

The Seven Seals on the Book of Life

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A Different Jesus Christ - The Seven Seals on the Book of Life

Each time I read the gospels, I am deeply impressed with the words and actions of Jesus. I am also astounded with the recoil and behavior of the Jews. Truthfully, I must confess that I used to view the bitterness between Jesus and His kinsmen from the perspective that, "if I were there, I would not have joined in with the Pharisees or the Sadducees."

I also used to think that if I had lived in Noah's day, I would have had enough faith to get into the ark. Perhaps many of you share my former views. Placing ourselves in a favorable light is always easy – especially when we neither share nor understand cultural perspectives and social pressures facing those individuals during those moments in history.

However, consider this fact: Only eight people, out of the entire world population, went into the ark! If you and I had lived during that generation, with human nature as it is, we can be sure that we would have not been numbers nine or ten.

Even in Christ's day, the likelihood that we would have sided with clergy and the prestigious faculty at Jerusalem's "Temple University" is highly probable. The gospels record the results – at the time of Jesus' death, the number of believers was very few. From this, we can conclude if you and I had been there, watching Jesus from the same human cultural perspective as they did – we would have reacted just as they did.

We have to Take Off our Nikes

For just a moment, put on the sandals of people who lived in A.D. 29. Consider the bitterness and hostility that existed because of Jesus' teaching in Jerusalem. If Jesus had not confronted the leaders of Israel with Truth, they would have never realized their gross errors about God.

Unfortunately, even after being confronted with Truth, most of them chose to remain in darkness. The embarrassment resulting from such a paradigm shift would have been too much for Israel's prestigious leaders – it would have meant a complete meltdown of previously held religious beliefs. These were not men of faith nor were they lovers of truth! Instead, they were men of religious authority who loved religion. They loved respect and adulation that came with authority.

They were scholars and lawyers. They were the educated, rich, influential leaders of Israel and THEY knew what to expect regarding the coming Messiah – or so they thought. However, in reality, His appearance, character, work and mission were very different from what they expected of Messiah. His arrival did not conform to their "prophetic expectations." His

appearance was common and the individuals who followed Him were low class laborers from Galilee.

From Israel's leaders' perspective, Jesus looked like, lived like, ate like and walked like any ordinary laborer. He was not a scholar, did not hold an important job, nor did He belong to the religious fraternity of Israel. Let us face it – He was not one of them. He was sociable, but not social seeking. He was poor and did not come from a family of distinction. People often repeated with disdain that He was conceived out of wedlock. All of His adult life, He remained an unmarried carpenter which possibly fueled these fires of gossip.

Is it possible for 20th Century Christians to take off their Nikes and put on the sandals of the Pharisees? Take a good, close look at the Jesus of Galilee – not the risen and eternal Jesus Christ with whom you are already familiar. Look at Him and His Earthly state for a few moments and think about this: The Father ordained that the Word appear before humanity in very humble garb so that Truth could be recognized for what it is. We should think about this important concept.

God does not accept our love for our church (or religion) as a substitute for our love of Truth. It proves that these two loves should be separate and distinct. Unfortunately, most of us cannot separate these two loves. To prove this point, God ordained that Jesus would begin His ministry at a time in Israel's history when the nation had never been more religious.

Consequently, the contest between Jesus and the Pharisees is really a story about loving Truth and loving "church." The outcome is described in the four gospels.

In the context of His day, His claims and doctrines were considered blasphemous! Jesus spoke plainly. He said things that seemed outrageous and highly offensive to the Jews because Truth is pure. Light ruins darkness. When darkness vanishes, so does ego, pride, fantasy, superstition and fiction.

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) For making these types of offensive statements, Jewish leaders ultimately agreed, Jesus must die. They believed that it was better that one man die, rather than a whole nation to perish. (See John 11:50.)

Truth can be Powerfully Divisive

Truth is progressive. This means that from time to time, God reveals more truth to Earth's inhabitants. God opens the eyes of humans to understand things that were unknown before. Today we have computers that are stunning when compared with ones manufactured just three years ago.

Why? Because God has opened the minds of individuals who are searching for more understanding in this area. In the same way, God is allowing us to understand more about His Word than ever before. The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation are beginning to unfold with brilliant clarity, like buttercups blooming in the Spring. The Word has not changed, but our understanding has! There is more to learn and new concepts to absorb, as we allow old misconceptions to fall away.

The clearer the truth, the greater its divisiveness. Truth divides and separates people as nothing else does. History confirms that when truth is granted great power, evil forces unite to show their superiority – foolishly thinking that force is of greater value than truth. However, a brief study in the book of Acts will reveal how early Christians raised the gospel of Jesus Christ high above the banner of the Roman empire. Today, all that remains of the Rome that Caesar ruled lies in ruins. The gospel of Jesus Christ continues to grow, 2,000 years later.

As I study the life and teachings of Jesus and the Bible prophets, I am impressed with the fact that God Himself, and His messengers, usually came in different forms than what was expected. Jesus was not what the people had been expecting either. They anticipated a king – not a carpenter.

They looked for victory over Rome – not victory over sin. They looked for a glorious destiny – not a horrible death. They looked for the exaltation of Israel above all nations – not a message that the meek will inherit the Earth. They wanted peace and prosperity – not self-denial. They claimed Abraham was their father – instead, Jesus revealed how the devil was their father. Although He chose to be a "nobody" in human terms (even before He was born), hardly anyone recognized Truth for what it was.

Although He chose to be a common carpenter, His words and actions should have challenged the minds of religious leaders, prompting them to investigate a deeper understanding of God's word. If Jesus walked on Earth today, I am sure the same thing would happen again today, simply because what people believe about Jesus really has little to do with His true character. When it comes to Truth, few people appreciate it for what it is. Consequently, I believe the real Jesus is much different than what most people understand.

I hope this introduction and the following study on the seven seals will cause you to re-evaluate your view of Jesus Christ. Do you really know the Master? Do you understand His ways? Do you love His truth? Would you recognize Him if He were on Earth in the form of an ordinary human being? These are not rhetorical questions. It has been almost three years since I wrote on this topic in the *Day Star* and it is time to revisit the story of the seven seals and consider their profound meaning.

I believe the story of the seven seals reveals the character, authority, deity, and faith of Jesus better than any other subject in the Bible. For this reason, I think we need to have a clear understanding of this topic – it is a revelation about all that Jesus Christ really is.

Let Us Start with the Bible

To enhance our understanding of the story of the seven seals, I have paraphrased Revelation 5 and 6. I encourage you to follow along in your own Bible because certain verses in my paraphrase may raise questions. This is only natural since I am explaining these verses as I go through them, but as you read, try to consider the big picture. In a later issue, the details will be reviewed in greater depth.

"I, John, was in the Spirit and zoomed forward in time to the year, 1798. (A full discussion regarding 1798 and its correlation to the seven seals is presented in the #206 video and audio tape series.) I was invited to watch a special service in Heaven – the coronation of Jesus as Sovereign God.

As the second witness on Earth to view this event, I was told to write down the things I saw as a record for future generations so they might have a better understanding of Jesus Christ. (Note: Daniel was the first witness. See Daniel 7:9-14.)

{5:1} As I watched, a mighty angel called a great convocation to order and billions of angels took their seat. The angels sat around the 24 thrones of the elders, and the elders sat around the exalted throne of the Father. Then I saw in the Father's right hand a book containing highly sensitive information.

The writing on the outside of the book identified the usual things found on books: the name of the book, the date it was written, and the name of the author. I saw the title of the scroll was the *Book of Life*. The author of the book is the Father. The origin of the book dates back before any creatures received life. (Revelation 17:8)

It was obvious the Father did not want anyone to see what He had written in this book until the appropriate time because the book was perfectly sealed with seven seals. The presence of seven seals, instead of one seal, reflected the supreme importance of the contents of this book.

Ever since the angels had been created, this book has been guarded day and night. Apparently, the title of the book described the nature of its contents. It was called the *Book of Life* because it contained a pre-recorded history of every created being that would ever receive life. This really impressed me. To think that the Father wrote down *my* life's story long before I existed was an incredible thought – almost more than I could grasp! He knew me before I was in my mother's womb. (Psalm 139:14-16)

Wow! As I looked around at the billions of angels present, I was awed by God's interest in each life. Each created being who receives life, has a segment in that book. Of course, the Father has foreknowledge. He knows everything – past, present and future. (Isaiah 46:10) He is omniscient and omnipotent. (Isaiah 46:11)

So why did He write this book? I could tell by the reaction of the angels that everyone in Heaven knew this book existed. I also discovered that a few people on Earth knew about the book, but only the Father knew what was written in the book. (Exodus 32:32; Psalms 139:16-19; Luke 10:20)

{2} As I continued to watch, I saw a mighty angel proclaim in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the *Book of Life*?" This announcement was given serious attention. Before me was the Father, the Most High God of the Universe, seated on an exceedingly bright throne.

Since this convocation was obviously a special event, I recognized the time had come to begin the process of exposing the contents of this book. Now, the Father was willing to allow His secrets to be revealed, but only by a being qualified to break the seals and open the book! I wondered what qualifications were required to expose the Father's secrets, but I said nothing. We all sat silently. You could have heard a feather fall.

No One Worthy

{3} When the mighty angel spoke, the faces of those gathered at that vast assembly were filled with consternation. This was no casual offer. I did not understand how serious this meeting was until I heard two angels discussing the matter. As it turned out, no one in Heaven or on Earth, dead or alive, was found worthy to open the *Book of Life* or even to look inside it.

{4} Time passed. The silence and delay aroused my interest. I began to comprehend what was going on. The Father Himself was involved in a very serious dispute! His honesty and integrity had been widely slandered by the highest angel of creation. (Ezekiel 28:14-17)

His righteous administration of the Universe had been charged with corruption. If no one could be found worthy to open the *Book of Life* and reveal its contents, then the Father could not be vindicated from the evil allegations that Lucifer had made against Him long ago. To be cleared of wrong doing by those who loved Him was not enough. The Father had a plan to eliminate all doubts about His character and government and the *Book of Life* was at the center of that plan.

God is Vulnerable

I began to understand that the Father *was vulnerable* because of the damaging allegations. (Isaiah 55:9) My heart broke to think that someone would actually misrepresent the Father. After all, He is the Source of life and all blessings. Like the cut of a sharp knife, this realization brought me much pain.

Here is the problem: The Father is infinite in every way. He does so many wonderful things simultaneously that created beings cannot immediately understand all that He is doing. Therefore, if a false charge was made against Him, the charge *could appear to be true for a long time*.

It takes time to comprehend and appreciate what the Father is doing and if accusations are skillfully made, created beings might be convinced that God is dishonest and manipulative. In fact, it could take thousands of years for finite creatures to appreciate His excellent wisdom and grand purposes. Unfortunately, this is exactly what happened.

Lucifer led one-third of Heaven's angels to rebel against the Father. The angels who remained faithful to God have lived by faith ever since, just like human beings are required to do until the seventh seal is opened.

So, this was it! His wisdom, knowledge, powers of omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence that make Him God and set Him above the rest of His creation, are the very elements that make Him vulnerable to suspicion and distrust. It was all becoming clear to me.

God foreknew the rise of sin – both in Heaven and on Earth and He wrote down the choices and actions of everyone before they came to pass. In the end, when the contents of the *Book of Life* are exposed, four complex matters will be resolved:

1. God has omniscience. Even though He knows everything and has all power, He does not manipulate His creatures.
2. God does not use His foreknowledge to avert a crisis. He did not prevent sin from happening. Instead, He deals with His creatures based on fairness, love and kindness – not His foreknowledge.
3. God is righteous, therefore He is not manipulative. He grants every creature the power of choice. We are not forced to obey Him. (The ugly presence of sin proves this point to be true.)
4. God's laws are righteous and perfect – not because He says so, but because it will be shown that His laws are good for a universe.

Looking at the book again, I appreciate God's wisdom and how he chose to resolve a complex problem! By writing down everything before it happened, God would exonerate Himself from all false charges and provide written evidence at the proper time. It was beginning to make sense. This is why God sealed the book with seven seals. The contents are so volatile, and if the contents are prematurely exposed, God would never recover from charges of corruption.

Think of it this way: *If the contents of this book were exposed before everyone saw that God judged angels and mankind on the basis of their choices, it could be made to appear that God had predestined some creatures for eternal life and some for eternal death!* By waiting until man's judgment was completed, the contents of the *Book of Life* would serve its intended purpose. Oh, the wisdom of God!

So, who would be able to prove truly and convincingly that the Father was above reproach? Who could prove that His deeds are always righteous and fair? Who could exonerate the Father from Lucifer's falsehoods? The four living creatures were not qualified. Neither were the 24 elders.

I wept and wept because I, also, was not worthy to open the *Book of Life* and reveal its contents. I could not help my wonderful Father. I would gladly die for Him, because I loved Him with all my heart, but I could not exonerate Him from Lucifer's charges of misconduct, or from the insults and taunts of mortal men. This situation was more than I could bear.

Jesus Found Worthy

{5} Finally, one of the 24 elders noticed my grief. He came over to me and said, "John, do not weep anymore! We have found One who is worthy. Look! The Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed over Lucifer. He alone is credible and worthy to break the seven seals and open the book."

{6} I had been so absorbed with my grief that I did not see Jesus respond to the angel's invitation. The Father examined Jesus with such intense scrutiny that it made me tremble. If I were judged with such intensity, I would never receive eternal life. Apparently, the qualifications of Jesus had been reviewed and He was found worthy to vindicate the Most Excellent Name of His Royal Highest, the Father. Through my tears, I saw a Lamb, looking like it had been slain, standing near the center of the throne area.

Jesus was represented as a lamb because He was the Lamb of God, slain by the Father, to reconcile the world to Himself – the perfect substitute to save man. The Lamb was surrounded by the four living creatures and the elders; however, the Lamb was not an ordinary Lamb. This Lamb had willingly set aside His divinity to become subject to the second death so that man might be saved. Now, because He was found worthy, the Lamb received more than He gave up. (Psalm 2:8; John 17:2-6; Daniel 7:13,14)

He received omniscience and His seven eyes represent that power. The seven horns represent sovereign authority, or omnipotence. The Lamb had authority over the seven fiery angels sent throughout the realms of Heaven and Earth. {7} After He received approval from the Father and the assembled hosts, the Lamb approached the Father and took the *Book of Life* from the Father's right hand. Then the Father retired to watch the actions of the Lamb. The book now belonged to the Lamb and it would be called, the *Lamb's Book of Life*. It would be up to the Lamb to exonerate God and His government.

{8} When the Lamb took the *Book of Life* from the Father, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before Jesus and gave Him honor. (I believe the 24 elders are human beings taken from Earth at Christ's ascension to watch this coronation of Jesus and His subsequent judgment of mankind – Ephesians 4:8; Matthew 27:52,53.)

The 24 elders, two witnesses from each of the twelve tribes, are present as a jury of peers. Consequently, they are seated closest to the throne since they must observe the judgment of man and testify regarding God's fairness during the 1,000 years. Each elder had a harp and a golden bowl full of incense.

The bowls were similar to temple bowls I had seen in Jerusalem that served as censers. When the elders put special incense on the live coals that were in the bowls, a most wonderful fragrance filled the courtroom. The priests burned incense regularly in the Earthly tabernacle as part of the atonement service – the wonderful fragrance represented God's generous grace to man, covering the stench of degenerate sinners.

{9} Then the elders and the four living creatures sang a new song. (Angels sing new songs in Heaven whenever a new experience occurs and the songs remain as a reminder of that event.) The elders and the living creatures played their harps and sang to the Lamb: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because *You* were slain, and with *Your* blood *You* have redeemed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

You have proved that You love human beings more than You loved Your own life. {10} Even more, You have exalted the redeemed of Earth to be a new order within the universe and You have ordained them to be priests to serve our God, and they will serve *You* when *You* set up *Your* kingdom."

{11} Then I looked away from the throne and heard the voices of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne along with the living creatures and the elders. {12} In a loud voice they joined the singing: "Worthy is the Lamb, Who was slain. We rejoice to see Him exalted to the Highest. He alone is worthy to receive the seven attributes of God: power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and praise!"

{13} Then Heaven rang with sounds louder than anything I have ever heard. It sounded like every creature in Heaven and on Earth and under the Earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, was singing. This great choir sang: **"To the Father who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever! We have considered the life and death of the Lamb on behalf of sinners and we find Him alone to be qualified and worthy, and we find You, O Father, more than fair in this investigation."**

{14} The four living creatures ended the new song by saying, "Amen," and again, the elders and the angels fell down and worshiped the Father and the Lamb.

{6:1} After the songs of praise ended, Heaven's hosts were seated. Jesus sat in an exalted position at the right hand of the Father. Since Jesus (the Lamb) now had sovereign power, I watched as Jesus broke open the first of the seven seals. Jesus spoke quietly to the first living creature, the one with the face of a lion.

Then the first living creature spoke in a loud voice that sounded like thunder and said, "Come and see the responsibility the Lamb has given me!"

{2} As I watched, the first living creature transformed Himself into a white horse. I remembered that Zechariah also saw the work of the Holy Spirit in the form of four colored horses. (Zechariah 6:1-8) I overheard an angel say that Jesus was sending the four living creatures throughout the Earth on four special missions.

I found nothing unusual about the imagery of horsemen doing the King's business. It was the custom in my day for Caesar to send high-ranking horsemen throughout the world to conduct business for him. The riders were commissioned to do all that Jesus wanted. Just as a rider directs a horse, Jesus directed the work of the four living creatures.

The first living creature had a very important task. The year was A.D. 1798. His assignment was to go throughout Europe and the New World and open the minds of people to their great need of salvation *through* Jesus alone. For more than 12 long centuries, Christians had been erroneously taught that salvation comes through sacraments administered by representatives from the Church in Rome. However, now it was time for the world to know the truth about Jesus.

So, in February 1798, God made sure the Church's power had been wounded. Salvation is only possible through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (the Lamb of God). I saw that man's connection to Christ does not come through a priest, preacher, rabbi or cleric. Jesus' offer of salvation is free to any person willing to obey Him as Lord and Master. (John 14:15; Matthew 7:21,22; 1 John 2:4-6; James 2:24)

As each living creature is commissioned by Jesus, it continues to work until the seventh trumpet (which is the end of God's mercy). The first living creature was to lay a solid foundation for the consummation of the gospel that would be delivered to the whole world in the last days. Salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone and although this age-old truth was rediscovered by Martin Luther in the 16th century, the Church continued to hold its subjects in darkness until 1798.

This first revelation, that salvation is possible only through faith in Jesus, holds primary importance in the establishment of Christ's kingdom because it is the basis of salvation. (Ephesians 2:8,9) Even more, this message lays the foundation for the first angel's message, which will be delivered throughout the world when the *Great Tribulation* begins. (Revelation 14:6-13)

In 1798, the stage was set to begin spreading seeds of truth about salvation that would be widely scattered over the Earth for a large harvest later.

The bow in the rider's hand indicated warfare. Every time God's truth is proclaimed with clarity and power, there is division and suffering among human beings. For this very reason, I, John, am a prisoner on the isle of Patmos. Yet I am encouraged because the rider on the white horse was given a *stephanos*, a golden crown of victory.

This represents the promised reward that is available to all who submit to the terms and conditions of Christ's salvation. So, the first living creature left the throne room and went throughout the Earth (like a lion looking for prey) searching for souls hungering for truth.

The work this creature did resulted in a great revival of interest in salvation that began in the Europe and the United States, starting in the 1800's and spreading throughout the world.

Second Seal

{3} Time passed. When the work of the first living creature was at a proper phase of development, the Lamb opened the second seal. He spoke to the second living creature, the one who had the face like an ox. The second living creature said in a loud voice, "Come and

see the mission the Lamb has given me!"

{4} With this, the second living creature transformed Himself into a red horse. He left the throne room to accomplish his mission on Earth. His work closely complemented the work started by the first living creature. The second living creature was given a great sword that represents the Word of God, the sword of Truth. With the determined strength of an ox, this living creature motivated and empowered people to translate and distribute the Bible throughout the Earth.

Translating and printing the Word of God was no small task. Many Bible societies formed in the 1800's and millions of Bibles were freely distributed in record time. The world has never experienced such a development. (Today, the Bible continues to outsell any other book and millions of Bibles continue to be translated into hundreds of languages each year.)

The harmony I saw between the activities of the first two creatures was wonderful to watch. As the first living creature caused men to hunger for truth and salvation through Jesus, the need for Bibles grew proportionately. I saw millions of Bibles translated, printed and distributed throughout the world and this process will continue until the Great Tribulation begins.

Bible truth separates people. The more powerfully truth is presented, the greater the response from people who hate truth. Therefore, the presentation of truth will inevitably bring warfare in the last days. During the coming Great Tribulation, God's truth, as written in the Bible, will be on every person's mind. Because the Bible exposes the contents of human hearts, evil men will kill many people who love God's Word to eliminate their rebuke and testimony. (John 16:2-4)

In spite of the martyrdom to come, I watched the first two living creatures go throughout the Earth, fulfilling their mission. Then, at just the right time, Jesus broke open the third seal. He spoke quietly to the third living creature who had the face of a man. I could tell by the face of this creature that his mission was going to be different from the first two creatures.

Third Seal

{5} The year was 1844. The third living creature said to me, "Come and see the responsibility the Lamb has given me!" I watched as the third living creature transformed Himself into a black horse! He left Heaven with a pair of scales in his hand and he carried a solemn message for the people of Earth. First, he needed a group of people to work with Him.

This small group came from among those people who had responded to the work of the first two living creatures. One of those people who responded was a studious Baptist layman named William Miller. William Miller was given new insight regarding two additional Bible truths.

The first truth highlighted the state of man in death. This topic complemented a second new truth that concentrated on the role of Jesus as man's High Priest in Heaven's temple. So, the previously unknown doctrines of salvation by faith, soul sleep (the state of man in death) and the pre-Advent judgment brought a deeper understanding about Jesus and His work in Heaven on behalf of man.

After Jesus opened the third seal, I saw Him open the record books of Heaven and begin investigating the lives and deeds of men and women who had died. This scene corresponds with the vision of the courtroom scene recorded in Daniel 7. There, Daniel saw those in the courtroom seated and the books of record opened. Daniel also saw Jesus receive His kingdom. I also saw that Jesus opened the third seal right on time in 1844, according to the prophecy of Daniel 8:14. (This prophecy will be discussed in the next issue of *Day Star*.)

As I looked at the Earth, I marveled at the opportunity God has given to men and women to understand His ways. Although the work of the first three living creatures is highly important, only a few people on Earth seemed interested at the time.

[A small, but very important point must be made here to reduce future confusion. The *Book of Life* is not part of the pre-Advent judgment of human beings because the *Book of Life* remains closed until the seventh and final seal is broken. According to Revelation 20:12, the *Book of Life* is the only book opened when the 1,000 years are over.

Since four seals remain to be opened on the book, this proves that the pre-Advent judgment is exclusively based on the books of record (books written by recording angels). – See Ecclesiastes 12:13,14; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Proverbs 15:3).

[The dead are judged from their life's record as recorded by angels,– not from God's foreknowledge]

{6} Then the third living creature said to me, "Although the pre-Advent judgment message has not been fully understood, a quart of wheat will be paid for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley will be paid for a day's wages, and those laborers who carry this message will receive the best oil and wine as promised!"

I thought about his statement for some time before I understood the meaning. This promise of wages applied to those people who would joyfully and sacrificially spread the judgment-hour message around the world — though the judgment-hour message they carried was incomplete. In other words, those who sacrificed and labored to teach others about Jesus' ministry in Heaven's temple will be rewarded for their services just like Solomon rewarded the builders of God's temple on Earth with wheat, barley, oil and wine! (2 Chronicles 2:15)

However, the reward of the 1844 message would not be the honor of seeing the Second Coming.

Reflections

These scenes were most interesting to watch. I was intrigued with three facts about the first three seals. First, I was impressed that the activity that followed the opening of each seal involved a new revelation about Jesus. Second, each seal was additive in nature. The activity generated by subsequent seals built upon the accomplishments of the preceding seals. Third, I was impressed that the first three seals combine to reveal the final phase of Jesus' activities as

He administers the Plan of Salvation in Heaven's courtroom!

Time passed and Jesus allowed more than 150 years to go by before breaking open the fourth seal. He allowed this span of time to pass for two reasons. First, He wanted the elders and angels to observe His judgment of human beings closely so they could be satisfied with His methods of justice and the fairness of this process.

This is a critical point. The Father wants every elder and angel to observe how careful and thoughtful each eternal sentence is decided for each human being. This painstaking process says much about the love and government of God. The Father and Jesus love every person. It will not be until we see Heaven and speak with the elders who oversaw this process that we can appreciate how sad and difficult it was for Jesus to condemn a person to eternal death.

The second reason Jesus waited for more than 150 years to break open the fourth seal is that the Father has previously appointed the time when wrath will come upon the world. Daniel 8:17,19 indicates that the time of the end cannot be manipulated, just as the sixth trumpet in Revelation 9:15 is also scheduled for a specific time – right to the very hour!

The Fourth Seal

{7} After the Lamb broke the fourth seal, He spoke to the fourth living creature who had the face of a flying eagle. The fourth creature said to us, "Come and see the responsibility the Lamb has given me!" {8} I watched as the fourth living creature transformed Himself into a dapple-gray horse. In his face, I saw the deadly mission of a flying eagle looking for prey.

His mission caused much death and destruction. Hundreds of millions of people were killed, and the grave followed close behind him, swallowing up the dead. During the time-period of the fourth seal, one-fourth of Earth's people perished from God's judgments of sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts. (Ezekiel 14:12-21) The four judgments are caused by the seven trumpets. (See Revelation 8 & 9.) The sight of this global holocaust was more than I could watch.

Yet, in fairness to Jesus, I realized that the people of Earth had almost destroyed themselves through violence, hatred, dishonesty and sexual immorality. As in Noah's day, the people of Earth were so preoccupied with their evil ways that Jesus had to send these terrible judgments to get the world's attention.

Suddenly, as the fourth seal was broken, the authority of Jesus was powerfully revealed to all mankind and the resulting wrath of God became a topic of worldwide interest. This was not what most people were taught or expected from a "loving God." The commencement of the Great Tribulation came as a complete surprise for most people.

As horrific as these judgments were, Jesus controlled the events associated with this seal. His ultimate purpose was to save as many survivors who would choose Him as their Savior.

When the fourth seal was opened, Jesus empowered 144,000 people to deliver three messages to the world during the days that followed. (The gospel during the Great Tribulation was discussed at length in the April 1998, *Day Star*.) The truth about worshiping God on His **holy** seventh day Sabbath, along with the events that will happen before the Second Coming and how they relate to salvation, was proclaimed as never before.

Although billions rebelled against God's truth, a very large number were saved! (Revelation 7:9-14)

The response of the people on Earth to the fourth seal was very divided, even disgusting. Some people reacted with terror, others showed their true characters of greed and self-centeredness. Men and women did all kinds of vile things while claiming to appease God. As often happens in war, social restraints are removed and evil atrocities explode. It was a time of enormous suffering for everyone on Earth. As I continued to watch, the Lamb broke open the fifth seal.

Fifth Seal

{9} When Jesus opened the fifth seal, my gaze was directed to the Altar of Burnt Offering in Heaven. It reminded me of the sanctuary service in Jerusalem. There, the priests customarily poured the blood from sacrifices into a large container at the base of the altar of burnt offering.

Here, in Heaven, I saw a similar Altar of Burnt Offering, and the sacrificial blood of saints was also poured into a large container. An angel explained the meaning to me. Jesus was about to close the door to salvation in a few days. Since most of the world's population had refused to believe the truth, Jesus released the devil (the anti-Christ) and allowed him to do his deceptive work so that the end might come quickly. By using great miracles, the devil provoked the wicked to turn against the saints.

An ultimatum was given; either worship the Antichrist or be killed. (Revelation 13:15)

Millions of saints were martyred because of their testimony for God's Word.

{10} The innocent blood of the saints called for divine justice. I heard their blood cry out as did Abel's, (Genesis 4:10) "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, must the martyrdom go on? How long, O Jesus, will it be until You finish judging the inhabitants of the Earth and avenge our innocent blood?" {11} Then, all the saints were promised a white robe and told to be patient. The saints were told that the martyrdom would continue until the exact number of martyrs Jesus had predetermined was reached.

I remembered the sword of Truth in the second seal and realized the correlation between the second and fifth seals! The Sword of Truth caused evil men to kill the saints. Why would Jesus allow so much martyrdom? First, no greater witness can be given than to be willing to lay down your life for what you believe.

If only one person can be moved to accept Christ and His truth through a martyr's witness, then

Jesus is willing to make such a sacrifice. Since Jesus holds the keys to the grave, He has no fear of death. The Lamb only has to speak – and millions who now sleep in the dust will come forth from the grave to life immortal!

God also allows some of His saints to be put to death so they might sleep through the final, more horrific days of Earth. Though the cries of the martyrs are great, the assurance and grace which Jesus sends to each martyr is greater. Remember, Jesus shed His own blood first, for the redemption of the human race. The martyrs are sacrifices and this is the reason their blood is represented as being under the altar in the container that holds the blood of sacrifices.

Jesus allows them to die, so if possible, the last few people on Earth can be saved after watching the saint's commitment and sacrifice for the cause of Christ.

What will these last people say throughout eternity when they realize that Jesus loved them so much He was willing to sacrifice many, many saints for them? How much more will they rejoice to learn that Jesus loved them so much that He, Himself, was willing to die for them!

I then noticed that the Lamb's *Book of Life* had two seals remaining. I wondered when we would finally get to see the contents of the book. {12} These thoughts were interrupted when Jesus broke the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake and the whole world shook.

Earth's sun became a black disk in the heavens, the moon became blood red in color, {13} and many meteors impacted the Earth, like late figs drop from a fig tree when it is shaken by a strong wind.

{14} Then, the sky violently rolled up like a scroll, and every mountain and island was moved from its place. This was the Second Coming of Jesus! He and the Father were coming to the planet where their Kingdom would eventually be established.

{15} Then the kings of the Earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, even the slaves and free men, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.

{16} They shouted at the hailstones and huge rocks falling from the sky (Revelation 16:21), saying, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the Father who sits on His throne and from the wrath of the Lamb who sits at His right hand!

{17} For the great day of their wrath is here, and who can stand?" This seal describes the horror of the wicked when they see the Second Coming. As Jesus destroys the wicked, He calls in a loud voice, "Come forth my children." At that, the graves are opened and the saints from all ages awake and come forth in spectacular glory.

The degeneracy of sin is completely gone. In the twinkling of an eye, Jesus says, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world." (Matthew 35:24) With that, the saints fly into the clouds to meet Jesus. The living saints that remain on Earth, shout, "Glory to God" and they, too, are whisked up with the others to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18)

Oh, what a day!

Thoughts:

As I, John, considered these scenes, three things impressed me. First, the Lamb's *Book of Life* is not open at the Second Coming. Therefore, the Father is not yet vindicated. I learned later that the seventh seal is not opened until the seventh millennium is finished. Second, watching all these events confirmed in my mind that the seals are chronological, progressive and additive in nature.

Each broken seal provides a brighter and clearer understanding of who Jesus really is and the powers that He has. (Five essential doctrines explain who Jesus really is. For an in-depth study on this topic, obtain a copy of the series, *Five Essential Bible Truths*.)

For example, the first seal reveals the salvation of Jesus, the second seal reveals the supremacy of His Word, the third seal reveals Jesus' ministry in Heaven as man's High Priest, the fourth seal reveals His great wrath against sin, the fifth seal reveals the faith of Jesus as reflected in the martyrs, and the sixth seal physically reveals the true King of Kings. The seventh seal reveals to the whole universe, to every created being, that Jesus is as much God as is the Father.

Finally, I was also impressed by the special way the six seals relate to each other. The first three seals are *causes or missions*, and the next three seals are their *effects or outcomes*. For example, the *first* seal describes the work of the first living creature that impresses upon people their need of salvation through Jesus; the *sixth* seal is the full realization of that salvation.

The *second* seal describes the distribution of the teachings of Jesus (the Bible or the sword) all over the world; the *fifth* seal culminates with martyrdom over Bible truth. Finally, the *third* seal's pre-Advent judgment message is consummated with the judgment of the living during the horrific destruction brought on by the opening of the *fourth* seal.

During the *third* seal, the dead from all ages are judged from the books of record, and under the *fourth* seal, the living on Earth are judged by their choices. I saw, in Revelation 7, that the harvest of souls from the Earth will be innumerable. The four horsemen did their jobs well!

The Seventh Seal

{8:1} Then, I was zoomed forward in time to the end of the millennium. I was shown things that would happen at the end of the 1,000 years. I saw the *Book of Life*. It had one remaining seal on it. Immediately, I remembered the scenes of the six previous seals. Finally, the seventh seal would be opened and the contents of the *Book of Life* revealed!

I looked around. Jesus was standing before all the inhabitants of Heaven and Earth. Everyone who had ever lived on Earth was now alive and present for this occasion. The righteous saints were safe in the Holy City. The wicked had been resurrected and were standing outside the city,

New Jerusalem.

What a crowd! The righteous saints, possessing glorious immortal bodies, stood on the walls of the New Jerusalem. What a contrast. The wicked occupied the *same* degenerate bodies they had during their life upon Earth.

Jesus silenced the great throng. He announced that He, as Creator of angels and man, had called for this meeting. He pointed upward and everyone looked up toward the sky and saw a compelling scene. Each person saw all the events in his or her life pass in review with complete clarity because faithful angels recorded every event as God saw it. Besides their own life's record, everyone beheld Christ's shame at Calvary.

The Plan of Salvation and the enormity of God's grace was revealed to everyone. As Jesus, the Judge of mankind gave His eternal verdict to each person, He revealed *why* each human being was either inside or outside the Holy City. The panorama lasted for several hours. When it ended, the angels and the human race fell on their faces before God in silence and awe. The wicked confessed that their sentence was fair. What else could be said – the evidence was powerfully and clearly presented. At the same time, the saints also knelt, not able fathom God's mercy on their behalf.

Then, everyone was told to stand up. Every eye watched Jesus break the seventh seal on the *Book of Life*. Again, everyone saw a panoramic revelation. As we watched, everyone was silent — this time, for about a half-hour. This revelation made every knee bow again before Jesus and made each person confess that in Him alone was righteousness and strength! Then I understood the seventh seal.

When Jesus broke the final seal on the *Book of Life*, everyone was shown the contents of the Book! The effect was overwhelming. The Father, in advance, had written down everything that would take place. The Father knew who would *choose* salvation and who would not, even before the angel's were created. When the *Book of Life* was opened, the contents revealed exactly what happened in each individual's life, whether angel or man. Then, the truth dawned.

Everyone saw that God had not used His foreknowledge to predestine the outcome of sin. The books of record, chronicled by angels, confirmed that every creature has the power to choose submission to God or rebellion against God. Already, everyone had admitted that the records were true. The *Book of Life* confirmed that God knew what each creature would choose — and yet, He fully granted the power of choice to all His creatures anyway. Never again would God be accused of using His omnipotence or omniscience to manipulate His creatures!

The books of record were found to be identical with the *Book of Life* with one exception. The names of those individuals who had rejected the promptings of the Holy Spirit were blotted out of the *Book of Life* before it was sealed up.

Keep in mind that the *Book of Life* was not used during the judgment of mankind. Although the life records of the wicked are in the *Book of Life*, their names cannot remain in the *Book of Life* because they will be completely destroyed in the lake of fire. Since they will cease to have life,

their names were blotted out. Those whose names remain in the *Book of Life* will never cease to have life!

At first, finding the records of the wicked in the *Book of Life* may seem contradictory, but in the end their names are blotted out. The reason their records are written there is that they had life – they were part of God's creation. God loved them, too. Remember, everyone on Earth, but Jesus, has sinned.

The *Book of Life* contains a complete record of all life and an accurate record of each creature's choices. The *Book of Life* is not a "who's who" list of those individuals receiving eternal life, but instead, it is a book that reveals what the Father knew before sin began.

His written report covers everything that took place. Before one rebel was ever created, God's omniscient eraser removed the names of those who would be forever lost – not because He predestined them to death, but because He knew they would refuse life.

Although He knew this, He loved them so much that He gave His only Son to die for them. Even more, He sent the Holy Spirit to them, time after time, to give them every possible opportunity for salvation! Still, they chose to rebel.

The Final Scene

Note: To conclude this paraphrase on the seven seals, it is fitting that I include the scenes described in Revelation 20:7-21:1. Because this scene is intimately connected to the seventh seal, some repetition is necessary. Incidentally, this scene contains the only verse in the Bible where the *Book of Life* is opened – verse 12.

{7} When the one thousand years are over, Jesus will return to Earth with all the saints in the Holy City. Then, all the wicked people that ever lived will be resurrected and Satan will be released from his 1,000 years of captivity in the Abyss.

{8} Immediately, the devil will begin to deceive all the wicked people who have come to life. He will go throughout the world – like Gog, the ruler of Magog, who incited the nations against Israel — gathering the wicked for a final battle against God. The number of wicked will be like grains of sand on the seashore.

{9} Filled with the intensity of Satan's deceptions, they will march boldly upon the Holy City. Their plan is to destroy the saints and the city, but fire comes down from Heaven and begins the final destruction process.

{10} The devil, that great red dragon himself, who deceived the wicked, will finally be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where Babylon (the dragon-like beast) and the body of the false prophet (the lamb-like beast) have already been thrown. (Revelation 19:19-21)

There, they will be tormented day and night for as long as there is any remaining particle of their

being. This is the justice of God and the judgment of the saints.

{11} As I considered these scenes, I wondered how these events and the book sealed with seven seals would vindicate the Father. Then I saw an impressive scene. At the end of the one thousand years, when Jesus returns to Earth with His saints in the Holy City, the wicked people from all ages were resurrected so they could behold the reality, righteousness and glory of Jesus Christ, their Maker!

Throughout history, most wicked people had died without fearing God, often denying that He even existed. However, all of the wicked had one thing in common – they *all* refused to submit to God's authority. I could see the sickening effects of sin on the great crowd of wicked human beings that stood outside the city gates.

People from every generation on Earth were there. I saw those who lived before the flood. They were physically much bigger than those who lived at the end of time. The contrast between the wicked in their degenerate bodies and the saints in their immortal bodies was indescribable.

Every person who had ever lived on the Earth was alive on this day. What a throng! The saints were inside the Holy City and the wicked were outside.

The devil urged the wicked to rush the Holy City and destroy it. They obeyed and attacked the City of God. At that same moment, I saw Jesus stand on a high balcony and with the same voice of authority that calmed the angry Sea of Galilee and He commanded: "Peace. Be still." Instantly, a hush fell over the whole Earth.

Then, Jesus opened the sky into a giant screen and every being looked up to see the story of his or her life that the angels of God had faithfully recorded. God required each person to see three things. First, the plan of salvation was explained to each person.

They saw the fall of Adam and Eve, the destruction caused by the flood, the scenes from Calvary and the great humility that Jesus suffered to make salvation possible for man. Next, each person saw his or her lifelong response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

The wicked saw how they rejected the love of Jesus and His offer of salvation. They saw with unvarnished clarity, their consistent rejection of the Holy Spirit and the results of their evil deeds and rebellion. As the saints watched, they saw the eternal importance of yielding to the impressions of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Everyone present understood the consequences of their choices, for Heaven's record was true and faithful. Last, the Father required every person to his or her day in Heaven's court.

The Father wanted each person to understand why Jesus decided each case as He did. At the end of these three events, *every* person confessed that Jesus had faithfully judged them and that His judgment was righteous and true.

{12} One by one, the wicked began to cringe before their Maker. Each individual saw the contents of the books of record. What could they say? How could they argue with such a

presentation of truth from God? How could there be any denial? There was no room for excuses or escape. Jesus stepped forward and asked if anyone had a complaint about the truthfulness of the scenes and fairness of His judgment. At this statement, every person bowed down before the Creator.

What could guilty man say to his Creator? All of God's creation will never forget this scene. Wicked people bowed before Jesus and admitted that His sentence of eternal death was just and fair. The saints, who also saw their life pass in review, bowed before their Savior realizing that without the great mercy of God, they would have no right to eternal life.

Even then, the devil and his angels, who stood at the back of the great crowd, refused to bow before Jesus. Their impending doom only made them more obstinate.

Then, Jesus held up the *Book of Life* that had been sealed with seven seals. Before the assembled host of Heaven and Earth, He broke the seventh and final seal. A powerful display occurred in the heavens and another panorama began. The sound was louder than anything I have ever heard.

Everyone was frightened when God displayed His awesome glory. We looked over to the great white throne and the Father was seated on it. The Father's glory was shockingly brilliant and overwhelming. Jesus approached the Father and stood before Him. Jesus opened the book and every eye looked to see what was written before the angels and the Earth were created.

Naturally, billions of angels, both good and evil, watched with great interest. They had known about the existence of this mysterious book for millenniums. However, most of the people on Earth did not know about the *Book of Life*. As I watched this awesome display in the sky, I saw that the *Book of Life* contained a faithful record of *everything* that had happened since the angels were created. The *Book of Life* revealed the lies that Lucifer would tell about his Creator and his work of deception – both in Heaven and on Earth.

However, what was most fascinating to all of us, was that the *Book of Life* was *identical* to the books of record!

As I watched this scene, the meaning unfolded to me. This was too wonderful! At last, I understood how the Father would be exonerated from the false charges the devil had made about Him before the world was created. This is a summary of what I learned: The Father knew, even before Lucifer was created, that one day Lucifer would charge Him with evil and malicious deeds. Lucifer would raise doubt about God's honesty and integrity by skillfully asking questions that his fellow angels could not answer. (Isaiah 14:13-15)

Since finite minds cannot comprehend the actions and works of an infinite God, His creatures must maintain a nonnegotiable faith in Him, for without faith, trust is impossible. The Father knew He would be misrepresented and misunderstood through the seeds of doubt planted by Lucifer.

At the time Lucifer was spreading lies about God in Heaven, God did everything He could to

satisfy Lucifer's jealous agitation. However, nothing helped. Lucifer's problem came from his jealousy of Jesus. He coveted the position that Jesus held in Heaven as the Archangel and bitterness grew in Lucifer's heart until he openly rebelled. (Ezekiel 28:12-17)

The End of Sin

The time had finally come to put an end to sin and the Father revealed three things. First, He showed from the *Book of Life* that He knew what Lucifer would say about Him even before Lucifer was created. He knew that Lucifer would bring rebellion to Heaven and ultimately cause one-third of His angels to perish. Second, He proved that He knew the name of each angel and each person who would be born on Earth and what their life would be like.

He also knew what each creature's choices for eternal destiny would be. He wrote all of this in the *Book of Life* before the angels and the world were created and sealed the book with seven seals. Last, although the Father knew all this, He did not manipulate any of His creatures to cause or avoid the problem of sin.

He knew of the great suffering that Lucifer would bring to His house. Lucifer had accused the Father of not being a God of love and not allowing His creatures to have the power of choice. Lucifer proclaimed, "Your creatures are just created servants. They are not free as you claim! They are slaves." Now, everyone could see the fallacy of these hollow accusations.

Every person's life has passed before them, every person has admitted that God's judgment was fair and true, and that they have been judged accurately. The Father has demonstrated by opening the *Book of Life* that He knows everything, but he forces no one to serve Him. His creatures are truly free to exercise their power of choice. The *Book of Life*, is undeniable proof that God has not used His great powers to manipulate His creatures. Every creature is granted the inalienable right to exercise choice.

Two great multitudes of men and women, one standing inside and the other outside the Holy City *prove* that God offers the power of choice and that He operates a government based on law – not an arbitrary whim.

{13} Everyone who has ever lived on Earth is present that day – those who have died at sea are no different from those who had been sleeping in their graves. Every person is rewarded according to their deeds. Finally, Lucifer, the father of liars and the adversary of God, is summoned to come to the front and stand before the Father and before Jesus.

There, in front of billions of angels and human beings, Jesus asks the devil if the records, as written in the books of record and the *Book of Life*, are true. Jesus asks Lucifer if He had been faithful and true in presenting the events as they happened. The devil bows down before the Father and Jesus confessing without repentance in his voice, "In You alone is truth and righteousness. I am a liar." (Isaiah 45:23,24)

As the wicked hosts see and hear this confession, they are outraged at the despot who had

encouraged them to rebel against God and forfeit eternal life. In a murderous frenzy, the wicked rushed the devil and his demons attempting to destroy them. However, what is human strength compared with that of an angel?

{14} Then fire falls from the heavens. The Earth seems like it is made of flammable material. Suddenly, fire is everywhere. Everything is thrown into the lake of fire — the great horde of evil people and even death and the grave itself. This lake of fire is the second death.

{15} If anyone's name is not found written in the *Book of Life*, he is thrown into the great lake of fire. After a few weeks, the fire finally consumes the wicked to ashes. (Malachi 4:1-3)

The devil and his angels suffer until they have atoned for the guilt of their sins. This is also true of man. {21:1} After the fire purified the Earth, I saw Jesus create a new heaven and a new Earth, for the first heaven and the first Earth had passed away and there was no longer any great sea of fire.

At last, sin was over. The beginning of ***eternal joy*** is just beginning.