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Seven Seals
of
Revelation



1. Introduction

The Seven Seals of Revelation play an essential role in the first 40 years of Jesus' prophecy. In our lesson on the Introduction to the Great Tribulation, we answered the questions.

- When was the Great Tribulation?
- What was the Abomination of Desolation?
- Had the gospel been preached to all nations before the Great Tribulation?
- Why does Revelation equate Jerusalem to Sodom and Egypt?
- Who was Josephus, and is he a credible historian?

In this lesson, we will answer these questions:

- What are the Seven Seals?
- How did the seals relate to the Great Tribulation?
- Was one quarter of the population killed, as Revelation says?

Then, in the following lessons, we will answer these questions:

- Who were the 144,000? When did this number stop counting?
- Understanding the various calendars of the Great Tribulation.
- Who were the armies crossing the Euphrates in Revelation?
- Was one-third of the population killed, as Revelation says?
- Why did Jesus say His coming would be like lightning from the east to the west?
- How long was the Great Tribulation — seven years or 2300 days?
- When did the Great Tribulation begin?
- When did it end?
- When did the Christians flee Jerusalem?
- How many people were killed during the Great Tribulation?
- Why was there thirty minutes of silence in heaven?
- When was the forty-two-month prophecy of Revelation?
- What is the significance of the five-month prophecy in Revelation 9?
- What was Daniel's 1290 and 1335-day prophecy about?
- What is the importance of Antioch in the prophetic calendar?
- What was the blessing to those who lasted 1336 days?

*In line with the agreed international standard, all dates, unless mentioned otherwise, are based on the Roman (Julian) Calendar; to bring them to our Gregorian calendar, this will be two days later. For example, for Jesus' appearance on the 21st May, 66 CE will be 23rd May by our calendar. In the next lesson, we will look at the different calendars.

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2. The Seals are Opened

Revelation chapter five begins with Israel's judgment through the seven seals that will be broken.

A. Scroll with Seven Seals

Revelation mentions seven seals related to the Great Tribulation.

REVELATION 5:1
AND I SAW IN THE RIGHT HAND OF HIM WHO SAT ON THE THRONE A SCROLL WRITTEN
INSIDE AND ON THE BACK, SEALED WITH SEVEN SEALS.

The seven seals on the back of a scroll held the prophecy of judgment until the day of the Lord arrived.

B. Scroll with Seals Inside

The scroll with writing inside represents prophecy.

ISAIAH 30:8
NOW GO, WRITE IT BEFORE THEM ON A TABLET,
AND NOTE IT ON A SCROLL,
THAT IT MAY BE FOR TIME TO COME,

From this and other similar scriptures, we learn that scrolls symbolise prophecies.

C. Only Jesus Can Take the Scroll:

REVELATION 5:5
BUT ONE OF THE ELDERS SAID TO ME, "DO NOT WEEP. BEHOLD, THE LION OF THE TRIBE
OF JUDAH, THE ROOT OF DAVID, HAS PREVAILED TO OPEN THE SCROLL AND TO LOOSE
ITS SEVEN SEALS."

This scroll contains Jesus' prophecies about the forty-year generation. However, before the Tribulation, the scroll is taken from the Father, and the seals are broken. Each of these signifies the unfolding of the scroll it encases.

D. Timing of the Seals Being Opened

The seals are opened after the Lamb is slain and while He stands.

REVELATION 5:6-7
AND I LOOKED, AND BEHOLD, IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE AND OF THE FOUR LIVING
CREATURES, AND IN THE MIDST OF THE ELDERS, STOOD A LAMB AS THOUGH IT HAD
BEEN SLAIN, HAVING SEVEN HORNS AND SEVEN EYES, WHICH ARE THE SEVEN SPIRITS
OF GOD SENT OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH. THEN HE CAME AND TOOK THE SCROLL OUT OF
THE RIGHT HAND OF HIM WHO SAT ON THE THRONE.

Here, Jesus is standing, but elsewhere, Jesus is seated.

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E. Jesus is Seated in 60-65 CE

In Hebrews, Ephesians and Colossians, Paul states that Jesus is seated at the Father's right hand.

HEBREWS 8:1

NOW THIS IS THE MAIN POINT OF THE THINGS WE ARE SAYING: WE HAVE SUCH A HIGH PRIEST, WHO IS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF THE MAJESTY IN THE HEAVENS,

These three epistles were all written between 60 and 65 CE, so Jesus is seated at that time.

F. Jesus is Seated in 30 CE

He was also sitting at the right hand of the Father after His ascension.

EPHESIANS 1:20

WHICH HE WORKED IN CHRIST WHEN HE RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD AND SEATED HIM AT HIS RIGHT HAND IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES,

From these scriptures, we learn that Jesus is seated on the heavenly throne room after His death and ascension. He is also seated around 60-67 CE, at the time these three epistles were written. Why then is the Lamb of God standing in Revelation?

G. When is Jesus Standing?

In Revelation 5, God is seated on the throne, but Jesus remains standing. There is another moment in Scripture when Jesus stands. This occurred during the first martyrdom in 33 CE, when Stephen was stoned.

ACTS 7:55-58

BUT HE, BEING FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, GAZED INTO HEAVEN AND SAW THE GLORY OF GOD, AND JESUS STANDING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, AND SAID, "LOOK! I SEE THE HEAVENS OPENED AND THE SON OF MAN STANDING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD!" THEN THEY CRIED OUT WITH A LOUD VOICE, STOPPED THEIR EARS, AND RAN AT HIM WITH ONE ACCORD; AND THEY CAST HIM OUT OF THE CITY AND STONED HIM.

Thus, Jesus is seated during His ascension when the three epistles were written between 60 and 67 CE. The only other time in Scripture when Jesus is described as standing occurs in 33 CE. The moment when Jesus opens the scrolls also appears at the beginning of persecution. Stephen is the first martyr, and Jesus, the Lamb, martyred for humanity, stands when the seals are opened; four of these seals involve martyrdom.

Jesus stands at Stephen's martyrdom, and at the opening of the seals that refer to martyrdom in 33 CE.

The seven seals were opened in 33 CE, when Jesus stood for Stephen's martyrdom, marking the beginning of Jesus's prophecy of judgment and persecution. They will reach their peak during the 42-month climax, as foretold by Daniel, which would occur between 67 and 70 CE.

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3. The First Conquering Seal

A. Persecution of the Jews Begins.

In 37 CE, shortly after the martyrdom of Stephen (around 6th November 33 CE), the Jewish religious leaders approached the new Emperor Caligula, lodging complaints against the Christians, hoping he would start persecuting them. Instead, Caligula turned against the Jews, fulfilling Matthew 24:51, becoming the only Emperor to cut people in half.

MATTHEW 24:48-51

BUT IF THAT EVIL SERVANT SAYS IN HIS HEART, 'MY MASTER IS DELAYING HIS COMING,' AND BEGINS TO BEAT HIS FELLOW SERVANTS, AND TO EAT AND DRINK WITH THE DRUNKARDS, THE MASTER OF THAT SERVANT WILL COME ON A DAY WHEN HE IS NOT LOOKING FOR HIM AND AT AN HOUR THAT HE IS NOT AWARE OF, AND WILL CUT HIM IN TWO AND APPOINT HIM HIS PORTION WITH THE HYPOCRITES. THERE SHALL BE WEEPING AND GNASHING OF TEETH.

This prophecy is directed at the unwise servants (Jews) who persecute the wise servants (followers of Jesus).

B. Conqueror on a White Horse

The first seal is when someone is given a crown so he can ride out to conquer.

REVELATION 6:2

AND I LOOKED, AND BEHOLD, A WHITE HORSE. HE WHO SAT ON IT HAD A BOW; AND A CROWN WAS GIVEN TO HIM, AND HE WENT OUT CONQUERING AND TO CONQUER.

This is not Jesus on the white horse, as He is the one who opens the seals. I will examine this in Beasts of Revelation, but Emperor Vespasian conquered Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. You will recall that Vespasian did not attack Jerusalem earlier; instead, he weakened the Jews by letting them fight amongst themselves before sending his son, Caesar Titus, to besiege Jerusalem.

4. The Second Seal of Conflict

REVELATION 6:3-4

WHEN HE OPENED THE SECOND SEAL, I HEARD THE SECOND LIVING CREATURE SAYING, "COME AND SEE." ANOTHER HORSE, FIERY RED, WENT OUT. AND IT WAS GRANTED TO THE ONE WHO SAT ON IT TO TAKE PEACE FROM THE EARTH, AND THAT PEOPLE SHOULD KILL ONE ANOTHER; AND THERE WAS GIVEN TO HIM A GREAT SWORD.

In Wars and Rumours of War, we see that the first 40 years after Jesus' prophecy were the most intense period in Jewish history. The rider probably represents Nero or Vespasian, both of whom initiated significant conflicts during that time.

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5. The Third Seal of Famine

The third seal to be opened is scarcity.

REVELATION 6:5-6

WHEN HE OPENED THE THIRD SEAL, I HEARD THE THIRD LIVING CREATURE SAY, "COME AND SEE." SO I LOOKED, AND BEHOLD, A BLACK HORSE, AND HE WHO SAT ON IT HAD A PAIR OF SCALES IN HIS HAND. AND I HEARD A VOICE IN THE MIDST OF THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES SAYING, "A QUART OF WHEAT FOR A DENARIUS, AND THREE QUARTS OF BARLEY FOR A DENARIUS; AND DO NOT HARM THE OIL AND THE WINE."

As we saw in [Last Days Proofs](#), major famines occurred throughout the 40- and 100-year generations, and these worsened during the Great Tribulation.

Over two hundred thousand deaths before the siege of Jerusalem significantly reduced the population's ability to produce food. The Roman armies would seize the Jews' food sources to supply their troops as they fought the Jews. The resulting scarcity of animals and crops led to further starvation among the Jewish community. I have mentioned the heaps of bodies in Jerusalem that cause pestilence in our lesson on [Last Days Proofs](#).

JOSEPHUS WAR 5.10.3

BUT THE FAMINE WAS TOO HARD FOR ALL OTHER PASSIONS, AND IT IS DESTRUCTIVE TO NOTHING SO MUCH AS TO MODESTY; ... THAT CHILDREN PULLED THE VERY MORSELS THAT THEIR FATHERS WERE EATING OUT OF THEIR VERY MOUTHS, AND,...SO DID THE MOTHERS DO AS TO THEIR INFANTS; AND ...WERE MOST DEAR WERE PERISHING UNDER THEIR HANDS, THEY WERE NOT ASHAMED TO TAKE FROM THEM THE VERY LAST DROPS THAT MIGHT PRESERVE THEIR LIVES; ... THE OLD MEN, WHO HELD THEIR FOOD FAST, WERE BEATEN; AND IF THE WOMEN HID WHAT THEY HAD WITHIN THEIR HANDS, THEIR HAIR WAS TORN FOR SO DOING; ... THEY ALSO INVENTED TERRIBLE METHODS OF TORTURE TO DISCOVER WHERE ANY FOOD WAS, AND THEY WERE THESE: TO STOP UP THE PASSAGES OF THE PRIVY PARTS OF THE MISERABLE WRETCHES, AND TO DRIVE SHARP STAKES UP THEIR FUNDAMENTS!, AND A MAN WAS FORCED TO BEAR WHAT IT IS TERRIBLE EVEN TO HEAR, TO MAKE HIM CONFESS THAT HE HAD BUT ONE LOAF OF BREAD, [WHEAT] OR THAT HE MIGHT DISCOVER A HANDFUL OF BARLEY MEAL THAT WAS CONCEALED;

This account offers a small glimpse into the depravity that Josephus describes in his volumes on the wars of Israel during this period.

6. Seal Four: One Quarter of People Die in the Great Tribulation

REVELATION 6:7-8

WHEN HE OPENED THE FOURTH SEAL, I HEARD THE VOICE OF THE FOURTH LIVING CREATURE SAYING, "COME AND SEE." SO I LOOKED, AND BEHOLD, A PALE HORSE. AND THE NAME OF HIM WHO SAT ON IT WAS DEATH, AND HADES FOLLOWED WITH HIM. AND POWER WAS GIVEN TO THEM **OVER A FOURTH OF THE EARTH, TO KILL WITH SWORD, WITH HUNGER, WITH DEATH, AND BY THE BEASTS OF THE EARTH.**

Vespasian moved through the towns in Judea and Samaria, slaughtering anyone who resisted. The number of people killed was so large that the bodies filled the rivers, warning the downstream settlements of their impending slaughter. The lions and bears would also have fed on the injured

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and malnourished, who were too weak from injuries, pestilence, and famine to defend themselves, thus fulfilling this prophecy.

In the table below, we see that 26.6% of the Jewish population died during the fall of Jerusalem. This is roughly one-quarter, as stated in Revelation.

The chart below shows how severe the first 40 and 100 years were. In this context, the first worldwide population estimate is based on available data. The world population figures are derived using an assumed annual growth rate of 0.1% for the first century. Here is the spreadsheet calculation for these figures, as they may be difficult to interpret for those who want to double-check.

War	Date	Jewish Population Killed	Est. Worldwide Jewish Population	Percentage Killed
Jesus' death	April 5, 30 CE		4,200,000	
Roman-Jewish Conflicts	37-66 CE	128,000	4,198,344	3.0
Start of the Great Tribulation (First Jewish Roman War), until surrounding of Jerusalem	23rd December 66 CE to April 13th, 70 CE	71,800	4,139,344	1.7
Destruction of Jerusalem 70 CE	April 14 - Sept 8th	1,100,000	3,042,142	26.60
March of the captives from Jerusalem to Antioch, including Vespasian's and Domitian's birthdays and at least two other games (spreadsheet here)	September 9 to December 13, 70 CE	23,720	3,019,183	0.8
Total 40-Year Generation	30-70 CE	1,323,520	3,019,183	32.1
Macherus	71 CE	1,700	3,043,484	0.1
Masada and Ein Gedi (End of Great Tribulation and First Jewish Roman War)	73 CE	1,660	3,047,914	0.1
(End of Great Tribulation and First Jewish Roman War)	April 10th, 73 CE		3,047,914	32.2
Hadrian revolt	130 CE	600,000	3,045,031	18.6
End of 100-year Generation as prophesied by Jesus	130 CE		2,626,600	
Total 100-year Generation	30 CE to 130 CE	1,926,880	The Jewish population shrank to 2,626,600 by 130 CE.	45.5% of the original 4,200,000

Percentage of Jews killed in Jesus' Last Days prophecy

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7. The Cry of the Martyrs

The fifth seal is the next one to be opened.

REVELATION 6:9-11

WHEN HE OPENED THE FIFTH SEAL, I SAW UNDER THE ALTAR THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO HAD BEEN SLAIN FOR THE WORD OF GOD AND FOR THE TESTIMONY WHICH THEY HELD. AND THEY CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE, SAYING, "HOW LONG, O LORD, HOLY AND TRUE, UNTIL YOU JUDGE AND AVENGE OUR BLOOD ON THOSE WHO DWELL ON THE EARTH?" THEN A WHITE ROBE WAS GIVEN TO EACH OF THEM; AND IT WAS SAID TO THEM THAT THEY SHOULD REST A LITTLE WHILE LONGER, UNTIL BOTH THE NUMBER OF THEIR FELLOW SERVANTS AND THEIR BRETHREN, WHO WOULD BE KILLED AS THEY WERE, WAS COMPLETED.

A. Persecution Starts

The persecution of Christians by Jews began with the first martyr, Stephen, in October 33 CE. Later, the persecution of Jews by the Romans started under Caligula in 37 CE, which would have included Jewish Christians.

B. Persecution Under Nero

Persecution of Jewish and Gentile Christians intensified during Emperor Nero's reign from 56 CE to 68 CE.

Remembering that Nero (not Domitian) had sent John to the Island of Patmos, probably after the fire of Rome, there were already martyrs under Nero (the Antichrist). It was likely these that John saw beneath the altar. They were told to wait a little while (not 2000 years) until the rest of their fellow servants and brethren joined them.

C. The Fire of Rome

An example of this persecution was the Great Fire of Rome in late July 64 CE. Most historical accounts state that Nero deliberately set the fire to bypass the senate's restrictions on buildings. Nero aimed to rebuild Rome according to his vision of its appearance. The fire started in the merchant stalls and quickly spread throughout the city, aided by people Nero had paid to keep it burning. After six days of relentless flames, the fire died out, and those same people reignited it. Looking for someone to blame, Nero accused the Christians, and 979 of them were crucified.

D. The Number of Martyrs Completed

The scripture above states that those under God's altar are to rest a little longer until the number of martyrs is complete. We aren't told how long they need to wait, but it could be until the hundred-year generation has passed or until Rome legalised Christianity in the 5th century. It might also mean until the end of the age when all who are 'sleeping' are raised for the Great White Throne of Judgment for eternal life or eternal separation from God and death.

8. Sixth Seal: Cosmic Disturbances

We have a separate lesson on signs in the "Last Day Proofs" lesson.

Josephus' Reference	Macedonian Date	Roman Calendar	Hebrew Calendar	Historic Event
63 CE				
6.300	8 Dystros	8 March	19 Adar	Jesus of Ananus prophesied day and night for over seven years concerning Jerusalem's destruction daily until Pentecost 70 CE
66 CE				
6.289	Full year			A sword-shaped star over Jerusalem, and a comet for a year
6.424		3 pm to 5 pm 29th March	Passover 15 Nisan	Passover 256,500 sacrifices made, requiring at least ten persons per sacrifice, equals the temporary Jerusalem population of 2,700,200 persons plus foreigners
6.298	21 Artemisius	21 May	9 Sivan	Jesus and His armies appear over Jerusalem
67 CE				
6.292	Xanthicus 8	April 8	Nisan 15	A sacrificed heifer gives birth to a lamb inside the Temple
6.293	Xanthicus 8	April 8	Midnight Nisan 15	The East gate to the Temple opened by itself at midnight on Passover
6.290	Xanthicus 8	April 8	3am Nisan 15	Bright light in the Holy Place starting at 3 am for 30 minutes.
6.299	Artemisius 29	May 29	Sivan 6 Pentecost	An earthquake followed by a loud noise and a voice of an immense multitude: "Let us go hence"
70 CE				
6.299	Artemisius 29	September 8	Elul 14	Sun darkened and moon turned to blood

A. Great Earthquake

REVELATION 6:12

I LOOKED WHEN HE OPENED THE SIXTH SEAL, AND BEHOLD, THERE WAS A GREAT EARTHQUAKE; THE SUN BECAME BLACK AS SACKCLOTH OF HAIR, AND THE MOON TURNED RED.

We should consider the significant earthquakes that have occurred. The first forty years were marked by an increase in seismic activity worldwide. There was a notable "mega-

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earthquake" when Jesus died, as the graves were opened. In our section on the first year of the Great Tribulation, we will see that an earthquake took place on April 19, 67 CE.

B. Blood Moons and Black Suns

Whenever there is a "blood moon", people start saying that we are in the last days. However, on average, there are 228 moon eclipses every century; in the 7th century, there were 255. Which one will signal that Jesus is coming?

It's easy to find information about full moons and, consequently, lunar and solar eclipses during the Great Tribulation on the NASA website.

During the Great Tribulation, there were seventeen moon eclipses, including one on the day Jerusalem was besieged. On the final day of the siege, a full moon lit the night as Jerusalem burned, causing it to appear blood-red through the smoke. All the smoke would have also blacked out the sun.

C. Hiding in the Subterranean Caves

However, a quick reflection on this seal suggests we shouldn't interpret it too literally. In the following verses, it says:

REVELATION 6:15-17

AND THE KINGS OF THE EARTH, THE GREAT MEN, THE RICH MEN, THE COMMANDERS, THE MIGHTY MEN, EVERY SLAVE AND EVERY FREE MAN, HID THEMSELVES IN THE CAVES AND IN THE ROCKS OF THE MOUNTAINS, AND SAID TO THE MOUNTAINS AND 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 HIS WRATH HAS COME, AND WHO CAN STAND?"

This doesn't refer to a future time. There aren't enough caves and rock formations for eight billion people to hide in. Yet, in Jerusalem, we see that this is precisely what happened. There were underground caves in Jerusalem that both rich and poor tried to use to hide from other Jews and Edomites who were attempting to steal their riches or the last scraps of food left during the siege.

JOSEPHUS 6.430-432

THERE WERE ALSO FOUND SLAIN THERE OVER TWO THOUSAND PERSONS, PARTLY BY THEIR OWN HANDS AND PARTLY BY ONE ANOTHER, BUT CHIEFLY DESTROYED BY THE FAMINE. STILL, THE SMELL OF THE DEAD BODIES WAS MOST OFFENSIVE TO THOSE WHO CAME ACROSS THEM, SO MUCH SO THAT SOME WERE FORCED TO LEAVE IMMEDIATELY, WHILE OTHERS, DRIVEN BY GREED FOR GAIN, WENT AMONG THE HEAPS OF DEAD BODIES AND TREAD UPON THEM; FOR A GREAT DEAL OF TREASURE WAS DISCOVERED IN THESE CAVES, AND THE HOPE OF PROFIT MADE EVERY MEANS OF OBTAINING IT SEEM LAWFUL.

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9. Seventh Seal

REVELATION 8:1-6

WHEN HE OPENED THE SEVENTH SEAL, THERE WAS SILENCE IN HEAVEN FOR ABOUT HALF AN HOUR. I SAW THE SEVEN ANGELS WHO STAND BEFORE GOD, AND TO THEM WERE GIVEN SEVEN TRUMPETS. THEN ANOTHER ANGEL, CARRYING A GOLDEN CENSER, CAME AND STOOD AT THE ALTAR. HE WAS GIVEN MUCH INCENSE, WHICH HE WAS TO OFFER ALONG WITH THE PRAYERS OF ALL THE SAINTS UPON THE GOLDEN ALTAR BEFORE THE THRONE. THE SMOKE OF THE INCENSE, TOGETHER WITH THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS, ASCENDED BEFORE GOD FROM THE ANGEL'S HAND. THEN THE ANGEL TOOK THE CENSER, FILLED IT WITH FIRE FROM THE ALTAR, AND THREW IT TO THE EARTH. THERE WERE NOISES, THUNDERINGS, LIGHTNINGS, AND AN EARTHQUAKE. SO THE SEVEN ANGELS WHO HAD THE SEVEN TRUMPETS PREPARED THEMSELVES TO SOUND.

The seventh seal is opened at 3 am on 19th April 67 CE. However, we will leave this for another lesson, as we need to establish a foundation before examining this seal. We will find that the 30 minutes of silence corresponds to the glory of the Lord leaving the Temple.

The noises, lightning, and earthquakes occurred on June 7, 67 CE, and marked the start of the 42-month, 1290-day, and 1335-day prophecies found in the Bible.

10. The Scroll is Opened

There were seven seals on the scroll. As we have learned, the scroll represents the prophetic words of Jesus, who was found worthy to open them. Once the seals are opened, the seven trumpets are prepared to sound.

REVELATION 8:6

SO THE SEVEN ANGELS WHO HAD THE SEVEN TRUMPETS PREPARED THEMSELVES TO SOUND.

We will examine each of these as we review what happened during the Great Tribulation, which started in late 66 CE.

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11. Summary

1. The first seal was broken when Jesus was standing for Stephen's martyrdom around 15 October 33 CE.
2. A conqueror on a white horse is the first seal, symbolising the Roman Caesars' conquest.
3. The second seal brings conflict between Jew and Gentile, which escalated in 37 CE under Caesar Caligula.
4. Seal four represents the quarter of the Jewish population killed during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE.
5. Martyrdom from Stephen onwards, reaching a peak under Nero and Vespasian, is the fifth seal.
6. The sixth seal refers to the cosmic disturbances that took place from 63 CE to 8 September 70 CE.
7. The seventh seal begins on 19th April 67 CE with a bright light, followed seven weeks later on the 7th of June, whose significance we will understand later in this series.
8. The seventh seal releases the five trumpets, which likewise are all fulfilled in the Great Tribulation.

In the next lesson, we begin to explore the calendars of the era. Grasping this is essential to explaining how all the dates precisely align with the prophecies of Jesus and Daniel.