

A Comparison of the "Seven Seals" (Revelation 6 - 8) to Jesus' Account of the End Times

Jesus' account of the end of the age, in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, has three main sections:

- (1) The increase of worldwide destruction and catastrophe, which leads up to Jesus' coming.
The future events described in this first section were foreshadowed by the destruction of Jerusalem (and the temple), in AD 70 - and Jesus' words were relevant to both. Because of this, the three accounts have somewhat different focuses: Luke has a greater emphasis on the application of Jesus' words to the events of AD 70 (although he doesn't totally exclude the end times); Matthew focuses almost entirely on how they relate to the events at the end of the age events which parallel the AD 70 events, but have a world-wide emphasis); Mark has a greater focus on the end of the age, but seems to include both, to some degree.
- (2) Jesus' coming and the events directly associated with it.
All three accounts focus on end-time events that have to do with Jesus' coming.
- (3) Instructions on how to be prepare for Jesus' coming.
The three accounts vary in the amount of instruction they give: Mark gives the least; Matthew gives the most. *All* have the same basic emphasis on the need to be ready, faithful, prayerful, etc.

Interestingly, Matthew and Mark make direct reference to prophecies mentioned in the book of Daniel, thus connecting Jesus' account with Old Testament prophecies. The "abomination that causes desolation," mentioned in Daniel (9:27; 11:31; 12:11), has to do with actions that are generally recognized as those which will be done by the Antichrist, or the "Beast" (Revelation 13). But historically, some of these events were foreshadowed by the actions of Antiochus Epiphanes (a conquering king from the area of modern-day Syria), in 168 BC.

A second item of interest is this: There are many events mentioned in Jesus' account of the end times, which seem to parallel the events described in the book of Revelation. Here, our main focus is on the similarities between the events which Jesus says will lead up to his return, and the events related to the opening of the "seven seals," described in Revelation 6 - 8.

Event	Jesus' Account	Revelation
Various people will convince others that they have the "answers" to the world's problems	False "Christs" - Matthew 24:4-5; Mark 13:5-6; Luke 21:8	Seal 1: The rider on the white horse, who brings a false "peace" - Revelation 6:1-2
Wars	Matthew 24:6-7a; Mark 13:7-8a; Luke 21:9-10	Seal 2: The rider on the red horse; no peace, bloodshed is widespread - Revelation 6:3-4
Famine in many places	Matthew 24:7b; Mark 13:8c; Luke 21:11b	Seal 3: The rider on the black horse; in many places, the cost of food will consume <i>all</i> of one's paycheck - Revelation 6:5-6

<p>Pestilence and other death-causing events intensify</p>	<p>Luke 21:11c (pestilence - not mentioned in Matthew and Mark); the general references to war and famine, in Matthew 24:6-7, Mark 13:7-8 and Luke 21:9-11, would also apply</p>	<p>Seal 4: The rider on the pale green horse; sword, famine, plague; ¼ of world's population dies - Revelation 6:7-8</p>
<p>Persecution and martyrdom of Jesus' disciples; at the same time, the proclamation of the good news about Christ</p> <p>[More about these things in a later section]</p>	<p>Matthew 24:9-28; Mark 13:9-23; Luke 21:12-24</p>	<p>Seal 5: Martyrs cry out for justice - Revelation 6:9-11 [See also the accounts of the 144,000 saved Jews and the great multitude of martyrs, in Revelation 7.]</p>
<p>Luke, focusing on the AD 70 events, says that persecution would occur <i>before</i> the events of verses 5-8. [According to the book of Acts, which Luke also wrote, it began soon after Jesus' resurrection.] Matthew, focusing on end-time events, describes the persecution as <i>worldwide</i> and as occurring <i>after</i> those events. Mark speaks in general terms, without a focus on the timing.</p>		
<p>Natural disasters that result in worldwide devastation; an awareness of God's judgment</p>	<p>Earthquakes - Matthew 24:7c; Mark 13:8b; Luke 21:11a; signs from heaven - Luke 21:11d [Note: "Signs from heaven" could include natural phenomena, such as the meteor showers that might be suggested by the events associated with the Sixth Seal.]</p>	<p>Seal 6: Earthquake (and possibly meteors hitting the earth?); the mountains and islands are moved; people try to hide from God's judgment - Revelation 6:12-17 [Note that the islands and mountains are not yet totally destroyed. That will occur in 16:17-19.]</p>
<p>At this point, this worldwide devastation is not total and complete. These events are described as the "beginning of birth pains" (Matthew 24:8 and Mark 13:8). It will not reach its climax until the total number of God's people are "sealed" (Revelation 7:1-3). <i>Only then</i> will the final events begin to occur.</p>		
<p>Signs and events immediately preceding Jesus' return, along with the return itself</p>	<p>Matthew 24:29(+); Mark 13:24(+); Luke 21:25(+)</p>	<p>Seal 7: A moment of silence, which introduces the 7 trumpet judgments and the 7 bowls of wrath - Revelation 8+ [These are judgments of increasing severity, leading up to Jesus' return.]</p>

For nearly 2000 years, God has had a greater focus on the Gentiles (non-Jews), because of Israel's rejection of Jesus. Here, the focus is changing back to the Jews, as an increasing number of them begin to trust in Jesus. (Romans 11:11-27 describes this rejection, as well as their eventual return.)

At this "end time" point in world history, we read about:

- (1) Worldwide persecution and the death of multitudes of Christians (perhaps the greatest number being non-Jews).
- (2) The worldwide proclamation of the good news about Jesus and his Kingdom.
- (3) The conversion and protection of many Jews.

Event	Jesus' Account	Revelation
Multitudes killed; encouragement and general instructions on how to respond	Matthew 24:9-13; Mark 13:9a, 11-13; Luke 21:12a, 14-19 [Instructions similar to Mark 13:11-13 and Luke 21:14-18 are given in Matthew 10:19-22, so Matthew does not repeat them here.]	Revelation 7:9-17; also 6:9-11 (Seal 5); encouragement given in many places in Revelation
Worldwide proclamation of the good news	Matthew 24:14 ("gospel of the kingdom"); Mark 13:9b-10 and Luke 21:12b-13 ("witnesses")	Implied by the worldwide persecution of God's people, as well as the hostility of the unrepentant (and their awareness that God is judging them)
Conversion and protection of many Jews	Matthew 24:15-28; Mark 13:14-23; Luke 24:20-24 - instructions for the Jews	Revelation 7:4-8 - 144,000 Jews having the seal of God's protection: they are called "God's servants"
<p>Luke, who focuses more on AD 70, emphasizes that the Jews will become prisoners, and that Jerusalem will be overrun by Gentiles (non-Jews), until the "times of the Gentiles" are fulfilled (Luke 24:24).</p> <p>In contrast, Matthew and Mark, having a focus on the end times, don't mention this. Instead:</p> <p>(1) They refer to "the abomination that causes desolation" (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; see also the comments at the beginning of this study).</p> <p>(2) They tell us that there would be a time of "distress" that surpassed any other time in world history, and that there would be <i>no survivors</i> in those days (the end times), if the number of days hadn't been "shortened" by the Lord (Matthew 24:22; Mark 13:20). [Basically, if Jesus didn't intervene, the human race would become extinct.]</p>		

Taking into consideration all these things...

- Which of these things are already occurring (or beginning to occur) today? Which are capable of occurring (or beginning to occur) at any moment?
- How should we respond?

Should we respond the way the world does, when things aren't going well? Jesus says "Definitely NOT!" (See Matthew 10:26-31, for the basic perspective a disciple of Jesus must have. It is applicable to *all* of life.)

If you really want to know how to respond, you will be willing to look for the answer - it can be found many places in Scripture. Suggested places to look include:

- Throughout Jesus' account of the end times, as well as throughout the book of Revelation.
- Some other passages include: 1 Thessalonians 4 & 5 and 2 Thessalonians; Hebrews 10:19-25 and 12:1-3; 2 Peter 3; etc.
- Jesus' instructions in Matthew 10 show the attitude that he has *always* required his disciples to have... and such an attitude would be applicable during end-time calamities, too.