

THE FIRST FOUR SEALS

David Baker, prepared for the Presbytery word, 5 September 2021
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Introduction

Welcome to session nineteen on 'The Seventy Weeks prophecy'. In this session, we will begin to consider the opening of the seals.

The opening of the seals is an important consideration as we continue to look at how Jesus Christ will gather both Jew and Gentile into the kingdom of God. This is occurring during *the period of delay* in the Seventy Weeks prophecy.

The period of delay belongs to the seventieth week, and that is when Jesus Christ is confirming the Everlasting Covenant, which is the covenant of sonship, *with the many*. The 'many' is a great multitude.

A great multitude gathered into the kingdom of God

The key point is that before the period of delay comes to an end, and the second half of the seventieth week commences, Jesus Christ and His messengers will have gathered into the kingdom of God *a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and tongue*.

Even though the messengers of Christ have been sent to proclaim the gospel in all nations since the Day of Pentecost, the Scriptures are clear that the final period within the period of delay is the time when *the great harvest*, or *the ingathering*, comes into the kingdom of God.

Jesus said that 'the harvest is the end of the age'.

This final period in the time of delay is called, in the Scriptures, *the time of the end*.

Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God

In our last session, we considered that Jesus Christ is currently seated at the right hand of God.

He is seated in the throne of the Father. The main point of the book of Hebrews is that Jesus Christ has taken His seat, and He is now ministering to us our participation in *His finished work* in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

When the apostle John heard a voice behind him 'like the great sound of a trumpet', he turned to see Jesus Christ seated in the midst of His seven golden lampstands, or His lampstand churches.

Christ is walking among His lampstand through His messengers

He is 'walking' among His lampstand churches through 'the seven stars' that He has in His right hand. He is walking through the *messengers* in His right hand.

In contrast to the Son, who is seated, the Father has not yet taken His seat.

When the Father, as the Ancient of Days, takes His seat in His throne, that will initiate all of the events that belong to the time of the end.

That was our key point in our last session.

Walking blamelessly in readiness for when the Father takes His seat

We are presently learning what it means to be *overcomers* and to be *walking blamelessly* in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings so that we are *ready* for the time when the Father takes His seat.

As those who belong to Christ's administration, seated with Him in the heavenly places, we are eagerly waiting and looking, with great expectation, for this time when the Father takes His seat, for we are praying, 'Your kingdom come.'

When the Father takes His seat Jesus will stand to open the seals

Once the Father has taken His seat, Jesus Christ will stand up, as the Lamb, with His administration, to open the seven sealed scroll.

This scroll contains *the full revelation of the will of God for the end of the age*.

The scroll is written on both sides, so it is the full revelation of the will of God in relation to *judgement*; and it is also the full revelation of the will of God in relation to *salvation*.

The first four seals are opened together

In this session we will begin looking at the opening of the seals, and we will only consider the first four seals today. We will speak briefly about each of the seals separately.

Before we begin, it is very helpful to consider that the first four seals will be opened by Christ together, or in *very quick succession*, so that all the

events that belonged to the first four seals *are happening at the same time*.

It is not as though Christ opens the first seal and then the events that belong to the first seal occur; and once those events come to an end, He opens the second seal, and so on.

He will open them together or in very quick succession so that all the events that belong to each of these seals happen concurrently.

As we will see, the great time of revival - an *ingathering* that belongs to *the white horse* - occurs at the same time as the great *warfare* that belongs to *the red horse*, and at the time of great *economic upheaval* that belongs to *the black horse*, and then also, at the time of *pestilence and death* that belongs to *the pale horse*.

The four living creatures represent the apostolic administration

'Now I saw [John was speaking] when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures [the first living creature] saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see".' Rev 6:1.

The *living creatures* represent *the apostolic administration of Christ* which is functioning in the midst of *the presbytery* around the throne of the Father; and the living creatures are in and around the throne.

The face of the first living creature is *the face of the lion*; the face of the second living creature is *the face of a calf*; the third living creature has *the face of a man*; and the fourth living creature has *the face of a flying eagle*.

Together, these living ones represent the apostolic administration.

The living creature that has the face like a lion represents those with revelatory grace from Christ, as part of this apostolic administration. So there will be a specific word initiative at this time that proclaims to all those who belong to the administration of Christ to 'Come and see'.

It was the command of the apostolic administration to come and see which enabled the apostle John to witness the events that belong to the opening of the seals.

And, in the same way, it will be the command of the apostolic administration in the time of the end that will invite all those who belong to Christ's

administration to come and see the fulfilment of the events that belong to each seal as *a participant* in the administration of Christ.

The principle of the word being 'signified' is more than an invitation to see by illumination.

It is an invitation to *participate* in everything that is being revealed. John said, 'Blessed are those who keep the things that are written in the book of Revelation'.

In the same way, this word, 'come and see', is an invitation to *come and see* by *participation* in what is being fulfilled.

The first seal opened - the rider of the white horse is Jesus Christ

'And I looked [in response to this word], and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to Him, and He went out conquering and to conquer [or 'overcoming and to overcome'].' Rev 6:2.

The rider of the white horse is Jesus Christ.

Some commentators, particularly in more recent times, have suggested that this is Antichrist, but we know that cannot possibly be the case.

We know that it is Jesus Christ because we read later in the book of Revelation concerning Christ's return for the final battle of Armageddon and the judgement of Antichrist, that Antichrist is fighting, or making war against, the rider of the white horse.

We also read concerning Christ's return for the final battle of Armageddon and the judgement of Antichrist. 'Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse [the same white horse]. And He who sat on it was called Faithful and True [the same rider of the same white horse], and in righteousness He judges and makes war.' Rev 19:11-12.

In the first chapter of the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ was first revealed or introduced to be *the Faithful Witness*. He specifically introduced Himself as the Faithful and True Witness when He addressed the presbytery in Laodicea.

Jesus Christ rides to overcome all rule, authority and power

We know that this is Jesus Christ, and we read in Revelation Chapter 6 that He begins to *overcome*, or to *conquer*, when the first seal is opened. And once

Christ has taken His place on the white horse, He *continues* to ride until He has put an end to all rule, all authority and all power.

He will ride until He has brought all of His enemies under His feet, so that He can then deliver the kingdom of God to the Father.

Christ comes with eyes like a flame of fire

'His eyes were like a flame of fire.' Rev 19:12.

Again, we can compare this to John's vision in Revelation Chapter 1, where he saw Christ as our great High Priest, and His eyes are 'like a flame of fire'.

As Christ is *presently* walking, through His messengers in His lampstand churches, His eyes reveal His *jealous love* for *our sanctification as sons of God*.

They also reveal His *wrath* on our sin and uncleanness.

But Christ is confronting us in this way, He is meeting us in this way, as our *merciful High Priest* to see us *delivered from the other law* in our heart, from our own iniquity, in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. This is a great *mercy* to us.

When John sees Christ with eyes like a flame of fire, He is coming exclusively in *judgement*. Rev 19.

'His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood [His priestly robe], and His name is called The Word of God.' Rev 19:12-13.

So, we know this is definitively Jesus Christ.

John went on to say that He has a name written on His robe and on His thigh, which is 'KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS'. Rev 19:16.

The overcomers will become the witness of Christ

Significantly, when Christ rides on the white horse, He will also be accompanied by *the overcomers* who were previously raised to sit with Him in His throne.

The overcomers who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb will become *the witness of Christ*, and will proclaim the gospel of the kingdom in all nations before the end of the period of delay.

Jesus said that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached as 'a witness in all nations, and then the end will come'.

John described the witnesses of Christ in the time of the end, and this witnessing will continue throughout the time of the end. 'And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean [washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb], followed Him on white horses.' Rev 19:14.

Christ receives a crown – He possesses the kingdom with His saints

'I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it [Christ, who is followed by a great cloud of witnesses], had a *bow*; and a *crown* was given to Him, and He went out conquering and to conquer.' Rev 6:2.

John saw that a crown was given to Christ, because the time had come for Him to receive and possess the kingdom for the sake of delivering that kingdom to the Father.

When Daniel saw One like the Son of Man being presented before the Ancient of Days, who is the Father, he said, 'Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.' Dan 7:14.

We know that Daniel's vision of the world kingdoms, which is recorded in Daniel Chapter 7, is a companion to, or a comparison with, King Nebuchadnezzar's vision which was interpreted by Daniel and recorded in Daniel Chapter 2.

King Nebuchadnezzar saw a statue that represented all of the world kingdoms from his day, right down to the time of the end. Then he saw a stone, cut without hands, strike the statue at the feet, which is the time of the seventh world kingdom. The stone smashed the statue and then grew into a great mountain that filled the whole earth.

The 'great mountain' is the kingdom of God in the time of the end.

This is a key verse speaking about this great mountain that will fill the whole earth. 'Now, it shall come to pass in the latter days [in the time of the end] that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on top of the mountains

[meaning 'on top of all of the other world kingdoms'] and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it.' Isa 2:2.

When the time comes for Christ to receive and possess the kingdom, this is the time for the saints to also receive and possess the kingdom.

When *the Lamb stands and receives the scroll* from the right hand of the Father who sits on the throne, the four living creatures, which is the *apostolic administration*, and the *presbytery* with its twenty-four courses, all begin to sing a new song proclaiming the worthiness of the Lamb, and also that the time has come for the saints to rule on the earth.

A bow and its arrows in the hand of Christ; His messengers, Jew and Gentile in one body

A crown was given to Him, and He also had a *bow*.

In the first three chapters of the book of Revelation, the messengers of Christ are likened to seven stars in the right hand of Christ.

And in the time of the end there will be one world-wide presbytery with twenty-four courses. The *primary ministry* of this presbytery in the time of the end will be *prayer* and *worship*.

However, proceeding from the ground of this fellowship will be a *messenger initiative* that rides with Jesus Christ.

And, when the first seal is opened, the messengers of Christ are likened to 'a bow with its arrows' in the hand of Christ.

We know that this messenger initiative will include both Jews and Gentiles. 'For I have bent Judah, My bow, fitted the bow with Ephraim, and raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and made you like the sword of a mighty man.' Zec 9:13.

The *messengers* that belong to Judah are likened to the *bow*. And the *messengers* that belong to Ephraim, which we have previously said is the fullness of the nations, are likened to the *arrows*.

However, together, it is one messenger initiative, including both Jew and Gentile, to *harvest* a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and tongue.

That is the opening of the first seal.

The opening of the second seal

'When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see".' Rev 6:3.

The second living creature with *the face of a calf* will then join the proclamation of the word with the first living creature.

'Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.' Rev 6:4.

The United Nations – the seventh world kingdom

Now, in times past, we have associated the rider of the *red horse* with the rise of the godless nations that comprise the seventh world kingdom.

However, over the last season, we have come to understand that the period of warfare that led to the rise of the seventh world kingdom - and we know there is significant warfare at the transition of each world kingdom to the next - was completed *over seventy-five years ago*.

The seventh world kingdom is *the United Nations* that was established in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.

In the aftermath of the First World War, the League of Nations was established, but when it failed after the Second World War, the United Nations was established. It is the seventh world kingdom, and it has ruled over all the nations of the world through all of its international organisations since that time.

We are not still waiting to see the emergence of the seventh world kingdom. It has been in the world for quite some time.

The archangel Michael is the rider of the red horse

The Scripture clearly shows that the rider of the red horse is the *archangel Michael* who, with the angelic administration, will ride in direct support of Christ and His administration, which is us. This is a very new point for most of us.

In relation to all of these points, it is vitally important that we allow 'the Scripture to interpret the Scripture'. We don't need to be speculative. We know that the Scriptures are one, cohesive package from the beginning to the end.

And, in the same way that we know that the rider of the white horse is Jesus Christ, because the book of Revelation clearly explains to us that it is Jesus Christ, we also know that the rider of the red horse is Michael, because this is clearly explained in the book of Zechariah.

'I saw by night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse.' This is very clear, very definitive and very helpful for us.

'I saw, and behold, a man riding on a red horse, and it stood among the myrtle trees in the hollow; [meaning that the horse stood]; and behind him were horses: red, sorrel [a very vivid, bright red] and white.

'Then I said, "My Lord, what are these?" [Zechariah spoke to the angel who was revealing these things to him.]

'So the angel who talked with me said to me, "I will show you what they are".'

The angel who was talking to Zechariah was the revelatory, or *interpretive, angel*. And as we have considered, the revelatory angel in the angelic administration is *Gabriel*.

Gabriel said to Zechariah, 'I will show you what they are.' Again, this is another example of the principle of a revelation being 'signified'.

When Gabriel said this, Zechariah was then able to begin to interface with those who were in the revelation itself.

The rider of the red horse then began to speak to Zechariah. 'And the man who stood [he was riding the red horse that stood] among the myrtle trees answered and said [concerning the other horses that followed], "These are the ones whom the LORD has sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth."

Now, these 'horsemen' all belong to the angelic administration. The next verse identified that they were all under the command of the rider of the red horse. It also identified that the rider of the red horse was the *angel of the Lord*.

'So they answered [or reported to] the angel of the LORD, who stood among the myrtle trees.' Zechariah kept inserting the point that the angel of the Lord is on the horse which stood among the myrtle trees, so that we can keep track of who he was referring to.

'So they answered [or reported to] the angel of the Lord, who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, "We have walked to and fro throughout the earth, and behold, all the earth is resting quietly".' Zec 1:8-11.

Michael and his angels will cast Satan out of heaven as we overcome

We will contrast this to what happens *when the second seal is opened*.

We know that the angel of the Lord on the red horse is not Gabriel. Gabriel was the one who spoke with Zechariah.

The angel on the red horse is *Michael*, who is the commander of the angelic host of heaven.

We recall that Joshua met Michael as the commander of the Lord's hosts, with his sword drawn, when Joshua led the nation of Israel into the promised land.

Joshua said to him, 'Are you for us or against us?'

He replied, 'Neither. I have come as the captain [or a commander] of the Lord's host. And, by the way, take your shoes off, because where you are standing is holy ground.'

The nation of Israel enjoyed angelic support to conquer and possess the promised land until they turned back from their mandate of clearing the land of all of its ungodly inhabitants. They then lost their angelic support.

Similarly, the church will also be supported by Michael and the angelic host in *receiving and possessing the kingdom of God* in the time of the end. This includes removing all of the enemies of Christ from the heavenly places.

For example, we are overcoming Satan by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony, and by loving not our lives to the death.

We read in Revelation Chapter 12 that, *as we overcome*, Michael and his angels actually throw Satan and his angels out of heaven.

We do not 'get our hands dirty' in casting Satan out of heaven as we overcome. Michael, in support of Christ and His administration, casts Satan and his angels out of heaven.

Warfare between the nations; Michael removes peace from the earth

‘Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.’ Rev 6:4. The great sword will be given to Michael and the angelic administration.

This doesn’t mean that Michael will initiate or instigate the warfare between nations.

Rather, he will *remove* the *sovereign restraint* that has *prevented* large scale warfare between nations for the duration of the seventh world kingdom.

This restraint will be removed, and the seventh world kingdom will begin to implode by turning against itself in another world war. This will be the beginning of World War Three.

The prophet Isaiah referred to this time by saying, ‘In that day the LORD with His severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan that twisted serpent; and He will slay the reptile [the dragon] that is in the sea.’ Isa 27:1.

‘Leviathan’ is another name for Satan. Satan is the dragon that is in the sea of the nations. He is the ruler of the seventh world kingdom.

And for this reason, the book of Revelation likened the seventh world kingdom to a fiery, or a great red, dragon with seven heads and ten horns.

We know that Satan has already been judged as the ruler of this world, and cast out by Christ when He was lifted up on the cross. And, as we have said in our last session, the opening of the seals is revealing what has *already been accomplished* by Christ on the cross, when He ‘sealed up all vision and prophecy’.

The revelation of this judgement upon Satan and the seventh world kingdom will begin when the second seal is opened, and Michael is given the great sword, which is the mandate to remove peace from the earth.

The third seal opened – a black horse – an impact on the economic system

Significantly, the judgement of the second seal will be accompanied by the judgement that belongs to the third seal and the fourth seals.

‘When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.’ Rev 6:5.

Scales are used for *measuring* or weighing things, and particularly measuring for the sake of *trade*.

We know that when the third seal is opened it will have an impact on the world’s *economic system*, which is built on the principle of trading.

‘And I heard 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 the wine”.’ Rev 6:6.

The statement, ‘a quart of wheat for a denarius and three quarts of barley for a denarius’ signifies that the judgement of the third seal will include *rampant inflation*, meaning that what you can buy for every dollar that you earn will become less and less.

It will include rampant inflation and the scarcity of natural resources. From the Scriptures, we know that a denarius is often used to represent the equivalent of *one day’s wage*.

The scarcity of resources that belongs to the third seal may be accentuated by other natural disasters at this time.

We know that the Lord protects the natural environment from widespread devastation until the blowing of the trumpets, and the trumpets belong to the opening of *the seventh seal*.

The body of Christ will be protected by the grace of God

Significantly, the apostle John also heard the voice from the midst of the four living creatures - the voice of the Lamb Himself - saying, ‘Do not harm the oil and the wine.’

It is evident that, while the world experiences this crisis, there will also be *miraculous provision and protection* for those who are receiving grace in the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings.

This is the key point.

Those who belong to the kingdom of God - that is, sons of God - and to the body of Christ as members of His body will experience the same circumstances as those who belong to the world. However, because of our fellowship in Christ’s offering and sufferings, we will do so by *the grace of God*. And it will produce *fruit to eternal life*.

When the voice from the midst of the throne said, 'Hurt not the oil and the wine', this refers to the fruit of the olive tree, which represents the kingdom of God, and the fruit of the true Vine, which represents the body of Christ.

The kingdom and the body of Christ will endure through fellowship in Christ's sufferings to produce multiplication of life

We know that both the production of fresh oil from olives, as well as the production of wine from grapes, involves some form of *crushing* process.

The olive is *crushed* to produce fresh olive oil, and a grape is *crushed* in the process of producing wine.

Those who belong to the kingdom of God and to the body of Christ will experience the pressure that will come upon the whole world during the opening of the seals. However, as they *fellowship in Christ's sufferings*, this pressure will not multiply anxiety and sorrow. Rather, it will *produce the multiplication of oil and wine*.

We could liken the multiplication of oil to *the growth and multiplication of the fellowship of the word* that is proclaimed by the apostolic administration in the right hand of Christ.

The multiplication of that word occurs in *a great multitude of households* who belong to the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the olive tree.

We could also liken the multiplication of the *wine* to the *multiplication of the life of the New Covenant* among the members of the body of Christ, who are committed to being *poured out* as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and the service of others.

Paul said, 'I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith.'

Significantly, the multiplication of *the fellowship of the word in households* that belong to the kingdom, and the multiplication of *the practical fellowship of offering among members of the body of Christ*, cannot be hindered or harmed by any external circumstances, including the *persecution* that the church will experience in the time of the end.

And we bear witness to this, even in the events of the last eighteen months, and in the pressure that the world is experiencing. It has multiplied anxiety and sorrow in the world.

For us, however, as our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, it has multiplied *the fruit of fellowship*.

And this fellowship cannot be harmed. It cannot be hindered by any external circumstance.

The opening of the fourth seal – a pale horse; death is its rider

'When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see".'

'So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.' Rev 6:7-8.

It is remarkable that the name of the rider of the fourth horse is 'Death'.

The rider of the horse that follows right on his heels is 'Hell'.

Obviously, these two horsemen do not belong to the administration of the church under the command of Christ. Nor do they belong to the angelic administration, under the command of Michael.

They are *enemies of Christ*, who will be thrown into the lake of fire at the end of the millennium.

The death of one quarter of the earth

Significantly, when the seals are opened, they will be given power over a fourth of the earth to kill with sword, with hunger, with death – literally, 'pestilence' – and by the beasts of the earth.

The first four seals are opened together or in very quick succession, so that the events that belong to these seals occur concurrently, or together.

The cumulative effects of the sword, meaning the *global conflict* that belongs to the opening of the second seal; and of the *famine* that belongs to the third seal; and of the *pestilence* and the *beasts* of the earth that belong to the fourth seal, will result in *the death of one quarter of the earth's population*.

This is quite staggering! When we consider that the earth's population is approaching eight billion people, this means that the death toll may be over two billion people in this period of the opening of the seals.

It is even more sobering to consider that those who die under the judgement of the second, third and fourth seals will go straight into hell.

This is the significance of Death riding the pale horse, immediately followed by Hell.

This will be the first manifestation of the judgement of God and of the wrath of the Lamb, in the time of the end.

'The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness'

However, as the prophet Isaiah declared, it is greatly encouraging to know that when the judgement of God is being revealed in the earth, 'the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness'. Isa 26:9.

The white horse will also be riding, or moving, and will be running concurrently with the red, black, and pale horses to *harvest* the great multitude which no man can number, from every nation, tribe, people and tongue.

We don't know exactly how long it will take for the opening of the seals, but it will be a relatively short time.

Referring to the harvest in the end of the age, the apostle Paul declared, 'For He will finish the work and *cut it short in righteousness*, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth'. Rom 9:28.

In our next session, we will consider the opening of the fifth seal, and the opening of the sixth seal, when the Lord will sovereignly intervene in the affairs of men to cut short the days and to finish the work of gathering Jew and Gentile into the kingdom of God.