

DAY BY DAY

Bible Texts and Topics, With Comments,
For Personal Study and Use at Family Worship.

4.01: SEVEN SEALS

1. THE SEVEN SEALS

“And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.” Revelation 5:1-7.

“Having taken the book, the Lamb proceeds at once to open the seals; and the attention of the apostle is called to the scenes that occur under each seal. The number seven has already been noticed as denoting in the Scriptures completeness and perfection. The seven seals therefore embrace the whole of a certain class of events, reaching down to the close of probationary time. . . . A trumpet is a symbol of war; hence the trumpets denote great political commotion to take place among the nations during the gospel age. The seals denote events of a religious character, and contain the history of the church from the opening of the Christian Era to the coming of Christ.” Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation, 431.

“The fifth chapter of Revelation needs to be closely studied. It is of great importance to those who shall act a part in the work of God for these last days. There are some who are deceived. They do not realize what is coming on the earth. Those who have permitted their minds to become beclouded in regard to what constitutes sin, are fearfully deceived. Unless they make a decided change, they will be found wanting when God pronounces judgment upon the children of men. They have transgressed the law and broken the everlasting covenant, and they will receive according to their works....

“In these scriptures two parties are brought to view. One party permitted themselves to be deceived, and took sides with those with whom the Lord has a controversy. They misinterpreted the messages sent them, and clothed themselves in robes of self-righteousness. Sin was not sinful in their eyes. They taught falsehood as truth, and by them many souls were led astray.

“We need now to take heed to ourselves. Warnings have been given. Can we not see the fulfillment of the predictions made by Christ, and recorded in the twenty-first chapter of Luke? . . . How many are deceiving their own souls, and cheating themselves out of the blessings that others might secure if they would believe and obey? Probation still lingers, and it is our privilege to lay hold of the hope set before us in the gospel. Let us repent, and be converted, and forsake our sins, that they may be blotted out.” Testimonies 9, 267, 268.

2. THE FIRST SEAL

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise 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.” Revelation 6:1, 2.

“The number seven in the Scriptures denotes completion or perfection. The seven seals embrace the whole of a class of events in which is narrated the history of the church from the beginning of the Christian Era to the second coming of Christ. The white horse, with his rider going forth to conquer, fitly represents the early Christian church in its purity, going into all the world with the gospel message of salvation.” Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 284.

“A crown denotes victory. A crown was given to him that sat on the horse, and he went forth “conquering, and to conquer.” During the first century, it mattered not whether there was an appearance of defeat, or whether triumph was seen in the healing of the sick, and the delivering of the tried and tempted. The name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth was health to the afflicted and life to the dead. Victory was written upon every move of the disciples. In prison, with their backs lacerated, their songs of praise and thanksgiving brought victory and resulted in the conversion of souls. Peter was sentenced to death, shut up in the inner prison; but that last night in prison was a victory for the angel of the Lord brought deliverance. Truly wonderful was the story of the gospel during the first century, as it went forth “conquering, and to conquer.”

“Like the tree planted by the fountain, whose branches grow beyond all bounds, so the church of the first century spread throughout the world. Its very loneliness and spirit of sacrifice was its most attractive feature to those hitherto unacquainted with the power of the gospel. It was indeed planted by the fountain of life, and so long as it remained in connection with that living water, no amount of opposition could retard its growth.

“The unparalleled rapidity attending the propagation of the gospel of the cross is witnessed to by writers of that age. To the Roman church Paul wrote: “I thank my God that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world”. And again, “Your obedience is come abroad unto all men.” Story of the Seer of Patmos, 111.

3. THE SECOND SEAL

“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 thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.” Revelation 6:3, 4.

“As whiteness in the first horse denoted the purity of the gospel which its rider propagated, so the color of the second horse would show that corruption had begun to creep in when this symbol applies. It is true that such a state of things did succeed the apostolic church. Speaking of the second century, Wharey, in his Church History, page 39, says: “Christianity began already to wear the garb of heathenism. The seeds of most of those errors that afterward so entirely overran the church, marred its beauty, and tarnished its glory, were already beginning to take root.” Worldliness came in. The church sought alliance with the secular power, and trouble and commotion were the result. This symbol extends from the close of the first century to the time of Constantine, when a complete union of church and state was effected.” Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 285.

“It is strange that, when men lose the Spirit of God, they at once become self-appointed judges of other men. The spirit of Christ is, “in honor preferring one another.” The life of the Savior is an example of this; the lives of those who have followed closely in His footsteps show that the same spirit has dwelt in men.... When, however, men cease to obey the law of God, they at once exalt self above the Lawgiver, and seated on the throne of justice, they attempt to weigh man’s deeds. . . .

“Nothing could more vividly describe this period than the “horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth.” This carries us through the period known as the triumph of paganism, corresponding to the Smyrna church. In the eyes of the world, the experience of God's people through this age was one of great defeat, but in the eyes of Him who has power to give victory in the smallest things of earth, and to bring to naught things that are, by things that are not, this experience was a

triumph. The very witness borne by the sacrifice of the lives of the saints became seed that sprang up and bore fruit.

"God's infinite power is made manifest in every sacrifice made by men upon earth. In their utter helplessness lay their strength. It was then that the power of Christ rested upon them. Even the smallest act, performed in behalf of Christ, multiplies not only a hundred fold in this life, but its influence, like a stone thrown into a smooth surface of water, extends until it reaches the ocean of eternity.

"To live a spiritual life requires a ceaseless climbing, higher and still higher; but humanity is prone to take an easier part. Sad as it may seem, we find the church, which for years sacrificed its life for the sake of the gospel, beginning to compromise the truth of God. The church turned its eyes from Christ, and was allured by the world into strange paths." - Story of the Seer of Patmos, pages 112-114.

4. THE THIRD SEAL

"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." Revelation 6:5.

"The black horse fitly represents the spiritual darkness that characterized the church from the time of Constantine till the establishment of papal supremacy in 538 AD. Of the condition of things in the fourth century, Wharey (page 54) says: "Christianity had now become popular, and a large proportion, perhaps a large majority, of those who embraced it, only assumed the name, received the rite of baptism, and conformed to some of the external ceremonies of the church, while at heart and in moral character they were as much heathen as they were before. Error and corruption now came in upon the church like a flood." Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 285.

"But the balances held by man are false balances; and while man is passing judgment, God, from the throne, is watching those who are being weighed, and in His infinite kindness, limits the power of the self-made judge. This judge may say, "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny"; he may, it is true, judge somewhat from outward appearances, he may weigh out the physical actions, but the divine command is, "See thou hurt not the oil and the wine." The oil of His grace, and the wine, the emblem of the inner spiritual life, must not and cannot be touched.

"The church during the fourth and fifth centuries began dictating to men what they should believe and how they should worship. This was the period when Christianity was replaced by the Papacy, and man was exalted as vicegerent of God on earth." Story of the Seer of Patmos, 115.

"In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock." Psalm 27:5.

5. THE FOURTH SEAL

"And when He had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and beheld 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." Revelation 6:7, 8.

"This is an unnatural color for a horse. The original denote the pale or yellowish color seen in blighted plants. The symbol evidently refers to the work of persecution and death carried on by the Roman Church against the people of God from the time at the beginning of papal supremacy in 538 AD to the time when the Reformers commenced their work of exposing the true character of the Papacy, and a check was placed upon this work of death." Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 285.

"The pale horse was an indication of still greater departure from the spirit of truth than the black one. Thousands have been put to death by the sword, by starvation, and by wild beasts; and what is worse than killing the body, many more have suffered spiritual death because of the hiding of the word of life. Whenever the church is clothed with civil power, it weighs out to mankind Christian experience. If that experience is not according to the prescribed religion, the thumbscrew and other instruments of torture are brought forth to extort confessions from the penitent; But God, even in the midst of the severest persecution, watches over every afflicted soul.

"It might seem that God would have prevented such seeming cruelty during the Dark Ages; but the view given to John shows that Christ suffered in the person of His saints. At the time of the crucifixion, angels were restrained from rescuing the Savior from His agony. It was suffered to be so for the time that the greater glory might be seen thereafter. So in the martyrdom of the Middle Ages, and in any form of persecution, Christ identifies Himself with the sufferer, and all heaven stands ready to succor him." The Story of the Seer of Patmos, 116, 117.

"God's word has given warning of the impending danger; let this be unheeded, and the Protestant world will learn what the purposes of Rome really are, only when it is too late to escape the snare. She is silently growing into power. Her doctrines are exerting their influence in legislative halls, in the churches, and in the hearts of men. She is piling up her lofty and massive structures, in the secret recesses of which her former persecutions will be repeated. Stealthily and unsuspectedly she is strengthening her forces to further her own ends when the time shall come for her to strike. All that she desires is vantage ground, and this is already being given her. We shall soon see and shall feel what the purpose of the Roman element is. Whoever shall believe and obey the word of God, will thereby incur reproach and persecution." The Great Controversy, 581.

6. THE FIFTH SEAL

"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, doest Thou not 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." Revelation 6:9-11.

"When He had opened the fifth seal," John "saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held." God does not forget those who have suffered for His name, but their names are written in the book of life. The lamb in the tabernacle service was slain on the earth; Christ left the courts of heaven, and the earth became the altar where His blood was shed. The rock-hewn sepulcher became the grave in which His dead body was laid; so the earth has drunk the blood of martyrs, and their bodies lie buried in its bosom.

"Representatives of all classes of men, from the lowly tradesman to the men of brilliant intellect, fell before the power of him who sat on the pale horse. Such men as Huss and Jerome, Ridley, Cranmer, and Latimer, suffered for the word of God. But there were others, such as Galileo, who were persecuted because they advocated principles which, when weighed in the balances of him who sat enthroned, were deemed to be dangerous to the government.

"The blood of Abel cried unto God, so the earth bears witness before Jehovah of every life which has been taken in His name. This witness is true, one that can never be suborned; and it matters not what may be the verdict of him who holds the balance. God knows, and gives righteous judgment....

“When asked why there is such long-suffering on the part of God, John saw the white robes of Christ's righteousness, prepared for every one who has given up life for the sake of the truth. They have been despised, rejected, and killed by men; but on the record books of heaven every sin is covered by the character of their Lord. They were the company who were “destitute, afflicted, tormented: of whom the world was not worthy”; but heaven has a home for them, and in the restoration of all things, they will be given a place near the throne. Their numbers will be increased by those who are called to suffer a similar death in the period of time preceding the Second Coming of Christ.

“What was done under cover of darkness in the Middle-Ages, will be repeated when the sun is at its zenith. All who are slain for conscience' sake, sleep together in their graves until called forth by the trumpet tones of Him who is the resurrection and the life. Then will white robes be given them, together with palms of victory. Today they are seen clothed in white robes; for the world, forgetting the crimes of which they were basely accused, assigns them a martyr's crown.” Story of the Seer of Patmos, 117-119.

7. THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH SEALS

“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.” Revelation 6:12.

“This doubtless refers to the great earthquake of November 1, 1755, commonly known as the Lisbon earthquake, the effects of which were felt over an area of 4,000,000 square miles. Lisbon, Portugal, a city containing 150,000 inhabitants, was almost entirely destroyed. The shock of the earthquake, says Mr. Sears, in his Wonders of the World, page 200, “was instantly followed by the fall of every church and convent, almost all the large public buildings, and one fourth of the houses. In about two hours afterward, fires broke out in different quarters, and raged with such violence for the space of nearly three days that the city was completely desolated. The earthquake happened on a holy day, when the churches and convents were full of people, very few of whom escaped. . . . The terror of the people was beyond description. Nobody wept: it was beyond tears. They ran hither and thither, delirious with horror and astonishment.” Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 286, 287.

The same verse, second part refers to the dark day and blood-moon night of May 19, 1780 when the darkness and gloom were such as to give the general impression that the Day of Judgment was at hand. This strange darkness increased until by noon the people had to light candles to eat their dinners by. Lights were seen in every window, and out of doors, people carried torches to light their steps. Everything took a different color from what it had by sunlight, and consequently the strange reflections of the torch lights were in keeping with the marvelous and changed appearance of everything. Hosts of people believed the end of the world had begun to come; men dropped to their knees to pray in the field; many ran to their neighbors to confess wrongs and ask forgiveness. . . .

“The darkness somewhat increased all day, and before time of sunset, was so intense that no object whatever could be distinguished. Anxiously and tremblingly, people waited for the full moon to rise at nine o'clock.... But they were disappointed, the darkness being unaffected by the moon. . . . Never dawned a lovelier morning than that 20th of May! Never were hearts more thankful on the earth! Even thoughtless people praised God!

“So much were the whole population affected by this event, that, at the succeeding March meeting, the town voted, March 9, 1781, to keep the next 19th of May as a day of fasting and prayer.” W. R. Cochrane, History of the Town of Antrim, New Hampshire, 58, 59.

'Twas on a May day of the far old year Seventeen hundred eighty, that there fell Over the bloom and sweet life of the spring, Over the fresh earth and the heaven of noon, A horror of great darkness. . . .

Men prayed, women wept; all ears grew sharp To hear the doom blast of the trumpet shatter The black sky, that the dreadful face of Christ Might look from the rent clouds, not as He looked A loving guest at Bethany, but stern As justice and inexorable Law. J. G. Whittier,

EVENTS FOLLOWING THE SIXTH SEAL: And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts 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 freeman, 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 sits 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? Revelation 6:13-17.

“Verses 13, 14, were fulfilled in the wonderful meteoric shower of November 13, 1833. Describing the scene in the vicinity of Niagara Falls, one writer 'Says: “No spectacle so terribly grand and sublime was ever before beheld by man as that of the firmament descending in fiery torrents over the dark and roaring cataract.” Bible Readings for the Home Circle, page 287.

The event mentioned in the fourteenth verse is still in the future, and will take place in connection with Christ's Second Coming. We are now standing between the two events, the last of the signs in the heavens, and the parting of the heavens and removal of earthly things out of their places.

Falling Stars, 1833, Seen as Sign of the Second Advent: “I witnessed this gorgeous spectacle, and was awestruck. The air seemed filled with bright descending messengers from the sky. It was about daybreak when I saw this sublime scene. It was not without the suggestion at that moment that it might be the harbinger of the coming of the Son of man; and in my state of mind I was prepared to hail Him as my friend and deliverer. I had read that the “stars shall fall from heaven,” and they were now falling. I was suffering much in my mind. . . . I was beginning to look away to heaven for the rest denied me on earth.” Frederick A. Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 186.

Falling Stars, 1833, Regarded as Forerunner of the Last Day. “We pronounce the raining fire which we saw on Wednesday morning last an awful type, a sure forerunner, a merciful sign, of that great and dreadful day which the inhabitants of the earth will witness when the sixth seal shall be opened. That time is just at hand described not only in the New Testament but in the Old; and a more correct picture of a fig tree casting its leaves when blown by a mighty wind, it was not possible to behold. Many things now occurring upon the earth tend to convince us that we are in the latter days. “This exhibition we deem to be a type of an awful day fast hurrying upon us. This is our sincere opinion; and what we think, we are not ashamed to tell.” “The Old Countryman,” New York, printed in the New York Star and quoted in the Portland Evening Advertiser, Nov. 26, 1833.

THE SEVENTH SEAL: “And when He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.” Revelation 8:1.

The sixth seal closes when the one hundred and forty-four thousand have received the seal of God, and are waiting for the appearance of Christ in the clouds of heaven. The time for the fulfillment of the promise of the Savior has come. He said, “It is expedient for you that I go away.” “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”