

In-House Wednesday Night Bible Study, 6:00 PM

“THE HEAVENLY WORSHIP” REVELATION CHAPTER 6

November 4, 2026

Symbolism Found in the Book of Revelation

The opening of chapter 6 of the book of Revelation marks an important milestone in the progressive revelation of the end of the age. In chapter 5 John is introduced to the seven-sealed book in the hand of Christ. In chapter 6 the first six seals are opened with the resultant tremendous events occurring in the earth. The interpretation of these events depends upon the understanding of other portions of the prophetic Word. If the events portrayed are taken in any literal sense, it should be clear that they describe an event yet future, in the words of Christ “the things which shall be hereafter” (1:19).

The Bible teaches that the world is headed inevitably not toward peace and unity, but toward a final, cataclysmic war, the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:14-16). Until that climactic holocaust, things will continue to deteriorate as the world falls deeper and deeper into chaos, confusion, and sin. As the end approaches, wars will increase, crime will escalate, there will be economic upheavals, and unprecedented natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, famines, and diseases (cf. Matt. 24:6-8). All those calamities will mark the outpouring of God's wrath on the fallen, rebellious world.

The Old Testament prophets spoke of this terrifying time of future judgment. Describing Israel's sufferings during that time, Jeremiah wrote, "Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of Jacob's distress" (Jer. 30:7). Describing the coming judgment of the Gentile nations, Isaiah wrote,

Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples! Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it. For the Lord's indignation is against all the nations, and His wrath against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to slaughter. So, their slain will be thrown out, and their corpses will give off their stench, and the mountains will be drenched with their blood. And all the hosts of heaven will wear away, and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; all their hosts will also wither away as a leaf withers from the vine, or as one withers from the fig tree. (Isa. 34:1-4)

In Revelation 5:1-7, Christ received from God the Father a scroll sealed with seven seals until opened by the One with authority to do so. The scroll contained the title deed to the earth. Unlike normal title deeds, it did not contain a description of Christ's inheritance but rather details how He will execute His reclaiming of what is rightfully His. Beginning in chapter 6, that scroll is unrolled and its seals broken. The unrolling of the scroll marks the beginning of God's wrath and judgment on sinful mankind as the Lord takes back creation from the usurper, Satan.

Each of the scroll's seven seals (cf. 5:1) represents a specific divine judgment that will be poured out sequentially on the earth. The seals encompass the entire period of the Tribulation (3:10), culminating with the return of Christ. It seems best to understand the first four seals as taking place during the first half of the Tribulation, the fifth stretching from the first into the second half, (called the "great tribulation" in 7:14 and lasting three and one-half years; 11:2; 12:6; 13:5) and the sixth and seventh taking place during that "great tribulation." Apparently the seventh seal contains the seven trumpet judgments (8:1-11:19) and the seventh trumpet (11:15) contains the seven bowl judgments (16:1-21). The seven seals thus contain all the judgments to the end when Jesus Christ returns.

The unfolding of the seven seals parallels our Lord's chronology of Tribulation events found in Jesus' own message describing the end times and His return, recorded in Matthew 24. The first seal describes a brief, false peace that will precede the final holocaust. In Matthew 24:4-5, Jesus also spoke of that peace, warning of the deceiving, false christs who will promote it. The second seal depicts worldwide war, which Jesus also predicted (Matt. 24:6-7). The third seal, famine, finds a parallel in Matthew 24:7. In that same verse Jesus predicted earthquakes, representative of natural disasters; the fourth seal represents death by such natural disasters, including earthquakes and plagues. The fifth seal, revealing the martyrs under the altar, finds a parallel in Jesus' warning that believers will be martyred during the Tribulation (Matt. 24:9). During the unfolding of the sixth seal, the sky goes black—just as Jesus predicted it would (Matt. 24:29). The seventh seal reveals the final cataclysmic judgments, including all the devastation from the trumpet and bowl judgments, leading up to His second coming (Matt. 24:37).

Just as a mother's birth pains increase in frequency and intensity as the time to give birth approaches, so

The judgments depicted by the seals will intensify throughout the Tribulation until they culminate in the arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ in blazing judgment glory. The first four seals cover the period Jesus described as "the beginning of birth pangs" (Matt. 24:8). As terrible as those four judgments are, they are but the preliminary outpouring of God's final wrath in the last three seals.

The following are the meaning of terms and imagery we will find in chapter 6 which will be helpful in your study of the book of Revelation.

The tribulation is a future time period when the Lord will accomplish at least two aspects of His plan:

- 1) He will complete His discipline of the nation Israel (Daniel 9:24), and
- 2) He will judge the unbelieving, godless inhabitants of the earth (Revelation 6—18).

The length of the tribulation is seven years. This is determined by an understanding of the seventy weeks of Daniel (Daniel 9:24–27; also see the article on the tribulation). The Great Tribulation is the last half of the tribulation period, three and

one-half years in length. It is distinguished from the tribulation period because the beast, or Antichrist, will be revealed, and the wrath of God will greatly intensify during this time. It is important at this point to emphasize that the tribulation and the Great Tribulation are not synonymous events. Within eschatology (the study of future things), the tribulation refers to the full seven-year period while the "Great Tribulation" refers to the second half of the tribulation.

Chapter 6 of John's Revelation teaches many important points for spiritual living such as:

The Certainty of Judgment - God's judgment is certain and will come to pass as described in Scripture. Believers should live with an awareness of this reality, motivating them to live righteously and share the gospel.

The Sovereignty of God - The events of Revelation remind us of God's ultimate control over history. Trust in His sovereignty should bring comfort and assurance to believers, even amidst chaos.

The Urgency of Repentance - The impending judgment underscores the need for repentance. Believers should examine their lives and encourage others to turn to Christ before it is too late.

The Power of Christ - As the Lamb who opens the seals, Christ's power and authority are evident. Believers can find strength and hope in His victory over sin and death.

The Call to Endurance - In light of the coming trials, believers are called to endure in faith, holding fast to the promises of God and the hope of eternal life.

The Futility of Hiding from God - Attempting to hide from God's presence is futile. True safety is found in repentance and faith in Christ.

The Inevitability of Judgment - God's judgment is certain and unavoidable. No earthly power or natural element can shield us from it.

The Role of Jesus as Judge - While Jesus is the Savior, He is also the Judge. His wrath is a response to unrepentant sin and rebellion.

The Universality of Judgment - No one is exempt from God's judgment, regardless of status or power. This calls for humility and repentance.

The Futility of Earthly Security - Earthly power and wealth cannot protect against divine judgment. True security is found in Christ alone.