

# THE BOOK OF REVELATION: VERSE BY VERSE

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## WEEK ELEVEN

### I. THE SEVEN SEALS AND THE 144,000 (Revelation 6:1 – 8:5)

#### A. The Seven Seals (6:1-17; 8:1-5)

##### *What Is A "Seal?"*

A seal was a sign of authenticity and ownership. Often scrolls and documents were rolled up and then bound together with a large blot of wax or clay, which would then be imprinted with an official seal of the writer. The scroll John saw was uniquely lined with seven "seals." Seven symbolizing "divine completeness and perfection." As each "seal" is broken, a different experience is unleashed.

1. The first seal... (6:1-2)
  - a. White can be a symbol of Christ, purity, or victory.
  - b. This horse represents (not Christ, but) the generic concept of conquest.
    - i. It is often seen as a parody of Christ just as the Beast in chapter 12 is seen as a parody of the Lamb.
2. The second seal... (6:3-4)
  - a. Red is a symbol of destruction and bloodshed.
  - b. This horse represents the specific concept of war.
3. The third seal... (6:5-6)
  - a. Black is a symbol of famine.
  - b. This horse represents famine as a consequence of war.
4. The fourth seal... (6:7-8)
  - a. Pale is a symbol for the draining of life.
  - b. This horse represents death in all of its forms.
    - i. **"Hades"** is the place of the dead, following closely behind this horse...
5. The fifth seal... (6:9-11)
  - a. The cries of the persecuted (in heaven...)
6. The sixth seal... (6:12-17)
  - a. The cries of the persecutors (on earth...)
    - i. The sixth seal is God's response to the cries of the persecuted in the fifth seal.

The last question asked (6:16-17) was, *"Who can withstand the wrath of the Lamb?"* John pauses to answer that question...

## B. A Brief Interlude... (7:1-17)

1. Four angels briefly prevent the earth's forces from doing any harm... (7:1)
2. Another angel places God's seal **"on the foreheads of the servants of our God."** (7:2-3)
  - a. This is not a literal, physical seal... (See 14:1, Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:22)
3. John hears the number **"144,000 from all the tribes of Israel..."** (7:4-8)
  - a. What does this number signify?
    - i. 12 is symbolic of complete unity in diversity...
    - ii. 12 is symbolic of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles...
    - iii. 10 is symbolic of completeness in terms of fullness (10 fingers, 10 toes...)
    - iv. When a Hebrew multiplies something by 10 he is implying something large... (See Matthew 18:22)
    - v. When a Hebrew multiplies something by 10 by 10 by 10 he is implying something you can't number.
      - 1.) You see this in 7:9...
  - b. What does **"the tribes of Israel"** signify?
    - i. Some believe this refers specifically to Messianic Jews killed during **"the great tribulation."**
    - ii. Some believe this symbolically refers to all of God's people martyred throughout history.
    - iii. The list of tribes John uses is unlike any of the other 18 lists in the Bible.
      - 1.) Scholarly views differ as to the reason for this.
  - c. John next sees **"a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."** (7:9-17)
    - i. They are described as **"those who have come out of the great tribulation..."** (See 7:14)

### ***What Is "The Great Tribulation?"***

The word **"tribulation"** (filipsis) literally means pressure. It is the word used when two opposing forces meet. Some believe that **"the great tribulation"** is a general term for the pressure that Christ-followers feel when confronting the forces of evil throughout history.

Others believe that **"the great tribulation"** refers to a specific period in history, preceding Christ's return to earth, when Christ-followers are severely persecuted.

## C. A Return To The Seven Seals (8:1-5)

1. The seventh seal... (8:1-5)
  - a. When the seventh seal is opened, it initially unleashes **"silence in heaven for about half an hour."**
    - i. What is the purpose of silence in the O.T?
      - 1.) A natural response to God's omnipotence (Isaiah 41; Habakkuk 2:20).
      - 2.) Anticipation of God's imminent action (Exodus 14:14; 1 Samuel 12:16)
      - 3.) Fearsome awe in light of His coming judgment (Zephaniah 1:7; Zechariah 2:13)
  - b. The silence is followed by the presentation of seven trumpets to seven angels...
    - i. What is the purpose of trumpets in the O.T?
      - 1.) Trumpets sound alarms, call the people to repentance, to battle, or to action.
  - c. This is then followed by the unleashing of the prayers of God's people on the earth!
    - i. And the next cycle (the seven trumpets) is about to begin...