

**DAY
4****The Lion and the Lamb
Revelation 5**

This chapter is considered by many as the theological center of Revelation and the key to interpreting the entire book. Every phrase has meaning and spiritual power. Read this chapter at least two times.

(5:1-4) The all-important scroll with 7 seals is introduced. The scroll is the hidden and mysterious purposes and plans of God for humanity, for the future, and for eternity (see Isaiah 29:9-16, especially 11-12). But it is sealed and no one is worthy to open the scroll. John weeps.

(5:5-6) Wait, there is one who is worthy—the Lion of Judah and the Root of David, two messianic titles for the King Israel awaited. John turns to see a Lion and instead, sees a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain. Right here is the deepest mystery-wisdom of God, even before the scroll is opened. This is the wisdom and power of God. The might of the King is displayed through suffering and sacrifice. There is NO greater truth in the universe. God is always sacrificial love. The power of God is essentially sacrificial love. The will and way of God for his people is sacrificial love.

The rest of the chapter unfolds that truth and displays the awesome worship that results as the Lamb of God takes the scroll (v. 7). All the worshippers from chapter 4 and an angelic host of 100,000,000 worship the Lamb (v. 11). That number was inconceivable in that time. It is perfection times perfection.

(5:9-10) Describe worship about the work of the Lamb. That work is redemption and transformation. The people of the Lamb become kings and priests. You are not a victim, even though the world is against you. You are already a king and a priest (see 1 Peter 2:9-10).

(5:9) This redemption is for the world. This is the first of 7 times when there is a 4-fold way of describing the people of the world (4 = all the world). See 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15. The world belongs to the Lamb, not to Rome, which seemed to control the world, and demanded worship from the world.

Look at every word and phrase in verses 9-14 that describe who you worship, why you worship, and how you worship. Note verse 12 had 7 things (the number of perfection), which we give to or ascribe to Jesus. As you study, worship the Lamb. Use all this language to shape your own praise.

Reflect on John 20:21. Jesus says he will send us out as his witnesses in the way he was sent out. Jesus is the Faithful Witness (Rev. 1:5) of God's sacrificial love. That is how you will be a faithful witness as well.

**DAY
5****The Scroll, The Seals,
The Horsemen
Revelation 6**

You were already introduced to many of the powerful images and symbols of this chapter. Now I want to guide you on a few more specific insights and lessons in this powerful chapter. Together with chapter 5, it is a unit that introduces the first series of judgments, the 7 seals. Here are several big picture observations.

1. There are three series of 7 judgments: 7 seals in Revelation 6 (seals 1-6) and Revelation 8:1-5 (7th seal); 7 trumpets in Revelation 8-9 (trumpets 1-6) and Revelation 11:15-19 (7th trumpet); and 7 bowls in Revelation 16 (all 7).

2. John uses a consistent pattern. The 7th seal introduces the 7 trumpets; the 7th trumpet introduces the 7 bowls. All three groups are divided into a group of 4 and then a group of 3. That significance will be explained later in the devotional.

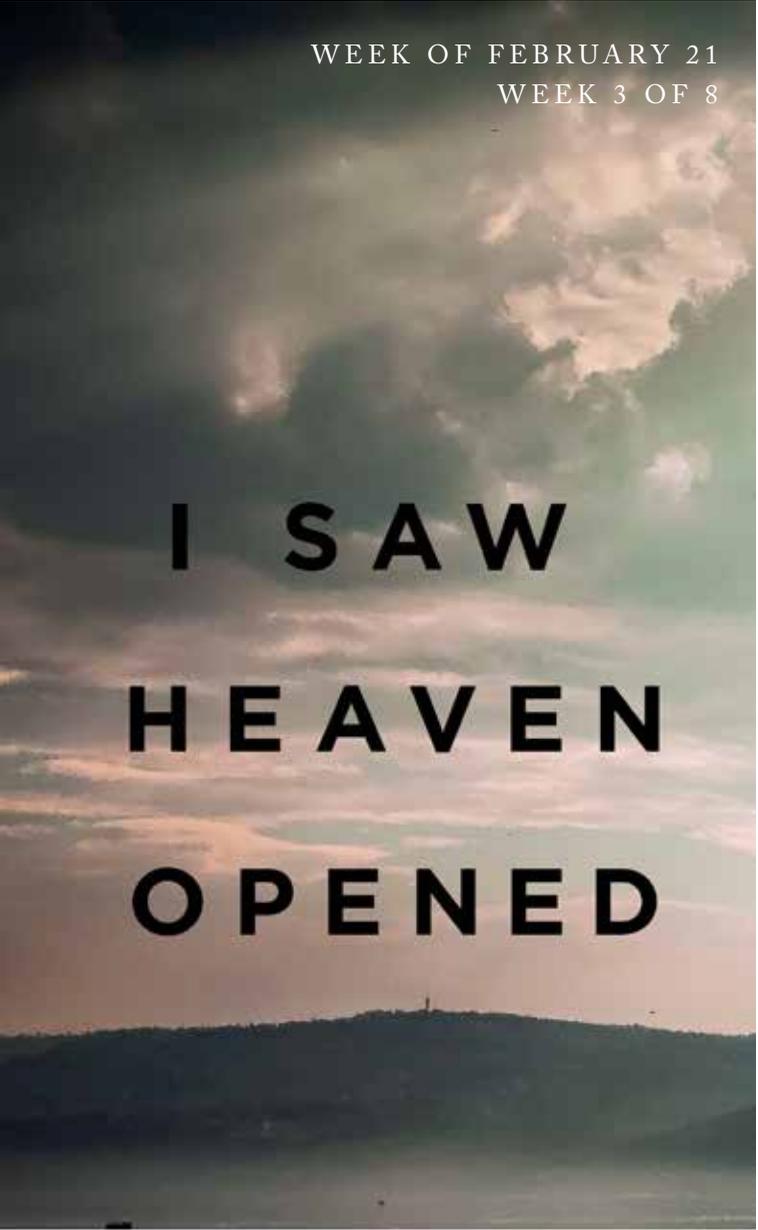
3. For the seals judgment, 25% of the world is affected. For the trumpets judgment, 33%. The 7 thunders judgment is never revealed (10:3-4). The bowls judgment seems to be 100%. The attempt to identify 21 different stages of actual, historical, cataclysmic events is extremely problematic. It is better to see all three sets of judgments as the progressive display of God's displeasure on sin and evil, and the increasing severity as designed to foster repentance from evil. A careful study of the 21 judgments reveals a great deal of similarity and strong allusions to the plagues of judgement on Egypt.

Throughout Revelation, it is NOT God who actively exercises judgment against evil. Instead, God permits judgment to unfold through other agents. Whether it is powers like war and death, or supernatural agents like Satan, or human emissaries like the beast from sea and land, evil itself is allowed to destroy life. This is IMPORTANT. God is not evil, but God allows evil to have its way, and then God will use that evil for his own purposes.

- On the nature of the four horsemen - see Day 1.
- Note the martyrs who long for justice in 6:9-11, a major theme: How long, O Lord.
- Note how God is described in 6:10.
- Note that "all people" in "7" groups are impacted by judgment (6:15).
- Finally, note that the judgment has NOT produced repentance, just hiding from God.

How concerned are you about evil and the injustices of evil? What particular injustice makes you cry out, "How long, O Lord?"

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 21
WEEK 3 OF 8



I SAW
HEAVEN
OPENED

Church – A Peculiar People



**DAY
1**

Understanding Images in Revelation

Apocalyptic literature is full of images. Sometimes those images are interpreted for us, other times they are not. Daniel 2 is an example where powerful images are not understood by the Babylonian astrologers. Daniel receives the interpretation in a dream and explains it to the king. He does not reveal the name of the second, third, and fourth kingdoms, but the meaning of the statue is explained. Daniel 7 and 8 have some explanation of the meaning of the images. Revelation is a vivid collage of spectacular images, one after the next. Let's look at the images in chapter 6.

(6:1) A scroll with 7 seals. This one is understandable. They had scrolls in that time that were sealed with the imprint of the sender. Only one who had authority could open the sealed document.

(6:1-8) There are 4 riders on 4 horses who bring destruction, war, famine, and death. Are these 4 literal entities riding four actual horses? Probably not. They are personifications of the powers and principalities of a fallen world. Death is not a literal person, but death is a power at work in our world. It is the same for war and famine. These are powerful symbols of very real sinful forces at work in the world.

(6:9) Souls under an altar. Is this actually where the souls of the martyrs dwell? Or is it a symbol that their lives were sacrificed and they are now safe and secure, fully sanctified (wearing white robes)?

(6:12-14) In these verses the sun turns black, the moon turns blood red, and stars fall to earth. The heavens recede and EVERY mountain and island are removed. Are these literal happenings? Think through what the world would be like if every mountain and island was removed. A large asteroid would destroy life on earth, much less "stars falling to earth." The Old Testament uses language like this to describe catastrophic events involving God's judgment on earth (see Isaiah 13:10-13; 24:19-23; 34:4; Ezekiel 32:6-8; Joel 2:10, 30-31; Habakkuk 3:6-11). It is the same language, always used symbolically, to describe calamity and judgment.

- Some of the Revelation images are symbolic, referring to ideas.
- Other images are symbolic, referring to first century people and places.
- Some are symbolic, referring to a representative or type. For example, Babylon is a representation of evil cities and empires.
- Some have clear identifications, like the dragon of Rev. 12 (Satan).
- Some images are just very hard to know exactly what they mean.

Generally, it is not sound interpretation to primarily link an image with a future person or event. Instead, see the images as referring to multiple people, events, experiences, and realities throughout history. Certainly ask, how do we experience a particular image in our time? And, perhaps wonder, will there be an extraordinary application at the very end?

**DAY
2**

The Time Table Temptation

Do you remember the story of the boy who cried "wolf"? He continued to trick the villagers to come running when he cried wolf until they stopped believing him. When a real wolf appeared and he cried out no one came.

I am one of many Christians who eventually had some end time fatigue as interpreters kept creating time tables (and massive charts) for the end times. They would definitely declare a particular historical event or person of our time had a direct one-to-one correlation with an image in Revelation (or other biblical passage). Over the years, I probably read 15-20 such books when they came out. Here is what EVERY BOOK had in common: They were WRONG!

They were wrong, in part, because they misunderstood how images work in apocalyptic writings like Revelation. They were also wrong because they didn't listen to Jesus. It was Jesus who said no one knows the day or hour, not the angels in heaven and not even Jesus (Matthew 24:36). When the disciples asked him again about the time table, Jesus said, "It is not for you to know the times or dates" (Acts 1:6-11). We will study both of these passages in one of the mid-week studies.

Jesus says don't do the time table thing. Instead, always be ready. Always live as though I will return today. So, after being misled by too many predictors who believed they knew what Jesus didn't, I stopped listening to that way of understanding the end times and Revelation. Instead, I came to understand that the themes, issues, and realities are all true, and will all have multiple expressions throughout history.

Our job is to discern those expressions in our own time and be found faithful and ready for the Lord's return. He can come back before today is over, but he does not have to come back for another 1,000 years. Don't obsess on dates and times. Focus on discipleship and mission. That is the message of Revelation. And always ask for the wisdom of discernment about the times and then pray, "Lord, how then do you want me to live?" Are you living with anticipation for the return of Jesus? Today, are you living the kind of life that Jesus will say, "Well done"?

**DAY
3**

The Heart of Worship Revelation 4

Old Testament sources: Jeremiah 17:12; Isaiah 6:1-8.

This chapter has the first of 7 fullness of worship experiences in Revelation (1:8-11; 5:8-14; 7:9-12; 11:15-19; 15:2-8; 16:5-7; 19:1-8). Revelation is a book about worship. Chapters 4 and 5 are closely connected. Chapter 4 is worship directed toward God the Father, while chapter 5 is worship of the Lamb of God.

(4:1-2) Set the scene. A door opens in heaven, John is invited in, and he is in the Spirit, to see what must soon take place. Before John can see the future (near or far) he must see the One who holds the future.

(4:2-8) Describe the throne room of God, first describing who is on the throne and then those around the throne worshipping. There are 24 thrones with 24 elders (representing the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles). There are 7 lamps/spirits, symbolizing the fullness of the church. There are 4 living creatures, angelic beings (seraphim?). The scene describes purity and holiness.

God is on the throne. Thrones are used 38 times in Revelation, 16 times in chapters 4 and 5. God is victorious and rules over the world. (This is why the number 4 is so important. It refers to the entire world). God alone is Lord and only God is worthy. Rome is not Lord, nor is Rome worthy of worship. This is core theology that explains all of Revelation.

Lightning, rumblings, and thunder are all signs of theophany or the appearance of God (the first of four times in Revelation 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18). This chapter is meant to evoke awe and reverence, faith and trust in God. No matter what life on earth is like. God is in control.

(4:8-11) Describe the worship they give to God, right out of Isaiah 6.

Carefully study verses 8-11 to see the content of worship. Look at every word and phrase that describes how you should worship and what is involved in your worship. What is God like? Do you live your daily life faithfully following a God like this? Spend time using the language of these verses to praise and worship God. Do this many times throughout the day.