

NT Verses Related to Revelation

- **1 John 2:18, 22 (NKJV):** *Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. ²² Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.*
- **1 John 3:1-2 (NKJV):** *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*
- **And others!**
- Dates when the Gospel of John, 1 John, and Revelation were written: Internal evidence in the 3 writings appear to place the gospel of John about 65 AD, 1 John in 65 - 66 AD, and Revelation a little later in 67 - 68 AD. Not everyone agrees on these dates, but most agree that 1 John was written before Revelation.
- Before John's writings, Paul mentioned the "man of lawlessness" in 2 Thessalonians, written about 51-52 AD. Many believe the "man of lawlessness" signifies the Antichrist.

Today's Lesson

1. **Introduction:** What is the purpose for which Revelation was written? The overarching purpose of the visions from God recorded by John is to draw believers closer to God. The visions are not intended to be examined with a microscope trying to determine a map of end-time events.
 - God is sovereign. He will end history in a way that honors Him and provides a place for His people to dwell forever in His presence. That sums up what we need to know. He wins! Our task is to be obedient!
 - The visions of the 4 horsemen remind us to depend on the eternal, sovereign God and not on fragile things like nation, power, wealth, or health which might be destined for destruction.
 - Trust and depend on God. Within His love and care, work toward results He approves. Your soul is secure in Him ("It is Well with My Soul"). Your mortal life is subject to the twists and turns of this sinful world, but your soul is safe and secure "in Christ."
 - Remember that our Lord Jesus, the King who rules over the nations and over us as individuals, is also the Suffering Servant who faced unearned punishment on our behalf without a word of protest.

2. Summary of First 4 Seals: Opening the first four seals releases the four horsemen of the Apocalypse who (1.) spread misleading propaganda (spiritual and non-spiritual), (2.) who take peace from the earth causing war, murder, destruction of property, and, in general disruption of peaceful life, (3.) who bring about runaway inflation and famine, and (4.) bring widespread death (up to $\frac{1}{4}$ the total population) from famine, murder, pestilence, and wild beasts.

3. God is Sovereign: He uses everything for His purposes. He declares the penalty for sin (turning away from God) is death. Sin draws God's wrath. That wrath is expressed in both preliminary and final forms. The preliminary form of judgment is symbolized by the Four Horseman.

- The four horsemen have been active on earth since Adam and Eve's sin.
- As I have said, I believe the four horsemen symbolize evil powers released by God as preliminary judgments on sin. To a significant extent, these judgments are carried out by sinners themselves when God's common grace restraints are reduced or eliminated.
- In the "white horse" judgment, I believe God permits the use of lies and deceptions to mislead people to "believe Satan's lies" and spread deception to as many others as possible.
- People who believe "lies" will likely act on those lies thinking the lies to be true.
- The "red horse" judgment is an increase in judgment level in which God's restraining common grace is reduced to the point people are delighted to kill and conquer in support of whatever lie Satan has brought to them.
- The "black horse" judgment allows the consequences of the first two judgments to produce famine and a shortage of everyday necessities.
- The "pale horse" judgment allows killing by sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts but is restricted to killing no more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the earth's population.
- The fifth seal reveals death of martyrs arising from the activities of the four horsemen.

4. Revelation 6:9-11 : *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. ¹⁰ They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹ Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.*

- Opening the 5th seal reveals a truth about the sinful world in which we live. In much of the world, faithful witness to God is and has been dangerous and possibly deadly. There have been and continue to be many killed for their witness. Killing people of faith may make only a ripple on earth, but our sovereign God notices, records the sin as subject to His wrath now or later.
- In Revelation, martyr's deaths are recognized as being due to their faithfulness to God. Their sacrifice will result in God acting in judgment on their behalf at the right time.
- At the time Revelation was written, many had been martyred. The church, while waiting for God's action, did not try to take judgment in their own hands. They prayed and

continued to offer their lives as faithful witnesses, all the while trusting God to carry out His plan.

- The martyred faithful witnesses were anxious for God’s justice on those who killed them. The rightness of the martyr’s plea was recognized, but the timing was not right. The martyr’s prayer is not for personal revenge. They cry out for God’s vindication of Himself and His people.
- The martyrs were given white robes and told to “***Rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.***” Apparently, the delay is because the result from the martyr’s work is not yet complete.
- God exercises patience in judgment until the ongoing effects of their witness is complete (even though delay is costly to the witnesses). God sees the end from the beginning.
- Much like the parable of the wicked tenants (Mark 12: 1-12), God continues to send His servants to provide the wicked an opportunity to change even when the servants are tortured and killed.

5. Revelation 6:12-17: *When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood,¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.¹⁴ The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,¹⁶ calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”*

- The sixth seal seems to signal the end of history when God brings about a final and complete judgment that will bring perfect justice.
- The opening of the 6th seal reveals God’s answer to the martyr’s prayers. Evil will be punished.
- Final judgment in the OT and NT is often portrayed by a dramatic coming apart of the entire cosmos (e.g., Isa. 13:10-13; 24:1-6, 17-23; 34:4; Ezek. 32:6-8; Joel 2:10, 30-31; 3:15-16; etc.) and (Mark 13:24-27; Matt.24:29-31; Acts 2:19-20; 2Pet. 3:10; etc.)
- Earthquakes were often associated with the eschatological presence of God in biblical and Jewish tradition. Words like “***the sun became black ... and the stars of the sky fell to the earth***” certainly seem to imply the end of history whether such phenomena are literal or metaphorical.
- The combination of a black sun and a red moon also appears in Acts 2:20 indicating they were well understood as signs of the Day of the Lord. I think the Day of the Lord is precisely what John portrays in these verses.

- However, recognizing that to be the case creates interpretation problems. It is difficult to see how the sixth seal could be the “end” when there are other judgments left to come (namely, seven trumpets and seven bowls of judgment remain). So, what is the correct literary structure?
 - One possibility is to assume the series of judgments in chapters 6-19 are events that happen in sequence, one after another in time. That’s the way history books are organized.
 - But Revelation is not a history book. It is a book that combines prophecy and history in apocalyptic style written as a letter to 7 real first-century churches.
 - Books of prophecy often place prophetic images out of sequence and repeat key events from different vantage points (think of Isaiah).
 - The 3 sets of 7 judgments in Revelation could be viewed as recapitulations with variations of a single set of events, each ending at the Last Day termination point. Each set resembles the others, but judgment intensity increases from “seals” to “trumpets” to “bowls.” Each set ends with the traumatic “last and final, perfectly just judgement.”
 - Thus, there is recapitulation with variations that show an increasing intensity of judgment.
 - The difficulty of establishing a “right” literary structure of Revelation can easily be seen by the many different structural outlines that have been proposed. There is virtually no consensus on Revelation’s literary structure. Hence there is a maze of interpretations.
 - In 9:20-21, there is an interesting observation about the results produced by the judgments.
- 6. Revelation 9:20-21: *The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, ²¹ nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.* (also 16:9,11. 21)**
- This is a reminder that without God’s intervention, sinners will sin despite consequences.
 - God’s preliminary judgements are acts of grace, giving humanity an opportunity to understand the gravity and danger of their behavior and repent.
 - But on judgment day, the truth of sin and its consequences will be obvious to all.
 - Even the great ones on earth will recognize that ignoring God and freely committing sins has put them into a dreadful situation. Their day of wrath has come.
 - They will wish there was some way to hide from the face of God and His justice, even by having the rocks of the mountains fall on them (but of course, even that would not hide them from God).
 - Who can withstand the consequences of God’s judgment of sin?
 - On the great day of God’s wrath, it is too late to ask that question, though it has an answer.
 - Seek God while He can be found. Confess your sins, turn to follow Him, and He will provide a way for you to live forever in His presence.

7. Next: Revelation 7.