

CHAPTER 6

The Heavenly Scene

The Book and Six of Seven Seals

Revelation 6

Dr. Walvoord suggested that five important questions must be answered before we begin our investigation of the events in chapter 6. He believed that in order to understand the events taking place from this point forward there must be a clear understanding of what had already taken place from an historical perspective in the fulfillment of Scripture. This is very critical to the understanding of the passage at hand because we will interpret the Scripture based on our view of history. In other words, if we believe that certain events have already taken place then we will not view them as future events. It will then give a completely different outlook to the events in the coming chapters. Here are the questions that Walvoord suggest we answer:¹

1. *Are the events which begin with the breaking of the first seal past or future?*
2. *What is the relationship of the seals to the Rapture of the church?*
3. *What is the relationship of the seals to Daniel 9:27?*
4. *Does Revelation deal with the entire seven years anticipated in Daniel 9:27 or only with the last three and one-half years, often referred to as “the Great Tribulation” or “a time of great distress”?*
5. *What is the relationship of the events of Revelation to Christ’s sermon on the end times?*

Question 1: Are the events which begin with the breaking of the first seal past or future?

Answer: There are some commentators who would suggest that the breaking of the first seal has already taken place. Yet there are more compelling reasons to believe that these events are still to come. Chapter 4:1 John states, “After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven;” he then goes on to describe what he saw in heaven. The “after these things” was a reference to Christ evaluation of the seven churches in chapters 2-3. Chapters 4-5 John is translated into heaven before the throne of God and expresses the beauty of the divine and the veracity of the worship given to Him. Chapter 6 continues the vision of chapter 5. The same Lamb who stood before the throne as slain in chapter 5 is the same Lamb who now brakes the seven seals. Remember chapter 1:19 Jesus told John to, “... write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.” John had already written the things which he had seen (chapter 1), and the things which are (chapters 2-3). His attention now turned to “the things which will take place after these things”

¹ Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 946–947). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

(chapters 4-22).

Chapter 5:1 shows the book being sealed and no one being found worthy to open it. This is stating a clear fact, the seal was not yet broken; the braking of the seals does not take place until chapter 6. The events taking place in chapter 6 after the braking of the seals have found no accomplishment in history thus far. There is no recorded history that corresponds with these events. In this case, the obvious reason for the missing historical records is due to the fact that these events have not yet taken place.

Question 2: *What is the relationship of the seals to the Rapture of the church?*

Answer: It appears as if the church has already been raptured by the opening of the first seal. Jesus told the church at Thyatira to hold fast until He comes (2:25, 28) and to the church at Philadelphia He said that, “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (3:10). This of course is a reference to the rapture of the church before the time of tribulation. From this point (chapter 6) on there is no reference to the church or the rapture of the church (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:51–58; 1 Thess. 4:13–18). According to Walvoord, “many conclude that the Rapture of the church takes place before the events beginning in chapter 4 and thus precedes the Tribulation (for full discussion see Charles C. Ryrie, *Revelation*; Charles C. Ryrie, *The Final Countdown*; and John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*).”²

Question 3: *What is the relationship of the seals to Daniel 9:27?*

“And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

Answer: Many have tried to find historical fulfillment of the 70th week of Daniel in history; but there are no events in recorded history that correlates with Daniel’s prophecy. These last seven years are best understood in the context of Christ Second Coming and therefore yet future.

Question 4. *Does Revelation deal with the entire seven years anticipated in Daniel 9:27 or only with the last three and one-half years, often referred to as “the Great Tribulation” or “a time of great distress”?*

Answer: Revelation 6:17 is called “the great day of their wrath” which is a clear reference to Revelation 7:14 the Great Tribulation. Both events appears to have in mind the fulfillment of Daniel 9:27. Revelation does not use the term “70th week” or the figure of “seven years.” Instead it presents it as three and one-half years or 42 months (11:2; 13:5). This is why some

² Walvoord, J. F. (1985) p. 946.

hold to the “mid-trib” position. These events does not seem to correspond with the time of peace (three and one-half years) as seen in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, “While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.” What is sure is that there will be a great time of tribulation like never seen before that will be experience by the whole earth (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21).

Question 5: *What is the relationship of the events of Revelation to Christ’s sermon on the end times?* (Matt. 24–25)

Answer: As J. Dwight Pentecost points out (*Things to Come*, pp. 280–82), the order of events in Revelation and the order of events in Matthew are strikingly similar: (a) war (Matt. 24:6–7; Rev. 6:3–4), (b) famine (Matt. 24:7; Rev. 6:5–6), (c) death (Matt. 24:7–9; Rev. 6:7–8), (d) martyrdom (Matt. 24:9–10, 16–22; Rev. 6:9–11), (e) the sun and the moon darkened with stars falling (Matt. 24:29; Rev. 6:12–14), (f) divine judgment (Matt. 24:32–25:26; Rev. 6:15–17). It should be obvious that the events of Revelation have their background in previous prophecies, which aids in interpreting John’s symbolic revelation. The evidence points to the conclusion that it describes the final period (probably the final three and one-half years) climaxed by the second coming of Christ to set up His kingdom (for further discussion, see Walvoord, *Revelation*, pp. 123–28; also cf. comments on Matt. 24–25).³

³ Walvoord, J. F. (1985) p. 946.