

Recap from Last Week

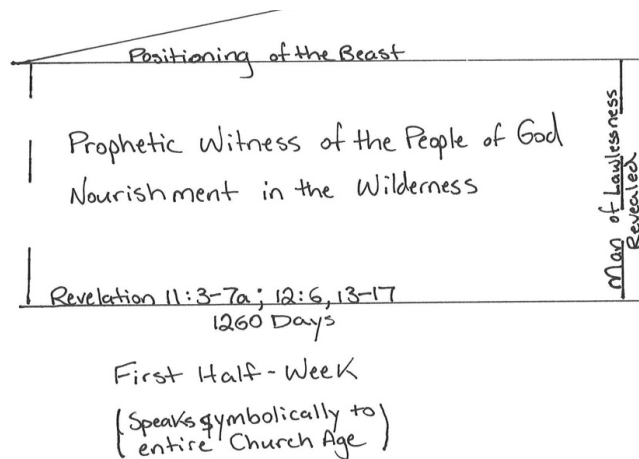
The scroll with the seven seals is the contract deed/title of the earth that contains the fullness of God's redemptive plan for this earth (MacArthur, Osborne, Hamilton). "In short, if that scroll is not opened the Bible's promises don't come true. Hope is lost" (Hamilton).

The context for the opening of these seals is adoring praise from both the four creatures, who represent the sum of God's creation, and the 24 elders, who represent the unified people of God from both the Old and New Testament headed by the 12 Tribes and 12 Apostles.

⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹ "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. (Matthew 24:5-9 ESV)

And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator." (Daniel 9:27 ESV)

The First Four Seals: The Four Horsemen and the First Half of Week Seventy



THE FOUR HORSEMEN

WHITE HORSE	False Messiah – The Antichrist who is bent on war and given temporary authority on the earth by God as a part of his plan of redemption, cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4
RED HORSE	War that results from the Antichrist's conquests.
BLACK HORSE	Likely resulting from the war, there's a famine that requires rationing that disproportionately affects the poor, yet does not curb drunkenness.
PALE HORSE	Epidemic plague and death. The four-part curse formula is patterned after the Old Testament (Eze. 14) and sums up the result of the first four seals: ¼ of the earth's population will die.

During the first half period of the Tribulation, the trials that reflect both the depravity of man and the brokenness of creation and have cycled throughout history since the establishment of the church will reach their high-point of intensity. During this time, the Antichrist will secure his power, paving the way for the Great Tribulation of the second half of week 70. *All of this occurs according to the sovereign purposes of God.*

How does God's sovereignty over the tumultuous political climate described in Revelation 6 ground us in the midst of this season?

Seal Five: The Martyrdom of the Saints in the Great Tribulation

The scene transitions from earth to heaven in a vision that certainly would have encouraged the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia and any church undergoing persecution from the enemy. In the opening of the fifth seal, we see those who have been killed on account of Christ and their witness. They are crying out for justice and the vindication of Christ before their persecutors. In their question, we gain insight into the heavenly perspective we do not have at this moment in time.

Are we willing to sacrifice all for Christ?

The training ground for martyrdom is not developing an attitude of bravado, but a faithful witness that cherishes Christ and his gospel above all and submits daily to his Lordship above your own desires. If we are not willing to pick up the metaphorical cross on account of Christ, we will not be willing to pick up a literal cross if and when the time comes.

"O Sovereign Lord, holy and true..."

1. They were grounded in the sovereignty, holiness, and trustworthiness of God.

If these martyrs believe that God is sovereign, holy, and trustworthy over their trial, do you believe the same about God in the midst of yours?

how long...

2. They were patient in their lament.

"There is a world of difference between 'How long, oh Lord' and 'How DARE you, oh Lord?'" – Denny Burk, SBTS

"How long" demonstrates patience in the lament of the trial as one trusts the Lord and hopes in his plan. We grieve, we hurt, and we call for justice, but we do so believing God is with us, not against us. Anger at God is poison to your healing process in the grief.

before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

3. They left vengeance to the Lord.

¹⁷ *Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* (Romans 12:17-21 ESV)

Seal Six (and Seven): The Great Day of the Lord

(cf. Revelation 1:7-8, 8:1, 11:15-19, 14:14-20, 16:17-21, 19:11-21)

³¹ *The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. ³² And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.* (Joel 2:31-32 ESV)

²⁹ *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* (Matthew 24:29-31 ESV)

*for the great day of their wrath has come, and **who can stand?***

This day will be a day of great terror, foolishness, and hopelessness for many. The tragic part is that this day is entirely avoidable. Those who recognize their sinfulness before the holiness of God and repent and believe in the gospel of salvation in Jesus are sealed by the Spirit of God, preserved through the trials of this life, and delivered from the eternal wrath of God.

Have you repented and believed in Jesus Christ? If not, will you today?