

Revelation 6:1–8
History Under the Lamb

Thursday, February 20, 2025 ▫ Read Revelation 6:1–8

Questions from the Scripture text: What did John see the Lamb do in v1? What did he hear? What did its voice sound like? What did it say to do? So what did John do (v2)? And what did he see? What did the One on it have? What was given to Him? What did He go out to do? What does the Lamb do in v3? Who says what? What does John see (v4)? What color is it? What does it do? What is granted to the one who sat on it? What else is given to him? What does the Lamb do in v5? Who says what? What does John do? What does he see? What color is it? What does the one who is on it have in his hand? What does John hear (v6)? From where? What does the voice say? How much wheat can a day's wage buy? How much barley? What can't it buy at all? What does the Lamb do in v7? What does John hear? Saying what? What does John do in v8? What does he see? What color is it? What is the name of its rider? Who follows with him? What is given to them, over whom? To do what, in what ways?

What are we to make of these dreadful things described in the seals? Revelation 6:1–8 looks forward to the hearing of God's Word, publicly read, in the holy assembly on the coming Lord's Day. In these eight verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **Jesus is in control of all of the dreadful things that happen in this age, bringing about the spread of His kingdom and the salvation of all of His elect.**

The Lord Jesus, in His earthly ministry, gave us the key to understanding the timing of the seals in Revelation 6. In Mt 24:2–3, the disciples had mistakenly thought that the destruction of the temple would coincide with Jesus's coming and the end of the age. But Jesus warns that this would be a deception (cf. Mt 24:4) and that the things that we now see in Rev 6:1–8 are merely the beginning of sorrows (cf. Mt 24:6–8). But the things that will come in the sixth seal (cf. v12–17) come at the end of the period of persecution (cf. Mt 24:29–31) that extends from the first coming of Christ until the second. More on that next week, Lord-willing.

The Spirit plainly tells us that the second through fourth seals unleash war (v4), poverty (v6), and widespread death (whether by pestilence or by some other means, v8). The latter is so severe that it afflicts one fourth of the earth. But we must heed Jesus's warning not to be deceived. These are not signs of the end, but ordained occurrences throughout the entire time of His absence.

Matthew 24 taught us not to be deceived. Now Revelation 6 teaches us not to be dismayed. Jesus is in control. The effect of these seals on the earth are dire, but He Who opens the seals in heaven is in control. This all occurs concurrently with the great throne room scenes in chs4–5.

And that is the point of the first seal. For, although He is bodily in heaven, the Lord Jesus is actively conquering on the earth (v2). Despite all of the persecution that believers face, and all of the upheaval in all of creation, the gospel goes out with conquering power.

The eye of flesh sees only those dreadful effects of the fall all around us: wars and murders (v4); inflation so bad that a day's wages can barely buy enough grain for a small loaf of bread, and oil and wine are altogether unaffordable (v6); a created order that spawns death, instead of life, at every turn (v8). But the eye of faith sees the Lamb on the throne, not only reacting to these things, but with authority to rule and overrule their unleashing. The eye of faith sees Him as going forth in His church, conquering and to conquer.

Dear reader, we must learn to see all of history this way: the acts of Jesus Christ, ruling from heaven to bring about the spread of His gospel, and complete the gathering-in of all of His elect (cf. v11). When you hear about war in Ukraine, or hurricanes, or persecutions, or economic crises, or world poverty... it is not merely that Christ is somehow able to bring something good out of all these things. Rather, He is worthily and ably accomplishing His plan of redemption even through these things. How comforting to know that our Redeemer rules over all; Christ is in control!

What things, currently in the news, tempt you to be anxious or discouraged? What is actually the "true story" behind all of these events? How can you be participating in the main story line of what is happening on the earth in our days?

Sample prayer: Lord, forgive us for how easily we are anxious or discouraged about events around the world. Truly, they are grievous, but You rule and overrule them for the success of Your kingdom and the gathering in of Your elect. Give us to adore the authority and glory of Jesus, the Lamb who sits upon the throne. And give us to trust Him in all that He is doing and to participate in His kingdom-work. Thus, not only forgive us for our wrong responses, but cleanse us from all unrighteousness, making us to live in this age in faith and love, we ask through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP46 "God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength" or TPH256 "God Moves in a Mysterious Way"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Revelation 6 verses one through eight. These are God's words. Now, I saw when the lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say, with a loud voice, like thunder. Come and see, and I looked. And behold, a white horse. He who sat on it at a bowl and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

Second seal. I heard the second living creature, say, saying, come and see. Another horse fiery red went out, and it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth and that people should kill one another, and there was given to him a great sword.

Third seal. I heard the third living creature say, come and see, so I looked. And behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it. It had a pair of scales in his hand, and I heard 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.

When you open the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature, saying, come and see. So I looked, and behold, a Pale Horse. In the name of him who sat on it, it was death and Hades, followed with him and power was given to them over a fourth of the earth.

To kill with sword with Hunger with death and by the beasts of the earth. Amen. So far. The reading of gods inspired and? And Aaron twerked. In this second sequence of Visions now. We come to the seals on the trumpets and the Bulls. We'll see the. The biblical reasoning for this and will begin to see it in a little bit.

And throughout the. Section with all three of those, but? The seals. Are those things? that happened throughout. The. The time between Jesus's first and second coming and? Sixth seal and the trumpets are especially those things that happen during that time. That point to Jesus's second coming, but they do not mean that necessarily that he is about to come.

Of the Wrath of the Lamb that Jesus is not sitting idly by. while his people are persecuted, and then when we get to the Bulls, those are the things. That are poured out at the second coming, and you see a? Increasing, you know, particularly what we just read about in the fourth seal with a quarter?

Of the Earth in the vision. being affected, you see this escalation. There's things that happen throughout the time. Affecting a quarter. in in the vision, reminding us that the whole of the creation is subject. To this groaning, and just not just the misery of the creation and the cursiveness of the land on man's account, but also the wickedness of man in in the.

Then, when you get to those things that point, especially to the wrath of the Lamb avenging. His. you, it gets upgraded to a third. These are things that belong, not merely to. The fallenness and the misery of the world in its present state, but The act of defending and responding.

by Jesus on behalf of his church. And so there's an intensification there. And then, of course, that which belongs to the last day to the day of Wrath. When you get to the Bulls, it's. It's on every. But the seals, In particular, these four seals that we have in our passage today are those things that are just the beginnings of Sorrows to use Jesus's own words.

From Matthew 24, when he distinguishes between those things that are just the ordinary way that the world will be between. his first coming and his second coming the beginnings of Sorrows, not at all. An indicator. that he is doing something. Unusual or invading history, interrupting the ordinary flow of History.

In in any way. And. To these in more detail, but basically, you have war and murder. in the second seal, and you have. Poverty and inflation in the third seal. And then you have all sorts of death. The fourth seal. things that happen either by what is commonly referred to as natural disaster or plague.

or even as a result of war or tyranny within a land or oppression. you know, these are all things that happen during this entire age. You remember, in Matthew chapter 24? It begins with the disciples, having been very impressed with the stones out of which the temple was built, and Jesus saying not to be impressed with either the temple or its Stones, because.

The day was coming when not one of those stones would be left upon another, and they assume that this is connected to Jesus's coming in his glory and the end of the Age. And Jesus says. Not one stone shall be left here upon another that shall not be thrown down.

In Matthew 24, verse 2, they ask him in verse 3, when will these things be? What will be the sign of your coming in the end of the Age? Us. Jesus's answer is take heed, that no one deceives you. For many, will come in my name, saying, I'm Christ, we'll deceive many.

And then he describes things that do not indicate that Christ is returning, or that it's the end of the age. And he says, you'll hear of wars and rumors of wars Nation will rise against nation Kingdom against Kingdom. So? Second seal. there will be famines. Third seal. And pestilences and earthquakes in various places.

Fourth seal, and then he says, verse 8, all these are the beginning of the Sorrows. And then he refers to the persecution that they will suffer in verses 9 and 10 and. false prophets in verse 11 and the love of many growing cold things that we see are already happening in the Book of Revelation, the false prophecy, the false teaching, and the love of the church growing cold.

These are things that were already occurring and were addressed in the seven letters in chapter two and chapter three. So these are not end timesy things, unless by end timezy, you mean between the first coming of Christ? Second coming of Christ. then Jesus goes on to tell them the indicators of.

The fall of Jerusalem that Jerusalem is about to be destroyed, that the temple is about to be destroyed. What does indicate that the temple will be destroyed, and he, he gives them a couple things to watch out for. Tells them to flee. But even then. after the destruction of Jerusalem, he, he says, verse 26.

Therefore, if they say to you look, he's in the desert. Do not go out or look is in the in rooms. Do not believe it for as the lightning comes from the East flashes to the. Will becoming of the son of man be so? The coming of the son of man is not going to be like the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple is going to be predictable andescapable.

The. Coming of the son of man is going to be unpredictable and inescapable. And Jesus says, then. Vengeance. Is announced or looked forward to by the sorts of signs that are in verse 29 and Matthew 24. The sun will be dark and the moon will not give its light.

Stars will fall from the heaven powers. The heavens will be shaken. Seal things. those are things that point forward to. the coming of the the son of man. As a sign of the son of man. But then, when it comes to? The last trumpet and the actual return of the Lord Jesus and?

The pouring out of the bowls of Wrath, then it says. He will send his angels out with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together his elect from the Four Winds, and from one end of Heaven to the other. So, if we, if we see that the very particular things that are being named in the seals are also the things in the three phases that Matthew 24 teaches us about.

Then, we don't have to be caught up in all of the weird and timesy things, and thankfully. Revelation chapter 6 doesn't give any indication. That these first four seals which are are subject of and the eight verses before us today. Any indication that these are future. In fact, they appear to be present.

Because the lamb is currently on the throne, the lamb is currently worthy to open the seals. The lamb is currently opening the seals. And the point is. That we ought not to be discouraged and dismayed. By Wars or famine? Or natural disasters or tyranny. Or the persecution of the church.

In particular because? The church, generally speaking in Christ, specifically by his church. Of course, the church is his body. The church is his agent in the world. The church is the one on the White Horse. That has a bowl, which is not just a weapon. It's a sign of the Covenant.

The one on the White Horse is not some famous conqueror from history Julius Caesar or Napoleon or. or anyone in, in all of? Those Innovative interpretations. That's the one who has a weapon that is also its Covenant with God. And because of the Covenant that God has made, not just to redeem all the elect, but this Covenant with his church.

Build it, and that the Gates of Hell will not Prevail against it, and that the gospel will go forth Unbound. And will succeed, and that his church will be established. We know that the church is this one with the bow and with the crown, which immediately ties back into the.

The couple of chapters that we've just heard the ones to whom the. The promise of the Lord Jesus. If they overcome, he will give them to sit on his throne with him, and then we see. From chapter 3 into chapter 4, the 24 Elders representing the church as a whole on Thrones around him with his throne and having their own crowns, but casting them down before him.

Having a King Hood that? That participates in and is subsidiary of the reign of the Lord Jesus on the earth. And even as they praise the lamb in chapter 5 that he has redeemed Us by. by his blood, and he has made us to Reign. On the earth, so the church Reigns on the earth even as the souls of Believers.

When we get to? what people?

Referred to as the Millennium the reigning with Christ for a thousand years, but it's just Souls there in. In chapter 20, it's not bodies, and there is. There is a double rain,

then there are those who overcome by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony they love, not their lives, even unto death.

And even though their bodies rest in the grave, their souls are reigning with Jesus in glory. The inexorable, Unstoppable progress of the Kingdom. The not now a nation in the? But the? As it spreads across the globe and Satan. Is helpless to stop at the Gates of Hell. Do not Prevail against it.

So, the church in particular is this one on the White Horse with the bow and the crown, and that his conqueror conquering and conquering, that goes out to conquer, conquering, and to conquer, And this refers especially to what we would call Mission work and church planting, and it's occurring despite all of the opposition all of the persecution.

In fact, there have been times in which the worse the persecution was, the more the church spread and grew. Now, there have been times also where the church suffered greatly. But these eight verses then are an accurate description of what the world is, like, it's the stuff that you read in the news in ver.

In seals two, three, and four, but what you don't read in the news is actually the great news story of this entire age. And that's the first seal. Spread of the church. And that? That is the main point. The main thing that is happening in this age. So, what are these?

what are these other things that are being carried out by The Sovereign will and power and goodness and mercy of God and the lamb. That's what's being described. Here you have God and the lamb. Have created all things, and they're created for him and. Who have redeemed his people.

for himself, and made them Kings and Priests. Unto God. And are worthy of the Sevenfold blessing power riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, blessing. They are the ones who are carrying out all these things. Yes, the those who are wicked do. What does wicked? There is an enraged devil.

Doing devilish things. But in all his devilry. He cannot help but be the instrument through which. The good that the good God? Is accomplishing. So, the second seal? You have the fiery red one who takes peace from the earth and that people should kill one another. And there is given to him a great sword.

God in his wisdom. often restrains the wickedness of man. And then sometimes give this man over to his wickedness. And it results in murders and divorce. Which are horrible, horrible things. No one who has been actually in a war? takes them lightly or. Would? Insanely read, or or think about.

As if they were no big deal. The third seal, the scales in the hand. This isn't. Straight up elimination of food, but there is inflation of Crisis, which probably refers to the scarcity of a famine or maybe as a result of a war or maybe the oppression of those who have power and are hoarding in order to increase their wealth, But it's poverty due to inflation.

A Denarius in verse 6 is a day's wage, and so a day's wage is buying either a quart of wheat, which. Nicer grain, a finer grain. And, you know, quartz is about this much. And you can make a tiny loaf for a day's wages or. If you get barley instead of wheat, you can get three quarts.

So, yeah, man. Working just for himself might get himself a loaf of wheat bread, or maybe you know he wants something heartier, or he has a family, and so he's able to make three of those little loaves for his family to share every day, and that's all his daily wages by.

That at that time. Considered Staples, Necessities, oil, and wine. There's no point even in thinking about those. There's not a price on them because they can't be bought. That's how great the inflation of the time is, and just think of how timely that is, you know how, how often people are talking about the inflation of prices just in the last couple of months, and what's happened to eggs, which you know?

If you know the government office a couple hundred million? Laying hens for pretty much. No reason. The price of eggs is going to go up. When that happens, we are not to be discouraged or dismayed. Because these things are happening under the authority. Of the one who is opening the seals.

And he does not do the wickedness himself. But it happens under and according to his degree. To do good through those. Who are doing that wickedness? And so you have the. The inflation, and then you have all of the different sorts of things. by which death comes? Yes, comes by.

Hunger, and it comes by the sword. So, there's a little bit of the second seal and third seal. Con, considered in countenance in the the fourth seal, but it also comes. by things like, beasts of the Earth, or if we're thinking in the language of. Matthew 24, which we read and is parallel to this, you know, things like earthquakes or?

In our area, especially hurricanes and tornadoes, and the amount of death, but. In the entire age between Jesus's first coming and his second coming, people are continually dying and, and they are passing into, the realm of the Dead. They are passing into Hades, either. Their bodies are resting in the grave.

Attended to by Christ or as their bodies go to the Grave. They go to the Grave under judgment and their souls go to torment, even as they wait. Lever weights until the last day. And so, for people who would be tempted to be anxious or discouraged or maybe disincenitized from living Faithfully unto God in an age in which all of these different things happen.

Six, one through eight comes and says, yes. The first three seals are what it looks like on on the Earth to the ordinary. The the eye of, the body, the eye of sight. But the eye of Faith knows two things that are happening. One the lamb is on his throne, and he is the one who is opening the seals?

Everything in history from the first coming of Christ to the second coming of Christ occurs in order to make his enemies a footstool under his feet occurs in order to gather for himself those whose salvation he has earned he has bought. His worthiness to receive everything that he has earned and won by.

By his life and death. Everything that happens in history between his first coming and second coming is in order to give him what what he has earned and what he has won. So that's one thing that the eye of Faith sees and the other thing that the eye of Faith sees is.

Seed growing into the great tree or the leaven? Expanding until. It has leavened the whole lump. Knowing that although the church appears to be? 11 ineffective and mustard seed small. It is actually a conqueror on a white horse. With the bowl of the Covenant as its weapon, and it goes out conquering and to conquer, and that's what faith sees.

And so, when you or I are dismayed or discouraged or anxious or afraid by all the stuff that we see in the news? To stop looking so much with the eye of the flesh. And instead look with the eye of faith. And see that the these things are occurring, under the authority of and for the glory of the one who sits on the throne in chapters four and five.

That his church is actually expanding and succeeding throughout this entire age. May the Lord give us then to live with joy and courage and hope and thankfulness and diligence and purpose. And all these things that we may have if we see. As the seals teach us to see. Our history, our time in history Through the Eye of faith.

Amen. Let's pray. Our gracious God and our heavenly father, how we thank you for? Giving to Jesus, this Vision that he trusted to angels to give to John. So that we too might see with the eye of faith. And might be grounded and established in the certainty of. his Reign in glory and?

Presiding over everything that happens in the earth. And his work on the earth. In the spread of his church, give us especially then to pray. For the spread of the Gospel church and her Reformation. Revival and her multiplication and give us to participate in it in all the ways that you've given us to with confidence and joy.

Make us thankful of God, that everything that happens comes to us in the same wisdom and love that gave us Christ. In his name, we pray. Amen.