

07a REV

This is the 16th of September, 2005. We continue tonight our study in the book of Revelation. Let's take a moment, as is our custom, to exercise our individual priesthood.

It's quite a privilege that we enjoy. We can represent ourselves directly before God without any other human intermediary than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Shall we pray? Father, we want to express our gratitude for your grace and your faithfulness.

The summation of your compassion and love for us expressed in the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on our behalf. We thank you that we have this life in which to learn and experience things that are of eternal benefit. We pray that as we study your word this evening, we will find in it the truth that will sustain us and transform us so that we can reflect your glory.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We are studying probably the most interesting and most controversial book in the whole Bible, the book of Revelation.

It is widely studied and there are almost as many interpretations of it as there are people studying it. The theories and beliefs about what it says and what it means are all over the map. And so we sally forth into well-trodden turf here, trying to find a straight path and rightly divide the word of truth.

In keeping with that, we have come to a place, having entered chapter 7 and almost finished chapter 7, where we are roughly a third of the way through the book, and we need to step back and look at its overall plan. Almost anybody that knows anything about Revelation knows that one of the primary features of the book is that you have the first chapter, which is John on the Isle of Patmos seeing the vision of the Lord Jesus in his glorified state. John doesn't lean his head into his bosom and say, Lord, who is it? And I'm the beloved disciple.

I mean, when he sees the Lord Jesus, it's in a whole different setting. This happens. I have good friends who are Marine Corps officers, and we could see each other in some far-off place by accident and shake hands and slap each other on the back and call each other by the first name, but if I saw that same individual on a base and there are other people around in uniform and enlisted people and so on, then there's snappy salutes and yes sir and recognition of rank, and even though we are the same two people, the context is different, therefore the greeting and the interaction is different.

When John sees Jesus in Revelation chapter 1, this is not disciple to mentor, rabbi, teacher. This is church-age believer standing before the glorified Lord Jesus, and so you don't have that familiarity and first name sort of conversation. Instead, John is on his face and the Lord Jesus is too bright to really look at.

Well, that's chapter 1. Then in chapters 2 and 3, we saw the letters to the seven churches, which we have more or less concluded represent the variation and the range of faithfulness and unfaithfulness that is to be found in every generation of the church age. They are not sequential. It's not like the first church was the first 500 years and so on.

You can find Philadelphians and Laodiceans and Thyatirans in every generation. That was chapter 2 and 3, seven churches. Then chapter 4, verse 1, major dividing point in the book.

Come up here, I will show you things that will come after. So we saw the things which were, the things which are, Revelation 2 and 3, and now the things which are about to be are going to take up the rest of the book. Well, from chapter 4, you begin to see the heavenly perspective, the throne, the occupants of the throne room.

Then there is this whole issue of the scroll. Who is worthy to open the scroll? The scroll is sealed with seven seals. So from chapter 4 forward, for the next 15 chapters or so, we see in the macro view, in the large scale, we see an organizational plan of the material based on the opening of the seven seals, followed by the blowing of the seven trumpets, followed by the pouring out of the seven bowls.

That is the major organizing principle. So, a fundamental question to ask ourselves and try to answer as we go through this section 4 through 20, is what is the deal, this is the theological scientific way we put it, what is the deal with the seals and the trumpets and the bowls? Are they sequential? You break all the seals and when you break the seventh one, then you start blowing the trumpets. You blow all the trumpets and when you blow the seventh one, then you get the bowls.

Pour out all the seven bowls, then Jesus comes back and you have the remaining three chapters of the book. Or, as you look at the seals and the trumpets and the bowls and begin to see some similarities, earthquakes in roughly the same places, different kinds of plagues affecting vegetation and wind, one thing and another, they seem to kind of be similar, so are they overlapping? Well, we need to answer this question because we have just finished the seals and now we are going on to the trumpets. So, are we moving forward in time or are we stepping back and retreading the same ground from a slightly different point of view? Well, there has been a lot of struggle and debate and weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth trying to figure out the answer to this question.

You can find people of every different stripe and persuasion and our answer to this question, at least the one I am going to offer you for consideration, is sort of both and neither. I am going to take us to just a few passages that we haven't gotten to yet on the trumpets and the bowls and we are going to look at this just a little bit and compare it to what we have already seen in the seals and see what conclusion Scripture itself suggests to us rather than just preconceiving it and then seeing if it works out. You remember in

chapter 6 that the first four seals introduced the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

Famous horses, you've got the white horse, you've got the red horse, you've got the black horse and you've got the green horse or the pale horse. One of the good Clint Eastwood movies, Pale Rider, you remember that? Well, it's not the rider that's pale, it's the horse that's pale. You get it back in the Greek with chloros like chlorophyll.

Well, green rider, I just don't think it would have had the same box office if he had looked like Spock riding into the Old West, you know, trying to bring retribution. But there is an allusion there, pale rider, they're talking about the rider on the pale horse and he comes in and judgment follows and that's of course sort of the suggestion. So, four seals, four horsemen, then we had the fifth seal, you remember that? In chapter 6, verse 9, and there are souls slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held.

And they say, how long, oh Lord, we are the victims of an injustice and when will justice come? Then in verse 12, we had the sixth seal which produces some symptoms that we want to take note of because these same symptoms are going to show up later, virtually identically. Earthquake, sun became black as sackcloth of hair, the moon became like blood, the stars of heaven fell to the earth like a fig tree drops its late figs, sky recedes, kings of the earth, wail, the great day of his wrath has come, who is able to stand, hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. Now, let's think about this, we know we're talking about the 70th week of Daniel, last seven years of the church age, we know that in the first three and a half years of it, it's all false peace, everybody's saying peace and safety as it was in the days of Noah, they were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage until the day the flood came.

And right in the middle, when they least expected it, everything kind of went downhill. That's what Jesus describes this period as being. So, for the first three and a half years, nobody's saying, big rocks, please fall on me and hide me from the Lamb.

When the four horsemen break loose, none of that language is used. When the fifth seal is snapped, you don't see any effect on earth, you see the martyrs stand up and speak their peace. When the sixth seal is broken open, you have the powers of the heavens shaken.

And it is at that point, after six seals have all been opened, the people start calling out and they specifically say, hide me from the wrath of the Lamb. Now, when do you see the Lamb in that seven year period? When does anybody see the Lamb? When does anybody know that it is the Lamb that's behind any of these judgments? Not till the very end, right? So, we get the idea that the seals span the entire seven years. The rider on the white horse with the bow, he's the man that conquers without firing a shot.

And you get this great superficial peace. That's the beginning. Hide me from the wrath of the Lamb, that's the end.

So, conclusion number one. The seven seals span seven years. That's just pretty much a bulletproof conclusion.

You can't really poke a hole in that. You've got the Antichrist at the beginning, and you've got the real Christ at the end. And everything in between matches all of the descriptions in the Old Testament of the time of Jacob's troubles.

So, you've got the whole gamut. Now, all of that has taken place with six seals. All of that that I just described, that was actually only six seals.

The seventh seal has not been broken yet at the end of chapter six. When the seventh seal is broken, we find this at the beginning of chapter eight. That's when you start getting the second set of seven things.

That's when the trumpets start blowing. In between the sixth seal and the seventh seal, rocks fall on me, etc. at the end of chapter... Then we have everything in chapter seven.

This is what we've been looking at. Somebody speaks and says to the four angels holding the four winds, hold up, don't do any harm until we get this sealing thing going for the 144,000. Now, let's think about this for a moment, just logically.

Seven seals, at least the six that we've looked at, span all seven years. You've got the Antichrist at the beginning, you've got Christ at the end, and people saying, kill me, there's the wrath of the Lamb. Then, in chapter seven, you've got an angel speaking to these, and in the fifth seal and the sixth seal in particular, you have all of these powers of the heaven and all this bad stuff going on, and you're saying all of this happened before the wind did its thing and caused problems? Let me suggest to you that we look at the seals one through six.

Between the sixth seal and the seventh seal, there is an interlude, there is an insertion of material. And in this inserted material that we find in chapter seven, between the sixth seal and the seventh seal, this material is not chronological. This material goes back and gives us some perspective on what we have just talked about.

Now, you just have to take that on faith right now. The reason I say that is we have the exact same thing happen with the trumpets. So hold this thought.

What we're looking for is what happens between the sixth element and the seventh. What happens between the sixth seal and the seventh seal? We get a whole chapter of seemingly non-related material. It's not related to the breaking of the sixth seal.

We haven't broken the seventh seal yet, but we have this whole chapter of people getting sealed and so on. Sealed from what? If the sixth seal has been broken and people are saying rocks fall on me, you're a little late with your seal. And it seems like we're going back.

And I'm going to suggest as a hypothesis for now that we have gone back to the beginning before any of the seals are broken. And this is a picture of the sealing of those who are the remnant that are going to be preserved. Now, why would I suggest this? What does the Bible say? What biblical precedent do we have? And this group in particular is uniquely qualified to remember this precedent because it's in our Tuesday night study.

Where have we seen people getting sealed in their foreheads before? Ezekiel chapter 9. Remember when God says, I'm going to go through and judge all of these no-goodniks that are living in Jerusalem and these worshipping the creepy-crawlies and weeping for Temus and this, that and the other. But He says, hold up until I do what? Seal the faithful, those who are crying over the status of things in Jerusalem. And seal them where? In the forehead.

Very same thing. So, just before the judgment of God begins, what is the symbol of the judgment of God beginning in Revelation? Handing the scroll to the Lamb who is worthy to open it and He starts breaking the seals. Even though the consequences that you see on earth are attributable to man, Antichrist is turned loose to wave his bow and get everybody subjugated.

But very quickly you have these other seals. But all of these seals are a part of the judgment of God. God allows Antichrist to do His thing.

There is something inhibiting Antichrist and the spirit of Antichrist right now, right? And this is the grace of God. God is going to remove that grace and when He does, Antichrist is going to do His thing. And that is what you might call a judgment by permission.

Take what Job has but don't touch him. Judgment by permission. God didn't bring it on but God removed His protection and let the enemy have his way in restricted areas.

So, I would argue on the analogy of the clear precedent set in Ezekiel that the sealing of the remnant is going to have to happen before the judgment of God begins, not in the middle of it. I am not going to go back and review Ezekiel because we studied it in great detail. The angel going forth.

And who does the sealing in Ezekiel? Angels. Who does the sealing here? Interestingly, how many angels have the seal of God? There is one. Look in chapter 7. He says, I saw a four angel standing.

I saw another angel ascending from the east having the seal of the living God. One angel. One seal.

But what does he say? He cried with a loud voice to the four angels. Do not harm the earth, the sea or the trees till we have sealed. Plural.

Till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. No harm to anything on the earth until these are sealed. Now that, I mean, this is kind of slamming the door after the cows are out.

If the six seals have all happened. You know what I mean? So, this is pretty much of a deduction here. It would not have a lot of solidity until we go looking in between the sixth and seventh trumpet, which is where we are going to go next.

So hold this thought and turn with me now. We are going to skip forward and just kind of establish our outline for what is coming. We have all of chapter 7 and then in chapter 8 there is an opening of the seventh seal and there is silence in heaven for half an hour.

That half an hour puzzles me. If I stop talking right now for half an hour. I mean, half an hour does not sound long when you read it.

But if I stop talking right now for half an hour and you just listen to the ambient noise of your circulation or the hiss of the tape or whatever it is you happen to be listening to for 30 minutes, that is a long time. Why is there silence in heaven for half an hour at the opening of the seventh seal? You want to talk about anti-climax. I mean, every other time they open a seal, horses are riding out and people are rising up out from underneath altars and stuff is happening in the heavens and rocks are falling and people are screaming.

So you think, well, this is the biggest and the baddest and the lastest of all the seals. Crack! Tick-tock, tick-tock for 30 solid minutes. You think, what is going on? Everybody in heaven, you hear the faucet dripping or crickets chirping.

I don't know what happens in heaven. They don't have faucets. They don't have crickets to my knowledge.

So I guess it is just dead air. It is the worst thing that can happen on the radio is dead air. It happened to me a couple of times where the network feed went away in the middle of something and I was down pulling PSAs or something in another room and all of a sudden the monitors, I hear a click and there is nothing and I go dashing madly back down the hallway and reaching in there and trying to get on and say, well, this moment of silence was brought to you by the Claremore Public Library or some such thing.

Because dead air is a bad thing. You want to have some content going out. So here is this silence for half an hour.

Why? I think, of course, in the symbolic language in which this vision is being communicated to us, it says, think. Remember in the Psalms, every time you see the word SELAH, you will have a phrase and then SELAH. And SELAH, the best guess anybody has is that this is an instruction that the singers stop singing the words and the musicians play an interlude.

And it gives you a chance to think about the words that you just heard. So you hear all these words and then SELAH means, okay, vocalists, give it a rest and we are going to play the bridge here and then we come back and sing another verse or something. You can think about this in that song, Dust in the Wind, or a horde of songs, slews of songs.

They are the A-B-A-B-C deal where you sing a verse, sing two verses, then have the bridge. Think about the Beatles songs where you got the little guitar solo, Beach Boys guitar solo, whatever you want to think of. Same thing.

So here, you have got all of this content, all this information. You come up to the great climactic events of the sixth seal. When the seventh seal breaks, it is like, before we do this, I want you to think about everything that has come before.

That is all anybody can do. Nobody is speaking, nobody is moving, nothing is happening. People are saying, wow, let's think about those first six seals.

And I think this is rewind time. Because then you have the trumpets. And we will cover this in detail later, but just take a quick look.

In verse 7 of chapter 8, in the first trumpet, just look at your headlines here, your topic headers here. First trumpet, vegetation is struck. Second trumpet, the seas are struck.

The third trumpet, the waters are struck. Fourth trumpet, the heavens are struck. The fifth trumpet, the locusts from the bottomless pit are turned loose.

And the sixth trumpet, in chapter 9, verse 13, the angels from the river Euphrates are released. And then you have these third of mankind killed by these armies and there are plagues of flying scorpions and whatnot. And nobody repents.

Verse 21 of chapter 9, they did not repent of their murders, their sorceries, their sexual immorality, their thefts. They continue to worship their idols of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood, which can neither seen nor hear nor walk. Now, that is six trumpets, right? So you would expect in chapter 10, verse 1, then behold I heard a noise and it was the seventh trumpet going off.

But no. Then you have a whole bunch of stuff going on. There is a mighty angel with a rainbow on his head and a bunch of things happening.

And John eats the little book. Then in chapter 11 you have the whole account of the two witnesses who are testifying, they are killed, they are resurrected. And all of this is inserted between the sixth trumpet and the seventh trumpet.

Why? Well, once again, I would suggest, perhaps, the six trumpets span the seven years of the tribulation and the seventh trumpet corresponds with the seventh seal. They seem to start in slightly different places and address different things, but everybody ends up at

number seven looking at the Lamb. And so you have all of this in chapter 11, you have the woman, the child and the dragon in chapter 12, and that whole scenario.

And that is clearly retrospective. The woman is Israel, the child is the Lord Jesus, the dragon is Satan. And you are not telling me Jesus was born in the tribulation.

So it is a retrospective. It looks back even past the beginning of the tribulation period encompassing the whole span of history, pretty much. The seed of the woman and so on.

Then in chapter 13 you have the beast from the sea. Chapter 13, verse 11, the beast from the earth. And chapter 14, you see the 144,000 come back into view once again.

In fact, you actually see them for the first time. If you think about it, did we see the 144,000 back there in chapter 7? We did not. John is in heaven and the angel says, Hold up, wind angels, until we seal the servants of God.

And there is an announcement of how many will be sealed, but you don't see them. They are not in view. We just hear about them.

We don't see the 144,000 servants until chapter 14. But we see them there. You have the proclamation to the three angels.

You have the reaping of the earth's harvest. And angel coming out from under the altar and so on. And it isn't until chapter 15 that you have the final trumpet.

And then in chapter 16, you start over with another seven. Chapter 16 is where your bowl judgments begin. I heard a voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, Go pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.

And so you have sores, water turning to blood. Actually, the salt water turns to blood. Then the fresh water turns to blood.

Then men are scorched. Then you have darkness and pain. You have the Euphrates being dried up.

And then the seventh bowl at the end of chapter 16, the earth is utterly shaken. So once again, you are at the very end of that period. So the idea here is that particularly when you are looking at the seals and the trumpets, between 6 and 7, you kind of break off and you start looking at the broad perspective.

I want to suggest to you that in the seals, which we have already studied in chapter 6, you are looking at the human point of view. Angels don't ride horses. Who rides horses? Europeans, right? Men.

The Indians didn't even ride horses until the Europeans brought the horses over from Spain and that. You think the noble red man was galloping across the plains all that

time? He didn't gallop around until Vasquez and Cabeza de Vaca and the rest of those guys all came over and dumped Balboa and the rest of them dumped horses off here. They didn't have horses.

Well, men ride horses. Angels don't ride horses in the Bible. So the riders on the horses represent actions of men.

And it's a man-oriented view. The seals... Who gets sealed? Who has ever been sealed in Scripture? What's the first seal that ever takes place in Scripture? You can't get four chapters into Genesis before you see a man getting sealed in his forehead. And it's Cain.

And it is always a mark of preservation from judgment, even for Cain. His mark preserves him from judgment. People in Ezekiel 9, preservation from judgment.

People in the Tribulation, preservation from judgment. In advance. It's not like there's, you know, torch-waving townspeople coming after Cain and he's backed into a corner and God sends an angel and says, Wait! Seal him in the forehead.

It's in advance. It's before any judgment comes. So, having said that, we look at the six seals and this is what man does.

This is the human participation in the plague. Man creates the famine and the pestilence. Man creates the war.

Man is involved in a lot of this. Then, between the 6th and 7th seal, we back up. And we stop.

And when the 7th seal is broken, there's like silence. It's like we're going to splice something in here before we see the result of the opening of the 7th seal. And then we start blowing the trumpets.

Now, the trumpets, take a look at this. Go back to chapter 8. When he opened the 7th seal, silenced them, in half an hour, I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Now, who broke the seals? The Lord Jesus Christ.

And He, of course, is God and what else? He is man. And the seals relate to men. Men are sealed.

The devastations that take place as a result of opening the seals, even the people who stand up from under the altar are human beings. Now, I would suggest to you, the trumpets are all about the angels. Angels blow the trumpet, the voice of the archangel, the trump of God.

These are angels. The Lamb doesn't blow the trumpets. He broke the seals, but He doesn't blow the trumpets.

Angels blow the trumpets. When He does, they're given seven trumpets. Another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar.

He's got the censer, offered with the prayers of all the saints upon the altar, the smoke of the incense. These trumpets, when they are blown, have something to do with answering the prayers of the saints. Breaking the seals didn't answer anybody's prayers, did it? Because it's the action of men.

Men are fallen. What man does just leads to corruption and death. Our righteousness is filthy rags.

Our peace won't last. Our safety is insecure. The whole seal thing is a bust.

That's why the seals are broken. They don't stomp the trumpets after they blow them, do they? The first angel blew his trumpet and threw it down and stomped on it. They don't do that.

You don't see a breaking and a loss like you do with the seals. So, you have the seven angels who had the seven trumpets, prepared themselves to sound in verse 6, and then in verse 7, the first angel sounded. And you have hail and fire and the vegetation struck.

This looks at the seven-year tribulation, not from what man does and what man causes. Now, man is involved in the judgments, both as victim and as perpetrator. This looks at the supernatural forces that are at work through the intermediate agency of the angels.

So, are you with me? Seals, this is the agency of man, the victimhood of man. Trumpets, this is the angelic participation in the tribulation period. The victims are still on the earth.

You've got the plant life. You've got the living creatures in the sea. The angels are involved in nature all through the Bible.

They control the winds here. They control how the vegetation grows or doesn't grow, whether you've got sufficient fish for the fishing industry, and tuna and salmon and all the rest of it that you get out of the sea. That's going to go away and be poisoned.

You've got the waters being struck, wormwood, and the water is bitter. This is a natural catastrophe, natural disaster. You think it's bad in New Orleans, wait until nobody's got water to drink.

The heavens are struck. The moon and the stars are darkened. A third of the day doesn't shine, and the night, and there's an angel flying in the middle.

It's all about how the angels are involved in implementing this judgment. All right, so, hang with me now. Seals look at the tribulation period from the standpoint of man and his involvement.

The trumpets look at it from the standpoint of the angels and their involvement by manipulating nature. What do you think the bowls are going to represent? Go over to chapter 16. Flip over to chapter 16 and look right at the beginning of the chapter.

What does it say? I heard a voice from the temple saying, Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth. Pour out the bowl of the wrath of God. So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth.

And now you have pestilence upon those who have the mark of the beast and those who worship his image. Specifically targeted at those who have identified themselves with the beast through the mark. The second bowl, the sea turns to blood.

When have we ever seen the sea turn to blood before? Go back to the plagues in Egypt where there also you had the clash between the God of Israel and the God of the land of Egypt. The Gods, plural. And you have this plague, the waters turning to blood.

And the angel says, You are righteous, O Lord, the one who is and who was and who is to be. And the focus in the bowls is God. So we can prove this out as we go through, but I want to suggest to you that the approach we should take, the outline we should adopt as we go through these next many chapters of Revelation, is to see that there is a perspective in the seals, there is a perspective in the trumpets, there is a perspective in the bowls that switches from human to angelic to divine.

Now I have left out one set of sevens. The Bible itself leaves out one set of sevens because John is specifically told not to write. Because there is actually four sets of seven.

What is the one that is missing? The seven thunders. And what do you think that represents? I will let you speculate on that while we take our break. And when we come back I will suggest to you what I think Scripture suggests to us about the seven thunders.

But let's pause here and take our break.