



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.

³ When 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.

⁵ When 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!”

⁷ When 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.

⁹ When 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. ¹⁰ They 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?” ¹¹ Then 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.

¹² When 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, ¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. ¹⁴ The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵ Then 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, ¹⁶ calling 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?"

Be honest. Some of you are thinking, "We have spent four weeks of sermons on just one chapter of Revelation?! At this rate we will never get through the book!" I warned against becoming enamored with the blood and battlefields described in this book. That is definitely not what I am doing. To be honest, I don't know how I will handle the next ten chapters. As I said last week, I much of the next ten chapters or so repeats itself. Sometimes this is referred to as recapitulation, which is fancy word which means it repeats itself. On the back side of the colored outline I gave you was a slightly different outline. Look at this repetition.

7 SEALS 4:1-8:1	7 TRUMPETS 8:6-11:18	7 SIGNS 11:19-15:4	7 BOWLS 15:5-16:21
White Horse •Conqueror 6:1-2	Earth Hail, fire & blood 1/3 Earth burned 8:7	The Woman in Labor 11:19-12:17	Earth Painful sores 16:2
Red Horse •Takes away peace 6:3-4	Sea 1/3 Sea creatures died 8:8-9	First Beast 13:1-10	Sea Everything died 16:3
Black Horse •Famine 6:5-6	Rivers Wormwood 1/3 Rivers 8:10-11	Second Beast 13:11-18	Rivers became blood 16:3-7
Pale Horse •1/4 mankind killed 6:7-8	Sun • 1/3 sun, moon, stars darkened 8:12-13	The Lamb and the 144,000 14:1-5	Sun scorches people 16:8-9

The first four trumpets and bowls are nearly identical to one another. Here is helpful perspective.

The unity of John's book ... is neither chronological nor arithmetical, but artistic, like that of a musical theme with variations, each variation adding something new to the significance of the whole composition. This is the only view which does adequate justice to the double fact that each new series of visions both recapitulates and develops the themes already stated in what has gone before.ⁱ

Each new series repeats and develops the prior series. I think it is really helpful to view it like a piece of music. We may not all be experts in classical music, but movie scores are a good example. Take Star Wars for example. The musical score is repeated endlessly but each time it is arranged a little differently. I love it when they take the same music theme and make it so subtle you almost don't recognize it the first time. You are listening and then all of a sudden you think, "Hey, that's the Star Wars theme." That's how it should be reading and studying through the

book of Revelation. Actually, you can expand that analogy to the entire Bible. If you know the Old Testament well, you see those same themes all over the New Testament. Of course the authors constantly quote from the Old Testament but even beyond that, you see themes again and again. Basically, the better you know your Bible the better you know your Bible. It just builds on itself in that way. This also happens with Scripture memory. When I memorized the book of Ephesians before I preached through it, it completely changed the way I saw the text, how the pieces fit together,

So I hope as we move through this book you will start to recognize the same themes repeating and building to a crescendo. And no matter how bleak some of this feels at times, never lose sight of the main theme. Jesus is the hero of this story and all of it is given for our hope. Every week we read the blessing together of keeping the words of this book. That is what brings us hope through Christ.

Let's dig into our final principle

1. Jesus as Sovereign
2. Jesus as Protector
3. Jesus as Judge
4. **Jesus as Savior**

1. Jesus saved all of the souls under the altar.

I LOVE the fifth seal. It is radically different from all of the others. We see a picture of martyred souls under the altar. This is more of an interlude in the devastation that is sweeping the earth. Or you could say it is the result of devastation sweeping the earth. The first four seals are taking place on the earth but the fifth seal peels back the curtain of heaven.

This perspective is fascinating. The souls are already in heaven in the presence of God, yet they are keenly aware of what happened to them and what is still happening. We talked about this last week some, but it does seem that there is a type of lament here. The phrase "how long" appears in the Psalms 54 times and it is almost always a lament. So the question is, are these saints lamenting? Are they sad? Doesn't Revelation say that there will be no more tears in heaven? In fact it says that twice. So how can saints in heaven be sad?

It doesn't say they are sad, does it? But it is clear that they are waiting. I'm not comfortable calling it sad, per se. But on the other hand, the absence of tears occurs in the new heavens and the new earth, so what we are witnessing here is still the shadowlands. Though they are in heaven and live in the very presence of God, not all is right with the world yet. They cry for justice to be done, which is also a cry for God's ultimate glory. They want the world to be righted, as they know it will be. They also know that when the world is made right, God will be most glorified.

But they also know that they are there because they have been saved from the ultimate judgment. They are in the sheep pen of the Great Shepherd. They are safe in his hands, saved by his blood. But not all is finished yet.

2. Jesus will save by destroying the last enemy—death.

That's ultimately what they were asking for, isn't it? Yes, their death has passed but death itself had not. This is why "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." Here is an amazing thing. We are not told who is speaking here, but they are comforted with the knowledge that more martyrs will soon be joining them. This is so counterintuitive, isn't it? From a worldly perspective, this doesn't make any sense. Even as believers we struggle with this. How is more death supposed to be a reason to be comforted. They are lamenting their reign of evil that took their lives. They are crying out for the sovereign Lord to take action and bring swift justice. They know he is capable and willing to do so. They know that he will bring justice, which is why they call him sovereign Lord. The question is when—when will this happen? The answer? As soon as more martyrs join your numbers under the altar.

Does that sound strange to you? If this were a superhero movie and countless people were dying, would it make sense for the superhero to say, "Hang on guys. As soon as more of you die, I will step in and put a stop to it." If police run away from danger like some have done at school shootings, we are rightly outraged. So when martyrs are told that more have to die before they are avenged. It might sound crazy to us. But then God's plans are not beholden to our so-called earthly wisdom. The response given to the souls under the altar tells us that God has a master plan at work. The full number of martyrs has not yet been reached. It really sounds like god has a specific number in mind, doesn't it? "until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete." Some think this means that all believers on the earth will be martyred. I don't think you need to assume that from this phrase but at the very least, despite the vast numbers of martyrs, more are yet to be martyred and it seems like god may have a certain number in mind. Of course he does. He may have predetermined that number or maybe in his limitless knowledge he knows the number. Either way, it's going to get worse before it gets better.

But in all this we must not lose sight of the fact that Jesus is saving us from the last enemy, which is death.

1 Corinthians 15:24-26

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet."

The last enemy is death.

I'd like to talk about a song we sung last Sunday.

Sing to the King who is coming to reign
Glory to Jesus the Lamb that was slain
Life and salvation, His empire shall bring
Joy to the nations when Jesus is King

This song implies that Jesus is coming to reign and the last line implies that Jesus will be king when he comes again. What do you think about that? Is he king now or will he be king when he comes? I think this 1 Cor 15 passage tells us the answer. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. He is reigning. He is king. I am not comfortable saying that he will be king. Yes, Satan is the ruler of this world, but he is still under subjection to King Jesus. If he was not, then all prophecy, including the book of Revelation, would be a lie. If Jesus is not king, then there's no guarantee that anything he said will come true. So he is reigning as king right now but not all enemies are fully in subjection. No one knows better than the souls under the altar that death is yet to be destroyed.

I like how Jeff Cade put it to me this week. He said that he was looking forward to a one-world government...the one where Jesus is king and rules everything. I could not agree more.

3. Jesus saved by rescuing them through death.

Nobody wants to suffer. No one wants to be persecuted but if you are living through the tribulation, or even the days leading up to it, some will be delivered through death, not from death.

I believe this is what Paul was describing at the end of his life.

At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (2 Timothy 4:16-18)

Paul is describing a time at the end of his life, while in prison, where he was deserted by all of his companions. After the hard life he had lived, can you imagine how difficult that would have been? But I want to focus on the part where he is rescued.

I was rescued from the lion's mouth.
The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed

Did the Lord rescue Paul from every evil deed? He rescued him from countless evil deeds, but did the Lord rescue Paul from every evil deed? Certainly not the one that caused his head to be separated from his body. That's why Paul wrote, "The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom." He knew that he would be rescued from every evil deed. He would be repeatedly rescued from death and then eventually he would be rescued through death.

Now this may not sound like good news to you. How can death be good news? For those who remain, death stings. But from the perspective of the believer, death is always the best possible news. Twelve days ago, brother Andrew, known as God's smuggler, was rescued through death. Here is [a short summary](#) of his courageous life.

Not to compare Brother Andrew with Jeffrey Dahmer, but many of you commented how you were struck by the words of his reported conversion. I learned from two sources that Dahmer was studying the book of Revelation right before his death. Five days before his death, in his weekly Bible study, Jeffrey Dahmer pondered the Book of Revelations.ⁱⁱ He was reading the book of Revelation, it appears, when he got up to go work his shift cleaning the prison gym. Jeffrey Dahmer was attacked and died shortly afterward.ⁱⁱⁱ Dahmer knew that mingling among the inmates put his life in danger. One wonders if he was contemplating his death as he studied Revelation.

4. Jesus will save through judgment and the opportunity to repent.

We can get lost in the focus on judgment in Revelation and lose sight of the continual opportunity to repent. This universal invitation comes at the very end of the book. It is one of the last truths that John wanted us to know.

17 The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

This is a clear reference to Isaiah 55.

“Come, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.
6 “Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
7 let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

The judgments create more urgency to repent and trust Christ. When you read about the four horses of the apocalypse, we can think, “Oh no, that’s terrible.” But we should also be thinking, “How wonderful that the gospel is still going forth.”

In chapter fourteen we see this proclamation being accomplished by an angel.

Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. ⁷ And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

The gospel is eternal. It is the same gospel preached by Jesus and the apostles. The gospel call is universal, give “to every nation and tribe and language and people.” No one will be missed and

all will have opportunity to repent. I don't know if this will literally be an angel or if it's symbolic of human messengers, but either way, it will reach to the ends of the earth.

¹¹ Then 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.

Some of these martyrs that were soon to be killed were not even believers yet. Some might be killed days, hours or even minutes after their confession of Jesus is Lord.

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ⁱ Osborne, G. R. (2002). [*Revelation*](#) (p. 270). Baker Academic.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.newsweek.com/jeffrey-dahmers-revelations-185404>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://medium.com/belover/jeffrey-dahmer-was-an-evangelical-christian-390c6394d864>