

Seven Seals

Revelation 6-8:5

MPS Jesus is sovereign who executes judgment for sin but seals for eternal salvation those who trust in Him.

OBJ Every person should trust in Jesus because of Five Eternal Truths that hold Christ-followers in God's judgment.

INTRO Scary Movies in the 1980s. **Do you recall the scary movies of the 1980s?** Actors always did the stupidest things, like fleeing from the “boogeyman” not by running to the car to leave the scene, but running into the tool shack filled with hanging sharp blades. In our Revelation study, the worst thing we can do is get so consumed by all that is going on that we miss the promise that is clearly in front of us, of our hope in Christ, of God's mercy and grace, and His love for us in revealing these things to us.

TRANS As we walk through each section, I want you to see the hand that was nail-scarred for us as we watch that same hand open the seals to reveal His will for us.

Jesus is sovereign who executes judgment for sin but seals for eternal salvation those who trust in Him.

6:1-8 The Four Seals: Four Horsemen

Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, “Come!”² And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

³When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!”⁴ And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

⁵When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand.⁶ And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!”

⁷When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!”⁸ And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

The Lamb begins to open the seals and God's judgment is revealed. The first seal represents war and destruction, in general. A white horse whose rider has a bow and is given a crown, who comes out to conquer. This first rider represents conquest in general, who comes out to conquer believers. His color and adornment reveal that he is either one who represents Christ or the preaching of the gospel, or he is one who masquerades to deceive by imitating Christ. The second seal represents bloodshed and violence. A bright red horse whose rider is given a great sword and is permitted to take peace from the earth, so people slay one another. The third seal represents economic inflation and devastation. A black horse holds a pair of scales, a system of measurement for transaction. A day's wage will scarcely buy a day's provision. Then a voice is heard from within the four living creatures that limits costs and determines what must not be harmed. The fourth seal unveils a pale horse whose rider's name is Death and is closely followed by Hades. They are given a fourth of the earth and kill in four ways, with a sword, through famine and pestilence, and by wild beasts. G. K. Beale reminds us that these first four seals show how Jesus' “authority extends even over situations of suffering sent from the hand of God to purify the saints and punish unbelievers. Rev. 6:1–8 is intended to show that Christ rules over such an apparently chaotic world and that suffering does not occur indiscriminately or by chance.” Beale continues, the “destructive events are brought about by Christ for both redemptive and judicial purposes. It is Christ sitting on His throne who controls all the trials and persecutions of the church.”¹

OBJ **Five Eternal Truths** hold Christ-followers' by hope in Jesus in the midst of God's judgment.

¹ G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, [Revelation: A Shorter Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 123–124.



Truth #1: God's wrath is poured out against all unbelief, but Christ who is enthroned sovereignly rules over all.

What is known as the 'four horsemen of the Apocalypse', these judgments represent "forces operative throughout history" that serve God's sovereign purposes and usher in the events of the end of the age," that "run simultaneously throughout history rather than one after another in a severe trial right before Christ returns.² [John reveals the plan of God's will carried out in judgment against sin.](#)

We know Christ is in sovereign control. The Lamb is in control because He opens each seal. Each of the first four seals is accompanied with "Come!", an invitation to behold. What occurs only happens because He ordains it, which means that it accomplishes His sovereign will. We also see God at work in each seal. The verbs for "was given" and "was permitted" are divine passives [2, 4 (2x), 8, 11], which reveal God's activity that determines the role of each rider. [The horses and riders are His instruments and the weapons His choosing, but God is the One who executes His judgment.](#)

We need to understand God's wrath and how He executes judgment. Romans 1:18 states, "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.*" God's wrath revealed is best understood as His mercy removed, where God gives people completely over to their own unrighteousness and wickedness. A right understanding of God's wrath and judgment magnifies the great importance of God's mercy to us. We must be sure that we do not neglect God's mercy, and that we do not believe that His forbearance of sin means He is passive toward it. [God's forbearance demonstrates His loving patience, that though it will not last forever, His mercy remains today.](#)

Have you recognized God's mercy and responded in faith to receive His forgiveness and cleansing of sin by faith in Jesus?

Series Refrain I introduced this series, "The King is Coming. Again. Soon." with two aspects about Jesus' Second coming that we must hold, urgency and priority. I want to revisit them here and remind us how we respond to Jesus in faith through what we learn in our study. Revelation demands our Urgency; this is not about being anxious, which comes from a lack of faith or disobedience, but that what is revealed matters now, not just one day when, so we take every opportunity to share our hope in Jesus the King. And second, Revelation demands our Priority; that first in all and at all times, our doctrinal convictions center how we live by [faith in obedience to Jesus because of the gospel. Urgency and Priority characterize the life of a real Christ-follower because our hope is consumed by God's eternal plan revealed to us.](#)

TRANS With Urgency and Priority in mind, let's consider all else that is revealed during God's judgment.

6:9-11 The Fifth Seal: sacrificial slain

⁹When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. ¹⁰They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

The fifth seal reveals the sacrificial slain of the faith. They are known by their fidelity to God's Word and faithfulness in their witness. But maybe most of all is where they are found, sheltered under the altar. They cry out to God asking, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Their cry is not for one of revenge but for God's justice to be made known.³ Their appeal is for God's holiness and righteousness to be vindicated, as the assurance of their souls. They are given a white robe of purity and told to rest a little longer while

² J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 100.

³ G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, [Revelation: A Shorter Commentary](#), 134. Beale states, "The prayer of the saints in v. 10 is not a cry for revenge but a cry for the manifestation of God's justice (Paul expresses the same thought in Rom. 3:25–26 in relation to the work of Christ), for God will be considered unjust if He does not punish sinners and those who wrongfully persecute His people."



the full number of them is completed. [The white robe declares that their cry is heard and satisfied, that God and his saints will be vindicated, even as they rest in God's sovereign will.](#)⁴

Truth #2: [The saints who have gone before us declare to us that Jesus is worthy of our perseverance in faithful obedience and witness.](#)

John's vision includes more than only literal martyrs of the faith but references all the saints that have gone before us. And the altar under which they stand is not one of sacrifice, but of incense. John is revealing that the sacrifice through which they persevered and the prayers which they now utter rise before God. He hears their prayer and rewards their sacrifice. [The saints testify to us: their position before God serves as an assurance and their prayers a strength in confidence; God is faithful and true, He rewards His saints and vindicates His righteousness.](#)

Christ-follower, your life today is not wasted nor disregarded. We deny self to take up our cross and follow Jesus (Matthew 10:38-39; 16:24-26; Luke 9:23) as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2) because He is true to His Word and faithful to His saints! Romans 8:35-39 is not trite cliché but eternal promise; nothing will separate us because nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus! God has not forgotten you in your suffering or sacrifice. Remain faithful to His Word and in your witness. He will receive and reward you with eternal blessings of His provision! It may seem like we are miserably losing in this world. But the saints who have gone before us revealed in the fifth seal say something quite different to us. [Our aim is not to win every argument or prove God true in this world: Christ-followers are called to live true to His Word and bear a faithful witness to His Name because Jesus is worthy.](#)

Christian, is the all-consuming aim of your whole life faithfulness to God's Word and in witness to Jesus' Name?

TRANS And rest assured, God not only hears but He answers the prayers of His saints when they agree with His Word. 6:12-17 **The Sixth Seal: the great day of Wrath**

¹²When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, ¹³and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. ¹⁴The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Seal six reveals the great day of God's wrath. And its scope and magnitude is far greater than one can comprehend. The reader is immediately struck, with John, by the involvement of the whole creation. We are reminded how Paul instructed that all creation "groans together in the pains of childbirth" for God to vindicate His righteousness and for the freedom of His children. (Romans 8:18-25) There is nothing like unstable weather patterns to remind us how small and inconsiderable we really are in this world.

ILLUS 1995 Texas hail storm / tornado In Spring of 1995 Christin and I lived in Ft. Worth, TX. We headed out one Friday night with another couple to a night on the town. A storm blew in that night that produced hail the size of cantaloupe and small watermelon, that fell like it was shot from a canon. And that was all just before the tornado moved through. We watched hail completely destroy full size trucks, smashing them flat in seconds. The hail was so destructive it destroyed three walk-overs at the hospitals, even bending the structural steel. And, a friend has hail penetrate all the way through their roof in their apartment complex.

I don't know all John saw in his vision, but this description alone is terrifying. As one scholar states, "Whether these phenomena are literal or metaphorical remains to be seen, but the unmistakable effects on the hearers would have been

⁴ G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, [Revelation: A Shorter Commentary](#), 135. Beale explains, "The metaphor of white robes connotes the idea of a purity which has resulted from persevering faith tested by the refining fire of tribulation (see on 3:4-5). Robes are given not only as a reward for purity of faith but as a heavenly declaration of the saints' purity or righteousness and an annulling of the guilty verdict rendered on them by the world. In this picture is an assurance to the saints still on earth that their vindication before God without doubt awaits them."



terrifying.”⁵ The is revealed in the response of people where six categories of humanity are identified; “*the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,*”, that remind us that none are spared in God’s judgment. And all of them who had rejected Christ had the same prayer, “kill us so we do not have to face the One seated on the Throne.” But not even death can rescue one from answering to God for their sin.

Truth #3: God’s Judgment is real and terrifying beyond comprehension, but all who are hidden with God in Christ will not face it.

Christian, you may suffer persecution in this life, and some will even be slain as martyrs, but you will not be touched by God’s wrath. Christ has consumed the wrath of God for you. You will not fall under God’s judgment because Christ willingly bore that burden for you. The mercy and grace of God that is sufficient for salvation is also sufficient for any and all suffering from persecution. Commentator Scott Duvall exhorts, “The Bible consistently supports a theology of endurance rather than escape, all the while assuring believers that they will never suffer God’s wrath or condemnation.”⁶ What we may suffer will only be temporal and never compare to the glory that awaits us in Christ. (Romans 8:18) Therefore, let us fix our hope not on some planned escape route, but in the One in whom our eternal hope rests, Jesus Christ. *When those who have rejected Jesus are crying out to the rocks begging to be killed by them, those who trust in Jesus will rest in Him as the Rock of God.*

Which “rock” are you crying out to? You cannot remain neutral forever; you should not remain neutral today. Put your trust in Jesus. He is the only Rock who will stand unmoved and safeguard you in the day of God’s wrath.

TRANS Chapter 7 serves as an interlude which “features a single vision showing the situation of the people of God, but from two different perspectives.”⁷

7:1-8 144,000 Sealed

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. ²Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, ³saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” ⁴And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

⁵12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed,

12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,

12,000 from the tribe of Gad,

⁶12,000 from the tribe of Asher,

12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,

12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,

⁷12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,

12,000 from the tribe of Levi,

12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,

⁸12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,

12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,

12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.

Four angels stand at the corners of the earth, which represents the whole of creation. They prevent ultimate destruction by holding back the winds. Then another angel ascends “*from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, ³saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” ⁴And I heard the*

⁵ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), 108.

⁶ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), 109. Duval writes, Throughout history, God’s people have always suffered persecution and martyrdom at the hands of evildoers. The Bible consistently supports a theology of endurance rather than escape, all the while assuring believers that they will never suffer God’s wrath or condemnation.”

⁷ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 118.



number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.” John sees a multitude who are provided a seal that guards them from ultimate destruction. The number 144,000 is determined by the twelve tribes multiplied by twelve and then by one thousand, a calculation that represents completeness and wholeness. This is not the literal Israel but the true Israel, which “represents the true people of God or the whole company of the redeemed.”⁸ **What is most important here is that by the angel’s decree, this group is protected from harm in all of the destruction because they are sealed by God.**

Truth #4: God guards Christ-followers from His judgment because we have been sealed with His Spirit.

While Christians know that we may, and surely will, suffer persecution because of our faithfulness to God, we will not be harmed in judgment because we have been sealed by God. God’s seal authenticates one’s identification with Him.⁹ We are protected because we are God’s, He owns us and we are part of His community. This we learned from the Throne room worship as God ransomed us and purchased us by Jesus’ blood. **And what is this seal that authenticates our identity with Him?** The Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:13-14 declares, “*In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*” And again in 4:30 we are reminded that by the Spirit we have been sealed for the day of redemption. **This of which we read in Revelation 7 is THAT Day in which God’s seal set upon us protects us because we are His!**

Has the Holy Spirit of God sealed you for the Day of His great wrath? Jesus’ seal of Holy Spirit is the only one that will suffice to save you from the wrath of God.

TRANS Where 7:1-8 shows “God’s people protected and prepared for battle,”¹⁰ now we see them weaponized with praise. **7:9-17 A Great Multitude**

⁹After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” ¹¹And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” ¹⁴I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵“Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

¹⁶They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Truth #5: God’s people will worship at His Throne victorious over the tribulation by Jesus’ resurrection power.

This part of John’s vision reveals the church triumphant praising God in heaven. This multi-cultural gathering adorned in white robes and waving palm branches is reveling in the celebration of the full victory of Christ Jesus. Their worship is combined with the worship of Heaven’s Throne Room as one united voice. And an angel asks John if he knows who they

⁸ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), 114–115. This position is supported by Mounce, Ladd, and Beale as well.

⁹ G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, [Revelation: A Shorter Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 145. “Seal can also have the sense of “authenticate” or “designate ownership of,” both of which are included with the idea of protection here.”

¹⁰ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 118.



are. These are the ones who have come through the great tribulation, who have had their robes washed and made white by the blood of Jesus, who have entered in to enjoy the presence of the Almighty for all eternity.

ILLUS I was in Kansas City on Wednesday for meetings. As I prepared to drive home it struck me that there was a victory parade taking place with an estimated half-million people in attendance. Knowing my normal path would take me right through the chaos, I pulled up my map and drove well out of my way to avoid the craziness at all costs.

When I read of this celebration I am also taking a distinctive route in life. By God's seal of Holy Spirit, I am protected and prepared for battle, and I am weaponized with praise! By God's seal, I am attending all the faculties and affections of my life to walk as directly into the celebration of Revelation 7 as absolutely possible. In Philippians 3:10, Paul prays that he might know the power of Jesus' resurrection and share in His suffering so that one day he might also share in the glory of His resurrection power. THIS is THAT day, the day of the glorious power of Jesus' resurrection! [Christ-follower, trust Jesus to remain faithful today because THAT Day will prove worth it!](#)

[Jesus is sovereign who executes judgment for sin but seals for eternal salvation those who trust in Him.](#)

Next Week: 8:1-7 The Seventh Seal: Seven Trumpets and a Golden Censer The seventh seal opened will introduce us to the next section of judgment.

