

Bible Study # 95
September 8, 1992
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Book of Revelation Series—Revelation 4—6
(Chart at end)

We are getting on a little further into the book of Revelation this evening. We **are going into chapters 4, 5 and 6.**

One thing I might mention at the beginning. You know there are various groups, particularly a number of the Protestants, who teach the doctrine of the rapture, which is the idea that the second coming really isn't the second coming. It is sort of the second "almost" coming, sort of a near miss. The doctrine of the rapture, of course, is not found in the Bible.

It's amazing how certain terms find their way into the religious vocabulary and you don't find them in the Bible. The Protestant doctrine of the rapture, you won't find in the Bible. The doctrine of the trinity, you won't find in the Bible. It was not used until a couple of hundred years after the Bible was completed and a Catholic writer used it.

The doctrine of the rapture is the idea that Christ doesn't really come all the way back. He only comes as far as the clouds and He catches up the church. He takes them all up to heaven; we sit up there and watch while the Tribulation is going on. Perhaps you've seen a car with a bumper sticker that says, "In case of the rapture this car will be driverless" or whatever. "This car will be without a driver in the case of the rapture." One of the scriptures they quote to prove their doctrine is Revelation 4.

Revelation 4:1, John says, "After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here....'" They stop at that point and say, "This is the point at which the rapture occurs and throughout the rest of the book of Revelation, the church is no longer on the earth. The church is no longer pictured as on the earth throughout the rest of the book of Revelation, so this proves the rapture."

Well, it doesn't prove the rapture. It's not talking about that at all. This is a vision that John saw. Let's go on and read the rest of the verse.

Verses 1-2, "...the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.' Immediately I was in the

Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne."

John saw a vision and his vision transported him into the presence of God. It's a remarkable thing when we read some of this. John was describing what he saw in the vocabulary that he had. Sometimes you read a description and you have trouble picturing it in your mind. But what you have to consider is that if you were shown things you had never seen before, how would you describe it? You would have to use words and terms that you were familiar with and say, 'It was like this' and 'it was like that.' You wouldn't know what it was. You wouldn't know the name of it unless someone told you, and if you put down the proper name, no one else would know what you were talking about.

What if someone of 100 years ago were transported forward into the future and saw a television and a VCR and then they went back to their point in time and were trying to describe to someone what they saw. If they used the word "television" and "VCR" that would be meaningless because nobody in the 1890s would have any idea of what that was. You might as well have called it a "whatyoumacallit" because it would be just about as meaningless to them.

It reminds me of an old man that I knew in the Church in Texas. He told me about when he was a boy, which was in the 1890s. One day they went to town in a wagon and while his father was shopping, he was wandering around as kids would. There was what was called a "magic lantern show" that was being held in the back part of somebody's barn there in town. There were barns in town back at that time. The magic lantern show was sort of the ancestor of the moving picture. It was a very primitive sort of thing. It was literally a magic lantern show because the lantern was the means of light and there was a sort of flipping through these cards. Some of you may be familiar with that. Anyway, it was a very crude and primitive thing, but it did project the picture onto a sheet that was hung there in the dark barn. The lantern was what gave the light and somebody had to manually put through the sequence. It looked like it was moving. It gave the illusion of moving—jerking, yes, but moving nevertheless. When he got back home, he was telling his Dad about seeing moving pictures. And his Dad whipped him for lying. He said, 'Pictures don't move. Don't be coming back telling me tall tales.' It seemed a very farfetched thing.

The point that I am making is what is unfamiliar is very difficult to describe. You describe it in

terms that are familiar to you. Back then, they called it a magic lantern show because they literally used the lantern and it seemed like magic. Instead of still shots, you saw things projected on the screen that seem to be moving. It was very primitively done.

John described things that he had never seen before. He described things that there were not appropriate words for in his vocabulary to describe. He described things and if he had put down the real name of it, nobody he was writing to would have known what it was. They would be looking at it and wouldn't be able to figure it out either. John described, in the vocabulary of his day, the things that he saw.

As we go through the book of Revelation, some of these things may very well have to do with futuristic battle scenes, weapons and things of this sort that there simply weren't any words for. When he describes battles and weapons, he talks about chariots. He talks about something that looked like a swarm of locusts flying through the air. If he had seen a squadron of attack helicopters moving through, what would it have looked like? It would have looked like a swarm of locusts coming through. He would have looked up and would have seen, transported in vision, things that were simply beyond the scope of his imagination. So he would have used terminology familiar to him.

Just like when the first cars came along, they were called horseless carriages. That was the way people described them. It was like a carriage but didn't have a horse in front of it. In describing some of these things, the problem is a matter of vocabulary.

If somebody wants to make the point that God's Church isn't found on the earth again after Revelation 4:1, all they have to do is go to Revelation 5:10 and find that we are kings and priests on the earth. There are plenty of other places. Revelation 12:14 talks about God's Church literally being taken to her place in the wilderness, to a place of protection or a place of safety to be protected from the Great Tribulation. There are some that object to the use of the term "place of safety" because they say that exact term is not in the Bible. No, it's not exactly what it says.

Revelation 12:14, "But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent."

We could call it "the place in the wilderness where the Church is nourished for a time, times

and half a time" every time we discuss it, but it's simpler to refer to it as "a place of protection" or "a place of safety"—a place for God's Church to be protected and nourished. What is a place of safety? It's not a matter of quibbling about terms. We find that the place where the woman, or the Church, is to be nourished is a place in the wilderness. It's a place on the earth, not off up in heaven somewhere; it's not in some situation like that.

In Revelation 4:1, John sees a vision. John had seen another vision about 65 years or more before he saw what he saw in Revelation 4. John had seen another vision. That vision is recorded back in Matthew 17.

Matthew 16:28, you remember at the very end Jesus said to the disciples, "...there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Then the very next verses, Matthew 17:1-2 says that a week later, He took James, Peter and John and went up into a mountain apart from the rest of them and was transfigured before them. They saw Him in His glorified state.

Verse 3, they saw Moses and Elijah in glorified form conversing with Him.

Verse 9, at the end of that experience He told them, "... 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.'" They saw a vision. That was the fulfillment of the promise that some of them would not taste death until they saw Him coming in the Kingdom. They saw it in vision. They saw Him in the glorified state that is representative of the Kingdom of God. They saw Him with individuals who will be in top positions in the Kingdom of God. They saw a vision of the resurrection. They were transported in vision into the Kingdom.

Now, over 65 years later, John is an elderly man in his 90s in exile on the island of Patmos and is given a vision. He had previously been given information. Now, in vision, he is transported into the very presence of the throne of God.

There are those who say, 'We don't know anything about what God is like or what heaven is like.' Oh, yes, we do! We wouldn't know it if God didn't tell us. But we can know. It's not the idea, 'well, whatever you try to imagine and visualize—God and whatever you are imagining—it won't be that way.'—Perhaps, if all you had was imagination; however, there are various things that you can certainly know. We know that there is a brilliance, a glory like the sun. In fact, we even know what color His hair is.

Revelation 1:14, "His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow...."

Verse 13 describes the garment that He has on. It describes various things. So those things that God reveals can certainly be known. Now, if God doesn't reveal it, we can't know it. But God does reveal certain things. He wants us to have a grasp of what He is like. He reveals information about Himself and about His throne. In Revelation 4:1, God gave John the vision. John was to write these things down to show these things to the servants of God. When John was transported in his vision, he saw a throne in heaven and he saw an Individual sitting on that throne.

Revelation 4:2, "...I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne." There are several places in Scripture where we find references to that. You can go back to Ezekiel 1; you can go to the book of Daniel (Daniel 7:9), where it talks about the Ancient of Days sitting on a throne. There are places in Daniel 7 and Ezekiel 1. There are places that are references to God and to a vision of heaven and God's throne. This is what John sees.

Verse 3, "And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald." What he saw was a reflection of light. It was brilliant. There was a splendor and a brilliance of color and light that was just overpowering to him. He saw it like a rainbow.

We've probably all seen prisms. My wife has a little one that hangs on a shade. Certain times of the year, at the right angle of the sun, the sun will hit it and will make little rainbow colors that come through the kitchen and shine on a kitchen cabinet. Many of us have seen that sort of thing. It's just a tiny bit, but it's pretty. We see here where God is surrounded by things like that.

Verse 6, "Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne..." The light that is emanated and the refraction of that light, the brilliance of color and beauty were just overwhelming. He describes it like a rainbow around the throne. There was all this brilliance and this beautiful light.

Who is it that designed color to be a part of life? That's an incredible thing. Here you have sunlight. There isn't any color in sunlight, but when it shines through a glass prism, all of a sudden you have red, yellow, blue—you have color. Where did that come from? Well, it came from the light. How did it get there? God put it there. He designed light in a way like that. He designed all sorts of things, and we see just a

tiny glimmer of it. Here, on this earth, we get to enjoy some of the beauty that God has designed. But do you think God has given us something that is beyond what He has? Do you think God looks down and is sort of envious and thinks, 'People get to have all the fun; they get all these nice things.'

Sometimes people, particularly young people, are concerned. They want Christ to come back, but they don't want Him to come back too soon because they want to be able to have some fun in life. If you stop and think about it, do you think God looks down and is envious of what people are doing? Do you think God says, 'Those people get to have all this fun. They have such exciting lives and get to do these thrilling, fun things—all I get to do is just sort of sit here.'

Psalm 16:11, "...in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Believe me, there isn't anything we can enjoy on the human level that even holds the flicker of a candle to the kind of enjoyment we can have on the God level. There just isn't!

It's hard for us to fathom—just like it would be hard for your two or three year old to fathom the things that you enjoy as an adult—why would that be so thrilling? A little child can sit there and make all these noises with his mouth and run his little truck across the floor. He's having a "ball." Do you look down there and say, 'I wish I could do that again. That's just so much fun.' Would you just want to spend your day making all those noises with your mouth. No, there are a lot of other exciting things—things that never even entered into the child's mind. He can't comprehend what it's like to live on an adult level. And in the same way, we can't comprehend what it's like to live on the God level. God gives us a little bit of insight.

John sees this and he's overwhelmed by it.

Revelation 4:4-5, then he notices, "Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes, and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

I am going to show you a little bit about who these seven Spirits are. We are going to see that this is identified in the Scriptures. Who are the 24 elders? What are they? The term for "elder" in the Greek language is the word "presbyteros." The Presbyterian Church takes its name from that term. That's the style of government they have—government by the elders or the

presbyters, as it is in the Greek. Basically that word means what our word “elder” means in English. The primary meaning of “elder” is “one who is older” and by implication, therefore, “one who has great experience and wisdom.” The elders of ancient Israel were the ones that people went to for counsel and advice. They were the ones who made judgmental decisions in a community. The elders were the ones who gave guidance. They were older men who had experience and were looked to by others as a source of wisdom. They occupied governmental function, in the sense that they often sat as a council to make decisions and give advice. The Jews applied that term to the members of the Sanhedrin.

Here, we find created beings at the throne of God who occupy very high-level positions in God’s government. Who are they counseling and advising and making judgmental decisions pertaining to? –Undoubtedly, the various angelic creatures and creation. We are not told how many angels there are. Perhaps there are billions of them. In Revelation 5:11, it talks about 10,000 x 10,000. Well, that is 100,000,000 (100 million), so you know that there are many. And it talks about many others, so there are perhaps even billions of angels. We are not told exactly how many, but God is not the author of confusion (I Corinthians 14:33). There is order and organization in everything that God does.

Twelve is God’s number for organization, for government structure or for organized beginnings. When God began the nation of Israel, He did so with 12 tribes. When you go back to the book of Exodus and Numbers, you find there were 12 princes, a prince for each tribe. When you go into the New Testament, Christ chose 12 apostles as a foundation of the New Testament Church. So 12 is a number of organizational beginnings. It denotes governmental structure.

Here in Revelation 4:4, we have twice 12; 2 x 12 is 24. Here is the governmental structure that the angelic realm is predicated upon. God doesn’t have angels out there just sort of swarming all over the place. There’s organization and structure. There is structure and a hierarchy. God doesn’t reveal all of it to us. We don’t need to know it all, but He gives us little bits of insight.

These 24 great angelic creatures sit like a council and occupy a position of administering the angelic realm right there at the throne of God. They are a source of advice, counsel, instruction

to the angels and deal with matters that come up. They are seen there.

It mentions these seven lamps burning before the throne.

Verse 5, “...And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”

Verse 6, “Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal...” Here, we find this great expanse. John describes it. It’s like crystal. It was reflective. Evidently it was sort of like a mirror finish. Perhaps parts of it may have even been some sort of crystalline design that refracted light. There was brilliance and shine to it. John had never seen anything like it. Of course, the reason is because there is nothing like it. It is something that exists at the throne of God.

Verse 6, continuing, it then describes these four creatures that were full of eyes, “...And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.”

Verses 7-8, it describes them as having characteristics like a lion, a calf, a man and an eagle and they had six wings. We think that sounds like an awfully unusual creature. It seems unusual to us because you and I have never seen anything like that.

They are mentioned back in Ezekiel 1. Ezekiel 1:5-10 describes four creatures. Ezekiel tells us they have four faces: one face was like a man, one was like a lion, one was like an eagle and one was like an ox; it describes that they had wings. They were unusual-looking creatures. The reason they strike us as unusual is because we have never seen anything like that and have trouble imagining anything like it.

Let me ask you a question. What did God model the animals here on earth after? Ever thought about that? You know, God modeled man after Himself. He made man in His image (Genesis 1:26; Genesis 5:1, 3). God made man a clay model that had the shape, outline and imprint of His characteristics. God modeled man after Himself. There are creatures in the spirit realm. Many of the angels also have the look of what we would term a human being. They carry that outward form and shape. But there are others that don’t.

The proof of that—remember, II Kings 2:11, when Elijah was taken up into heaven in a chariot. He was taken up into the sky (the atmosphere). What was he taken up in? He was taken up in horses and chariots of fire. Where do you think they got the horses of fire? Do you

think they went down to the auction and bought the first horses that came through the ring? They wouldn't have gotten very high off the ground, and you wouldn't have gotten them close to a chariot of fire, that's for sure. These were angelic horses. They were horses that existed in the angelic realm. We know that there are creatures that have the appearance of a horse because even Jesus Christ is pictured as sitting on a horse.

Revelation 19:11, "Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war."

Verse 14, "And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses."

We find a description that there are angelic creatures. Since they are made of spirit, they are angelic creatures, creatures in the angelic realm. Certainly, some beings in the angelic realm have the appearance of what we would term animals. Just as God modeled man after Himself, certain animals that He made were modeled after counterparts or certain characteristics of angelic beings. Now, I am not saying that every animal you come across has some sort of a heavenly counterpart. I don't think that's necessarily the case at all. There isn't any indication of opossums and armadillos and all the rest of it. I am not indicating that at all. But there are some. How many are there—I don't know. We are not told. We have certain ones.

Revelation 4:5, "...And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

Revelation 1:4-5, if we go back, "John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead..." We again read of the seven Spirits before the throne of God.

Revelation 3:1-2, "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, "These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: 'I know your works...'"" There's a reference to these Spirits. What are they? Let's turn back to the book of Zechariah and we will notice in Zechariah 3 and 4.

Zechariah 3:8-9, "...for behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH [This is a reference to Jesus Christ; in most of your Bibles, the term "BRANCH" is probably in all capital letters.]. For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua: upon the stone are seven eyes.

Behold, I will engrave its inscription," says the Lord of hosts, "and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.""

Zechariah 4:10, "'For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the Lord, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth.'"

Revelation 5:6, "And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth."

"Seven eyes which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." We find that reference in Zechariah 4:10. We find these seven Spirits referenced in other places in the book of Revelation. This is not the Holy Spirit. These are spirit beings.

Just hold your place here and let's notice one other place.

Hebrews 1:7, "And of the angels He says: 'Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.'" His ministers are His servants. His angels are spirits. Some servants are likened to flames of fire. Here, this describes created angelic spirit beings that evidently serve as an information-gathering source to God. They are the means by which God keeps up with every single thing that's going on all over the earth.

Our technology is very primitive, but there are certain things that we are aware of that can give us some insight. Our technology is perhaps more than generations past, though I don't think we should think that what we have is comparable to what God has. To compare what we have to what God has is like comparing a little flickering candle with the sun in full glory. There's not a whole lot of comparison. A little flickering candle and the sun both provide light and heat, but the distinction between them is awfully significant.

We can put satellites in the sky and we can have various ones located in orbit in various places around the earth. We call them spy satellites. They can send back pictures. Somebody can be sitting in a room watching on a television set something that is going on a world away. We have telephoto. We can take photographs and watch things that are going on a long ways away. We have sent probes into outer space. We can sit and watch film footage coming from the moons of Jupiter—just incredible things. Somebody can sit and watch something projected onto a television screen.

Here, it's being projected back. These seven Spirits that John described serve, in that sense, as the eyes of God. They are the means by which God watches what is going on. They are described here.

John sees a great celebration of praise for God going on in heaven.

Revelation 4:11, ““You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.””

For all of this brilliance, magnificence, power and grandeur that are described in the spirit realm, none of them are created to be part of God's Family. Just hold your place here and let's go back to Hebrews. God is speaking of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:4-5, ““having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten you?’ And again: ‘I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?’””

For all the grandeur, power and greatness that these angels were created with, none of them are part of God's Family. They are created as servant beings to serve and carry out God's government. But we have the opportunity to actually be a part of His Family, to actually be a part of the very Family of God.

Revelation 21:7, God says to us, ““...I will be his God and he shall be My son.”” ‘You are My sons!’ Now, if we are sons and He's the Father, that's a Family, isn't it? It's a relationship the angels can't have. We don't just become angels. We won't sprout wings, grow a halo and become an angel. Our destiny is far, far greater than any of the angels.

Let's compare it. In a monarchy, the only way you can be a part of the royal family is to be born into the royal family. If you're a commoner, the highest thing that you could aspire to is to be the Prime Minister. If you actually look at the meaning of the words “Prime Minister,” it simply means “the first servant” or “the chief servant.” But you can never be higher than that because the only way you can be a prince or a king is to be born into the royal family.

The angelic beings have great power, authority, grandeur and greatness—far greater than what we have as human beings right now. Our destiny is not just simply to be a super angel. It is far, far above the angelic realm. It's incredible.

John sees a little bit of this. He sees heaven. He sees the very throne of God.

Revelation 5:1, ““And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll [KJV, “book”] written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.””

Verse 3, ““And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.”” None of the created angelic beings that were in heaven—not the 24 elders, not the four living creatures, not Michael or Gabriel or any of the angelic beings that were in heaven—were worthy to open that book. There wasn't any human being alive on the earth that was worthy to open that book. There wasn't anybody dead and buried under the earth that was worthy to open that book.

Verse 4, John was just overwhelmed that there wasn't anyone who could open the book.

Verses 5-6, ““But one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.’ And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain....””

John uses the metaphor “Lamb of God.” He uses it in his gospel and he uses it in the book of Revelation. It is referring to Jesus Christ.

Verse 7, he describes, ““Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.”” He took it out of the hand of God the Father.

Verse 8, ““Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.””

““Golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”” Do you ever think of God having a means of storing up prayers? It describes here golden bowls full of incense. Incense was offered in the Holy Place and was symbolic of the prayers of God's people—it's sweet savor coming up to God. God evidently has a means by which He preserves the prayers of His saints. They are really precious to Him. If we consider and think about that, we might be more careful in our prayer life. Think about that.

I don't know about you, but I have a box at home. In that box, I have an accumulation of cards. I have things my children made for me years ago when they were really small. I have cards that they would make or a letter that they would write to me. I have cards that various people have sent over the years. From time to

time I like to go back through, look and think back about some of that and to sort of take encouragement from some of that. We often save things that our children do when they are young because it means a lot to us. It's very precious to us. As they get older, you look back and see some of these things. It's something you enjoy reminiscing about. God appreciates and values the prayers of His children. ”

I want to call your attention to a technical point in verses 9 and 10 so we can understand it.

Verse 9-10, “And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.’” The King James Version translates it with first-person pronouns. Many other translations will render the third-person pronoun, which is “them” or “they,” and that is correct.

The Greek text that the King James was translated from is called the “Textus Receptus.” Overall it is a very accurate text. It is not identical to what is called the “Majority Text” or the “Byzantine Text,” which comprises about 90 percent of the Greek manuscripts. It is a text that was available there in Europe and was primarily compiled from those. Overall it was a very excellent text, but when you check the Majority or Byzantine Text, which is really the authoritative New Testament manuscript, it uses the third-person pronoun “them” or “they.” That is correct because if you look at the context, angelic beings are the ones that are singing. Well, they haven't been redeemed out of tribe and tongues and peoples and nations. They would be using the third-person pronoun “them” or “they.” Most modern translations render it that way. The New King James renders it the way the Old King James does, but they have a footnote in the margin where they tell you that the text is really a deviation from one of the few originals. The angelic creatures are singing a new song to Christ.

Verse 9, “...‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed [*them*] to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.’” It's talking about human beings from every ethnic background who have been redeemed to God through the blood of Jesus Christ. Angelic beings are singing this. So naturally they would use a third-person pronoun.

Verse 10, “‘And have made [*them*] kings and priests to our God; and [*they*] shall reign on the earth.’”

Verse 11, “Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.” He saw 100 million and then thousands of thousands. That's millions! John saw millions of angels. One choir was 100 million angels. Can you imagine what sort of a volume of song that ten million angels could make?

We hear our choir sing and that's inspiring. When you go to the Feast, there may a large choir that consists of 100 or 200 at a big Feast site, and that's really impressive. Can you imagine the choir that God has in heaven? —A hundred million angels. That must be quite a thing.

They were singing and glorifying God and Jesus Christ. They were worshipping Him because now the Lamb opens the seals. The Lamb is Jesus Christ. He opens the seals. He is the Revelator. Jesus Christ is the One who reveals what the seals meant.

A document was written and sealed. The King James Bible says it was a book, but what we are seeing is actually a scroll. Books that are bound, as we think of them, didn't come into use until at least a couple of hundred years after the time John had written Revelation. Up to that time, a scroll, which is unrolled, is what was utilized. Here we find something that was sealed. It was sealed and a seal was broken. You unrolled it and then you got to another seal. You broke that seal and unrolled it further.

Seals were put on letters. It was a way of making something tamper proof, of ensuring that only the authorized individual used it. In ancient times and coming on up into fairly modern times, sealing was generally done on legal documents. Sealing wax was put on them and then a signet ring was pressed into the warm wax. Something that identified or authenticated the genuineness was pressed into it. Pages of a will or something similar were folded. Then they would heat wax, let that blob of wax fall on the fold and then put a seal in it. If anybody broke it, it was obvious. You couldn't repair it. So it would be apparent whether or not it had been tampered with. It was a means of protecting a legal document and guaranteeing that no unauthorized entry was made. Nobody had access to it. If they did, it was readily discovered that they had done so. No one

was authorized to open it except the individual who was authorized to break that seal.

No one was allowed to break that seal. God had written it. He had sealed it and no one was authorized to break the seal. No one was worthy to break the seal except Jesus Christ. He broke the seal. As Jesus Christ would break the seal, John described it. It's like John is in heaven. He's transported to heaven and he's before the throne. The seals are broken and it's like he's watching on a big television. Now, that's a poor analogy, but it sort of gives you the picture. It's almost as though he's there. All of a sudden, he sees all of these events going on. Then another seal is broken and he sees all these other events going on. This is a remarkable thing. You can sort of picture it. It's something like a giant movie screen, though perhaps a 3-D movie screen or something far more impressive than anything we have.

All of a sudden, John actually sees these events taking place. What he sees is symbolic and these symbols are interpreted. Where would we look to find the interpretation? We have to go to the interpretation given by Jesus Christ because He's the Revelator. He's the only one worthy to open the seals.

Revelation 6:1-2, "Now I saw when the Lamb opened **one of the seals**... And I looked, and behold, a **white horse**. And he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer."

Verses 3-4, "When He opened the **second seal**, I heard the second living creature saying, 'Come and see.' And another **horse, fiery red**, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another and there was given to him a great sword."

Verses 5-6, "When He opened the **third seal**, I heard the third living creature say, 'Come and see.' And I looked, and behold, a **black horse**, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, 'A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius....'"

Here was food rationing—famine. Food was being rationed out. A denarius was the daily wage of a laboring man at that point in time. So here we are looking at a small ration of food for a day's wages—at least a day's wages, what we would term "minimum wages." We are looking at food being scarce, being rationed and being very expensive.

Verse 7, "When He opened the **fourth seal**, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, 'Come and see.' And I looked, and behold, a **pale horse**. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades [grave; the grave follows after death] followed with him. And power was given to them [the previous horsemen, particularly the red horseman of war and the black horseman of famine, together with the pale horse of death] over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death...."

Among those three—warfare, famine and disease—one-fourth of the earth's population dies, along with many animals. It's a horrendous event.

Verses 9-11, "When He opened the **fifth seal**, I saw under the altar the **souls** of those who had been **slain** for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' And a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed."

Let's talk about this fifth seal a little bit. There's some who point to Revelation 6:9 and say, 'This proves there's people in heaven. People go to heaven when they die because it talks about them right here.' Well, if Revelation 6:9 proves that people go to heaven when they die, it also proves that they all go under the altar, which must be a rather crowded place by now. They want to take that literally and say that proves they are going to heaven. If you are going to take it literally rather than symbolically, then it proves they went down under the altar and they are stuffing another one down under there. Those who believe in going to heaven don't think they are going to lie under the altar stacked up like cordwood for centuries and millennia. They think they are rolling around the streets of gold.

What is it talking about? What was under the altar? The altar in the tabernacle and temple was where the sacrifices were slaughtered. What was under the altar? There was a basin that collected the blood of the sacrifices. There was a basin at the foot of the altar and the blood ran down. The blood was collected in the basin and was utilized. The blood was symbolic of the life of the creature. In Leviticus 17:11, we are told that the life is in the blood.

Let's go back to the book of Genesis. In Genesis 4, we read the story of Cain and Abel.

Genesis 4:8-10, "Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose against Abel his brother and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' And he said, 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?' And He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.'"

Did he mean that Abel's blood literally had a voice? Well, no, he's using what is termed "metaphorical language." The very presence of the blood of a righteous man demands retribution from a just and holy God. He told Cain, "Your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." In other words, the very presence and existence of the blood of Abel demanded retribution from a God who is holy and just—not simply One who stands by and ignores it—when one of His servants is slaughtered.

Now, the blood of righteous Abel cried out. If the blood of one righteous man—one martyr—cried out for vengeance, how much more loudly is the collective cry from the blood of all of the servants of God who have been slain down through the centuries—from righteous Abel on down? How much more loudly does the blood of all righteous men cry out collectively? The martyrdom of men and women of God demands that a God who is just and holy has to intervene for there to be justice. If God is a God of justice, then somewhere along the line there has to be some retribution. In this life, many times the righteous perish and the wicked prosper (Psalm 73). Unless there is a final evening of the score, then how do you come out ahead by obeying God?

What he sees is the collective martyrdom of the people of God down through the centuries who were figuratively crying out, just as Abel's blood had cried out.

Revelation 6:10, "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'"

Verse 11, "And a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed."

They would rest a little while longer; they would remain in the grave yet a little season until the resurrection. There is a final end-time martyrdom yet to come.

Revelation 12:13-14, "Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time [three and one-half years] from the presence of the serpent." He's not allowed to get at her. He tries, but he can't. So he's angry.

Verse 17, "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." He goes to make war with those who weren't taken to a place of protection. He goes to make war with the only portion of God's Church that he is allowed to get at—the portion that is not in the place of safety.

When you go through Revelation 3, it is apparent that the Philadelphia Church is taken to a place of protection and the Laodiceans are not. I covered some of that in a sermon. The Tribulation is Satan's wrath. It is Satan's wrath against the people of God—against God's people nationally and against God's people spiritually. God's people nationally are the nations of modern-day Israel—the United States and British Commonwealth nations, the people who were the descendants of Abraham and with whom God made His covenant.

Jeremiah 30:7, "Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." It is the time of Jacob's trouble. It's a time that is terrible. There is none like it. Here is an unsurpassed time of calamity called the time of Jacob's trouble.

Let's go to Matthew 24. Here we find Christ the Revelator. Hold your place in Revelation 6 and Matthew 24 because we are going to go back and forth a little bit.

Matthew 24 is the focal point of Bible prophecy. This is where Jesus Christ unveils and gives the key to understanding what we read in Revelation 6.

Matthew 24:21, He talks about a time of "...great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." You can't have two times that are worse than any other time. If the time of Jacob's trouble is a time such as there has never been, and if the time Christ speaks of right here in Matthew 24:21 is the time worst than any other time, then obviously it's the same time.

It is Satan's wrath. It is Satan's wrath against physical Israel. It is the time of Jacob's trouble.

It is also Satan's wrath against God's Church. God protects the Philadelphians era of His Church. Satan can't get to them. He wants to, but he can't because God won't let him. He then goes after the only part that is there, which is the remnant—those that have been left behind, the Laodiceans. He goes after them with full force and fury. Many of them are martyred. That is the final time of the martyrdom of the people of God. The Great Tribulation is Satan's wrath.

Revelation 6:12-13, "I looked when He opened the **sixth seal**, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind." This is speaking of giant meteor showers, **heavenly signs**. It is just an incredible thing.

Now, let's go to Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:3, "Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'" How are we going to know?

Verse 4, "And Jesus answered and said to them: 'Take heed that no one deceives you.'" The first thing we have is deception. We have false messiahs, false Christs.

What is the first seal? It's someone coming on a white horse (Revelation 6:1-2). Some commentators will tell you this is talking about Christ. No, it's not talking about Christ. Christ doesn't come back until Revelation 19. He's pictured as coming on a white horse all right. What we find in Revelation 6 is somebody masquerading as Christ, somebody who tries to give the outward appearance.

But notice there is a significant difference. The rider in Revelation 6:2 has a bow. Christ is never pictured as having a bow. He's pictured as having a sword (Revelation 19:11, 15). The sword represents the word of God (Hebrew 4:12). The bow was the symbol of Nimrod the mighty hunter. Back in Genesis 10 and 11, we have the story of Nimrod and the tower of Babel. Genesis 10:8-10, "...Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, 'Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.' And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel...."

Here was the beginning of Babylon. He was the great conqueror, the mighty hunter and the founder of the Babylonian Mystery religion. Here we find the final end-time successor. We find those who were a perpetuation of the

Babylonian Mystery religion coming with the sign and symbol—in reality, the successor of Nimrod—coming and purporting to be Christ.

What did Jesus say?

Matthew 24:5, "'For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.'" They are going to come giving this impression. There's going to be deception. There are going to be false messiahs, false Christs.

I may go into some of these seals a little more on the Feast of Trumpets. The **first seal is the white horse of deception**—'those coming in My name.'

Matthew 24:6-7, notice the second thing, "'And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom....'" The **second seal is the fiery red horse of wars**. There's going to be wars on the international scale. That's kingdom against kingdom. There's also going to be wars in terms of ethnic strife and violence, which is "nation against nation" or ethnos against ethnos.

We use the word "nation" in modern English to refer to various countries like Canada, the United States, Mexico, Britain, France or whomever. But the word "nation" derived from a Latin word that we get our word "nativity" (like in nativity scene). Hospitals have a prenatal unit. The word comes from the Latin word for birth. When you talk about "neonatal" or "prenatal" you are talking about the care prior to the birth of a child, as in prenatal care. When you talk about a nativity scene, you are talking about the traditional Christmas scene centering around what is purported to be the birth of Christ. Our English word "nation" is derived from the same Latin root. It means those who are bound together by birth, those who share a common ancestry. It's translated from the Greek word "ethnos" from which we get our word "ethnic."

You can see the ethnic violence and that's happening all over the world. It's happening in Africa, Asia, Europe and all over the world. It's happening in this country. It is violence of one group against another, who may be within the same country, but they are of different "ethnos," different ethnic groups. In some cases, there are different political entities such as countries or nation states—"kingdom against kingdom." It is warfare and violence internally among various ethnic groups and on the international scene.

What was the second seal? Wasn't it the red horse? The red horseman had the power to take peace from the earth; that's war (Revelation 6:3-4). That's the second seal. Christ interpreted it right here in Matthew 24.

What did He say the third seal was? Famine!

Matthew 24:7, "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famine...." What was the **third seal**? It was **the black horse, rationing food, famine** (Revelation 6:5-6).

What was the fourth seal that Jesus revealed?

Matthew 24:7, "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines, **pestilences**...."

Revelation 6:8, "...And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword [warfare], with hunger [famine], and then with death...." The **fourth seal is the pale horse which is death**. There will be disease epidemics. There will be things like the black plague that devastated Europe during the early Middle Ages. We are finding that there are things and will be things we have only seen the very beginning of. I tell you what—AIDS and some of these other things that are coming along—they haven't seen anything yet, in terms of what is going to transpire.

It talks about **earthquakes** right along with this (Matthew 24:7; Revelation 6:12), an upsurge in earthquake activity. There will be earthquakes and natural disasters in various places. We are certainly experiencing that.

Matthew 24:8, he says, "...all these are the beginning of sorrows." The first four horsemen are the beginning of sorrows.

What's next?

Matthew 24:9, "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake." Oh, that's martyrdom! What was the **fifth seal**? —A **future martyrdom of the saints** (Revelation 6:9-11).

Matthew 24:29, he comes down, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." That's the **sixth seal**; that's the **heavenly signs** (Revelation 6:12-17).

Jesus Christ opened up the seals of Revelation. Matthew 24 is where we look to find the interpretation that Jesus Christ gave of these symbols. The **sixth seal is God stepping into history**. That is the **beginning of the Day of the Lord**.

Verse 17 is the last verse of Revelation 6.

Revelation 6:17 says, "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

The Great Tribulation is Satan's wrath. Satan's wrath is directed primarily at the people of God, physically and nationally, as well as spiritually. It is aimed at the modern-day descendants of Israel (the United States and British Commonwealth nations) and at God's Church, God's people, spiritually. It's the time of Jacob's trouble and it's the time when Satan goes to make war with the remnant that is left behind. That's the **Great Tribulation of Satan's wrath**; that's the **fifth seal**.

The other seals are already opened prior to the beginning of the Tribulation. They are opened one at a time. They follow one another sequentially, but the first seal is not closed back up when the second one is opened. The first is opened first and it begins. It's followed by the second. Now, you have the first and the second both going on. Then the third one is opened up and the first and the second are still going on. Then the fourth one is opened up and all are going on. The first four horsemen are already riding when the Tribulation starts. They haven't done everything they are going to do because each of these seals, as it's ongoing, is continuing to build in its intensity.

When the Tribulation starts and it proceeds along, we come to a point where God steps in and the Day of the Lord begins. The final one year of that three-and-one-half-year period represents God stepping in and beginning to deal with the beast power.

The sixth seal is simply God saying, 'Let Me have your attention, please!' Only He says it very dramatically. He is going to get the world's attention. I want to tell you what—an earthquake has a way of getting people's attention. A hurricane can get your attention. I've been in hurricanes and I've been in earthquakes. The advantage of a hurricane is that at least you know it's coming. If you want, you can try to do something, either by taking refuge or leaving and getting away. An earthquake just comes. You don't know it's coming until it's here and there isn't any place you can go because the most solid permanent thing you know of is shaking and quivering like a bowl of Jell-O right under your feet.

If you go up in an airplane and there's a lot of turbulence, you say, 'If I ever get my feet on solid ground again, you're not going to get me back up here.' I've known of people who have been talked into going on a deep-sea fishing trip. They got out there and, boy, it (rough sea) was

going. They were saying, 'If I ever get off this boat and get my feet on solid ground again, you're not going to get me back out here.' We think if we are in the air and it's turbulent or if we're on the water and it's turbulent, well, if we can just get onto solid ground, we're okay. But when you are on solid ground and it's not solid—it begins to quiver and shake like a bowl of Jell-O—where are you going to go and what are you going to do? The only things you can do is stand there and pray that it doesn't get bad enough to bring down whatever you're in on top of you. It's just a matter of intensity.

Science can't tell you how intense it's going to get. They can't tell you when it's going to come. Interestingly enough, certain animals are the best predictors—horses in particular. They can sense it a day or so before. We think we are so smart. Our instruments can't pick up what animals sometimes can pick up. God's designed a few things in, and we still haven't figured out all of it.

The point is that God is getting ready to step into history and He does so in a dramatic way. Earthquakes begin to shake; there are tremendous meteor showers and inexplicable signs in the heavens like a total eclipse. Incredible things are occurring and it's frightening. God is getting ready to intervene. That is the sixth seal. It sets the stage for the seventh seal.

I will call to your attention that you may want to go back and read Ezekiel 1 (the vision that Ezekiel saw) and compare it with Revelation 4. Ezekiel saw a miraculous appearance. God appeared in a certain conveyance—a way that He at times chose to transport Himself through the universe. It describes this. Some will say Ezekiel saw the first UFO. It's not a UFO. "UFO" means "unidentified flying object." What Ezekiel saw is clearly identified. It's the throne of God. It was an IFO, an identified flying object. There isn't any question as to what Ezekiel saw because he explains and interprets it. There's an awful lot packed into the book of Revelation. We've only just sort of skimmed the surface of it.

Next Bible study we will have a chance to go through chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 as we progress a little further.

The Seven Seals of Revelation

First Seal	Second Seal	Third Seal	Fourth Seal	Fifth Seal	Sixth Seal	Seventh Seal
White Horse: Deception Revelation 6:1-2	Red Horse: War Revelation 6:3-4	Black Horse: Famine Revelation 6:5-6	Pale Horse: Pestilence Revelation 6:7-8	Martyrdom and Great Tribulation Revelation 6:9-11	Heavenly Signs Revelation 6:12-17	Seven Trumpet Plagues Revelation 8:2

Seven Trumpets: The Day of the Lord

First Trumpet	Second Trumpet	Third Trumpet	Fourth Trumpet	Fifth Trumpet	Sixth Trumpet	Seventh Trumpet
Green grass and one-third of the trees are burned up. Revelation 8:7	One-third of sea becomes blood, one-third of ships and sea life are destroyed by fire. Revelation 8:8-9	One-third of waters turn bitter. Revelation 8:10-11	One-third of sun, moon and stars do not shine. Revelation 8:12	"Locusts" wield the Beast's military power. Revelation 9:1-12	200 million-man army gathers. Revelation 9:13-21	The Kingdom is proclaimed. The Second Coming Revelation 11:15-19

Seven Last Plagues

First Plague	Second Plague	Third Plague	Fourth Plague	Fifth Plague	Sixth Plague	Seventh Plague
Sores afflict those who accepted the mark of the Beast. Revelation 16:2	Sea turns to blood; all sea creatures die. Revelation 16:3	Rivers turn to blood. Revelation 16:4-7	Mankin, scorched by the sun, blasphemes God. Revelation 16:8-9	The Beast's seat of government is afflicted. Revelation 16:10-11	The Euphrates is dried up; world armies gather to Armageddon. Revelation 16:12-16	The earth is utterly shaken. Revelation 16:17-21