

Revelation #2

Review of Introduction to Revelation and Chapters 1-3

1. The Introduction
 - a. Revelation means “an unveiling” and/or “a disclosure” of something previously unknown. It’s the pulling off of a lid.
 - b. The major emphasis of the book is it is framed as a message to the church, not a book to – necessarily – give us the particulars of how the End Times unfold.
 - c. We advocated for a layered approach to the prophetic elements in the book. By layered, we mean prophecies can have multiple fulfillments throughout history (i.e., the Abomination that Causes Desolation).
 - d. The theme of Revelation is “to those who overcome, I will give.” Variations of this phrase occur throughout the book.
2. Chapters 1-3
 - a. Chapter 1 provides the basis for the “revelation” that occurs in the whole book. It’s a “revelation” from Jesus “to show his servants what must soon take place.
 - b. The churches addressed in Revelation 2-3 have (a) immediate application to the original church addressed; and (b) is a historically progressive prophecy that takes us up to the present. Ephesus, for example, denotes the early church that received the Gospel in its purity through the apostolic witnesses and didn’t tolerate false apostles. Similarly, Laodicea, describes what is true of the church now. It is lukewarm.

Chapters 4-7 as a Single Unit

1. Chapters 4-7 form a single unit in the book. We know this from context because in 8:1, the seventh seal is opened and there is silence in heaven. Consequently, the visions contained in the 7th seal takes us from chapter 8 to the end of the book.
2. Chapters 4 and 5 describe for us what goes on in heaven. The “unveiling” of what has previously been disclosed takes place in the throne room of heaven (ch4). And the “lamb” is the worthy one able to open what has previously been sealed (ch5)
3. Chapter 6 describes the 1st 6 “seals” of the Book of Revelation. In antiquity, important documents were sent on a papyrus scroll sealed with several wax seals. A wax seal was usually placed across the opening of the scroll so that it was known to be authored by the proper person. It was removed only in the presence of witnesses. Here, the witnesses are the church receiving the “revelation.”
4. Chapter 7 is a reprieve of sorts that prepares us for what will unfold in chapter 8 and the rest of the book.

The Scene in Heaven and The Lamb Worthy of Unveiling What’s Previously Been Hidden (Chs 4-5)

1. **The Throne Room of Heaven (Ch 4)**
 - a. A Prominent Person – *“at once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby.”* (4:2-3a)
 - b. An Important Symbol – *“a rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne”* (4:3b) – (i.e, sign of grace with Noah)
 - c. 24 Elders – *“Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.”* (4:4)
 - i. 12 is the number of divine government in the Bible. Similarly, elders are leaders entrusted with authority. In the OT, the 12 tribes of Israel formed the nucleus of God’s governing authority. In the NT, that governing authority went from the tribes of Israel to the 12 apostles. The idea here is that both covenants are represented in heaven.
 - d. 4 Living Creatures - *In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. ⁷The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. ⁸Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”* (4:6-8)
 - i. The Lion, Ox, Man, Eagle come straight from Ezekiel 1 when the prophet sees a vision of a chariot of fire from heaven.
 - ii. The Early Church connected these 4 living creatures with the Gospels. Irenaeus of Lyons – Lion (Matthew); Ox (Mark); Man (Luke); Eagle (John)
 - iii. Day and night, these “witnesses” encircle the throne and cry out “holy” and “worthy” is the Lord. That’s what the Gospels do as well every time we read them.
2. **The Worthy Lamb Capable of Opening What Has Been Previously Hidden (Ch 5)**
 - a. The Centerpiece of the Throne - *⁶Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits^[a] of God sent out into all the earth.* (5:6)

- i. This is figurative language. Seven is the number of completion. “Horns” in Daniel denote rule in a negative context (Anti-Christ is the “little horn”). Here it is positive. “Eyes” denote omniscience (know all). “Spirits” denote omnipresence.
- b. He, Alone is Able to Unveil What Was Previously Hidden — *“And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and they will reign on the earth” (5:9-10)*

The First Six Seals (Ch 6)

1. White Horseman

I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, “Come!”² I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest. (6:1-2)

- In my view, the first four seals of Revelation deal with what’s true and what has been true and what will be true until the final events take place. Those things start to come into view in seals 5-6. Seal 7 is the final eschatological battle, so to speak. As a result, the best way to interpret what these six seals reference is to read them against the backdrop of what Jesus said what will take place in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24.
- In that vein, the 1st seal denotes deception. --- “For many will come in my name, claiming ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many” (Mat 24:5).

2. Red Horseman

³When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!”⁴ Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword. (6:3-4)

- This denotes war. --- “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Matt 24:6-7)

3. Black Horseman

⁵When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand.⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, “Two pounds^[a] of wheat for a day’s wages,^[b] and six pounds^[c] of barley for a day’s wages,^[d] and do not damage the oil and the wine!” (6:5-6)

- This denotes famine. --- *There will be famines and earthquakes in various places (Matt 24:7)*

4. Pale Horseman

⁷When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!”⁸ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth. (6:7-8)

- This denotes death. --- *Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me (Matt 24:9)*

5. Great Tribulation

⁹When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?”¹¹ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters,^[e] were killed just as they had been. (6:9-11)

- Events described here parallel what Jesus said about the Great Tribulation in layers: (a) The Great Tribulation that occurred in 70 AD (Temple Destroyed) and one that will take place in the future. --- *For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now-and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened (Matt 24:21-22)*

6. Cosmic Crisis Followed by the Second Coming

12 I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red,¹³ and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. ¹⁴ The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us¹⁷ from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the great day of their¹⁸ wrath has come, and who can withstand it?"

- Again, this material parallels what Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse. --- ²⁹ "Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ³⁰ "Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth³¹ will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory!³² ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. (Matt 24:29-30)

7. Conclusion of Seals 1-6

- 1-4 parallel what Jesus said about not being alarmed...there will be wars and rumors of wars...
- 5 has happened and will happen in the future.
- 6 hasn't happened yet but will in the future.
- Reading both the Olivet Discourse and Revelation 6 side by side, there is no biblical justification for a pretribulation rapture where the People of God is spared. That's wishful thinking, not biblical thinking. But like the events of Exodus, there is justification for the "days being cut short." The question is: what does "being cut short imply?" Chapter 7 answers this.

Reprieve After the Sixth Seal and Before the Seventh Seal (Ch 7)

1. Concerns What is Necessary Before the Seventh Seal is Opened

- What's Necessary is a Seal for Christians of Some Type
 - ² Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: ³ "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." (7:2-3)
- This Seal "Mark" Comes to Us in the Form of a Mysterious List
 - ⁴ Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. ⁵ From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, ⁶ from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, ⁷ from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, ⁸ from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000. (7:4-8)
 - This is Revelation's version of a census list. It follows the format of the census lists of the Book of Numbers when Israel was about to take the Promised Land. Here, these individuals have entered the Promised Land of Heaven and consist of every tribe, nation, and tongue. People make this out to be more complicated than it is. The real question that should be asked is: "how are they sealed?"
- They Are Sealed By Their Martyrdom
 - ¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴ I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (7:13-14)

2. Consequently

- Now you have elements of the church being removed before the final eschatological war in Seal 7 (days being cut short).
- But they are removed by their deaths to be spared. Consequently, it is a "sparing" for the People of God. But not the type of sparing the People of God today have in mind. Here they are spared from the worst of it (the 7th seal) via death during the Great Tribulation.