



DATE: January 29, 2011

TEXT: Revelation 6: 9-17

TITLE: Opening the Seals

I am continuing this morning our study of the book of Revelation. I want to begin this sermon with a recap of what we have seen the past few weeks. We are now seeing the 2<sup>nd</sup> vision of John. I will share 6 quick scenes of this vision that we have already seen.

**Scene # 1** We saw John enter the very throne room of God. He saw a scene of worship.

The angels, the elders representing the faithful of the Old Testament and the faithful of the New Testament were worshipping the Lord God Almighty.

**Scene # 2** We saw the scroll in the right hand of God. This scroll is the plan of God for the salvation of humanity. It is history written before history took place. It is in the hand of God. He is in control. He is sovereign.

**Scene # 3** We saw John weep and weep and weep because no one could open the scroll. No one could bring forth the plan of God for the salvation of the men and women of this creation.

**Scene # 4** This is where it got exciting. We saw John hear the voice of the angel declare

that here is the one who could open the scroll... here is the one to bring forth the salvation of humanity. And we saw John turn.. He did not see a mighty Lion of Judah. He did not see at conquering Warrior. He saw a Lamb. And not a pretty lamb...a lamb that had been slain. He saw our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Scene # 5** It got even better. We next saw the lamb ascend to the throne of God. We saw the coronation of our Lord Jesus. He is King. He is at the Right Hand of God reigning in power.

**Scene # 6** We saw the beginning of the judgements of God. We saw deception and war, and famine and disease come to this world. We saw the reason why we as Christians suffer today. We are part of a fallen world. Yes, we are new in Christ. Yes, we are victorious because of the death of the lamb.... but we live in a world that chooses sin. We live in a world that chooses to let people starve. We live in a world that experiences physical death.

This moves us to our text today. We continue to see the opening of the seals. We continue to see the judgements of God. Remember.. These judgements have already begun... but

as we will see today, they will escalate as the time of Christ's return nears. I will share 3 additional scenes from our text today.

**Scene # 7** We see the martyrs... that is the Christians who had died for their faith cry out for justice. *John 6: 9-11*

**9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. 10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" 11 Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.**

To understand this text we need to once again look at the situation of John the Apostle.

Remember he is now an old man. For 20 years he was the Pastor of the church in Ephesus. But then in the 90's a great persecution arose. Both the Jewish population and the Roman population rose up against the Christians. The Jewish population controlled the commerce... and Christians were unable to work and were starving. The Romans arrested the Christians and imprisoned them and put them to death. John was arrested and exiled to Patmos. John was a Pastor. He loved these people. His friends, his spiritual children were starving... they were being tortured... they were being put to death.

John, in this vision, sees these men and women... and the men and women in the future who were suffering for Christ, being honored and exalted and avenged. They had the white robes of eternity and honor placed upon them. To kill the children of God is to reject the love of Christ. Vengeance is the Lord's.

Let us be clear... Jesus never promised a nice easy path for His children. Hear these words of Jesus in *Matthew 24:9*

**“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. 10 At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, 11 and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. 12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, 13 but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**

Yes, we are in a fallen world. Yes, we will be hated for our faith. I am angered when I hear preachers promise health and wealth to Christians. I am angered when I hear preachers imply that if you are not receiving wonderful blessings it is your fault and your lack of faith. Hear these words of Jesus. Stand up for the gospel of Christ... and expect persecution. Expect co-workers to mock you and fellow students to laugh at you. Expect T.V. to denigrate you.

I need to share with you a word about the persecuted Church today. Here is a quote from

the EWTN newspaper.

**In two millennia of Christian history, about 70 million faithful have given their lives for the faith, and of these, 45.5 million— fully 65%— were in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.**

Never think persecution was a thing of the past. Persecution continues today. I will give a number of examples.

- In the beginning chapters of Revelation we looked at the 7 churches that received this letter. They were all in modern day turkey. Do you know they do not exist. In the 1920's the Islamic gov't decided to rid the nation of Christians. 1.5 million Christians were killed. Last week the French Gov't officially decided to call this genocide and the Turkish Ambassador threatened to break off diplomatic relations with France if they did this. This was last week.
- It was reported that in 2005 171,000 Christians were martyred.
- In Indonesia Christians were systematically executed in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- It is estimated that today 200 million Christians are being persecuted worldwide.
- We are seeing the “Arab Spring” today... but Christians in Egypt and Libya and other arab Countries are calling it the “Christian winter.” Islamic Fundamentalists are rising in power in all these places. Dedicated to eliminating Christianity from their land.
- Iraq at one time had a strong Christian population... in the past 10 years more than 50% of the Christians had to leave or face death in Iraq.

We need to pray for our brothers and sisters who even today may die for being a Christian. John sees 70 million Christians being given the white robes of honor and victory.

And John hears this truth. The number of martyrs is known by God. Let us pray that we are close to that number. Come Lord Jesus come.

**Scene # 8** John sees the “Day of the Lord.” John sees the coming of the Lord to judge the

world. *John 6: 12-17*

**12 I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, 13 and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. 14 The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.**

**15 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. 16 They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?"**

Jesus said this again in *Matthew 24:3-8*

**As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"**

**4 Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many. 6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of birth pains.**

And Finally we read this in *2 Timothy 3: 1-5*

**But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.**

These truths are evident... Christ is coming again. This will be the time of judgement. The

wheat will be separated from the tares. The Day of the Lord will be a terrible day for the non

Christians... but the Day of the Lord will be a day of joy and rejoicing for those who have

surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ. This is the absolute promise of God. We will look at the Day of the Lord again and again as we look at the Book of Revelation.

I want to take a minute or two to look at this text from 2 Timothy. Does that not sound like out day and age. One of the great signs of the coming of Christ is the increase of apostasy. Apostasy is when people claim to have truth but that truth is not based on the Word of God. REPEAT Apostasy is when the First horseman of the Apocalypse ...that is the spirit of deception, has succeeded in corrupting the church of Jesus Christ. This is the great danger. We have always had non-believers through all of history. We have always had those who oppose the gospel and persecution is the result. But this is a fairly new danger.... the corruption of the church.

*Anthony Hoekema in his book The Bible and the Future states this...*

**When in many European countries today, countries that have know the gospel for centuries, people stay away from churches in droves (less that 10% of Europeans ever go to church)—surely this is apostasy. When many so called Christians leaders, both in Europe and America, deny cardinal teaching of the Bible like the bodily resurrection of Christ and still claim to be Christian theologians—surly this is apostasy. When preachers proclaim myths instead of facts, existential philosophy instead of the gospel—surly this is apostasy.**

I was received a call this week from a couple who live in Enon Valley who are being sent as missionaries to France. Europe is now the most non-Christian populated continent in the world.

The deceit of Satan has been victorious.

We live in a day and age where those who claim the name of Christian look no different than those who do not claim the name. The marriages look the same. The morality looks the same. The use of time looks the same. The priorities of life look the same. The T.V habits are the same. Family devotions are gone. Family prayers are formal if they exist at all. Church attendance is either gone or habitual. This is apostasy... and this is sign of the return of Jesus.

I conclude with this statement. The Book of Revelation is Good news. Christ is coming again.

We will share in that victory. We too will have white robes place upon us. Remain faithful and hear the words “Well done good and faithful servant” Remain true to the Word of God and receive the joy of the Lord. Yes, that joy begins on this earth.... but it is fulfilled when we enter His presence.

Jesus again and again gave this command... “Be watchful.” Be watchful Be Watchful. He is coming. Maybe Today. Come Lord Jesus Come

AMEN