

The Book of Revelation  
The Seals, The Cavalry and Getting Left Behind

Old Western movies are great. The settlers have circled their wagons; their guns are a-blazing against countless Indians surrounding them on every side. They're running low on ammunition and have to make every shot count. All hope seems lost—until they hear that bugle call that means the U. S. Cavalry is riding in to the rescue.

But for the Christians living under Roman persecution, life was more like the Alamo. No cavalry was riding in to the rescue. They were losing their homes, losing their families, losing their lives. For all they could tell, God had lost and Satan was the victor.

### **Watch The Video: Lesson 3**

The Calvary is Coming! **Read Revelation 19:11-21.**

#### The Seven Seals

The message of the seven seals, and indeed of the trumpets and bowls which will follow from them, is that Christ reigns even in the apparent chaos and confusion of this world. The preliminary judgments depicted here are the signs of the times which herald the great day when Christ will return in glory to judge the living and the dead.

In the meantime, disaster and suffering do not take place at random or by chance but serve both the redemptive and judicial purposes of the Lord.

The characteristic phrase ***“I watched”*** (literally - *“And I looked”*) marks the shift to a new scene within the vision. The prophet is an observer, an eyewitness to that which occurs as the events of the future are dramatized. The Lamb proceeds to unseal the first of the seven seals which close and conceal the scroll. By this symbolic action Christ reveals and sets in motion the events contained in the scroll.

The opening of the first four seals presents one of Revelation's most familiar images, the famous **Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse**. In the ancient Near East, donkeys and camels were used for transportation in contrast to horses which

were connected with warfare and conquest. Hence the four horsemen bring a message of war and the calamities which accompany the waging of war. The image of horse and rider as a symbol of the powers that patrol the earth to carry out God's purposes is drawn from the Old Testament book of Zechariah.

### Left Behind Books

*Left Behind* claims it is based on John's revelation. As such, the authors have concocted a best-selling story line of

- vanishing believers,
- pilotless airplanes,
- spouses waking next to empty pajamas.

So convincing is the story that uninformed Christians point to uninformed friends who are now saved because of *Left Behind*.

Of course, we know God can bring good out of anything, including this series. But we also know the end doesn't justify the means.

The authors of *Left Behind* claim their books are truthful. The most they can claim is that they are truthful from a millennialistic, literalistic, unsymbolic position.

The truth is this:

- Revelation was inspired to give courage to Christ's people during difficult times. *Left Behind* is written from a legalistic and defeatist point of view.
- Revelation stresses the joy and ultimate victory of those who know Jesus as Savior. *Left Behind* overlooks these themes and zeroes in on that which is frightening and sensational.
- Revelation says the ultimate victory is to be given to the millions who have Jesus as their Lord and Savior. *Left Behind* implies joy is reserved for those relative few that understand the end times.

*Left Behind* contradicts Scripture:

- *Left Behind* says there is a second chance for salvation; the Bible says that now, today, is the time of salvation.

- *Left Behind* encourages people to wait and see if the stories come true and, if they do, then, they will believe.
- *Left Behind* indicates that when Jesus comes back on Judgment Day there will be extra time to believe. The Scriptures, however, maintain there will be no second chances.
- Lastly, Revelation should inspire gladness for the Savior's return, not despair. Jesus' last words in the Bible are these: "Yes, I am coming soon." Our reply should be, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20b).  
Most of us liked codes when we were kids. But a code is worthless without the key to interpret it. Today, we learn the key to understanding the code in Revelation.

#### **Watch The Video: Session 4**

- How did the codes you learned in the video help you unfold this passage?
- What descriptions do you find most inspiring?
- How could you use this message to comfort and strengthen someone who is going through a crisis?

#### **REVELATION SYMBOLS AND THEIR MEANINGS:**

##### **Numbers:**

- **3½** (half of 7), a definitely limited period of time
- **4** means the created world
- **6** means imperfection (i.e. wanting to be like 7—God's number—but not able to)
- **666** is an intensification of 6 equaling the worst evil there can be (In Revelation 12-13, John portrays an evil *anti-Trinity trio* who work against the people of God. This threesome is made up of "the dragon" [i.e. Satan], the "first beast rising out of the sea" [i.e. broad political power like that of the Roman emperors who persecuted the Church] and the "second beast rising out of the land" [i.e. false prophets arising from within the Church]. The three-fold number—666— may represent the members of this anti-Trinity trio who each seeks to be like the Holy Trinity.)
- **7** means the works God alone can do

- **10** means all of
- **1000** means really, absolutely all of ...
- **12** is used for the people of God—12 tribes in Old Testament, 12 apostles in New Testament
  - **144,000** is a combination of 12s (12 x 12) and 10s (10 x 10 x 10) meaning really, absolutely, totally all of God's people in the Old and New Testament times
  - **squaring or cubing** a number intensifies its meaning (i.e. if 10 means all of, then 1000 means really, absolutely all of)

### Colors:

- **black** is famine or starvation
- **pale gray** is death
- **white** is victory

### Objects:

- **Armageddon** literally means the mountain of Megiddo in Revelation, it is symbolic for the final battleground between God and the forces of evil
- **Babylon** stands for Rome and its emperors who persecuted Christians
- **book** or **scroll** is the heavenly record
- **bowls** carry things from heaven to earth or vice versa
- **dragon** represents the devil
- **eye** means symbolic of knowledge
- **Gog and Magog** represent the entire anti-Christian world
- **harlot, prostitute, or fornicators** represent people from within the Church who should be faithful to the Lord and His Word but aren't, i.e. they're "false prophets"
  - **virgin** faithful believers who refuse to worship anything but the Trinity
  - **horns** represent power, like the horns of an animal
  - **incense** is prayer
  - **jewels** represent glory
  - **lampstands** are churches
  - **land** represents organized non-Christian religions
  - **living water** equals life and truth
  - **sea** represents evil human government
  - **seals** designate something as private property. In antiquity, lumps of clay impressed with a signet ring or cylinder seal were used to indicate ownership. To

seal a scroll, a lump of clay was placed over the strings that tied up the roll and then stamped.

- **stagnant water** represents death
- **trumpets** announce an event
- **winepress** portrayed God's judgment and hell. In a winepress the juice or *blood* of grapes was crushed underfoot to make wine. In God's judgment, the blood of sinners is poured out in eternal death under the crushing burden of His wrath.