

Revelation 6 & 7

by John McGregor

The sermon explores the themes of tribulation, God's sovereignty, and the hope found in Christ as revealed in Revelation 6 and 7.

Duration: 37:14

Scripture: Revelation 7:3, Revelation 7:9

Topics: "Revelation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse mentioned in the book of Revelation. He highlights that these horsemen represent various aspects of evil and destruction, such as deception, war, famine, and death. The preacher emphasizes that these forces of evil are not just future events, but are active in the world today. He also reminds the audience that Jesus, represented as the Lamb, is at the center of the throne and will be their shepherd. The sermon encourages the audience to seek peace and trust in God's sovereignty amidst the challenges of life.

Transcript

It's been read for us already. And you know, God has given to us so many things. In the Christian and Missionary Alliance, we're about to celebrate 125 years this year.

In the Christian and Missionary Alliance here in Regina, there have been all kinds of things in the last few years with the college moving and so on. And just put down a date in your mind and heart. You probably saw it on the overhead announcements for March the 11th.

It's entitled Repentance and Restoration. And it's a night where we as God's people can just come as one, not the separate churches, but as one and come before the Lord, just seeking his face again. Repentance is an act and restoration is a journey.

We know that and we're grateful for that. But I want to encourage you, that night will be at Heritage. I've been asked to lead that evening.

You know, there's something precious about repentance and restoration, forgiveness. It's a time when we're set free and able to really walk on with God. Well, let's pray and ask him just to speak to us this morning as we look together into his holy word.

Father, thank you for your kindness, your goodness. Thank you that the Lamb indeed is worthy. And thank you for your word.

Every part of it, it's true. You have sustained this word throughout the centuries that we might know. And thank you, Father, that the Christian above all people need not be ignorant about the things concerning the end times and the journey of this world and the importance of eternity.

So, Lord, would you bless your word to our hearts today and would you open it by your spirit's power and strengthen us as we seek to just walk with you. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Well, there are those who say the world will end December 21st this year.

And then there are some scientists who say the world will go on for another 500 million years. And you know, I, this morning, I'm going to tell you exactly when the world will end. Aren't you glad? I knew you'd appreciate that.

Scripture says, no man knows the day nor the hour. And it goes on to tell us the plan of God in the unfolding of this process. And it will end according to the plan of God and in the time and sovereignty of God.

And no matter what men or people may do to jump up and down and scream and shout, it will still run according to God's eternal purpose and plan. Now, I like that. In fact, for me, that is a whoo-hoo kind of moment.

Because I don't have to sweat it and I don't have to worry about it. And you know, if I worried, my hair would go white. So I don't want to do that, for sure.

And as you enter into this passage in the Revelation, you begin to see a series of sevens. We've already looked at the seven churches in previous chapters. And we saw, as Matthew mentioned, how no one was worthy to open the seals in the book until the Lamb came.

And He is worthy. That was our previous chapter some three or four weeks ago now. And as we come back, we see we're entering into the opening of these seven seals.

And there are things happening then upon the earth as well as things happening in heaven. You'll find there are also seven trumpets that we'll look at and seven bowls that we'll consider. And because of our humanity and our understanding, we tend to think seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls.

And we would think they sort of follow on one after the other as we read it. But there's a certain sense of synchronism around these things. They are not necessarily in linear order.

And that's hard for our minds to get around, isn't it? And so don't think about these events as, well, when this is happening, then this is going to happen and so on, because it all works together in the plan and purpose of God. And sometimes as we think about revelation, you can get discouraged and say, wow. Or you can go right through to the end of it and get encouraged and say, yeah, I know who wins.

It's important for us to grasp too as we walk through the things that are happening. In Matthew 24, Jesus was asked, what will be the signs of your coming and so on? And he talked about a great time of tribulation upon this earth. And so as we review this morning in chapter six, these first verses are talking to

us as the seals are opened about that time of tribulation.

The book with seven seals. And so briefly, let me walk through what is happening here. The four horsemen of the apocalypse are mentioned.

They've made movies about it. That's one of those things that's well known out of the book of Revelation, these four horsemen. Did you know you find the same four horsemen in the first chapter of Zechariah? You see, all of God's plan and purpose works together.

It's not that any part of Scripture ever contradicts another. They work together. First, we see on this first horse rides forth a conqueror.

Sounds good. And it's a white horse. Sounds good.

And it says he has a bow, but doesn't say he has any arrows. So if this is a conqueror, he's gonna have to conquer in some different way. And this is indeed a conqueror.

We know him as the deceiver, the evil one. He has no arrows. The only way he can conquer is through lies.

And oh, what a good job he does in lying. And you know, the strange thing is, oftentimes we're not only tempted to believe his lies, but we do believe his lies. He has a crown and so on.

And the thought is, you know, wow, this is someone so powerful and so strong. But later on in the book of Revelation, there is coming one who really rides a white horse. And he is far stronger than what you see here.

What you see here is in a sense, the judgments that are happening upon this earth and the things that we see and know somewhat of, although not to the extent of this kind of tribulation. The evil one is going forth to conquer. You know, a good thing, Christian, to ask yourself day by day is, did I believe any of his lies today? Did I believe that I'm no good? Did I believe that I have nowhere to go? Did I believe that I'm so important everybody should listen to me? You see, he lies on both ends of the spectrum.

He either tells us we're so good or we're so bad. And he just pours that out. He is the deceiver and he is the accuser.

And when we come to chapter 13, we're going to see that again, that he loves to accuse this first horse, riding out to conquer. Now, I wish I could tell you that your pastor has never been conquered. But you know, if I told you that, you'd be worried because I'd lie to you about other things as well.

All of us face this battle, don't we? The lies of the evil one. And most of the world believe his lies. Get everything that you can get and surely you'll have it made.

But we know that the more we get, the more we want, because we're just never quite there. And we know, unfortunately, that some will believe his lies all the way out into eternity. So as we review this morning, these first verses, we see there's a conqueror.

He's a liar. We see the second horse is war, removing peace. There's injustice and abuse and slaughter that goes on.

Now, you may want to argue with me, but I plead with you, do some research before you argue with me. I think you'll find there are four different horses, but only one rider. And you know, we know there's wars in places like Syria today and so on, but there are wars that go on in the human heart all the time.

The rider of that second horse is to take away peace. Has he taken away your peace in the past week? He's taken away mine for a little while. It happens so subtly and so easily.

When we get our eyes off Jesus and onto anything of self. The third horse is famine, a shortage of food and oil and wine, no provision. And we see those things on the earth, don't we? There is also a famine sometimes of spiritual food.

The book of Amos tells us a famine for the Word of God. And oh, you know, when we don't judge and place ourselves against the Word, we sort of go on our own way. As we review, we see that these are not just concepts, not just something that will ride out onto the scene in the future in a great time of tribulation, which is true, but something that is active today in the forces of evil.

So there's a conqueror, a deceiver. There's war. There's famine.

There's death. And a quarter of the earth dies. And you notice why I say there's only one rider? Because the fourth horse, it says, and his name is death and hell follows after him.

Now, we've cleaned it up a bit to say Hades, and people don't like it when preachers talk about hell, but I don't care. And the reason I don't care is there's a Savior who came and died and rose again so that no one would go there. There is, you see, as you think about these horsemen and this coming time of great tribulation, massive loss of life, going out into a lost eternity.

And as you review the seals as they are broken, the fifth one shows us the martyrs who are under the altar. And I wanna come back to them in a minute. And then the sixth one shows us terror on the earth.

Everything is falling apart once you get past verse 10 and so on in chapter six. There's terror and there are those who say to the rocks, fall on us and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb. Now, when you picture a Lamb, it becomes somewhat hard to think about wrath, isn't it? But my dear friends, the truth is, when He came the first time, He showed us the Lamb of God sacrificed for your sin and mine.

And as He comes the second time, there's no argument. There's no movement. There's no possibility.

There's just the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the Lamb who was slain that we might have life. And those who have purposefully turned Him down and turned Him away are ever lost. This time of great tribulation that will come upon the earth reminds me that God has a plan.

And I can say, yes! Because if you think about all that goes on upon the earth, how could there not come a time when God Himself will say, enough, enough now. I want to ask this morning, just as I did on Wednesday night past, are you saved and sure? You see, that's the work of the church in this world, to present the need of Christ and to encourage people just to make sure that they know Him. The beginning of chapter seven, which we didn't read, there's a short interlude.

And it's clearly different for the people of God. You say, why would you say that, John? Well, if you just look at verse three, you see it says, do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God. And then if you like to think upon where will the Jews and the

Gentiles come together, you'll find it in the middle of chapter seven, where 144,000 from every tribe and the martyrs from the great tribulation are together in heaven.

So we've done a quick review. Let me then come to part of the text that I want to dwell on a little bit. In chapter six, verses nine and 10, there's a request.

Let's look at it. I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, how long sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood.

To each of them was given a white robe and they were told to wait a little longer until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was complete. There's that question, how long? Isn't that a question that we wrestle with? Isn't that the question that goes with why does God permit evil? Why doesn't he just finish it? How long, oh Lord? That's such a human question, isn't it? And when we get into the throes of difficulties and hardships, I don't know about you, but this little Irishman likes to say, Lord, how long, holy and true? I need a reminder that it's not going to last forever and that it's not going to be forever. And indeed, that's exactly what the book of Revelation is giving to us in these words and chapters.

That human cry for justice, that cry, you know, is made in the Bible by both people in the Old Testament, here in the New Testament, and God sometimes says to us, how long? The prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel, or the Carmel Mountains said to the people of God, how long do you stop between two opinions? And the word that God gave to Mr. Darren that he faithfully and obediently shared with us is indeed one of those moments where the Lord is saying to us, how long? Do you love me? Isn't that what the question was? Because you see, there are things that would pull us away from that love of God, things that would stir us up in the wrong ways, and so on. How long? But could I say this morning, this question is not asked in hopelessness. That's kind of how I ask it when I get down in the dumps and discouraged by things, I say, ah, how long? But the saints are saying, how long, O Lord, holy and true? They're asking this question with an expectancy because they already know the answer.

They already know that He will be just. They already know what He is going to do. They're just saying, how long, Lord? When will it come to that time of enough, enough? Better remember where I left my glasses.

He knows they obeyed His word. He knows they died and suffered because of it. And He holds them in His hand.

All my friends, this morning, as we think about these two chapters, let's also look at His response to this request. You see, His answer comes in three parts. First, it tells us that they were each given white robes.

I love this so much. You see, we know they're asking with expectancy, but it's still a human question, how long? Now, most of the time in Ireland, when they say, I forgive you, they're saying under their breath, but I'll never forget. And there is, you know, within each of us, the capacity to hold on to things that we can't seem to get past or get by or get over.

Ever been there? I want you to see this. Jesus didn't just say to those under the altar, it'll be all right. I'll look after it in due time, just relax.

He gave them a robe of righteousness. Why? Because it's not their righteousness, it's His. He's saying, would you just put on the purity and the salvation and the glory and the majesty of being right with me? It's His righteousness.

And when I read about it, I'm reminded that one day I would stand naked before God because I don't have one thing, nothing. To impress Him with, nothing to give to Him. But it won't happen because there is a righteous one who says, put this on.

You'll find if you walk through the book of Revelation, these martyrs ask this question, how long, O Lord? You'll find in the mid-teens that the elders ask the question, how long, O Lord? You'll find that the angels toward the end of the book say, how long, O Lord? But you'll only find that it is to humankind He says, here, put on my robe, put on my righteousness. Yes, and then He secondly says, rest a while. Oh, I know the version I read says wait, but the implication is rest a while.

Rest in this righteousness that is Christ. Trust Him, He is fair, He is just, He is holy, He is true. It kind of reminds me of the story of a man who was going to be executed in Cuba.

And he was a citizen of the United States and a citizen of Great Britain. And they tied him up to the post and their firing squad came out and they were ready to do their job. And an ambassador from the British embassy arrived and he wrapped the guy in the British flag and he stood there beside him and he said, fire on this flag if you dare.

That's the same implication as it is to be in the righteousness of Christ. It's a safe place to be. So as we think about the Lord's response, we see He puts that robe on and if you were to ask John, I would say He clothes them in the robe of righteousness so that there is still room for mercy.

Yes, even in the midst of that tribulation, in the midst of that time upon this earth where it is so dark in human terms, still there's His mercy. Didn't He demonstrate that when He looked across the table at Judas and He knew what He was gonna do? Oh dear friends, this is not a book of doom and gloom. This is a book that shows us the righteousness of God and the mercy of God and the justice of God.

And that's the third thing. He says there are others who are yet to come and when they do, you see we cannot change His plan. We will not move His plan.

He is going to unpackage it and unfold it. Others are yet to come. We live like kings.

We live so wonderfully that we take it all for granted. We live with such apathy and ease that we can turn so easily upon one another. But there are many places in this world where all that the Christian has is another Christian.

Who's better off, us with our apathy and ease or them with their passion and purity for Christ? Hurry up, John. Okay, I hear you. You notice here there's no argument nor is there any sort of personal presentation.

Excuse me, Lord, I know for the rest of these guys they can wait and so on, but you remember my case. You remember how tough things are for me and were for me and let's work this out here. It's not there because the sovereign Lord is on the throne.

Fourthly, there's a reminder for us in this text. You'll find it in those last verses that Brad read for us and with this, we'll kind of wrap it up. There's a reminder.

Look at verse 17 with me for a moment. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd. There's the first thing that it says.

The Lamb himself at the center will be their shepherd. Woo! Jesus himself at the center. One of the things that sometimes happens when we read Revelation is we can also read the scholars and we can take a scholarly position, but if you look at the book just as in Ephesians, in itself, in context, you see that God is constantly ministering to his people.

He is comforting us through his word, through the knowledge of where things may go, but his love will never change. He is going to shepherd those to springs of living water. Wow.

He will wipe away our tears, every tear, it says. Every tear from their eyes. Now, what a picture that is of Jesus.

And as we wrap things up this morning, let's make this infinitely practical. You see, sometimes when it comes to books of prophecy like Revelation, we're just kind of saying, pastor, would you give me the information? Download, download, download. Got it.

Step one, step two, step three, step four. Cuckoo, check out. And don't get me wrong, it's important, but the most important thing is the relationship between us and Jesus on a daily basis.

Is he the center of your heart this morning? Is he the center of your life this morning? Is he the one who wipes away every tear? You see, when I'm crying, do you know sometimes the first thing I do? This. You wouldn't believe the day I've had today. Oh, incredible.

And much as I love this girl, and much as many times she wipes away the tears, the deep things of the heart, only one can wipe away, and his name is Jesus. So as I finish this morning, let me just make three applications. Because it's so easy to talk to other people about our problems and issues and so on, and what we really need to do.

Is to come to the cross and to come in brokenness and just say, Lord, I hurt, I hurt. My heart is broken for this. Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people.

He is the one who lifts up the weary. He is the one who gives strength where there is none. Are you saved? And sure, that's the first application.

The second is, dear Christian brother or sister, are you near the one who wipes away every tear? Or are you still trying to plead your own cause and get your own way? And the third one takes me to another text, and I encourage you to turn with me for just a moment. Back a couple of books to 1 Peter 1 and verse 22. This is what it says.

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth, so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart. For you have been born again not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For all men are like grass, and their glory is like the flowers of the field.

The grass withers, the flowers fall. But the word of the Lord stands forever. Dear Father, we thank you for your word this morning.

Thank you that it does stand forever. Thank you that as we review it, we see your plan and know that you will not change it. And although there may be many things that happen on this earth, your great desire is that no one should perish, but that all should come to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

As we look at all of these things pertaining to a time of tribulation, Lord, it overwhelms us. But when we see that your care for your people has not changed, your intense love remains the same. Oh God, we need that kind of love toward you and toward one another.

Just as Peter wrote, even as he quoted from Isaiah chapter 40, for our time here is fleeting, but you are eternal. Therefore, Master, as we close this portion, this message, would your Holy Spirit continue to speak to each of our hearts of the things of the world that are passing and of the things of eternity which are forever? Would you give us that goal that we always might seek in everything to please him who loved us and gave himself for us? Lord, in the stillness, in the quietness, as we're at that place of prayer, can I ask you, are there things throughout this week that have pulled you away from that nearness with Jesus? Issues, relationships, things. If there are, let me just invite you to respond to the Lord.

I'd love to pray for you as I close out in prayer. Has the Lord been speaking to hearts this morning? Would you just take a moment and slip up your hand and say, Pastor, pray for me. Thank you.

God bless you. The Lord bless you. Many, many hands.

God bless you. This is where the knowledge of Christianity and the practice of Christianity come together. Lord, for every hand that was raised, I pray, and I ask that in the power of your spirit, long before the amen is said in this service, that you would grant each heart that moment just in quiet repentance to come to the foot of the cross and say, Lord, I've been struggling with this issue.

Lord, I release it unto you, and I do so trusting you to work it out in me and in every step. In these things, Father, we ask in Jesus' name, amen. God bless you.

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