

describes the great multitude they are described as those who have come out of the great tribulation. Many want to read this that God's people are spared tribulation, but the truth is the message is more of God's protection through tribulation of life. God's seal is not protection from, but rather a reminder that they belong to God no matter what they pass through. John obviously expected God's people to suffer hardship, trouble and even martyrdom. Yet, God's seal, God's protection was still theirs.

I said that our hope is not a wish or a chance. Our hope is based on Jesus. Our hope is lasting no matter what happens to our lives as individuals or to this world. The world can fall apart and yet, we have hope in Jesus. We know that because He is the risen one and we will be led to the places where we do not thirst or suffer, but where there are everlasting springs and every tear is wiped away.

Our hope is found in Jesus, the risen one and the evidence of this hope is found right now in the visible church. One of the most powerful pictures from these chapters is the multitude that is worshipping Jesus. They are described as a multitude no one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language. This is a powerful image of the church. Only God through Christ can do this. In Chapter 6 we find one who is riding to bent on conquest and controlling others. We have a picture of war, which of course is between those who are not like us. Then, there is famine an economic collapse that so many times is something that happens to others not us. Then there is a change. Death comes and it comes to all. The cosmic forces of the world falling apart come to kings and slaves. No one can stand on the Day of the Lord.

Yet, the scene in heaven is people of all kinds for all time together worshipping the Risen One. That is only something God can do through Jesus. Only Jesus can cut through our prejudice, our hatred, and our animosity and as walls that divide us from others in this world and make us one. Only God can create the church for it is impossibility from earthly perspective.

I say, that to say when I look for signs of the hope that God promises... I look to God's people. I know that the hope we have is sure and an anchor for our souls because I see it in you. When I think know one cares for the things of God, I notice you and your devotion. When I think that everyone is selfish and self-centered, I noticed people who give up their day to minister to others. When I think that we live in a culture that is rude, crude and uncaring, I watch you speak and do kindness just like Jesus. I watch you welcome the stranger in a time when

the stranger is not to be welcomed because of fear. You see, when I wonder if I can place my hope in Christ I am encouraged to do so because of the hope I find in you... in the church. I wonder if John let us see the church in Chapter 7 to remind us that yes, God is at work doing something wonderful and if God can do this, then surely His promises are true.

John describes for us horrible scenes of death and pain, but in the midst of these most horrible descriptions he stops to remind us God hears us, we belong to God and God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Because of this, no matter what we might face... we can have hope. Place your hope in Jesus, He is the anchor for our souls.



# Jesus - Our Eternal Hope

Revelation 7



I am not a Dumb and Dumber fan, but for many that is an iconic movie. It, like other movies, has some scenes that where the dialogue has become part of cultural language. One such scene is when Jim Carey's character is pursuing his love interest. When he asks her what are the chances of them being together, she of course answers not good. He says not good as like one in a hundred. To which she says no, I would say it is more like one and a million. His next line is the iconic line. Carey's character responds with a big smile coming upon his face when he says, "So your telling me there is a chance?"

Sometimes we think of hope like the optimistic character from Dumb and Dumber. Hope is like a wish. Hope is like chance. The only problem with viewing hope in this manner is that it lacks a foundation. Hope, that is nothing but a wish, is thin and flimsy. This type of hope will not anchor us in times of trial and trouble. We can wish things were different, but wishes do not produce right actions or character. We can say there is a small chance, but the evidence against that chance leads us to despair.

So, what is difference about hope? Hope from a Christian perspective is not a wish. Hope from the Christian perspective is not based on best wishes, thoughts or higher than 50% chances. Hope from a Christian perspective is based on a certainty. That certainty is Jesus. Our hope is not based on what might be some day or what might have been or what even might be. As we have learned in Revelation God is the one who is, the one who was and is to come.

In other words, hope from the Christian perspective is based on the person of Jesus. It is based on the truth that Jesus is Lord. It is based on the truth of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Jesus' resurrection then fulfills God's promises of a Messiah and then becomes the basis of hope for God's future promises, namely that this same Jesus will return in God's timing to reconcile all of creation to God.

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that God has fulfilled God's promise through the sending of

Jesus and states of Jesus "He is the anchor for our souls." The anchor, the one who is sure, the one who holds us steady in the waves of life. Jesus is the anchor and Jesus is our hope... our eternal hope.

This is the emphasis of Revelation 6 and 7. We have been looking during the Easter Season at the pictures of Jesus, the Risen One from the book of Revelation. The first week we looked at that beautiful first chapter that reminded us that Jesus the one who was crucified not only lives, but also lives in heaven and reigns there. Thus, we can count on God's character, power and future. God had a word for us and that word is grace and peace.

Last week we looked at chapters 4 and 5 and peered through the door with John into the throne room of heaven. There we saw Jesus standing at the center of the throne room next to God who was on the throne. Jesus is encircled by all the heavenly beings and there is an explosion of worship. The worship that had been for God, who created all things, now is also offered to Jesus the lamb that was slain. This Jesus not only receives the worship that God receives in Chapter 4, but the worship expands and expands until all things and all people are praising Jesus.

Chapter 6 continues John's view of what is happening in the throne room. The scroll with seven seals is now ready to be opened by Jesus, the only one who is worthy to open the scroll. As Chapter 6 begins we begin to see an event following each opening of the seal. There are seven seals. We are reminded that Revelation is full of sevens. There are seven churches, seven seals, seven bowls and seven trumpets. Scholars are divided about whether each seven events are chronological in order or are they the same seven events described in different terms, which would be keeping with apocalyptic language. No matter how you choose to read it, the picture is clear. There is unleashed on earth some terrible events.

The first four seals are some of the most vivid pictures of not only Revelation, but of the Bible. The picture of the four horseman of



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the apocalypse have been painted, sculpted and written about by many. Their depiction is an amazing picture. There is rider on a white horse. This one on the white horse has a crown and a bow and arrow and he is bent on conquest. Some try to depict this person as Jesus, since Jesus is depicted as riding a white horse in victory in Revelation 19. However, this is not to be interpreted to be Jesus. The one on the white horse is given a crown the indication that the crown is not really his or it is temporary. Secondly, the rider is bent on conquest. Some interpret this to be the antichrist and still others would suggest it depicts all who come in conquest. The world's history has been filled with men who were given a crown and what they did with the crown was to ride out bent on conquest. Their whole life was filled taking, plundering and grabbing.

The second horse is the red horse and it is the symbol of war. The description is of one who has the power to take peace from the earth. He has the power to make men slay each other. He was given a large sword. The picture of war and warring against one another. The picture of the animosity and hatred that exists between nations, races, people on this earth.

Last century was the bloodiest of all centuries. It is estimated that in the 20th century there were 187 million people killed in war. Trying to estimate the number of people who have died as the result of war is almost impossible. It was Winston Churchill who said history is written by the winners. This means that the number people who died in a given war are many times only estimated by the victor. Also, it is almost impossible to know the deaths of many who died without any historical documentation. I have been listening to a wonderful podcast by Dan Carlin called Hardcore History. I have recently listened to a 5 part series on Genghis Kahn. Although I was a history major in college my Asian history background is almost non-existent. Some interesting things about this conquering leader. Kahn conquered what would be equal to the landmass of Africa. It is estimated by some scientist that 50% of all people on the earth have Kahn's DNA. In addition, it is also estimate that he and his army were responsible for 40 million people or 10% of the worlds' population at the time.

A report in 2015 from Reuters suggest that there has been a rise of about 28% in fatalities in war over the past few years than before in this century. The red horse is war and the rider is given power to make men slay one another.

The third horse is black. There is pair of scales in the riders hand and the saying is a quart of wheat for a day wages and three quarts of barley for a days wage and do not damage the oil and the wine. The picture is that of famine. It is a picture of food being scarce and the cost is beyond anyone's imagination. We can read this as famine or we can read this as economic collapse. Both

bring with them a misery that is beyond description. It is estimated that 70 to 100 million people died of famine in just the 20th century. In the United States it is estimated that 48.1 million people live in what is described as food insecure households. The third rider was famine and economic collapse.

The fourth rider is described as pale. The word really means a kind of sickly green. The picture is that of pestilence. This rider is death and hades is coming right behind this rider. This seems to be an inclusive description. Death is described with the power to bring death by sword, famine and plague and wild beasts. John writes that one fourth of all people on the earth were dying by one of these methods. Hades is coming right behind them swallowing them up. Hades the place of the dead or abode of the dead is described coming behind and swallowing up those who have died.

The first four seals are a picture of the horribleness of living and dying on this earth. Life can be filled with horrible moments filled with pain and grief beyond one's control or ability to bear.

Then there is a fifth seal. The fifth seal is a reminder that there are also those who are put to death because of their faith. The fifth seal reveals those who have been martyred as a result of their faith in Christ. They are souls under the altar. The picture is reminiscent in the blood of the sacrifice of the sacrifice poured under the altar in Leviticus 4:7. The idea is the blood of the martyrs is under the altar in heaven. They cry out "how long o Lord?" The cry of the martyrs is the cry of every Christian who has suffered for faith and wondered when God will intervene. How long until we are avenged?

Eugene Boring comments on this verse and says of the first readers of Revelation would have understood that the chopping block of Rome had become a cosmic altar. The martyr for Christ was not purposeless. They were not forgotten. In the midst of the death described in Chapter 6 there is a remembrance of those who have died for their faith. They are not forgotten. It was not pointless. They are not only remembered, but given a white robe the sign of purity and told to be patient. They must wait until the time is completed.

The sixth seal is opened and the result is cataclysmic cosmic chaos. The descriptive yet symbolic language describes the world falling apart. Creation being uncreated. Order becoming disorder. As a result all that we count on for surety and order in this world goes away. Notice that from King to slave everyone is afraid and standing in judgment. Who can stand in the Great Day of the Lord? The answer? No one. It matters not what you have become or what you have amassed on that day. All will be judged.

It is there that the scene changes. After this incredibly image filled chapter of disaster, trouble and death the

imagery changes. Before the earth can be destroyed or before it all comes to an end, an angel says that God's people will be sealed. The idea of sealing has to do with protection. Here they are sealed with God's protection and their number is 144,000. John lists it as 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Who are the 144,000? There have been many interpretations offered. First, we must say that the number 144,000 is not a literal number as is almost any number in Revelation. They are symbolic numbers. 144,000 would represent wholeness and completeness. 12 was a complete number. 1,000 are a god like number. So what you have here is 12 by 1,000 by 12 again. So, it is a holy and complete number. Some suggest it represents God's people of the ages. Complete and no one left out. They come from every tribe. If this is the case, then the 144,000 are the same as the multitude described later. Some suggest the 144,000 are the martyrs and the great multitude is the picture of the church of the living God.

John writes that the multitude is praising the God of salvation and the elders and the living beings join in this moment of worship just as in chapter 4 and 5. John indicates that one of the elders asks what seems to be a rhetorical question. Who is the multitude dressed in white? John is speechless it seems and says, "you know." He is told they are those who have come out of the great tribulation and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. These are the one who have come through the great ordeal. They are the ones who have been saved through Christ. Because of this the elder says, "Never again will they thirst. Never again will the sun beat upon them. The Lamb will be their shepherd and lead them to springs of water and will wipe away their tears."

What is John's point? Those who belong to Jesus have hope in the midst of the most horrible situations. There is nothing that happens on this earth or in this life that can ultimately take away what God has for us in Christ Jesus. As frightening as Revelation can be in its imagery it is meant to be a word of hope. It is a word of encouragement and hope for those who follow Jesus.

Let me again make some comments on these incredible images we find in Chapters 6 and 7.

First, we find hope in Jesus because this hope is based in reality. What is incredible about these two chapters

is the realism that it presents. There are images of death, famine, conquest, and even the world order falling apart. There is even a picture of the martyrs who are crying out to God and the message is you must wait. They are to wait until others will join them in martyrdom and things are completed. I like what Mitchel Reddish O.T., professor from Stetson University in Florida, writes in his commentary on Revelation. Reddish states John is telling his readers that sometimes things get worst before they get better. Hope, real hope, is found in the realism of this world. John is telling his readers that others may die before Christ returns. He is telling his readers that what they are going through is not going to be over soon.

In fact, it may get worse before it gets better... even still there is hope.

OUR HOPE IS BASED ON JESUS. OUR HOPE IS LASTING NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO OUR LIVES AS INDIVIDUALS OR TO THIS WORLD. THE WORLD CAN FALL APART AND YET, WE HAVE HOPE IN JESUS. WE KNOW THAT BECAUSE HE IS THE RISEN ONE AND WE WILL BE LED TO THE PLACES WHERE WE DO NOT THIRST OR SUFFER, BUT WHERE THERE ARE EVERLASTING SPRINGS AND EVERY TEAR IS WIPED AWAY.

Too much of the time we present Christian faith as some fantasy that denies the very existence of evil and trouble and we create a false hope. There are many in our cultures that believe to be a follower of Jesus is to be healthy, wealthy, and wise. The follower of Jesus on a billboard is not one of sufferer, but of victor and I mean victor with the trappings of this world not the trapping of heaven. Is John reminding us that sometimes things get worse before they get better? True hope in Christ is the hope that outlasts the worst things on this earth.

Any of us who have been through health issues know sometimes things get worse before they get better. If you have been through a journey with someone with addiction, you know sometimes things get worse before they get better. If you have walked with a loved one to death's door with disease and then given thanks to God for deliverance and heaven, then you know sometimes things get worse before they get better.

John is telling us that as followers of Jesus, we don't have to stick our head in the sand and ignore the sometimes-horrible events of our lives and in this world. We live in a fallen world, but we believe that no matter how bad things might become there is still hope. It is a hope that is based on Jesus.

John is telling us, God is with us even in the worst this world has to offer. The beautiful interlude of the fifth seal and the counting of the 144,000 are witnesses to this promise. In the midst of the death, description of the seals the fifth one is almost out of place. It is an interlude and a pause in the story to say in all this death and destruction God has not forgotten God's people. The martyrs are not forgotten and the 144,000 are given a seal of protection. Now what kind of protection is this? That is the real question. Is it protection from or protection through? It seems to me that is protection through. When the elder