

Small Group Bible Study Guide

Revelation 6–7: Seeing the World Truthfully and Seeing Ourselves Truthfully

Big Idea

Revelation unveils the true nature of the world under empire and the true identity of God’s people under the Lamb.

Revelation is not meant to frighten the church but to form it—to help believers see clearly, remain faithful, worship deeply, and endure with hope.

Eugene Peterson: “The gospel is never about escaping the world but about seeing the world truthfully.”

Part 1: Setting the Stage — The Lamb Opens the Scroll

Read: Revelation 5:6–10; 6:1

Before the seals are opened, John sees the Lamb on the throne. This is crucial: the one unveiling history is not a tyrant—but the slain Lamb.

The Lamb does not unleash evil; the Lamb reveals reality.

Sermon insight:

“The seals are not to prevent us from seeing what is on the scroll. They represent ownership. This is the story of human history, revealed to us by Jesus.”

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important that the Lamb—and not a beast or tyrant—opens the seals?
2. How does the image of the slain Lamb redefine power?
3. How does this challenge our assumptions about how God works in the world?

Key Insight

Victory comes not through violence, but through faithful witness.

Part 2: The Four Horsemen — The World as It Really Is

Read: Revelation 6:1–8

The horsemen are not predictions of future disasters. They are revelations of present reality.

Sermon insight:

“These are not new events unleashed in the future. They are the normal consequences of a fallen world—and especially a world shaped by empire.”

The horsemen represent the normal operating system of empire:

Horseman	Represents	How Empire Operates
White	Conquest	Empire expands by domination
Red	Violence	War sustains power
Black	Economic injustice	Exploitation and inequality
Pale	Death	Death is the inevitable outcome

This reflects Romans 6:23:

“The wages of sin is death.”

Discussion Questions

1. Where do you see these forces at work in our world today?
2. How do empires promise peace and security while relying on conquest, violence, and exploitation?
3. In what ways do we benefit from empire even while critiquing it?

Important Theological Insight

The Lamb is not causing these realities. He is unveiling them.

“Jesus pulls back the curtain on our fantasies about empire.”

Part 3: The Cry of the Martyrs — Witness in a Violent World

Read: Revelation 6:9–11

The martyrs cry out, not for revenge, but for justice. They are told to wait.

This reveals something essential: suffering is part of faithful witness in a broken world.

Discussion Questions

1. What does this passage teach about suffering and faithfulness?
 2. Why does God ask them to wait?
 3. What encouragement does this give believers facing opposition today?
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Part 4: The Collapse of Empire — Cosmic De-Creation

Read: Revelation 6:12–17

This cosmic imagery symbolizes political collapse, not literal astronomy.

Sermon insight:

“This is not a literal astronomy lesson. It is political theology.”

Old Testament prophets used the same imagery to describe the fall of empires:

- Isaiah 13 – Fall of Babylon
- Ezekiel 32 – Fall of Egypt

This is the ultimate message: Empire is fragile.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Revelation use cosmic imagery to describe political collapse?
2. What does this teach us about placing our trust in governments or nations?
3. Why do people hide in fear when empire collapses?

Key question from the text: “Who can stand?”

Part 5: The Reversal: Hear an Army, See a Multitude

Read: Revelation 7:1–17

This is one of Revelation’s most important “hear/see” reversals.

Your sermon insight:

- In Revelation 5, John hears of a Lion—but sees a Lamb.
- In Revelation 7, John hears of 144,000—but sees a multitude.

What John hears:

A numbered army from Israel.

What John sees:

A vast, multinational worshipping multitude.

This reveals the true nature of the church.

Not a military force.

A worshipping people.

Not conquerors through violence.

Conquerors through faithfulness.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does John hear a number but see a multitude?
2. What does this reveal about the nature of the church?
3. How does this challenge cultural ideas about power and victory?

Key theological truth:

The church conquers not by killing—but by faithful witness.

Part 6: Sealed by God — The Security of God’s People

The church may suffer physically—but is secure spiritually.

Sermon insight:

“The empire looks powerful—but is fragile. The church looks fragile—but is secure.”

The seal represents belonging, protection, and identity.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean that believers are sealed by God?
 2. How does this give courage in uncertain times?
 3. How does worship shape the church’s identity?
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Part 7: Prayer — The Church’s True Weapon

Read: Revelation 8:1–4

Prayer is central to the unfolding of history.

Sermon insight:

“Prayer holds together the shattered fragments of creation. It makes history possible.” —
Jacques Ellul

And:

“The Christian who prays acts more effectively and more decisively on society than the person who is politically involved.”

Revelation teaches:

The primary calling of the church is not control—but faithful witness, worship, and prayer.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is prayer so central in Revelation?
 2. How does prayer challenge the illusion that empire is in control?
 3. How can prayer shape how we live in today’s world?
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Key Contrast: Revelation 6 vs Revelation 7

Revelation 6

The world as it appears powerful

Empire dominates

Death is everywhere

People hide in fear

Revelation 7

The church as it appears fragile

God protects His people

Life is promised

People stand in worship

Sermon summary insight:

“Revelation 6: The empire is not what it pretends to be.
Revelation 7: The church is not what it appears to be.”

Final Reflection Questions

1. What part of this passage most challenges how you see the world?
 2. What part most encourages you?
 3. Where are you tempted to trust empire more than God?
 4. How can worship and prayer reshape your imagination and loyalty?
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Closing Application

Revelation prepares us for faithful discipleship:

- The Lampstands — We remain faithful
- The Throne — We worship
- The Seals — We pray

Final encouragement from the sermon:

“Empire is not as strong as it pretends to be. The church is not as fragile as it appears to be. Pray first. Act later. Trust God, not the empire.”