

## I. Defining Judgment

- A. Most people use the word of judgement when talking about the 7 seals, trumpets and bowls in the book of Revelation. This is 100% accurate in its biblical definition, but, unfortunately, brings wrong understanding in its cultural context. Culturally, the topic of God's judgment generally carries a connotation of unleashed rage from an angry God. Many think the motivation behind God's judgment is to release the pent up anger that He has towards unrighteous people. (Ps. 96:9-13)
- B. We live in a day where the primary view of God (even in the church) is a sovereign dictator who hates sinful people and deeply desires to make them pay for their wrong doings. This is a vast contradiction to the concrete, overwhelming, revelation we have revealing that He is a tender, merciful, joyful, Father and Bridegroom. (Ez 18:32, 33:11; Jer. 31:20; Hos. 11:8)
1. When He does speak of His hatred it is focused upon our fallen sin nature and the results of it. His heart is broken for the lost hurting prisoners that are ensnared in sinful lifestyles and actions. He will manifest His jealous anger for humanity to be free of sin and to walk in light, righteousness, and the fullness of love. This is the motivation behind His judgment. (Rom. 1:18-32)

*God's end-time judgments are manifested to REMOVE ALL THAT HINDERS LOVE. He will use the least severe means to reach the greatest number of people at the deepest level of love without violating anyone's free will. – Mike Bickle*

2. In the apocalyptic vision John is constantly in shock at the unwillingness of fallen humanity to turn to the Lord even in the midst of the severe trouble He brings upon them. This is an aspect of the mystery of lawlessness. (Jhn 3:19-21; Luke 12:46-47; 2 Thes. 2:7)

## II. The Great Tribulation

- A. John describes 3 series of 7 judgments (Rev. 6-19) over a span of 3 ½ years. Our core conviction concerning these judgements is that they are literal (actual events not symbolic), future (not yet fulfilled in fullness), progressive (unfolding in a clear chronological sequence) and grow in intensity (the 2<sup>nd</sup> is worse than the 1<sup>st</sup> the 3<sup>rd</sup> is worse than the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>). These 3 series of 7 judgment events are each further divided into 3 parts (the first 4 belong together, the next 2 are related, and the final one stands separate).

- B. The judgments are orchestrated and released by Jesus, the lamb of God, who will carry them out in perfection, righteousness, and justice. These judgments will be the final and ultimate shaking of the nations in order to produce the fullness of love and the restoration of all things. This final shaking will purify and unify the bride, bring in a great harvest of believers including the salvation of ethnic Israel, and end the kingdom of darkness. He will do all of this without violating free will. (Hag. 2:5-7)
- C. This ultimate final shaking is known theologically as the “great tribulation” or “the great day of the Lord”. The great tribulation is a mixture of 4 different realities that culminate to fullness just before the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus. (Mat. 13:24-30, 36-43)
1. God’s Jealousy for His Bride – (Ex. 20:4-5; Deut. 4:24; 2 Cor. 11:2)
  2. Sinful Man’s Desire for Lawlessness – (Mat. 24:12; 2 Thes. 2-10)
  3. Rage of Satan and his Kingdom – (1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:12)
  4. Groan of the Earth – (Rom. 8:19-22)
- D. It is also very important to note that though the great tribulation will affect the entire earth, the vision that John receives is greatly focused on geographic and ethnic Israel. This should not be surprising but rather expected when you look at the whole of redemptive history in the scriptures. (Rom. 9-11)

### **III. The First Four Seals (Rev. 6:1-8)**

- A. Removal of Restraint – In the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Thessalonians Paul points out the “movement” of lawlessness and the “man” of lawlessness that will take place right before the return of Jesus. The movement of lawlessness creates a global rebellion against the Word of God and a man emerges that fully embodies the values that are in hearts of the people. Both the man and the movement are supernaturally empowered by demonic activity and the lying deception of Satan. (2 Thes. 2:7-12)
1. When the restrainer is taken out of the way we will all see the true lawless condition of man. Currently God’s merciful hand is keeping fallen humanity from plunging into the depths of their depravity. I believe that the restraint of lawlessness has to do with the clear conscience of unbelievers. We are in a day where clear right and wrong is blurred by the encroaching lawlessness upon the God given conscience. The first 4 seals are the result of this removal of restraint. The removal of the restrainer is not in the context of believers but rather unbelievers. (Rom. 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5)

B. The opening of these seals causes great pressure and devastation to multitudes worldwide. The first 4 seals have common characteristics i.e., a horse with a distinct color (white, red, black, pale) with a rider released by a prophetic decree of one of the living creatures. (Zech. 1:8-11, 6:1-8; Rev. 6:2, 4, 8)

1. **The First Seal - The Antichrist Receives Authority** – John see's a rider on a white horse with a crown and a bow. Who is given authority to conquer and to continue conquering. It has been the main view of the church and scholars through the ages that this is a prophetic picture of the Antichrist "The counterfeit Messiah".
  - a) White Horse – Biblical Symbol of victory, righteousness, peace, and holiness. This horse gives appearance of purity, but it's a false counterfeit. The Antichrist will rise to power and gain influence through false peace and righteous looking brilliant political maneuvers. (Ps. 2:2-3)
  - b) Bow - This rider is pictured as ready for war with a bow in hand on a horse. However, since the bow does not have arrows it is understood as a threat of war and economic penalties without actual war breaking out. It points to his initial bloodless victories or peaceful conquest. I believe the 'arrowless-bow-stage' of the Antichrist is the time when he privately threatens war as he is publicly seen to accomplish his political agenda with peaceful means. I believe worldwide peace will be initiated by the Antichrist during the first seal. (Dan. 7:8; 9:27; 1 Thes. 5:3; Rev. 17:12-18)
  - c) Crown - The "*stephanos*" Crown is a symbol of victory. This speaks of his political promotion to international leadership status. Satan and the Antichrist are described as wearing crowns. The political position that he receives will be seized, or won, over time through intrigue. (Dan. 11:21, Rev. 12:2,13:1-2, 7).
  - d) Conquering and to Conquer - The Antichrist's political aggression will result in a series of successful conquests unprecedented in history. It seems he will, out of all the conquerors of history, come the closest to achieving world dominion. The Antichrist starts as a regional political leader who goes on to rulership in some fashion over the entire earth. (Rev. 13:1-2,7)

2. **The Second Seal – Final World War** – The color Red in scripture always speaks of bloodshed. I believe we have world wide bloodshed as a result of war and conflict in view here.
  - a) Granted to Take Peace - This rider didn't need to bring war and destruction. All he needed to do was take peace from the earth. Once this peace was taken, men quickly rush in with war and destruction. Peace between men and among nations is a gift from God's restraining hand to unbelievers. Peace is not the natural state of relations between fallen men. (1 Thes. 5:3)
  - b) A Great Sword - Our modern age is marked by war and conflict. Since World War II, there have been more than 150 wars of some kind in the world, and at any given time there may be some three dozen armed conflicts taking thousands of lives yearly. The nations of the world often spend more than \$1 trillion on military expenditures a year. What will it be like when fallen man's desire to make war comes to fullness?
  
3. **The Third Seal – Famine and Economic Failure** – Black in scripture is the color of famine, death, mourning, and sorrow. Lack of rain, historically, was judgment upon the land of Israel during her seasons of compromise. The lack of rain brought drought and famine conditions until Israel called on the Lord in true repentance. (Lam. 5:10; Jer. 16:1-5)
  - a) Pair of scales in his hand: The use of scales in the ancient world was a picture and instrument of economics and food distribution.
  - b) Quart of Wheat for a Denarius - A denarius in John's day was equivalent to wages for one day of work. The economic crisis results in earning power reduced to working all day to affording food for one day. This represents about 10 to 12 times less buying power than in the world today. Wheat and barley were food staples in the ancient world, wheat being superior in taste and nutrition to barley. One could purchase three times the amount of barley (inferior grain) for the same price. (Lev. 26:6; 2 Kings 7:1; Ez. 4:10, 16)

- c) Do not harm the oil and the wine: People cannot survive on olive oil and wine. These will become items of luxury during the time of famine. The perceived economic crisis may be a manipulated one. "Do not harm" means, "Do not tamper with", possibly reflecting the strict control over prices that ungodly rulers under Antichrist's leadership will have at this time. As the Tribulation grows worse, the rich as well as the poor will suffer, but at this early stage, I believe the poor will suffer more than the rich. (Rev. 13:16-17)
4. **Fourth Seal – Death of one-fourth of the Earth's Population** - John next saw a pale horse (literally 'pale green'), the color of a human corpse. Presumably the removal of the restraint of lawlessness causes widespread death. The rider is "Death" speaking of physical death of the body. "Hades," also known as the "Place of Departed Spirits," which claims unbelieving people's spirit at physical death, followed on his heels. (Lk. 16:19-31; 1 Cor. 15:55)
- a) Widespread Death – It is estimated that by 2025 the earth's population will be around 10 billion. One-fourth of that would be 2.5 billion people, which is 50 times the death total of World War II (50 million people died from 1939-45).
- b) Kill with sword, hunger, death, and beasts: This widespread death is evidently the result of all the catastrophes predicted so far. These catastrophes are war "sword", the resulting "famine," and disease "pestilence" these are all very scriptural disasters that follow divine judgment. Attacks by wild animals (beasts) will also contribute to the death rate. (Jer. 15:2-3, 24:10, 29:17-18; Ezek. 5:12, 17; 14:21)

We encourage you to submit questions about our study in the book of Revelation!! Please email Pastor Justin at [justinfrie@restorationfellowship.net](mailto:justinfrie@restorationfellowship.net) and we will take time to answer your questions on Sunday mornings so we can all benefit from the discussion.