What do the 7 Seals Mean? February 13, 2022

*Rev. 6:1-17; 8:1 Series: Understanding the Book of Revelation*

May I have the pleasure of the wild beasts that have been prepared for me. – Ignatius, bishop of Smyrna

Intro: Seminary student witnesses to his captors

The 7 seals teach believers how to endure life in the last days

1. Brace yourself for more
2. With the seals, God’s purposes in history are carried out

v. 1 *I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals*

1. The white horse brings war

v. 2 *I looked, and behold, a white horse!*

v. 2 *And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.*

Matthew 24:6 *And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars.*

1. The red horse brings violence

v. 4 *And out came another horse, bright red.*

v. 4 *Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another*

1. The black horse brings poverty

v. 5 *And I looked, and behold, a black horse!*

v. 5 *And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand.*

v. 6 *A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!*

1. The pale horse brings disease and death

v. 8 *I looked, and behold, a pale horse!*

v. 8 *its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him*

v. 8 *And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.*

Matthew 24:7 *there will be famines and earthquakes*

* What would John’s readers have felt when they heard about the 4 horses? Why was it important for them to hear?
* What difference does it make that Jesus opens the seals?

1. Be faithful until the end
2. The sacrifice and witness of a faithful life is a precious offering

v. 9 *I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.*

Leviticus 4:7 *all the rest of the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering*

Matthew 24:9-10 *they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations*

1. When life is bad, the faithful trust that God is still good

v. 10 *They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”*

Psalm 119:84 *How long must your servant endure? When will you judge those who persecute me?*

1. God honours those who give everything for their faith

v. 11 *Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed*

Mark 8:35 *whoever would save his life will lose it*

* Why is it encouraging that the martyrs are under the altar?
* What are the sinful alternatives to asking God “how long”?
* What’s the point of mentioning the numbering of martyrs?

1. Wait for God’s final justice
2. The end won’t delay forever

v. 12 *I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake …*

v. 12 *the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood*

v. 13 *the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale*

v. 14 *The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up …*

v. 14 *every mountain and island was removed from its place*

Matthew 24:29 *the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven*

1. Those who choose compromise will face terrible wrath

v. 15 *Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks*

vv. 16-17 *calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”*

8:1 *When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.*

Habakkuk 2:20 *But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.*

* Do you think vv. 12-17 describe the final end or just some bad expression of God’s anger? How do you know?
* A lamb doesn’t normally strike fear in people’s hearts. Why is this title used in v. 17 in speaking of “the wrath of the Lamb”?
* How would this vision of God’s wrath have helped the believers to whom John wrote deal with persecution? Compromise?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study Revelation 7:1-17

Notes