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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

As you turn to Revelation 6, I go ahead and find the book of Daniel, chapter 9 in the Old Testament. Daniel is nestled among the Minor Prophets, although he really is much more than a minor prophet. We’ll come back to Daniel.

A lot of people don’t understand the book of Revelation but the key is found in 1:19, where the threefold division of the book is given by the Lord. He says to John, who is in exile on the island of Patmos by order of the Roman emperor, Domitian, “Write the things which you have seen.” That was a vision John had of Jesus (past tense). Then he said, “Write the things which are,” right now (present tense), describing the seven churches, which represent all churches of all times even us today. Then beginning in chapter 4 and through the rest of the book it is a description of the future. We believe that in chapter 4:1, there is a picture of the church caught up together to meet the Lord in the air and we are taken into heaven. Chapters 4 and 5 have been exciting, because we have been reading what the Bible says heaven is going to be like. There is going to be great praise around the throne with all of the redeemed singing to the Lamb.

But beginning in chapter 6, the scene shifts to planet earth and describes what is going to take place while we are in heaven and it’s not a pretty picture. I try to be positive and an encourager but I have to tell you this sermon is not going to be very pleasant. However, I am committed to preach and teach the whole counsel of the word of God and not to skip over any of it—even the unpleasant parts. The good news is if you are a born again Christian, you are not going to be here on earth when all of this is taking place. One reason you *don’t* want to you’re your time waiting to accept Jesus is because the Bible describes what it is going to be like on planet earth—terrible world chaos. For the rest of the book of Revelation or at least the future section of it we’re going to look at three series of sevens. There are going to be seven seals. Do you remember a few weeks ago when I had a little scroll up here that had the seals on the top? You break one seal and you open it and you read something then you break the second seal on the scroll and open it and so on. The seventh seal leads into seven trumpets; each one of these trumpets is symbolic of judgement upon the earth announcement of judgement like a trumpet announcing something. The seventh trumpet leads into seven bowls or vials of wrath that are symbolically poured out on earth in God’s judgement. These three series of sevens seals, trumpets and bowls all have the same pattern of sequence: The first four are given, then, there is a pause and the next two are given, then there is a long pause, after which the seventh is given.

We’re going to look at these seven seals the Lamb, Jesus, opens in heaven. Every time he opens a seal it describes something that’s going to happen on earth during the time of what we call the Tribulation. Let me put this in historical context to you. This is what we believe or at least what I believe and many other Bible scholars believe. I believe the next thing that’s going to happen is what we call the Rapture of the church. Jesus is going to come and all true Christians are going to be caught up together with him. Then, on the planet earth seven years of Tribulation are going to take place. Jesus called it the Great Tribulation and we’ll see why it is seven years.

Seal #1: Deceptive Peacemaker

Look at each one of these seven seals. I'm going to spend more time on the first one than on all the other five tonight.

Revelation 6:1-2. "I watched as the Lamb opened the first of seven seals. Then, I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, 'Come!' [*archo*, which literally means *proceed* or *start*. It's a word that would be used at the beginning of a race] I looked and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

Seal number one is a deceptive peacemaker. On the surface this looks like somebody really nice. Here's a guy symbolically riding a white horse we all know good guys wear white hats and ride the white horses and he has a crown on his head. He has a bow but there's no arrow, meaning he's going in peace and he conquers. So, at the outset you think "Boy, this is a hero." In fact, we're going to see when Jesus comes back down the road in chapter 19 he's going to be riding a white horse also. But it is very important you know this represents Satan's *imitation* of Jesus: This is the counterfeit Christ. This is the character you have often heard referred to as the Antichrist. He is going to come on the scene of the world and he is going to be a one-world ruler. I don't know when Jesus is going to come back and I don't know when any of this is going to take place. It is fruitless to speculate exactly when and if anybody starts giving you dates saying, "This is when it's going to happen," you know they are not obeying the scriptures, because Jesus said, "No man knows the day or the hour except the Father in heaven." You don't know the exact date when all of this is going to take place, but Jesus said in Matthew 24 it's like "birth pains." Babies don't come unannounced. God has given you these things called contractions to let you know when it's time to go to the hospital. You say, "Boy I think that baby's on the way. I'd better go get taken care of." We can't know the date or the hour but Jesus said when these birth pains start, you can know it's about the season these things are going to happen.

Has there ever been a time in the history of the world when it was technologically possible for there to be a one-world ruler? Never before today! But with communications and transportation it could happen today. Every time you hear somebody in government start talking about a global economy, global politics, or one-world government, they don't even know they are setting themselves up. I'm not saying everybody that says that is the Antichrist. All I am saying is the system is in place and many people want to see it happen.

What do we know about this Antichrist? Look at verse 2. He's riding a white horse. White means bloodless and a horse is always a symbol of war. It means he is able to take control of the world in what we would call a bloodless coup. He is able to slip in as a peaceful ruler. He's holding a bow a bow without an arrow. It is like a sign of peace. Back in ancient military days when someone wanted to surrender, the captain rode to the opposing army holding up a bow with no arrow. This is a sign of peace." This man is coming saying, "Peace! Peace!" and the world is going to fall down at his feet. Jesus has raptured the church. Millions have disappeared. You talk about a crisis the world has never known before! Here is someone who comes on the scene and says, "We have to all pull together now. No more of this nationalism. No more of country against country. Let's all work together to solve the world's problems. Doesn't that sound attractive? Doesn't that sound like it's something some people are preaching today?"

Some people ask, "How do you know this is going to be a seven-year period because the book of Revelation never says seven years?" Four times the book of Revelation mentions 3½ years—42 months. This is one of the most amazing prophecies in scripture I want to point you to. Hold your place in Revelation 6, and turn to Daniel 9. I hope everybody will read this in the Bible with your own eyes. What I'm about to share with you is nothing new or unusual. If you really want more information on this, I encourage you to get any kind of study Bible, particularly a Ryrie study Bible or a Scofield study Bible. They go into this in much more detail.

Daniel 9:24. The angel Gabriel gave this prophecy to Daniel almost 600 years before Jesus was even born. Daniel was in exile in Babylon. There was no temple in Jerusalem. It had been destroyed. Israel was an outpost of the Babylonians. There was no nation of Israel as such. Things seemed hopeless but, look what Gabriel told Daniel verse 24 "Seventy 'sevens.'" (KJV "weeks") To us a week is seven days but this is the Hebrew word meaning seven of anything. It's like our word "dozen." If I told you to get me a dozen something you would say, "A dozen what? A dozen doughnuts? A dozen marbles? A dozen horseshoes?" A dozen something. This word means sevens and it is very clear it means weeks of years or sevens of years so when it says, "Seventy sevens of years." Seventy times seven years is 490 years. That's the period of time Gabriel is talking about: 490 years. Verse 24 says, "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people in your holy city [Jerusalem] to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy." That's a whole lot in that one sentence but this is basically what Gabriel says: "Daniel, it's going to take a period of 490 years to completely finish everything God has in store for the nation of Israel. "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, [that's the word for Messiah, which means Jesus] "the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens' [49 years] and sixty-two 'sevens'" [434 years] That's 49 plus 434 years.

Find Artaxerxes, the Babylonian ruler, in any history book. Artaxerxes issued a decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the Jews could go back and rebuild Jerusalem back in the time of Daniel. It was exactly 49 years until the time that happened. Then, from the time that happened until the time Jesus Christ was born, and lived and died, was 434 years exactly. Gabriel gave Daniel a vision for the future. Keep reading in verse 26, "After the sixty-two 'sevens,'" or 434 years "the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing." That means he will be crucified and he was. "The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary." This is talking about a different ruler, the Antichrist. So in 70 A.D., a little over 35 years after Jesus was crucified, the Roman general, Titus, descended upon Jerusalem and utterly destroyed the city. They tore the temple down and even sowed salt in the soil so plants could not grow there. So everything Daniel prophesied here has taken place. "The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He [the Antichrist] will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.'" This is the word for peace treaty.

I know you are going to get confused and that's okay. The first time I studied this I was confused for months, but if it spurs your curiosity enough to study it in the Ryrie study Bible or the Scofield reference Bible and you sit down with a calculator and a Bible in one hand and a history book in the other hand it all adds up. And this is in the future: The Antichrist is going to come and confirm a peace treaty. There has been one Arab/Israeli peace treaty signed since Israel

became a nation again in 1948. That was the Camp David Accords between Sadat and Begin, but you and I both know it was basically between Egypt and Israel. We have been watching and reading the newspapers and just in the past few days as the Palestinians who represent those people who feel like they have no homeland live in all those nations in the Middle East and Israel are signing a peace treaty tomorrow, where the PLO will recognize Israel and Israel will recognize the PLO. This is an amazing peace treaty. Five years ago, two years ago, one year ago, I would have never thought that would have been possible as quickly as this happened and it's going to happen tomorrow in Washington, D.C.

Many who study it believe this could be the covenant it's talking about here the peace treaty. Now don't go out of here saying I said Bill Clinton is the Antichrist because he's going to be there tomorrow. He's just a smart politician! He's milking all the PR out of it he can. It is not the person who *signs* the treaty. Notice the words, “confirms the covenant” this is what many people believe it means when the Antichrist comes on the scene he is going to confirm, validate, and recommit himself to a peace treaty between Israel and the other nations of the Middle East.

But keep reading; he's going to do that for seven years. Verse 27 “In the middle of the seven he will put an end to sacrifice and offering.” In the middle of that seven-year period he's going to change he's not going to be peaceful anymore; that means in the Temple. Is there a Temple in Jerusalem? I've been there several times and I've been to the Dome of the Rock, which is one of the most holy sites in Islam and I've been into the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque at the other end. The Jewish people do not control Temple Mount anymore but archeologists believe that where the temple was, was not exactly where the Dome of the Rock is. If you have ever seen pictures of the Wailing Wall, there is an area underground beside it where they have been coming and going ever since the Six Day War. Many believe they are ready at any moment to reconstruct the Temple underground on the same level it was during the time of Jesus. That's what a lot of people can't understand. But over the centuries debris and dirt builds up. I have walked on the streets of Jerusalem and heard the tour guide say, “There's the Pool of Bethesda where Jesus healed the man” Do you know how far down you have to dig to get to the level of the pool as it was during the time of Jesus? About twenty-five feet. Doesn't that blow your mind that over two thousand years twenty-five feet of debris has built up? So if you think the Temple was built on the same level as the Dome of the Rock, that's just not true. The last time I was in Jerusalem, one of the guides, who is a Zionist—a Jewish man— said they were training Rabbis to perform sacrifices so when the Temple was opened again, they would be ready to start doing sacrifices again. So it means during this seven-year period of Tribulation there will be a Jewish Temple. They will be offering sacrifices, but in the middle of the seven years this Antichrist who has seemed to be the friend of Israel is going to say, “Stop it!” Then it says, “And one who causes desolation will place abomination upon a wing of the Temple until the end of this is decreed and poured out on him.”

If you want a cross-reference, Jesus said in Matthew 24:15, “When you see the abomination of desolation written by the prophet, Daniel, then you'll know that all of this has taken place.” That may sound really weird to you and strange and you may be more confused than ever before, but let me explain. Gabriel said “490 years, Daniel, is going to take care of all of God's plan for Israel, 49 weeks until the issue is decreed for the Temple to be built.” That's history. Then he said, 462 years from that time until the time the Messiah is crucified. That's history. 434 plus 49

equals 483 years. 483 of 490 years have been accounted for, leaving 7 years. That’s very important. This is what happened: When Israel rejected Jesus Christ and crucified him and did not recognize him as the Messiah, the prophetic clock stopped for them. We are living in the age of the church, the dispensation of grace. We are between that 483rd year and the beginning of this seven-year period. It’s like the prophetic clock stopped. But for Israel when Jesus Christ comes back to rapture the church, it will start again—and there’s one seven-year period. Daniel says in the middle of that seven year period, the Antichrist’s true evil colors and nature are going to be seen. The book of Revelation uses that phrase three and a half years 42 months four times. Do you want to know why some people get so fired up about prophecy? That’s exactly why right there, because of that one prophecy in Daniel that predicts when Jesus was going to be crucified and when the Antichrist is going to come.

Seal #2: Destructive Policy

Okay back to Revelation and through these other seals. We’re going to learn more about the Antichrist later in the book of Revelation. This is a political seal, a political ruler. Seal number describes the deceptive peacemaker’s destructive policy. This has to do with a military event. Revelation 6:3, “When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, ‘Come!’ Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.” This describes a time when there is going to be widespread warfare. In World War I, ten million died. In World War II, fifty million people died but this is predicting a time in the future on planet earth when there is going to be such widespread warfare, many more people than that are going to die. There’s a very interesting phrase here. Look at verse 4, “to him was given a large sword.” The word really there is *great* sword. It’s the word *mega*. It doesn’t mean big, it just means effective like you would say, “That’s a *great* knife! I mean you mean it’s a *sharp* one and the word for sword there is not the word for a big broad sword. It’s the word, *machaira* in Greek which means a dagger. This is very important because back in Bible times the zealots carried this dagger in the sleeves of their robes. They walked through the marketplace and would take out this dagger. The sharper it was the greater it was. They used this dagger in guerrilla warfare or what we would call terrorism. It could be this is a prediction of the widespread prevalence of terrorism. I know part of the agreement tomorrow is the PLO will renounce terrorism. But you and I both know there are some factions, both Israeli and Islam or Palestinian, who are not going to pay any attention to that peace treaty. There are evil fringes on both sides that have much hatred toward the other side. This could be a prediction of the spread of terrorism. You and I both know Americans a little upset when some of these folks start talking about coming over here and bombing the World Trade Tower or bombing American airports using terrorism. That scares Americans. We feel like we can respond to something like Operation Desert Storm because we can get organized. We have time to do it but how do you fight against terrorism? So many think this is a reference to the spread of terrorism a destructive policy.

Seal #3: Deadly Poverty

Seal number three. “When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, ‘A

quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!” The first seal deals with political judgement. The second seal has to do with military judgement. This seal has to do with economic judgement. It’s talking about deadly poverty. This describes a time when there is going to be economic collapse in the world. These all run together. You have a guy the Antichrist who comes on the scene seemingly peaceful but he leads into a policy of terrorism and war and there is so much war going on that people don’t have time to plant their crops. That’s what is happening in Bosnia now. They are so involved in warfare they cannot produce food. When you can’t produce food, there is famine and poverty. This is an amazing prophecy because it says one quart of wheat equals a day’s wages, denarii, a penny. The word *denarii* in Greek was what one man earned working one day. In good economic times, one man working all day made enough money to feed himself, his family and to pay for his living expenses and a little bit more for that day but one quart of wheat is only enough to feed one person. Here’s the decision. Times are going to be so bad economically that a man works all day and he only makes enough food to feed his mouth not his wife not his children not his family. It’s going to be a terrible time of economic collapse.

There is something very interesting here. Look what it says in the last part of verse 6. “Do not damage the oil and the wine.” That’s a reference to prosperity, to luxury oil and wine. That’s like today somebody would say “caviar and champagne.” That’s something that’s just for the rich and the famous right? So this is a picture not only of desperate poverty for most of the people, but it’s talking about a group of people who are going to be living in luxury and riches while much of the world is living in poverty. Do we see that happening today? The middle class is shrinking, and shrinking, and shrinking and our world is becoming more and more divided among the very poor and the very rich particularly in Third World Countries.

This is exactly the kind of description Charles Dickens wrote about in his classic book, *A Tale of Two Cities*, when he described the city of Paris. Those of you who read it are familiar with this. He describes a man by the name of Monseigneur who was one of the great lords of the land. “He must have his morning chocolate,” Dickens wrote, “served up by four strong men besides the cook. One lackey carried the chocolate pot into the sacred presence a second man milled and frothed the chocolate, a third servant presented the favored napkin, and a fourth servant poured the chocolate out. Monseigneur must have the luxuries of life and have them in magnificent style but hunger stalked the streets and the slums of the poor. Cold, dirt, sickness, ignorance and want were the lords in waiting on the streets and in the slums.” He described a time in Paris when there was luxury and great poverty that led to the great revolt. And this is what this is describing—an economic collapse.

Seal #4: Damaging Pestilence

Seal number four. “When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.” The fourth seal describes a time of damaging pestilence that has to do with judgement by poor health. Warfare leads to famine, which leads to pestilence. During World War I, there was such terrible pestilence in Europe it is estimated twenty million died of influenza. Another six and a half million people

died from other diseases at that time. This is describing a time in the future where disease is going to be rampant in the world.

AIDS is spreading in our world today and there seems to be no cure. It is predicted to reach epidemic and even pandemic proportions in the future. Could it be this is a prediction of the rampant spread of AIDS? It's not bad in America until it affects your family. In the future it is going to affect more and more of our families. I got a letter just this week from one of our Southern Baptist missionaries in Malawi. He told me 40 percent of the adult male population in Malawi are infected with AIDS and are dying by the thousands. He went on to tell me one of the Southern Baptist missionary wives was raped not long ago in Malawi. By far the biggest concern they had was that she would contract Aids as a result of that rape. It is spreading and it is spreading around the world and this is talking about a time when there is going to be disease, pestilence and plagues.

It is interesting verse 8 talks about "wild beasts of the earth." I don't think it is talking about lions and tigers. Many people think this could be an increase of vermin and rats in the continued urbanization of population centers of the world. In Baghdad, Calcutta and other places, these rats are everywhere. In the 14th century, rats spread Bubonic Plague around Europe and were responsible for the deaths of almost one third of the European population. Could it be that is what this is talking about? We don't know, but it's going to be a terrible time of pestilence.

Seal #5: Dangerous Persecution

It doesn't get any better. Seal number five "When he opened the fifth seal, 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?' Then 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 completed." This predicts a time of dangerous persecution.

You say, "Wait a minute, Brother David. I thought Christians were to be raptured, caught up before all this takes place." That's true. This is not talking about Christians as we know it today, believers as we know it. This is talking about a group of people we are going to see many more times in the book of Revelation called Tribulation Saints. Some will tell you during the Tribulation nobody will be saved. That is not true! There will be many who are saved during the Tribulation but many of them are going to die a martyr's death, because of "their testimony and because of the word of God" We're going to see later—and this is all in the book of Revelation—the Antichrist is going to require everyone have a mark on his or her forehead in order to buy and sell food and these Tribulation Saints are going to say, "No, we're not going to submit to that!" and they are going to be killed! How many? We don't know, but many of them are going to be killed. There's going to be a terrible time of persecution during the Tribulation for those who believe.

Seal #6: Devastating Panic

Seal number six. "I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place."

Seal number six describes devastating panic. How do you imagine people are going to react when there is natural judgement on the earth? Earthquakes, eclipse of the sun, the sky turning red. A lot of this sounds to me like some kind of nuclear holocaust because a nuclear war a nuclear explosion would turn the sky red and it would cause the sky to recede. When it says, "the heavens recede" remember the word heaven can be used to mean the atmosphere, the sky as we know it. Have you seen pictures of the tests of the first atomic bomb exploded by the United States before Hiroshima and Nagasaki? In the pictures it seemed as if the sky was "rolling up like a scroll." It was in just such turmoil like that. That could be a description of this. The reaction of the people is going to be absolute panic!

"Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?'" Isn't that an amazing picture! Usually you think of a lamb as being meek and mild. But there will be utter panic!

We are going to see these people want to kill themselves, but they won't even be allowed to kill themselves during this time of judgement. I told you this is unpleasant! This is not something you want to go home and dream about tonight, but I tell you this with a sense of heaviness and a sense of burden. The Bible says this is what it is going to be like on earth after Jesus comes and gets the Christians. So if you're not a Christian, you need to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior! Because the same prophecy in the book of Daniel is also in the prophecy of Revelation.

CONCLUSION

Here's your homework: Turn to Matthew, chapter 24 and read the words of Jesus Christ himself beginning in verse 4. Notice every one of these judgments is in the very same order they are listed in Revelation 6 are mentioned by Jesus Christ in Matthew 24. The same thing John says is going to happen; Jesus says is going to happen. You had better be sure you are a Christian and you know the Lord Jesus. I don't want to be here during this time and Praise God I'm not going to be here! I'm going to be around the throne of the Lamb praising him saying "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." I'm not going to be here during this time.

You don't have to face all this! In fact, God loves you and he sent Jesus to die for you so you could be saved from this kind of punishment. The New Testament asks the question "How shall we escape judgement if we neglect so great a salvation?" The answer to that is if you do neglect salvation as provided by God, you will not escape! But if you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior if you do you can avoid it you can escape this judgement coming on the world!

OUTLINE

The seven seals are the first of several series of "sevens" in Revelation.

I. Deceptive Peacemaker (vs. 1-3)

This rider on the white horse is a pseudo-peacemaker, the Antichrist. He is described in 2 Thessalonians 2 and Daniel 9:20.

II. Destructive Policy (vs. 3-4)

This may predict the alarming rise of terrorism during the Tribulation

III. Deadly Poverty (vs. 5-6)

An economic crisis will result after the rapture

IV. Damaging Pestilence (vs. 7-8)

Could AIDS be this widespread plague that will kill millions?

V. Dangerous Persecution (vs. 9-11)

Tribulation saints will be slaughtered like another Holocaust

VI. Devastating Panic (vs. 12-17)

Jesus predicted all of this in Matthew 24