Table Host Discussion Guide

Week 4: The Seals and the Sealed

This week's study marks a major turning point in Revelation as the Lamb begins opening the sealed scroll. Rather than encouraging speculation about modern political events, John repeatedly draws our attention back to the Old Testament, showing that the horsemen, covenant judgments, and cosmic imagery are part of a familiar biblical pattern. God's judgments are never arbitrary. They unfold under the authority of the Lamb and serve as merciful warnings that call people to repentance before final judgment arrives. At the same time, Revelation reminds suffering believers that while God's people may experience persecution—even martyrdom—they are never abandoned. Before judgment continues, God seals His servants as His own, assuring them of their eternal security. John hears the symbolic numbering of God's covenant people but turns to see an innumerable multitude from every nation standing victoriously before the throne. The chapter ends with one of Scripture's greatest promises: those who remain faithful to Christ will dwell forever in God's presence, where every tear is wiped away, and every sacrifice made for Christ proves eternally worthwhile.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important that Revelation continually points us back to the Old Testament when explaining its symbols?

Answer: Throughout this study we've seen that Revelation rarely invents new imagery. The four horsemen echo Zechariah, the covenant judgments come from the Law and the Prophets, the sealing of God's people reflects Ezekiel, and the cosmic language describing judgment appears repeatedly throughout Isaiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets. Rather than reading Revelation through modern headlines, John teaches us to interpret Revelation through the rest of Scripture. The Old Testament provides the vocabulary for understanding the visions John records.

Application: When you encounter difficult passages in the Bible, are you more likely to search for modern explanations or biblical ones? How can you become more intentional about letting Scripture interpret Scripture?

2. What do the first six seals teach us about God's judgment?

Answer: The opening seals reveal conquest, war, famine, death, persecution, and judgment. Yet every seal is opened by the Lamb. Nothing happens apart from Christ's authority. The judgments are also partial rather than final—they affect "a fourth" of the earth—showing that God is warning people while there is still opportunity to repent. His judgments reveal both His justice and His mercy.

Application: Why do you think it is difficult for people to hold together God's love and His justice? How does seeing Jesus as both Savior and Judge deepen your understanding of His character?

3. What encouragement do the martyrs under the altar and the sealing of God's people give believers who suffer?

Answer: The martyrs ask, "How long?" because they long for God's justice, not because God has forgotten them. They receive white robes and are told to wait until the full number of faithful witnesses has been completed. In chapter 7, God seals His people before judgment continues. The seal does not promise freedom from suffering or even death. Instead, it declares that God's people belong to Him and are eternally secure, even when the world rejects them.

Application: How does knowing that God never abandons His people—even in suffering—change the way you think about hardship, persecution, or trials in your own life?

4. Why is the description of the 144,000 followed immediately by the great multitude?

Answer: John first hears the symbolic numbering of God's covenant people, but then he turns and sees what that number represents: an innumerable multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language. Just as John heard about the Lion but saw the Lamb in chapter 5, here he hears the symbolic numbering of Israel but sees the complete people of God gathered from every nation. The unusual tribal list itself points beyond a literal census to a symbolic picture of God's redeemed people united in Christ.

Application: What does this vision teach us about God's plan to redeem people from every nation and culture? How should that shape the way we view the global Church?

5. Why does Revelation end this section by focusing on the great multitude before God's throne?

Answer: Revelation does not leave our attention fixed on judgment or persecution. It lifts our eyes to the final destiny of God's faithful people. The white robes connect this multitude to the martyrs from chapter 6, showing that those who remained faithful—even unto death—now stand victorious before God. Their hunger, thirst, suffering, and tears have ended because the Lamb is now their Shepherd. Revelation reminds believers that every sacrifice made for Christ is temporary, but every reward Christ promises is eternal.

Application: Which promise in Revelation 7:15–17 encourages you the most? How can that promise strengthen you to remain faithful to Christ this week?