



ONE PLUS GOD

**Get going: We don't have forever to get into forever  
A study on Revelation**

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**Week 5  
Judgement & Grace**

**One Plus God Ministries**

**Missions Minded, Every Day, Everywhere.**

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## **Revelation: Lesson plan**

Lesson 1 — September 3 — Who is Jesus? (Rev 1)

Lesson 2 — September 10 — What Jesus expects from His Church, part 1 (Rev 2 & 3)

Lesson 3 — September 17 — What Jesus expects from His Church, part 2 (Rev 2 & 3)

Lesson 4 — September 24 — In the throne room with God: Father, Lamb, and Spirit (Rev 4 & 5)

Lesson 5 — October 1 — Judgement and Grace (Rev 6 & 7)

Lesson 6 — October 8 — The Church has a mission (Rev 8 to 11)

Lesson 7 — October 15 — The Christmas-story through the eyes of Revelation (Rev 12)

Lesson 8 — October 22 — Evil attempting to imitate God (Rev 13)

Lesson 9 — October 29 — Time for grace will run out... (Rev 14 to 16)

Lesson 10 — November 5 — The efforts of Darkness will intensify, yet come to an end (Rev 17-18)

Lesson 11 — November 12 — God's triumph over a one-sided war (Rev 19 to 20)

Lesson 12 — November 19 — God's complete reign is coming soon! (Rev 21 to 22)

## **Revelation 6:1-8, Controlled judgement is unfolding over a portion of the earth**

The four seals, each releasing a horse for judgement, are broken by the Lamb. In other words the Lamb initiates the judgements, and God approves it (refer to “was giving” in 6:2, 4, and 8). This is important, because it shows that judgement does not simply unfold in an uncontrolled manner, as if they are random acts of evil, all happening apart from, and out of God’s control...

Surely these four horses belong together given the context, which would mean that the white horse from v. 2 would not be Jesus’ horse as in Rev. 19:11-16. This is another horse, one that reminds us of the god Apollo who had a bow and arrow as symbols of prophecies and propaganda—of course in this case a god with false propaganda, paving the way for the other horses! He is on a white horse as part of his efforts to mislead and disguise his evil intent. The red horse is taking things a step further by shedding blood (vv. 3-4; see also Mark 13:7-8). Things continue to progress from bad to worse as the black horse introduces a time when you can see the effects of war—food is scarce and has to be weighed (vv. 5-6; see also Lev. 26:26, Ezek. 4:16). Wheat is now being sold for eight times more than usual, and barley for five times more—inflation rates are extremely high. Olive trees and vineyards though were not to be destroyed as they kept being a source of precious food and medicine—even in times of famine, because of their much deeper root systems.

The fourth horse brings about the logical progression of all of the preceding horses’ actions: Death...however, they are given this power only over a portion (1/4) of the earth (vv. 7-8). And this is important, because it is here that we see God’s grace so clearly at work, right in the midst of these heartbreaking unfolding of judgements: The series of 7 seals strike a 1/4 of earth, followed by the 7 trumpets hitting a 1/3 (Rev. 8:6 and further), with finally the 7 plagues (Rev. 15) and 7 bowls...simply hitting everything relentlessly (Rev. 16)... Three sets of series’ of 7, probably not to be understood as chronologically following one after another, but rather unfolding with intensifying progression towards the end, reminding us...warning us: Get going, because we don’t have forever to get into forever!

The meaning of the four horses could therefore be summarized as follows (with texts like Zechariah 1:7-11 and 6:1-8 in the background):

- White horse representing false propaganda (vv. 1-2)
- Red horse representing war (vv. 3-4)
- Black horse representing famine and inflation (vv. 5-6)
- Gray/pale horse representing death (vv. 7-8)

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**Revelation 6:9-17, Believers and non-believers crying out!**

The opening of the fifth seal takes us to the altar where we find the souls of those who had died the death of martyrs, because they had faithfully proclaimed the life-giving testimony of the Living Lord (v. 9; Mark 13:9-13). They are crying out to God in verse 10 that His righteousness will come upon all the earth—be careful, “righteousness”...not “revenge” (see also Rev. 16:5-7, 19:2, 20:11-14; Luke 18:7). It is due to their maintained obedience that they are rewarded with white robes, pointing to their victory and glory in their Lord and Savior (v. 11a). He is asking them to be patient for a little while longer till all who had to testify, even to the point of death like they had done, were home (v. 11b-c; Matt. 10:28). Time is surely running out (Rev. 10:6), and even the devil realizes that (Rev. 12:12)!

Natural disasters will also follow in these times between Jesus’ first and second coming, as the sixth seal is warning us about (vv. 12-14; see also Isaiah 13:10-13, 24:1-6, 34:4; Ezek. 32:6-8; Joel 2:10, 30-31). Earthquakes are often used to help depict God’s judgement (Joel 2:10-11), but

also to remind us of God’s powerful presence and simply His awe (Habakuk 3)! The sun turning black like sackcloth in v. 12b helps us to understand that these judgements do not happen with some sadistic joy (neither on earth, nor in heaven), but rather with deep mourning...yet, it also happens with a deep intensity as sun and moon eclipses had often signified (Ex. 10:22; Ezek. 32:7-8). Simply nothing can stand before the judgement of God—one can only stand and watch in terrifying / glorifying awe as He acts with almighty power: Stars fall like figs dropping from a fig tree (v. 13; Is. 34:4), the sky disappears as if it is rolled up like a scroll (v. 14a; Mark 13:25), and that which seemed like it can never move an inch are shaken (v. 14b, Rev. 16:20). What is known as that which signifies order and stability, are now shouting out that a dramatic end is near, to make place for an even more dramatic, new beginning! It is time to wake up, recognize the greatness, the power, the rule of the King of kings, and to reach out to His grace, before only judgement remains...

And from this judgement no one will escape! Whether you are in this world king, prince, general, rich, mighty, slave, or free...no one (not even believers!) will escape the consequences of the unfolding judgement of the living God...a judgement so severe that non-believers would be terrified and rather want to hide from it, or even die before facing this devastating judgement (v. 15; see also Is. 2:19, 21 and Hosea 10:8)! However, we know that hiding from it is not possible—all will have to face Him who sits on the throne, and the wrath of the Lamb (v. 16), for the end will surely come (v. 17) and even the dead will have to appear before their God (Rev. 20:11-14; see also Joel 2:11, 31; Mal. 4:1, 5).

So therefore the next logical question: “Who can stand?” (v. 17b)! This is the cry, echoing Mal. 3:2 and Joel 2:11, that begs for hope...hope, that is given in chapter 7!

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**Revelation 7, Hope and grace in the midst of a severe judgement!**

Even the structure of the text is shouting it out: Even in the midst of judgement our God is a God Who is longing for the lost to be found, Who is protective of His own, Who is a Father and not only a Judge. It cannot escape our attention that chapter 7 doesn't start with the opening of the seventh seal! This just simply doesn't make sense structurally (see also the structural gap between the sixth and the seventh trumpet in Rev. 10:1-11:14!). Why would the opening of the seventh seal skip an entire chapter (Rev. 8:1)? It has to have meaning. And it does. Clearly the tone and message change drastically from one of fear, sadness, sorrow, struggle and pain, to one of hope, joy, victory, glory and worship. It is crystal clear: Till it isn't over, it is not over, and till then even the structure of Revelation is shouting out that the end will come, and it will come soon, but yes, there is also still hope, there is still the opportunity for saving grace!

The believers are encouraged to remain focused in the midsts of these judgements. They should keep a Godly perspective on things, and Revelation is there to help them with that. Not only are they provided with an encouraging view of the believers on earth (vv. 1-8), but they are also hugely encouraged by the victorious believers standing before the throne of God (vv. 9-17). With Revelation's reluctant way of following some chronological, pre-set structure, this could even very well be the same group of believers simply viewed from two different perspectives! Remember, Revelation is much more interested in following themes, than a chronological order of events.

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**Revelation 7:1-8, Encouragement to the believers on earth in the midst of it all!**

With God’s entire creation under His control, He reaches out to it all (4 angels, 4 corners of the earth, 4 winds; see also Ezek. 7:2), and stop any wind from blowing (v. 1). For a moment all judgement, expressed here by the winds (see also Jer. 49:36, Dan. 7:2, Hos. 13:15), come to a complete and quiet standstill. This gives time for an angel with a special token, the “seal of the living God” (v. 2), to complete the task of letting believers know without a doubt that they are “servants of God” (v. 3). This “seal on the foreheads” reminds us of the ancient custom to express with such an action ownership, and the right to certain privileges, like care taking, protection, or even representation of the one carrying the seal (see also Esther 3:10-11; Dan. 6:17, and Ezek. 9:3-6)! This also reminds us of other New Testament texts that encourages believers in the same way, for instance 1 Cor. 6:19-20.

And who receives this “seal on the forehead”? All believers—not a single believer will be passed over in the process: God ensures that all 144,000 believers from all tribes of Israel receive this sign (vv. 4-8). Clearly this group of believers, and the group in Rev. 7:9 is the same group, which helps us to keep perspective, and recognize that this symbolic number refers to all believers: 12 (OT) x 12 (NT) x 10 x 10 x 10 (referring to divine completeness) = 144,000. Verses 5-8 help us to remember that not all receive this seal, but from every tribe the complete number of believers from that tribe. Now, who would these tribes of Israel refer to? Well, again, if we remember that it is actually the same group as we encounter from verse 9 and onwards it is easy to realize that we must be talking about the new Israel, now including both Jewish and heathen Christians. This interpretation would also help us to make sense of Rev. 9:4 where the locusts are commanded to harm only those who were not carrying the seal of God. If we would interpret the “Israel” as only the Jewish, OT Israel, it would be really hard to

understand why God would not also want to protect non-Jewish believers? Of course we also have multiple texts helping us to understand the shift in the New Testament of how “Israel” is now also including believers from all nations: Rom. 2:29, 4:11-17, 9:6; Gal. 3:7, 29, 6:16; James 1:1, and 1 Pet. 1:1! Without making too much of this...if we would want to treat the list of tribes in verses 5-8 as the real tribes of Israel, we would encounter quite a bit of challenges: Reuben as the oldest is not listed first, but Judah as Christ came from this tribe; Manasseh and Joseph are included in this list but not Dan as one of the 12 sons of Jacob, probably because of his falling into idol worshipping; finally, we have several lists of the tribes that differ quite a bit from each other (Gen. 49, Num. 1:20-43, Deut. 33, Judges 5).

A couple of important remarks: You cannot sit on the fence—either you carry this “seal”, or the mark of the beast (Rev. 13:16); we cannot jump to all kinds of conclusions about physical marks or implants that can be electronically read, and we need to remember that God does not keep His children from physical harm, but does encourage and enable them spiritually to endure till the end!

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**Revelation 7:9-17, Be encouraged by your destination!**

What a sight! A great multitude that no one could count (we are reminded of God’s promises in Gen. 13:16, 15:5, 32:12; Hos. 1:10 and Heb. 11:12)! A crowd of believers from every nation, tribe, people and language before their God (v. 9)—how encouraging?! This is indeed the feast that all have been waiting for, and therefore requires festive clothing (white robes) and symbols (palm branches), so that victory in God can be celebrated (vv. 9-10, see also Zech. 14:1-21)!

Falling down, with their faces touching the ground, the angels are showing immense respect and honor, while worshipping God—what a scene this must be (vv. 11-12)?! A scene in which the faithful believers join in, with amazing, continuous worship and indescribable Godly care in the direct presence of God (vv. 13-17)!

It is indeed interesting that “great tribulation” is only mentioned here, and in Matthew 24:21 (Mark 13:19), and probably point back to Dan. 12:1. It seems rather than trying to figure out “when” this would be, the most important theme would be to focus on “faithful endurance” no matter the intensity or time of tribulation, so that we are not caught off guard with being weary and ultimately...unfaithful.

We can only be in awe before God to think that a day will come where we will not only experience His greatness in the “holy of holies”, but that the “tabernacle” will be “spread” open to cover Him who sits on the throne..*and now also including all of us* (v. 15)!

We can only be in awe before God to think that a day will come when the Shepherd will take hands-on care of us, and God Himself will not only “wipe away” our tears, but rather “wipe them out”, forever, as the Greek intends to share (v. 17)!

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## Resources

There are such amazing mission stories out there! We have read today about the believers simply crying out to God in the midst of all of that is happening. This reminded me of a great missions book titled, “A cry from the streets: Rescuing Brazil’s forgotten children”, by Jeannette Lukasse. You will enjoy this great read about street children in the spiritual darkness of Brazil, searching through trash cans, desperately trying to survive one more day, with no hope...until they found the love of Jesus through the compassionate ministry of the young Dutch couple, Jeannette and Johan Lukasse. This is a story of how people leave their comfortable lives to surrender all to God, and how God uses this obedience in miraculous ways to transform the lives of others with His grace, hope and the Living Water!

This is available in a Kindle version on Amazon.

## Want to dig deeper, or just stay connected?

- Email pastor Wayne/Wynand with your questions/remarks at [wynand@OnePlusGod.org](mailto:wynand@OnePlusGod.org).
- Call pastor Wayne/Wynand at 567-356 2007.
- Connect with us on Facebook:
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## References

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