

LEAD SHEET

REVELATION - WK 5 THE SEVEN SEALS OCTOBER 30, 2016

THIS MONTH'S FAITH SKILL:

WORSHIP WITH YOUR LIFE

If you want to know God better, give back to Him!

GETTING STARTED

Today, we're going to discuss the seven seals of Revelation. Each one brings not a challenge, but a message. Not just for the original audience, but for us as well.

General Discussion:

- Let's review what we know about Revelation, who wrote it? (*Jesus showed John all these things and John wrote it down.*)
- Where is John as he writes?
(Exiled on the island of Patmos.)
- What type of literature is Revelation? (Apocalyptic.)
- As such, how should it be interpreted? (There is a lot of symbolism and figurative language.)

We'll encounter a lot of figurative language today. Reading Revelation 6 and 7 without understanding its symbols can seem really confusing. But the truth is, when we deconstruct the symbolism of these two chapters (which make up most of what we'll study), the message is clear.

DIGGING IN

Read Revelation 6:1-2

Discussion Questions:

1. Based on what we've studied so far, and the fact that the "L" in lamb is capitalized, who can we understand "the Lamb" to be? (*Jesus.*)
2. What does the Lamb do in verse 1?
(*Opens the first of seven seals.*)
3. What does John hear?
(*One of the living creatures say, "Come."*)
4. What does John see? (A white horse with a rider holding a bow, carrying a crown.)

This is the first of seven seals that are broken. Before we study the other six, we need to understand what a seal is.

Remember that symbolism is huge in Revelation, we need to understand that an actual lamb is not opening envelopes here. Jesus is trying to show John and us something important.

We need to realize there are seven of them. Later, we'll talk about seven trumpets. Then there will be seven signs and plagues and then seven final visions. Seven is a big deal in Revelation, and we should understand it to mean completion, perfection, and wholeness.

So, what are the seals?

The seals are the only thing holding back God's judgment. The first seal introduces the rider of the white horse who is "a conqueror bent on conquest." With that in mind, let's continue our study.

Read Revelation 6:3-8

Discussion Questions:

1. What does each seal have in common? (There is a horse; the living creatures say, "Come"; the horse is named by color; the riders are given something, etc.)
2. What is each rider given? (Rider One: bow, Rider Two: a large sword, Rider Three: a pair of scales, Rider Four: power to kill.)
3. What are the four horsemen supposed to do? (Destroy, judge, kill, conquer, judge, etc.)
4. Who opens each seal? (The Lamb.)
5. Who ultimately has and gives the authority to judge? (Jesus.)
6. Who is being judged? (People.)
7. What brings about this judgment? (*Sin.*)

Read Revelation 6:9-11

Discussion Questions:

1. What is revealed by the fifth seal? (Martyrs calling out for justice from God.)
2. Where are the martyrs? ("under the altar" in Heaven.)
3. What are the martyrs given? (A robe.)
4. What do the martyrs ask? (How long until the inhabitants of earth are judged and the martyrs' blood is avenged.)

It is noteworthy to point out that the martyrs are asking how long? Suffering will continue according to this passage. This is not an end-times prophecy so much as it is a picture of suffering that will happen for all who follow Jesus in all times, not just the end times.

Read Revelation 6:12-17

Discussion Questions:

1. What is different about the sixth seal? (The cosmos are effected, not just people.)
2. How so? What happens? (A great earthquake, the sun turns black, the moon turns red, the stars fall to earth, etc.)
3. Do you think all this literally happens? Why or why not? (Allow for discussion.)
4. How many things happen? (*Seven.*)
5. In verse 15, how many groups of people are affected? (*Seven.*)
6. What do the people want to happen? (*They want to hide from Jesus' wrath.*)

Seven means completion. John twice uses the number 7 (things that happen, people groups effected) to point out that everything will be destroyed.

The question asked at the end of the passage is “Who can withstand it?” It’s a good question, and it leads us to chapter 7 and the seventh seal.

Read Revelation 7:1-8

Discussion Questions:

1. What does John see next? (Four angels standing at the four corners of the earth.)
2. Do you think this is meant to be taken literally? (No, the earth doesn’t have four corners, it’s round.)
3. So, what is happening? (God is telling angels to hold back judgment from the earth until He seals His people.)
4. Where is John seeing this: in Heaven or on earth? (Earth is mentioned several times.)

I point this out to say that the 144,000 are not the only ones to get to Heaven, like some non-Christian religions claim. These people are people of earth, not Heaven. The 144,000 are “from all the tribes of Israel.” Israel, in the New Testament’s context and certainly in Revelation, is the Church. This is not talking about the nation of Israel, it’s talking about Christians. Jesus is setting aside His Church. They will suffer, but they will be saved.

Read Revelation 7:9-17

Discussion Questions:

1. Where is this vision located? (Around the throne, before the Lamb, in Heaven.)
2. How many are present? (“multitudes, count” from every nation and tribe. In other words, do not believe that only 144,000 people will be allowed into Heaven.)
3. What are they wearing? What are they crying out? (Robes, “Salvation belongs to our God...”)
4. Of what is this is a picture? (Worship.)
5. What have these people endured according to verse 14? (They have endured great tribulation.)
6. What makes them white? (The blood of the Lamb.)

So two groups can “withstand” the horrific judgment unleashed by the first six seals, Christians on earth and the multitude. These are the faithful. They escape judgment. This also brings to mind political imagery. A white robe and palm branches is how an emperor entered a city. The Triumphal Entry of Jesus was a political move. However, His purpose is different, and so are the martyrs. Their position came through suffering, not power.

Read Revelation 8:1-5

Discussion Questions:

1. What happens after the seventh seal is opened that is so different? (There is silence in Heaven for about half an hour. Each of the first six said “Come” or some other statement.)
2. What does John see? (Seven angels standing before God and seven trumpets were given to them.)
3. There is another angel. What does it have? (A golden censor.)
4. What is in the censor? (Smoke from incense, prayers of God’s people.)
5. What does the angel do? (Hurls it to the earth.)
6. What results from this? (Thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.)

The prayers make a difference on earth. And the prayers are for justice and judgment.

We will talk about the seven trumpets next week. For now, we need to figure out what the seven seals meant to the first audience and what they should mean to us.

MAKING IT REAL

In summary, the Seven Seals tell a story and make a point. The story is the story of every Christian. It is a story of faithfulness. It is a story of suffering. It is the story of Christians in every age, of every ethnicity. The point of the story is that the faithful can stand up under the judgment dished out (the six seals) because of the blood of the Lamb. Great tribulation can be endured. They—we—will not be protected physically, but we will be protected spiritually.

General Discussion:

- What is the fate of the first-century Christians who are reading Revelation 6 and 7? (They are heavily persecuted, being killed for their faith, suffering economically, etc.)
- Do you think the Church suffers in the same way today? (Not the Church in the United States, but the global Church certainly does.)
- These seals bring judgment for whom? (The enemies of God.)
- How does that judgment come about? (War, economic trouble, etc.)
- Do you think that time of judgment is still being exercised today? (Certainly, there has never been an age where there was no war or economic trouble the likes of which are talked about in the first six seals.)
- So do you think this judgment is reserved for past populations of the earth? (Allow for discussion.)
- Do you think this judgment is reserved for future populations of the earth? (Allow for discussion.)

God's judgment is ongoing, and there is only one way to persevere: faithfulness.

CLOSING PRAYER

Spend some time praying for the persecuted of today and those that will suffer because of Jesus. Ask students to pray for one another. Pray that they withstand their personal hardships and remain faithful to Christ.