

Life with the End in Sight

A Series in Revelation



2. Nothing takes God by surprise (Rev 6:1–8:1)

Introduction

In this section of Revelation, we see the lamb opening seven seals and setting in motion things that must happen before the end. It is not easy reading, as we see suffering and pain for many.

In this study, we will be focusing on the breaking of the seven seals, found mostly in Revelation 6, and how they speak to questions of the suffering we see today.

Part 1, The Seven Seals

Revelation 6:1-17; 8:1

Q. If you had to give an answer to the question 'Why does God allow suffering?' what might you say?



The seven seals are depictions of things that will happen in our world before the end. They describe human suffering in many forms:

Take some time to read through the opening of the different seals to understand what it is they describe.

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| 6:1-2 | Wars and conquest |
| 6:3-4 | International strife & carnage |
| 6:5-6 | Famine |
| 6:7-8 | Death |
| 6:9-11 | Persecution |
| 6:12-17 | Natural disasters |
| 8:1 | Divine judgment (the final seal introduces the 7 Trumpets, which depict God's judgment) |

You might be interested to compare the list with Jesus' words in Mark 13.

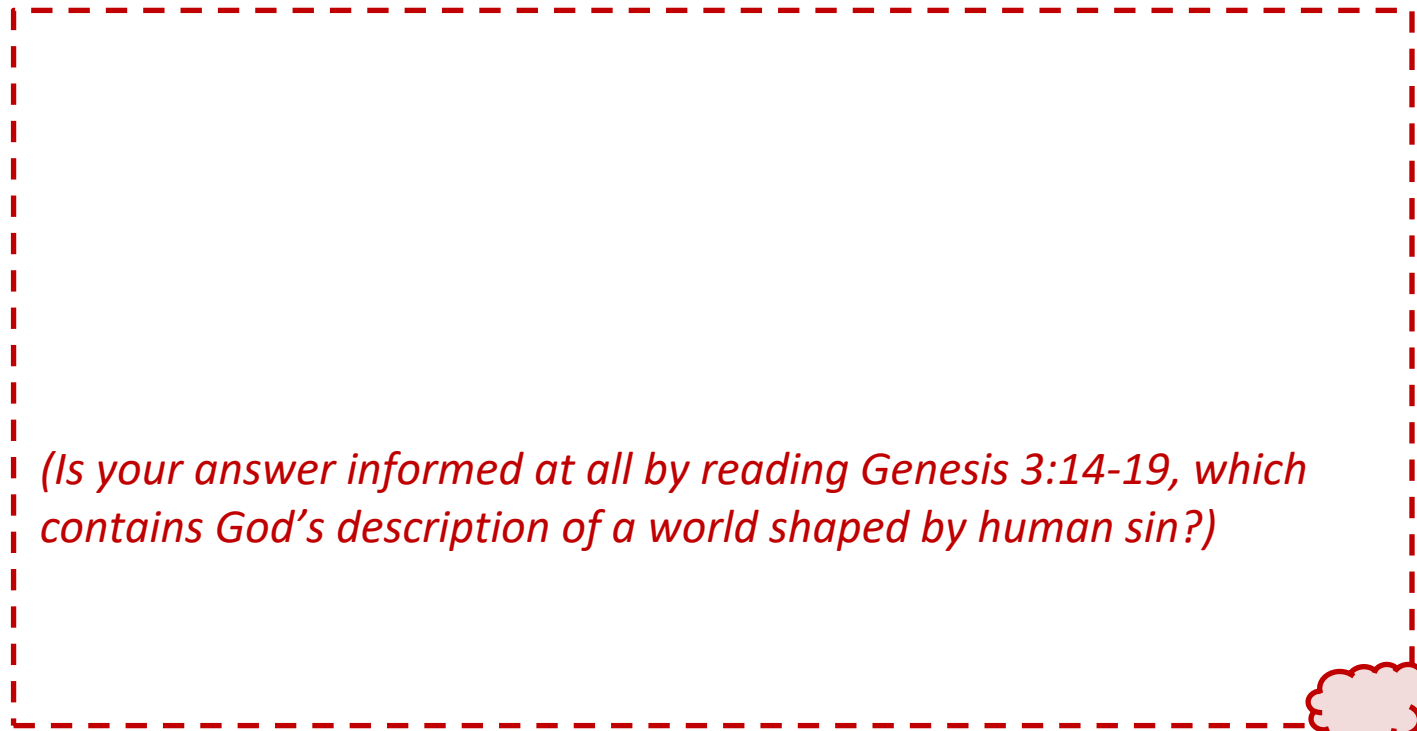
Q. To what degree do we see these different kinds of suffering in the world today, and in our own lives and culture?



Revelation was written to Christians who were facing persecution and knew suffering very well. **Q. How do you think this section of the book would have spoken to them in their situation (especially 6:9-11)?**



Q. Looking at the list of kinds of suffering again, how much are they the result of human sin?



(Is your answer informed at all by reading Genesis 3:14-19, which contains God's description of a world shaped by human sin?)

Q. After descriptions of so much suffering, which of these do you think we should feel at the idea of divine judgment?

Fear	Relief	Sadness	Vindication
Excitement	Confusion	Hope	Joy
Anger	Indignation	Compassion	Despair

Which do we actually feel when we consider divine judgment?

Part 2, The Question of Suffering

So far, we have looked at the scope of suffering described in Revelation and considered how rooted it is in humanity's own brokenness and sin. We have also thought about how judgment and bringing it all to a point of completion can be seen as a positive thing, not something to fear.

Q. Can you think of reasons why God might delay wrapping up human history (including all the suffering) instead of doing so right now?

(You might find 2 Peter 3:8-10 useful to reflect on.)



Q. What significance might there be that it is the 'lamb' (not the lion) who is in the midst of these descriptions of suffering?



Q. What opportunities does the gospel give us to speak into a world that suffers with the love of God?

