



GENESIS

BOOKENDS

REVELATION

THE LAMB HOLDS THE REINS

REVELATION 6

SYNOPSIS

Revelation 6 reveals that history is not chaotic but governed by Christ, the Lamb who opens the seals of God's plan. The four horsemen show that conquest, war, poverty, and death all unfold under His authority. The suffering of the church, even unto martyrdom, is neither unseen nor meaningless, as God promises justice and rest for His people. Though persecution continues, it serves His purposes. The final seal points to coming judgment, when all will face the wrath of the Lamb. Yet the same Lamb who judges is the One who bore God's wrath for sinners, offering salvation to all who trust in Him.

SERMON OUTLINE

1. **The Lamb Holds the Reins of History:** The first four seals of the scroll release four horsemen. These four horsemen describe four powers unleashed upon this world that shape much of history.
 - a. **The White Horse:** Symbolizing Christ riding out and conquering with the Gospel
 - b. **The Red Horse:** Symbolizing war and persecution
 - c. **The Black Horse:** Symbolizing economic poverty
 - d. **The Pale Horse:** Symbolizing death by sword, by famine, by sickness, and by tragedy
2. **The Lamb Holds the Reins of the Church:** The fifth seal reveals those who have died for the name of Jesus Christ, as they are comforted underneath the altar.
 - a. The Reality of Martyrdom
 - b. The Painful Prayer
 - c. Christ's Peculiar Response
3. **The Lamb Holds the Reins of Final Judgment:** As the sixth seal is opened, we see that the "wrath of the Lamb" against all ungodliness ultimately unleashed upon the world.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Special Leader's Note: Please remember that we are getting into heavily debated passages of scripture. Some will likely disagree with Pastor Raef's choice of interpretation on various symbols in this and coming chapters. That is okay! But be careful to not let the group discussion become a debate on symbol interpretation. Get to the practical heart level discussions around the principles of the text.

LOOKING AT THE TEXT

These text-based questions are only guides for you, and you do not need to use them. The goal is to get your group studying the text before reflecting on the sermon. Some groups will do this quite naturally by just observing what they see in the text. Others may need a few guiding questions like the ones below.

1. What effect do you see between what is happening in heaven and on earth?
2. List out specifically what happens in heaven and what it represents on earth for each of the first six seals in this chapter.
3. What words or phrases in verses 12–17 describe the events of the sixth seal, and how do people on earth respond to what is happening?
4. Across the entire chapter, what do you notice about who is acting, who is being acted upon, and how often God or the Lamb is directly or indirectly in control of the events?

GROUP REFLECTION & APPLICATION

1. **Suffering:** Look back at the last time you suffered through something significant. Share what the cause of the suffering was.
2. **Gospel Optimism:** Pastor Raef talked about “Gospel Optimism.” In our text, this is represented by the rider on the white horse, who we interpreted as Christ riding forth with the gospel, building his kingdom. Despite other powers that exist in this fallen world (death, suffering, sickness, etc.), Christ is galloping across history transforming hearts and lives for his kingdom. This should build a courageous optimism in God's people, a sense that we are on the winning side of history, and therefore should be bold in our kingdom building efforts.
 - a. Do you tend to be more “optimistic” in your kingdom outlook, or “pessimistic”?
 - b. What bold step of faith might God be calling you to, that requires courage?
 - c. What opportunities exist for our Church in Chicago, to take back ground from the enemy in practical ways?
3. **The Persecuted Church:** At the end of this document are two short stories of women who are living boldly for Christ in the midst of great risk to themselves.

- a. Read the stories
 - b. Together take a moment to pray fervently for God's protection over these two individuals.
 - c. What can these two women's short stories teach us about faith in Christ?
 - d. Have you ever been persecuted for your faith? What was that experience like?
4. **Preparing for Suffering:** We discussed that every faithful Christian should prepare themselves to suffer and be persecuted for their faith in Christ, in some way.
- a. If you knew that in five years you would be persecuted heavily for your faith in Christ, what areas of your faith would you want to strengthen now in preparation for that time?
 - b. Why do you think that God permits his saints to be persecuted?

STORIES FROM THE PERSECUTED CHURCH¹

Beatriz: Bold Witness in Mexico

Meet Beatriz* in Central Mexico's "Circle of Silence," a region where less than two percent of the population is Christian. In this region, believers must live their faith in secret. Despite violent persecution that almost killed her daughter, Beatriz* continues to share the gospel in this dangerous place. In her rural community, she leads a group of women, walking with them through the daily challenges of persecution and womanhood.

Behind closed doors, they study the Bible, pray and encourage each other. Together, they're learning to restore their dignity, reaffirm their identity in Christ and find the strength to raise their children amid fear—trusting that God is transforming their pain into hope.

"Every meeting is a victory—not because we are strong, but because God sustains us," Beatriz* says.

Slowly but surely, Beatriz* is leading women to rewrite the story of what it means to be a woman of faith in this land. One of them—the first in her group to receive Jesus—now helps lead part of the meeting, a small but powerful sign of the faith spreading across the region.

Beatriz's dream for this region is also a prayer: "In 10 years, I hope there will be more followers of Christ here—that God's Kingdom will expand, that believers will live without fear and that faith can be practiced openly."

Vannida: Relentless Servant in Southeast Asia

In southeast Asia where Vannida* lives, she has faced the unthinkable—the death of her husband. Phansak*, a devoted church leader and known follower of Jesus, was killed for his faith. Vannida has been blacklisted by her community and lives under constant surveillance by authorities.

¹ <https://www.opendoorsus.org/en-US/stories/persecuted-women-sharing-jesus-resurrection-power/>

Still, she continues to trust God and share the gospel with others, including five Christian families in her village. Pressing into her faith, Vannida says, "Whatever happens, we will never stop following the Lord. I want to serve the Lord more and more, even though I know trouble is waiting. I won't abandon Jesus Christ."