

Chapter 10

Revelation 4-6

**“...When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
your eyes saw my unformed body. *All the days ordained
for me were written in your book before one of them came
to be.* How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How
vast is the sum of them!”**

– Psalm 139:15-17, emphasis mine

The first prophecy in Revelation is quite a challenge to understand because several *large* subjects dovetail into this prophecy. To make this presentation easier to understand, I have divided it into four segments: The first segment will deal with motive – why did God write a book before He began creating life? The second segment will examine why the book had to be sealed with seven seals. The third segment will examine the timing of Revelation 4-6, and the last segment will deal with the meaning of each seal.

Segment I

Why Did God Write the Book?

The Problem of Sin

You may ask, how can an omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipotent (all-powerful) God have a problem? It all started when Lucifer, the brightest and highest of God’s created beings, exercised *his God given right* to rebel against his Maker. Lucifer and the angels (like Adam and Eve) were created with a pure heart, having a propensity for righteousness. There was no taint of selfishness or rebellion in them. At some point in time, Lucifer *chose*, of his own free will, to rebel against Christ’s authority. Lucifer’s actions created a chain of problems, which ultimately introduced rebellion to the universe. During a lengthy period of grace, God tried to get Lucifer to repent, but he refused. When Lucifer and his followers became hopelessly defiant, God cast them out of His house. God did not destroy them because He knew His largest problem was not the presence of sin in His universe. *From the beginning, God’s greatest problem has been preventing sin and rebellion from rising a second time.*

Think about this. If you were God, how would you *prevent* sin from occurring again among children that you gave the *right* to rebel? Because our “Heavenly Father knows best,” He allowed Lucifer and his followers to live for a while so that angels and humans alike could understand the nature and properties of sin as it developed. Because God is omniscient and omnipotent and His character is love, He has devised an elegant process that, in the end, will constantly thwart the rise of sin throughout the endless ages of eternity. In simple terms, the process works like this: At the end of sin’s drama, God will *repopulate* Heaven with people who had sinful natures, but *chose* to submit to His authority. The angels who chose to rebel against God with Lucifer will be replaced by ex-sinners who overcame the rebellion of sin. By doing this, God will have a host of seasoned witnesses – elevated to the stature of “kings and priests” – who will be able to resolve any issues that might lead to rebellion in the future! (Revelation 1:6) How ingenious! The seasoned experiences of ex-sinners will forever keep the universe free of sin! God knows that the price for sin has been too great to ever have it rise again.

Think This Through

The Bible says that God is love. (1 John 4:8) Because He is a loving God, He gave each of His children the most precious gift that a Creator could offer a created being – the power of choice. If we so choose, we can rebel against our Creator. Of course, all choices have consequences, and rebellion against God’s laws and authority are not exempt; they too have serious consequences. In the beginning, only God had the knowledge of good and evil. This means the angels did not understand the consequences of sin. However, when the drama with sin is completed, the knowledge of good and evil will exist as an eternal verity (a highly exalted truth that will never fade) because everyone in God’s universe will clearly understand four matters:

1. God’s laws are designed for the benefit of His children. Because God knows the end from the beginning and He knows what laws are essential for eternal happiness, His laws are unchanging and nonnegotiable. God Himself is subject to His own changeless laws, even to the point of death.
2. There is no selfishness or self-seeking in God’s heart. The Father was willing to annihilate Jesus for our sins and Jesus was willing to cease to exist, if necessary, so that we could have eternal life.
3. The self-centered behavior of the sinful nature is not only self-destructive, it is corporately destructive. Rebellion exposes every child of God to injury or loss.

4. Because God will not impose His will on His children, the only way there can be a happy and harmonious universe after rebellion occurs is through a justifiable annihilation of those who *insist* on rebellion.

Because these four matters will be widely understood and highly exalted at the end of sin's drama, God will not be able to spare future rebels from immediate execution if sin rises again. Keep in mind that God did not destroy Lucifer and his followers, or Adam and Eve, at the time of their rebellion, because the knowledge of good and evil had not yet unfolded in the universe. However, after the four points listed above are widely known and proven to be true (at the end of sin's drama), God will not tolerate rebellion against "the righteous order" necessary for the happiness and benefit of His children. (Have you noticed in Genesis 2:17, that Adam and Eve were to be destroyed the same day they sinned? God relented because Jesus offered to die in their place. Jesus was willing to die for Adam and Eve because the guilty pair did not sin defiantly.)

This is a key point: God does not destroy sinners because He is offended. Rather, God destroys those who insist on rebellion because rebellion hurts everyone. Annihilation is the only way to terminate the horrible consequences of sin. When the universe clearly understands the consequences of good and evil choices, sin's victims will prevent a second rise of sin forever. (Nahum 1:9; Matthew 12:31, 32)

Currently, God is resolving two problems. He is resolving the existing problem of sin, and He is resolving the problem of sin in such a way that His children will refuse to participate in sin again! How wonderful! When the current drama with sin ends, it will become obvious that only an omniscient God of love and wisdom could so masterfully resolve both problems.

Foreknowledge at Work

The subject of God's foreknowledge can be hard to understand because God's behavior is not like our behavior. (Isaiah 55:8, 9) God is love. This means that He has no selfishness in Him. God does not manipulate His creatures on the basis of His foreknowledge. He has given us the power of choice and He *always* treats us on the basis of love even though we do make choices that are contrary to His will. Fallen human beings have selfish hearts. If we had the gift of foreknowledge, we would use this incredible power for selfish purposes. We would manipulate others to our satisfaction and we would manipulate the outcome of life to protect ourselves and enhance our circumstances. In other words, if the gift of foreknowledge was mixed with human selfishness, the result would be

extraordinary manipulation of those around us. Consider the following illustration:

Let us assume that a recently married husband and wife have foreknowledge. Let us assume they intend to have a family of nine children. Since they have foreknowledge, they foreknow that their firstborn child will be a son which they will call “Louis,” and they know he will be born on August 10, 2004. Fifty years later, on Louis’ birthday, August 10, 2054, they know that Louis will start a heated argument and he will attempt to kill both parents that evening. Prior to his fiftieth birthday, this husband and wife know that Louis will attempt to steal their assets to support his reckless and indulgent lifestyle and his addiction to drugs. Because they have foreknowledge, the parents know that Louis will use lies to alienate the other siblings from them. To keep his true motives from being detected, Louis will try to convince his brothers and sisters that his parents are evil. Furthermore, he will claim they owe him money and are unwilling to meet their obligation. The parents foreknow that two of their children will sympathize with Louis and take sides with him. Even though they know these terrible events will unfold, they also know that during his first forty years of his life, Louis will be a wonderful, loveable son. In fact, of all the nine children, Louis will be their favorite. Since these parents know what the situation will be on Louis’ birthday in 2054, what should they do *right now* to protect themselves and their other offspring from Louis?

- A. Have no children.
- B. Have eight children, do not give birth to Louis.
- C. Abandon Louis immediately after he is born.
- D. Kill Louis before he turns forty.
- E. Kill Louis when he starts taking drugs.
- F. Kill Louis when he begins to tell lies to limit his influence on the other children.
- G. Write out the contents of you know is going to happen (foreknowledge) and seal it up before any child is born so that at the right time, your children and grandchildren can examine the whole story and determine the truth about Louis and his parents.

These seven options may sound ridiculous, but they have a serious parallel. God is all knowing and He foreknows everything in the past, present and future. Of course, some of these options were not viable options for a loving God, but they illustrate a range of considerations

that God faced before creating life. God foreknew that Lucifer, the first and highest of His created beings, would eventually choose to become His enemy. God foreknew the damage that Lucifer and his followers would cause in His house. God also foreknew that Adam and Eve would sin and that Earth would be filled with billions of rebellious people. (Isaiah 44:8; 46:10,11; Jeremiah 17:10;) Given His heart of perfect love and foreknowledge, God looked at all the options and He chose the equivalent of option “G.” To better appreciate the problems that God faced before creating life, let us consider these seven options from God’s perspective:

Option A: Have no children. God rejected this option because He wanted to fill His huge house with a numberless group of happy children. (Isaiah 45:18) The presence of billions of angels and human beings in God’s universe proves this point. Each angel and human being is alive because God deliberately gave them life! Jesus, the Creator, must have thought, “Even though sin will occur someday, and I will have to die to redeem sinners, the gift of life is of greater value than *any* damage sin can cause.”

Option B: Do not create Lucifer. While this option may have solved the problem with Lucifer, it does not solve the underlying problem of sin. If God limited creation to beings who would remain obedient to His demands, then He could not be considered a God of love. Love is not about control. Love is about granting choice. Because God is love, He grants angels and mankind the power of choice. We can *choose* to rebel against Him or we can *choose* to love and obey Him – the choice is ours to make, not His to dictate. If God created beings that have no choice, love would be meaningless. God’s created beings would be mere robots. Therefore, leaving Lucifer (and any others who might rebel against His will) out of the creative process was not a viable option for God. If it were, do you think Jesus would have created Adam and Eve foreknowing the price He would have to pay for their sins? Do you think He would have created you and me? *Any manipulation of created beings for personal benefit is contrary to God’s character of love.*

The presence of sin in the universe proves three immutable things.

1. First, it proves that God grants the power of choice to His children. Lucifer and one-third of the angels could sin and they *chose* to sin. Adam and Eve could sin and they *chose* to sin. In both cases, sinning was an unnatural act. Before they fell, neither angels nor mankind possessed a predisposition toward sin. We were created in God’s image, after His likeness – having

a proclivity for right doing. God put a magnetism for right doing within the angels and mankind so that everyone in His universe would naturally live in harmony with the rules necessary for eternal happiness and joy. When the angels and mankind fell, we became predisposed to be rebellious and selfish toward God and His rules. Therefore, the presence of rebellion *proves* that God grants the power of choice to His creatures and some of His creatures have exercised their *God given right* by rebelling.

2. The second immutable truth that comes out of the drama of sin is that God has no self-seeking pride, arrogance or selfishness in His heart. God did not have to offer His Son to save mankind, He was not forced to do it. ("For God so loved the world that He gave . . .") He *chose* to offer man salvation through Jesus because Eve and Adam did not defiantly disobey their Creator. God would have gladly offered salvation to Lucifer and his angels, but they repeatedly and defiantly rejected God's appeals. When the Holy Spirit could not bring them to repentance, they passed the point of no return. There is a point in rejecting the Holy Spirit where submission to God's authority becomes impossible; Lucifer and the angels reached that point and committed the unpardonable sin. (Matthew 12:31, 32) Therefore, no sacrifice for their sin was offered. Even though God foreknew the enormous consequences that sin would bring to Himself and His children, His foreknowledge did not prevent Him from creating those who would eventually rebel. What a loving God!
3. The third immutable truth that comes out of the drama of sin is simply stunning. Contrary to what a lot of people believe, God does not destroy sinners with fire at the end of the thousand years because they refused to honor and obey *Him*. God is the meekest being in the universe. Here is a profound point: God does not use His divine powers of omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence to keep Himself on the throne. Instead, God uses His divine powers to insure that His universe will be a wonderful home for His children. The point is that God has a very simple reason for destroying the wicked with fire. God only annihilates sinners *after* He has demonstrated to the saints that His laws are singularly designed for the happiness and well being of His subjects. In other words, the annihilation of rebels is necessary to stop sorrow, sickness, suffering and death. There is no other option for eliminating these horrible curses. When the wicked are destroyed, sin will be destroyed and then this Scripture will be

fulfilled: “. . . **Death has been swallowed up in victory.**”
(1 Corinthians 15:54)

Given these three immutable truths, we can say that God has granted His children the power of choice; we can also say that God is meek and selfless; and furthermore, the destruction of the wicked will be totally justified.

Option C: Abandon Lucifer after he is created so that he does not come to know his Creator. A loving parent cannot abandon his offspring and certainly, a loving God could do no less. In fact, if you really want an inside glimpse into God’s heart of love, consider this: God foreknew that Lucifer would eventually become hostile toward Him, but He gave Lucifer the highest position and greatest gifts that a created being could possess. Lucifer was appointed as a guardian cherub. He stood on the left side of the throne and Michael stood on the right. Lucifer was just below Michael, the archangel, in authority and glory. No created being was given more talent, glory, authority, or power than Lucifer. These gifts speak volumes about God’s love for Lucifer – especially when you understand God’s foreknowledge. Think this through: God treats His subjects on the basis of what He knows is best for us (His infinite love), not on the basis of what He knows we will do (His foreknowledge).

Option D: Kill Lucifer while he is still a great friend. Of course, this was not an option for God. How could God justify killing an innocent being? If God had killed Lucifer before he sinned, God would be guilty of murder! If God killed Lucifer on the basis of His foreknowledge, how could He justify His action to the angels when Lucifer had done nothing wrong? Because God is pure in heart, He could not deceive the angels by disguising Lucifer’s death as an accident. If God killed Lucifer without justification, intelligent angels would have rightfully concluded that God is a tyrant! Despots destroy those who threaten their authority because the self-centered ego cannot let go of the two things it loves most; control over others and wealth to satisfy every selfish desire.

God claims to be righteous in everything He does (Isaiah 41:10) and killing Lucifer to avoid having problems with him would not be righteous. In fact, God has done just the opposite. He has permitted Lucifer to live for a few thousand years *after* his rebellion to demonstrate a very important point about sin. Sin hurts. Sin causes the innocent to suffer. Sin produces sorrow, suffering, sickness and death. God’s rules for eternal life are righteous and true – not because He says so – but because they can be proven to be so.

Lucifer and a great host of sinners will be destroyed by fire at the end of sin's drama, but God will be totally justified in the eyes of every survivor *before* He annihilates the first wicked angel or human being!

Option E: Kill Lucifer when he first sins. If God had killed Lucifer immediately, the angels – who did not have the knowledge of good and evil at that time – would have concluded that God is not a God of love. In other words, if Lucifer had been killed for disagreeing with God, it would have appeared to the angels that the moment one deviates from God's will, KABOOM! It is sudden death! It would be a terror to live throughout eternity with a God who might explode in fury like this. So, God allowed Lucifer to live for a few millennia so that the nature and properties of sin might develop and be understood by angels and humans.

Option F: Kill Lucifer to limit his influence on the other angels. If God had killed Lucifer to limit his influence on others, the universe would not have had an opportunity to observe and understand the awful properties of sin. The knowledge of good and evil would have been incomplete. If Lucifer had been prematurely put to death, the possibility of sin occurring *again* would have remained high because the angels would not have understood the consequences of sin. By allowing sin to run its ugly and grievous course for a few thousand years, God has provided a comprehensive drama that clearly reveals the terrible properties of sin. Angels as well as human beings now have access to "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Prior to the rise of sin, God alone had this knowledge. Now you know why the tree in Genesis 2 was given this name.

God has predetermined that sin must last long enough to demonstrate this truth: Rebellion against the infinitely wise laws of God *always* produces suffering, sorrow, sadness and death. The profound point here is that God wants the universe to know that His laws are not arbitrary. He did not make them up to suit His fancy. God's laws were framed by infinite wisdom and they are based on principles of love. God's laws encompass all of the issues of life. He alone knows what it takes to happily live throughout eternity. Remember, He has foreknowledge. Since God foreknew the rise of sin and the harvest of suffering that sin would produce, He opted to allow Lucifer to live for a few thousand years for the benefit of everyone who would choose to live eternally. The drama of sin will be constantly studied throughout eternity and "the knowledge of good and evil" will prevent the rise of sin a second time.

Option G: To protect Himself from the lies of Lucifer and the ignorance which sin would impose on billions of human beings, God wrote a book. With technology exceeding anything known to man, the Father “penned” a complete history of sin *before* Jesus created angels or human beings. (See Revelation 17:8) This book (or scroll) is called the “Book of Life,” for it contains the complete story of life. (Revelation 3:5; 5:7; 20:15) The Father wrote down a complete history of life so that He could show the universe what He knew *before* life was given to any creature. He sealed the Book of Life with seven great seals so that the contents of this book would not be disclosed until the very end of sin’s drama. If the contents of the Book of Life were prematurely revealed, God would not be able to recover beyond a reasonable doubt from the accusation that He manipulated the eternal destiny of His children with His foreknowledge. This fact confuses a lot of people. They say, “If my eternal destiny is my choice and God already knows my eternal destiny, do I really have any choice in the matter?” The answer is a resounding “Yes!”

God’s foreknowledge about our choices has no bearing on our choices. For example, suppose you record a football game on Monday night. Because you watched the game as you recorded it, you know the outcome of the game when it ends. A day later, a friend comes over to watch the tape and your friend does not know the outcome of the game. Does your foreknowledge have any affect on the taped game? Of course, not! In God’s case, He can record the game *before* it takes place because He has perfect foreknowledge. The Book of Life was sealed because God does not want anyone to know what He knows until the right time arrives.

We are free to rebel against His laws or to submit to His authority. This is our choice. The fact that He already knows what we will do has no bearing on what we do. Keep this thought in mind as we proceed through this study: *No one will be judged according to what is written in the Book of Life.* By keeping the contents of the Book of Life sealed until the end of the thousand years, God will prove to everyone that even though He has perfect foreknowledge, He did not manipulate one of His subjects. God will prove that He is a God of love. Remember, we were created in God’s image. God has a free will and we have a free will. God freely exercises His choices and we can freely exercise our choices. God takes full responsibility for His actions and so must we. God is our Creator and we are accountable to Him.

God Can Be Trusted

Now that we have examined seven options which God faced before creating Lucifer, you know *why* God wrote the Book of Life. God has a

few things to say to the whole universe at the end of the thousand years, and the contents of the Book of Life will do the talking. Because the Father is a God of love, He can be difficult to understand at times because His love is not like our love. God's love is not corrupted with selfishness. Many people think of God's mercy or generosity as love, but God's love is more than mercy and generosity. God's love is a *balance* between justice and mercy. Mercy and justice are not antagonists in the courtroom of His love. Consider how mercy and justice work together in God's government. God uses His awesome powers of divinity to ensure His government of love is eternally imposed throughout His universe. In other words, He does not use His divine powers to selfishly maintain His exalted throne. He uses His omnipotence and omniscience to keep His children safe and happy. Because finite children cannot fathom the wisdom or plans of their infinite Father, faith in God is a crucial matter. God is doing things right now that will take thousands of years to understand. So, how does a person live at peace and in adoration of a God whose actions are not understood? How does a person live "in the fog of darkness" until the time for light comes? There is only one way. Jesus said, **"You have to trust in the Father and in me."** (John 14:1) God's subjects have to trust Him. Rebellion indicates a lack of trust. Rebellion says "my way is better." Rebellion is particularly harmful because it ruins every wonderful project which God is trying to accomplish before the project comes to completion. Time after time God has proven that He can be explicitly trusted. Faith in God is rewarded because faith always gives way to understanding. (Hebrews 11:6; 1 Corinthians 13:10) *Faith in God is an experience that when seen in reverse, makes perfect sense.* God stands today where we will stand tomorrow.

The Great White Throne

"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 [sentenced] according to what they had done as recorded in the books." (Revelation 20:12, insertion mine) The Bible indicates that God assigned some angels to faithfully record everything that happens in His universe. (Malachi 3:16; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Daniel 7:10) I like to think of these recording angels as God's secretaries who use powerful camcorders. They do not miss a word, a deed or a motive that goes on in a universe brimming with life. Their records are kept in books of deeds, and these books are not to be confused with *the book* sealed with seven seals. The books of deeds and the Book of Life will be opened at the end of the 1,000 years and both will be presented for all to see. (See Daniel 7:9,10;

Ecclesiastes 12:14; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12) There will be no blame, no denial, no excuses, no escape from God's record of life when the Great White Throne scene occurs at the end of the 1,000 years. After the wicked dead are resurrected, the books of deeds will be opened and their lives will be presented before them. They will see that God judged them accurately and sentenced them fairly and righteously. All wicked people will confess that they were judged on the basis of their choices and their actions as recorded in the books. The Bible says, **“. . .The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”** (Revelation 20:12) The point is that the eternal destiny of each person is based on his choices.

When the wicked observe the righteous and fair judgment of their life as recorded in the books of deeds, they will kneel before God admitting that God's record is flawless and His judgment fair. When righteous people see their life's record, they too will kneel before God and confess that God's record is flawless. The righteous will have no claim to the marvelous gift of eternal life that He bestowed on them and they kneel before God's great mercy. Consider the scene: Two groups of people will kneel before God on that day: One will kneel before God's justice, the other before His mercy. **“By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength.’ All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. But in the Lord all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult.”** (Isaiah 45:23-25)

After the righteous and wicked confess that God is righteous and true, the seventh seal on the Book of Life will be broken and the all important book will be opened. The secret contents of the Book of Life will be presented before that vast throng. Everyone will be astonished that God, foreknowing the choices of every angel and person, extended so much patience, love and grace. Everyone will recognize that God foreknew who would hate Him and rebel against Him long before He gave them life. Yet, even with this knowledge, God graciously bestowed the gift of life on billions of angels and people any way. More amazingly, the Father gave Jesus as a ransom for sinners. When this revelation occurs, every knee will bow again, but not in submission to God's awesome authority and power. Rather, every knee will humbly bow before God admitting that He is worthy of love, honor and worship because He is love! He is far more generous than He needs to be in order to be fair. The depths of God's love and goodness are unbelievable! What a day that will be. I am looking forward to this great occasion.