**Lesson 3 (6-8:5)**

**The seven seals (6:1-8:5)**

Old Testament backgrounds for chapter six are Zechariah 6:1-8 and Ezekiel 14:12-23. They see the same plagues of sword, famine, wild beasts, and plagues. In Leviticus 26:18-28 God warns of four judgements consisting of seven punishments each.

A voice of thunder indicates the command comes from God’s throne.

**6:1-2 First seal:** a rider on a white horse with a bow and crown rides off to conquer. This may be a Satanic person or reflect sinful humanity allowed to go to its evil extremes.

**6:3-4 Second seal:** fiery red horse, a rider with a large sword, took peace from the earth. There may be a sense of civil war here.

**6:5-6 Third seal:** A black horse. A rider had a scale, making wheat expensive, roughly 8 to 16 times the normal price. Oil and wine are luxury goods that only the rich will be able to afford.

**6:7-8: Fourth seal:** A pale green horse. Its rider named Death and Hades. Over ¼ of the earth’s population was killed by sword, famine, plague, and wild animals. Perhaps death and Hades were following along behind, collecting corpses from the first 3 seals.

The Old Testament often warns of a fourfold judgement: Lev. 26:18-28; Deut. 32:24-26; Jer. 15:1-4; 16:4-5; Ezek. 5:12; 6:11-12; 14.

**6:9-11: Fifth seal:** The martyrs, under the altar, cried out for justice. They were given a white robe and made to wait until the remaining martyrs were slain.

**6:12-17: Sixth seal:** A violent earthquake, the sun turned black, the entire moon like blood, the stars fell from the sky, the sky was split apart, every mountain and island were moved.

Then all the kings, generals, rich, powerful, slave and free person hid from God’s wrath. The “wrath” of the lamb demonstrates the lamb as far from powerless or harmless.

This may refer to the final judgment, for now the martyrs have all been killed.

The elements of the shaking of the earth, darkness, blood, and moon, stars, sun falling to the earth are elements of Old Testament descriptions of judgment (Isaiah 24:1-6; 34:3-4; Ezekiel 32:6-8; Joel 2:31; 3:15-16; Hab. 3:6-11).

**The Sealed of Israel (7)**

**7:1** The four corners of the earth represent the entire world. The four winds of the earth could be the four horsemen of 6:1-8. Those may have been modeled after Zechariah 6:1-8 which are also referred to as the four “winds” or “spirits” of heaven. The angels are temporarily holding back the evil forces of destruction.

**7:2** Just as the beast will put the mark of 666 on the foreheads of people to identify them as belonging to him (13:17; 14:9-11), so God places a seal on those who belong to him. This mark primarily protects people spiritually and preserves their salvation (see Ezek. 9:4-6).

**7:4** 144,000 is twelve times twelve and then multiplied by 1,000. This could represent the twelvetribes as well as the twelve apostles and then multiplied by 1,000 to represent fulness/completeness and may represent the Church throughout the ages.

In Rev. 14:1, we are told the 144,000 had the names of God the Father and Christ written on their foreheads. These names may represent the seal placed on them.

**7:5-8** The twelve tribes are listed, with Judah first, from which came the Messiah. The tribe of Dan is missing while Manasseh is listed as well as Joseph. This list is similar to the military census found in Number 1:21, 23 etc. and might picture the 144,000 as God’s army prepared to go to battle. They will fight by holding on to their faith in the face of persecution and suffering.

**7:9** The vast multitude of every tribe and nation represents all believers at the end of the age. This was prophesied in Daniel 7:14, 22, 27. White robes represents purity. Palm leaves would refer to the Feast of Tabernacles which celebrated God’s deliverance of his people from Egypt.

The great multitude which no one could count would be the culmination of God’s promise to Abraham (Gen. 16:10; 17:5, 32:12).

**7:14** The Great Tribulation is only mentioned in the Old Testament in Daniel 12:1 and is also mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24:21. The tribulation would have come from pressures from the world’s religious and economic system to compromise one’s faith. These tribulations began with Christ’s death on the cross and continued in varying degrees until the last days.

**7:16** As a result of Christ’s presence with his people, they will no longer hunger or thirst (Isaiah 49:10; John 6:35).

**7:17** There will be no more tears in Christ’s presence (Isaiah 25:8). This is stark contrast to the terror of those who have rejected Christ (6:16-17).

**Seventh Seal**

**8:1** Silence indicates something awesome or very important is about to happen. The seventh seal may be a continuation of the sixth seal, or it may unleash the seven trumpets.

**8:2-5** The incense is the prayers of the saints who cried out for justice (6:10).

The peals of lightning, thunder, rumblings, and earthquake are reminiscent of Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:16-19).