

December 2005 Broadcast Notes

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Title: Revelation Commentary
The Seven Seals - Part IV

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Begin Text:

Today, we continue our study on the seven seals. Thus far, we have examined seals 1 through 3.

As a matter of review, we have discussed how Jesus was found worthy in 1798 to receive the book sealed with seven seals. Then, Jesus broke the first seal and the Holy Spirit was "sent out" of Heaven's temple on a *campaign* to find people willing to accept and promote the truth that salvation comes through faith **alone** in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit motivated Protestants -- the new *trustees* of the gospel -- to share the gospel of Jesus.

Seal 2 was broken around the year 1800. The Holy Spirit moved upon Protestants to immediately form numerous Bible Societies. The Bible was rapidly translated into 112 languages between 1800 and 1844 and sacrificially distributed throughout the world. Today, only a few Bible societies remain. However, the Bible still has no equal. Each year, more Bibles are printed and distributed than any other book on Earth.

During the past 200 years, the net effect of the first two seals has been significant. But, Protestantism has not made a very big dent if you look at the population of the whole world. Estimates on the number of practicing Protestants today ranges from 300 to 700 million -- which is a mere 5% to 10% of the world's population. So, the gospel of Jesus as preached by Protestants isn't going very far very fast!

Seal 3

Rev 6:5 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.

Rev 6:6 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!"

Notice two things:

1. The rider has scales in his hand -- a symbol of judgment...
2. An offer of wages - though paid with food

Last month, I explained how the third seal was broken in 1844. The dating of the third seal involves three steps:

Step 1.

Paul announced that at an appointed time, the Father would put everything in Heaven and Earth under the authority of Jesus.

Eph 1:9 And he [the Father] made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

Eph 1:10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment -- to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

Heb 2:7 You [the Father] made him [Jesus] a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor

Heb 2:8 and put everything under his feet." In putting everything under him, God [the Father] left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present [A.D. 64] we do not see everything subject to him."

When Paul wrote the book of Hebrews (one of his last books), he knew that the exaltation of Jesus had not yet taken place. But, Paul knew that a time was coming when Jesus would be exalted and he also knew that after being exalted, Jesus would give back to the Father all of His authority, power and even His kingdom when sin's drama was finished!

1 Cor 15:24 Then the end [of sin's drama] will come, when he [Jesus] hands over the kingdom [of Earth] to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

1 Cor 15:25 For he [Jesus] must reign until he [Jesus] has put all his enemies under his feet.

1 Cor 15:26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

1 Cor 15:28 When he [Jesus] has done this, then the Son himself will be made **subject** to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all [everything]."

We know that Paul could not understand the book of Daniel because the book of Daniel was sealed up until the time of the end! In other words, Paul was shown many wonderful things about the exaltation of Jesus, but Paul did not know **the timing** of this matter because the timing is found only in the book of Daniel!

So, step 1 in dating the third seal centers around the exaltation of Jesus. When did it happen? 1798.

Step 2.

According to the book of Daniel, Jesus was exalted in 1798 and He was also given the kingdom of Earth at that time. We know from Daniel 7:10 that soon afterwards, the books of records were opened, that is judgment began.

Dan 7:13 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.

Dan 7:14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

Dan 7:10 "... The court was seated, and the books were opened."

We know that Daniel 7:10 occurred in 1798 because God linked a large event on Earth [the fall of the papacy] with this even larger event and more significant in Heaven. Therefore, the exaltation of Jesus which Paul predicted occurred in 1798. Paul also predicted that Jesus would conduct a cleansing of Heaven's temple near the end of the world! Before we read Paul's words, you should recall three things from our earlier study on Daniel 8:

a. Throughout the year, the Old Testament temple on Earth became defiled with the record of sin. Every time a lamb was offered, the blood (the evidence of guilt) was posted on the horns of the altar. Therefore, a cleansing of the temple was necessary each year to remove the record of sin. This cleansing took place on the Day of Atonement.

b. According to Daniel 8:14, the cleansing of Heaven's temple began 2,300 years after the 457 B.C. decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. This means that Jesus began to cleanse Heaven's temple in 1844.

c. The cleansing of Heaven's temple (the judgment bar of Christ) is a courtroom drama that takes place before billions of angels and 24 elders.

During the judgment bar, Jesus reviews the books of record and He examines the record of each person who has died. Then, He passes eternal judgment on that person. If the person being judged lived a life of rebellion against the Holy Spirit, his sins are upon his own head and the sinner must pay the penalty for sin.

If Jesus determines that a person lived in submission to the demands of the Holy Spirit (lived according to his faith in God), then his guilt is *transferred* onto the head of Lucifer, the scapegoat.

Note: This does not make Lucifer a savior. Rather, Lucifer is described as the scapegoat because He is responsible for the presence of sin and he must suffer death accordingly - not only for his own sins, but for the sins he caused others to commit. The guilt of the redeemed is transferred through the atoning blood of the Lord's goat to the head of the Scapegoat.

The point here is that (a) the guilt of sin is never forgiven, someone must pay for sin because sin is not justifiable and (b) the guilt of sin is assigned during the judgment bar of Christ and this assignment cleanses Heaven's temple of the guilt of sin by removing it from the temple and putting it where it ultimately belongs.

Since 1844, the cleansing of the temple in Heaven has been underway. (The judgment of the living will begin when the fourth seal is broken.)

On the basis of His perfect sacrifice and service to God and man, Jesus was found worthy to receive the kingdom of Earth. He was exalted in 1798 and 46 years later, He began to cleanse Heaven's temple. Paul did not know about 1798. Paul did not know about 1844. But, Paul did know that a time was coming when Jesus would be exalted and that He would conduct a Day of Atonement service for the whole world at the end of time. Notice his words:

Heb 6:19 We have this hope [in Jesus serving as our High Priest] as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain [the most holy place],

Heb 6:20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. . . ."

KJV - Heb 9:24 For Christ is not entered into the [holiest of] holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself,

now to appear in the presence of God [behind the veil] for us:

Heb 9:25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the [holiest] holy place every year with blood of others;

Heb 9:26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now >>once<< in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

2 Cor 5:10 "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."

Reviewing....

Step 1 in dating the breaking of the third seal centers around the exaltation of Jesus.

Step 2 requires an understanding of "soul sleep", the judgment of the dead and the date assigned in Daniel to cleansing Heaven's temple.

Step 3

Step 3 requires some understanding of historical events that occurred around 1844.

In 1844, the Holy Spirit was sent from Heaven to reveal the judgment of mankind on Earth. This discovery occurred during 1844 as a result of William Miller's failure. Look at the third seal again:

Rev 6:5 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.

Rev 6:6 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!"

Notice what happened on Earth as 1844 drew near:

William Miller (1782-1849)

The 1844 story begins on a Sunday morning in 1816, when the Holy Spirit changed the heart of Captain 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 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, Captain Miller agreed. A few weeks later, Miller was called upon to read the sermon one Sunday morning. About half way through the sermon on Isaiah 53, Miller was overcome with a personal realization of what he was reading.

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 sat down.

Many in the audience wept, too. The moving of the Spirit was overpowering that wonderful Sunday morning and from that day forward, William Miller was a changed man. He became a born-again believer in Jesus Christ and joined the Low Hampton Baptist church.

After his conversion 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.

Note: 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 the 1843 conclusion in 1818. Archibald Mason (1753-1831), of Wishawton, Scotland, also concluded the world would end "around 1844" during 1820.

It is not coincidental that more than twenty-five writers in Europe and the United States, having no collaboration or connection with William Miller, came to the conclusion that the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 would terminate around 1844.

Fifteen years after becoming a born-again Christian, Miller began to feel a strong burden to publicly share his discoveries in the Bible. An invitation from his nephew to speak to a small church group initiated Miller's ministry in August, 1831. Because Miller's views on the Second Coming were unusually specific, word soon spread. Miller's views gained the respect of those who heard him even though he was not an highly educated man. But, Miller was a very bright man, a keen thinker, well organized in his thoughts, thorough in his research and most of all, humble.

In 1833, he was licensed by a group of Baptist ministers so that he could preach in Baptist churches around Low Hampton. By 1844, Miller estimated that he had personally delivered some 4,500 lectures on Bible prophecy before a total of some 500,000 people. (The population of the USA in 1844 was less than 4 million.)

When you consider that Miller was about fifty years old when he began preaching, when you consider the physical demands of "horse and buggy" travel in those days and speaking to audiences without the benefit of a PA system, William Miller the evangelist has few peers in early American history.

William Miller was the "Billy Graham" of his day. Of course, as his popularity grew, so did resistance and ridicule. At the height of his ministry, historians calculate the Millerites (as his followers were called) numbered between fifty and one hundred thousand expectant people.

When Jesus did not appear in 1843 or 1844 as Miller predicted, Miller's credibility was ruined and he went to his grave five years later bearing the shame and stigma of "a false prophet." William Miller died in 1849, broken in health and finances. He sold his farm 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 thought "the sanctuary" in Daniel 8:14 was Earth itself and the cleansing of Earth would come through fire at the Second Coming.

But, the Spring and Fall of 1844 came and went. Jesus didn't appear and the Millerite movement imploded with bitter disappointment.

The Millerite fiasco caused many Protestant churches to disdain the study of prophecy and shun the foolishness of "future telling." As you might expect, when Jesus didn't arrive, most of the Millerites renounced their faith in the Bible and Miller.

A few Millerites sheepishly returned to their former churches. But thousands of disappointed souls refused to have anything further to do with any church. This confirmed the suspicions of those religious leaders who were antagonistic toward Miller: They said, "It is better to say nothing about the Bible than to mislead thousands of people away from Christ."

One small group Millerites did not throw in the towel and give up after Jesus did not appear on October 22. They returned to their Bibles to try to figure out what went wrong and they discovered the problem within a few days! 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. But, after carefully reviewing the books of Hebrews, Leviticus and Daniel, they concluded that Miller's teaching on the timing of the 2,300 years was correct, but the sanctuary to be cleansed was the true temple which is in Heaven.

In other words, they concluded that Jesus began cleansing **Heaven's temple** in 1844. This text caught their attention:

Heb 8:5 "They [**earthly priests**] serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven.... "

These Millerites reasoned that if the earthly temple was cleansed once a year, then the Heavenly must need cleansing too! This discovery ultimately produced the doctrine of parallel temples. From today's perch on history past, Miller's ministry and the bitter disappointment that followed served two grand purposes.

First, Miller brought attention to Daniel 8:14 as no one else in history ever has.

Second, the doctrine of parallel temples was discovered as a result of the Millerite disappointment.

This doctrine is one of five essential doctrines that is necessary to understand the books of Daniel and Revelation. The Holy Spirit accomplished an astounding success in 1844 even though it looked like an astounding disaster. After the Millerite disappointment dissipated, there were a few people on Earth who finally 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. They had rejected Miller's views and of course, anything that came out of Miller's failure was also rejected wholesale. But, out of the ashes of Miller's disappointment, a church group formed that would become known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

This church group was organized in 1863, in Michigan, about twenty years after Miller's disappointment. The story of William Miller and the formation of the Seventh Day Adventist church is germane to the breaking of the third seal because the Holy Spirit raised up a humble Baptist preacher to draw attention to the commencement of the judgment bar of Christ just like He used a Catholic monk (Martin Luther) to draw attention to justification through faith. (Romans 1:17)

Although I am not a Seventh Day Adventist, I am convinced that the Holy Spirit raised up the Seventh Day Adventist Church to assemble the five essential Bible doctrines. These doctrines are:

1. Luther's rediscovery of salvation through faith in Jesus,
2. The Congregationalist view of soul sleep
3. The Seventh Day Baptist view on the observance of God's seventh-day Sabbath
4. Miller's views on 1844 and the Second Coming
5. The discovery of God's use of parallel temples.

Adventists uniquely merged these five doctrines into a systematic system of understanding, but alas, I believe that Seventh Day Adventists, like Catholics and Baptists have not been willing to follow advancing light. Here is a true paradox: History proves that churches will form around a truth whose time has come, but once formed, they cannot move forward with truths that are revealed later on. In this sense, Seventh Day Adventists have followed in the footsteps of all Protestant churches. They have not been able to move forward with advancing light. The darkness which currently holds Adventists, Catholics, Baptists and the whole world captive will be realized when the fourth seal is broken!

History tells us that the advancement of truth comes with 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 out to the desert of rejection where often, you are alone with God. The Bible represents people as sheep for good reason.

Sheep like to flock together. They also tend to follow their leaders (political and religious) without thinking or studying through matters for themselves. Look around at the total sum of religious bamboozle that Hindus, Moslems, Catholics, Jews, Protestants, atheists and pagans believe today. Where did all of these goofy ideas about God come from? From spiritual leaders who are as blind as the laymen they guide. (Matthew 23:16)

Man'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. My point is that truth is not determined by majority vote or acceptance.

Fact is: At just the right time, at the end of the 2,300 years, the Holy Spirit 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 a man. (Revelation 4:7) This face indicates the Holy Spirit has an intelligent message from Jesus that mankind needs to understand. The scales in the hand of the rider indicate judgment - - the judgment bar of Christ has begun!

". . . 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! The third seal merges the doctrine of soul sleep, the cleansing of Heaven's temple, the worthiness of Jesus and the pre-Advent judgment into one comprehensive prophetic fulfillment.

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)

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)

In 1844, Jesus began an examination of every dead person. Perhaps Jesus began with Abel, the first man to die. For the past 161 years, Jesus has been

reviewing and passing judgment on each dead person. Of course, Jesus does not need 161 years to judge the records of the dead, but the angels and the twenty-four elders need this lengthy period of time.

The angels and the elders are getting a "college education" on the huge dimensions of God's ways, His character and government. They are studying, observing and learning about God's constitution, His branches of government, His grace, wisdom, mercy and most of all, how love is the balance between mercy and justice.

Their lectures include real-time investigations of dead people and real-time applications of God's justice and mercy. Every life record presented before Jesus and the watching host is a unique story. The angels and the 24 elders are beholding 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 "thrones were arranged and the Ancient of Days took His seat . . . and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. . . ."

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. Because many Bibles had been distributed around the world by 1844, this message became "mission possible."

Just 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 19 years of endeavor, that the Lord's promise has proven faithful and true.

Rule Three says we must 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]." (2 Chronicles 2:10, italics mine)

Solomon offered Hiram food as **wages** because food was of greater value than silver or gold. The building of the Lord's temple in Jerusalem would be an enormous undertaking and Solomon did not have the building materials, but he had plenty of 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. (Ask North Korea)

The parallel here, is that since 1844, Jesus has been offering wages to those who are willing to work for Him, willing to build up the knowledge of His heavenly temple on Earth. This is not easy work, but it is rewarding work.

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 nor easy task. Again, I can testify from personal experience, this is the most difficult assignment I have ever had.

An offer of wages goes with an understanding of the breaking of the third seal. Jesus wants the world to hear and understand that He has been exalted by the Father and that He is judging the dead. Furthermore, the judgment of the living is coming soon. Jesus wants the news spread far and wide and He is willing to pay good wages "in food" to anyone willing to carry the news!

Now, we come to **Seal 4**. This is the next seal to open.

Rev 6:7 When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!"

Rev 6:8 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."

One does not have to be a Bible scholar to see that when the fourth seal is broken, the results will be deadly. In fact, the rider's name is personified as "Death" and the grave (Greek: Hades) like a companion vulture, follows close behind to swallow up the slain.

The Bible says that Death will have power to kill twenty-five percent of Earth's population. This rider will kill with God's four deadly judgments: Sword, famine, plague and wild beasts. The question rises, "Has the fourth seal already been broken? If so, when did God deliberately kill **twenty-five percent** of Earth's population with His four deadly judgments?"

Before I respond to this question, please consider two statements spoken by God Himself. These passages are profound because God identifies four deadly judgments and justifies their use. The first passage is a selection of verses taken out of "The Song of Moses." The Israelites were required to memorize and sing this song. (Incidentally, this song will also be sung in Heaven! See Revelation 15:3.) And, the second statement was spoken to Ezekiel just before King Nebuchadnezzar was sent to plunder and totally destroy Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Statement 1: The Song of Moses ~1437 B.C.

"Jeshurun [A poetic name of endearment given to Israel. God used this name to indicate His affection for Israel, as though it were His pet.] grew fat and kicked; filled with food, he became heavy and sleek.

He abandoned the God who made him and rejected the Rock his Savior. They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to demons, which are not gods, gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth. The Lord saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters. . . . I will heap calamities upon them and spend my arrows against them. I will send wasting **famine** against them, consuming pestilence and deadly **plague**; I will send against them the fangs of **wild beasts**, the venom of vipers that glide in the dust. In the street **the sword** will make them childless; in their homes terror will reign. Young men and young women will perish, infants and gray-haired men. . . ." (Selections from Deuteronomy 32:15-25, insertions and italics mine)

Statement 2: Concerning the Destruction of Jerusalem ~586 B.C.

"The word of the Lord came to me: Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its men and their animals, even if these three men Noah, Daniel and Job--were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness,' declares the Sovereign Lord. Or if I send wild beasts through that country and they leave it childless and it becomes desolate so that no one can pass through it because of the beasts, as surely as I live,' declares the Sovereign Lord, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved, but the land would be desolate.' Or if I bring a sword against that country and say, Let the sword pass throughout the land,' and I kill its men and their animals, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved.' Or if I send a plague into that land and pour out my wrath upon it through bloodshed, killing its men and their animals, as surely as I live,' declares the Sovereign Lord, even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they could save neither son nor daughter. They would save only themselves by their righteousness.' 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!" (Selections from Ezekiel 14:12-21, italics mine)

Fact: God plainly says that He has four deadly judgments which He uses to punish and cauterize the growth of sin. God also says that He is reluctant to implement these judgments, but He is moved by divine justice (Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 18:24) when the cup of sin becomes full.

The Bible says that God destroyed the world in Noah's day because man's thoughts were constantly evil. (Geneses 6:5) The Bible indicates that God destroyed Sodom, Gomorrah and Jerusalem because of degenerate behavior. (Genesis 18, 19; Ezekiel 5) So, Bible history leaves no wiggle room on this matter: God's patience with sin and sinners has a definite limit. God rises up and destroys people, cities and nations when extended mercy can't produce repentance, reformation and redemption.

Unfortunately, we don't hear much about the wrath of God these days and this silence has led many people to diminish their accountability toward God and the reality of God's coming wrath! Now that you have a little background information on God's four deadly judgments, we return to the breaking of the fourth seal.

History Can't Produce a Fulfillment

For 2000 years, Christian expositors have made various claims of fulfillment for the fourth seal, but no one has stepped forward with a solution that has gained widespread acceptance. The problem with the fourth seal is the huge scope of destruction. The destruction of 25% of Earth's population is so huge that no one can find anything this big! Furthermore, this destruction has to occur between the breaking of the third seal and the breaking of the fifth seal, so the timing of the fourth seal is critical!

The absence of a clear and convincing historical fulfillment should have caused more concern among Protestant expositors, but alas, prophetic details can be easily distorted when things don't add up as they are written. If the fourth seal was broken in ages past, what year was the fourth seal broken? When has Jesus punished the whole world by killing twenty-five percent of its population?

A few Christians have argued the bubonic plague that swept through Europe in the sixth, fourteenth and seventeenth centuries was a fulfillment of the fourth seal. Yes, these epidemics were horrible, but the rate of death in each of these cases did not exceed two million people per year and these epidemics were local to Europe.

Was the bubonic plague sent from God as a punitive judgment or was the bubonic plague the consequence of poor sanitation and standing filth? Did the ravages of the bubonic plague kill twenty-five percent of the world's population? No.

Because the Protestant reformation grew out of persecution, numerous reformers in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries claimed the fourth seal covered a period of a thousand years when the Church of Rome persecuted all who refused to obey its laws. The total number of martyrs during the Dark Ages has been estimated to be as low as ten million and as high as fifty million. When this figure is divided by a thousand years, the rate of martyrdom is a maximum of 50,000 people per year. No student of Protestant history doubts the persecution of the saints during the dark ages was horrible, but this interpretation doesn't come close to satisfying the specifications given in the fourth seal for two reasons.

First, the Bible indicates that God's four judgments: sword, famine, plague and wild beasts, are punitive in nature. They are directed at wicked nations who have filled up their the cup of iniquity - - they are directed at God's people, faithful martyrs standing firm for Bible truth. So, the fourth seal can't apply to the saints who were burned at the stake or imprisoned for their faith.

Second, the Bible says that when the fourth seal is broken, God's four judgments will kill twenty-five percent of Earth. Even if the Catholic Church put fifty million saints to death, this cannot meet the specifications of the fourth seal. The scope of destruction presented in the fourth seal is just too large.

A few Christians have suggested the fourth seal was broken in 1918. At the height of its deadly grip in 1918, the world's worst outbreak of influenza killed twenty five million people in a single year! (From 1914 to 1918, nine million people died from World War I.) Yes, the influenza outbreak was horrible, and it was accompanied by a horrible war, but both of them together did not come close to killing twenty-five percent of the world's population.

In short, history cannot produce a fulfillment of the fourth seal because the scope of the fourth seal is so large that nothing in the past can measure up.

Rule Two says that a fulfillment only occurs when all of the specifications of a prophecy are met and there is no event in history that meet the twenty-five percent specification. Now that the specifications of the fourth seal are known and since there is no evidence of a historical fulfillment, please consider the following solution.

The breaking of the fourth seal is next. When it occurs, it will mark the beginning of the Great Tribulation. According to Rule One, the breaking of the fourth seal has to occur after the third seal is broken is 1844.

Since twenty-five percent of Earth's population has not been killed with divine judgments since 1844, the breaking of the fourth seal has to be next. The breaking of the fourth seal can be called "a shock and awe campaign" of destruction from God.

The books of Daniel and Revelation indicate that Jesus is about to declare war on Earth. He is about to punish this world for its rebellion with punitive judgments. The King of kings is about to impose a regime change on this planet. Jesus is about to release His four deadly judgments against planet Earth because we have become a degenerate world and Earth's cup of sin is full.

Jesus said our day would parallel the days of Noah. (Matthew 24:37) When the wrath of Jesus breaks out, twenty-five percent of Earth's population will

perish during a period of perhaps thirty to sixty days. Can you grasp the death of 1,750,000,000 dead? I can assure you, this will get the full attention of the survivors. The first four trumpets of Revelation 8 explain how the wrath of Jesus and the death of 1.75 billion people will occur.

End Text: