord” (Ezekiel 11:5), and “The Spirit of God” (Romans 15:19). At times, the Holy Spirit has enabled men to do incredible things. For example, Samson’s great strength came through the power of the Holy Spirit. **“The Spirit of the Lord came upon him [Samson] in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat. . . .”** (Judges 14:6) **“Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him [Samson] in power. He went down to Ashkelon, struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of their belongings and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. . . .”** (Judges 14:19)

Shortly after Jesus ascended to Heaven, the Holy Spirit killed a husband and wife in Jerusalem for lying. This single event imposed a great deal of respect for the Holy Spirit among early Christians. The death of Ananias and his wife was similar to that of Uzzah when he irreverently

touched the Ark of the Covenant and was struck dead. (2 Samuel 6:7) Remember, the presence of the Holy Spirit was prevalent in the early church, and the killing of Ananias and Sapphira elevated respect for honesty and integrity in a dramatic way. Carefully review the story: **“Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet. Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Did not it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, was not the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God [the Holy Spirit].’ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, ‘Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?’ ‘Yes,” she said, ‘that is the price.’ Peter said to her, ‘How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.’ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.”** (Acts 5:1-11, insertion mine)

A Great Awakening

When the fourth seal is broken, a powerful campaign will begin to reveal Jesus Christ to the world. God’s awesome wrath will stun Christians and non-Christians alike. Christians will be overwhelmed because today’s concept of “Jesus” is grossly unlike the real Jesus. His destructive judgments will shatter the false perceptions about Jesus which Catholics and Protestants have created. Non-Christians will also be awestruck when they witness the wrath of Jesus because there is no God that can stop His power and authority! It is interesting to notice how Jesus’ wrath will rip up the Earth and tear down billions of false paradigms at the same time. *The net effect of God’s wrath is that the world will be forced for a short time to hear the testimony of Jesus.*

Jesus is waiting for the appointed hour to arrive. Jesus has given the people of Earth every grace and opportunity, but the gospel of Jesus is no

longer going forward. The population of Earth is multiplying faster than the gospel can be told. Moral degeneracy is rampant. Religious bias is impenetrable. Violence is everywhere. When Jesus breaks the fourth seal, He signals the end of His patience with Earth's rejection of righteousness and truth. Earth's corporate cup of iniquity has overflowed. The wrath of Jesus will last 1,335 days and come in two waves. The seven first plagues will be accompanied with the offer of salvation through faith in Jesus, but the seven last plagues will not contain mercy. God's wrath will accomplish a number of things that His love and patience have not achieved. The ears of the survivors will be unplugged so they can hear the truth about Jesus. The eyes of the survivors will be opened because the blinders of religion will be removed. The clearest and brightest presentation of truth ever told will commence. The 144,000 will speak with unvarnished clarity. Jesus has carefully and deliberately designed the course of events during the Great Tribulation so that as many people as possible can be saved. (2 Peter 3:9) Given these facts, we can only begin to appreciate the depth of man's arrogance and ignorance when we see the level of wrath Jesus must use to get the attention and respect of the human race.

The breaking of the fourth seal marks the beginning of the time of wrath. **"He [Gabriel] said: 'I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end.'"** (Daniel 8:19, insertion and italics mine) The appointed time of the end is called "a time of wrath" because everyone on Earth will suffer wrath. People who obey God will feel the wrath of their government and people who obey their government will feel the wrath of God. Every nation will reel from the execution of God's four deadly judgments – sword, famine, plague and wild beasts. The destruction of the fourth seal is described in Revelation 8 as the first four trumpets. Twenty-five percent of Earth's population will perish over the course of a few weeks. Currently, this means more than 1.5 billion people are about to perish because of God's wrath, and the religious systems of the world say nothing about the opening of the fourth seal. Why is this? The answer is arrogance and ignorance.

Three Types of Wrath

Pre-tribulation advocates have been led to believe that God's children will escape His coming wrath. They typically put 1 Thessalonians 5:9 and Romans 5:9 together to support their claim. Unfortunately, these texts do not apply to the Great Tribulation. (I wish they did.) Instead, they speak of God's wrath as the penalty for sin, that is, the second death – not the wrath of the Great Tribulation. There are three types of

wrath, and understanding the nature and purpose of these different types is crucial to understanding the fourth seal:

1. **Wrath as the fruit or consequences that comes from wrong doing:** If we violate a physical or moral law, we suffer wrath – the consequences of the law. Paul wrote, **“Because [the] law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.”** (Romans 4:15, insertion mine) For example, if we eat too much at Thanksgiving, we will suffer pain (wrath) for overeating. If we commit adultery, we will eventually suffer wrath (the social consequences) for our sin and the innocent around us (spouse, children, families) will suffer too. The Bible says, **“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”** (Galatians 6:7, 8) Sin always causes sorrow, suffering, pain and death because these things are the consequences of wrong doing.

A victim of wrong doing seeks justice (revenge). Once revenge has been administered, wrath is satisfied. The Middle East is a painful demonstration of a revenge process that cannot achieve justice. This is why Jesus taught, **“But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”** (Matthew 5:44; 6:12) Jesus said these words because the power of forgiveness is God’s way to peace. The power of forgiveness comes to those who are willing to receive it from God. Forgiveness terminates wrath. This is why Paul wrote, **“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”** (Romans 12:19)

Of course, Jesus ordained the establishment of government when He created man. He permits humanity to execute corporate justice on wrong doers. (Romans 13) Jesus also empowers governments to administer justice as long as they uphold righteous principles. (Numbers 35) When governments overstep their authority, Jesus brings them down. (Daniel 4:17, 35) Babylon, Medo-Persia, Grecia, Rome and many other governments fell because they degenerated into arbitrary rule (lawlessness). Sin has consequences which are called wrath.

2. **Wrath as the penalty for sin:** When Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden, they were put under the obligation of law. **“But**

of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:17, KJV) Adam and Eve were to be executed the very day they ate the fruit, because the penalty for sin is *death by execution*. This point was proved every time a sacrificial lamb died in the Old Testament. The animal was slaughtered on an altar – it did not naturally die from a disease. Even more, Jesus was executed for our sins (1 Thessalonians 2:14, 15) because the penalty for sin is death by execution. This point will be demonstrated when the wicked die at the end of the thousand years. No wicked person has received the penalty for his sins yet. Billions of wicked and righteous people have died from the *consequences* of sin, but God has not executed one wicked person with the penalty required for sin! The execution of the wicked occurs at the end of the thousand years. Think about this, if God had executed a wicked person, how could an eternally condemned person be resurrected “to life” (Revelation 20:5, 6) at the end of the thousand years only to perish in the fires of Hell again? (Revelation 20:14, 15) The doctrine of soul sleep is highly important because it clarifies this aspect of God’s wrath so clearly.

Everyone who commits the unpardonable sin will be declared “wicked” by Jesus during the judgment bar of Christ because they rejected the demands of the Holy Spirit. However, Jesus will declare people who submit to the Holy Spirit “righteous” because His blood covers everyone who submits to the authority of the Holy Spirit. This is the meaning and context of Paul’s words, **“For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath [as in the penalty for sin] but to receive salvation through [the blood of] our Lord Jesus Christ.”** (1 Thessalonians 5:9, insertions mine) **“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”** (Romans 5:9) **“For the wages of sin is [eternal] death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (Romans 6:23, insertion mine) **“But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment [of mankind] will be revealed.”** (Romans 2:5, insertion mine) Sin not only has consequences, but it has a deadly penalty, too. The penalty for sin is eternal death by execution. (Note: The difference between the consequences of sin and the penalty for sin may be compared to the difference between compensatory and punitive judgments in a court system.)

3. **Wrath comes in the form of redemptive or destructive**

judgments: If a nation angers God by persistent rebellion, He brings wrath against that nation by sending *redemptive* judgments. If that nation continues in rebellion, God brings more wrath by sending *destructive* judgments. Jesus told Israel, **“But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it.”** (Leviticus 26:14-16) After centuries of trying to get Israel to accomplish the purposes for which He delivered them out of Egypt, Jesus sent Israel into Babylonian captivity in 605 B.C. The first siege of Jerusalem and the captivity of Israel’s finest young men did not change Israel’s behavior. So, Jesus sent Nebuchadnezzar a second time in 598 B.C. Still no change of heart. Finally, Jesus told Ezekiel: **“For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments – sword and famine and wild beasts and plague – to kill its men and their animals! Yet there will be some survivors – sons and daughters who will be brought out of it. They will come to you, and when you see their conduct and their actions, you will be consoled regarding the disaster I have brought upon Jerusalem – every disaster I have brought upon it.”** (Ezekiel 5; 14:21) Finally, King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and totally destroyed it. When redemptive judgments do not produce repentance and reformation, God’s wrath becomes grossly destructive. Global destruction occurred in Noah’s day for this reason. **“So the Lord said, ‘I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the Earth – men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air – for I am grieved that I have made them.’ ”** (Genesis 6:7) During the Great Tribulation, global destruction will happen again. First, there will be seven redemptive judgments (the seven trumpets), and then, there will be seven destructive judgments (the seven bowls). **“I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues – last, because with them God’s wrath is completed.”** (Revelation 15:1)

Four Deadly Judgments

Near the beginning of Segment III in this chapter on the seven seals, we examined the breaking of the fourth seal because I wanted to demonstrate two things. First, throughout the Bible, *God's deadly judgments are defined as sword, famine, plague and wild beasts*. Second, the breaking of the fourth seal has to be in the future because the breaking of the fourth seal has to happen after the third seal was broken in 1844.

Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 32 and Ezekiel 14 leave no wiggle room on the meaning of “sword, famine, plague and wild beasts.” God’s wrath is executed on mankind through these four instruments. (See also Leviticus 26; Jeremiah 21:7, 42:17; Ezekiel 7:15.) **“For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments – sword and famine and wild beasts and plague – to kill its men and their animals!”** (Ezekiel 14:21) Jesus sent the flood in Noah’s day. He kills people when sin becomes so pervasive that recovery is impossible. Jesus warned Moses that He would do the same to Israel if they rebelled against His covenant: **“See now that I myself am He! There is no God besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand.”** (Deuteronomy 32:39)

The Bible indicates over and over that these four judgments are punitive in nature; that is, Jesus deliberately uses them to punish nations when wickedness exceeds the limits of divine patience. This is why the language of the fourth seal is so succinct. The Great Tribulation will begin with the breaking of the fourth seal. Judgments from God are upon us because we have exhausted the limits of divine forbearance. If only Catholics and Protestants understood the subject of God’s wrath. A correct understanding of this subject will change your thoughts. We are accountable to God for our words and actions. God has not changed! His Word has not changed. Our arrogance and ignorance keep us from understanding God’s wrath. This is why the world remains in great darkness and this is why the Holy Spirit will soon be sent out of Heaven’s courtroom on a campaign of wrath. Seeing is believing.

Summary

Now that we have examined the four horsemen of Revelation 6, you should notice a very interesting progression. The first campaign was a message to the world of salvation through faith in Jesus. The second campaign focused on the translation and distribution of the Bible

throughout the world so that the teachings of Jesus could be rediscovered and understood. The third campaign was a message to the world that the judgment bar of Christ is under way. Jesus is cleansing Heaven's temple by reviewing the records of the dead. The fourth campaign will be a mission of wrath that will kill 25% of the world's population. This coming display of God's wrath will accomplish a very important task. Humanity's arrogance and ignorance will be subdued for a short time so that the world can hear His servants, the 144,000, present the following messages from Jesus:

1. The judgment of the living has begun. Honor the Creator. Worship the Creator on His seventh day Sabbath.
2. Do not worship God according to the laws of Babylon, the Crisis Government.
3. Do not worship or obey the Antichrist or receive his mark.
4. Come out of Babylon – avoid her plagues.

We will examine these messages in Revelation 14 later, but when the fourth seal is broken, the wrath of Jesus will begin, the judgment of the living will begin, the ministry of the 144,000 will begin, and the Great Tribulation will begin. In days to come, the teachings of Jesus will explain *why* the wrath of God is upon us. Everyone will be able to see Bible prophecy fulfilled before their very eyes. The fulfillment of prophecy will give the Bible an incredible amount of believability and authority! In fact, this credibility will eventually cause evil men to kill those who obey God's commandments. This killing is described in the next seal! (Remember how the distribution of the Bible under the second seal is connected to the killing that occurs during the fifth seal – see Chart 10.3.)

At this time, the stage is set. The people of Earth are about to be actors in a drama they do not anticipate. The five essential doctrines have gone as far as they can go. Bibles have been translated and distributed. The 144,000 will be empowered at the right moment and the wrath of Jesus will arrest the world. Earth's cup of iniquity is full. The only thing that is holding back the "four winds" of God's wrath is the sealing of the 144,000. (Revelation 7:1-4) During the Great Tribulation, the sheep in every religious system will hear the voice of Jesus speaking through His servants, and many of these sheep will call on the name of the Lord and be saved. The goats will rebel against the testimony given by the servants of Jesus and they will punish His saints for refusing to go along with their rebellion. Jesus has deliberately and carefully designed a

course of events so the Great Tribulation can accomplish several purposes. Through the testimony of the 144,000, Jesus will overcome the bias and hatred that exists toward Him, and a large number of people will be saved. Jesus will be revealed to the world as the only Savior of man. Jesus will be revealed as Almighty God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As these revelations occur, God's sheep will abandon their false gods and serve Him who saves to the utmost. Isn't this amazing?

In closing, I should point out that a correct understanding of the first four seals unlocks several key points in Revelation that we will soon study. For example, the breaking of the fourth seal initiates the Great Tribulation. The breaking of the fourth seal will be marked with a global earthquake. (Revelation 8:5) The 1,260 days of the Two Witnesses begin with the breaking of the fourth seal. (Revelation 11:3) The seven trumpets of Revelation 8 and 9 explain how sword, famine, plague and wild beasts occur during the Great Tribulation. The breaking of the fourth seal will produce a response from man which is described in Revelation. The horrific judgments of Jesus will cause a Crisis Government (the composite beast in Revelation 13:1) to rise and become a global power. As our examination of Revelation continues, these matters will become clearer.

Take a few moments to examine Chart 10.4 on the following page. Notice the timing of the first four seals. The length of time between seal four and seal six is a maximum of 1,335 days.

Seal #5 – A Campaign of Martyrdom – The Faith of Jesus Demonstrated

“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the Word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the Earth and avenge our blood?’ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.”
(Revelation 6:9-11)

The fifth seal will be a somber campaign. These three verses are full of information that will be helpful and encouraging to God's people when the time comes. When God's people suffer martyrdom under the fifth seal because of their loyalty to God's Word, the *assurance of the white robe* will be worth more than all the fine gold found on Earth! I estimate

Revelation 4-6 Expands The Matrix

Today

Timing:	538 B.C.	331 B.C.	168 B.C.	A.D. 476	A.D. 538	1798	1844	Great Tribulation
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Rev 4-6						Jesus Found Worthy, Then Breaks First Three Seals Between 1798 - 1844	Seal 4 Marks The Beginning of the Great Tribulation		
						1 2 3	4	5 6	
Daniel 8	---- 457 B.C. -----2,300 Day/Years ----- 1844 ----						The Time of the End		
	Ram with Two Horns	Goat With One Great Horn -- then Four Horns	-- 538 -1798 --			Pre- Advent Judgment of the Dead	Judgment of the Living	Horn Power from the North: Stern Faced King	
Daniel 7	Bear with Three Ribs	Leopard with Four Heads	Monster	10 Horns at First	1,260 Day/Years A.D. 538 to 1798		Books Opened	Little Horn Heard Boasting	Beasts are Burned Up in the Fire at the End
					Little Horn Rises Uproots 3 Horns	Cout Seated Little Horn Falls			
Daniel 2	Chest of	Thighs of	Legs of	Feet of				10 Toes 10 Kings	
	Silver	Bronze	Iron	Iron and Clay				Iron/Clay	
	Medo- Persia	Grecia	Rome	Many Kings				10 Kings	

Chart 10.4

that the fifth seal campaign will begin about 1,040 days into the Great Tribulation. (This timing will be further discussed in the chapter on the Seven Trumpets.) This is about seven months before the offer of salvation is closed forever. Because the end of redemption is near, Jesus initiates a powerful campaign to demonstrate the religious difference between faith and presumption. (Few people experientially know the difference now.) Faith loves God's Word and humbly submits to God's demands. Presumption believes in God, but justifies rebellion against the commands of God. The behaviors of Cain and Abel reflect these powerful forces. Both men built altars to honor God. One man humbly obeyed the command of the Lord by bringing a lamb from his flock. The other man presumed God would accept his offering of fruit and the rest of the story is history. Presumption is offended by faith, and ultimately, presumption convinces itself that the destruction of the faithful is justifiable. This is why Revelation says, **"This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus."** (Revelation 14:12)

You may recall the breaking of the seven seals began with the doctrine that salvation comes *through faith* in Christ. Before the offer of salvation is closed, Jesus wants the distinction between faith and presumption sharply differentiated throughout the world, so no one will be confused about the properties of faith. Millions of God's children will choose death rather than obey the demands of the Antichrist. Like the three Hebrews in Daniel 3, the saints would rather perish in a fiery furnace than bow down and worship the image of the beast. (Revelation 13:15) The Bible predicts millions of people will die rather than disobey the commandments of God and renounce their faith in Christ. Innocent blood will demonstrate the great gulf between faith and presumption.

The Faith of Jesus Reflected

The fifth seal is different from the other seals in that the faith of Jesus is revealed in this campaign through His saints. Consider this: The first four seals were "delivered" to Earth by four horsemen riding out of Heaven's temple, the sixth seal will be a campaign revealing Christ's glory, and the seventh seal will be a full disclosure of His deity. So, six of the seven seals are direct revelations from Jesus to the world, but the fifth seal will be an indirect, powerful revelation, showing the faith of Jesus through the death of His saints. The martyrdom of the fifth seal will separate the faithful from the faithless, and I have no doubt, that like the martyr Stephen, the faces of people who stand firm for Jesus will shine like the faces of angels! **"All who were sitting in the**

Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was [bright] like the face of an angel.” (Acts 6:15, insertion mine)

The Meaning of “Faith in Christ” Distorted

Because “faith in Christ” has been transformed into “presumptions about Christ,” Jesus will set the record straight with the testimony of martyrs. Many pastors are teaching fables as truth, and many people have deceived themselves into thinking that God is pleased with their actions when the opposite is true. (See Isaiah 1-4 for a review of this ever persistent problem.) The fruit of religious presumption is decadence. The devil’s deceptions are clever. He is a master at gradualism. He induces intellectual games that lead to compromises because he knows that sin has consequences. For example, Americans have been wrestling with the abortion issue for thirty-five years and the United States is just as divided today on the subject as when the controversy started. The funny thing about this controversy is that hardly anyone is addressing the sinful, immoral behavior that produces unwanted babies. Why is there so much silence about sexual promiscuity? The devil knows that once an immoral couple conceives, tough choices are ahead. Something has to be done with the fruit of promiscuity. So, the controversy moves away from the cause of the problem to dealing with the consequences of sinful behavior, and *there are no human solutions to the problem of sin!*

Biblical faith means a complete surrender to God’s will – to go, to be, and to do all that He asks *at any cost*. This is the faith that Jesus lived by (Luke 22:42; Hebrews 5:7) and during the Great Tribulation this faith will cost many saints their lives. There is no wiggle room on this. The saints will be bitterly persecuted for forty-two months. (Revelation 13:5) The Bible clearly predicts this persecution, but millions of people have presumptively chosen to believe in a pre-tribulation rapture, expecting to avoid suffering and martyrdom.

An intellectual assent to truth cannot withstand the purifying fires of persecution. Jesus willingly went to His death because of the faith He exercised in His Father each day. When Jesus arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane, He asked the Father to remove the cup of martyrdom from His lips, but it was the will of the Father that Jesus die. (John 3:16) Similarly, many martyrs will submit to death because it is the will of Jesus that they do so. Jesus has put the saints on notice of this coming extremity saying, **“If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.”** (Revelation 13:10)

darkness caused, perhaps, by hundreds of volcano eruptions.) Twenty-five percent of Earth will perish during the first four trumpets. The fifth trumpet marks the appearing of the devil masquerading as Almighty God, and after five months of tormenting wicked people who are not willing to worship him, the sixth trumpet sounds. When the sixth trumpet sounds, the devil's forces will be allowed to kill one-third of the world's population so that he can establish total dominion over Earth. (Revelation 9:15) Notice on the chart how the fifth seal is broken immediately after the sixth trumpet sounds. When the slaughter of the fifth seal is finished, Earth's population will be reduced to about 50% of what it was before the Great Tribulation began.

The Identity of the Altar

“ . . . I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the Word of God and the testimony they had maintained.” When the fifth seal was broken, John saw the souls of martyrs located under an altar. This language speaks volumes if you already understand the prerequisite doctrine of parallel temples. The altar mentioned in the fifth seal refers to the bronze Altar of Burnt Offering. You may recall, this altar was located in the courtyard of the temple (Exodus 40:6), while the golden Altar of Incense was located inside the tabernacle, near the veil. (Exodus 40:5; Leviticus 16:12) Since the golden Altar of Incense is specifically mentioned in Revelation 8:3, this has led some people to assume the altar mentioned in the fifth seal is also the golden Altar of Incense. We can discover the true identity of this altar by comparing the heavenly altar with the altars used in the earthly temple. (Hebrews 8:1-5) Notice this text: **“Present your burnt offerings on the altar of the Lord your God, both the meat and the blood. The blood of your sacrifices must be poured beside the altar of the Lord your God, but you may eat the meat.”**

(Deuteronomy 12:27, See also Leviticus 5:9; 8:15.) This text indicates that the blood of animal sacrifices was poured into a container beneath the Altar of Burnt Offering in the earthly temple. Once this point is understood, the parallel becomes obvious.

The souls of the martyrs are under the Altar of Burnt Offering in Heaven. They are located in Heaven because they represent human beings *sacrificed* for the cause of Christ. The Bible says they were slain because of their faithfulness to the Word of God and the testimony they maintained. Remember the campaign to translate and distribute the Bible after the second seal was broken (the large sword, the sword of truth, placed in the rider's hand). Do you remember our study of the second seal about how the translation and distribution of the Bible

would cause men to kill one another? The breaking of the fifth seal will be the fulfilling of the second seal. The Bible says these souls under the altar were slain because of the Word of God. During the Great Tribulation, God will have a people who stand on the Bible and the Bible alone as the Word of God. A time is coming when all people who obey the Word of God (Abel the faithful) will be regarded as enemies of God (Cain the presumptuous). In the same way, the Crisis Government (Babylon) will regard the saints as enemies and later, Lucifer, who will be masquerading as Almighty God, will insist on their death. Jesus warned His disciples, **“All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.”** (John 16:1-4)

Who Has Greater Guilt?

The fifth seal is a problem for people who believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. Advocates of a pre-tribulation rapture believe that they are worthy of escaping the suffering of the Great Tribulation, because they “believed in Christ” *before* the Great Tribulation began. This is foolish. James wrote, **“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.”** (James 2:19) Believing in God is one thing; obeying God at any cost is another. Currently, a large majority of the world rejects the authority of Christ, as well as His teachings, and Earth’s population is exploding faster than the gospel can travel. Billions of people on Earth have not had a chance to thoughtfully consider the gospel of Christ. They cannot consider it because they are immersed in the barriers of culture, language, religious arrogance, and ignorance. Should these ignorant people be punished for 42 months with suffering and martyrdom while the raptured saints are playing harps in Heaven? How can Jesus torment the heathen (meaning all of the “unsaved”) with a Great Tribulation, when proclaiming and demonstrating the gospel to the heathen is *the* responsibility of Christians? (Matthew 28:19, 20) Who has the greater guilt: The pagans who did not or could not hear the gospel because Christians did not come to their village, or Christians who chose a fine paying job instead of traveling to remote villages to share the gospel? The “great escape” (as some call the pre-tribulation rapture) is plausible when presumption has displaced faith in Christ. If Jesus, our Lord and Master, came to Earth to suffer and die for us, should His servants do less for Him? Jesus said,

“Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.” (John 15:20, 21)

Saints as Sacrifices

John was shown the souls of martyrs under the Altar of Burnt Offering in Heaven because they are sacrificial martyrs. Before I can address what this statement means, I have to explain a few items. First, the doctrine of soul sleep becomes highly important once again in our study on Revelation. The souls of all dead people are dead – awaiting either the first resurrection or the second. (John 6:39, 40; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Revelation 20:5) The souls of Abel, Stephen, Paul, and millions of other martyrs are not located under the Altar of Burnt Offering in Heaven now. Dead souls are not in Hell, either. Furthermore, the souls of those martyred during the fifth seal are not to be confused with people who have been martyred for the cause of Christ through the ages. The souls under the Altar represent people who will die for Jesus *after* the fifth seal is broken.

From time to time in Revelation, Jesus uses figurative language, and Rule Three of apocalyptic prophecy addresses the use of figurative language saying, *“Apocalyptic language can be literal, symbolic or analogous. To reach the intended meaning of apocalyptic prophecy, the student must consider: (a) the context, (b) the use of parallel language elsewhere in the Bible, and (c) relevant statements in the Bible which define the symbol if an element is thought to be symbolic.”* Since Rule Three says we have to consider the use of parallel language, please consider the following text: **“Now Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let’s go out to the field.’ And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ ‘I do not know,’ he replied. ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ The Lord said, ‘What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.’ ”** (Genesis 4:8-10) Of course, the blood of Abel was not talking to God, but the presence of Abel’s innocent blood spoke volumes to God! God saw the blood of Abel on the ground and its presence cried out to God for justice. Therefore, the Lord punished Cain for the murder of his brother. (Genesis 4:11-16) This is the point of the fifth seal. First, the souls are under the altar. This means they were used as sacrifices for the cause of Christ. Second, the innocent blood of these martyrs cried out in a loud voice for relief and revenge saying, **“ ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy**

and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the Earth and avenge our blood?’ [Then, the martyrs were told,] . . . to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.”

(Revelation 6:10, 11) Jesus assures the martyrs that He is following a plan – the Plan of Salvation. He is deeply aware of each martyr’s situation, and He is counting the number of martyrs because there is a predetermined *number* of saints He will sacrifice before bringing martyrdom to an end. Jesus sacrifices a specific, large number of saints to demonstrate the great gulf between faith and presumption. The problem is that presumption looks like an identical twin to faith. At three feet, you cannot tell them apart, but the distinction becomes clear when life itself is threatened. Remember, salvation comes through faith, not through presumption.

The Setting

To better appreciate the campaign of the fifth seal, consider the setting on Earth when martyrdom begins. Jesus will release the devil from the abyss (spirit world) during the fifth trumpet. After **the majority** of people on Earth have heard the gospel (the terms and conditions of salvation), but refuse to love the truth and be saved, the devil will be released. The devil will be released out of the spirit world, and he will physically appear on Earth because the world has rejected Christ’s authority. **“. . . They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”** (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12) If people refuse to worship Jesus and submit to His authority after the clearest evidences of His will have been presented, and when the urging of the Holy Spirit has been silenced by deliberate rebellion against God’s Word, Jesus can do little to save people. So, Jesus releases the Antichrist – Lucifer, “the destroyer” from the abyss. (Revelation 9:1) The physical presence of the devil changes everything for the wicked. Human beings will now choose to obey Jesus or they will be forced to obey Lucifer. No other options exist. Jesus allows the devil to physically appear on Earth to force undecided people into a decision. When the devil commands worship, the conflict between Christ and the Antichrist will narrow down to the same question that Elijah asked Israel on Mt. Carmel: **“. . . How long will you waver between two opinions?”** (1 Kings 18:21)

During the fifth trumpet, the devil and his angels will torment wicked people, but they cannot kill a single person. **“They were not given**

power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.” (Revelation 9:5, 6) For five months, the devil will intimidate and torture the wicked who refuse to submit to his sovereign authority, but he is not allowed to kill anyone. So, when the sixth trumpet sounds in Heaven’s court, most of the people on Earth will have made their decision as to whom they will worship, but a few people will remain on the fence.

After the five months of torment are over, the fifth seal is broken and the martyrdom of the saints begins. When the sixth trumpet sounds, four powerful demons will be released on the earth. The devil’s angels will begin a search and destroy mission, killing people who oppose Lucifer’s claims. They will kill the non-religious wicked and righteous alike because both groups of people have refused to worship the devil who is masquerading as Almighty God. (Remember the discussion about three classes of people – the non-religious wicked, the religious wicked and the righteous in our study on Daniel 10-12.) **“And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.”** (Revelation 9:15,16) Because the Great Tribulation affects every family, this horrible slaughter will have destructive and redemptive value at the same time. When loved ones, separated by differences of opinion during the Great Tribulation, see the murderous slaughter of friends and family members who have lived godly lives, some of them will repent of their rebellion at the last minute and take their stand for Christ. The blood of martyrs will purchase many precious converts for Christ. This is why Jesus sacrifices one-third of His saints. He is willing to sacrifice millions of saints to save one soul. Jesus Himself was a sacrifice for us and He will use His faithful followers as sacrifices to save as many people as possible!

There are several profound points here. First, Jesus has predetermined the number of martyrs that will die. He knows when the last person will make his decision. Once the last decision is made, the martyrdom stops and the seventh trumpet sounds. **“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise [from His throne of intercession]. There will be a time of distress [wrath, as in seven bowls] such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people – everyone whose name**

is found written in the Book [of Life] – will be delivered [from martyrdom].” (Daniel 12:1, insertion mine) Jesus will declare: **“Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.”** (Revelation 22:11)

The second point is even more profound. It is hard to comprehend the martyrdom of millions of saints for the benefit of a few people who will choose salvation at the last minute. In other words, if the *sacrifice* of 500,000,000 saints produces just a few converts to Christ during the last moments of grace, then the sacrifice is worth it to Jesus. This shows the value He places on each human being. When God’s children begin to understand that 500,000,000 martyrs are worth as few as ten converts to Jesus, then we faintly begin to realize what the Father gave the world when He gave us Jesus. The sacrifice of Jesus is of greater value than the sum total of the human race! But, **“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.”** (John 3:16, 17)

The third profound point concerns the destructive/redemptive outcome of the sixth trumpet. By killing one-third of the human race, the devil gains what he has wanted from the day that Adam and Eve sinned, namely, dominion over mankind. Jesus allows the devil to kill the non-religious opposition as well as many saints. The end result is that Earth will be divided into two distinct camps of people: people worshiping the Lamb and people worshiping the lamb-like beast. Even though it appears on Earth that “Almighty God” (Lucifer) is in control, Jesus controls and limits Lucifer’s operations because Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus is in control of this drama and He has a few more lessons to demonstrate before bringing the drama to a close. The sacrifice of martyrs ends a 6,000 year old offer. When the last human being makes his choice, like the door on Noah’s ark, the offer of salvation from the penalty of sin closes.

Revenge

The martyrs cried out in a loud voice, **‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the Earth and avenge our blood?’** The martyrdom of the saints will occur over a period of about seven months. (This timing will be discussed in the chapter about the Seven Trumpets.) During this seven month time period, the devil will set up his one world church (called the image and

the harlot), and he will require everyone to convert to this new religion or be killed. **“He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.”** (Revelation 13:15-17)

We will discuss the image and the mark of the beast at length in our study on Revelation 13. For now, consider the point that a third of the saints will perish when the fifth seal is broken because they will refuse to worship the image or receive the mark of the beast. The blood of these martyrs will cry out for justice, and the wicked will be brought to justice after the seventh trumpet sounds. **“The nations were angry; and your wrath [the seven bowls] has come. The time has come for judging [avenging] the dead [martyrs], and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great – and for destroying those who destroy the Earth.”** (Revelation 11:18, insertions mine) Notice how Jesus brings the wicked murderers to justice! He gives the bloodthirsty murderers blood to drink and the angels of Heaven declare the Lord righteous for extracting this horrible revenge! **“The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: ‘You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.’ And I heard the altar respond: ‘Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.’ ”** (Revelation 16:4-7)

The White Robe

“Then each of them [the martyrs] was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer . . .” Believe it or not, an enormous amount of encouragement is in this passage. Let us consider the point in time when this occurs. When the fifth seal is broken, the saints have endured more than a thousand days of great tribulation. They will be weary, deathly ill, imprisoned for their loyalty and faith, or suffering from injuries resulting from torture and persecution. As the saints see the misery of the world and the ugly conflict between good and evil, many of them would rather die than to go forward for another year.

Because Jesus said, “My grace is sufficient for you,” the saints do not fear death. **“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”** (Psalm 23:4) At that time, many of the saints will, like Job, be living on God’s grace and hanging on to life by the hour. The devil’s four angels will be allowed to murder those saints who Jesus has determined should be released from their body of suffering. **“If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed.”** The devil’s forces will appear to have achieved a great victory, but in reality, the death of these saints is God’s will! Jesus will accomplish two things through their sacrificial death. First, as stated already, the martyrdom of these saints will impress a few of the undecided to take their stand for Christ. Second, Jesus allows these faithful warriors to rest from their labors. The martyrs are assured of two things: First, they can say, **“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”** (2 Timothy 4:7, 8) Second, they will be comforted knowing that they have been sealed with the seal of God, and they will eagerly await to receive the promised white robe. The martyrs will calmly go to their death standing firm on the Word of God and holding tightly to their faith in Jesus. They truly rest in peace awaiting the glorious resurrection that “lies just ahead.” **“‘Then I heard a voice from Heaven say, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.’”** (Revelation 14:13)

Summary

Our examination of the fifth seal ends with the profound affirmation of a truth. Faith in Jesus means a complete surrender to go, to be, and to do all that Jesus asks *at any cost*. Following Jesus and living by faith is so contrary to our fallen nature. It is humanly impossible to love our enemies, but Jesus died for us while we were His enemies. (Romans 5:10) It is so hard to stand alone for what is right, but Jesus stood alone in Pilate’s judgment hall for us. (Matthew 27) It is so hard to be completely honest and true, but Jesus came from Heaven and withstood endless scorn to demonstrate the truth about God the Father. (John 17) It is so hard to be submissive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, but Jesus was tempted in all points as we are without sinning. (Hebrews 4:15) It is so hard to be different when the pressure to “go along” with the crowd is so great. (Matthew 7:13) Following Jesus and living by faith are the most

difficult experiences known to the human race. Why do you think ancient Israel failed? Why did the Catholic Church fail? Why has Protestantism failed? When the majority of people in any religious organization displaces faith with presumption, that religious system falls from grace and it becomes a prison of darkness. (Matthew 23:27)

The gospel of Jesus is not an intellectual assent to truth. The gospel of Jesus is a declaration of our true position and condition before God. The gospel of Jesus is an explanation of the terms and conditions for salvation. The gospel of Jesus is a clarion call to overcome sin through the power of Christ. Paul wrote, **“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”** (Romans 1:16-17) The gospel of Jesus proclaims there is abundant grace to do the impossible if we are willing to submit to it! (2 Corinthians 12:9) In fact, there is strength enough, if and when the time comes, to go to our death for Christ if that is God’s will. (Revelation 13:10) Jesus has given us a perfect example of loving our enemies and living by faith.

By zooming forward in time to the fifth seal, we have been able to examine the difference between faith and presumption. The drama of martyrdom completes the story. The end result is that we are in an excellent position *right now* to understand the first seal. Now, we can see where faith in Jesus will take us. The fifth seal allows us to see “around the bend.” We can see why Jesus needs people who will put complete faith in Him so that He can use our life and death, as necessary, to accomplish the salvation of those around us! The fifth seal declares the meaning of biblical faith. The fifth seal unmasks the deception of presumption. People who live by faith are partakers of divine power! **“For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”** (1 John 5:4, 5)

Seal #6 – A Campaign of Victory – The Glory of Jesus Exposed

“I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a

strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to 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 their wrath has come, and who can stand?’ ” (Revelation 6:12-17)

The sixth seal closes the campaigns of the first five seals in a show of power, brilliance and glory that would dwarf the simultaneous detonation of all the world’s atomic bombs. When Jesus appears, He will rescue the righteous and destroy the wicked. The false prophet (Lucifer) and his Crisis Government (the beast of Revelation 13:1) will be captured alive and thrown into the lake of burning sulfur. **“The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.”** (Revelation 19:20) The special body which Lucifer will “assume” when he comes out of the spirit world will be burned up in this lake of burning sulfur, along with the bodies of the wicked who participated in his government. God will give Lucifer a body at the beginning of the fifth trumpet so that he might physically appear before the human race. This body will be destroyed at the Second Coming, which will effectively return Lucifer to his previous location – the abyss, or spirit world. (Revelation 9:1-3; 20:1-3) Meanwhile, the rest of the wicked will be destroyed at the Second Coming with a single command that comes out of the mouth of Jesus. They will not be burned up. **“The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.”** (Revelation 19:21)

Two distinct groups of people will see the appearing of Jesus. The population of Earth at that time will be quite small. The saints, barely alive and clothed with tattered rags, will tremble at the majesty and grandeur of Jesus. They will cry out, “. . . Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.” (Isaiah 25:9) The wicked will tremble at the majesty and grandeur of Jesus, and an overwhelming fear of justice will engulf their hate filled souls. **“Then the kings of the Earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to 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 their wrath has come, and who can stand?’ ”** (Revelation 6:15)

In the coming study about the seven bowls, you will learn that the appearing of Jesus occurs over a period of ten days. The sign of His appearing will be a cloud in the eastern sky. (Revelation 16:12) As He draws nearer to Earth, the cloud will grow larger and the sky will become more violent until the rider on the white horse and His army fill the whole sky, from horizon to horizon. **“For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”** (Matthew 24:27) The lightning and thunder within the approaching cloud of glory will grow in intensity until the armies of Earth are paralyzed with fear. **“Every heart will melt and every hand go limp; every spirit will become faint and every knee become as weak as water.”** (Ezekiel 21:7) Unlike the local sightings of Lucifer during the fifth trumpet, the appearing of Jesus will not be a local event. **“Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the Earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.”** (Revelation 1:7)

Because Earth rotates on its axis in a counterclockwise direction, any object approaching Earth from space appears first in the eastern sky. As Earth rotates beneath His swelling cloud of glory, the people of Earth will have several days to look up and see Jesus approaching. **“At that time the *sign* of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the Earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.”** (Matthew 24:30, italics mine) **“Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.”** (Daniel 12:12)

The Day of the Lord

King David wrote about the great day of the Lord’s appearing saying, **“The Earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry. Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it. He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet. He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him – the dark rain clouds of the sky. Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced, with hailstones and bolts of lightning.”** (Psalms 18:7-12) Joel wrote about the great day of the Lord’s vengeance saying, **“The Lord thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty are those who obey his command. The day of the Lord is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?”** (Joel 2:11)

When the sixth seal is broken, Revelation 6:12 indicates there will be a great earthquake. This global earthquake will cause our planet to begin quivering with violent tremors. This earthquake will grow in intensity and disaster – ultimately making the islands disappear and leveling the mountains! **“No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on Earth, so tremendous was the quake. . . . Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.”**

(Revelation 16:18, 20) As this earthquake shatters the crust of Earth, there will be a special resurrection of selected people. Jesus will fulfill the promise He made two thousand years ago to resurrect the people who participated in His crucifixion. When the chief priests and religious rulers are awakened, words will not be able to describe the terror and anxiety of the leaders who demanded Jesus’ death. When they see the Righteous One they condemned as a blasphemer now sitting beside the Father, their shame and self-loathing will be indescribable. Remember the conversation between Jesus and the high priest on that Friday morning, April 7, A.D. 30? **“The high priest said to him, ‘I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.’ ‘Yes, it is as you say,’ Jesus replied. ‘But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of Heaven.’”** (Matthew 26:63, 64) Even the Roman soldiers who pierced the body of Jesus and divided His garment will be resurrected to see the majesty of “The Lamb of God.” (Revelation 1:7)

The Father Comes with Jesus

Many people overlook the fact that when the Second Coming occurs, the Father comes to Earth with Jesus! What could keep the Father away? Who has given more for our redemption than the Father and the Son?

Look again at the words of Jesus to the high priest, **“In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of Heaven.”** (Matthew 26:64)

Compare this verse with the cry of the wicked, **“They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from [a] the face of him who sits on the throne and [b] from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their [plural] wrath has come, and who can stand?’”** (Revelation 6:16, 17, insertions mine) Also, consider this verse: **“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings [plural] from the East.”** (Revelation 16:12) When we examine the seven bowls, we will discover why the Father and Son are called “the Kings from the East.” For now, consider these two points: Jesus told His accusers that He would be sitting at the right hand of the Father

and coming on the clouds of Heaven. Furthermore, we know that any object approaching Earth from space appears in the east, so it is not hard to conclude that the Father and Son are the Kings from the east. The Father and the Son will appear in a light that will be brighter than a welder's arc. The righteous will tremble with awe and respect, but the wicked will run for cover faster than cockroaches hiding from light. The display of Jesus' glory at the Second Coming will eclipse the powerful display of authority that He demonstrated on Mount Sinai. **"When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet [voice] and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, 'Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.'"** (Exodus 20:18, 19, insertion mine)

Saints Rescued First

The Second Coming of Jesus will be marked with glory, redemption and destruction. Jesus will reveal His wrath against sin and sinners in a never to be forgotten display of sovereign glory. Jesus will reveal His unfailing love for the people who put their faith in Him by calling the righteous dead to life and gathering up all the saints to meet Him in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17) In our coming study about the seven bowls, we will learn that the righteous will be gathered from Earth to meet the Lord in the air *before* the Lord destroys the wicked with the sharp sword that comes out of His mouth. The wicked will witness the redemption of the saints, and the righteous of all ages will see the destruction of the wicked with their own eyes. **"Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked."** (Psalm 91:8, KJV) The rescue of the righteous and the destruction of the wicked will cause a new wave of glory and praise for Jesus. Perhaps this song will be repeated by the saints many times. **"They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: 'Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.'"** (Revelation 15:2-4)

Look at the dimensions surrounding the life of Jesus. He experienced false arrest, accusations of blasphemy, torture, humiliation and death at the hands of men. He experienced subjection and the second death (the penalty for sin) at the hands of the Father. Because He went through these experiences without sinning, He alone is worthy to exonerate God

and redeem man! At the Second Coming, He will show His true identity: Almighty God. Is there anyone else like Him? The Second Coming will be the greatest epiphany ever seen. The glory of Jesus, His Eternal Majesty, as King of kings and Lord of lords, the King of Everlasting Glory will be revealed. When we see the love, the life and experience of Jesus, we will realize there is no one in the universe like Him. It is only right that a full revelation of Jesus will take place. The Father wants the universe to know that Jesus is not a lesser God than Himself. What a gracious Father! There is no jealousy for highest honor among the members of the Godhead. Jesus has the same attributes as the Father and the Father will be delighted beyond words to have this glorious information disclosed.

Set Your Clock

I like to think of the Second Coming as an inaugural process that takes 1,335 days to complete. The inaugural calendar is divided into two segments. The first segment consists of “seven first plagues” and the last segment consists of “seven last plagues.”

The Great Tribulation

|----- 1335 Days -----|
 X-----1260 Days-----X -- 4---|-----70 Days-----|X

Seven First Plagues

Seven Last Plagues

Chart 10.6

Many people argue that no one knows the day or hour of Christ's return. **“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”** (Matthew 24:36) Jesus did say that no one knows the day or hour of His return (and this includes me). However, once the Great Tribulation begins, the date of Christ's return will no longer be a secret because Jesus has given us a comprehensive timetable of end time events in the books of Daniel and Revelation. *This is why Jesus put eighteen prophetic time periods in these two books.* You will be able to start your countdown clock for the appearing of Jesus with the first display of His sovereign authority. This display will consist of the following five physical events:

1. Flashes of lightning
2. Mysterious voices saying things
3. Peals of thunder
4. Global earthquake

5. Fiery hail

This display of sovereign power will occur three times. Look at Chart 10.6 and notice three instances of the letter “X.” (Revelation 8:5, 11:19, 16:18)

The first “X” marks the breaking of the fourth seal. The sovereignty of Jesus will be declared throughout Earth by a series of five physical phenomena. The first “X” marks (a) the beginning of the judgment of the living, (b) the beginning of the Great Tribulation, and (c) the beginning of the seven trumpets (seven first plagues). These phenomena will arrest the attention of mankind. Christ’s second display of sovereign power occurs 1,260 days later. Once again, the same five physical phenomena will declare the sovereignty of Jesus.

The second “X” marks (a) the close of His judgment bar, and (b) the beginning of the seven bowls (seven last plagues). This display of power will indicate that Jesus has terminated His intercession for sinners. He has judged mankind and determined who will inherit Earth and who will be destroyed. (The four days shown on the chart represent the 3.5 days that the Two Witnesses lie in the street of the great city which will be covered in our study on the Two Witnesses.) The third display of sovereign power marks the close of 6,000 years of sin.

The last “X” marks the Second Coming of Jesus. The same five physical phenomena also attend the Second Coming and these phenomena contribute to the termination of life on planet Earth. The wicked will be slain by fire or sword and the righteous will be taken to Heaven. Lucifer and his angels will be returned to the abyss. Earth will be desolate for one thousand years of sabbatical rest – the seventh millennium.

Now that you have some idea of when Jesus declares His sovereignty, take a few moments to read the following texts. After you have examined each passage, make sure that you can associate each passage with its “X” in Chart 10.6, and while you are reading, look for the five physical phenomena just mentioned.

Censer Cast Down

The first declaration of sovereignty marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation: **“Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the Earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them. The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there**

came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.” (Revelation 8:5-7)

Seventh Trumpet

The second declaration of sovereignty marks the end of God’s mercy and salvation and the beginning of the seven bowls: **“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.” Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.”** (Revelation 11:15, 19)

Seventh Bowl

The third declaration of sovereignty marks the end of 6,000 years of sin. The wicked will be destroyed and the land will rest from the works of sin for a Sabbath millennium: **“The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, “It is done!” Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on Earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.”** (Revelation 16:17-21)

After reviewing these passages, it is clear that the five physical events are not random in nature. In fact, they are identical in all three cases. Because the same events occur three times at strategic moments during the Great Tribulation, we know that Jesus is deliberately making a show of power to the people on Earth. Each declaration of power evidently grows in intensity because the final declaration of Christ’s sovereignty destroys everything and everyone on Earth. Jesus will totally devastate the earth. It will be made uninhabitable, at the Second Coming. **“See, the day of the Lord is coming – a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger – to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners**

within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.” (Isaiah 13:9-11)

Summary

The breaking of the sixth seal will be a revelation of the glory of Jesus. He will have all power and authority. He will destroy His enemies and rescue His children. I can think of one more reason (and I am sure there are many more) why the sixth seal is a revelation of the glory of Jesus. Before I present this reason, let us review the setting.

Before sin began in Heaven, Jesus identified closely with the angels by living among them in the form of an angel. His name was Michael, the archangel. (For a more complete study on the subject of Michael, please see Chapter 2 of my book *Jesus, The Alpha and The Omega*.) Lucifer, the highest of created beings, became jealous of Michael because he wanted the position, worship and adoration that belonged to Michael. Because of jealousy, Lucifer became anti-Christ. A third of the angels listened to Lucifer’s misery and joined in his rebellion. At that time, the glory that belonged to Jesus was shrouded because He lived among the angels as one of them, that is, as their companion. (Hebrews 1:9) Thousands of years later, Jesus came to Earth to live among us in the form of a man. A few people received Him as Messiah, but most of the people rejected Him. **“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”** (John 1:11) To the people on Earth who saw Him, He looked like a very ordinary man. (Isaiah 53:2) When Jesus was on Earth, the glory that belonged to Jesus was shrouded by His humanity. The purpose of the seven seals is to disclose Jesus. During the Great Tribulation, the glory of Jesus will be shrouded from mankind until He physically appears at the Second Coming. Jesus does not want His creatures worshiping His power, position, or glory! He does not want to be a superstar or an icon! Jesus wants to live among His created beings so that we can know and love God. The sixth seal is a revelation of Jesus’ glory and it proves forever that Jesus has the same glory and authority as the Father.

Artists depict Jesus on the cross wearing a loincloth because it would be too offensive to show what really happened. The Romans stripped criminals of all their clothing so that their shame would haunt them in the life hereafter. Jesus was willing to bear our shame. He was disrobed

and publically humiliated because He loved us enough to die in our place. Amazingly, Jesus will be disrobed once again! This time, there will be no shame. We will see Him for who He is – Almighty God. **“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”** (Isaiah 9:6) **“Who is He, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty – He is the King of glory.”** (Psalm 24:10) This is why the sixth seal is a revelation of the glory of Jesus.

Seal #7 – A Campaign of Knowledge – The Deity of Jesus Exposed

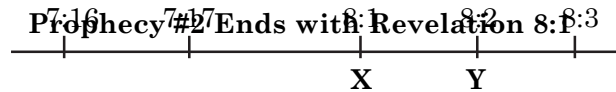
“When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in Heaven for about half an hour.” (Revelation 8:1)

Even though the sentence in Revelation 8:1 is part of the second apocalyptic prophecy in Revelation (7:1-8:1), the seventh seal will be discussed in this chapter because conceptually, the seven seals belong together. Many people are confused by the seventh seal because it seems disconnected from the first six seals. There is a good reason for this. Rule One of apocalyptic prophecy says, *“Each apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning and ending point in time and events occur in the order given.”* We see this rule at work in the apocalyptic prophecy of the seven seals. Jesus was found worthy to receive the Book of Life in 1798, then He broke the first seal, then the second, etc. The first apocalyptic prophecy in Revelation begins with Revelation 4:1 (the beginning point in time for this prophecy is 1798) and this prophecy ends with the sixth seal, which is, the Second Coming in Revelation 6:17 (the ending point in time for this prophecy). Because the *next* verse after Revelation 6:17 does not happen chronologically *after* the Second Coming, the order in Revelation’s text is broken. Therefore, according to Rule One, this forces the beginning of a new prophecy. In other words, the sealing of the 144,000 (Revelation 7:1) does not happen *after* the kings and generals of the Earth hide in the caves and cry out for the mountains to fall on them, so Prophecy #2 begins with Revelation 7:1.

6:15	6:16	6:17	7:1	7:2
<u>Prophecy #1 Ends with Revelation 6:17</u>				
		X	Y	

X = verse 6:17– Second Coming

Y = verse 7:1 – 144,000 sealed – chronological order broken –
Prophecy #2 begins.



X = verse 8:1 – Seventh seal

Y = verse 8:2 – Seven trumpets begin – chronological order broken –
Prophecy #3 begins

Chart 10.7

Look at Chart 10.7 and notice how the second apocalyptic prophecy begins with Revelation 7:1 and it proceeds in chronological order through Revelation 8:1. Then, in Revelation 8:2, the chronological order is broken and the third apocalyptic prophecy (the seven trumpets) begins.

Revelation 8:1 contains one short sentence describing the opening of the seventh seal. Of course, if you know nothing about the seals, one sentence does not offer much. Centuries ago, when the Bible was divided into chapters and verses for purposes of reference and study, translators did not know what to do with the sentence describing the seventh seal. This one sentence does not seem to fit within Revelation 7 which deals with the 144,000, and it does not belong with the seven trumpets. Since they could not physically relocate the sentence to the end of Chapter 6 so that the seventh seal would follow after the sixth seal, they decided to make this sentence the first verse of Chapter 8. (Of course, they did not know about the rules of interpretation because Daniel had not been unsealed, but to their credit, they did not tamper or alter the order of the text that John wrote! They did not move this one short sentence from its all important location!)

The second prophecy in Revelation (Revelation 7:1 through 8:1) perfectly conforms to Rule One. There are three events in this prophecy. (See A, C, D in Chart 10.8.) God put these three events together in one apocalyptic story because the rules of interpretation produce a matrix. We have seen in our study on Daniel how this matrix provides solutions to timing that cannot be discovered otherwise and the same is true in

Revelation. The rules produce the matrix and the matrix reveals the timing. Notice the chronological flow in the second apocalyptic prophecy:

Apocalyptic Prophecy #2: Revelation 7:1 to 8:1

Seals 4

5

6

7

A |-----Great Tribulation----- B--C-----1,000 Years-----D

- A. The sealing of the 144,000 just before the global earthquake
- B. The Second Coming – sixth seal
- C. The numberless multitude that will come out of the Great Tribulation are seen standing before the throne in Heaven
- D. The seventh seal broken / Book of Life opened

Chart 10.8

After studying Chart 10.8, you might ask, “How do we know the seventh seal is broken at the end of the millennium?” The answer might surprise you.

- First, the Bible indicates the Book of Life is separate and distinct from other books in Heaven.
- Second, the Bible indicates the Book of Life is opened once, at the end of the one thousand years. **“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”** (Revelation 20:12)
- Third, evidence was presented in Segments I and II of this chapter showing why the Book of Life is the book sealed with seven seals. So, the Book of Life is opened when the seventh seal is broken.
- Fourth, the seventh seal is broken open after the numberless multitude have been taken to Heaven and are seen standing around the throne. Consider the timing of this verse: **“After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. . . .**

Then one of the elders asked me, ‘These in white robes – who are they, and where did they come from?’ I answered, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’ ” (Revelation 7:9,13, 14)

So, the saints in verses 9-14 came out of the Great Tribulation and are seen standing around the throne. Then, the seventh seal is opened in verse 8:1. The location of verse 8:1 forces the seventh seal to be opened *after* the numberless multitude are in Heaven.

When we align the matrix of events which Rule One produces, the opening of the Book of Life occurs at the end of the millennium and the breaking of the seventh seal occurs after the Second Coming, so the seventh seal has to be broken at the end of the millennium. This conclusion harmonizes with the idea that the Book of Life is sealed until the end of the thousand years. Once the seventh seal is broken, everything written in the Book of Life will be exposed! **“If anyone’s name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”** (Revelation 20:15)

	1798	1844	Today	Great Tribulation	1,000 Years	White Throne
Prophecy #3 Six Trumpets				1234 5 6		
Prophecy #2 144,000			A	1,335 Days	B	C
Prophecy #1 Six Seals	1 2	3		4 5 6		

Revelation’s Matrix Begins to Grow

Chart 10.9

- A = The sealing of the 144,000
- B = The numberless multitude standing around the throne
- C = The seventh seal

The Matrix Grows

In Segment III, we discovered that the timing of the first seal is a critical

matter. Because some things have to be understood before they can make sense and other things have to make sense before they can be believed, the books of Daniel and Revelation are hard to understand at first. God is very clever. He had the cryptic books of Daniel and Revelation written out thousands of years ago so they would be included and widely distributed as part of the Bible. But, God had them written in such a way that no one could figure out what they meant until the book of Daniel would be unsealed at the appointed time of the end. However, once the rules of interpretation were discovered, the books of Daniel and Revelation become perfectly harmonious because the four rules produce a matrix that determines the timing for everything written in these two books! We saw the value of this matrix when we were able to determine that the seventh seal on the Book of Life would be broken at the end of the millennium.

Please examine Chart 10.9 again and notice an interesting feature. Prophecy #1 in Revelation (Revelation 4:1-6:17) covers six seals, and then Prophecy #2 begins with a discussion about the 144,000, but ends with the seventh seal. (Revelation 7:1-8:1) The same thing happens with the seven trumpets! Prophecy #3 (Revelation 8:2-9:21) discusses six trumpets, and then Prophecy #4 begins with a discussion on the Two Witnesses. (Revelation 10:1-11:14) Then, Prophecy #5, which describes the seventh trumpet, follows Prophecy #4. The separation of the seventh seal from the six seals and the seventh trumpet from the six trumpets has been a mystery for centuries. I believe God had Revelation written this way to force us into using valid rules of interpretation. Then, when the book of Daniel would be unsealed and valid rules of interpretation discovered, the all important matrix would reveal the timing of each event presented in Daniel, as well as Revelation.

Great White Throne Judgment

At the end of the seventh millennium, the holy city, New Jerusalem, will descend from Heaven with all the saints inside. (Revelation 21:2) After the city comes to rest, the wicked will be resurrected from their graves. (Revelation 20:5) The wicked, from the time of Cain to the last person who was killed at the Second Coming, will number in the tens of billions. Keep in mind that 99% of the wicked did not see the Second Coming because they were sound asleep. On that sober day, two great classes of people will gaze at each other. The saints, already a thousand years old but free of the aging process, will see the miserable and degenerate condition of the wicked. The wicked will rise from their graves just as they went to their graves. They will be astonished as they study the gleaming walls of New Jerusalem. The wicked will see family members,

friends and individuals who they regarded as poor, weak, unsophisticated and uneducated. Generals, kings, presidents, scholars, wealthy tycoons, religious leaders and greedy employers will be found standing outside the city. (Matthew 7:14; 19:24)

Jesus will resurrect the wicked for three reasons:

1. First, He will confront them with the results of His judgment bar. Jesus will have a face to face meeting with each of His created beings. He wants every wicked person to know that He personally investigated every record and He wants every wicked person to know why that person was not granted eternal life. To put His investigation and decision beyond controversy, Jesus will open the books of deeds and present the evidence to each person, showing each wicked person the record of his life. Each wicked person will be forced to face unvarnished truth. **“For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”** (Ecclesiastes 12:14) **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”** (2 Corinthians 5:10) Jesus will conclude this segment of the Great White Throne judgment by saying that He could not save anyone who committed the unpardonable sin, and the sound of His gavel will declare a finished work. The wicked were denied eternal life because they rejected the authority of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 12:31, 32) After reviewing the evidence and hearing Jesus’ decision, the wicked will kneel out of fear and confess with a heart like Esau, **“In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength. . . .”** (Isaiah 45:24) Remember, Esau regretted that he sold his birthright for a dish of food, but his heart remained unchanged. (Hebrews 12:17)
2. The second reason Jesus resurrects the wicked is so they can provide restitution. During the millennium, the saints were required to go over the records of the wicked and determine the amount of restitution each wicked person must pay. **“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!”** (1 Corinthians 6:2, 3) **“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus**

and because of the word of God. . . .” (Revelation 20:4)

This will shock some people, but the golden rule is iron clad. It cannot be violated. “As you did unto others, the same will be done unto you – with additional penalties.” Jesus said, **“For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”** (Matthew 7:2) The doctrine of judicial equilibrium is a marvelous study. Basically, it teaches that whenever we do wrong, God requires that we make every effort to restore the damage and make it right. If we refuse to make things right, God will see to it that restitution is extracted at the appointed time, even if we are unwilling. This is why Paul wrote, **“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”** (Romans 12:19) During the millennium, the victims of crimes will determine the amount of restitution that will be extracted from their wicked assailants, and the currency of restitution will be paid in full through suffering in a lake of burning sulfur. The wicked will burn and suffer according to the decisions made by their victims. God’s law demands it. Contrary to what most Christians believe today, God does not forgive sin. He is willing to transfer the guilt of sin away from the sinner, but in God’s economy, sin *always* requires atonement. Only after restitution has been totally paid will the wicked be allowed to perish. Many wicked people have committed horrible crimes and gone to their grave thinking they got away with murder. Can you imagine their surprise when they learn they have been awakened from the sleep of death to provide restitution for their deeds by suffering? Do not forget, the saints will also pass judgment on Lucifer and each demon. The culpability of Lucifer and his demons will be completely exposed and the saints will judge them during the millennium. In the end, justice will be served to achieve the perfect equilibrium that God’s wrath requires.

3. Of course, the third reason for the resurrection of the wicked is the breaking of the seventh seal. This will be the only moment in the history of the universe when everyone who had life is alive. Billions of people and angels will be present. The wicked will be positioned outside the city with Lucifer and his angels, and the saints will be positioned inside the city with the angels of God. At this point in time, Jesus has something to say to everyone (literally everyone who has ever lived). When Jesus breaks the

seventh seal, He will show angels and humans alike that He is an Eternal God, a member of the eternal Trinity, possessing every attribute of God. As such, He was responsible for the creation of everyone present and that He was not willing that anyone should perish. He will explain that He was willing to die for angel or human before He created them. The love of Jesus for His creation will be revealed to every being that draws breath. This touching revelation takes half an hour. Perhaps the presentation will be presented with clips of events that actually happened, like a giant movie, using the sky as a giant screen. Everyone will understand the magnitude of Christ's love. Everyone will know that He is God. Everyone will see the Creation, the Fall, the Redemption and the Restoration. Everyone will see that Jesus truly loved His children and that He was willing to die – from the beginning – for anyone that sinned without defiance.

After the seventh seal is broken and the half hour presentation comes to an end, Jesus will then show what the Father knew from the beginning. The books of record and the Book of Life will be found to be identical. The choices of angels and humans alike were recorded as they happened, and even though the Father foreknew the rise and price of sin, He authorized the creation of life anyway. (Hebrews 1:2) After the Book of Life has been opened, seven eternal truths will be confirmed before the assembled host:

1. God has perfect foreknowledge. He does not use His foreknowledge to manipulate the choices and affections of His children. God treats and respects His children on the basis of infinite love.
2. God is love. Even though He foreknew the rise of sin and the price of redemption, He created children and gave them freedom anyway.
3. God grants the power of choice to His children. They are free to love Him and serve Him or they are free to hate Him and rebel against Him. God does not control or manipulate the choices of His children.
4. God's ways are not righteous because He arbitrarily declares Himself righteous. God's ways are righteous because He has been proven to be righteous during the presence of sin and rebellion. The Book of Life will prove that God uses His

omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence to insure the eternal rule of the law of love throughout His expanding universe. He does not use these incredible powers to secure His position on the throne.

5. God is unbelievably humble and unselfish. As God, Jesus was willing to forfeit His eternal existence so that the offspring of Adam and Eve might have the possibility of recovering all that was lost through sin.
6. God's government is based on principles of righteousness and justice. Because God is subject to His own unchangeable laws, Jesus agreed to die as a perfect substitute in man's place so that everyone who believed in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
7. Now that the knowledge of good and evil has become universal, people redeemed from the penalty of sin will forever use their influence to prevent sin from occurring again.

When the universe comprehends these demonstrated truths, the saints will fall on their faces before Jesus saying, Jesus is Great! Jesus is just too good and too great to describe. Singlehandedly, He exonerated the government of God and redeemed sinners from their sins! What a God! The angels of God will rejoice at this revelation of Jesus as they see the contents of the Book of Life. Everyone present knows that the Father's character has been revealed through Jesus. The saints and angels will fall on their faces before Jesus praising Him for His goodness and generosity to them. Saints and angels of God will declare again that Jesus is worthy! The Godhead can be trusted. The Godhead is worthy of nonnegotiable faith.

As saints and angels of God rejoice over the contents of the Book of Life, Lucifer, his demons and the wicked multitude are moved to anger. There is no one to blame for their position outside the city, but themselves. There is nothing they can do to save themselves from the suffering that is about to be extracted from their flesh. As they gaze on the glorious holy city and the rejoicing saints, they feel darkness, loneliness, despair, and strangely, their hatred for God rises. Lucifer seizes the moment, he marshals the mighty host to make war against Jesus, inspiring them to take the city by force: **"They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false**

prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” (Revelation 20:9, 10) This torment, which occurs day and night for ever and ever, reflects the demands of restitution. The wicked will suffer in full until their debt is paid in full. **“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”** (Revelation 21:8)

The book of Revelation indicates that Jesus will create a new Heaven and a new Earth. (Revelation 21:5) After doing this, Jesus will do something even greater! **“Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”** (1 Corinthians 15:24-26) Jesus will once again hand over His exceeding great authority to the Father so that He might live among His creation as one of us. What does this action say about the character of God? I can think of nothing other than this: God is love.

Chapter 10 Summary

Even though this chapter was broken into four segments, this has been a very long chapter. I hope you have found this information helpful. The next time you read through this chapter, it will make more sense because you will know the end from the beginning. The story of the seven seals is huge and I am very grateful for the opportunity to share the results of my investigation with you. The first apocalyptic prophecy in Revelation is dedicated to the seven seals because there is no grander topic than the revealing of all that Jesus is. He is worthy to receive worship, praise, honor, strength, glory, wisdom and power. Even in our wildest dreams, we could not have invented a God with the attributes of Jesus! He is more than we can possibly understand.

In summary, the Father wrote the Book of Life before life was created. He prerecorded the history of angels and humans. He then sealed the book with seven seals so that no one could view the contents of the book until the appropriate time. In 1798, Jesus was found worthy to receive the book and begin breaking the seals. As each seal is broken, a new revelation about Jesus occurs:

Seal 1: The salvation of Jesus

Seal 2: The teachings of Jesus

Seal 3: The judgment bar of Jesus

Seal 4: The authority of Jesus

Seal 5: The faith of Jesus

Seal 6: The glory of Jesus

Seal 7: The deity of Jesus

As we look at the prophetic matrix, the fourth seal is the next seal to be broken. This seal marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation. The stage is set and the hour is almost here for Earth's final curtain. For six thousand years, Earth has been a theater of conflict between good and evil. The drama of sin is almost over. We are very close to the Second Coming. The next revelation of Jesus will be awful and awesome at the same time. The declaration of His sovereignty will soon occur. (Remember the five physical phenomena?)

At the end of the seventh millennium, the drama of sin will come to a close when the seventh seal is broken and the contents of the Book of Life are exposed. Because the Book of Life will be found to be identical with the books of record, the Father will eternally silence the charge that He used His foreknowledge to manipulate the choices of His children and the outcome of events. The universe will see that even though God knows everything and has all power, He can be explicitly trusted to respect the power of choice that He grants to each of His children. Every question about His integrity, character and government will be resolved when the seventh seal is broken because an open Book of Life will say everything that needs to be said.