Six Seals, the 144,000 Part 1

By Charles Feinberg

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This is the third in the series on The Book of the Revelation by Dr. Lee Feinberg, Dean of Talbot Theological Seminary in La Mirada, California.

Friends we are now at the 6th chapter of the Book of the Revelation. The first verse we had indicated that beginning with this chapter we're dealing with a six seal judgments, the six seal judgments. We have six seals in this chapter, The Seventh seal will be in the later portion of the Revelation. Now verses 1 and 2, "And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the nose of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer." In the first two verses then we have the first seal. The first six seals occur, we believe, in the first half of Daniel's seventieth week. They are the beginning of sorrows. In the first part of the judgments, the lamb is prominent. In the latter part the moving one appears to be God the Father. We read of the four living creatures. When heaven is in view, the elders speak. When Earth is in view, the living creatures speak.

In the second verse The one who sits on a white horse has a bow and has given unto him a crown and comes forth conquering and to conquer. Now there are many different interpretations, several prominent interpretations of the first seal. Some say that this is Christ. Many refer this to Christ because they compare it with a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation 19. Now there's no question about what Revelation 19 refers to the Lord Jesus Christ,
the Description there is so full concerning him. But in this case it would not be in keeping with the other horses. They symbolize conditions and not personalities. Others say that the one here who is on the white horse and has a bow and crown goes forth conquering and to conquer is a false Christ. Again that would not appear to be in keeping with the other horses. They are speaking of conditions certain circumstances and not persons.

We believe this particular seal speaks of the attempt of many to bring in a permanent peace. You find that in Matthew 24:4 and 5. 1 Thessalonians, for instance, the fifth chapter and the third verse if we were to look at that latter chapter, 1 Thessalonians 5:3, we read, "For when they shall say peace and safety then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child and they shall not escape". Well, if you will look up history even the history of our country it seems that before the greatest conflicts break out, the greatest conflagrations in strife between nations, there seems to be a tremendous propaganda for peace. And so here we have an attempt to bring in a permanent, bloodless peace. A horse speaks of actions of Providence in governing the earth. The idea of speed and power is present also as you have it in the first chapter of Zechariah, a horse. This is a white horse. Speaks of victory and triumph, a bloodless victory.

In the second seal, verses 3 and 4, we read, "And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat theron to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword", a great sword. The second seal of verse three and four speaks clearly of war. You have another horse which is a red horse here. This is the second of the four horses and the four horsemen of the apocalypse as they are often called. This one on the red horse takes peace from the earth. And there is a slaying of one another. It
embraces all types of bloodshed. Even the mightiest fighters have realized that it's better to walk in the paths of God than to carry on warfare. But the ungodly want to bring the ravages. They want the devastations of war on an ever-widening scale until it's on a universal, all-comprehensive scale.

The third seal then after a bloodless peace, War. Then the third seal, in verses 5 and 6, "And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.” The third seal in verses 5 and 6 reveals a balance in the hand of this one who's riding on the black horse. Where there is abundance, there is no minute weighing of common articles of food. I think our grandparents would have thought we had taken leave of our senses if we had spoken of weighing watermelons and items like that. But in our day there is. Where there is tremendous abundance throughout the world, and where there is not an inflation of the ordinary articles of food, there is no minute weighing of common articles of food. But as things become more scarce, even in the midst of certain abundance, there is scarcity, there is rationing of food. Worldwide War is usually followed by worldwide famine. We have one man's meal for a day's wages in wheat. In barley, three meals for a day's wages even though that was food for cattle and horses. Such are starvation conditions. The rich however will still have their luxuries.

And now we come to the fourth seal, death. "And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and
with the beasts of the earth." Now we come in this fourth seal, verses 7 and 8 and when that is open, we have one riding uphill horse that's a livid horse, He's death. That's the place of the departed body just as Hades is the place of the departed spirit.

So you see you have a connected story in these four horsemen of the apocalypse. Specifically what do we have? We have attempts at a bloodless peace, then bloodshed and war break out on a universal scale, then that's followed by famine, and famine is inevitably followed, sadly enough, by death. So you see friends you have here a connected picture. You have a picture of a bloodless peace. And you have a bloodless victory, Peace gained through negotiations and the like conquering and to conquer. Then inevitably, war breaks out, that's in the heart of man. It cannot be stopped indefinitely. Then famine and finally death.

Thus we have the picture of the little book being broken open. It's not a book such as we have from our publishing houses today. It was in Strohl form. It had seals at given places along the scroll. And when the seal is broken, you see more and more of the scroll unraveled indicating what particular judgment is coming up at that specific time. So by the time that you have the breaking of the fourth seal, we have all these four horsemen of the apocalypse. But that's not the end. There's a fifth seal in the next three verses. Verses 9 through 11, "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, how long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."
When the fifth seal is opened, what do we find? We find the souls under the altar, the souls of those that have been slain for the word of God, for the testimony which they have held. These are on earth under the altar on Earth. The saints indicated here, slain for the word of God, are not the saints of this age. Because the saints of this age we saw in Revelation 4 are already seated in heaven, crowned. But who are these saints? Some folk think that the minute they find the words saints, the minute they find the word elect it must relate to the church that is not true. Aaron is called a saint of the Lord. That means one who believe God but not in this age, it was in the Old Testament age. Here there are tribulation saints and even the word elect for that matter, Matthew 24, does not refer to the church because there was a chosen people before there was a chosen Body of Christ. Deuteronomy 4:1 and 2 indicates that God chose Israel. Amos 3:2, “You have been chosen from among all the nations of the earth. Therefore will I visit your iniquities upon you”. Now in verses 2-8 then, we have the first four seals grouped and the remaining seals are conceived of as together. These events of verses 2-8 have occurred in other ages too but not with such severity as in this age of judgment. Verses 9 to 11 are treating a temple scene. Souls were slain like burnt offerings. They are the souls of the Tribulation saints, the Jewish martyrs of that period. The cry is in keeping with the age of judgment. Notice they cry out, "Oh Lord how long holy and true dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth". That is not the prayer of saints of this age. That's in keeping with an age of judgment. It’s the well-known prayer of the Jewish saints. Just check with Matthew 24 verse 9 here belong all, at this time, belong all the implicatory psalms. The Psalms, Those that denounce the ungodly and call down God's wrath upon them. It said they belong not only back there in the Old Testament time but they have a relevance they have an applicability to this time of God's wrath. When God is dealing in wrath then such a prayer as that is in keeping with it. There is much in these verses
concerning the departed saints. Notice that they're not in the same group as the redeemed saints of this age, the church. They are still witnessing and there are still other witnesses. You see there are still some redeemed saints that are witnessing. They cannot be the church saints he talks about rest for a little season until their fellow servants also and their brethren that should be killed as they were should be fulfilled. There are still witnesses in verse 11 but they're not, I repeat, church saints. They do not utter such a cry that church has never had this as its model prayer. Now the sixth seal, beginning with verse 12 and going through the chapter, "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" The sixth seal then covers verses 12 to 17. Gives a picture of tremendous anarchy and upheaval. The End of chapter 6 then from verse 12 gives us the sixth seal. The princes, the chief captains, the rich, strong, bondman, Freedman hide themselves in the caves and rocks of the mountains. They pray to be hidden from the wrath of the lamb. Notice very carefully that the features spoken of here can indicate literal occurrences. Of course God could bring them to pass and Of course it does symbolize remarkable events as well. It can refer as we find in other portions of Scripture to the overthrow of ordered society. Great anarchy, great governmental upheavals. And throughout delegated
powers there will be unsettling of religious and social sources. We see much of that today. Human life will be in chaos, in turmoil, none will be exempt. The fear and the consternation, the dread, the horror will be universal.

Then mark all this great throng cry to the mountains and to the rocks to fall on them, to hide them from God from the wrath of the lamb. That will be the greatest prayer meeting ever to be held on the earth. But sadly enough it's not a prayer meeting of godly ones. It does not refer either to the judgment of Chapter 20 of the revelation. It's not a judgment of the unsaved and the Saved together. No, these souls are beyond the day of grace. They cry out not for salvation, only for an end of their miseries. The way to be sure, friend, that you will not be in that awful prayer meeting when they cry for the mountains And the rocks to fall on them is to utter your voice now upward to God and say I do receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my savior. I trust him with all my heart. The redeemed have blessed promises of safety. If it would be safe then, now is the time to make sure. Hideaway. Where? In the Rock of Ages.

Now we come to the seventh chapter and we entitle the seventh chapter, The Sealed 144,000 and Their Fruit. This chapter does not carry on. I must insist this chapter does not carry on the episodes of Daniel's seventieth week in a chronological way. It happens to be a parenthesis between the sixth and the seventh seals. In the midst of wrath, God remembers mercy for his own. The chapter reveals two separate, distinct groups. In the first eight verses, we shall be reading them in a moment. In the first eight verses we have the sealed remnant. In verse 1, it’s a providential restraining of judgment until the time of sealing is over. We read in Revelation 7:1-8, "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he
cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribes of Judah were sealed 12,000. Of the tribe of Manasseh were sealed 12,000. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed 12,000. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed 12,000. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed 12,000. Of the tribe of Zebulun were sealed 12,000. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed 12,000. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed 12,000."

We have then the sealed remnant. In verse 1 we have a mention of a holding of the four winds of the earth. Winds we read in the word of God are god's agencies to carry out his purposes. The Angel of verse two is, I believe, the Lord Jesus Christ himself and that according to many students of the word. Another angel ascending from these having the seal of the Living God. What the seal is that he has, we do not know definitely. It may include special impartation, enablement, and endowment of the Holy Spirit for this specific service for God. God made sure that he preserves his own in the midst of judgment. Later in this book we shall see that Antichrist seals his servants in their foreheads in Chapter 13. In Chapter 13 verse 16. But God has already done as much by that time for the preservation of his servants. The events of this chapter take place, as we've indicated, sometime during the first and seventh seals. It seems that the sealing takes place before the Great Tribulation proper begins before the three and a half years at the end of the Tribulation time. Those Last three and a half years are called the great tribulation. The seventh seal is the great tribulation in all its intensity. The last three and a half years of a general period call the tribulation but the last three and a half years are specifically the Great Tribulation. Its most intense time is during the seventh seal. They are sealed, these servants are 144,000, as a
means of preservation for them in their witness for God in the seven year period. God protects us when we're witnessing for His glory. God will take care of his own when they're ministering, when they're witnessing, when they're serving, when they're living for him.

In verses four, five, six, seven, and eight you have the mention of the servants of the Lord that are sealed. "Here is the number of them that were sealed, 144,000". And notice they are sealed out of every tribe of Israel, 12,000 out of every one of the Twelve Tribes. Now there's been no end to speculation on the identity of these sealed ones. We hear of all different types of sects and isms and cults claiming to be this group. If someone should tell you today that he belongs to the 144,000, just ask him to which tribe he belongs. These do not constitute all the saved of Israel of that age nor all the saved at that time. They are a specific class with a specific mission. The Gospel hardened of this age will not have another chance. We believe that's very clearly taught in the remarkable book of 2 Thessalonians 2. There is a remarkable passage there, in 2 Thessalonians 2, where we read what will happen to those who turn away from the truth. There is going to be the Antichrist coming with all deceivableness of righteousness in them that perish because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved and for this cause, not because they didn't have the truth, they didn't have the love of the truth so they could be saved. And for that cause God, not man, shall send them strong delusion that they should believe not a lie but the lie. What lie? That that man of sin who sits in the temple of God and says he is God, they're going to believe that. Yes and God's going to send them strong delusion to do so that they all might be judged who believe not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. The Gospel hardened of this age who will go on to the time of the Rapture unbelieving will not have another chance. You see the rapture is as revolutionary and as epic changing as death itself. Yes. Not having the truth they are going to be ensnared by Satan and by the man of sin. They will be
given strong delusion that they should believe the lie because they have not the love of the truth. There will be no revival at the rapture for those who had the message given to them. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, we repeat, at the rapture is just as revolutionary and epoch making as death would be to an individual. There would be no chance for the Gospel hardened to this age. That's why the necessity is upon us to get the message out speedily to the greatest number possible.

The 144,000 we believe were the wise are going to turn many to righteousness and shall shine as the stars forever and ever As in Daniel 12:3. Will you notice that one tribe is omitted? The tribe of Dan is not mentioned. Some think that Dan is omitted on the basis of his record in the Old Testament. From the Book of Judges we do know that the tribe of Dan knew the end of the Book of Judges, We find that the tribe of Dan was the first tribe as a tribe to go into idolatry. And you remember in Genesis 48 when Jacob was telling of the future of his sons he mentions Dan under the figure of a serpent that by that bites the horse's heals so that the rider falls backward. So many think that Dan is omitted here because of his idolatrous tendencies. But however, remember that in Ezekiel 48, when we read of the millennial distribution of the land, Dan will receive his fixed portion. Now we are not dogmatic about the reason for the omission of Dan. that could be a possible, we would not even say a probable reason. But we do know that he did go into idolatry, He does not suffer a loss in the distribution of the land in the millennial earth. Now in this passage Joseph is named for Ephraim, and Levi who had no territory in the land is mentioned so the whole number of twelve is made out from verses 5 to 8. God seals his servants then for the Ministry of witnessing.

From verses 9 through 17 We see the fruitage of the saved multitude, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people,
and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, what are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Here we have a great multitude of all the nations coming out of the great tribulation. Many and various are the opinions again in regard to this group too. But they are, it Appears to us, verily, the fruit of the labor of the 144,000. They are saved but like the 144,000 they are saved for earth. They are not given a position in heaven according to this passage. Doesn't mean that in eternal times or in millennial times there will not be opportunity to go from one to the other just as the Saints that are reigning with Christ will have opportunity to proceed from one area to another, from earth to heaven or from heaven to earth. They are not the 144 thousand because the 144,000 are not from all nations but from one nation, the nation of Israel. Whereas it's very clear the saved multitude come from all the nations. Verse 9 tells us all nations, kindreds, peoples, tongues. It couldn't be more specific. And then, the 144,000 are a specific
number. This saved multitude are an innumerable number, we read no man could number. So these are another group. These are the pure ones, possibly of Daniel 12:10. They are saved for they are arrayed in white robes. We read of this great multitude that no man could number of all the nations, kindreds, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the lamb. How? Arrayed in white robes with palms in their hands. They're not the church. They're a distinct group from that body. The elders are seated, these are standing. The elders have crowns and Thrones, The Palm bearers have neither crowns nor thrones. The elders were in heaven before the hour of the trial, these come through the tribulation, the great one, verses, verse 14 tells us. Elders are called Kings and Priests. These are designated as servants of God in this place. The elders maintain a different position from them. The elders were in heaven, these 144,000 are on Earth and the Saved multitude are upon the earth.

Another proof is that John didn't know their identity because in verse 14 he asked who they were. Yes who. in Verse 13 one of the elders answered saying, "Who are these, You see, "who are arrayed in white robes and Where do they come?’ and he says 'Sir thou noticed', and he said to me, 'these are they who come out of Great Tribulation"'. So in verse 14 he indicates he did not know when he was asked by one of the elders. He didn't know who this group was. Their palms speak of victory. In verse 14 the text tells us of the manner in which they gained their victory. You see here that although these have gone through the tribulation period yet they are saved exactly in the same way as the church Saints. There is only one way of salvation from Adam's time all the way down to the eternal ages. How did they do it? They washed their robes in the blood and made them white in the blood of the lamb. Yes, washed their robes in the blood and made them white.
There is only one way, friend, of salvation at any age. Hear it, the blood of the savior the company is before the millennial throne on Earth and we have the millennial blessing of these nations on earth. There will be no night and day in heaven. Here we read that the sun will not strike upon them no no hunger any more neither any thirst in the midst of the throne shall be the shepherd who shall guide them unto the fountain of the water of life. God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes. And you notice there's also mentioned here a temple, verse 15, "Serve him day and night in his temple. The temple is the millennial Temple of the last nine chapters of Ezekiel. Ezekiel chapters 40 to 48. The reason many cannot conceive of these things happening in the millennium is because of a lack of understanding of the glories that wonderful age and reign. It'll be glory for the saved of Israel and the Saved gentiles on Earth. While the church is the bride of the ruler of all, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, on every page of God's word throughout this last book of God's revealed purpose for time and eternity, We see the only refuge held out from man is in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s there and it's there alone. Friend, Have you been washed in the blood of the lamb by faith? You can be this very moment if you trust Christ as Savior.

Now we come to the eighth chapter of the book of Revelation that’s before us now. It deals with the Seventh seal and the four trumpets. You see that means that beginning with Chapter 8 verse 1 you are discussing the seals that were interrupted at the end of chapter 6 because Chapter 7 is a parenthesis. It deals with the Seventh seal and the four trumpets. When the seventh seal is opened, the book as a whole is opened to view. The seventh seal includes the seven trumpets. Now from chapter 4-11, the events are in sequence where the parenthesis as we noticed in Chapter 7. But in Chapter 12, God begins to view the events again with relation to Israel and the chief or principal participants of the last days. And the bowl judgments mentioned
in chapter 15 and 16 are the role reversed. You see that Scroll a rule was written on the front side and on the back. The bowl judgments of chapters 15 and 16 are the role on the reverse side. The parentheses are three in number actually. Chapter 7 is the first parenthesis between the Sixth and Seventh seal. Chapter 10:1-11:14 is the second parenthesis between the Sixth and Seventh Trumpet judgment. Notice how orderly is the arrangement in the Book of Revelation. And Chapter 16 verse 15 is the third parenthesis between the sixth and seventh bowl judgments. So notice the orderly arrangement in the book of Revelation.

[End part 1]