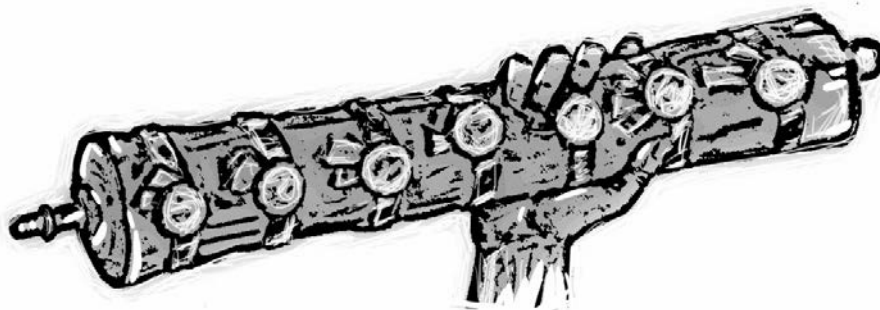


The Seven Locks or Seals



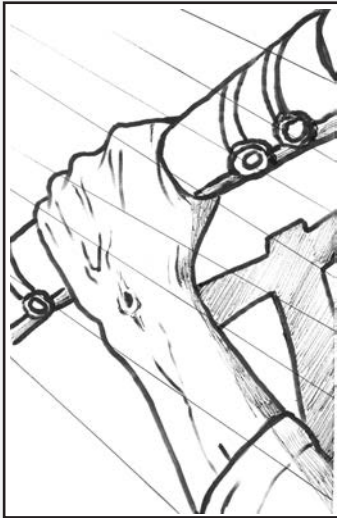
SABBATH—JANUARY 26

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Revelation 6:1–8; Matthew 24:1–14; Revelation 6:9, 10, 12–14; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10.

MEMORY VERSE: “‘It is right for You to take the book and break its locks. It is because You were killed. Your blood has bought men for God from every family and from every language and from every kind [group] of people and from every nation” (Revelation 5:9, NLV).

LAST WEEK, we saw Jesus take the locked book. When Jesus takes the book, it is a sign. It shows us that Jesus gave back to humans everything that Adam lost when he sinned. Jesus' death for us allows Him to open the locks on the book. When Jesus opens the 1st lock, we see that He is ready to finish God's work to save humans. The 1st open lock also shows us that Jesus' followers must start preaching the Good News. They will continue to preach the Good News until Jesus opens the 7th lock, the last lock on the book. After Jesus opens the 7th lock, history on earth ends.

Revelation 3:21 helps us understand what the seven locks mean. The locks show us the victory and power that Jesus gives us over sin. Revelation 4 and 5 tell us that Jesus won the war against sin for us on the cross. So, He is worthy to open the locks on the book. The last verse of chapter 7 talks about God's people in front of Jesus' throne **after** they win the war against sin and God's enemies. Chapter 6 talks about God's people **before** they win the war. Chapter 6 also shows us the things that God's people must fight against so that they can win the war and be leaders with Jesus.



The locks show us the victory and power that Jesus gives us over sin.

**JESUS OPENS THE 1ST LOCK OR SEAL
(Revelation 6:1–8)**

Revelation 6:1–8 show us Jesus opening the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th locks on the scroll. A scroll is a rolled-up piece of writing paper. Long ago, people used “seals,” or hot wax, to lock a scroll. Now look at what Moses writes in Leviticus 26:21–26 and what Jesus says in Matthew 24:1–14. What do their words teach us about the seals, or locks, in Revelation and what they mean?

If we want to understand the seven seals, we must first understand the curses in the Old Testament Covenant. The Covenant was God’s Special Agreement with His people. God’s Agreement warns us that He will use four awful things to punish His people when they do what is wrong: (1) wild animals, (2) war, (3) disease, and (4) hunger. God uses these four punishments to help His people understand how much they need Him. These punishments help us understand the four horsemen in Revelation 6. God uses the four horsemen to help His people stay “awake” while they wait for Jesus to come back. In Matthew 24:4–14, Jesus explains what will happen on earth before He comes back. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th seals show us many of the same things Jesus talked about. God uses the four horsemen to help His people remember that this earth is not their home.

The 1st rider in Revelation 6:1, 2 holds a bow. He also wears a crown. In Revelation 6:2, the Greek word for the 1st rider’s crown is “stephanos [ste’-fä-nos].” It is the crown that God gives to His people who win the war against sin (Revelation 2:10; Revelation 3:11). The rider in Revelation 6:2 is a warrior who cannot lose. As he rides into war, he defeats his enemies. The 1st seal shows us a special time in history when God’s people first started to preach the Good News. Jesus’ kingdom grew. Today, God’s people must share the Good News in many more places before Jesus comes back.

The things that happen in the 1st seal match God’s message to the church in Ephesus and what happened during that time. Remember, Ephesus was a real church. But also it is a word picture for the time in history when God’s people shared the Good News with people all over the earth in a very short time (Colossians 1:23).

When we are on Jesus’ side in the war against evil, we are always on the winning side. Why is it important to remember that truth when times get hard?



The first seal shows us a special time in history when God’s people first started to preach the Good News.

JESUS OPENS THE 2ND AND 3RD LOCKS (Revelation 6:3, 4)

Revelation 6:3, 4 show us the red horse and its rider and the work God gave this rider to do. Remember, the four horses and their riders are word pictures. They tell us about Christian history from the time when Jesus woke up from the dead until His Second Coming. What do the word pictures of the red horse and its rider tell us about Jesus' followers and their work to share the Good News?

Look what happens when Jesus opens the 2nd lock or seal: the rider on the red horse ends peace on the earth. With no peace, people try to kill each other. What causes peace to end? War. The red horse and rider show us the war that Jesus fights against Satan. The rider does not kill anyone. But the big "sword" that Jesus uses to fight against Satan is the Good News. Satan fights back (read Matthew 10:34). He attacks Jesus by hurting God's people. That is why the 2nd horse is red, the same color as blood.



The red horse and rider show us the war that Jesus fights against Satan.

Read Revelation 6:5, 6 about the black horse and its rider. What does this word picture tell us about God's people and what happened when they preached the Good News? (Also read Leviticus 26:28 and Ezekiel 4:16 for a hint.)

The rider on the black horse holds a scale. This scale weighs food. Someone in John's vision announces: " 'A quart [two pounds] of wheat or three quarts [six pounds] of barley will cost a full day's pay' " (Revelation 6:6, ERV). The announcement that people must measure food on scales shows a time when there will not be enough food. In John's day, " 'a full day's pay' " was enough money for a family to buy the food they needed to eat on that day. But when there was a food shortage, they were able to afford food for only one person. So, how did a family feed all of its members? They bought barley. Poor people ate barley because barley was the only thing that did not cost too much to buy.

The 3rd seal shows us more about what happens when people do not accept the Good News. We saw that the white horse showed us God's people preaching the Good News. The black horse is a word picture that shows us a time when no one preaches the Good News. Grain, both wheat and barley, is a word picture for God's truth (Luke 8:11). When people do not accept God's truth, they will not have enough spiritual food on the earth. Many people will go "hungry."

**JESUS OPENS THE 4TH LOCK OR SEAL
(Revelation 6:7, 8)**

Read Revelation 6:7, 8. What is happening here in these verses? How is this action connected to what happens when Jesus opens the 4th lock, or seal?

Let us look at the Greek word for the color of the horse in the 4th seal. The word for this color in Greek is “chloros [khlō-ros].” Chloros is the gray color of a dead body when it rots. The name of the horse’s rider is Death. Death has a friend. His friend’s name is Hades. Hades is the Greek word for the “grave.” So, John in his vision shows us Death and the Grave, or Hades, as people. God allows Death and Hades to destroy humans with war, hunger, death, and wild animals (Matthew 24:7, 8).

The 4th seal is a time of disease and death. Its awful word pictures warn us about what happens when people throw out the Good News. The Good News is God’s spiritual food. People will go “hungry” for spiritual truth because they refused to eat the “food” that God wanted to feed them. In the end, they will “starve” to death. But there is good news for us. Jesus says, “ ‘I have power over death and hell [Hades; the grave]’ ” (Revelation 1:18, NLV). God limits Death’s power and Hades’ power over people. God gives Death and Hades power over only ¼ part of the earth.

Read again Jesus’ messages to the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Thyatira (Revelation 2). Look at what happens in those four churches. How do those messages also show us what happens in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th seals?

We saw that each of the seven churches show us what happens during different times in Christian history. The seals also explain what happens at different times in Christian history. During the time of the New Testament church, Jesus’ followers shared the Good News everywhere in a short time. After that, the Roman Kingdom attacked Christians. The 2nd seal shows us that God put a stop to Rome’s attacks on His church. Rome’s attacks lasted from the end of A.D. 100 to the beginning of A.D. 300. The 3rd seal shows us what happened between A.D. 300 and A.D. 400. At that time, there was not enough spiritual “food” or Bible truth in the church. It led to the time in history known as the “Dark Ages.” The 4th seal explains the spiritual death that happened in the Christian church during the Dark Ages.



John shows us Death and the Grave as people who destroy humans with war, hunger, death, and wild animals.

JESUS OPENS THE 5TH LOCK OR SEAL (Revelation 6:9, 10)

What is happening in Revelation 6:9, 10?

What does the word “souls” (Revelation 6:9, ERV) mean in the Bible? A soul is the whole person (Genesis 2:7). Revelation 6:9, 10 show us God’s loyal people, or “souls,” who died for their faith. In his vision, John sees these people “under the altar” (Revelation 6:9, ERV) in heaven’s sanctuary. Heaven’s sanctuary is the place where Jesus works to save His people. In the sanctuary on earth, the holy leaders took blood from the animals that people brought to God as gifts. Then the priests poured the blood at the bottom of the altar. God wants to show John that His people rest under the altar because they gave their lives for the truth (Exodus 29:12; Leviticus 4:7). In John’s vision, God’s people who are under the altar cry to God for justice. They ask God to prove that they are innocent.

Now let us be clear about something. These people are dead. They are not in heaven. The Bible teaches that death is the same as sleep. People do not talk or communicate after they die. So, these verses in Revelation are only word pictures. They explain the things that happen on this earth that are not fair. They do **not** explain what happens after a person dies.



John sees some of God’s people who died for their faith. They lie at the bottom of the altar and cry out to God to prove that they are innocent.

Read Revelation 6:11; Deuteronomy 32:43; and Psalm 79:10. How does God answer the prayers of His people who died for their faith and “cry out” to Him for justice?

God gives white robes to His people who were killed for their faith. These white robes are word pictures for Jesus’ holy and obedient life. God gives this gift of white clothes to everyone who accepts His mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin (Revelation 3:5; Revelation 19:8). Then God tells His people they must rest or sleep in the grave until Jesus makes other believers right with God too (Revelation 7:9, 10). God’s people who died for their faith will not wake up from the dead until the Second Coming and the start of the 1,000 years in heaven with Jesus (Revelation 20:4).

The 5th seal shows us the time in the Christian church leading up to the Reformation. The Reformation was the time when people all over Europe woke up to Bible truth and started making big changes. These changes led to the start of the Protestant churches. Before that time, millions of people were killed because they believed Bible truth.

JESUS OPENS THE 6TH LOCK OR SEAL (Revelation 6:12–14)

When Jesus opens the 5th lock, we see that God’s people who died for their faith shout to God for justice. The time comes for God to help His people and answer their prayers.

Read Matthew 24:29, 30 and 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10. How do these verses help us understand what happens in Revelation 6:12–14? What does John show us?

John tells us about the signs that happen in the sky when Jesus opens the 6th seal. In Matthew 24:29, 30, Jesus also talked about the signs of the 6th seal. These special signs appear in the sky at the end of the “time of great [awful] suffering” (Revelation 7:14, ERV), or the Dark Ages. The signs warn people that Jesus’ Second Coming will happen soon. The sun, the moon, the falling “stars,” and the sky in the 6th seal are real, not word pictures. At the same time, John says the real sun will look the same as black clothes. John uses this word picture to show us that the sun really will become black. John also says how the moon will look the same as blood. That shows us that the moon really will turn red. John says the stars that fall to the earth are the same as figs that drop off a tree. Christians believe that all these signs already happened: (1) In 1755, there was an awful earthquake in Lisbon, Portugal. (2) On May 19, 1780, people in eastern New York and southern New England saw the sun grow fully dark. (3) And on November 13, 1833, thousands of stars made the night look the same as day when they “fell” from the sky over the Atlantic Ocean. When people saw the stars fall, they started to wake up to Bible truth. Christians today see these signs as the things that John said must happen before the Second Coming.

When Jesus comes, He will give justice to everyone on the earth. Then evil people everywhere will feel deep panic (Revelation 6:15–17). They will ask the mountains to “fall on us. . . . Hide us from the anger of the Lamb!” (Revelation 6:16, ERV). They will say, “The great [special] day of [T]heir [the Three-in-One God’s] anger has come. Who can live through [stay alive during] it?” (Revelation 6:17, NIV). John gives us the answer to this question in Revelation 7:4: the people who stay alive during the Second Coming have God’s mark, or seal, on their foreheads. This seal means that God’s people are full of the Holy Spirit. They have God’s Spirit locked inside them.



The people who stay alive during the Second Coming have God’s mark, or seal, on their foreheads. This seal means that God’s people are full of the Holy Spirit.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The World’s [all the people on the earth] Need [the thing we need most],” pages 457–460, in *Testimonies [messages] to Ministers [pastors] and Gospel [Good News] Workers*.

In a vision, John watches Jesus open the seven locks, or seals, on a scroll. We saw that a scroll is a rolled-up piece of writing paper. John’s vision about Jesus and the seven seals shows us God’s care for His people on earth. Writer Kenneth A. Strand tells us the same thing:

“The Bible shows us that God has always cared for His people. The Bible also shows us that during every time in history God is always there to make His people strong. The Bible promises us that at the end of time, God will prove that His people are innocent of doing anything wrong. Then God will reward His people with the gift of everlasting life. What a precious gift! We can understand only a little about how wonderful this gift is for us. In the book of Revelation, John talks about how much God cares for His people and tells us even more about God’s love for us. So, the book of Revelation has a special message for us. The book of Revelation shows us the most important message in the whole Bible: Jesus, the ‘Living One.’ Jesus won the war against death and the grave (Revelation 1:8). Jesus will never leave His loyal followers. Even when God’s people must die for their faith, they win the war against sin (Revelation 12:11). The ‘crown of life’ waits for them (read Revelation 2:10; Revelation 21:1–4; and Revelation 22:4).”—Kenneth A. Strand, “The Seven Heads: Do They Represent [show us] the Roman Emperors [kings]?” in *Symposium [group discussion] on Revelation—Book 2*, Daniel and Revelation Committee [group of people] Series [a set of books about the same topic or idea], volume 7, page 206, adapted.



“Even when God’s people must die for their faith, they win the war against sin. . . . The ‘crown of life’ waits for them.”—Kenneth Strand, “The Seven Heads” in *Symposium [group discussion] on Revelation—Book 2*, page 206, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What important lessons have you learned from our study about Jesus and the seven locks or seals? How does Jesus’ opening the seals show you that God is in control of everything, even when bad things happen on earth? How does Jesus’ opening the locks also show us that all of God’s wonderful promises to us will happen?
- ② How can your church work harder to share the Good News about Jesus with other people?