

Questions About the Seven Seals

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Q. I have many questions about the [Seven Seals](#) in Revelation. Can you tell me how you understand them in simple terms?

LW. A common mistake made by Bible students who study the seven seals is to innocently disconnect the subject of the seven seals from the "book" that is sealed with the seven seals! As a result, they often lose sight of the final objective which is the opened book.

If you do not keep the final objective in focus, it is easy to become confused. Simply said, Revelation contains a story about a book the Father wrote and sealed with seven seals before any life was created. At an appointed time, Jesus was found worthy to receive the book from the Father (Revelation 5).

At that time, Jesus began to break the seals open in chronological order. As each seal is broken, more about Jesus is revealed to the angels and to man. The contents of the book remain a secret until the last seal is broken at the end of the millennium (1,000 years), when the contents of the Book of Life will be disclosed.

Q. What is written in the book?

LW. The Father wrote a complete history of everything that would happen before any life was created. The book contains a complete record of the choices of all created beings.

Q. Does that mean the Father knew whether I would be saved or lost before I was born?

LW. Yes.

Q. Does His foreknowledge determine if I will be saved or lost?

LW. No.

Q. How is this possible?

LW. Suppose you look at an alarm clock and notice that it is set to ring at 2 p.m. Does your "foreknowledge" determine the behavior of the clock? No. In the same way, God does not use His foreknowledge to "predestine" any creature to eternal life or death. God is love, and true love always offers a choice.

The Book of Life was written before any life came to be because God knew that some of His creatures would exercise wrong choices and rebel against His authority and government. So, to protect Himself and His universe from the eternal presence of sin and the Satan's defamatory claims against Him, He wrote everything that would happen before creating anything.

To appreciate God's problems, you have to consider certain qualities that He has. For example, God is omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing), and omnipresent (present everywhere). These three qualities are difficult for finite minds to comprehend, since there is no place in the universe a created being can go where God is not present. A creature cannot think a thought that God does not notice and a creature cannot do more than God allows Him to do. Yet, God has granted a power to His creatures that He will never manipulate. It is called the power of choice. Every person is granted this power, and if we exercise it in cooperation with the laws of God, we benefit. If we exercise it in opposition to the laws of God, we suffer.

Q. What is the difference between predestination and foreknowledge?

LW. Predestination means to "pre-decree." Predestination is the process of mandating an outcome. For example, if you set an alarm clock to ring at 6 p.m., you have predestined the alarm to sound at 6 p.m. Using this illustration, foreknowledge would be like a person who sees the alarm is set for 6 p.m., but was not the person who set the clock to ring. Foreknowledge is knowing what the outcome will be without having pre-determined it. Parents are able, in some instances, to look at the direction their child's life is going and "foreknow" the end result. This is where the phrase "I told you so" comes from! In this illustration, foreknowledge does not cause the end-result; rather, the child's choices determine the outcome. Foreknowledge is knowing the end-result, not causing it.

Q. You are saying that God foreknows whether I will choose eternal life or eternal death?

LW. Yes.

Q. I thought God determined whether I will be saved or lost?

LW. God makes His determination for life or death *based on our choices*. He does not make His determination based on a predestined outcome that He determined for you before you were born. (Some churches teach that God has predetermined who will be saved and who will be lost before they were created. Therefore, people have no choice about salvation.) But, the Bible clearly emphasizes the power of choice. Notice these texts: **"For 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." (John 3:16) "...Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." (Revelation 22:17)**

Did you notice the word "whoever" in both verses? Yes, we do make the choice.

Q. Why did the Father write the Book of Life?

LW. To prove His innocence.

Q. Why would a holy, omnipotent God find it necessary to prove His innocence?

LW. Because Lucifer, the first created being, cast suspicion and doubt on God's character. (See *Day Star*, July 1995, "On the Origin of Sin.") As a result, one-third of the angels came to believe

that God was evil. Eventually, they were cast out of Heaven.

Q. Why didn't God simply destroy them?

LW. He will destroy them, but at His appointed time.

Q. So, the book was written to protect God?

LW. Yes. Consider this parable: Let's assume that you have omniscience, that is, you know the future. Let us suppose that you and your spouse were married in 1945 and by 1947, you decided to have nine children. But, in 1945 you knew that in 50 years your first born child will become angry and hateful toward you -- without justifiable cause. You foreknow that your oldest son is going to say horrible things about you. You foreknow that He is going to steal some of your dearest possessions. Even worse, you foreknow this child will lie and convince a third of your children that you are a terrible, abusive parent. Consider this dilemma. You knew in advance that your own child will become your greatest enemy during 1997 and would, if possible, kill his own parent. Yet, for the next 40 years, you also foreknow that this child will be your best -- and most loyal friend -- a favorite son. What would you and your spouse do to protect yourself in a situation like this? Here are four options:

1. Have no children and maintain an empty house.
2. Kill your first born while he is still your best friend. (If you choose this option, it would appear to be evil in the eyes of your entire family since they do not understand or foreknow what you know.)
3. In 50 years, when your son turns evil, immediately kill him, to stop the damage he would do to others and hope the rest of the children will understand. (This option also has problems since the other children love their older brother and will consider your act as a confirmation of what the older brother claimed.)
4. Write the whole story before it happens. Then, in the end, you can show all of your children and grandchildren that you knew what was going to take place before it came to be.

The essential point to this story is that God knew the outcome of sin and yet, He chose to be vulnerable anyway. By writing down the story of life before creature-life came to be, God will prove at the appointed time, that He does not manipulate nor predestine His creatures. He will be able to show what He knew in advance and what He was willing to do for the salvation of man.

Contrary to Lucifer's claims and the blame game that continues today, God grants the power of choice to all His creatures. We are responsible for our actions. We are accountable to God for all that we do. (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14; 2 Corinthians 5:10) God is love.

His foreknowledge does not change His behavior nor does it alter His actions which spring from a character of love. God knew that sin would occur and He was prepared for its deadly consequences. He knew that Lucifer would sin and deceive one-third of Heaven's angels. God knew that Adam and Eve would sin. He also knew that generations of people on Earth would

curse and deny Him. God foreknows everything.

Q. So, if the Book of Life is sealed with seven seals and the last seal is not opened until after the 1,000 years, then the Book of Life is not used in during the judgment.

LW. That's right. At the creation of Earth, God commissioned recording angels. Their records, as impartial observers of the human race, are called the Books of Deeds. These books contain the records from which man will be judged.

God is going to require all created beings to stand in His presence at the end of the 1,000 years. The angels (both Heavenly and demonic) and every person who ever lived on Earth (both redeemed and wicked) will be present. God will then reveal the record of each created being's life. All beings will see their own life, as Heaven saw it.

There will be no blame, no denial, no excuses, no escape, for the Books of Deeds not only include our external actions, but also our motive and knowledge. In other words, God sees our limited knowledge, our inner motives and our corresponding actions, and He judges accordingly.

When the wicked beings see their records as recorded by angels in the Books of Deeds, they will kneel before God's justice, admitting that God has been unquestionably accurate and fair. When righteous beings see their life's record, they will kneel before God's mercy, confessing that God's record is accurate and true.

Except through God's mercy, they have no claim to live forever in God's kingdom. So, there will be two groups kneeling before God: One acknowledging God's justice, the other acknowledging 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)

After the books of record have been reviewed and the judgment process completed, the seventh seal on the Book of Life is broken. A special revelation about Jesus is then disclosed and Jesus is finally revealed for all that He truly is. After that, everyone can see the contents of the Book of Life. For the first time since the creation of life, created beings comprehend what God knew before anything existed.

They see that He wrote a complete history of everyone's choices before they were created. Everyone will be astonished that God gave so much love and grace to His creatures, foreknowing that rebellion would rise against Him.

Everyone will also see that God knew who would hate Him and rebel -- yet He gave everyone life and Jesus as a ransom for each sinner. Overwhelmed, every knee will bow again -- not before the authority and power of God which is awesome -- but this time bowing before God,

acknowledging that He is more loving and generous than any creature under Heaven.

Everyone will say that His ways are righteousness and most of all, that He extended much grace to every sinner. All who harbored hatred and bitterness against God will be put to shame.

Q. So, the seven seals are inseparably connected to the contents of the Book of Life.

LW. Yes. If God's foreknowledge were prematurely exposed by revealing the contents of the Book of Life before the judgment was conducted, the information could be used against God *forever*. Some beings could claim that He predestined some of His creatures to life and others to death.

So, the reason the contents of the Book of Life are kept secret is this: At the right time, after man has confirmed that the Books of Deeds are accurate and fair, God will then show that He knew the outcome of everything by opening the Book of Life. In other words, in the Book of Life God knew the rise of sin before sin came to be and the choices that every creature would make before He created any creatures.

Q. What will this really prove?

LW. Three things:

1. God has omniscience (all knowing).
2. God does not use His omniscience to manipulate His creatures.
3. God is love. God offers the power of choice to His creatures, even foreknowing the great expense His creatures' wrong choices will cost Him.

Q. Now that you have explained the Book of Life, what are the seven seals?

LW. As each seal is broken, more about who Jesus really is becomes revealed.

Q. What do you mean? Everyone knows that Jesus is the Son of God.

LW. Not true. Hundreds of millions of people on Earth do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and millions more do not believe that Jesus is the Savior of the World! On a global scale, the number of people believing that Jesus Christ is Creator and Savior of man is less than 25%. But, this will change as a result of the next seal to be opened. Soon, 100% of the Earth will know about Jesus Christ!

The revealing of all that Jesus is, is a subject of most impressive beauty. The revealing of all that Jesus is has to be understood as a process of continual enlargement. Many people try to interpret each seal as though the seal is an event. This is not possible because the seven seals are not events in and of themselves. Rather, they are seven "processes" or developments that lead to the full revelation of Jesus.

Q. What is the full revelation of Jesus?

LW. Revealing that Jesus is God, having all the powers, abilities and authority as does the Father. He is equal in every way to the Father.

Q. This fact is not widely known?

LW. That's right, neither here on Earth nor in Heaven!

Q. How can the angels not know all that Jesus really is?

LW. They have never seen the power, ability and authority of Jesus revealed as it is going to be revealed. They have not seen the glory of Jesus displayed like the glory of the Father.

Q. What you are saying can also be true on Earth. It is possible to know a person well without knowing everything about them.

LW. That's right. For example, a number of years ago I worked at a hospital in Dayton, Ohio. I had several opportunities to visit with the CEO of the hospital during my employment there. However, I did not know until four or five years after leaving the hospital that the CEO could bake a tantalizing pineapple upside-down cake!

Q. So, how does this all relate to the seven seals?

LW. In brief, the seven seals are chronological and they combine together to reveal all that Jesus is in the following ways:

- Seal 1. The salvation of Jesus
- Seal 2. The doctrines of Jesus
- Seal 3. The judgment of man conducted by Jesus
- Seal 4. The authority of Jesus
- Seal 5. The faith of Jesus
- Seal 6. The glory of Jesus
- Seal 7. The fullness of deity in Jesus

Q. I do not see how the four horsemen of the first four seals can have anything to do with the first four seals as you have presented them.

LW. The four horsemen are representations of *how* the revelation of Jesus is presented to the world.

Q. How?

LW. The four horsemen represent the work of the Holy Spirit sent throughout the Earth to accomplish four tasks. In other words, God uses the imagery of four horsemen to represent the means by which He accomplishes His plans.

Q. I still do not understand.

LW. This takes a few minutes to understand. So, I will present a short parallel view of the four horses from the Bible. The Bible contains all the information necessary to understand this topic! We are not left to guess what the four horses of Revelation are all about.

Notice these verses from Zechariah: **"During the night I had a vision and there before me was a man riding a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him were red, brown and white horses. I asked, What are these, my lord?' The angel who was talking with me answered, I will show you what they are.' Then the man standing among the myrtle trees explained, They are the ones the Lord has sent to go throughout the earth.' And they reported to the angel of the Lord, who was standing among the myrtle trees, We have gone throughout the earth and found the whole world at rest and in peace.' Then the angel of the Lord said, Lord Almighty, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah, which you have been angry with these seventy years?' So the Lord spoke kind and comforting words to the angel who talked with me. Then the angel who was speaking to me said, "Proclaim this word: This is what the Lord Almighty says: I am very jealous for Jerusalem and Zion..."** (Zechariah 1:8-14)

To appreciate the meaning of these verses, consider the setting. Zechariah lived *before* Jerusalem was destroyed in 605-586 B.C. God had also revealed to a number of Zechariah's contemporaries (Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.) that He was going to destroy Jerusalem because of its exceeding wickedness.

In the visions God gave to Zechariah, He revealed to Zechariah *how* He causes destruction and *how* He brings peace upon the Earth. The vision was to bring hope. If God could so manage the Earth, He could also restore the future of Jerusalem, the city He loved. This vision that God gave before Jerusalem was captured, reflected His promise to restore prosperity and peace to Jerusalem even after He destroyed it.

God gave this vision to be a great source of encouragement to Daniel and others during the 70 years of Babylonian captivity.

Did you notice verse 10? The horses represent agents of God, sent throughout the Earth to accomplish His will. This point was very easy for Zechariah to understand. After all, in his day, kings regularly sent horses and riders throughout the kingdom to accomplish administrative business and to proclaim decrees. (No telephones, faxes, UPS, or postal services were available then.)

Now, consider another selection from Zechariah: **"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)

The four horses in verse 5 (notice that the horses are the same colors as in Revelation) represent four spirits (or creatures) who stand in the Lord's presence. They go throughout the Earth (and not without strain -- vs. 7) to accomplish God's will. Remember, God does not force anyone's will. (For an example of "straining," see Daniel 10:13.)

The point of Zechariah's text is that the "land of the north" was given rest due to the efforts of the horses sent throughout the land of the north.

Babylon was considered the "land of the north." (Jeremiah 1:14; 4:6; 6:22; 25:9) God made it clear through Jeremiah that HE would stir up the Kingdom of the north and destroy Jerusalem. God's anger with the Jews would then be satisfied and rest would return to the region. (Jeremiah 7:20; 10:10; 21:5-10; 32:37)

After 70 years, Israel would be restored and Jerusalem rebuilt. (History confirms God's promise was fulfilled.)

Q. So, you are saying that the four horses of Zechariah parallel the four horses of Revelation.

LW. Yes.

Q. The four horses in Revelation go throughout the Earth to accomplish the will of God?

LW. Yes, just like they did in Zechariah.

Q. What is the will of God for the four horses and their riders?

LW. The revealing of all that Jesus is.

Q. How does that happen?

LW. To understand what the horsemen do, we must understand their timing. For now, consider the point that the four horsemen do their work during the last 200 years of Earth's history. The first horse and rider go throughout the Earth to reveal the salvation that comes through faith in Jesus.

A crown is promised to every faithful believer, but the offer of salvation does not come without a struggle (represented by the bow). The offer of salvation through Jesus is ongoing and will continue until the day that the offer of salvation is withdrawn.

The second horse and rider receive a comprehensive task. This seal points to the world-wide

translating, printing and distribution of God's Word, the Bible (the sword of truth). Eventually, the day will come when people will kill one another over the words in the Bible.

The third horse and rider receive the task of leading people to understand the ministry of Jesus in Heaven's sanctuary, specifically, the pre-advent judgment conducted by Jesus.

The fourth horse and rider will soon be released. They will reveal the authority of Jesus to everyone on Earth. When one-fourth of the people of Earth perish, it will get the attention of all people, regardless of culture, religion or language.

Q. Jesus is about to kill one-fourth of Earth's population?

LW. Yes.

Q. For what purpose?

LW. To reveal His authority.

Q. Why such a horrible display of authority?

LW. What else will cause 5.7 billion people to seriously consider God's authority? Do you believe that God's love and mercy toward man is making the world a better place to live? Or, is God's long-suffering and patience with man interpreted as God's indifference toward our actions? When you really get to the bottom line, many, many people do not give God His due because they have no fear or respect for Him. Thus, a demonstration of authority will accomplish what goodness and mercy have not achieved.

Q. It is hard to believe that God would do this, but go on and finish the seals.

LW. OK, the fifth seal reveals the faith of Jesus. There will be many martyrs for Christ's sake during the Great Tribulation. (Incidentally, the Great Tribulation begins with the opening of the fourth seal.) The martyrs will display the faith of Jesus as they willingly lay down their lives for "the Word of God" and their commitment to Jesus.

The sixth seal reveals the glory of Jesus. The sixth seal is marked by the Second Coming. Finally, the seventh seal is opened at the end of the millennium when the full deity of Jesus is disclosed. Full deity means that Jesus has every attribute the Father does.

Q. I still do not understand the issue of Jesus and full deity.

LW. Think about the setting where the judgment scene will occur at the end of the millennium. Everyone who has ever lived, billions and billions of people, will be alive. The majority of them will not know Christ. They died without this knowledge.

Billions do not know who their Creator is. Billions do not know of the Plan of Salvation. Billions do not know of God's love. So, on that day, God will reveal all these items to everyone. It will be

a day of great interest. Most of all, the fullness of Jesus will be disclosed as never before. Even the angels have not seen what is reserved for that day!

Q. One last question. Why is the issue of worthiness so critical to the story of the book with seven seals? Remember, John cried and cried.

LW. Who is qualified to exonerate God? If God cannot exonerate Himself, who among His created beings can do so? The whole point about worthiness (or qualification) is this: Who is in a position to break open the seals to reveal the character and government of God.

Who is qualified to judge the human race? Who is qualified to receive all the attributes of sovereign power and then exercise such power righteously? Who is qualified to bring an end to sin? If no one is qualified, then the salvation of man is not possible and even worse, sin can continue in God's universe forever.

But, there was One found worthy. His name is Jesus. He will bring an end to sin and give salvation to all who are willing to submit to His authority. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords.